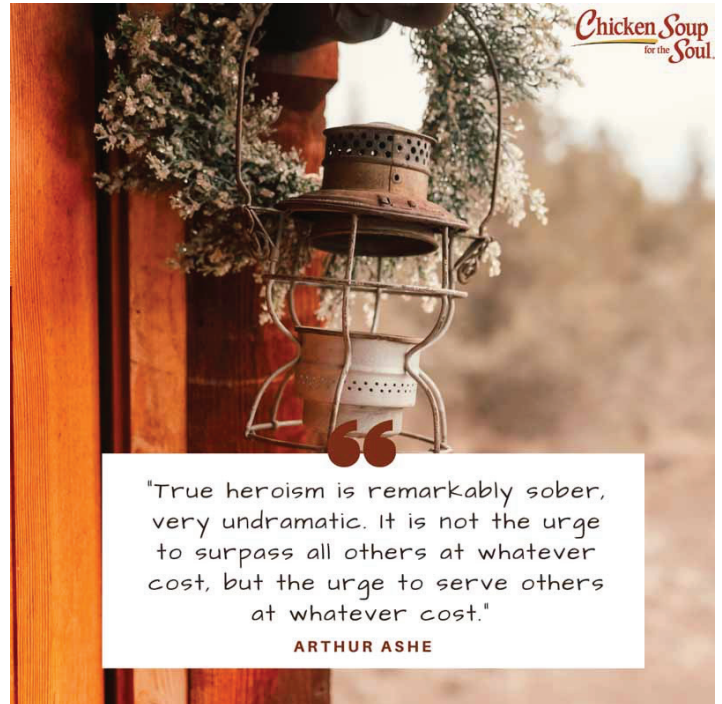


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Groton Community Calendar Thursday, Jan. 19

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, banana, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, baked beans.

Basketball Double Header at Milbank: C boys at 4 p.m. followed by C girls in elementary gym; JV girls at 4 p.m. followed by Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity.

Friday, Jan. 20

Senior Menu: Breaded codfish, rice pilaf, pea and cheese salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas.

Wrestling hosts Deuel at 6 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 21

Wrestling at Arlington, 10 a.m.

Girls Basketball at Great Plains Lutheran: C game at 11 a.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

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

Sunday, Jan. 22

Open Gym: Grades JK-8; 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Grades 6-12; 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with Milestones for 6th grade at sophomores, 9 a.m.; Annual Meeting; Sunday School at 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

GDILIVE.COM

Double Header at Milbank

Thursday, Jan. 19, 2023

C Games at the Elementary Gym

with C boys at 4 p.m. Sponsored by Darcie & Eric Moody
followed by C girls. Sponsored by Russ & Dixie Clark

In the Main Gym

JV Girls at 4 p.m. Sponsored by Kent & Darcy Muller
Followed by JV Boys.

Sponsored by Memory of Jay Imrie from the Imrie Family

followed by Varsity Games

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

The Life of Arlis Harms



The funeral service for Arlis A. Harms, 82, of Aberdeen, SD, formerly of Groton, SD, will be 10:30am, Saturday, January 21, 2023 at Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, Groton, with Pastor Josh Jetto officiating. Burial at Sunset Memorial Gardens. Arlis died Sunday, January 15, 2023, at Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen, SD.

Visitation will be from 5:00-6:00pm, Friday, followed by a prayer service at 6:00pm, at Spitzer-Miller Funeral Home, 1111 South Main Street.

Arlis Ann Miller was born May 2, 1940, to George E. and Ada Ellen (Keller) Miller in Aberdeen, SD. She grew up on a farm near Putney, SD, and went to school at the country school near there. Arlis was active in 4-H throughout school. She went to Groton High School and graduated in 1958. After graduating, she worked as a bank teller in Brookings, SD. She attended the Wesleyan Church and met Douglas Harms there. They were united in marriage on June 14, 1960. They lived in various places in Minnesota and Iowa for Doug's job. In 1973, they returned to Arlis's family farm.

Arlis was active in the No Name Extension Club and Putney Ladies Aide. She was a member of the Wesleyan Church in Aberdeen and held the office of treasurer. She enjoyed painting and deer hunting throughout her life. She especially liked going on family vacations.

Grateful for having shared Arlis's life are her sons: Lowell (Marie) Harms and Craig (Patty) Harms; grandchildren: Nichole (Seth) Rosenthal, Caleb (Krista) Harms, Arionna (Jeff) Carrillo, Logan (Kayla) Harms, Ryley Harms, Bradley Harms, Bentley Harms, Taté Mani Win Harms, Micah (Marissa) Harms, Jacob (Nicole) Harms, and Ellie (Nathan) Sanborn; great-grandchildren: Chisholm Rosenthal, Conagher Harms, Sawyer Harms, Douglas Carrillo, Marshall Harms, Miles Harms, Maxwell Harms, and Corinne Sanborn; and her sister Mildred (Don) Stewart.

Preceding Arlis in death are her husband Doug Harms, her parents, George & Ada Miller, one nephew, Curtis FitzSimmons, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

www.spitzerfuneralhome.com

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Groton Chamber welcomes Josie's Tiger Cubs, a new in-home daycare in Groton, owned by Josie Kirsch. Pictured are Chamber President Carol Kutter, April Abeln, Bruce and Karyn Babcock and Josie Kirsch in front. (Courtesy photo)

The following was posted on Josie's facebook page:

As a young girl, I always wanted to follow in my mom's footsteps, and be a teacher when I grew up. Before graduating high school, those plans changed. I was very interested in the criminal justice system, and saw myself working in the human services field. I decided I wanted to fulfill that dream, & I would become a parole or police officer. I earned a bachelor degree in sociology at NSU, with an emphasis in both criminal justice and human services. While earning my degree, I needed a part time job to help with finances. I found myself working at a local daycare center, and immediately fell in love with not only the children, but the job itself. When a job becomes something you enjoy doing, how could you not want to continue? My dreams of becoming a parole/police officer quickly were forgotten, and I believe it was meant to be that way. I enjoyed my college schooling, but being with small children everyday was my true calling in life. For the past 8 years, I've worked in childcare. I knew I always wanted to start my own, and now seemed like the right time. It was bittersweet leaving my Teddy Bear family, but it was time for me to spread my wings.

I would like to thank all of my family and friends for their support during this amazing journey. Thank you to everyone in the Groton community for your support and donations to my new business. Thank you to my in-laws for working their butts off helping us with construction. The biggest thank you goes to my husband for not only agreeing to open our home to my second family, but for working so hard on our house, and making my dreams come true. I love you all!!

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Libby Cole (Trombone) and Carlee Johnson (Horn) have been accepted into the 2023 SD Middle School All State Band! Carlee was accepted into the Honor Band and will receive a three-year award! Libby was accepted into the Festival Band and is a two-year member! (Photo from Desiree Yeigh's Facebook

Page)

Community is invited to **EMILY'S HOPE PRESENTATION**



with

*Angela
Kennecke*

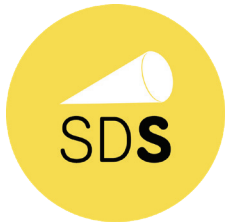
SPONSORED BY GROTON RESCUE

JAN | WED | 2023
25
1PM

GROTON AREA H.S. ARENA

ANGELA KENNECKE IS TURNING HER HEARTBREAK INTO ACTION BY TRAVELING THE COUNTRY TO BRING EMILY'S STORY TO COMMUNITIES, CONFERENCES AND SCHOOLS.

"MY NUMBER ONE REASON FOR TALKING ABOUT EMILY'S DEATH IS TO ERASE THE STIGMA SURROUNDING ADDICTION, ESPECIALLY THE USE OF HEROIN OR OPIOIDS OF ANY KIND.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Landowners congregate in Capitol to push for tighter restrictions on eminent domain

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 18, 2023 5:14 PM

PIERRE – Landowners and concerned citizens from around the state congregated Wednesday in the Capitol to advocate for protection from compulsory land acquisition, or eminent domain, and to support a bill limiting the practice.

They criticized three projects planned in the state — two carbon capture pipelines and a pumped storage project — all of which could require eminent domain.

One carbon capture project, the Summit Carbon pipeline, would cross Roy Meyer's rural Aberdeen farmland. Meyer said the project should not be allowed to use eminent domain, because he said the project does not benefit the general public. The pipeline would capture carbon dioxide emitted from Midwest ethanol plants and transport it in liquefied form to be sequestered underground in North Dakota.

"Public use is supposed to be something that benefits the public," Meyer said. "This is not going to benefit the public at all."

Rep. Karla Lems, R-Canton, has introduced legislation that would limit eminent domain to projects that are "for the public use."

"This House bill will hopefully tighten things up a bit," Lems said.

The bill does not define "public use." Lems said it's a well-understood concept in South Dakota law. She added that the bill is a work in progress.

Lems wants recognition that carbon capture pipelines are not for the public use in the way that a railroad or natural gas pipeline benefits public users.

Watertown farmer and rancher Rick Schultz came to Pierre to support that message.

"We'd prefer to have our voices heard by sending our representatives to carry our message, but here we are, making sure that message gets out there," Schultz said.

Meanwhile, Summit Carbon Solutions has 10 registered lobbyists for 2023.

Minnehaha County farmer Joy Hohn said she's concerned about the potential for rupture along the pipelines.

"The carbon pipelines are very hazardous and potentially lethal for farmers," Hohn said. "We don't want a rupture. We don't want to endanger citizens and our families."

But Summit Carbon Solutions says it has the backing of many South Dakotans.

The company has more than 450 easement agreements with South Dakota landowners, accounting for 56% of the proposed pipeline route through the state, with many additional landowners currently considering agreements, according to Courtney Ryan, a Summit Carbon Solutions spokesperson.

"This support tells us South Dakota landowners along the route view the project as critical to supporting the state's most important industry — agriculture," Ryan said in an emailed statement. "Given this strong and growing support across the state, it's not surprising project opponents continue to try to invent distractions in their attempts to prevent essential investments in the state's infrastructure, even those that will create jobs and grow our economy."

Meanwhile, Summit Carbon Solutions has filed lawsuits seeking access to some land where landowners have refused to grant permission for survey work.

Another bill addressing eminent domain this legislative session would strengthen notice requirements

for landowners when companies want to access and survey land, and require a \$500 payment for that access, among other amendments to existing law.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Bill proposes task force to study new criminal justice approach for 'emerging adults'

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 18, 2023 3:45 PM

Young adults, ages 18 to 25, represent roughly 10% of South Dakota's population but 25% of arrests, according to Greg Sattizahn, state court administrator with the Unified Judicial System.

Those "emerging adults" are the most incarcerated group based on penitentiary numbers and are the most likely group of state prisoners to recidivate, or return to prison within three years of their release.

South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen wants to change that.

House Bill 1063, which would assemble a task force to study services for that age group involved in the justice system, was introduced at Jensen's request last week. The House Judiciary Committee approved the bill Wednesday and sent it to the House floor.

Sattizahn testified in support of the bill, saying that people in this age group are still developing mentally and socially, which makes them more prone to peer influence, diminished foresight and risky behaviors that could land them in the criminal justice system.

But the criminal justice system treats a 19-year-old the same as a 50-year-old.

"When an individual has contact with the criminal justice system it has a ripple effect on their lives," Sattizahn told the committee. "It's going to start to impact their educational opportunities, it's going to start to impact their employment, it's certainly going to impact societal and family relationships."

On the flip side, the "emerging adult" age group is more likely to "rebound" than older adults with intervention, mentorship and counseling, Sattizahn said.

"What can we do differently?" Sattizahn said. "If we continue to put that person back there, into society, and there's not those support mechanisms and ... they recidivate again, that means that we're spending more and more time and dollars and money and space for those individuals as they work through the system."

The task force would:

- Identify best practices for supporting emerging adults involved in the criminal justice system.
- Create joint training opportunities for justice system professionals and partners.
- Seek opportunities to expand diversion programming to "avoid criminal conviction" for the age group, Sattizahn said.
- Explore ways to overcome housing and employment barriers for emerging adults once released, as well as probation and parole supervision practices.
- Recommend how to develop culturally responsive, community-based mentoring programs for emerging adults.
- Recommend alternative or additional funding structures for supportive services for emerging adults.

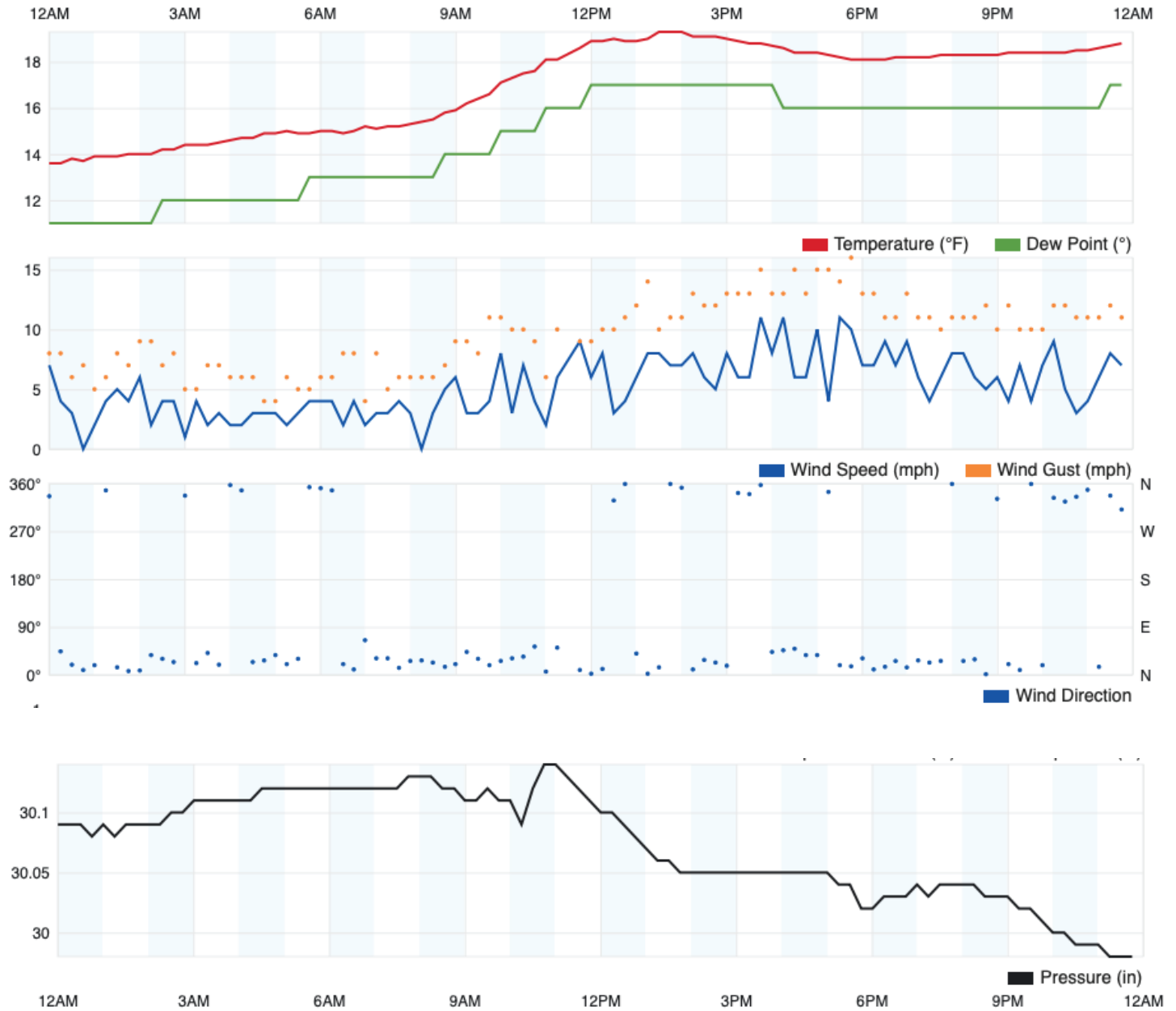
The group would comprise at least 11 people representing the state Unified Judicial System, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, Department of Labor and Regulation, Department of Social Services, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement and community-based providers.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



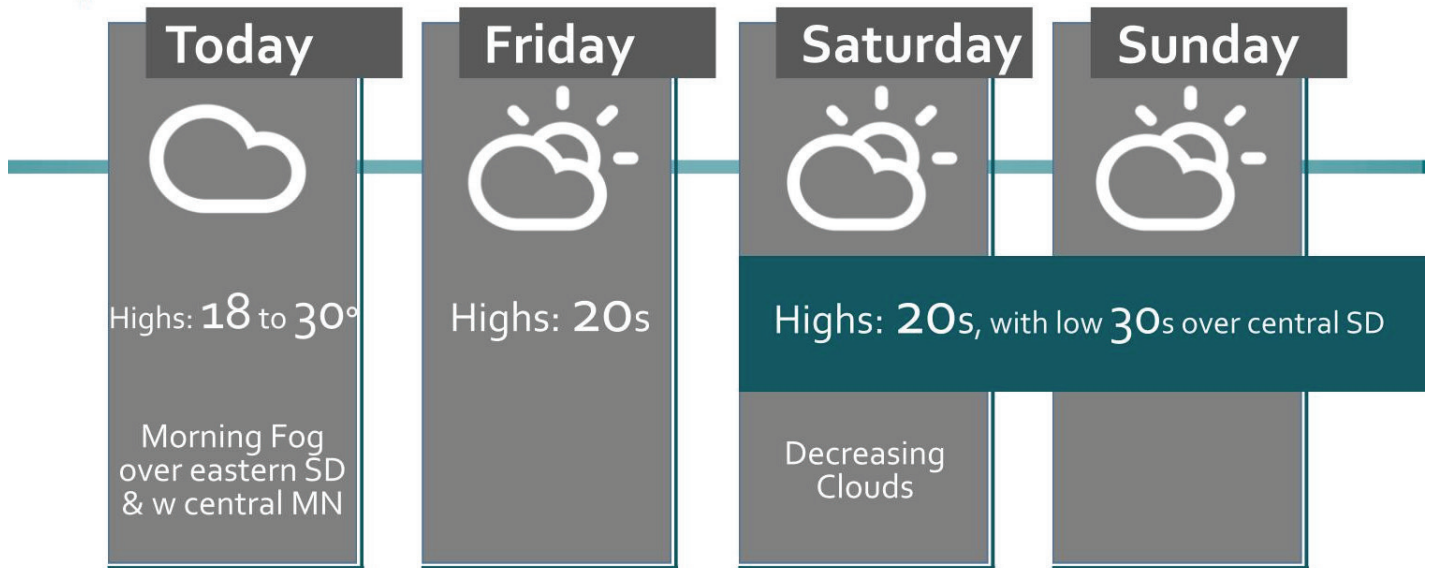
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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Patchy Freezing Drizzle then Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 22 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 25 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 27 °F	Low: 6 °F	High: 24 °F



Weather Outlook: Mainly dry. A slight warm up for the weekend!



weather.gov/aberdeen

Mostly dry conditions will return today. Expect patchy fog to linger through the morning over eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Highs through Sunday will mainly be in the 20s. Over central South Dakota, highs this weekend will be in the 30s.

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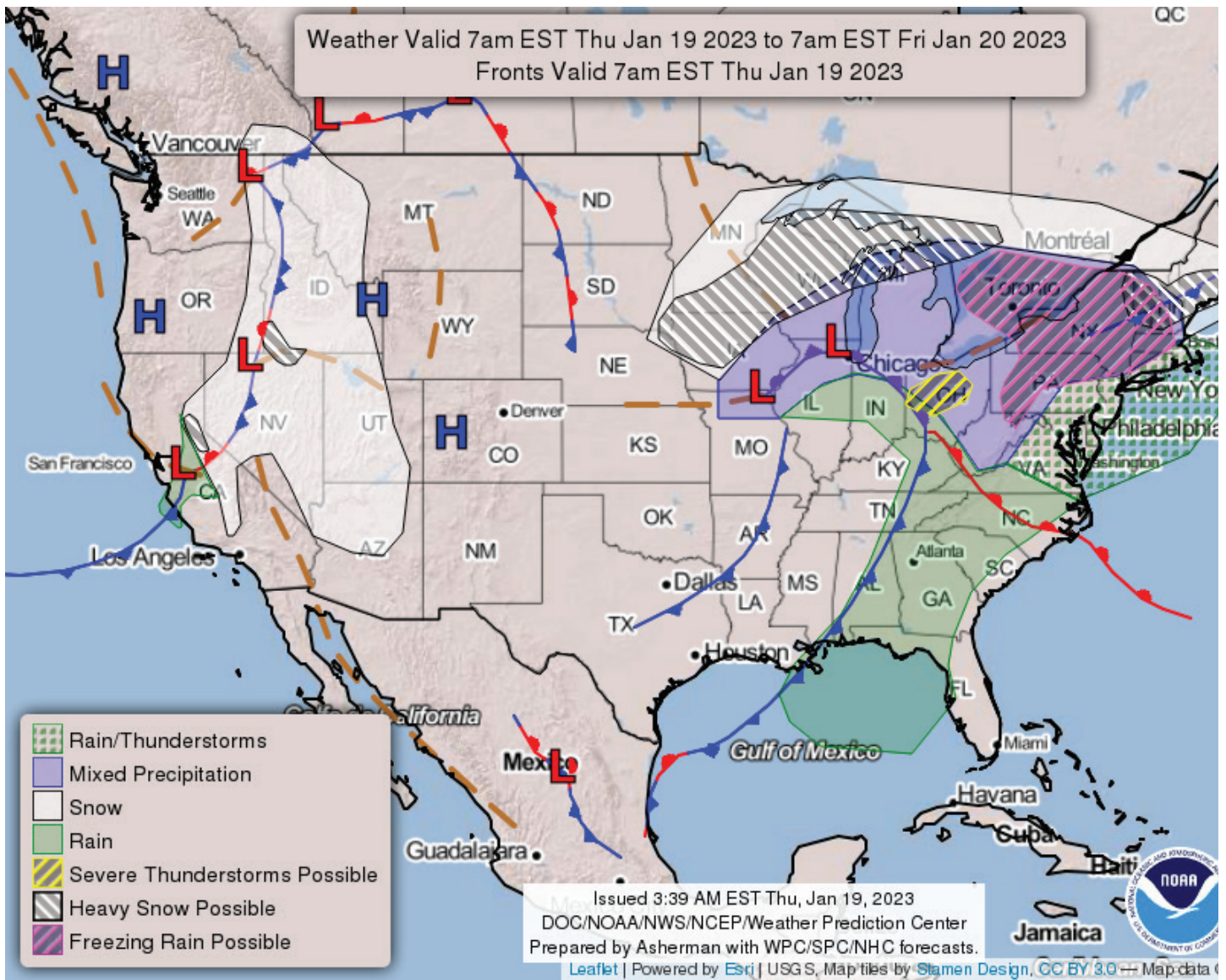
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 19 °F at 1:36 PM
Low Temp: 14 °F at 12:00 AM
Wind: 16 mph at 4:05 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 18 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1921
Record Low: -36 in 1943
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.36
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.36
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:22:11 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:03:17 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 19, 1970: An extremely cold air mass was over settle over South Dakota and western Minnesota. After a frigid night, daytime high temperatures struggled to reach the single digits below zero. Overnight low temperatures across the area were from 25 below to 34 below zero, with daytime highs from 3 above at Sisseton to 12 degrees below zero at Pierre. Record low temperatures were set at Wheaton, Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. The temperature fell to 32 degrees below zero at Pierre, 33 degrees below zero at Watertown and Wheaton, and 34 degrees zero at Kennebec. Aberdeen fell to 35 degrees below zero, Sisseton dropped to 26 degrees below zero, Mobridge fell to 25 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, and Timber Lake fell to 27 degrees below zero.

1810 - The famous "cold day" in New England. Gale force winds wrecked homes, and accompanied a sudden overnight drop in temperature of 50 degrees. Tragedy struck Sanbornton NH where three children froze to death. (David Ludlum)

1839: An Aurora Borealis observed at Bossekop, Norway, on January 19th, 1839. Illustration from 'Electricity and Magnetism' by Amedee Guillemin (1826-1893), published in London in 1891.

1883: The steamers of Cimbria and Sultan collided in the North Sea due to dense fog. This collision resulted in the death of over 350 people

1933 - Giant Forest CA received 60 inches of snow in just 24 hours, a state record, and the second highest 24 hour total of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum)

1961: Eight inches of snow fell and caused crippling traffic jams around the Washington D.C. area on the eve of John Kennedy's inauguration. The president-elect had to cancel dinner plans and, in a struggle to keep other commitments, reportedly had only 4 hours of sleep. Former President Herbert Hoover was unable to fly into Washington National Airport due to the weather, and he had to miss the swearing-in ceremony.

1977 - Snowflakes were observed at Homestead and Miami Beach in extreme southern Florida. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm tracking toward the northeastern U.S. produced up to 14 inches of snow in northern Indiana. Peru IN reported a foot of snow. Six cities in Florida reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 88 degrees at Miami equalled their record for the month of January. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A powerful storm hit the central U.S. producing blizzard conditions in the Central High Plains, and severe thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Snowfall totals ranged up to 36 inches at Wolf Creek Pass CO, with 31 inches at Elsmere NE. Tornadoes claimed five lives in Tennessee, and a tornado at Cullman AL injured 35 persons. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The high temperature for the day at Fairbanks, AK, was a frigid 41 degrees below zero, and the morning low of 24 degrees below zero at Anchorage AK was their coldest reading in fourteen years. (National Weather Summary)

1993: An unusual series of Pacific storm systems tracked across Arizona from January 6th through the 19th, producing heavy and prolonged precipitation across the state. These heavy rains caused the most widespread and severe flooding in Arizona since the turn of the century. The protracted rainfall over the 2 weeks caused multiple flood peaks on most streams and rivers. A large garbage landfill and portions of the new Mill Avenue Bridge under construction were washed away by the raging Salt River. The Gillespie Dam west of Phoenix was damaged as high water spread throughout low-lying areas. One man drowned while trying to cross the Agua Fria River.

1996: January 1996 is known as one of the worst snowmelt floods on record for the Mid-Atlantic. The region saw blizzard conditions on January 6 and 7th, which produced 15 to 24 inches east of I-95, and 2 to 3 feet of snow west of I-95. With a tremendous amount of snow on the ground, on January 19, temperatures soared into the 50s and 60s ahead of an approaching cold front. At 7 am in Washington, D.C., was reporting a temperature of 60 degrees with a dewpoint of 60 degrees, both unusually high for a January morning. The warm temperatures combined with rain to melt much of the snowpack, released into the waterways.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

CLOUDS AND RAIN

On July 12, 1990, Pastor Trenny Thomas called the members of his Evergreen Baptist Church in Metter, Georgia to a day of prayer. The farmers of this small, rural area had endured a long, devastating drought and were about to lose their crops. They gathered together and prayed for twenty-four hours. At the end of the vigil, there were a few clouds but no rain.

The congregation decided to begin another twenty-four hour time of prayer when some fluffy clouds joined the others. Slowly, more clouds appeared and covered the blue sky. Finally, the clouds exploded with rain and covered the dry, thirsty land. Then the rain turned into a mist and lasted through the night. The crops and families were saved by the grace of God.

Said Rev. Thomas, "It was a feast. It was just like the manna falling from heaven when God fed his people. It was a divine intervention from God." God can always answer our needs.

"Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give," said Solomon. He is describing a man who is bragging of talents and skills he does not possess and is representing himself to be more than he is - like clouds without rain that appear to tease the hopeful and destroy their faith because they are not what they appear to be.

We who call ourselves "Christ's disciples" have something to offer those who are thirsty and crying for "the water or life." People all around us are looking for "clouds" with water that can bring "life to parched hearts" with living water to end the drought in their lives. We who know Him who is the "fountain of life" dare not let those around us die of thirst!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for being the "fountain of life." May we who have experienced "water from Your well" share Your gift of life willingly with others! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give. Proverbs 25:14



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

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
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- Colored \$42.60/6 months
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Groton, SD 57445-0034

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.17.23

2 12 18 24 39 18

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

GAME DETAILS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

12 18 24 27 45 1

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,270,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

GAME DETAILS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

12 27 35 42 44 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 34 Mins
DRAW: 46 Secs

GAME DETAILS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

3 22 25 27 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$23,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

GAME DETAILS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

4 11 14 54 69 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

GAME DETAILS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.18.23

6 15 22 42 47 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$473,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

GAME DETAILS

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News from the  Associated Press

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. January 16, 2023.

Editorial: Storm Response And The Need For Answers

A point of contention was brought to the South Dakota Legislature last week concerning the state's recent response to a December snowstorm that smothered several West River reservations.

During the annual State of the Tribes address to lawmakers in Pierre, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Chairman Peter Lengkeek called for better collaboration and coordination between the state and the tribes in dealing with disasters such as life-threatening storms.

In this case, Lengkeek was alluding to the mid-December storm that dropped several feet of snow in some parts of western South Dakota. It ground life on some reservations to a halt, with many people left snowbound, isolated and without power. It was reported that some people resorted to burning clothing in order to keep warm — to survive — until help could reach them.

Lengkeek said nine people died in both the mid-winter storm and the bitter Arctic cold that followed a week later. According to a South Dakota Searchlight story, the fatalities included a 12-year-old boy with health issues who could not be reached by emergency responders, and an elderly man found frozen to death in a ditch.

"A single life lost is one too many," the chairman said. "If we are able to collaborate and work in partnership successfully in the future, we must address and correct the dynamics of our relationship so that the lives of all South Dakotans are protected."

Lengkeek also noted that the Rosebud Sioux Tribe issued a disaster declaration on Dec. 16 in the wake of the heavy snowfall of the first storm, but Gov. Kristi Noem did not activate the National Guard until six days later, just as frigid air overwhelmed the central part of the nation.

"...Emergency services were slow to act," Lengkeek said.

After the chairman's speech, the governor's office challenged the allegations. Noem spokesman Ian Fury issued a press release calling Lengkeek's remarks "a message of division" that were part of a "false media narrative." Fury noted that Rodney Bordeaux, former chairman of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, sent Noem a letter "thanking her for the efforts of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety... and the South Dakota National Guard... to assist in the storm response."

So, we are presented with (at least) two different accounts of what happened during these winter storms that left several people dead and many people effectively under siege for days.

Legislators need to ask for more information and facts on the situation.

If this were Congress, hearings would be put together to begin exploring those questions, but the Legislature — being limited to just a few weeks of business each winter — likely doesn't operate in a manner that allows such committee inquiries to be quickly organized and launched.

Nevertheless, the matter demands more clarity, if for no other reason than the peace of mind of South Dakotans, particularly those who faced this calamitous situation that made headlines around the world. Whether this could be packaged as a broader summer study by lawmakers or into some other, timelier fact-finding inquiry is open to question.

The divergence of accounts — not only between the state and the tribes but also, apparently, among tribal officials themselves — must be untangled so that we (that is, state and tribal officials, and citizens alike) are better prepared for such disasters in the future.

END

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South Dakota governor's grocery tax repeal hits GOP pushback

By AMANCAI BIRABEN and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are considering a number of tax cuts this year, including Gov. Kristi Noem's campaign promise to repeal the grocery tax. The only problem is deciding on which ones.

Republican lawmakers are proposing alternative tax cut schemes, such as scaling back the sales tax and property tax. Other lawmakers also say the state has a long list of programs to fund this year, leaving little room in the surplus for tax cuts.

Although Democrats have proposed grocery tax cuts for years, they gained a powerful bipartisan ally when Noem made it a key part of her reelection campaign. Noem, who is considering a 2024 White House bid, has trumpeted the proposal as the largest tax cut in South Dakota history.

Noem says cutting the tax, which brings in more than \$100 million annually, would help household budgets squeezed by inflation.

"They need relief — and we can afford to give it to them," the Republican governor said in a statement.

Advocates for repealing the grocery tax say it weighs heaviest on low-income people who spend a larger percentage of their income on food. Only 13 states levy taxes on groceries, and South Dakota is just one of three that tax groceries at the rate of other sales, according to the Tax Foundation, a pro-industry think tank.

But many of the governor's fellow Republicans have been resistant.

House Speaker Hugh Bartels said that when he has discussed the grocery tax repeal with the governor's staff, his message has been that constituents are not calling for it.

"I'm waiting until the budgeting process is done," he said, adding "You've got to weigh the option of unfunded programs and tax cuts."

For people like Fred Steffen, who traveled to the Capitol on Wednesday to tell lawmakers of shortfalls in the state's program to provide home health aides to disabled adults such as his son, it made little sense to discuss tax cuts when it appears government programs lack necessary funding.

"If they are talking about cutting the food tax, there's a place in there that could benefit the disabled population," he said.

Pierre resident Barry Sargent said he generally supports tax cuts but fears they could cut into essential government services if not well planned.

"I don't think anybody's against paying taxes as long as they're used for stuff that they can see — that benefits people or pays for schools or pays for roads," he said.

Republican state Rep. Chris Karr, who has pushed for a reduction in the state's sales tax, pointed to the state's \$310 million in ongoing revenue growth and argued that the state could afford to fund programs and cut taxes.

"Those dollars belong to the people," he said.

But a recent report from the state's legislative research office shows that South Dakota's revenue growth has been driven by inflation and federal stimulus funds rather than organic economic growth.

State Sen. Reynold Nesiba, the Senate's Democrat leader, suggested the competing proposals and pressing needs could result in an incremental tax cut, such as reducing, rather than repealing the tax on groceries.

He said, "I think there is a way forward to compromise."

Germany pressed on tanks for Ukraine; Kyiv airs frustration

By GEIR MOULSON and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany faced mounting pressure to supply battle tanks to Kyiv and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy aired frustration about not obtaining enough weaponry as Western allies conferred Thursday on how best to support Ukraine nearly 11 months into Russia's invasion.

Just hours into his tenure, Germany's new defense minister, Boris Pistorius, welcomed U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to Berlin. He declared that German weapons systems delivered so far have proven their worth and that "we will continue in the future, together with our partners, to support Ukraine in its

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fight for freedom, territorial independence and sovereignty.”

He didn't, however, mention the Leopard 2 tanks that Ukraine has long sought. Since the United Kingdom announced last week that it will send Challenger 2 tanks, Berlin has faced increasing pressure to supply battle tanks or at least clear the way for others — such as Poland — to deliver German-made Leopards from their own stock.

Austin is to host a regular coordination meeting of top defense officials from Ukraine's Western allies at the United States' Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Friday. He said that “we'll renew our united commitment to support Ukraine's self-defense for the long haul,” but didn't mention any specific new equipment.

Speaking by video link to a breakfast meeting on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Zelenskyy offered a veiled critique of major supporters such as Germany and the United States that have nonetheless hesitated about sending tanks.

He bemoaned a “lack of specific weaponry” and said that to win the war, “we cannot just do it with motivation and morale.”

Speaking at the Victor Pinchuk Foundation breakfast through an interpreter, he said: “There are times where we shouldn't hesitate or we shouldn't compare when someone says, ‘I will give tanks if someone else will also share his tanks.’”

Ukraine's foreign and defense ministers said in a joint statement that the Challenger 2 tanks Britain plans to supply, while welcome, are “not sufficient to achieve operational goals.”

“We guarantee that we will use these weapons responsibly and exclusively for the purposes of protecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognized borders,” Dmytro Kuleba and Oleksii Reznikov said in an appeal to Germany and several other countries that use the German-made Leopard 2 to join an “international tank coalition.”

For months, Ukraine has sought to be supplied with heavier vehicles such as the Leopard and U.S. Abrams tanks, but Western leaders have been treading carefully.

Germany has been particularly in focus in recent days. Critics, some inside Germany's governing coalition, have long complained of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's perceived hesitancy to take the next step when it comes to weapons deliveries.

Scholz has been wary of such pressure, insisting that Germany wouldn't go it alone and pointing to a need to ensure that NATO doesn't become a party to the war with Russia, though every time so far Berlin has eventually moved ahead. He has portrayed his cautious weighing of each step as a virtue.

In Davos on Wednesday, Scholz avoided directly answering a question about Leopard tanks, saying that Germany will remain one of Ukraine's top weapons suppliers and that “we are never doing something just by ourselves, but together with others — especially the United States.”

German officials have conveyed their hesitancy to allow allies to give German-made Leopards unless the U.S. also sends Ukraine the Abrams, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity. An upcoming new package of U.S. military aid is expected to include nearly 100 Stryker combat vehicles and at least 50 Bradley armored vehicles — but not the Abrams, which U.S. officials says has complex maintenance needs and may not be the best fit.

Austin said on Twitter that he plans also to meet Scholz's chief of staff, Wolfgang Schmidt, while in Berlin. “I think this isn't about avoiding going it alone any more, but about avoiding being alone,” Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German ambassador to the U.S., said on Deutschlandfunk radio of the calls for German tank deliveries.

Some eastern NATO allies have provided Soviet-era T-72 tanks to Ukrainian forces, but officials acknowledge that supplies of Soviet-era equipment with which Ukrainian forces were already familiar are limited.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Ukraine's Western backers this week will discuss ways to supply heavier and more advanced weapons.

“The main message there will be: more support, more advanced support, heavier weapons and more modern weapons,” Stoltenberg said of Friday's meeting.

Defense ministers from Britain, Poland and the Baltic nations were to meet on Thursday afternoon in

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Estonia ahead of that gathering.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said Thursday that his country has decided to send up to 50 Swedish-made combat vehicles plus a shoulder-fired anti-tank missile system and the Archer artillery system to Ukraine.

Estonia announced what it said is largest military aid package to date, including howitzers, ammunition, artillery support equipment and grenade launchers.

New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, an icon to many, to step down

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who became a global icon of the left and exemplified a new style of leadership, said Thursday that she would leave office.

Just 37 when she became leader, Ardern was praised around the world for her handling of the nation's worst-ever mass shooting and the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. But she faced mounting political pressures at home and a level of vitriol from some that hadn't been experienced by previous New Zealand leaders.

Still, her announcement came as a shock throughout the nation of 5 million people.

Fighting back tears, Ardern told reporters in Napier that Feb. 7 would be her last day as prime minister after five and a half years in office.

"I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple," she said.

Lawmakers in her Labour Party will vote for a new leader on Sunday.

Ardern became an inspiration to women around the world after first winning the top job in 2017. She seemed to herald a new generation of leadership — she was on the verge of being a millennial, had spun some records as a part-time DJ, and wasn't married like most politicians.

In 2018, Ardern became just the second world leader to give birth while holding office. Later that year, she brought her infant daughter to the floor of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

She notched up center-left victories while right-wing populism was on the rise globally, pushing pushed through a bill targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, overseeing a ban on assault weapons, and largely keeping the coronavirus out of New Zealand for 18 months.

Her approach to the pandemic earned the ire of U.S. President Donald Trump, and she pushed back against wildly exaggerated claims from Trump about the spread of COVID-19 after he said there was a massive outbreak and "It's over for New Zealand. Everything's gone."

"Was angry the word?" Ardern said about Trump's comments in an interview with The Associated Press at the time.

In March 2019, Ardern faced one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history when a white supremacist gunman stormed two mosques in Christchurch and slaughtered 51 worshippers during Friday prayers. Ardern was widely praised for her empathy with survivors and New Zealand's wider Muslim community in the aftermath.

After the mosque shootings, Ardern moved within weeks to pass new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons. A subsequent buyback scheme run by police saw more than 50,000 guns, including many AR-15-style rifles, destroyed.

Less than nine months after the shooting, she faced another tragedy when 22 tourists and guides were killed when the White Island volcano erupted.

Ardern was lauded globally for her country's initial handling of the coronavirus pandemic after New Zealand managed to stop the virus at its borders for months. But she was forced to abandon that zero-tolerance strategy as more contagious variants spread and vaccines became widely available.

She faced growing anger at home from those who opposed coronavirus mandates and rules. A protest against vaccine mandates that began on Parliament's grounds last year lasted for more than three weeks and ended with protesters hurling rocks at police and setting fires to tents and mattresses as they were

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forced to leave. This year, Ardern canceled an annual barbecue she hosts due to security fears.

Ardern last month announced a wide-ranging Royal Commission of Inquiry would look into whether the government made the right decisions in battling COVID-19 and how it could better prepare for future pandemics. A report is due next year.

Many observers said that sexist attitudes played a role in the anger directed at Ardern.

"Her treatment, the pile on, in the last few months has been disgraceful and embarrassing," wrote actor Sam Neill on Twitter. "All the bullies, the misogynists, the aggrieved. She deserved so much better. A great leader."

But Ardern and her government also faced criticism that it had been big on ideas but lacking on execution. Supporters worried it hadn't made promised gains on increasing housing supply and reducing child poverty, while opponents said it was not focusing enough on crime and the struggling economy.

Ardern described climate change as the great challenge for her generation. But her policies faced skepticism and opposition, including from farmers who protested plans to tax cow burps and other greenhouse gas emissions.

Ardern had been facing tough prospects at the ballot box. Her center-left Labour Party won reelection in 2020 with a landslide of historic proportions, but recent polls have put her party behind its conservative rivals.

Ardern said the role required having a reserve to face the unexpected.

"But I am not leaving because it was hard. Had that been the case I probably would have departed two months into the job," she said. "I am leaving because with such a privileged role comes responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead, and also, when you are not."

She said her time in office had been challenging but fulfilling.

"I am entering now my sixth year in office, and for each of those years, I have given my absolute all," she said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Ardern "has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength."

"She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities," Albanese tweeted. "Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thanked Ardern on Twitter for her friendship and "empathic, compassionate, strong, and steady leadership."

Ardern charted an independent course for New Zealand. She tried to take a more diplomatic approach to China than neighboring Australia, which had ended up feuding with Beijing. In an interview with the AP last month, she said that building relationships with small Pacific nations shouldn't become a game of one-upmanship with China.

New Zealand Opposition Leader Christopher Luxon said Ardern had been a strong ambassador for the country on the world stage. He said that for his party "nothing changes" and it remains intent on winning this year's general elections to "deliver a government that can get things done for the New Zealand people."

Ardern announced that vote would be held on Oct. 14, and that she would remain a lawmaker until then. Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson announced that he won't contest the leadership of the Labour Party, throwing the competition open.

It's unclear who will take over as prime minister until the election.

If no candidate gets at least two-thirds support from the caucus when Labour lawmakers vote on Sunday, then the leadership contest will go to the wider party membership. Ardern has recommended the party choose her replacement by the time she steps down.

Ardern said she hadn't had too much time to reflect on her tenure in the role, although noted it had been marked with crises.

"It's one thing to lead your country in peace times, it's another to lead them through crisis. There's a greater weight of responsibility, a greater vulnerability amongst the people, and so in many ways, I think that will be what sticks with me," she said. "I had the privilege of being alongside New Zealand during

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crisis, and they placed their faith in me.”

Aya Al-Umari, whose brother Hussein was killed in the Christchurch mosque attacks, tweeted her “deepest gratitude” to Ardern, saying her compassion and leadership during that grim day “shone a light in our grief journey.”

“I have a mixture of feelings, shocked, sad but really happy for her,” Al-Umari wrote.

Ardern said she didn’t have any immediate plans after leaving office, other than family commitments with her daughter, Neve, and her fiancé, Clarke Gayford, after an outbreak of the virus thwarted their earlier wedding plans.

“And so to Neve, Mum is looking forward to being there when you start school this year,” Ardern said. “And to Clarke, let’s finally get married.”

Strikes, protests test French plan to raise retirement age

By SYLVIE CORBET and JADE LE DELEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Workers in many French cities took to the streets Thursday to reject proposed pension changes that would push back the retirement age, amid a day of nationwide strikes and protests seen as a major test for Emmanuel Macron and his presidency.

Demonstrations gathered thousands of people in the cities of Paris, Marseille, Toulouse, Nantes, Lyon and other places as strikes were severely disrupting transport, schools and other public services across the country.

French workers would have to work longer before receiving a pension under the new rules — with the nominal retirement age rising from 62 to 64. In a country with an aging population and growing life expectancy where everyone receives a state pension, Macron’s government says the reform is the only way to keep the system solvent.

Unions argue the pension overhaul threatens hard-fought rights, and propose a tax on the wealthy or more payroll contributions from employers to finance the pension system. Polls suggest most French people also oppose the reform.

More than 200 rallies are expected around France on Thursday, including a large one in Paris involving all France’s major unions.

Laurent Berger, head of the CFDT union, called the government’s plans a “unfair” reform on BFMTV and called on workers to “peacefully come (to the streets) to say they disagree.”

Police unions opposed to the retirement reform are also taking part, while those who are on duty are bracing for potential violence if extremist groups join the demonstrations.

A majority of trains around France are canceled, including some international connections, according to the SNCF rail authority. About 20% of flights out of Paris’ Orly Airport are canceled and airlines are warning of delays.

Electricity workers pledged to reduce power supplies as a form of protest.

The ministry of National Education said some 34 to 42% of teachers were on strike, depending on schools. High school student unions were expected to join the protests.

Thierry Desassis, a retired teacher, called the government’s plan “an aberration.”

“It’s at 64 that you start having health problems. I’m 68 and in good health but I’ve started seeing doctors more often,” he said.

The strike was also affecting some monuments. The Versailles Palace was closed on Thursday while the Eiffel Tower warned about potential disruptions and the Louvre Museum said some exhibition rooms will remain closed.

Many French workers expressed mixed feeling about the government’s plan and pointed to the complexity of the pension system.

Selim Draia, 48, an animation artist, said some changes may be needed “but rushing through it like this — I think the country is divided and polarized enough to take the time to have a conversation.”

Quentin Coelho, 27, a Red Cross employee, felt he had to work Thursday despite understanding “most of

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the strikers' demands." With an aging population in the country, he said, raising the retirement age "isn't an efficient strategy. If we do it now, the government could decided to raise it further in 30 or 50 years from now. We can't predict."

Coelho said he doesn't trust the government and is already saving money for his pension.

Liliane Ferreira Marques, a 40-year-old Brazilian saleswoman from Boussy-Saint-Antoine, south of Paris, said she supports the strikers' demands but can't afford to go on strike because she is "paid barely the minimum wage."

French Labor Minister Olivier Dussopt acknowledged "concerns" prompted by the pension plans that will require from workers "an additional effort." He called on strikers not to block the economy of the country. "The right to strike is a freedom, but we do not want any blockades," he said, speaking on LCI television.

Dussopt justified the choice to push back the retirement age because the government rejected other options involving raising taxes — which he said would hurt the economy and cost jobs — or reducing pension amounts.

The French government is formally presenting the pension bill on Monday and it heads to Parliament next month. Its success will depend in part on the scale and duration of the strikes and protests.

The planned changes provide that workers must have worked for at least 43 years to be entitled to full pension. For those who do not fulfil that condition, like many women who interrupted their career to raise their children or those who studied for a long time and started working late, the retirement age would remain unchanged at 67.

Those who started to work early, under the age of 20, and workers with major health issues would be allowed early retirement.

Protracted strikes met Macron's last effort to raise the retirement age in 2019. He eventually withdrew it after the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

As US nears debt limit, political frictions raising alarms

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The countdown toward a possible U.S. government default is in the offing — with frictions between President Joe Biden and House Republicans raising alarms about whether the U.S. can sidestep a potential economic crisis.

The Treasury Department projects that the federal government will on Thursday reach its legal borrowing capacity of \$38.381 trillion, an artificially imposed cap that lawmakers have increased roughly 80 times since the 1960s. Markets so far remain calm, as the government can temporarily rely on accounting tweaks to stay open, meaning that any threats to the economy are several months away. Even many worried analysts assume there will be a deal.

But this particular moment seems more fraught than past brushes with the debt limit because of the broad differences between Biden and new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who presides over a restive Republican caucus.

Those differences increase the risk that the government could default on its obligations for political reasons, a problem that could rattle financial markets and — if not resolved — plunge the world's largest economy into a wholly preventable recession.

The pair have several months to forge a deal, as the Treasury Department imposes "extraordinary measures" to keep the government operating until at least June. But years of intensifying partisan hostility have led to a conflicting set of demands that jeopardize the ability of the U.S. lawmakers to work together on a basic duty.

Biden insists on a clean increase to the debt limit so that existing financial commitments can be sustained, refusing to even start talks with Republicans. McCarthy is calling for negotiations that he believes will lead to spending cuts. It's unclear how much he wants to trim and if his fellow Republicans would support any deal after a testy start to the new Congress that required 15 rounds of voting to elect McCarthy speaker.

Asked twice Wednesday if there was evidence that House Republicans can ensure that the government

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will avert a default, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said it's their "constitutional responsibility" to protect the full faith and credit of the United States. She did not say whether the White House saw signs at this stage that a default was off the table.

"We're just not going to negotiate that," Jean-Pierre said. "They should feel the responsibility."

For his part, McCarthy said Biden needs to recognize the political realities that come with a divided government. He equates the debt ceiling to a credit card limit and calls for a level of fiscal restraint that did not occur under President Donald Trump, a Republican who in 2019 signed a bipartisan suspension of the debt ceiling.

"Why create a crisis over this?" McCarthy said this week. "I mean, we've got a Republican House, a Democratic Senate. We've got the president there. I think it's arrogance to say, 'Oh, we're not going to negotiate about pretty much anything' and especially when it comes to funding."

Any deal would also need to pass the Democratic Senate. Many Democratic lawmakers are skeptical about the ability to work with Republicans aligned with the "Make America Great Again" movement started by Trump. The MAGA movement has claimed that the 2020 election lost by Trump was rigged, a falsehood that contributed to the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

"There should be no political brinkmanship with the debt limit," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "It's reckless for Speaker McCarthy and MAGA Republicans to try and use the full faith and credit of the United States as a political bargaining chip."

In order to keep the government open, the Treasury Department on Thursday was introducing a series of accounting maneuvers known as "extraordinary measures." These measures put a hold on contributions and investment redemptions for government workers' retirement and health care funds, giving the government enough financial space to handle its day-to-day expenses until roughly June.

What happens if these measures are exhausted without a deal to raise the debt limit is unknown. A prolonged default could be devastating, with crashing markets and panic-driven layoffs if confidence evaporated in a cornerstone of the global economy, the U.S. Treasury note.

Analysts at Bank of America cautioned in a Friday report that "there is a high degree of uncertainty about the speed and magnitude of the damage the U.S. economy would incur." The underlying challenge is that the government would have to balance its books on a daily basis if it lacks the ability to issue debt. If the government cannot issue debt, it would have to impose cuts equal in size on an annual basis to 5% of the total U.S. economy. But the analysts say their baseline case is that the U.S. avoids default.

Still, if past debt ceiling showdowns such as the one that occurred in 2011 are any guide, Washington may be in a nervous state of suspended animation with little progress until the "X-date," the deadline when extraordinary measures are depleted. That creates its own set of challenges.

"A deal probably won't be reached until the last minute, raising the risk that the deadline to lift the ceiling is inadvertently missed," said Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics.

Study: Big gap in carbon removal effort key to climate goals

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Researchers say efforts to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere aren't being scaled up fast enough and can't be relied on to meet crucial climate goals.

A report published Thursday by scientists in Europe and the United States found that new methods of CO2 removal currently account for only 0.1% of the 2 billion metric tons sucked from the atmosphere each year. That compares with roughly 37 billion tons of annual CO2 emissions.

Most current greenhouse gas removal is achieved by planting trees and managing forests and other natural carbon sinks, which themselves are under considerable threat.

New carbon removal technologies include so-called direct air capture, where CO2 is sucked from the atmosphere and stored underground. Another method known as biochar involves burning plant matter and then burying the carbon-heavy waste.

Both have been heavily criticized by environmentalists even as they attract considerable funding from

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governments and companies seeking solutions to the climate crisis. Developing countries argue that their contribution to global carbon removal — mostly in the form of forests and land management — are equally important and deserve greater recognition.

The study concludes that novel carbon removal needs to increase 30-fold by 2030 to achieve the emissions reductions required to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) and ideally no more than 1.5 C (2.7 F) by the end of the century.

Achieving 'net zero' emissions by mid-century — a goal many countries are aiming for and experts say is necessary to meet the targets agreed in the 2015 Paris climate accord — would require an increase in carbon dioxide removal by a factor of 1,300 and few countries have realistic plans for doing so, the authors said.

"We are really lagging behind significantly when it comes to carbon removal," said study co-author Jan Minx of the Berlin-based Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change.

"If we want a robust strategy to achieve the Paris climate goals then we need to restrict dependence on carbon removal ... through rapid and far-reaching emissions reductions," he said. "But at the same time the expansion and development of carbon removal methods needs to be boosted."

Oliver Geden of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, who also contributed to the report, said natural means of carbon removal, such as reforestation, are currently more cost-effective than artificial methods. But there are limits to how much land can be devoted to forests and rising global temperatures increase the risk that carbon stored that way could be released again, such as through wildfires.

He noted the rapid rise of solar and wind power plants as examples for how new technologies could have a measurable impact on efforts to curb climate change.

The authors of the study say they plan to regularly publish a regular 'State of Carbon Dioxide Removal.'

Cowboys-49ers rivalry set for record-tying 9th playoff game

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — For Kyle Shanahan, the chance to coach the San Francisco 49ers against the Dallas Cowboys in a playoff game is a throwback to when that rivalry was the biggest in football.

Shanahan's formative years were spent watching his father, Mike, as offensive coordinator in San Francisco battling the Cowboys in three straight NFC title games.

After the rivalry went dormant for more than a quarter-century as the proud franchises rarely enjoyed success at the same time, it is having a rebirth with San Francisco set to take on Dallas for the second straight postseason when they meet Sunday in the divisional round.

"That's how rivalries happen," Shanahan said Wednesday. "You guys knew it from the '80s when it started out. I remember so much from my childhood from sixth grade to ninth grade, because I was here '92 to '94, so it was the biggest rivalry in football to me growing up. Then usually that goes away when you don't meet in the playoffs a bunch and we had a big game last year, we have a big game this year, so the more you do that, the bigger it gets again."

This will be the ninth time these franchises have met in the postseason, tied for the most of any matchup in the Super Bowl era with San Francisco against Green Bay and Dallas against the Rams.

But with six of the previous matchups coming in the conference title game, few rivalries have had as many big games or star players such as Roger Staubach, Joe Montana, Jerry Rice, Emmitt Smith, Deion Sanders, Steve Young, Troy Aikman and Michael Irvin.

The 49ers-Cowboys playoff history is a rich one from back-to-back conference title games in the early 1970s, the iconic "Catch" in the 1981 season and then the heated rivalry in the 1990s when the Cowboys won the first two meetings on the way to Super Bowl titles and then the Niners took the third game.

"None of us were around for that," Niners fullback Kyle Juszczyk said. "So the rivalry is really what we've done recently. We played them last year in the playoffs. I think that is more of our fuel as opposed to those other games."

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The series took a long playoff break before resuming in the wild-card round last year when the 49ers held off the Cowboys 23-17. The game ended in dramatic fashion with Dak Prescott scrambling to the San Francisco 24 in the closing seconds.

Dallas scrambled to get to the line and waited for the officials to set the ball. Prescott then spiked the ball in hopes of getting one more play off but the clock ran out.

Here's a look at the history of the playoff rivalry.

AMERICA'S TEAM

The teams squared off in the first three years after the merger with the Cowboys beating the Niners for the NFC title game in 1970 and '71 and again the next year to help launch their status as "America's Team."

In the first meeting at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, Dallas used 143 yards rushing and a TD from Duane Thomas and two interceptions of John Brodie to win 17-10.

Dallas' defense dominated again the next year with three more interceptions of Brodie in a 14-3 win that led the Cowboys to their first Super Bowl title.

The next meeting in the divisional round at Candlestick Park helped Staubach earn the moniker of "Captain Comeback."

Staubach entered the game in the fourth quarter with Dallas down 28-13 and led the team on three scoring drives. He threw a 20-yard TD pass to Billy Parks with 1:20 left to cut the deficit to 28-23. After a successful onside kick, the Cowboys won it on a 10-yard TD pass from Staubach to Ron Sellers with 52 seconds left.

THE CATCH

The Niners fell off after that three-year run, but got their revenge with a late-game comeback of their own to launch a dynasty in the 1981 NFC championship game.

San Francisco took over at its 11 with 4:54 to play trailing 27-21 when Montana took over. He picked apart Dallas' Doomsday Defense with a quintessential West Coast offense drive.

Then the Niners faced a third-and-4 at the Dallas 6 with less than a minute to play when Bill Walsh called "Sprint Right Option." Montana rolled right and couldn't find an open receiver immediately. Then with Ed "Too Tall" Jones and the Dallas defense closing in, Montana launched a high pass that seemed headed out of the end zone.

But Dwight Clark leaped over Everson Walls in the back of the end zone and came down with "The Catch" to give San Francisco a 28-27 lead.

The win was sealed when Danny White lost a fumble and San Francisco won its first of five Super Bowl titles in a 14-year span two weeks later.

"Start of a dynasty," former 49ers president Carmen Policy said. "I don't let myself go down the road of what would have happened if he doesn't make that catch."

HOW 'BOUT THEM COWBOYS

While the Niners dynasty was launched with that win, it was the start of Dallas' demise under coach Tom Landry. The Cowboys bottomed out with a one-win season in Jimmy Johnson's first year in 1989 before beginning a steady rise.

That helped lead to the Cowboys making it to the 1992 NFC title game in San Francisco against a stacked Niners team led by Steve Young and Jerry Rice.

But the young Cowboys didn't flinch, getting two TDs from Smith to build a 24-20 lead and then Aikman helped seal it with a 70-yard pass to Alvin Harper to set up another TD.

The rematch the next season wasn't nearly as tight with the Cowboys building a 28-7 halftime lead on the way to a 38-21 win after Johnson guaranteed victory earlier in the week. Johnson punctuated both wins with his "How 'bout them Cowboys!" proclamation in the victorious locker room.

"I've been talking all week," Johnson told his team. "If you're gonna talk the talk, you gotta walk the walk. Thanks to you guys, y'all did the walkin."

YOUNG'S BREAKTHROUGH

After those two losses raised questions if Young would ever win the "big one," the game the next year helped establish him as one of the greats.

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Eric Davis got it started with a pick-6 on the opening possession. Two more turnovers helped San Francisco break out to a 21-0 lead less than five minutes into the game.

"Spotting them a 21-point lead was like spotting Carl Lewis 20 yards in a 100-yard dash," Smith said. Young did the rest with two TD passes and a TD run and went on to win Super Bowl MVP two weeks later. "To answer that pressure is one of the great feelings in sports," he said after that win over Dallas.

Lunar New Year tourism hopes fizzle as Chinese stay home

By TIAN MCLEOD JI, ELAINE KURTENBACH and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A hoped-for boom in Chinese tourism in Asia over next week's Lunar New Year holidays looks set to be more of a blip as most travelers opt to stay inside China if they go anywhere.

From the beaches of Bali to Hokkaido's powdery ski slopes, the hoards of Chinese often seen in pre-COVID days will still be missing, tour operators say.

It's a bitter disappointment for many businesses that had been hoping lean pandemic times were over after Beijing relaxed restrictions on travel and stopped requiring weeks' long quarantines. Still, bookings for overseas travel have skyrocketed, suggesting it's only a matter of time until the industry recovers.

"I think the tourists will return around the end of February or early March at the earliest," said Sisdivachr Cheewarattaporn, the president of the Thai Travel Agents Association, noting that many Chinese lack passports, flights are limited and tour operators are still gearing up to handle group travel.

COVID-19 risks are another big factor as outbreaks persist following the policy about-face in China, he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "People are possibly not ready, or just getting ready."

For now, the Chinese territories of Macao and Hong Kong appear to be the most favored destinations.

Just days before Sunday's start of the Lunar New Year, iconic tourist spots in the former Portuguese colony, like historic Senado Square and the Ruins of St. Paul's, were packed. Gambling floors at two major casinos were largely full, with groups of Chinese visitors sitting around the craps tables.

"I'm so busy every day and don't have time to rest," said souvenir shop owner Lee Hong-soi. He said sales had recovered to about 70%-80% of the pre-pandemic days from nearly nothing just weeks ago.

Kathy Lin was visiting from Shanghai, partly because it was easy to get a visa but also because she was concerned about risks of catching COVID-19. "I don't dare to travel overseas yet," she said and she and a friend took photos near the ruins, originally the 17th century Church of Mater Dei.

That worry is keeping many would-be vacation goers at home even after China relaxed "zero-COVID" restrictions that sought to isolate all cases with mass testing and onerous quarantines.

"The elderly in my family have not been infected, and I don't want to take any risks. There's also the possibility of being infected again by other variants," said Zheng Xiaoli, 44, an elevator company employee in southern China's Guangzhou. Africa was on her bucket list before the pandemic, but despite yearning to travel overseas, she said, "There are still uncertainties, so I will exercise restraint."

Cong Yitao, an auditor living in Beijing, wasn't worried about catching the virus since his whole family has already had COVID-19. But he was put off by testing restrictions and other limits imposed by some countries, including the U.S., Japan, South Korea and Australia, after China loosened its pandemic precautions.

"It looks like many countries don't welcome us," said Cong, who instead was planning to head for a subtropical destination in China, like Hainan island or Xishuangbanna, to enjoy some warm weather.

According to Trip.com, a major travel services company, overseas travel bookings for the Jan. 21-27 Lunar New Year holidays were up more than five-fold. But that was up from almost nothing the year before, when China's borders were closed to most travelers.

Reservations for travel to Southeast Asia were up 10-fold, with Thailand a top choice, followed by Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia and Indonesia.

Travel to other favorite places, like the tropical resort island of Bali and Australia, has been constrained by a lack of flights. But that is changing, with new flights being added daily.

"You will see an increase, certainly, compared with last year, when China was still closed, but I don't think you will see a huge surge of outbound travelers to different destinations within Asia-Pacific, let alone

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Europe or the Americas," said Haiyan Song, a professor of international tourism at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Tourism Australia forecasts that spending by international travelers will surpass pre-pandemic levels within a year's time. Before the disruptions of COVID-19, Chinese accounted for almost one-third of tourist spending, nearly \$9 billion.

Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport has increased staffing to cope with more than 140,000 arrivals a day during the Lunar New Year rush, though only individual Chinese travelers will be coming for now — group tours from China have yet to resume.

As an brilliant orange sun set behind ancient Wat Arun, beside Bangkok's Chao Phraya river, a Shanghai man who would give only his surname, Zhang, posed with a companion in colorful traditional silken Thai costumes.

"It's very cold in China, and Thailand has summer weather," said Zhang, adding that he knew many people who had booked tickets to get away from his hometown's cold, damp weather.

Still, for many Chinese, the allure of world travel has been eclipsed, for now, by a desire to head to their hometowns and catch up with their families, nearly three years exactly since the first major coronavirus outbreak struck in the central city of Wuhan in one of the biggest catastrophes of modern times.

Isabelle Wang, a finance worker in Beijing, has traveled to Europe, the Middle East and other parts of Asia. After three years of a slower-paced life during the pandemic, her priority is to be reunited with her family in Shangrao, a city in south-central China.

"There's still a lot of time remaining in our lifetimes, and there will certainly be opportunities to go abroad later when we want to," she said.

China accuses 'some Western media' of COVID-19 coverage bias

BEIJING (AP) — China on Thursday accused "some Western media" of bias, smears and political manipulation in their coverage of China's abrupt ending of its strict "zero-COVID" policy, as it issued a vigorous defense of actions taken to prepare for the change of strategy.

The move in December to end mass testing and quarantines led to a sharp rise in cases, with some hospitals and crematoriums overwhelmed with victims.

An editorial in the ruling Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily outlined what it called China's "optimization and control measures" and blasted reports by media outlets they didn't identify as "completely biased hype, smear and political manipulation with ulterior motives."

Since the initial wave of new cases, life in much of China has largely returned to normal, although officials have expressed concern about a further spread of the virus into the countryside during the Lunar New Year travel rush now underway.

Despite that, the editorial said many localities have "passed the peak of the epidemic, and production and life are speeding up to return to normal."

"Zero-COVID," as the strategy came to be known, sought to track and isolate every case of infection, along with those who had contact with them and even third-hand contacts. It confined millions of people in cities such as Shanghai to their homes for two months or longer, with many suffering from food shortages and lack of access to health care.

China strongly defended the policy but began dismantling it under economic pressure and after highly rare street protests broke out in Beijing and other major cities denouncing the ruling party and its leader, Xi Jinping. On Jan. 8, it took the further step of eliminating the requirement that those arriving from abroad undergo lengthy and expensive quarantines.

China rejected both foreign and domestic criticism of the policy's excesses, denouncing earlier calls from the World Health Organization for it to adjust to changes in the nature of the virus, calling them "irresponsible."

That made the abrupt mid-winter shift to a policy of merely seeking to prevent the most serious cases all the more jarring for the population, many of whom have defied censors to express anger online. Virtually

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overnight, testing stations where people had stood in long lines disappeared, while field hospitals used to quarantine millions simply packed up.

China also ceased publishing figures on new cases and deaths, which it had long been suspected of underreporting, leading to further complaints from the WHO and foreign nations about a lack of transparency. Unconfirmed estimates now put numbers of new cases at tens of thousands a day, with up to 85% of the population in some provinces having become infected.

China has also rejected calls to release more data and provide more information about the origin of the virus, first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, accusing those making the requests of "politicizing" the issue.

The government has also lashed out at countries that require travelers coming from China to show a negative virus test, calling the demand "discriminatory" even though it requires the same of anyone entering China.

That defensive attitude was reflected in the People's Daily editorial, which said: "Thanks to meticulous medical preparations, sufficient production capacity reserves, and strong organizational planning and equipment, China has smoothly passed the adaptation period after the 'transition' and 'shift' of the epidemic prevention policy."

"In the face of China's prevention and control achievements, any political manipulation is pale and powerless," it added, citing endorsements from academics in Nigeria, Kenya and Russia, all close Chinese diplomatic partners.

"All parties should focus on fighting the epidemic itself, avoid any words or deeds that politicize the epidemic, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, and work together to defeat the epidemic," the editorial said.

Elon Musk depicted as liar, visionary in Tesla tweet trial

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Elon Musk was depicted Wednesday as either a liar who callously jeopardized the savings of "regular people" or a well-intentioned visionary as attorneys delivered opening statements at a trial focused on a Tesla buyout that never happened.

Lawyers on opposing sides drew the starkly different portraits of Musk for a nine-person jury that will hear the three-week trial. The case is focused on two August 2018 tweets that the billionaire posted on Twitter, which he now owns.

The tweets indicated that Musk had lined up the financing to take Tesla private at a time when the automaker's stock was slumping amid production problems.

The prospect of a \$72 billion buyout fueled a rally in the company's stock price that abruptly ended a week later after it became apparent that he did not have the funding to pull off the deal after all. Tesla shareholders then sued him, saying that Tesla shares would not have swung so widely in value if he had not dangled the idea of buying the company for \$420 per share.

Nicholas Porritt, a lawyer representing Glen Littleton and other Tesla shareholders in the class-action case, promptly vilified Musk as he addressed jurors.

"Why are we here?" Porritt asked. "We are here because Elon Musk, chairman and chief executive of Tesla, lied. His lies caused regular people like Glen Littleton to lose millions and millions of dollars." He also asserted that Musk's tweet also hurt pension funds and other organizations that owned Tesla stock at the time.

Musk's lawyer, Alex Spiro, countered that the run-up in Tesla's stock after the tweet mostly reflected investors' belief in Musk's ability to pull off stunning feats, including building the world's largest electric automaker while also running SpaceX, a maker of rocket ships.

"Mr. Musk tries to do things that have never been done before. Everyone knows that," Spiro told the jury.

Spiro added that Musk had been in advanced talks with representatives from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund to take Tesla private.

"He didn't plan to tweet this," Spiro said of Musk's Aug. 7, 2018, statement at the heart of the trial. "It

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was a split-second decision” aimed at being as transparent as possible about the discussions with the Saudi fund about a potential deal.

After saying “funding secured” for the buyout, Musk followed up with another tweet that suggested a deal was imminent.

Littleton, a 71-year-old investor from Kansas City, Missouri, was the first witness called to the stand. He said Musk’s claim about the financing alarmed him because he had purchased Tesla investments designed to reward him for his belief that the automaker’s stock would eventually be worth far more than the \$420.

He said he sold most of his holdings to cut his losses but still saw the value of his Tesla portfolio plunge by 75%.

“The damage was done,” Littleton lamented. “I was in a state of shock.”

Littleton’s frustration escalated in October 2018, when he lashed out at Tesla for late deliveries on vehicles for some of his nieces and nephews. That led him to become a lead investor in the lawsuit.

“I still believe in Tesla to this day. I do,” Littleton said.

During cross-examination, a lawyer for Tesla’s board of directors repeatedly questioned whether Littleton had legitimate reason to believe a buyout was inevitable, but the investor remained steadfast even while seeming confused at times.

“Funding secured’ was the only thing that mattered to me,” Littleton testified. “That was such a defining statement.”

Musk’s 2018 tweets attracted the attention of securities regulators, who concluded that they were improper and that he was lying. In a settlement, they forced him to pay \$40 million and required him to step down as Tesla chairman.

U.S. District Judge Edward Chen, who is presiding over the trial, ruled that the shareholders’ lawyers can’t mention that settlement in the case.

But Chen has already ruled that Musk’s tweet was false, a finding that can be alluded to during the trial without specifically mentioning the determination made by the judge. Pollitt seized on that opportunity during his opening statement, informing jurors that they are to assume Musk’s tweet was false, as the judge allowed. Spiro shook his head as he listened.

The trial’s outcome may turn on the jury’s interpretation of Musk’s motive for the tweets. And Musk will have his chance to make his case to the jury.

After the trial adjourned Wednesday, Porritt told The Associated Press he hopes to call Musk to the stand when the proceedings resume Friday after two other witnesses testify. If the allotted time runs out Friday, Musk will likely testify Monday, Porritt said.

Musk’s leadership of Twitter — where he has gutted the staff and alienated users and advertisers — has proven unpopular among Tesla’s current stockholders, who are worried that he has been devoting less time to automaker at a time of intensifying competition.

Those concerns contributed to a 65% percent decline in Tesla’s stock last year that wiped out more than \$700 billion in shareholder wealth — far more than the \$14 billion swing that occurred between the company’s high and low stock prices from Aug. 7 to Aug. 17, 2018, the period covered in the lawsuit.

Tesla’s stock has split twice since then, making the \$420 price cited in his 2018 tweet worth \$28 on adjusted basis now. The shares closed Wednesday at \$128.78, down from the company’s November 2021 split-adjusted peak of \$414.50.

After Musk dropped the idea of a Tesla buyout, the company overcame a production problem, resulting in a rapid upturn in car sales that caused its stock to soar and made Musk the world’s richest person until he bought Twitter. Musk dropped from the top spot on the wealth list after a stock market backlash to his handling of Twitter.

Biden to tour California storm damage, see recovery efforts

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to tour damage and be briefed on recovery efforts

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after devastating storms hit California in recent weeks, killing at least 20 people and causing destruction across 41 of the state's 58 counties.

The president, accompanied by FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell, Gov. Gavin Newsom and other state and local officials, will visit Thursday the storm-damaged Capitola Pier in Santa Cruz County, where he will meet with business owners and affected residents.

Biden will also meet with first responders and deliver remarks on supporting the state's recovery at nearby Seacliff State Park.

"Over 500 FEMA and other federal personnel have already deployed to California to support response and recovery operations and are working side by side with the state to ensure all needs are indeed met on the ground," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Wednesday.

Biden has already approved a major disaster declaration for the state, freeing up additional federal resources for recovery efforts. Hours ahead of the visit, he raised the level of federal assistance available even higher.

From Dec. 26 to Jan. 17, the entire state of California averaged 11.47 inches of rain and snow, according to the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center, with some reports of up to 15 feet of snow falling over the three-week period in the highest elevations of the Sierra Nevada.

California gets much of its rain and snow in the winter from a weather phenomenon known as "atmospheric rivers" — long, narrow bands of water vapor that form over the ocean and flow through the sky.

California has been hit by nine atmospheric rivers since late December. The storms have relented in recent days, although forecasters were calling for light rain toward the end of this week followed by a dry period.

Climate misinformation 'rocket boosters' on Musk's Twitter

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Search for the word "climate" on Twitter and the first automatic recommendation isn't "climate crisis" or "climate jobs" or even "climate change" but instead "climate scam."

Clicking on the recommendation yields dozens of posts denying the reality of climate change and making misleading claims about efforts to mitigate it.

Such misinformation has flourished on Twitter since it was bought by Elon Musk last year, but the site isn't the only one promoting content that scientists and environmental advocates say undercuts public support for policies intended to respond to a changing climate.

"What's happening in the information ecosystem poses a direct threat to action," said Jennie King, head of climate research and response at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a London-based nonprofit. "It plants those seeds of doubt and makes people think maybe there isn't scientific consensus."

The institute is part of a coalition of environmental advocacy groups that on Thursday released a report tracking climate change disinformation in the months before, during and after the U.N. climate summit in November.

The report faulted social media platforms for, among other things, failing to enforce their own policies prohibiting climate change misinformation. It is only the latest to highlight the growing problem of climate misinformation on Twitter.

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, allowed nearly 4,000 advertisements on its site — most bought by fossil fuel companies — that dismissed the scientific consensus behind climate change and criticized efforts to respond to it, the researchers found.

In some cases, the ads and the posts cited inflation and economic fears as reasons to oppose climate policies, while ignoring the costs of inaction. Researchers also found that a significant number of the accounts posting false claims about climate change also spread misinformation about U.S. elections, COVID-19 and vaccines.

Twitter did not respond to questions from The Associated Press. A spokesperson for Meta cited the company's policy prohibiting ads that have been proven false by its fact checking partners, a group that includes the AP. The ads identified in the report had not been fact-checked.

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Under Musk, Twitter laid off thousands of employees and made changes to its content moderation that its critics said undercut the effort. In November, the company announced it would no longer enforce its policy against COVID-19 misinformation. Musk also reinstated many formerly banned users, including several who had spread misleading claims about climate change. Instances of hate speech and attacks on LGBTQ people soared.

Tweets containing "climate scam" or other terms linked to climate change denial rose 300% in 2022, according to a report released last week by the nonprofit Advance Democracy. While Twitter had labeled some of the content as misinformation, many of the popular posts were not labeled.

Musk's new verification system could be part of the problem, according to a report from the Center for Countering Digital Hate, another organization that tracks online misinformation. Previously, the blue checkmarks were held by people in the public eye such as journalists, government officials or celebrities.

Now, anyone willing to pay \$8 a month can seek a checkmark. Posts and replies from verified accounts are given an automatic boost on the platform, making them more visible than content from users who don't pay.

When researchers at the Center for Countering Digital Hate analyzed accounts verified after Musk took over, they found they spread four times the amount of climate change misinformation compared with users verified before Musk's purchase.

Verification systems are typically created to assure users that the accounts they follow are legitimate. Twitter's new system, however, makes no distinction between authoritative sources on climate change and anyone with \$8 and an opinion, according to Imran Khan, the center's chief executive.

"We found," Khan said, "it has in fact put rocket boosters on the spread of lies and disinformation."

Flavored cannabis marketing is criticized for targeting kids

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When New York's first licensed recreational marijuana outlet opened last month, the chief of the state's Office of Cannabis Management, Chris Alexander, proudly hoisted a tin of watermelon-flavored gummies above the crowd.

Outside the Manhattan shop, he displayed another purchase — a jar containing dried flowers of a cannabis strain called Banana Runtz, which some aficionados say has overtones of "fresh, fruity banana and sour candy."

Inside the store run by the nonprofit Housing Works, shelves brimmed with vape cartridges suggesting flavors of pineapple, grapefruit and "cereal milk," written in rainbow bubble letter print.

For decades, health advocates have chided the tobacco industry for marketing harmful nicotine products to children, resulting in more cities and states, like New York, outlawing flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Now as cannabis shops proliferate across the country, the same concerns are growing over the packaging and marketing of flavored cannabis that critics say could entice children to partake of products labeled "mad mango," "loud lemon" and "peach dream."

"We should learn from the nicotine space, and I certainly would advocate that we should place similar concern on cannabis products in terms of their appealability to youth," said Katherine Keyes, a professor of epidemiology at Columbia University who has written extensively about the rise in marijuana use among young people.

"If you go through a cannabis dispensary right now," she said, "it's almost absurd how youth oriented a lot of the packaging and the products are."

Keyes added that public health policymakers — and researchers like her — are trying to catch up with an industry and marketplace that is rapidly expanding and evolving.

New York, which legalized recreational marijuana in March 2021, forbids marketing and advertising that "is designed in any way to appeal to children or other minors."

But New York's state Office of Cannabis Management has yet to officially adopt rules on labeling, pack-

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aging and advertising that could ban cartoons and neon colors, as well as prohibit depictions of food, candy, soda, drinks, cookies or cereal on packaging — all of which, the agency suggests, could attract people under 21.

"Consumers need to be aware — parents need to be aware — if they see products that look like other products that are commonly marketed to kids, that's an illicit market product," said Lyla Hunt, OCM's deputy director of public health and campaigns.

Hunt recently saw a cannabis product calling itself "Stony Patch Kids" that she said looked like the popular candy "Sour Patch Kids."

Similar products are being sold by the dozens of illegal pot dispensaries that operate out in the open and that officials worry are selling unsafe products. Once packaging and marketing standards are established, the illicit marketplace will likely not comply, experts say.

"We can regulate until we're blue in the face. But the truth is, it's a partnership between a compliant industry, strong regulations that are robust in their protections for youth and then with parents, too," Hunt said.

Under state law, a minor in possession of marijuana would face a civil penalty of not more than \$50. Licensed cannabis retailers who sell to minors face fines and the loss of their licenses, but no jail time.

Science has long established the addictive nature of nicotine and the health maladies associated with smoking tobacco, including cancer and emphysema.

Less settled are the health repercussions from vaping, particularly among children whose bodies and internal organs have yet to fully develop.

While smoking tobacco cigarettes has fallen among teens and young adults, the use of e-cigarettes and vapes has risen.

A handful of states — California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island — have bans on most flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vapes. An increasing number of cities, including New York City, also have similar bans.

But those rules need to be broadened to include marijuana, said Linda Richter with the Partnership to End Addiction, who says the issue has yet to be widely addressed.

"There is more scrutiny on the tobacco industry, and very, very little in terms of rules, regulations, scrutiny, limitations when it comes to the cannabis industry," she said.

Because of the relative infancy of the legalized industry, she added, states have yet to coalesce rules on a single national standard. States often look to the federal government to set those standards, but marijuana remains illegal on the federal level.

"That's a real issue where you don't have the weight of the federal government in terms of standards of packaging and marketing," to set parameters to avoid appealing marketing to young people, Richter said.

Anti-smoking groups, including the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, have long railed against the tobacco industry for its marketing, such as using cartoon characters to help market their products. In more recent years, they've campaigned against flavored nicotine products, including those in vaping form.

But thus far, such groups have not put the marijuana industry in its crosshairs.

A study released earlier this month documented the steep rise in poisonings among young children, especially toddlers, who accidentally ate marijuana-laced treats.

The uptick in cases coincides with the rise in the number of states allowing the use of marijuana for medicine or recreation. Medical use of cannabis is currently allowed in 37 U.S. states, while 21 states allow recreational use.

"When you're talking about strawberry-cheesecake, or mango, or cookies-and-cream flavors, it's very difficult to argue that those are for older adults," said Dr. Pamela Ling, the director for the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California in San Francisco.

"Folks who consider themselves to be more like cannabis aficionados," she said, "would say that smoking a flavored cannabis product is like putting ketchup on your steak."

At Lunar New Year, desserts can be customary or 'cute-ified'

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

Every Lunar New Year without fail, Kat Lieu's mother would make her steamed nian gao, which is a sweet rice — or mochi — cake. It was a tasty tradition of having dessert for breakfast.

The Seattle-based author of the "Modern Asian Baking at Home" cookbook and founder of the Subtle Asian Baking online group switches things up for her 9-year-old son. He gets mochi waffles made with bright green pandan the first morning of the new year.

"This year again I'm going to make the waffles," said Lieu, who is half Chinese and half Vietnamese. "I'm also going to make the steamed nian gao and things like that, and try to have him appreciate it more, too."

Unlike Thanksgiving, when pie is a given at many households, desserts and confections at Lunar New Year are as varied as the Asian diasporas around the world that celebrate it.

Families from China to the U.S. to Vietnam will mark the new year on Sunday with the usual customs such as elaborate dinners and red envelopes with money for children. There will be customary sweet snacks like nian gao. But in this age of social media, food savviness and cultural pride, younger generations of Asians also are getting more inspired to have dessert courses that are whimsical and creative — from black sesame financiers to peanut butter miso cookies.

In Beijing, residents have been flocking to the flagship store of Daoxiangcun, one of the city's best-known bakeries, for new year-themed dessert gift boxes in which some of the pastries were shaped like a rabbit, the animal of the upcoming year's Chinese zodiac.

On Saturday, people stood in line outside the store for up to four hours for the chance to buy baked goods, according to a staffer. Even at a less popular branch half a block away, customers still had to wait 40 minutes.

For Lexi Li, it was about bringing a little something to loved ones even though it meant waiting in the line for seven hours in sub-freezing temperatures.

"I don't really like desserts and pastries, but I just want to bring something home as a gift," said the 30-year-old, who walked out with a stack of eight boxes for friends and family in her hometown Taiyuan, in central China's Shanxi province.

Known for its diverse food culture, China offers a variety of Lunar New Year desserts that are usually rice-based or flour-based. They include tang yuan, which are mochi-esque rice balls with black sesame or peanut paste in soup, as well as sesame balls, almond cookies, candied lotus seeds and fat goh — steamed cakes also known as prosperity cakes.

Nian gao remains one of the most popular options. Its key ingredient is glutinous rice flour, along with other things such as taro, dates, jujube and red bean paste, depending on the variety. Its name is a homonym for "higher year" in Chinese, meaning a more prosperous year ahead and expressing wishes for children to grow taller.

The well-preserved tradition plays a vital role in passing on Chinese culture because it keeps alive a food culture honoring grains and reminding people of how festivals are celebrated going back to the seventh century, according to Siu Yan Ho, a Hong Kong-based expert in Chinese food culture.

"Food is memory, and this memory is connected with festivals," Siu said.

In Vietnam, which is celebrating the Year of the Cat, sweets also differ by region. Vietnamese people eat nian gao, which they call banh to. They also eat che kho gao nep, a pudding made with sticky rice and a mixture of water, ginger and either sugar or molasses. Other delectables include che kho dau xanh — a mung bean pudding made with coconut milk and sugar — and banh tet chuo, a glutinous rice cake with bananas.

"On Lunar New Year, for three days you go visit family, friends and teachers," said Linh Trinh, a Vietnamese food historian who is getting a PhD in the subject at the University of Michigan. "So everybody has to store a lot of snacks in their house for people to come visit and have tea. It becomes like the pride of the household to serve their traditional snacks."

More U.S. companies are finding a sweet spot in incorporating Lunar New Year elements. Cupcake chain

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Sprinkles, in collaboration with the pan-Asian cultural support nonprofit Gold House, is selling red velvet cupcakes with an almond cookie crust and almond cream cheese frosting. At Disney California Adventure Park, guests can order milk tea cheesecake with taro mousse.

Judging by the 150,000-plus membership of the Subtle Asian Baking Facebook group, a lot of Asians are more about showing off something they made for the holiday rather than bought. The community has come a long way from when Lieu started it in 2020. For the third year, there has been a virtual Lunar New Year bake-off on Facebook and Instagram where members share photos of stunning macarons, chiffon cakes and other pastries.

"You're innovating. You're bringing appreciation to all these amazing ingredients," Lieu said. "And then you're you're making it your own traditions, which is amazing."

Kelson Herman, of San Francisco, crafted a sourdough boule with an illustration of Miffy, a girl bunny from a popular Dutch children's book series, for the Lunar New Year. Already an avid baker, the 44-year-old got inspired by seeing online what other people were doing.

"I see a lot of boundaries being pushed, people trying to not just one-up each other but be more creative," Herman said. "I feel like it always comes down to flavors that bring back kind of familial memories. ... It could be things that just evoke conversation and family."

In Queens, New York, Karen Chin made a two-tier cake frosted in coconut buttercream topped with a white chocolate rabbit. One layer was vanilla with red bean paste. The other was spiced cake with cardamom and mango curd. It's a far cry from the fat goh her grandmother makes.

"I told my grandma that I was going to make a cake. And she's like, 'Don't make it too complicated,'" Chin said, chuckling.

Yet, Chin's creativity yielded some special family moments.

"I was so touched because last time when she came and she ate something, she's like 'You make good food.' I was like, 'Wow, that's the first time she complimented me,'" Chin said.

Sue Ng, who was born and raised in Canada but now lives in Hong Kong, loves to "cute-ify" pastries for special occasions. During the pandemic, she found a passion for combining baking and her love of Asian pop culture. Past Lunar New Year creations included a rolled cake that looked like a White Rabbit Creamy Candy, a Chinese brand as iconic as the Hershey bar.

Ng said that because her two school-age daughters have grown up in Hong Kong, they've learned the importance of the Lunar New Year, including the food. But she also likes to throw in something different, such as black sesame financiers and salted egg yolk cookies.

"A Lunar New Year dessert to me is something made using Asian elements with reference to traditionally-made goods during this time," Ng said in an email. "Now we can be creative and make something like nian gao-filled cookies and the ideas are limitless! Sweet treats are a must during this time because it symbolizes a sweet life."

Report: Climate change fueling conflict in Lake Chad Basin

By WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

MOMBASA, Kenya (AP) — Droughts, flooding and a shrinking Lake Chad caused in part by climate change is fueling conflict and migration in the region and needs to be better addressed, a report said Thursday.

Human rights group Refugees International called for the issue to be central to a high-level international conference on the Lake Chad basin next week in Niamey, Niger's capital.

The report found that shrinking natural resources due to adverse weather are heightening tensions across communities and displacing people. It said that around 3 million people have been displaced and an additional 11 million were in need of humanitarian assistance.

"For too long, insufficient attention has been paid to how climate change fuels violence and displacement," report lead author Alexandra Lamarche told The Associated Press. "International responses to the Lake Chad basin crisis have singularly focused on the presence of armed groups."

A 13-year insurgency of the Boko Haram extremist group and other militant groups have destabilized

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the Lake Chad basin and the wider Sahel region. The basin is shared between Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

The Lake Chad region is facing “much more than a climate and ecological crisis,” said Mabingue Ngom, the senior advisor to the executive director of the United Nations population agency. “It is a humanitarian issue touching on peace and regional development.”

The United Nations weather agency warned that Lake Chad basin “is particularly vulnerable to climate change related extreme events such as floods and droughts” and issued alerts that “extreme events will likely become more abundant causing more frequent droughts and flooding with impacts on food security and general security in the region.”

Lamarche noted that the Logone Birni commune in northern Cameroon was particularly vulnerable to increasing violence as climate change worsens.

“Fighting over access to natural resources (in Logone Birni) forced 60,000 people to seek refuge in neighboring Chad in late 2021,” Lamarche said.

The Lake Chad basin in west and central Africa covers 8% of the African continent and is home to 42 million people whose livelihoods revolve around pastoralism, fishing and farming, according to figures from the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

The U.N. environment agency notes that Lake Chad has shrunk 90% in 60 years, which climate change a significant contributor. Irrigation, the construction of dams and population increase were also to blame.

A provisional agenda of next week’s summit seen by The Associated Press suggests that the “adverse impacts of climate change” will feature as part of peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts.

Lamarche said the conference is “the perfect opportunity for international donors to commit to long-term solutions to address the nexus between climate change, violence, and displacement in the region.” The meeting in Niamey will be the third high-level summit on the lake’s basin.

Analysis: Hard to know what’s next for Nadal with hip injury

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — This is hardly the first time Rafael Nadal’s body has betrayed him. That much we know. What no one — not even the 22-time Grand Slam champion himself — can possibly pinpoint accurately is what comes next.

First things first: An MRI exam on Thursday showed that Nadal injured his left hip flexor during a 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 loss to 65th-ranked Mackenzie McDonald in the Australian Open’s second round a day earlier. And he is expected to need up to eight weeks for a full recovery.

What no tests can reveal, what no doctor can determine, is perhaps the most vital question of all: How much more of this sort of thing is he willing to put up with?

“I went through this process too many times in my career and I am ready to keep doing (it), I think,” Nadal said Wednesday after his earliest exit from a major tournament in seven years, “but that’s not easy, without a doubt.”

It is only natural that folks will wonder what this all means for his future, especially with the retirements of Roger Federer and Serena Williams still top of mind.

Nadal turns 37 in 4 1/2 months. The wear and tear produced by his punishing brand of play-each-point-as-if-it-might-be-the-last is undeniable. So, perhaps, is the psychological toll of the work it takes to be able to compete at the level to which he has grown accustomed.

“Sometimes it’s frustrating. Sometimes it’s difficult to accept,” a downcast Nadal said. “Sometimes you feel super tired about all this stuff, in terms of injuries.”

Over the past 12 months alone, he has been troubled by damaged rib cartilage ... and by chronic pain in his left foot that was dulled via nerve-numbing injections during his title run at the French Open ... and by a torn abdominal muscle that forced him to pull out of Wimbledon.

“It’s a tough moment. It’s a tough day,” he said. “I can’t say that I am not destroyed mentally at this moment, because I would be lying.”

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Nadal explained that his left hip was so bad Wednesday, he couldn't hit a backhand or run much at all. He considered quitting but played on because he was the reigning champion.

Nadal also was seeded No. 1 at Melbourne Park, because top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz is out with a leg injury. (As an aside: All of the absences, for various reasons, are staggering: Naomi Osaka, Ash Barty, Simona Halep, Venus Williams, Nick Kyrgios.)

McDonald, a 27-year-old American who won NCAA singles and doubles titles for UCLA in 2016, claimed only four total games during a loss to Nadal the other time they played, nearly 2 1/2 years ago.

McDonald said his emotions Wednesday after the biggest victory of his career were "a little more flat and stale than I thought they would be."

Why? "Because," McDonald said, "of the circumstances."

This was not a Nadal at the height of his powers.

He has won two of his last nine matches, dating to a fourth-round loss to Frances Tiafoe at the U.S. Open in September.

"I definitely thought it was an opportunity. ... He seems a step slow," McDonald said. "Look, he's doing his best. I mean, he's a great champion. He's trying to make the most of what he can do. He's (almost) 37 out here. His body's not what it used to be, I'm sure. I definitely think now is the best time to be playing him."

With so much unknown right now, Nadal offered a bit of insight when he was asked what motivates him to do what's required to keep returning from injury.

"It's a very simple thing: I like what I do. I like playing tennis. I know it's not forever. ... I like to fight for the things that I have been fighting for almost half of my life or even more," Nadal said. "When you do things that you like to do, at the end of the day, it's not a sacrifice. You are doing the things that you want to do."

In Pakistan, trans men search for inclusion, visibility

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — Aman, a 22-year-old transgender man from the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore, says he was always close to his father. When he was little and it was cold out, his father held his hands to warm them. When he was at university, his father would wait until he got home to eat dinner together, regardless of how late it was.

Now they are cut off. Aman's decision to live as a man has cost him everything. His parents and five siblings no longer speak to him. He dropped out of university and had to leave home. He has attempted suicide three times.

Trans men face deep isolation in Pakistan. The country, with a conservative Muslim majority, has entrenched beliefs on gender and sexuality, so trans people are often considered outcasts. But trans women have a degree of toleration because of cultural traditions. Trans women in public office, on news programs, in TV shows and films, even on the catwalk, have raised awareness about a marginalized and misunderstood community.

The Pakistani movie and Oscar contender "Joyland" caused an uproar last year for its depiction of a relationship between a married man and a trans woman, but it also shone a spotlight on the country's transgender community.

Trans men, however, remain largely invisible, with little mobilization, support or resources. Trans women have growing activist networks — but, according to Aman and others, they rarely incorporate or deal with trans men and their difficulties.

"It's the worst," said Aman. "We are already disowned by our families and blood relatives, then the people we think are our people also exclude us."

Trans women have been able to carve out their space in the culture because of the historic tradition of "khawaja sira," originally a term for male eunuchs working in South Asia's Mughal empire hundreds of years ago. Today, the term is generally associated with people who were born male and identify as female. Khawaja sira culture also has a traditional support system of "gurus," prominent figures who lead others.

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But there is no space within the term or the culture surrounding it for people who were born female and identify as male.

"Every khawaja sira is transgender, but not all transgenders are khawaja sira," said Mani, a representative for the trans male community in Pakistan. "People have been aware of the khawaja sira community for a long time, but not of trans men."

He set up a nonprofit group in 2018 because he saw nothing being done for trans men, their well-being or mental health.

Trans people have seen some progress in protecting their rights. Supreme Court rulings allow them to self-identify as a third gender, neither male nor female, and have underscored they have the same rights as all Pakistani citizens.

Although Mani was involved in the trans rights bill, most lobbying and advocacy work has been from transgender women since it became law.

"Nobody talks about trans men or how they are impacted by the act," said Mani. "But this is not the right time to talk about this because of the campaign by religious extremists (to veto changes to the act). I don't want to cause any harm to the community."

Another reason for trans men's low visibility is that females lead a more restricted life than males in Pakistan, with limits on what they can do, where they can go and how they can live. Family honor is tied to the behavior of women and girls, so they have less room to behave outside society's norms. On a practical level, even if a girl wanted to meet trans people and get involved in the community, she wouldn't be able to because she wouldn't be allowed out, said Aman.

Coming from a privileged and educated family, Aman said his parents indulged him as a child, letting him behave in ways seen as male and dress in a boyish way. He wore a boy's uniform to school.

But there came a time when he was expected to live and look like a girl. That meant fewer freedoms and the prospect of marriage. He didn't want that life and knew there were operations to change his gender. But his father told him he was too young and would have to wait until he was 18, apparently hoping he would grow out of it.

Aman had nobody to speak to about his gender identity struggles. He used social media and search engines, making contact with a trans man in India who connected him with a WhatsApp group of trans men in Pakistan.

Aman grew his hair long and dressed like a girl "just to survive" while still at home, he said. He also felt he shouldn't do anything to jeopardize the family's honor.

"These restrictions created a war in my mind," he said. "You have to socialize, and it was difficult for me because I had to socialize as a girl."

He wasn't allowed male friends because of the taboos around mixing with the opposite sex, nor was he allowed female friends because his parents feared it would lead to a lesbian relationship.

Still, Aman set goals to get educated, earn money and be independent, planning eventually to live as a man. By 2021, he was on hormone therapy and his voice was changing.

But it all changed when a family member asked outright if Aman was changing his gender. The question inflamed all the doubts and worries his parents already had about his steps to transition. They disowned him, saying he could no longer live under their roof if he wanted to live as a man.

"They said everything can be tolerated but we can't tolerate this," Aman said. His mother said it would hurt his siblings and their marital prospects. His sisters locked him in a bathroom once. Only his older brother supported him.

Aman moved out and began living alone – and fully as a man.

Mani has helped, giving him an office job at the non-governmental organization. Still, Aman barely gets by and faces constant problems. One is that he hasn't changed his gender to male officially on his ID card, which he needs to vote, open a bank account, apply for jobs and access government benefits including health care.

He went once to NADRA, the government agency responsible for ID cards, but there the officials harassed him. They inspected him, talked derisively about him, and demanded a bribe. One official felt his chest.

He feels isolated.

"I'm satisfied with my gender, but I'm not happy to live anymore," he said. "I love my family. I need my father, I need my brother."

California storms feed systems set up to capture rainwater

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As Californians tally the damage from recent storms, some are taking stock of the rainwater captured by cisterns, catches, wells and underground basins — many built in recent years to provide relief to a state locked in decades of drought.

The banked rainwater is a rare bright spot from downpours that killed at least 20 people, crumbled hillsides and damaged thousands of homes.

Los Angeles County, which has 88 cities and 10 million people, collected enough water from the storms to supply roughly 800,000 people for a year, said Mark Pestrella, director of the Los Angeles County Public Works department.

In the four years since Californians approved a measure to invest hundreds of millions of dollars each year to build small and medium-sized infrastructure projects that collect rainwater, experts say progress has been gradual, but not insignificant.

In Santa Monica, a new water project captured nearly 2 million gallons (7,600 cubic meters) of runoff that once treated gets used for plumbing, irrigation or pumped back into the city's aquifer.

Sunny Wang, water resources manager for the city, said the project will eventually save an average of about 40 million gallons (151,000 cubic meters) per year.

The vast majority of rainwater in California's cities eventually flows into the ocean. In Los Angeles, a complex system of dams and paved flood control channels steer water away from roads and buildings and out to sea as fast as possible. The century-old infrastructure was designed to prevent urban flooding.

From the concrete-lined Los Angeles River alone, which starts in the San Fernando Valley and ends in the ocean in Long Beach, 58,000 acre-feet of stormwater was sent out to sea during the recent storms, said Kerjon Lee, spokesman for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. That's about 20% of Nevada's allotment from the Colorado River each year.

"It's a big number we're capturing, but it's a small percentage of the watershed," Wang said. "Billions of gallons of stormwater enter Santa Monica Bay each year, so 40 million sounds like a lot but it's just a first step towards more investments we need to make."

Santa Monica says its Sustainable Water Infrastructure Project is the first of its kind in California. Most people would hardly know it exists.

Hidden under a newly paved parking lot next to a county courthouse, the wastewater treatment plant filters and purifies sewage and runoff simultaneously to produce water that exceeds state and federal drinking water regulations.

County officials say the water being saved matters — not just to bolster water supplies but also to prevent contaminants picked up by rainwater from flowing into the Pacific Ocean.

Pestrella, the county's public works chief, said the stormwater captured over the past few weeks could be enough to prevent the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which supplies major population centers including Los Angeles and San Diego, from imposing the strictest water restrictions next spring and summer.

To escape the drought, Pestrella added, "we need at least three years of this kind of rain."

Most of Los Angeles' water isn't from its own watershed, but from a vast storage and delivery system that carries snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada range in Northern California and the Colorado River to the east.

County officials say the government has invested \$400 million from the statewide effort to increase local water supplies by rainwater capture in more than 100 regional projects, most of them new, over the past two years. Officials expect the projects in Southern California to be completed within eight years and said they could provide enough water for 500,000 more people in Los Angeles County.

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The county's longer-term goal — over the next 30 years — is to collect 300,000 acre-feet from captured stormwater, or enough to serve up to 900,000 households annually.

Bruce Reznik, executive director of the environmental nonprofit Los Angeles Waterkeeper, called scaling up rainwater capture projects in Los Angeles “a race against time,” because of drought and the state's over-tapped water sources. He said a sluggish permitting process is partly to blame.

“We're starting to make strides, but we obviously need to be doing better,” Reznik said. “In the last few years, people have gotten increasingly serious.”

In the Willowbrook area of South Los Angeles, Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park sits on a former oil storage field that later was partly developed into a housing project. Now, the 104-acre park with two lakes, a playground, exercise equipment, and a community center also collects runoff from storms.

The renovation was finished in 2021. For the majority of people walking around the lakes, the park is simply a nice place to walk. Ducks circle the lake in pairs while Canada geese honk from a small island.

“It's safe, quite peaceful and it's just beautiful,” said Barbara Washington Prudhomme, a retired postal worker.

She was unaware of the other benefits of the park — that a small structure near the lake was recycling filthy stormwater runoff captured from storm drains that would have flowed out to sea and using it to fill the lake or irrigate the grass when needed.

When told about the park's design that allows it to capture and divert up to 4 million gallons (roughly 15,000 cubic meters) per storm, she was impressed.

“That's a good system if it works,” she said.

Peru's Andes 'descends on' capital to demand leader resign

By DANIEL POLITI and FRANKLIN BRICEÑO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — People poured into Peru's coastal capital, many from remote Andean regions, for a protest Thursday against President Dina Boluarte and in support of her predecessor, whose ouster last month launched deadly unrest and cast the nation into political chaos.

Supporters of former president Pedro Castillo, Peru's first leader from a rural Andean background, hope the protest opens a new chapter in the weeks-long movement to demand Boluarte's resignation, immediate elections and structural change in the country. Castillo was impeached after a failed attempt to dissolve Congress.

The protests have so far been held mainly in Peru's southern Andes, with 53 people dying amid the unrest, the large majority killed in clashes with security forces

The demonstrations and subsequent clashes with security forces amount to the worst political violence Peru has experienced in more than two decades and has shined a spotlight on the deep divisions that exist in the country between the urban elite largely concentrated in Lima and the poor rural areas, where citizens have often feel relegated.

“In my own country, the voices of the Andes, the voices of the majority have been silenced,” Florencia Fernández, a lawyer who lives in Cusco, said Wednesday ahead of the protest. “We've had to travel to this aggressive city, this centralist city, and we say, the Andes have descended.”

By bringing the protest to Lima, demonstrators hope to give fresh weight to the movement that began when Boluarte, who was the vice president, was sworn into office on Dec. 7 to replace Castillo.

“When there are tragedies, bloodbaths outside the capital it doesn't have the same political relevance in the public agenda than if it took place in the capital,” said Alonso Cárdenas, a professor of public policies at the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University in Lima. “The leaders have understood that and say, they can massacre us in Cusco, in Puno, and nothing happens, we need to take the protest to Lima,” Cárdenas added, citing two cities that have seen protest violence.

The concentration of protesters in Lima also reflects how the capital has started to see more antigovernment demonstrations in recent days.

“Lima, which hadn't joined the protests at all in the first phase in December, decided to join after the Juliaca massacre,” Omar Coronel, a political science professor at the Catholic University of Peru, said,

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referring to the 18 people killed in that southern city on Jan. 9.

The protesters on Thursday are planning to march from downtown Lima to the Miraflores district, one of the emblematic neighborhoods of the country's economic elite.

The government has called on protesters to be peaceful.

"We know they want to take over Lima," Boluarte said this week. "I call on them to take over Lima, yes, but in peace" and added that she would "wait for them in the Government House to be able to talk about their social agendas."

Boluarte has said she supports a plan to push up to 2024 elections for president and congress originally scheduled for 2026.

Many protesters say that no dialogue is possible with a government that they say has unleashed so much violence against its citizens.

As protesters gathered in Lima, more violence erupted in southern Peru.

In the town of Macusani Wednesday, protesters set fire to the police station and judicial office after two people were killed and another seriously injured by gunfire amid antigovernment protests.

The officers had to escape the police station that the crowd burned in a helicopter, police said. Macusani, about 160 kilometers from the city of Juliaca near Lake Titicaca, is the capital of the province of Carabaya,

Activists have dubbed Thursday's demonstration in Lima as the Cuatro Suyos March, a reference to the four cardinal points of the Inca empire. It's also the same name that was given to another massive mobilization that took place in 2000, when thousands of Peruvians took to the streets against the autocratic government of Alberto Fujimori, who resigned months later.

There are several key differences between those demonstrations and this week's protests.

"In 2000, the people protested against a regime that was already consolidated in power," Cardenas said. "In this case, they're standing up to a government that has only been in power for a month and is incredibly fragile."

Another distinction is that the 2000 protests had a centralized leadership and were led by political parties. "Now what we have is something much more fragmented," Coronel said.

The protests that have engulfed much of Peru in the past month though have largely been grassroots efforts without a clear leadership.

"We have never seen a mobilization of this magnitude, there's already a thought installed in the peripheries that it is necessary, urgent to transform everything," said Gustavo Montoya, a historian at the National University of San Marcos. "I have the feeling that we're witnessing a historic shift."

The protests have grown to such a degree that demonstrators are unlikely to be satisfied with Boluarte's resignation and they are now demanding a more fundamental structural reform.

The protests have emerged "in regions that have been systematically treated as second-class citizens," Montoya said. "I think this will only keep growing."

Analysts warn that a failure to listen to demands from protesters could have tragic consequences.

"We have to start to think what we want to do with Peru, otherwise this could all blow up," Cardenas said.

Israel and Palestinians clash at UN meeting as tensions rise

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Israel's U.N. ambassador accused the Palestinians on Wednesday of stabbing a knife into any chance for reconciliation by seeking an advisory opinion from the U.N.'s highest court on Israel's decades-old occupation — and the Palestinian U.N. envoy accused Israel's new government of seeking to crush its people.

The always contentious monthly U.N. Security Council meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was even more vitriolic and threatening this week, and U.N. Mideast envoy Tor Wennesland warned that "a dangerous cycle of violence persists on the ground, amidst increased political tension and a stalled peace process."

"Israelis and Palestinians remain on a collision course amid escalating political and inflammatory rhetoric as well as heightened violence in the West Bank -- both with potentially grave consequences," he said. "Absent a concerted and collective effort by all, with strong support from the international community,

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spoilers and extremists will continue to pour more fuel on the fire and we will move still further from a peaceful resolution of the conflict.”

Underlying the ongoing violence is the Palestinians’ decades-long quest for an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, territories seized by Israel in the 1967 war. Israel considers the West Bank to be disputed territory and has built dozens of settlements that are now home to roughly 500,000 Jewish settlers.

In the latest confrontation, the Palestinians and their supporters won U.N. General Assembly approval on Dec. 30 of a resolution asking the International Court of Justice or ICJ to intervene in one of the world’s longest-running and thorniest disputes and render an advisory opinion on the legality of Israeli policies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

While the court’s rulings are not binding, they do influence international opinion.

Israel’s new hardline government responded on Jan. 6 by approving steps to penalize the Palestinians in retaliation. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said they were aimed at what he called “an extreme anti-Israel” step at the United Nations.

The measures include withholding \$39 million from the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority and transferring the funds instead to a compensation program for the families of Israeli victims of Palestinian militant attacks, deducting an amount equal to the sum the authority paid last year to families of Palestinian prisoners and those killed in the conflict including militants implicated in attacks against Israelis, and ending VIP travel privileges for leading Palestinians.

The Palestinians responded by getting more than 90 countries to sign a statement expressing “deep concern” at penalizing the Palestinians for going to the court, and urging Israel to reverse the punitive measures. Israel’s Foreign Minister Eli Cohen rejected the statement.

At Wednesday’s Security Council meeting, Israel’s U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan accused the Palestinians of drafting “a poisonous and destructive resolution” referring Israel to the ICJ “with the sole purpose of destroying Israel as the Jewish state.”

He claimed this has been a Palestinian goal since before Israel’s founding in 1948, and said one weapon they use “is the manipulation and abuse of international bodies” to force Israel to agree to their demands, which he called “multilateral terror.”

Erdan pointed to anti-Israel activities spurred by the Palestinians at the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court, and said that with the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the ICJ, “the Palestinians stabbed a knife in the heart of any chances for dialogue or reconciliation.”

He also accused the Palestinians and the U.N. of exaggerating Palestinian casualties and under-reporting and discriminating against Israeli victims. While 2022 “may have been the deadliest year for Palestinian terrorists,” he said, “it was also the year with the most terror attacks committed against Israelis in a decade.”

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, told the council the new Netanyahu-led government has said openly its program is to increase settlements, “annexation, systemic discrimination and oppression.”

“It does not recognize our rights anywhere, and proclaims a right for its settlers everywhere,” Mansour said.

The international community overwhelmingly considers settlements to be illegal. Israel’s annexation of east Jerusalem, home to the city’s most sensitive holy sites, also is not internationally recognized.

Mansour said “peace is still possible,” but only if the Security Council and the international community “stand up to the supremacists” and take action to end Israel’s occupation, ensure accountability for its annexation of Jerusalem, recognize the state of Palestine, and reject Israeli settlers in occupied territory.

“We face the absurd situation where impunity is enjoyed by those who violate the law and collective punishment is endured by those entitled to its protection,” Mansour told the council.

Asian shares mixed after biggest Wall St retreat of the year

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

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TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares were trading mixed Thursday, as investors grew cautious after Wall Street's biggest pullback of the year.

Shares dipped in Tokyo, but rose in Seoul and Sydney, where they recouped earlier losses by late morning. Hong Kong shares were slightly lower, while Shanghai shares were little changed.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 slipped 1.5% to 26,380.26. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.6% to 7,437.10. South Korea's Kospi added 0.3% to 2,376.08. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was nearly unchanged at 21,672.07, while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.1% to 3,228.60.

In a bit of positive news, data from the Japan National Tourism Organization showed that tourist and other kinds of travel to Japan from Asia outside China had recovered last month.

Visitors totaled 1.37 million people in December, about the same level as December in 2020, according to the data. But more time is needed before such numbers return to pre-COVID-19 levels, a report from SMBC Nikko said.

"On the macro front, there remains lingering uncertainties about the outlook for the global economy. A slew of disappointing U.S. data releases and hawkish Fed rhetoric are also adding to the risk-off mood across markets," said Anderson Alves, trader at ActivTrades.

The S&P 500 fell 1.6% to 3,928.86 after having been up as much as 0.6% in the early going. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 1.8% to 33,296.96 and the Nasdaq composite slid 1.2%, ending a seven-day winning streak, to 10,957.86. The losses are reversal for the market, which kicked off the year with a two-week rally.

The Russell 2000 index fell 1.6% to 1,854.36.

The selling came as new economic data showed that as inflation cools, the economy is slowing, heightening worries about the possibility of a recession. Meanwhile, a key Federal Reserve policymaker said interest rates need to go higher than the central bank signaled earlier.

The government reported Americans cut back on their spending at retailers more than anticipated last month, the second straight decline. Separately, the Federal Reserve said U.S. industrial production, which covers manufacturing, mining and utilities, fell in December much more than economists had expected.

The government also reported more encouraging inflation data. Wholesale prices rose 6.2% in December from a year earlier, a sixth straight slowdown for the measure of prices before they are passed along to consumers.

Investors have been hoping that easing inflation and a slowdown in economic growth might influence the Federal Reserve's position on interest rates. The central bank aggressively raised rates throughout 2022 in an effort to cool hot inflation, but that has hurt prices of stocks and bonds, and risks going too far and bringing on a recession.

While there's growing evidence that high inflation is finally easing, further rate hikes are still needed, according to Loretta Mester, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland.

"I still see the larger risk coming from tightening too little," Mester said in an interview Tuesday with The Associated Press.

Mester stressed her belief that the Fed's key rate should rise a "little bit" above the 5% to 5.25% range that policymakers have collectively projected for the end of this year. It has raised its key overnight rate to a range of 4.25% to 4.50% from roughly zero a year ago. The Fed will announce its next decision on interest rates Feb. 1. Investors are largely forecasting a raise of just 0.25 percentage points next month, down from December's half-point hike and from four prior increases of 0.75 percentage points.

The broader economic picture is still not clear enough to see whether the Fed's fight against inflation is working well enough to avoid a recession. Several major banks have forecast at least a mild recession at some point in 2023.

Technology stocks were among the biggest drags on the market, including a 1.9% drop in Microsoft after the tech titan joined others in its industry in announcing layoffs. The software giant is cutting 10,000 workers or almost 5% of its workforce.

Investors reviewed the latest batch of corporate earnings for more insight into how inflation and con-

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sumer spending are affecting profits and revenue. PNC Financial Services Group fell 6% after reporting weak earnings.

In energy trading Thursday, U.S. benchmark crude fell \$1.25 to \$78.23 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell 70 cents to \$79.48 per barrel on Wednesday.

Brent crude, the international pricing standard, lost \$1.10 to \$83.88 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar declined to 128.00 Japanese yen from 128.87 yen. The euro cost \$1.0799, little changed from \$1.0796.

2 more people killed in southern Peru amid unrest

Associated Press undefined

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Protesters set fire to the police station and judicial office in the Peruvian town of Macusani Wednesday after two people were killed and another seriously injured by gunfire amid antigovernment protests.

The deaths were confirmed by Macusani health official Dr. Iván Fernández and brought to 53 the number of people killed during more than a month of unrest following the ouster of President Pedro Castillo.

The officers had to escape the police station that the crowd burned in a helicopter, police said. Macusani, about 160 kilometers from the city of Juliaca near Lake Titicaca, is the capital of the province of Carabaya,

The deaths come as protesters converge on Lima for an antigovernment protest Thursday that activists hope will open a new chapter in the weeks-old movement demanding President Dina Boluarte's resignation by bringing the protests to Peru's capital.

Besides Boluarte's resignation, protesters are demanding the closure of Congress and immediate elections. Some are calling for the release of Castillo, who remains in prison. The governors of Puno, Cusco and Apurímac regions in southern Peru have called for Boluarte's resignation.

The unrest began in early December following the destitution and arrest of Castillo, Peru's first president of rural, Andean roots, following his attempt to dissolve Congress and head off his own impeachment.

Boluarte was Castillo's former running mate before taking over the presidency. She has said she supports a plan to push up to 2024 elections for president and congress originally scheduled for 2026.

Castillo, a political novice who lived in a two-story adobe home in the Andean highlands before moving to the presidential palace, eked out a narrow victory in elections in 2021 that rocked Peru's political establishment and laid bare the deep divisions between residents of the capital, Lima, and the long-neglected countryside.

Witness: Bribes helped Fox execs get soccer TV rights

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. government's star witness in a corruption trial over the broadcasting rights to some of soccer's biggest events testified Wednesday how he and two former Fox executives paid millions of dollars in bribes to undermine competing bids.

The trial in New York City is the latest development in a tangled corruption scandal that dates back nearly a decade and has ensnared more than three dozen executives and associates in the world's most popular sport.

The witness, Alejandro Burzaco, alleges that he and former Fox executives Hernan Lopez and Carlos Martinez conspired to bribe South American soccer officials for the TV rights to the Southern Hemisphere's biggest annual tournament, the Copa Libertadores, and help land broadcasting rights to the sport's most lucrative competition, the World Cup.

"The bribes fulfilled that purpose extremely well," Burzaco testified.

Lawyers for Lopez and Martinez have asserted that the former executives are being framed, with one defense lawyer accusing Burzaco of masterminding the bribes.

During his first day on the witness stand Wednesday, Burzaco told the court about the sham contracts that were set up with soccer officials to funnel the bribes.

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He said the payments Lopez and Martinez are accused of making to South American Football Confederation officials helped Fox squeeze out competitors and secured the rights to tournaments for below-market costs.

Lopez, a native of Argentina, is the former chief executive of Fox International Channels and later operated a podcasting venture. Martinez, a native of Mexico, headed the broadcaster's Latin America affiliate.

Another sports media and marketing company, Full Play Group SA, is on trial with Lopez and Martinez, but the bribery allegations against that company involve different TV rights. Full Play, incorporated in Uruguay, is accused of paying bribes for the rights to the Copa America, a quadrennial national team competition, as well as to World Cup qualifying matches.

Prosecutors are expected to question Burzaco until at least Friday, after which it will be the defense attorneys' turns.

The New York-based Fox Corp., which split from a subsidiary of international channels during a restructuring in 2019, has denied any involvement in the bribery scandal and is not a defendant in the case.

The company said in a statement that it has cooperated fully and respects the judicial process, noting the international channels were part of what was then known as 21st Century Fox before the corporate reshuffle.

"This case involves a legacy business that has no connection to the new FOX Corporation," the statement said.

So far, more than two dozen people have pleaded guilty and two people have been convicted at trial in connection with a U.S.-led investigation into tens of millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks at soccer's highest levels. Four corporate entities have also pleaded guilty. Four other companies were charged but reached agreements with the government to avoid prosecution.

The soccer world's governing body, FIFA, has said it was not involved in any fraud or conspiracies and was a mere bystander as the scandal unfolded.

Nevertheless, the scandal thrust the organization under worldwide scrutiny. It has since sought to polish its tarnished image.

Last month's World Cup final in Qatar, where Argentina prevailed over France in a dramatic title-clinching shootout, was the most-watched soccer match ever in the United States, according to television audience estimates.

During opening arguments Tuesday, Assistant U.S. Attorney Victor Zapana told jurors that millions of dollars in bribes fed a system of clandestine, no-bid contracts that "allowed disloyal soccer executives to live a life of luxury."

Prosecutors allege that the payoffs enabled Lopez and Martinez to allow Fox to get confidential information from high-ranking soccer officials, including those at FIFA, that allowed its \$425 million bid to beat out rival ESPN and secure U.S. broadcasting rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

Burzaco is a former business partner of the two men and headed an Argentinian marketing firm. He has cooperated in previous soccer corruption cases after his own bribery arrest in 2015 in a bid, his critics contend, to avoid prison.

Burzaco has pleaded guilty to racketeering conspiracy and other charges. He testified in 2017 that all three South Americans on the FIFA executive committee took million-dollar bribes to support Qatar's bid for the recently completed 2022 World Cup.

New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, an icon to many, to step down

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, whose empathetic handling of the nation's worst mass-shooting and health-driven response to the coronavirus pandemic led her to become an international icon but who faced mounting criticism at home, said Thursday she was leaving office.

Fighting back tears, Ardern told reporters in Napier that Feb. 7 would be her last day as prime minister.

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"I am entering now my sixth year in office, and for each of those years, I have given my absolute all," she said.

She also announced that New Zealand's 2023 general elections would be held on Oct. 14, and that she would remain a lawmaker until then.

Her announcement came as a shock to people throughout the nation of 5 million people. Although there had been some chatter in political circles that Ardern might resign before the next election, she'd always maintained she planned to run again.

It's unclear who will take over as prime minister until the election. Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson announced that he won't contest the leadership of the Labour Party, throwing the competition open.

Ardern became an inspiration to women around the world after winning the top job in 2017 at the relatively young age of 37. The following year, she became just the second world leader to give birth while holding office. When she brought her infant daughter to the floor of the U.N. General Assembly in New York in 2018, it brought smiles to people everywhere.

In March 2019, Ardern faced one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history when a white supremacist gunman stormed two mosques in Christchurch and slaughtered 51 people. She was widely praised for the way she embraced the survivors and New Zealand's Muslim community in the aftermath.

She was lauded globally for her country's initial handling of the coronavirus pandemic after New Zealand managed for months to stop the virus at its borders. But she was forced to abandon that zero-tolerance strategy as more contagious variants spread and vaccines became widely available.

Ardern faced growing anger at home from those who opposed coronavirus mandates and rules. A protest last year that began on Parliament's grounds lasted for more than three weeks and ended with protesters hurling rocks at police and setting fires to tents and mattresses as they were forced to leave.

The heated emotions around the coronavirus debate led to a level of vitriol directed at Ardern that had rarely been seen by other New Zealand leaders. This year, Ardern was forced to cancel an annual barbecue she hosts due to security fears.

Ardern had been facing tough reelection prospects. Her liberal Labour Party won reelection two years ago in a landslide of historic proportions, but recent polls have put her party behind its conservative rivals.

Ardern said the role required having a reserve to face the unexpected.

"But I am not leaving because it was hard. Had that been the case I probably would have departed two months into the job," she said. "I am leaving because with such a privileged role comes responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead, and also, when you are not."

She said her time in office had been fulfilling but challenging.

"I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple," she said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose Labor Party is aligned with New Zealand's ruling party, said Ardern "has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength."

"She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities," Albanese tweeted.

"Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me," he added.

With China becoming more assertive in the Pacific, Ardern had tried to take a more diplomatic approach than neighboring Australia, which had ended up feuding with China. In an interview with The Associated Press last month, she'd said that building relationships with small Pacific nations shouldn't become a game of one-upmanship with China.

Ardern last month announced a wide-ranging Royal Commission of Inquiry would look into whether the government made the right decisions in battling COVID-19 and how it could better prepare for future pandemics. Its report is due next year.

The Labour Party caucus will vote for a new leader on Sunday. If no candidate gets at least two-thirds support, then the leadership contest will go to the wider party membership. Ardern has recommended the party chose her replacement by the time she finishes in the role on Feb. 7.

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Ardern said she didn't have any immediate plans after leaving office, other than family commitments with her daughter, Neve, and her fiancé Clarke Gayford, after an outbreak of the virus thwarted their earlier wedding plans.

"And so to Neve, Mum is looking forward to being there when you start school this year," Ardern said. "And to Clarke, let's finally get married."

New ice core analysis shows sharp Greenland warming spike

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A sharp spike in Greenland temperatures since 1995 showed the giant northern island 2.7 degrees (1.5 degrees Celsius) hotter than its 20th-century average, the warmest in more than 1,000 years, according to new ice core data.

Until now Greenland ice cores -- a glimpse into long-running temperatures before thermometers -- hadn't shown much of a clear signal of global warming on the remotest north central part of the island, at least compared to the rest of the world. But the ice cores also hadn't been updated since 1995. Newly analyzed cores, drilled in 2011, show a dramatic rise in temperature in the previous 15 years, according to a study in Wednesday's journal Nature.

"We keep on (seeing) rising temperatures between 1990s and 2011," said study lead author Maria Hoerhold, a glaciologist at the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany. "We have now a clear signature of global warming."

It takes years to analyze ice core data. Hoerhold has new cores from 2019 but hasn't finished studying them yet. She expects the temperature rise to continue as Greenland's ice sheet and glaciers have been melting faster recently.

"This is an important finding and corroborates the suspicion that the 'missing warming' in the ice cores is due to the fact that the cores end before the strong warming sets in," said climate scientist Martin Stendel of the Danish Meteorological Institute, who wasn't part of the research.

The ice cores are used to make a chart of proxy temperatures for Greenland running from the year 1000 to 2011. It shows temperatures gently sloping cooler for the first 800 years, then wiggling up and down while sloping warmer until a sharp and sudden spike hotter from the 1990s on. One scientist compared it to a hockey stick, a description used for other long-term temperature data showing climate change.

The jump in temperature after 1995 is so much larger than pre-industrial times before the mid-19th century that there is "almost zero" chance that it is anything but human-caused climate change, Hoerhold said.

The warming spike also mirrors a sudden rise in the amount of water running off from Greenland's melting ice, the study finds.

What had been happening in Greenland is that natural weather variability, undulations because of an occasional weather system called Greenland blocking, in the past had masked human-caused climate change, Hoerhold said.

But as of about 25 years ago, the warming became too big to be hidden, she said.

Past data also showed Greenland not warming as fast as the rest of the Arctic, which is now warming four times faster than the global average. But the island appears to be catching up.

Ice core data for years showed Greenland acted a bit differently from the Arctic. That's likely because of Greenland blocking, Hoerhold said. Other scientists said as a giant land mass Greenland was less affected by melting sea ice and other water factors compared to the rest of the Arctic, which is much more water-adjacent.

Hoerhold's team drilled five new cores near old cores so as to match established ice core records. They use the difference between two different types of oxygen isotopes found in the ice to calculate temperature, using an already established formula that is checked against observed data.

Hoerhold and outside scientists said the new warming data is bad news because Greenland's ice sheet is melting. In fact, the study ends with data from 2011 and the next year had a record melt across Greenland and the island's ice loss has been on high since then, she said.

"We should be very concerned about North Greenland warming because that region has a dozen sleeping giants in the form of wide tidewater glaciers and an ice stream," said Danish Meteorological Institute ice scientist Jason Box. And when awakened, it will ramp up melt from Greenland, he said.

And that means "rising seas that threaten homes, businesses, economies and communities," said U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center Deputy Lead Scientist Twila Moon.

Mother, 1-year-old son killed in Alaska polar bear attack

By MARK THIESSEN and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A polar bear chased several residents around a tiny, isolated Alaska Native whaling village, killing a mother and her 1-year-old son in an extremely rare attack before another community member shot and killed the bear, authorities said.

The fatal mauling, the first in more than 30 years in Alaska, happened Tuesday next to the front entrance of the school in Wales, an isolated Bering Strait coastal community located on the westernmost tip of the North American mainland — about 50 miles (80 kilometers) from Russia — that is no stranger to coexisting with polar bears.

School officials rushed people into the building after the polar bear was spotted, Bering Strait School District chief administrator Susan Nedza told the Anchorage Daily News from her office in Unalakleet.

"The bear tried to enter with them," Nedza said, but Principal Dawn Hendrickson "slammed the door" to keep it out.

"It's terrifying. Not something you're ever prepared for," said Nedza, who didn't return messages to The Associated Press on Wednesday.

School district officials pulled the shades in the school and locked down the building. They eventually got word out that they needed someone to "take care of the bear."

Summer Myomick of Saint Michael and her son, Clyde Ongtowasruk, were killed in the attack, Alaska State Troopers said in a statement.

Myomick's parents declined interviews with The Associated Press when reached Wednesday at their home.

"It's very, very sad for Saint Michael right now, and Wales," said Virginia Washington, the Saint Michael city administrator. She said Myomick split time between the two communities.

"She was a very sweet lady. She was very responsible," Washington said.

Like many far-flung Alaska villages, the predominantly Inupiaq community of roughly 150 people in Wales has organized patrols when the bears are expected in town, from roughly December to May, said Geoff York, the senior director of conservation at Polar Bear International. The last fatal polar bear encounter in Alaska was in 1990.

Poor weather and no runway lights at the Wales gravel air strip prevented troopers and wildlife officials from traveling there Tuesday to investigate the attack, but they made it Wednesday. The investigation showed Myomick and Ongtowasruk were walking between the school and a clinic when the bear attacked them, according to a statement from the state troopers.

The remains of the mother and son were transported to the State Medical Examiner's Office for autopsy, troopers added.

When asked to describe the mood in Wales on Wednesday, Hendrickson, the school principal, called it "traumatic." Classes were canceled, and counselors were being made available.

She said there have been no announcements for memorials for the two victims yet. "We are still in the beginning phase," said Hendrickson, who spoke to the AP earlier in the day but didn't detail the polar bear attempting to breach the school.

It's unclear if the attack was related to climate change, but it's consistent with what is expected as the Arctic continues to warm, changing the ecosystem in ways that are still not fully understood, York said.

However, this particular bear was a member of a population that is doing fairly well, said Andrew Derocher, a professor of biological sciences at the University of Alberta and an expert on polar bears.

Alaska scientists at the U.S. Geological Survey in 2019 found changes in sea ice habitat had coincided

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with evidence that polar bears' use of land was increasing and that the chances of a polar bear encounter had increased.

Wales is just over 100 miles (161 kilometers) northwest of Nome. The community is accessible by plane and boats, including barges that deliver household goods. Winter trails provide access on snowmobiles to other communities and to subsistence hunting grounds. ATVs are used for non-winter hunting and fishing trips.

Polar bears are the largest bear species, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Males can weigh more than 1,700 pounds (771 kilograms), but typically weigh 600 to 1,200 pounds (272–544 kilograms) and reach up to 10 feet (3 meters) in length. Females weigh 400 to 700 pounds (181-318 kilograms). Polar bears generally feed on seals but also prey on walruses and beluga whales.

Polar bears were listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 2008. They are also protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Both laws prohibit harming the animals without authorization, unless necessary for human safety.

Polar bears are at the top of the food chain, and see humans as a food source, York said. Fatal polar bear encounters usually involve young bears, usually males, who are hungry all the time, or older bears who are injured or ill and having difficulty getting enough calories.

"Both of those bear types are more likely to take risks, like we saw here in Wales," York said.

Unlike brown or black bears, polar bears do not hibernate in the winter. Only pregnant females enter snow dens, and that's only for reproduction.

All the other polar bears are out, typically on sea ice where their prey is available year-round.

The Alaska Nannut Co-Management Council, which was created to represent "the collective Alaska Native voice in polar bear co-management," on its website says polar bears near or entering villages represent ongoing safety concerns for communities within polar bear territory.

Joseph Jessup McDermott, executive director of the Alaska Nannut Co-Management Council, which represents tribes that have hunted polar bears for subsistence, said the bear patrol in Wales "is not currently active" because "it essentially lost what funding it had." The organization has been working with the World Wildlife Fund and other partners to restore the patrol program, McDermott said.

The bear was from a population in the Chukchi Sea that is faring well amid climate change, Derocher said. That means the attack could be the result of a bear lured by attractants such as food or garbage.

Polar bears of the southern Beaufort Sea, east of the Chukchi Sea population, are in worse shape, Derocher said.

In this case, even though there is ice in the Chukchi and northern Bering seas, the quality of that ice is not well known. More importantly, York said they don't know what's going on under the ice — or what the availability of seals and other prey is for polar bears.

New program lets private citizens sponsor refugees in US

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Everyday Americans will be able to help refugees adjust to life in the U.S. in a program being launched by the State Department as a way to give private citizens a role in resettling the thousands of refugees who arrive every year.

The State Department plans to announce the program, dubbed the Welcome Corps, on Thursday. The agency aims to line up 10,000 Americans who can help 5,000 refugees during the first year of the program.

"By tapping into the goodwill of American communities, the Welcome Corps will expand our country's capacity to provide a warm welcome to higher numbers of refugees," according to the announcement.

The State Department has traditionally worked with nonprofit groups that specialize in refugee issues to help people from around the world when they first arrive in the country and face a dramatically different way of life. Under the program being announced Thursday, five or more Americans would be able to form a group and fill this role as well.

They would apply to privately sponsor refugees to resettle in America, and would be responsible for

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raising their own money to help the refugees during their first 90 days in the country. Assistance would include everything from finding a place to live to getting kids enrolled in school.

A consortium of nonprofits with expertise in refugee resettlement will help oversee the vetting and certification of people and groups who want to be private sponsors. They'll also offer training so private sponsors understand what's needed to help refugees adjusting to life in America. The consortium will be responsible for monitoring the program.

The new initiative will roll out in two phases, according to the State Department. Under the first phase, private sponsors will be matched with refugees already approved for resettlement under the U.S. Refugee Assistance Program. That will start during the first half of 2023.

In the second phase of the program, private sponsors would be able to identify refugees abroad that they would like to help and then refer those people to the Refugee Assistance Program and assist them once they arrive in the U.S.

The Welcome Corps program comes on the heels of a similar, smaller scale endeavor under which Americans were able to sponsor Afghans or Ukrainians fleeing their country. That program launched in October 2021 and has helped just over 800 people coming to America through a network of 230 certified sponsors.

President Joe Biden vowed in a 2021 executive order to restore the U.S. as the world's haven and called for private sponsorship of refugees. The previous administration, under President Donald Trump, had largely rolled back the refugee program.

Donald Trump says he never read book accusing him of rape

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump said he has never read any part of a book in which the columnist E. Jean Carroll accused him of raping her in a department store dressing room in the mid-1990s, according to court records unsealed Wednesday.

Trump was questioned under oath in October by lawyers for Carroll, who is suing the Republican. During his 5 1/2-hour deposition, Trump said he hasn't read Carroll's book, "What Do We Need Men For?" and didn't see excerpts of it in a New York magazine article when the book was released in 2019.

Portions of the transcript of Trump's deposition were ordered unsealed in court records by a judge who would preside over a trial.

Carroll, a former longtime Elle magazine advice columnist, accused Trump in the book of attacking her in an upscale Manhattan department store in late 1995 or early 1996 after they ran into each other by chance and exchanged lighthearted banter about who should try on a piece of lingerie.

After the book was published, Trump said the encounter never happened and claimed Carroll was making it up to fuel book sales. He also said he had never met Carroll and dismissed her as "not my type."

He said a photograph showing him with Carroll and both of their spouses at an event in 1987 was apparently an unmemorable encounter on a receiving line.

Carroll's attorney, Roberta Kaplan, asked Trump if he read the book or any portion of it.

"No, never have. I've never seen the book actually," he responded.

Kaplan also asked Trump about the black and white photograph that shows him with Carroll, her husband, and Trump's then-wife, Ivana Trump, who died last July at age 73.

Trump pointed at Carroll in the picture and said: "It's Marla."

"You're saying Marla is in this photo?" Kaplan asked.

"That's Marla, yeah. That's my wife," Trump answered, according to the transcript, apparently referring to Marla Maples, who he married several years after the picture was taken.

Trump's attorney, Alina Habba, interjected to say: "No, that's Carroll."

"Oh, I see," Trump then said.

The transcript excerpts in four dozen pages released Wednesday came a week after several dozen other pages were unsealed by the court.

Habba did not immediately comment Wednesday. Kaplan declined comment.

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The deposition was recorded on video, but the recording was not put in the public record for two lawsuits seeking unspecified damages that Carroll has brought against Trump.

Carroll first sued him for defamation, saying his statements damaged her reputation. In November, she brought a separate lawsuit specifying that she is owed damages for rape, a legal road made possible when New York state enacted a temporary law allowing adult rape victims to sue their abusers, even if the attacks occurred decades ago.

In the pages unsealed Wednesday, Kaplan asked Trump if he was talking about Carroll's physical appearance in pictures when he said she was not his type.

"Physically she's not my type, and now that I've gotten indirectly to hear things about her, she wouldn't be my type in any way, shape, or form," he said, calling her accusation "ridiculous."

Late in the deposition after Trump characterized Carroll as a "sick woman," Kaplan confronted him with accusations that two dozen women have made against him, asking: "They're all sick, too, right?"

Trump answered: "I don't know about any of these people or very many of them. I mean, every once in a while, you get — I think a lot of famous people have charges thrown at them, and many of them are false and some of them are true. But in my case —"

"None of it is true?" Kaplan interrupted.

"I would say. I mean, I don't see any. I mean, you haven't shown me anything," Trump responded, according to the transcript.

Anger grows in Virginia city where first-grader shot teacher

By BEN FINLEY and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. (AP) — When a 6-year-old shot and wounded his first-grade teacher in this ship-building city near Virginia's coast, the community reacted with collective shock.

But the sentiment has percolated into rage from parents and particularly from teachers, with many lambasting school administrators Tuesday night for what they called a misguided emphasis on attendance and other education statistics over the safety of children and staff.

The anger in Newport News is bubbling up during a decadeslong pendulum swing that's been moving American schools away from suspensions and expulsions, experts say. But some school systems are still seeking a "happy medium" between strict discipline and a gentler approach.

During a three-hour school board meeting dedicated solely to public comment, Newport News teachers and parents said students who assaulted classmates and staff were routinely allowed to stay in the classroom with few consequences. They said the shooting of Abigail Zwerner could have been prevented if not for a toxic environment in which teachers' concerns are systemically ignored.

"Every day in every one of our schools, teachers, students and other staff members are being hurt," high school librarian Nicole Cooke told the board. "Every day, they're hit. They're bitten. They're beaten. And they're allowed to stay so that our numbers look good."

Addressing superintendent George Parker, Cooke said: "If Abigail had been respected, she wouldn't be in the hospital right now."

Zwerner was shot Jan. 6 as she taught her first-grade class at Richneck Elementary. There was no warning and no struggle before the 6-year-old pointed the gun at his teacher and fired one round, police said.

The bullet pierced Zwerner's hand and struck her chest. The 25-year-old hustled her students out of the classroom before being rushed to the hospital.

Newport News police said the 6-year-old's mother legally purchased the gun but that it was unclear how her son gained access to it. A Virginia law prohibits leaving a loaded gun where it is accessible to a child under 14, a misdemeanor crime punishable with a maximum one-year prison sentence and \$2,500 fine. No charges have been brought against the mother so far.

Community reaction shifted into anger late last week after the superintendent revealed that Richneck administrators had learned the child may have had a weapon before the shooting. But a search did not find the 9mm handgun despite staff looking through his bag.

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Zwerner's shooting was "completely preventable — if the red flags had been taken seriously and proper procedures clearly communicated and followed," Amber Thomas, a former school psychologist in Newport News, told the board.

Thomas left the school system last year after working there for a decade. In an interview with The Associated Press, she recalled a time when a "teacher was assaulted by a student — and that student faced no disciplinary action at all."

"A school counselor and I were often called to intervene with explosive behaviors," said Thomas, who served three elementary schools at a time, although not Richneck. "And the administrator would see what was going on and turn around and walk the other way."

Cindy Connell, a middle school teacher who also addressed the board, told the AP that school system leaders fear angering parents and are too focused on limiting discipline such as suspensions.

They're afraid, she said, that pulling kids out of the classroom will imperil a school's accreditation.

"Our administrators are under an intense pressure to make everything appear better than it is in reality," Connell said.

Zwerner's shooting did not shock Connell.

"I have teacher friends who have been hit by kindergarteners, kicked by kindergarteners, punched by kindergarteners, stabbed with pencils by kindergarteners," she said. "So the only difference is that this child had access to a weapon at home. So, if you put those two things together, I'm not surprised."

In a statement released late Wednesday, the Newport News School Board thanked the teachers, parents, students and others who shared their concerns "with candor" at the board's meeting on Tuesday.

"We listened intently and we are reflecting on each speaker's comments. We know our community wants action and we are determined to follow up on the recommendations and concerns we heard," the board said in its statement. "In the coming days, weeks and months, the School Board will take the necessary steps to restore public confidence in Newport News Public Schools."

William Koski, a Stanford law professor and director of the school's Youth and Education Law Project, said many schools in the U.S. had strict zero-tolerance discipline policies in the 1990s, but began to depart from that approach about a decade later, as concerns grew that suspensions and expulsions were failing to help students, while feeding the school-to-prison pipeline and disproportionately affecting Black children.

"If you get expelled a lot, you are just more likely to head down that path, to not graduate, to end up not being a very productive person," Koski said.

Educators have shifted to a gentler approach that focuses on creating a safe and positive school climate, while zeroing in on the root causes of behavioral problems.

Koski said he understands the frustrations of teachers in Newport News and elsewhere. He said that some school systems may still be in search of a "happy medium" between the two approaches.

But Republicans in Virginia's House of Delegates appear to want to push the pendulum back. A bill filed last month would require the state Department of Education to establish a uniform discipline system for students. It would include criteria for teachers to remove disruptive students from class, while making removal mandatory if the behavior is violent.

Newport News is a racially diverse city of about 185,000 people — about 45% white and 41% Black — that sits along the James River near the Chesapeake Bay. It's probably best known for its sprawling shipyard, which builds the nation's aircraft carriers and other U.S. Navy vessels.

About 15% of the population lives in poverty, according to U.S. Census data. More than 400 of the nearly 1,000 incidents of violent crime in the city in 2021 involved a handgun or firearm, according to FBI statistics.

"Gun violence has become a constant for our students," William Fenker, an eighth-grade science teacher, told the board. "It has been a salient issue in our community for some time now ... (and) has even made its way into our schools."

Newport News schools have endured two other shootings in a little over a year.

In September 2021, two 17-year-old students were wounded when a 15-year-old boy fired shots in a crowded high school hallway after he had a fight with one of the students.

Two months after that shooting, an 18-year-old student fatally shot a 17-year-old in the parking lot of a

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different high school after a football game. Police said the teens exchanged “gestures” in the gym before an altercation broke out.

“Our students do not wonder if there will be another school shooting,” Fenker told the board. “They wonder when and where the next shooting will be.”

Last week, the school board announced that 90 walk-through metal detectors would be placed in schools across Newport News, starting with the one where Zwerner was shot.

But that failed to satisfy many parents at Tuesday night’s board meeting.

Doug Marmon, who has two children in school, called for the removal of the school system’s executive leadership and for many more security measures. He also wants the system to change how it addresses bad behavior.

“Students need to be held accountable for their actions, regardless of age or circumstances — not transferred to another school or placed in a different classroom,” he said.

Another parent, David Wilson, said the problem starts at home. But he also questioned the impact of removing children from the classroom.

“We can do what everybody wants to do — we can start suspending more kids, sending them home,” Wilson said.

“So you just prevented a school shooting but you just caused a 7-Eleven shooting,” he said. “You didn’t solve the issue. You shifted the issue from one thing to another.”

Job cuts in tech sector spread, Microsoft lays off 10,000

By MATT O’BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Microsoft is cutting 10,000 workers, almost 5% of its workforce, joining other tech companies that have scaled back their pandemic-era expansions.

The company said in a regulatory filing Wednesday that the layoffs were a response to “macroeconomic conditions and changing customer priorities.”

The Redmond, Washington-based software giant said it will also be making changes to its hardware portfolio and consolidating its leased office locations.

Microsoft is cutting far fewer jobs than it had added during the COVID-19 pandemic as it responded to a boom in demand for its workplace software and cloud computing services with so many people working and studying from home.

“A big part of this is just overexuberance in hiring,” said Joshua White, a finance professor at Vanderbilt University.

Microsoft’s workforce expanded by about 36% in the two fiscal years following the emergence of the pandemic, growing from 163,000 workers at the end of June 2020, to 221,000 in June 2022.

The layoffs represent “less than 5 percent of our total employee base, with some notifications happening today,” CEO Satya Nadella said in an email to employees.

“While we are eliminating roles in some areas, we will continue to hire in key strategic areas,” Nadella said. He emphasized the importance of building a “new computer platform” using advances in artificial intelligence.

He said customers that were accelerating their spending on digital technology during the pandemic are now trying to “optimize their digital spend to do more with less.”

“We’re also seeing organizations in every industry and geography exercise caution as some parts of the world are in a recession and other parts are anticipating one,” Nadella wrote.

Other tech companies have also been trimming jobs amid concerns about an economic slowdown.

Amazon and business software maker Salesforce earlier this month announced major job cuts as they prune payrolls that rapidly expanded during the pandemic lockdown.

Amazon said that it will be cutting about 18,000 positions and began notifying affected employees Wednesday in the U.S., Canada and Costa Rica, with other regions to follow, according to emails from executives. The job cuts, which began in November, are the largest set of layoffs in the Seattle company’s history, although just a fraction of its 1.5 million global workforce.

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Also Wednesday, the U.K.-based cybersecurity firm Sophos confirmed it had laid off 10% of its global workforce — 450 employees — on Tuesday. Sophos, known for threat intelligence and detection, was acquired in 2020 by the private equity firm Thoma Bravo for \$3.9 billion.

Facebook parent Meta is laying off 11,000 people, about 13% of its workforce. And Elon Musk, the new Twitter CEO, has slashed the company's workforce.

Nadella made no direct mention of the layoffs on Wednesday when he put in an appearance at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting happening this week in Davos, Switzerland.

When asked by the forum's founder Klaus Schwab on what tech layoffs meant for the industry's business model, Nadella said companies that boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic are now seeing "normalization" of that demand.

"Quite frankly, we in the tech industry will also have to get efficient, right?" Nadella said. "It's not about everyone else doing more with less. We will have to do more with less. So we will have to show our own productivity gains with our own sort of technology."

Microsoft declined to answer questions about where the layoffs and office closures would be concentrated. The company sent notice to Washington state employment officials Wednesday that it was cutting 878 workers at its offices in Redmond and the nearby cities of Bellevue and Issaquah.

As of June, it had 122,000 workers in the U.S. and 99,000 elsewhere.

White, the Vanderbilt professor, said all industries are looking to cut costs ahead of a possible recession but tech companies could be particularly sensitive to the rapid rise in interest rates, a tool that has been used aggressively in recent months by the Federal Reserve in its fight against inflation.

"This hits tech companies a little harder than it does industrials or consumer staples because a huge portion of Microsoft's value is on projects with cash flows that won't pay off for several years," he said.

Among the projects that have been attracting attention recently is Microsoft's investment in its San Francisco startup partner OpenAI, maker of the writing tool ChatGPT and other AI systems that can generate readable text, images and computer code.

Microsoft, which owns the Xbox game business, also faces regulatory uncertainty in the U.S. and Europe delaying its planned \$68.7 billion takeover of video game company Activision Blizzard, which had about 9,800 employees as of a year ago.

Ukraine helicopter crash kills interior minister, others

By MALAK HARB Associated Press

BROVARY, Ukraine (AP) — A helicopter carrying Ukraine's interior minister crashed into a kindergarten in a foggy residential suburb of Kyiv on Wednesday, killing him and about a dozen other people, including a child on the ground, authorities said.

Interior Minister Denys Monastyrskiy, who oversaw the country's police and emergency services, is the most senior official killed since Russia invaded nearly 11 months ago. His death, along with the rest of his ministry's leadership and the entire helicopter crew, was the second major calamity in four days to befall Ukraine, after a Russian missile struck an apartment building in the southeastern city of Dnipro, killing dozens of civilians.

There was no immediate word on whether the helicopter crash, which occurred on a foggy morning in the capital's eastern suburb of Brovary, was an accident or related to the war. Ukrainian authorities immediately opened an investigation. No fighting has been reported recently in the capital region.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy — addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, by video link — said the crash had a broad connection to the war.

"This is not an accident because it has been due to war and the war has many dimensions, not just on the battlefields," he said after asking the Davos audience to join him in a standing minute of silence to honor those killed. "There are no accidents at wartime. These are all war results."

Ukraine's State Emergency Service, which was operating the French-manufactured Super Puma helicopter, said at least 14 people were killed, including nine on the helicopter, and a child on the ground. It said

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25 people were injured, including 11 children. Early official reports gave differing numbers of casualties. At the scene of the crash and ensuing fire, plastic sheets covered at least four bodies. Workers cleared charred and mangled wreckage lying against an apartment building and in the kindergarten's playground. Some walls were partly demolished and blackened. The helicopter's blackened rotors protruded from a destroyed car and rested on the roof of a building's entrance.

Kyiv regional Gov. Oleksii Kuleba told Ukrainian television that emergency services were still identifying remains and that the death toll could rise.

The crash killed five Interior Ministry officials, one national police official and all three helicopter crew members, the Ukraine National Police said. Monastyrskyi's deputy Yevhen Yenin and State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Yurii Lubkovych were among the dead, the police said.

Monastyrskyi, 42, was in charge of police and emergency services that dealt with the consequences of Russian strikes and de-mining, political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko told The Associated Press.

Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said National Police Chief Ihor Klymenko has been appointed acting interior minister.

Senior Ukrainian officials routinely travel by helicopter at low altitudes and high speed during the conflict, increasing the inherent dangers associated with the flights. The tragedy may prompt Kyiv to institute a rule many countries and companies follow stating that top officials shouldn't fly on the same aircraft, Fesenko said.

The officials on the helicopter were due to visit Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, local police chief Volodymyr Tymoshko said, adding on Facebook that they were "not just leaders," but "friends who I respected."

The helicopter was sold to Ukraine before the war in 2019, a French defense official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to be identified, according to ministry policy.

The Security Service of Ukraine is investigating "all possible versions" of the crash, prosecutor general Andriy Kostin said on Telegram.

The crash came at a particularly dark period in the war for Ukraine, just days after the Russian strike on the apartment building in southeastern Ukraine killed 45 people, including six children — the deadliest attack on civilians since the spring.

"The pain is unspeakable," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

"Another very sad day today — new losses," said his wife, Olena Zelenska, dabbing teary eyes as she responded to the news at the economic conference in Davos, where she was mustering support for Ukraine.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called the crash "heartbreaking."

British Home Secretary Suella Braverman called Monastyrskyi "a leading light in supporting the Ukrainian people during (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's illegal invasion." She said she was "struck by his determination, optimism and patriotism."

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who is facing pressure to send tanks to Ukraine, tweeted that the crash "shows once again the huge price that Ukraine is having to pay in this war."

In Wednesday's other developments:

— Putin defended his invasion by offering a variation on arguments he has used previously. He told a group of veterans that Moscow's actions were intended to stop a "war" that has raged since 2014 in eastern Ukraine, where Russia-backed separatists have battled Ukrainian forces.

"All what we are doing today as part of the special military operation is an attempt to stop this war. This is the meaning of our operation — protecting people who live on those territories," he said.

Ukraine and its Western allies have rejected Russia's justifications arguments, saying Kyiv posed no threat to Moscow and the invasion was unprovoked.

— Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow's goals in Ukraine are "determined by Russia's core legitimate interests."

"There must be no military infrastructure in Ukraine that poses a direct threat to our country," Lavrov said at his annual news conference. He claimed the goal of Ukraine's Western allies is to use the conflict

to exhaust Russia.

— Fighting continued in eastern Ukraine around the city of Bakhmut and the nearby salt mining town of Soledar, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. A total of 14 cities and villages were shelled in the partially occupied Donetsk region in the previous 24 hours, Ukraine's presidential office said. Two civilians were wounded.

It added that Russian forces also shelled residential areas of the southern city of Kherson, which Kyiv's military retook in November. Four people were wounded.

Prosecutors weigh options in fatal shooting by Alec Baldwin

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A Santa Fe district attorney will announce Thursday whether charges will be brought in the fatal 2021 film-set shooting of a cinematographer by actor Alec Baldwin during a rehearsal of the Western "Rust."

Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies said a decision will be announced Thursday morning in a statement and on social media, without public appearances by prosecutors.

"The announcement will be a solemn occasion, made in a manner keeping with the office's commitment to upholding the integrity of the judicial process and respecting the victim's family," said Heather Brewer, a spokeswoman for the district attorney's office.

Cinematographer Halyna Hutchins died shortly after being wounded by a gunshot during setup for a scene at the ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe on Oct. 21, 2021. Baldwin was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when the gun went off, killing her and wounding the director, Joel Souza.

Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza, who led the initial investigation into Hutchins' death, described "a degree of neglect" on the film set. But he left decisions about potential criminal charges to prosecutors after delivering the results of a yearlong investigation in October. That report did not specify how live ammunition wound up on the film set.

Taking control of the investigation, Carmack-Altwies was granted an emergency \$300,000 request for the state to pay for a special prosecutor, special investigator and other experts and personnel.

Baldwin — known for his roles in "30 Rock" and "The Hunt for Red October" and his impression of former President Donald Trump on "Saturday Night Live" — has described the killing of Hutchins as a "tragic accident."

He has sought to clear his name by suing people involved in handling and supplying the loaded gun that was handed to him on set. Baldwin, also a co-producer on "Rust," said he was told the gun was safe.

In his lawsuit, Baldwin said that while working on camera angles with Hutchins during rehearsal for a scene, he pointed the gun in her direction and pulled back and released the hammer of the gun, which discharged.

New Mexico's Office of the Medical Investigator determined the shooting was an accident following the completion of an autopsy and a review of law enforcement reports.

New Mexico's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau has levied the maximum fine against Rust Movie Productions, based on a scathing narrative of safety failures, including testimony that production managers took limited or no action to address two misfires of blank ammunition on set prior to the fatal shooting.

Rust Movie Productions continues to challenge the basis of a \$137,000 fine by regulators who say production managers on the set failed to follow standard industry protocols for firearms safety.

The armorer who oversaw firearms on the set, Hannah Gutierrez Reed, has been the subject of much of the scrutiny in the case, along with an independent ammunition supplier. An attorney for Gutierrez Reed has said the armorer did not put a live round in the gun that killed Hutchins, and believes she was the victim of sabotage. Authorities said they've found no evidence of that.

Investigators initially found 500 rounds of ammunition at the movie set on the outskirts of Santa Fe — a mix of blanks, dummy rounds and what appeared to be live rounds. Industry experts have said live rounds should never be on set.

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In April 2022, the Santa Fe Sheriff's Department released a trove of files including lapel camera video of the mortally wounded Hutchins slipping in and out of consciousness as an evacuation helicopter arrived. Witness interrogations, email threads, text conversations, inventories of ammunition and hundreds of photographs rounded out that collection of evidence.

State workplace safety regulators said that immediate gun-safety concerns were addressed when "Rust" ceased filming, and that a return to filming in New Mexico would be accompanied by new safety inspections.

The family of Hutchins — widower Matthew Hutchins and son Andros — settled a lawsuit against producers under an agreement that aims to restart filming with Matthew's involvement as executive producer.

"Rust" was beset by disputes from the start in early October 2021. Seven crew members walked off the set just hours before the fatal shooting amid discord over working conditions.

Hutchins' death has influenced negotiations over safety provisions in film crew union contracts with Hollywood producers and spurred other filmmakers to choose computer-generated imagery of gunfire rather than real weapons with blank ammunition to minimize risks.

New Mexico shootings follow two years of election assaults

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

Two years since the attack on the U.S. Capitol, a series of drive-by shootings targeting Democrats in New Mexico is a violent reminder that the false claims about a stolen election persist in posing a danger to public officials and the country's democratic institutions.

While no one was hurt in the Albuquerque attacks, this latest outburst of political violence underscores how election denialism has become deeply embedded across much of the country and how it is driving grievance-filled anger over the nation's politics and officeholders.

Over the past year, the husband of former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was seriously injured in an attack in his home by an assailant who said he was sick of the "lies coming out of Washington D.C.," election workers were intimidated and harassed, and prosecutors won convictions in a plot to kidnap Michigan's governor.

Further sign of the unrelenting threat came this week when authorities arrested a Republican candidate for the New Mexico House who had refused to accept his loss in last fall's election. Police said Solomon Peña hired four people to shoot at the homes of four Democratic lawmakers.

"I think we are really entering a new era where political rhetoric has gotten so heated and people with mental health issues or extreme conspiratorial viewpoints on the world have resorted to political violence," New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez, who took office Jan. 1, said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

He wants the Legislature to address political violence and said he plans to talk with the secretary of state's office about ways to shield some information about elected officials or candidates from public disclosure.

Torrez noted that other countries have become destabilized when extremists use threats and intimidation rather than work through the institutions of government. He said such violence is destabilizing and needs to be dealt with forcefully.

"It is a threat to the very fabric and foundation of a democratic republic," he said.

Lies by former President Donald Trump and his allies about the 2020 presidential election led to the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, as well as threats and harassment against state and local election officials. The insurrection in Washington also contributed to a drop in confidence in election results among Republicans.

Some election deniers ran last year for offices that oversee elections, as well as for governor and attorney general — all losing in battleground states. The turn to violence in New Mexico suggests the lasting impact of the campaign by Trump and his allies to discredit the 2020 race he lost and sow doubt about how elections are run.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre called the allegations "horrifying and shocking," adding the Biden administration has "emphasized the dangerous ways in which conspiracy theories and disinform-

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mation can lead some individuals to violence.”

A large segment of Republicans, 58%, still believe Democrat Joe Biden’s victory in 2020 was not legitimate, according to an October poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Peña, a 39-year-old felon and self-proclaimed “MAGA king,” faces multiple charges in the Albuquerque-area attacks on the homes of two state lawmakers and two county officials, including one house where a 10-year-old girl was asleep. Peña had refused to accept his landslide loss in November when he won just 26% of the vote in a state House race in Albuquerque against the longtime Democratic incumbent, Rep. Miguel P. Garcia.

Peña parroted Trump’s rhetoric, claiming without evidence that the House race had been “rigged” against him. There has been no evidence of fraud or widespread problems in New Mexico’s election.

Peña, who is being held without bond, appeared briefly in court Wednesday on charges that include multiple counts of shooting at a home, aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, conspiracy and being a felon in possession of a firearm. He spent nine years behind bars after his arrest in April 2007 for stealing electronics and other goods from several retail stores as part of what authorities described as a burglary crew. He was released from prison in 2016, and had his voting rights restored after completing five years probation in April 2021, corrections officials said.

Peña did not speak at the hearing, and a message to his attorney was not immediately returned.

The New Mexico Republican Party said in a statement that Peña should be prosecuted “to the full extent of the law” if he is found guilty.

There also was no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation of voting machines in the 2020 election, and Biden’s win was affirmed after exhaustive reviews in the states where Trump disputed his loss. Dozens of judges — including some appointed by Trump — rejected lawsuits by Trump and his allies challenging the outcome, and Trump’s own attorney general, William Barr, said the fraud claims were bogus.

Despite that, the conspiracy theories surrounding the presidential election have prompted a surge in threats and harassment of state and local election officials.

Cases like the one in New Mexico might seem random but are not, said John Farmer Jr., director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University and a former New Jersey attorney general.

“They are the logical endpoint of this culture of challenging the legitimacy of our democratic processes,” he said.

Farmer said curbing that kind of political violence depends in part on filing the most serious charges possible and aggressively prosecuting cases.

David Levine, a fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy and a former elections official in Idaho, said extremism fueled by anti-democratic figures and conspiracy theories is an acute threat. He advocated for better information-sharing among intelligence and law enforcement agencies as well as changes to state laws to remove provisions that could be exploited by those seeking to spread election misinformation.

Congressional proposals to increase penalties for threatening election officials failed to advance last year, leaving state officials looking to their legislatures for support. Seven bills have been introduced so far in five states to protect election workers and their staff, according to the Voting Rights Lab, which tracks voting-related legislation in the states.

In Michigan, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Democratic legislative leaders announced plans this week for several election-related bills, including ones to increase penalties for threatening, harassing or revealing private information about election workers and for pressuring election officials to act illegally.

“We must do more to protect the people who protect democracy,” Benson, a Democrat, said in a statement.

Concerns of political violence have been growing in recent years.

Last month, the co-leader of the plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer before the 2020 election was sentenced to 16 years in prison. Whitmer, a Democrat, was not harmed. Prosecutors said the defendants were upset about restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and perceived threats to gun ownership.

In California, prosecutors said the assault of Paul Pelosi was part of a plot to kidnap the Democratic

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congresswoman and that the suspect also planned to target other politicians.

Members of Congress have seen a sharp rise in threats in the two years since the insurrection. In Kansas, a trial began this week for a man prosecutors say threatened to kill a Republican congressman.

New Mexico House Speaker Javier Martínez of Albuquerque, whose home was among those targeted in the recent shootings, said he was relieved by the arrest.

"These are the things that can happen when the rhetoric gets out of hand," he told reporters on the opening day of the Legislature. "Anyone who takes the plunge to participate in our democracy, to get into the process, should never have to encounter that type of violence and have that kind of fear."

Biden-McConnell: Personally mismatched, professionally bound

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Joe Biden stepped to the lectern in the shadow of the Brent Spence Bridge in northern Kentucky this month, he couldn't stop showering praise on the state's senior Republican senator, who had fought to repair the ramshackle span for decades.

It was quite a contrast to the clipped introduction delivered just a few minutes earlier by that senator, Mitch McConnell, who referenced Biden only in noting that the president had signed the bill to finally fix the aging bridge.

By temperament and manner, the two men — whose relationship in Washington has been scrutinized, analyzed and satirized for years — are decidedly mismatched. Biden is tactile, gregarious and gaffe prone; McConnell is tactical, often grim-faced and rarely utters an unscripted word.

But with the new days of divided government underway, the Biden-McConnell relationship will become more important.

McConnell's experience in cutting deals and the political capital he retains among Republican members could leave him much freer to negotiate with the White House on thorny matters such as government spending and the debt ceiling than new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., whose ranks have already issued hardline demands on the debt that the White House says are nonstarters.

Both Biden and McConnell see political imperatives in strategically cooperating. McConnell, who fell short of regaining the Senate majority last November, will have a far more advantageous political map in the 2024 election cycle and wants to demonstrate that Republicans can govern responsibly. Meanwhile, central to Biden's case for reelection is promoting his policy accomplishments and selling a record of competent governing — punctured somewhat by recent discoveries of classified documents at his former office and Delaware home.

"Look, I got elected by the people of Kentucky," McConnell said in a radio interview Tuesday with Louisville's 840 WHAS. "I don't view my job, even though I'm the Republican leader of the Senate, as objecting to everything just because Joe Biden might sign the bill."

When asked about McConnell after the Kentucky bridge visit, Biden pointed to their joint efforts in the Obama administration to ward off federal fiscal calamities.

"I've had a relationship with Mitch McConnell for years," Biden said. "We've always been able to work together."

McConnell's acceptance of the White House invitation to attend the bridge event surprised even some of those close to him.

He was among those who greeted Biden on the tarmac at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. Then McConnell joined Biden in the armored presidential limousine, known as the "beast," where the two men talked foreign policy and how to keep the international coalition united on Ukraine. Having McConnell ride with the president was not planned in advance, according to an official familiar with the interaction, but it wasn't a surprise, either.

"On the one hand, it's easy to overread it," said Scott Jennings, a veteran Kentucky-based party strategist with close ties to the Republican leader. "McConnell had long said he would be more than happy to work with Biden on policy things that are within what he considers the 40-yard line in American politics

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and building a bridge in Kentucky is right in the middle of that field.”

Jennings continued: “On the other hand, I do think there’s a message in that whole event, that there is a basic threshold of governing responsibility that people expect out of a political party, and I do think the Republicans sort of got judged as failing that threshold” at the end of the Donald Trump presidency and with some GOP Senate candidates last year.

Indeed, Biden and McConnell have demonstrated in the past that they could capably govern when others couldn’t.

Their deal-making through a trio of financial agreements prevented what could have been major economic and political catastrophes. Those agreements temporarily extended the Bush tax cuts in 2010, lifted the debt limit in summer 2011, and in late 2012 avoided the “fiscal cliff” that would have hiked tax rates and enacted steep spending cuts, risking a recession.

Former President Barack Obama and then-House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, were unable to reach an agreement as the fiscal cliff loomed. McConnell dialed up the then-vice president and asked: “Is there anyone over there who knows how to make a deal?”

“Obviously, I don’t always agree with him, but I do trust him implicitly,” McConnell said in a farewell tribute to Biden on the Senate floor in December 2016. “He doesn’t break his word. He doesn’t waste time telling me why I’m wrong. He gets down to brass tacks. And he keeps in sight the stakes.”

McConnell continued: “There’s a reason ‘get Joe on the phone’ is shorthand for ‘time to get serious,’ in my office.”

Biden also has found McConnell trustworthy. In a February 2011 speech at the McConnell Center in Louisville, Biden lavished the highest of praise for a congressional leader: “Mitch knows how to count better than anyone else I have ever known.”

“This is not a joke,” Biden said as the crowd chuckled. “When Mitch says, ‘Joe, I have 41 votes’ or ‘I have 59 votes,’ it is the end of the discussion. ... He has never once been wrong from what he’s told me.”

Over the years, the interactions between the two men has turned, at times, deeply personal. McConnell was the sole Republican senator to attend the funeral of Beau Biden, the president’s elder son, who died from glioblastoma in 2015. The following year, an emotional Biden presided over the Senate as McConnell, then the majority leader, surprised him by leading the renaming of legislation to bolster cancer research at the National Institutes of Health in Beau Biden’s honor.

Biden recalled that moment in his first joint address to Congress in April 2021, remarking directly to McConnell: “I’ll never forget you standing and mentioning — saying you’d name it after my deceased son.”

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said of the two: “There is a personal relationship that -- transcends isn’t the right word, but that is different from their philosophical leanings. And my experience has been that personal relationships count in this setting.”

That working relationship has been evident throughout the Biden presidency.

As the military in Myanmar was staging a coup in February 2021 and arrested de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the White House put national security adviser Jake Sullivan on the phone with McConnell — who has long advocated on behalf of democracy efforts in the Southeast Asian country — to brief him on the administration’s efforts and to solicit feedback. McConnell has backed Biden on aid to Ukraine even as some Republican lawmakers question continued U.S. support to resist Russia’s invasion.

They’ve even found cooperation when it comes to the judiciary, an area deeply important to McConnell and where Biden has set records in how quickly he has gotten new judges confirmed. Last summer, the White House agreed to nominate an anti-abortion lawyer favored by McConnell to a federal judgeship in Kentucky, despite significant resistance from Democrats in the weeks after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. That nomination was later scuttled due to opposition from the state’s other senator, Rand Paul.

“Instead of just using the next two years to dig in and fight and hash it out until the ‘24 election, I know McConnell — as you’ve heard him say — believes that a divided government can be a time of significant accomplishment,” said South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican. “He’s always been a believer in the long game.”

Still, it hasn’t always been so smooth between the two men during Biden’s first two years.

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In the run-up to the midterms, Biden wove McConnell's name into his usual fusillade of warnings about Republicans threatening to take hostage the debt limit — the nation's borrowing cap that lawmakers will have to suspend or lift later this year. When asked in September whether Biden viewed McConnell differently from Republicans like McCarthy, Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson and Florida Sen. Rick Scott — the president's campaign-season GOP boogymen — White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre responded: "I wouldn't go that far."

And in January 2022, McConnell took umbrage at a fiery speech that Biden delivered in Atlanta, during which the president compared opponents of Democrats' voting-law legislation to racist politicians such as the segregationist Alabama Gov. George Wallace and Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy. McConnell called Biden's remarks "profoundly unpresidential."

"I have known, liked, and personally respected Joe Biden for many years," McConnell said. "I did not recognize the man at that podium."

Notably, the most significant bipartisan achievements of the Biden presidency were clinched without McConnell in the room, although the Republican leader did eventually vote for two of the major ones: the big infrastructure bill and a measure to boost production of computer chips.

But with no major Biden legislative accomplishments on the horizon, McConnell almost certainly will have to be a fixture in negotiating with the White House for the basic tasks of governing.

"While they would be the first to tell you that they disagree on all kinds of things," Jean-Pierre told reporters earlier this month, "they believe in cooperating when they have specific areas of mutual agreement for the good of the country."

Cohen meets Trump prosecutors amid renewed hush money probe

By JIM MUSTIAN and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, said he met for 2½ hours Tuesday with Manhattan prosecutors who have revived a years-old investigation into payments made to a porn star to keep her quiet about an alleged extramarital tryst.

Cohen said he had been "ordered not to disclose" any of the people present at the meeting or to discuss prosecutors' area of interest in any detail.

"I have tremendous confidence in the team that I met with yesterday, as well as their depth and knowledge regarding this and other matters," Cohen said.

Cohen pleaded guilty in 2018 to federal charges that he violated campaign finance law by arranging payouts to porn actor Stormy Daniels and model Karen McDougal to keep them from going public with claims of extramarital affairs with Trump. Trump has denied the affairs.

The U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan decided not to prosecute Trump personally over the hush-money payments. The Manhattan district attorney's office then began investigating the payments to see if any state laws were broken.

No charges were brought against Trump during the tenure of former Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., who shifted the probe's focus to the Trump Organization's business practices. The company was convicted of tax fraud last month and fined \$1.6 million.

After that conviction, Vance's successor, District Attorney Alvin Bragg, said its Trump investigation was moving to the "next chapter," but he offered no specifics on where it was headed next.

Focusing again on hush money payments would be bringing the probe full circle.

A message seeking comment was left with the Manhattan district attorney's office.

Bragg, a Democrat, has shown renewed interest in pursuing more charges, possibly against Trump himself. He has also shown concern about revealing too much about the probe, saying that acknowledging or disclosing certain details could harm a potential case.

On Wednesday, Bragg's office sent a letter to Mark Pomerantz, the former prosecutor who once oversaw the office's Trump inquiries, and his publisher Simon & Schuster, raising concerns that his book's slated publication next month could "materially prejudice ongoing criminal investigations."

Bragg's office said Pomerantz failed to receive required authorization before writing the book, "People

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v. Trump, An Inside Account” and that he could be committing a crime if he was “unlawfully converting confidential government information for his personal advantage.” The office is seeking to review the manuscript before publication.

Pomerantz left the district attorney’s office last year after clashing with Bragg over the direction of the case and recently started a non-profit law firm, Free + Fair Litigation Group, with ex-Trump prosecutor Carey Dunne and former NBA players union Executive Director Michele Roberts.

In a statement, Pomerantz said: “I am confident that all of my actions with respect to the Trump investigation, including the writing of my forthcoming book, are consistent with my legal and ethical obligations.”

As for Cohen, he met with Manhattan prosecutors earlier in the investigation more than a dozen times, including three times while serving a federal prison sentence. Tuesday’s session was his first since Bragg took office last year.

Bragg, told The Associated Press in a recent interview that his office’s investigation into Trump and his businesses is continuing and that no decision has been made on whether to charge the former president.

“We’re going to follow the facts and continue to do our job,” Bragg said.

Trump, a Republican, has decried the probe as politically motivated.

Bragg said the investigation slowed while the Trump Organization case was playing out, in part because he did not want to prejudice the trial or give rise to defense mistrial motions.

“Now with the trial having ended, we are now moving on to the next chapter, which may allow us to do things that are not 100% covert — may involve reaching out to people outside of the office to gather additional evidence,” Bragg said.

Last month, as the trial was wrapping up, Bragg hired former acting U.S. Assistant Attorney General Matthew Colangelo to lead the Trump investigation and other white collar probes. Bragg and Colangelo worked together on Trump-related matters at the state attorney general’s office.

Manhattan prosecutors have also probed whether Trump misled banks and tax authorities about the value of assets, an issue Cohen raised while testifying before Congress in 2019. That matter is now the subject of a civil lawsuit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James.

At Davos, Zelenskyy urges allies to speed up push vs. Russia

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told political leaders at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos that supplies of Western weapons must come quicker than Russia’s attacks, urging the world to move faster because “tragedies are outpacing life; the tyranny is outpacing democracy.”

Zelenskyy, speaking by video link from Kyiv, said the world needs to react more rapidly to challenges like global security, climate change, hunger and energy, warning that in the war, “the time the free world uses to think is used by the terrorist state to kill.”

He said his allies must not hesitate: “The supplying of Ukraine with air defense systems must outpace Russia’s vast missile attacks. The supplies of Western tanks must outpace another invasion of Russian tanks.”

Zelenskyy’s spoke after U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the world as being in a “sorry state” because of interlinked challenges including climate change and Russia’s war in Ukraine that are “piling up like cars in a chain reaction crash.”

The gloom hung on the second day of the elite gathering of world leaders and corporate executives in the Swiss ski resort of Davos after a helicopter crashed into a kindergarten in Ukraine, killing more than a dozen people, including Ukraine’s interior minister.

Zelenskyy stood and asked for a moment of silence for the victims. There was no immediate word on the cause of the crash, but he said that “every individual, every death is a result of war.”

His wife, first lady Olena Zelenska, earlier called it “another very sad day,” dabbing teary eyes, then telling Davos attendees that “we can also change this negative situation for the better.”

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The Ukrainian delegation to Davos, including Zelenska, has been pushing for more aid, including increasingly advanced weapons, from international allies to fight Russia.

Shortly before Zelenskyy spoke, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz reiterated that Germany was one of the top suppliers of military equipment to Ukraine when asked why he had not sent tanks to the war-torn country.

While Germany has provided air-defense systems and armored personnel carriers, Scholz — the only leader to attend Davos from the Group of 7 biggest economies — is facing increasing pressure to send Leopard 2 battle tanks to help Ukraine.

"We will continue to support Ukraine — for as long as necessary," Scholz said.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Ukraine's Western backers this week will discuss ways to supply heavier and more advanced weapons.

"The main message there will be: more support, more advanced support, heavier weapons and more modern weapons," Stoltenberg said of a gathering in Germany of top defense officials, including U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who work to coordinate military contributions to Ukraine.

"This is a fight for our values, this is a fight for democracy — and we just have to prove that democracy wins over tyranny and oppression," the NATO leader added.

Meanwhile, Guterres said the "gravest levels of geopolitical division and mistrust in generations" are undermining efforts to tackle global problems, including widening inequality, a cost-of-living crisis sparked by soaring inflation and an energy crunch, lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply-chain disruptions and more.

The U.N. chief singled out climate change as an "existential challenge," and said a global commitment to limit the Earth's temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius "is nearly going up in smoke."

Guterres, who has been one of the most outspoken world figures on climate change, referenced a recent study that found scientists at Exxon Mobil made remarkably accurate predictions about the effects of climate change as far back as the 1970s, even as the company's stance publicly raised doubts about whether global warming was real.

"We learned last week that certain fossil fuel producers were fully aware in the 1970s that their core product was baking our planet," he said in his speech. "Some in Big Oil peddled the big lie."

Critics have questioned the impact of the four-day meeting where politicians, CEOs and other leaders discuss the world's problems — and make deals on the sidelines — but where concrete action is harder to measure. Environmentalists, for example, slam the carbon-spewing private jets that ferry in bigwigs to an event that prioritizes the battle against climate change.

Government officials, corporate titans, academics and activists attended dozens of panel sessions Wednesday on topics covering the metaverse, environmental greenwashing and artificial intelligence.

Ukraine has taken center stage as the anniversary of the start of the war nears. When Zelenskyy was asked about engaging in a dialogue with Russia, he said that "they will have to recognize their own mistakes, they will have to recognize Ukrainian statutes and they will have to really respect our territorial integrity."

NATO's leader says supplying Ukraine more equipment long term will help force Russian President Vladimir Putin to negotiate.

"It is very dangerous to underestimate Russia," Stoltenberg warned. "Weapons — they are the way to peace" but they must come quickly.

Zelenskyy has daily pleaded for more advanced weapons, escalating his requests as Russia introduces new tactics and weapons against the much smaller Ukrainian army. Western countries have heeded the calls, although often with a delay and not in the number sought.

Guterres was not optimistic that the conflict being waged less than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from Davos would end soon.

"I do not see the end of the war in the immediate future," he said. Deep historical differences between Russia and Ukraine make it more difficult to find a solution based on international law and that respects territorial integrity, he added.

"For the moment, I don't think that we have a chance to promote or to mediate a serious negotiation

to achieve peace in the short term," Guterres said.

Snoop Dogg, Gloria Estefan, Sade make it to Songwriters Hall

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Snoop Dogg, Gloria Estefan, Sade, Jeff Lynne, Glen Ballard, Teddy Riley and Liz Rose have been chosen to join the Songwriters Hall of Fame, a class that includes the writers of such varied hits as "Man In the Mirror," "Drop It Like It's Hot" and "Rhythm Is Gonna Get You."

The seven songwriters from the class of 2023 will be inducted at a gala June 15 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City.

Snoop Dogg, whose hits include "Drop It Like It's Hot" and "Gin & Juice," will be joining such rappers as Missy Elliott and Jay-Z in the hall. Estefan is credited for popularizing Latin rhythms with such crossover smashes as "Rhythm Is Gonna Get You" and "Let's Get Loud."

The inductees include soul-jazz vocalist Sade, whose 1980s soft rock hits include "Smooth Operator" and "The Sweetest Taboo," and Lynne, of ELO, who penned "Mr. Blue Sky" and "Evil Woman."

"I'm very excited about this honor. Songwriting has always been my passion. This means so much to me," Lynne tweeted Wednesday. Estefan took to Instagram to thank "all the incredible fans that, by listening to my music, have made it possible for me to receive this incredible honor!"

Ballard helped write Alanis Morissette's monster 1995 album "Jagged Little Pill" and was involved in the recording and writing of several Michael Jackson albums, including "Thriller," "Bad" and "Dangerous."

Riley, the singer, songwriter and producer, is credited with creating New Jack Swing and its top anthems like Bobby Brown's "My Prerogative" and Keith Sweat's "I Want Her." Rose co-wrote many songs with Taylor Swift, including "You Belong with Me," "Teardrops on My Guitar" and "White Horse."

The 2023 class "represents not just iconic songs but also diversity and unity across genres, ethnicity and gender, songwriters who have enriched our lives and, in their time, literally transformed music and the lives of billions of listeners all over the world," said Nile Rodgers, the hall's chair.

Eligible voting members late last year turned in ballots with their choices of three nominees from the songwriter category and three from the performing-songwriter category.

Some of the 2023 nominees who will have to wait include The Doobie Brothers, R.E.M., Heart, Blondie, Bryan Adams, Patti Smith and Steve Winwood.

The Songwriters Hall of Fame was established in 1969 to honor those creating the popular music. A songwriter with a notable catalog of songs qualifies for induction 20 years after the first commercial release of a song.

Some already in the hall include Carole King, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora, Elton John and Bernie Taupin, Brian Wilson, James Taylor, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, Lionel Richie, Bill Withers, Neil Diamond, and Phil Collins.

Shooting by 6-year-old raises complex cultural questions

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

He was 6, in his first-grade class in Newport News, Virginia. He pointed a handgun at his teacher, police say, and then he pulled the trigger. And across the nation, people ... didn't quite know how to react.

Even in a country where gun violence is sadly commonplace, the story of a small boy with a gun is reverberating in a big way. There has been finger-pointing. Confusion. Floundering for answers. Mass grappling with deeply uncomfortable feelings. And questions: How could something like this possibly happen? Where in the national consciousness do we put it?

"It is almost impossible to wrap our minds around the fact that a 6-year-old first-grader brought a loaded handgun to school and shot a teacher," Mayor Phillip Jones said that day, Jan. 6. "However, this is exactly what our community is grappling with today."

It's not just his community, though, and it wasn't just that day. This is a country full of people who know exactly what they think about everything, and say so. Yet many are throwing their hands up at this. In a

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land awash in hot takes, it's a head-scratcher. A heart-scratcher, even.

"I never thought elementary students being the shooter was a possibility we would ever see," says Kendra Newton, a first-grade teacher in Florida.

That may be because it sits outside what people are accustomed to. Jennifer Talarico, a psychology professor at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, believes the case hits differently in part because it violates society's expectations for both school shootings (of which there were two others elsewhere in the country that day) and childhood itself.

"Sadly, we have schemas, we have rubrics, we have archetypes for school shootings in this country. We have a sort of script for these things," said Talarico, who has studied how people remember indirectly experienced events. "Using the phrase 'school shooting' as a shorthand leads us to develop that story in our heads, and when the facts of the case are so different ... that is what is surprising."

Americans typically view childhood as an encapsulation of the best of our society and values, Talarico says — innocence, fun, joy, love. Anything that challenges that deep-seated view unearths complicated questions about the culture and community in which a child is being raised — whether it be local culture and community or the entire nation.

"That's some hard self-reflection," she says. "That is why the story is resonating with people."

Americans are left struggling with a scenario that doesn't fit into any bucket. But as jarring as that may feel, there's a danger in trying to force the incident into a familiar framework, says Marsha Levick, chief legal officer and co-founder of the Juvenile Law Center.

She believes Americans have become "so stuck in a place of punishment" that they have lost the ability to have conversations outside those boundaries. By labeling the shooting with the loaded word "intentional," Newport News Police Chief Steve Drew is inviting people to view it as a criminal act, Levick asserts.

"That is ludicrous. It is absurd. It is utterly inconsistent with science and what we know about human development and child development," she says. "Let's own that. This was not a criminal act."

Levick would like law enforcement to acknowledge that "this is not our lane," as it did more than two decades ago in one of the few cases from the recent past that bears some resemblance to the Virginia shooting. When a 6-year-old boy shot and killed a classmate in Michigan in 2000, Genesee County Prosecuting Attorney Arthur Busch didn't go after the boy, but after those who provided access to the gun.

In an interview last week, Busch said he's been surprised by the repeated use of "intentional" by Newport News police.

"It was like fingernails on a chalkboard when I heard the police say it was intentional," he said. "We don't call it intentional when it's a 6-year-old. ... He's not old enough to have intent."

Busch, who later became a defense attorney and retired in 2018, remembers visiting the boy at a group home and squeezing into a child-sized chair to chat. The boy proudly showed him pictures he had colored and his favorite toys. A smile revealed two missing front teeth, and they talked about the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny.

"He was excited because he knew he was going to get candy," Busch said. "It was quite clear that he was not hatching any diabolical plots. He was just a typical little kid. He was a baby, pretty much."

Busch remembers being dumbfounded when notified of the 2000 shooting. "I just couldn't wrap my head around that," he said. But he knew immediately he wouldn't bring any charges.

"The only thing to do with that boy is get him out of that situation, find the best place for him," Busch said. "This kid had probably never seen love in his life. We needed to wrap our arms around him as a community, and love and protect him."

The Virginia case is sure to stir debate about gun control and school safety. But Moira O'Neill, who led New Hampshire's Office of the Child Advocate for five years, says anyone feeling shaken by the incident can take a few simple steps. She says an abundance of research shows that the best way to support child development and promote resilience is to offer children a sense of belonging.

In short: Don't let your shock paralyze you. Take steps to value children in your own community.

"This is not a big commitment. This is simply knowing the kids, knowing their names, and giving the impression if they need help they can ask," she said. "If neighbors choose to settle with being shocked,

without thinking through ways they can contribute to child well-being and safety, they are sending the message that the children are not valued.”

Whether all the reflection around the Virginia shooting leads to change remains to be seen. Talarico, whose work includes studying the “memory-laden language” that often surrounds big events, says imperatives like “Never Forget” don’t always lead to sweeping action — particularly when it comes to guns. “Never Forget,” she says, “hasn’t effectively translated to ‘Never Again.’”

Shooter stood over California mom holding baby, killed both

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A shooter stood over a 16-year-old mother clutching her 10-month-old baby and shot and killed them in a brazen attack in a central California farming community that left six dead, a sheriff said Tuesday.

Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux said the teenager was fleeing the violence early Monday when the killers caught up to her outside the home in Goshen, a central California community of about 3,000 residents in the agricultural San Joaquin Valley, and shot the young mother and her child “assassination-style.”

The other four victims ranged from 19 to 72 years old, including a grandmother who was shot as she slept. Their autopsies are expected to be completed later in the week.

Authorities said they were searching for two suspects and offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to their arrests.

“None of this was by accident,” Boudreaux said during a news conference Tuesday. “It was deliberate, intentional and horrific.”

Boudreaux walked back his earlier comments to reporters that the attack was likely a cartel hit, saying that investigators are also looking into whether it was gang violence.

“I am not eliminating that possibility,” the sheriff said. “These people were clearly shot in the head and they were also shot in places where the shooter would know that a quick death would occur ... This is also similar to high-ranking gang affiliation and the style of executions that they commit.”

Law enforcement is familiar with the home, the sheriff said, citing gang activity there that “has routinely occurred in the past” without giving any specifics.

The sheriff’s department on Tuesday identified the victims as: Rosa Parraz, 72; Eladio Parraz, Jr., 52; Jennifer Analla, 49; Marcos Parraz, 19; Alissa Parraz, 16; and Nycholas Parraz, 10 months.

Boudreaux said “there was no reason” for the shooters to kill the young mother and her child.

“I know for a fact this 10-month-old baby was relying on the comfort of his mother. There was no reason for them to shoot that baby, but they did,” he said.

Samuel Pina said Alissa was his granddaughter and the baby, Nycholas, was his great-grandson.

“I can’t wrap my head around what kind of monster would do this,” he told The Associated Press on Monday.

Pina said Parraz and her baby were living with her father’s side of the family in Goshen, and that her dad’s uncle, her dad’s cousin, her grandmother and her great-grandmother were also killed.

He said the family is in shock.

“It comes in big waves,” he said.

Authorities received a call at 3:38 a.m. Monday about multiple shots being fired — so many that it initially seemed like an active shooter situation — at the residence in the town of Goshen, some 170 miles (273.59 kilometers) north of downtown Los Angeles.

It was later determined the person who made the call was someone hiding at the property. Deputies arrived seven minutes later and found two bodies outside the home in the street, and a third body at the doorstep, Boudreaux said.

Deputies found more victims inside the home, including the grandmother. Down the street they discovered the teen mom and her baby. A forensics investigation revealed she had tried to run away before the shooter caught up with her and stood over her and fired multiple rounds into her skull, Boudreaux said.

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"It is very clear that this family was a target," he said.

Three people survived and will be interviewed by authorities. They include a man who hid in the home as the killings happened.

"He was in such a state of fear that all he could do was hold the door, hoping he was not the next victim," Boudreaux said.

On Jan. 3, a search warrant at the home led to the arrest of Eladio Parraz Jr., a convicted felon who was killed in the shooting Monday — though Boudreaux said Parraz Jr. was not the "initial intended target" and declined to elaborate. Parraz Jr., 52, had an extensive criminal record including driving recklessly to evade arrest, and possessing firearms and drugs, according to prison records.

The search warrant stemmed from a parole compliance check during which investigators found shell casings on the ground, the sheriff said. The occupants refused to let officials inside the home, Boudreaux said.

They returned with a search warrant and arrested Parraz Jr. after discovering ammunition, a rifle, a shotgun and methamphetamine in the home, court records show. He was released on bail four days later.

Rural California is no stranger to drug-related violence. In 2020, seven people were fatally shot in a small, rural Riverside County town where the property had been used for an illegal marijuana growing operation — a common practice in that area.

The following year, a man accidentally shot himself while working at his family's illegal marijuana grow in Butte County's Forbestown. His father and two brothers were accused of moving his body to prevent investigators from discovering the grow site.

Wholesale inflation in US slowed further in December to 6.2%

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Wholesale prices in the United States rose 6.2% in December from a year earlier, a sixth straight slowdown and a hopeful sign that inflation pressures will continue to cool.

The latest year-over-year figure was down from 7.3% in November and from a recent peak of 11.7% in March. On a monthly basis, the government said Wednesday that its producer price index, which measures costs before they reach consumers, dropped 0.5% from November to December.

The producer price data can provide an early sign of where consumer inflation might be headed. The data reflects the prices that are charged by manufacturers, farmers and wholesalers, and it flows into an inflation gauge that the Federal Reserve closely tracks, the personal consumption expenditures price index.

The ongoing slowdown in wholesale price growth is adding to evidence that the worst bout of inflation in four decades is steadily easing, though it remains far above the Federal Reserve's target of 2%.

Last month's drop was led by gas prices, which sank 13.4% from November to December. Gas prices averaged \$3.36 a gallon Wednesday, according to AAA, down from a peak of \$5 a gallon in mid-June.

Food prices fell by a sharp 1.2%, led by fruits, vegetables and chicken. One exception was egg prices. Driven up in part by a wave of avian flu, egg prices soared 25% just from November to December.

Excluding volatile energy and food costs, so-called core producer prices rose only 0.1% from November to December. Measured year over year, core prices increased 5.5% in December, compared with 6.2% in November.

"The big picture is one of rapid disinflation, with much more to come," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

Producer prices in the nation's vast service sector — everything from restaurants and hotels to airlines and entertainment venues — ticked up just 0.1% from November to December, the smallest such increase since last April. The Fed has been monitoring this area of the economy in particular as it assesses its progress in combating high inflation.

But rising evidence shows that inflation across the economy is easing after having reached a four-decade peak last summer. At the consumer level, inflation also cooled in December for a sixth straight month to 6.5% compared with a year earlier, from 7.1% in November.

An acceleration in workers' wages has been slowing, too, which could further help control inflation. In

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December, average wage growth in the United States was up 4.6% from 12 months earlier, compared with a recent peak of 5.6% in March.

Over the past year, the Fed has rapidly raised its key interest rate in an aggressive drive to cool borrowing and spending and tame inflation, which began surging more than a year and a half ago.

The Fed's rate hikes have, in turn, led to higher borrowing costs for consumers and businesses. The average mortgage rate is still nearly twice its level a year ago, though it has dipped in recent weeks. Loan costs for auto purchases, credit cards and a range of business borrowing are up sharply, too.

Even as overall inflation gradually slows, costs continue to surge in some pockets of the economy. Particularly in the service sector, wage growth is still contributing to broader inflation pressures.

UK nurses stage new walkout as strike wave intensifies

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Thousands of nurses in Britain walked out Wednesday in a new protest over pay, with no end in sight to a wave of strikes that has piled pressure on the U.K.'s overburdened public health system.

Two 12-hour nursing strikes on Wednesday and Thursday affect about a quarter of hospitals and clinics in England. Emergency care and cancer treatment will continue, but thousands of appointments and procedures are likely to be postponed.

With more walkouts by nurses planned for next month — and ambulance workers announcing a new slate of February strikes — the Conservative government is under growing pressure to lift its opposition to substantial raises for health care staff.

"It's a job that I love, but I need to pay my bills," said intensive care nurse Nav Singh, on a picket line in London. "Nursing students don't want to be nurses, experienced nurses are leaving, there will be no-one left and I don't blame them, but I can't imagine doing anything else."

Nurses, ambulance crews, train drivers, airport baggage handlers, border staff, driving instructors, bus drivers and postal workers have all walked off their jobs in recent months to demand higher pay amid a cost-of-living crisis.

Inflation in the U.K. hit a 41-year high of 11.1% in October, driven by sharply rising energy and food costs, before easing slightly to 10.5% in December.

The nurses' union has been seeking a pay raise of 5% above inflation, though it has said it will accept a lower offer.

Pat Cullen, head of the Royal College of Nursing union, urged health officials to "get round a table and let's stop the strikes so we don't have to continue this into February."

"I would say to the prime minister this morning: If you want to continue to have strikes, then the voice of nursing will continue to speak up on behalf of their patients and that's exactly what you will get," she told ITV.

The British government argues that double-digit public sector pay increases will drive inflation even higher.

"Unaffordable pay hikes will mean cutting patient care and stoking the inflation that would make us all poorer," Health Secretary Steve Barclay wrote in the Independent newspaper.

The government also has angered unions by introducing a bill that will make it harder for key workers to strike by setting "minimum safety levels" for firefighters, ambulance services and railways that must be maintained during a walkout.

The nursing union has announced two more strike days next month, when disruption across the economy looks set to intensify. Feb. 1 is shaping up to be the most disruptive day yet, with walkouts by teachers, train drivers, civil servants and university staff.

The GMB union said Wednesday that 10,000 ambulance call handlers, paramedics and other staff across most of England will strike on February 6 and 20 and March 6 and 20.

"Our message to the government is clear — talk pay now," said GMB national secretary Rachel Harrison.

Opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer accused the government of presiding over "lethal chaos" in the state-funded National Health Service, with many patients waiting hours for ambulances in emergencies.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the health system was dealing with “unprecedented challenges,” but insisted the government was spending extra money to relieve the pressure — though he did not mention staff demands for higher pay.

“We are investing more in urgent and emergency care to create more bed capacity, we are ensuring that the flow of patients through emergency care is faster than it ever has been,” Sunak said in the House of Commons.

Church of England refuses to back same-sex marriage

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Church of England said Wednesday it will allow blessings for same-sex, civil marriages for the first time but same-sex couples still will not be allowed to marry in its churches.

The decision followed five years of debate and consultation on the church’s position on sexuality. It is expected to be outlined in a report to the church’s national assembly, the General Synod, which meets in London next month.

Under the proposals, the Church of England’s stance that the sacrament of matrimony is restricted to unions between one man and one woman will not change.

However, same-sex couples would be able to have a church service with prayers of dedication, thanksgiving or for God’s blessing after they have a civil wedding or register a civil partnership.

Same-sex marriage has been legal in England and Wales since 2013, but the church did not change its teaching when the law changed.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the spiritual leader of the Anglican Church, acknowledged that the proposals “will appear to go too far for some and not nearly far enough for others.”

“This response reflects the diversity of views in the Church of England on questions of sexuality, relationships and marriage. I rejoice in that diversity and I welcome this way of reflecting it in the life of our church,” Welby said.

“I hope it can offer a way for the Church of England, publicly and unequivocally, to say to all Christians and especially LGBTQI+ people, that you are welcome and a valued and precious part of the body of Christ,” he added.

The church said bishops plan to issue a formal apology to LGBTQ people on Friday for the “rejection, exclusion and hostility” they have felt from within the church.

It said it would issue pastoral guidance to its ministers and congregations and urge them to welcome same-sex couples “unreservedly and joyfully.”

Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell apologized for “the way LGBTQI+ people and those they love have been treated by the church which, most of all, ought to recognize everyone as precious and created in the image of God.”

“We are deeply sorry and ashamed and want to take this opportunity to begin again in the spirit of repentance which our faith teaches us,” he said. “This is not the end of that journey, but we have reached a milestone, and I hope that these prayers of love and faith can provide a way for us all to celebrate and affirm same-sex relationships.”

Cottrell said the proposals will not be “what everyone wants,” but further changes will require a legislative overhaul and there was currently no majority supporting such change.

Jayne Ozanne, a prominent campaigner for LGBTQ people in the church, said the bishops’ decision was “utterly despicable.”

“I cannot believe that five years of pain and trauma has got us here. We have had countless apologies over the years but no action to stop the harmful discrimination,” she tweeted.

The General Synod is expected to discuss the proposals in detail during its Feb. 6-Feb. 9 meeting.

Hampered by bad hip, Rafael Nadal loses at Australian Open

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By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer
MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Rafael Nadal bowed his head during changeovers and rested his elbows on his knees, the very picture of resignation.

What already was a poor start to 2023, following a year marred by all manner of health issues, reached a low point at the Australian Open on Wednesday.

The defending champion and No. 1 seed at Melbourne Park, Nadal injured his left hip and lost to Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 in the second round, abruptly ending his bid for a record-extending 23rd Grand Slam trophy.

"It's a tough moment. It's a tough day," said Nadal, a 36-year-old Spaniard. "I can't say that I am not destroyed mentally at this moment, because I would be lying."

He pulled up awkwardly at the end of a point late in the second set against the 65th-ranked McDonald. Nadal was visited by a trainer on the sideline, then left the court for a medical timeout. Up in the stands, his wife wiped away tears. Nadal returned to play, but was clearly compromised and not his usual indefatigable self, saying afterward that he could not hit his backhand properly and could not run much, either.

But Nadal added that, as the reigning champion of the tournament, he did not want to leave the court via a mid-match retirement.

He said the hip had been bothering him for a couple of days, but it was never as bad as it became on Wednesday. Nadal was not sure exactly what the nature of the injury was, saying that he will have medical tests to determine if it has to do with a muscle, joint or cartilage.

"It's never over until it's over' type thing. He didn't even want to roll over and quit. He kept fighting until basically the end, even though he maybe didn't have all his game," said McDonald, a 27-year-old who won NCAA championships in singles and doubles for UCLA in 2016.

"I was in the locker room," McDonald said about the aftermath of the match, "and I was like, 'Hey, that's actually really big for me, because I haven't beaten someone of that caliber.'"

This is Nadal's earliest exit at any Grand Slam tournament since bowing out in the first round in Melbourne in 2016 against No. 45 Fernando Verdasco. That also made Verdasco the lowest-ranked player to defeat Nadal in Australia — until, of course, McDonald on Wednesday.

McDonald has never been past the fourth round at a major tournament. In his lone previous matchup against Nadal, at the 2020 French Open, McDonald won a total of just four games in a lopsided loss.

"He kicked my butt," McDonald recalled Wednesday.

This result overshadowed everything else going on in Melbourne, of course, on a day that persistent rain pushed back the start of play on all but the three courts with retractable roofs until after 5 p.m. local time.

That meant some players — most notably, No. 1 Iga Swiatek, No. 3 Jessica Pegula and No. 6 Maria Sakkari — won matches that put them in the third round before more than a dozen others even had contested a single point in the first round.

At night, 2022 French Open runner-up Coco Gauff got past 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu 6-3, 7-6 (4) in a second-round meeting between two of the sports young stars.

"I know a lot of people were looking forward to that matchup," said Gauff, an 18-year-old American. "I'm glad we got the prime spot. I hope we delivered."

Seeded men who won included No. 3 Stefanos Tsitsipas, No. 6 Felix Auger-Aliassime, No. 7 Daniil Medvedev — the runner-up to Nadal last year and to Novak Djokovic in 2021 — No. 15 Jannik Sinner and No. 16 Frances Tiafoe.

"I told him, 'You're going to be in a position to win today. You can win today,'" Tiafoe said about fellow American McDonald. "Sort of seeing how he feels, I'm happy for Mackie. 'GOAT wins' don't come easy. Something to tell his grandkids one day, and you have to be happy for that guy."

A year ago, Nadal won the Australian Open for the second time to earn his 21st major championship, then raised his total to 22 — the most for a man — at Roland Garros.

He is currently ranked No. 2 but was the top seed at Melbourne Park because No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz is sitting out the Australian Open with a bad leg.

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Nadal's body has betrayed him quite a bit recently.

He needed pain-killing injections for his left foot on the way to winning the French Open last June, pulled out of Wimbledon last July before the semifinals because of a torn abdominal muscle and also dealt with a problem with rib cartilage in 2022.

Nadal's exit drains the tournament of yet more star power. In addition to his absence and Alcaraz's, 2022 Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios pulled out because his left knee needs arthroscopic surgery, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka is off the tour while she is pregnant, two-time major champ Simona Halep is serving a provisional doping ban and Venus Williams is hurt.

That is all on top of this: The 2023 edition of the Australian Open is the first Grand Slam tournament since Serena Williams and Roger Federer announced their retirements.

Nadal arrived in Melbourne with an 0-2 record this season, making him 1-6 dating to September, when he lost to Tiafoe in the fourth round of the U.S. Open.

Even during a first-round victory Monday, a four-setter against a cramping Jack Draper, Nadal never quite seemed to be at his chase-every-ball, put-every-high-spin-shot-on-target best. He looked, somehow, his age.

The same was the case from the outset against McDonald.

"I'm really happy with how I started that match. I thought I was playing really well, serving great, returning well, too," McDonald said. "So I was really taking it to him."

That is true. From the get-go, McDonald was on, Nadal was off.

The very first game served as something of a harbinger: McDonald broke for a 1-0 lead thanks a trio of unforced errors by Nadal — two off his feared lefty forehand side.

Out of sorts, Nadal got into a back-and-forth with chair umpire Marijana Veljovic during breaks in action about whether she was starting the between-points serve clock too quickly for his liking.

Soon, McDonald was up a set. Then he went up a break right away in the second.

After one point in that set, Nadal showed real signs of trouble. He squatted behind the baseline and placed his racket down on the court. Then he went over and leaned on a sign, prompting Veljovic to ask whether Nadal was OK.

Nadal watched a couple of serves off McDonald's racket fly past him, then was checked on by the trainer. While the match would proceed, it essentially was over right then and there.

Today in History: JAN 19, Lucy gives birth, twice

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2023. There are 346 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

In 1953, CBS-TV aired the widely watched episode of "I Love Lucy" in which Lucy Ricardo, played by Lucille Ball, gave birth to Little Ricky. (By coincidence, Ball gave birth the same day to her son, Desi Arnaz Jr.)

On this date:

In 1853, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Il Trovatore" premiered in Rome.

In 1915, Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in England.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces captured the British protectorate of North Borneo. A German submarine sank the Canadian liner RMS Lady Hawkins off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, killing 251 people; 71 survived.

In 1944, the federal government relinquished control of the nation's railroads to their owners following settlement of a wage dispute.

In 1966, Indira Gandhi was chosen to be prime minister of India by the National Congress party.

In 1987, Guy Hunt became Alabama's first Republican governor since 1874 as he was sworn into office, succeeding George C. Wallace.

In 2005, the American Cancer Society reported that cancer had passed heart disease as the top killer

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of Americans age 85 and younger.

In 2009, Russia and Ukraine signed a deal restoring natural gas shipments to Ukraine and paving the way for an end to the nearly two-week cutoff of most Russian gas to a freezing Europe.

In 2012, Rupert Murdoch's media empire apologized and agreed to cash payouts to 37 people who'd been harassed and phone-hacked by its tabloid press.

Ten years ago: Thousands of gun advocates gathered peacefully at state capitals around the U.S. to rally against stricter limits on firearms. Minister Greg Griego, his wife, Sara, and three of their children were shot to death in their home near Albuquerque, N.M.; the couple's teenage son, Nehemiah, is charged with murder. Death claimed baseball Hall-of-Famers Stan Musial at age 92 and Earl Weaver at age 82.

Five years ago: Olympic gold medalist Aly Raisman joined dozens of other women and girls in confronting her former doctor, Larry Nassar, at his sentencing hearing for multiple sexual assaults; she warned him that the testimony of the "powerful army" of survivors would haunt him in prison. Amazon announced that it was raising the monthly price of its Prime membership plan by nearly 20%, to \$12.99. (The fee for an annual membership would also rise 20% a few months later, to \$119 a year.)

One year ago: Voting legislation that Democrats and civil rights leaders said was vital to protecting democracy collapsed after two Democratic senators refused to join their own party in changing Senate rules to overcome a Republican filibuster; the measure would have ensured access to early voting and mail-in ballots, and would have enabled the Justice Department to intervene in states with a history of voter interference. In a rebuff to former President Donald Trump, the Supreme Court allowed the release of presidential documents sought by the congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection. The NCAA adopted a sport-by-sport approach for transgender athletes, bringing the organization in line with the U.S. and International Olympic Committees.

Today's birthdays: Actor Tippi Hedren is 93. Former PBS newsman Robert MacNeil is 92. Movie director Richard Lester is 91. Actor-singer Michael Crawford is 81. Actor Shelley Fabares (fab-RAY') is 79. Country singer Dolly Parton is 77. Former ABC newswoman Ann Compton is 76. TV chef Paula Deen is 76. Rock singer Martha Davis is 72. Singer Dewey Bunnell (America) is 71. Actor Desi Arnaz Jr. is 70. Actor Katey Sagal is 69. Comedian Paul Rodriguez is 68. Conductor Sir Simon Rattle is 68. Rock musician Jeff Pilson (Foreigner) is 65. Actor Paul McCrane is 62. Actor William Ragsdale is 62. Basketball coach and commentator Jeff Van Gundy is 61. International Tennis Hall of Famer Stefan Edberg is 57. Rock singer Whitfield Crane (Ugly Kid Joe) is 55. Singer Trey Lorenz is 54. Actor Shawn Wayans is 52. Rock singer-musician John Wozniak (Marcy Playground) is 52. Actor Drea (DRAY-uh') de Matteo is 51. Comedian-impressionist Frank Caliendo is 49. Actor Drew Powell is 47. Actor Marsha Thomason is 47. Actor Bitsie Tulloch is 42. Actor Jodie Sweetin is 41. U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is 41. Movie director Damien Chazelle is 38. Actor Shaunette Renee Wilson is 33. Actor Briana Henry is 31. Actor Logan Lerman is 31. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shawn Johnson is 31. Rapper Taylor Bennett is 27. Actor Lidya Jewett is 16.