

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 1 of 81

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Region1A Standings](#)
- [4- NSU Wrestling](#)
- [5- Re:Set Woman's Conference Ad](#)
- [6- Groton School Feb. 8 Special Meeting Minutes](#)
- [7- Gov. Noem Signs Bills into Law](#)
- [8- GHS Basketball](#)
- [9- School Board Agenda](#)
- [10- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [11- SD Searchlight: Transgender advocacy group sues state over contract cancellation](#)
- [12- SD Searchlight: Lawmakers send transgender youth health care ban to Noem's desk](#)
- [13- SD Searchlight: Bill would require companies to disclose ag land and foreign owners](#)
- [14- SD Searchlight: U.S. Senate panel debates safety net spending in upcoming farm bill](#)
- [16- SD Searchlight: New U.S. House weaponization panel to probe FBI, IRS, ATF](#)
- [18- SD Searchlight: China balloon's voyage across Alaska, Montana and U.S. enrages members of U.S. Senate panel](#)
- [19- SD Searchlight: White House taps Indiana, New Mexico governors for federal-state council on national security](#)
- [20- SD Searchlight: SD's pheasant predator bounties are wrong for Nebraska, experts say](#)
- [22- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [28- Subscription Form](#)
- [29- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [30- News from the Associated Press](#)

Groton Community Calendar

Friday, Feb. 10

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle casserole, peas and carrots, swedish apple pie square, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.
School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.
Girls Basketball hosts Redfield. (C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity)
MS Pep Band Night!
Little kids wrestling at Doland

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

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



Saturday, Feb. 11

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.
Basketball Double Header at Mobridge: (Boys JV in MS Gym, 1 p.m.; Girls JV in HS Gym, 1 p.m.; Varsity Girls to follow in HS Gym and then Varsity Boys).
Northeast Conference Wrestling at Webster, 11 a.m.
Middle School State wrestling at Pierre, 9 a.m.
Junior High Boys Basketball at Mobridge, 11 a.m. in the MS Gym - 2 games)

Sunday, Feb. 12

Kids wrestling Tournament in Groton, 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.
Youth Wrestling Tournament at the Groton Area Arena, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 2 of 81

The Bulletin by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

2024 presidential bid.

- Milford Councilman Russell Heller was gunned down in a vehicle by a former employee in Franklin Township in Somerset County in New Jersey, becoming the second such shooting in the state in less than two weeks.

- Utah Republican Senator Mitt Romney broke with his fellow GOP members and defended President Joe Biden's decision to wait before shooting down the suspected Chinese spy balloon.

- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, some European Union member states have reportedly signaled that they are ready to provide all the necessary weapons to Ukraine—including combat aircraft. Wagner Group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin has "absurdly" claimed that over 10 million American citizens have applied to join his Russian mercenary organization, the Institute of the Study of War said.

- More than 21,000 people are believed to have died, while tens of thousands of people have been injured more than 76 hours after the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

- Former Vice President Mike Pence has been subpoenaed by special counsel Jack Smith, who is investigating Donald Trump's actions on Jan. 6 and the classified documents recovered from Mar-a-Lago.









- Donald Trump has lashed out in anger, insisting that he did not want donations from the group of wealthy Republican donors who said they will not be supporting his

Groton Daily Independent









Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 3 of 81

Region 1A Standings

Girls Basketball

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Sisseton	15	2	.882	44.118
2	 Milbank	10	6	.625	41.750
3	 Groton Area	11	6	.647	41.529
4	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	8	.529	41.118
5	 Redfield	7	10	.412	38.941
6	 Waubay/Summit	8	9	.471	38.706
7	 Tiospa Zina	5	12	.294	38.000
8	 Webster Area	6	11	.353	37.941

Boys Basketball

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Waubay/Summit	14	2	.875	43.562
2	 Groton Area	10	4	.714	42.357
3	 Tiospa Zina	8	7	.533	41.467
4	 Milbank	7	6	.538	41.000
5	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	9	.500	40.167
6	 Redfield	8	10	.444	39.389
7	 Webster Area	4	12	.250	37.625
8	 Sisseton	1	16	.059	36.294

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 4 of 81

NSU Wrestling

No. 14 Augustana Pulls Away From No. 20 Northern State in Thursday NSIC Action

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 20 Northern State University wrestling team dropped their opening dual of the weekend to No. 14 Augustana earlier this evening. The Wolves tallied three match wins early on, but were unable to find success in the heavier weights.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 9, AU 23

Records: NSU 9-5 (4-5 NSIC), AU 10-10 (5-4 NSIC)

HOW IT HAPPENED

- The dual kicked off at 125 pounds with a 3-point win for the Wolves
- Landen Fischer defeated Christian Olsen in a 3-1 decision
- Augustana tied things up the following bout, where Teagan Block battled and kept things within reach against No. 2 Jack Huffman
- The Vikings grabbed their first lead of the evening adding a decision a 141-pounds
- No. 7 Wyatt Turnquist tied the match for the second time, defeating Connor Simmonds in an 8-4 decision
- Northern grabbed the second and final lead of the dual at 157-pounds, in an upset victory by Devin Bahr
- The NSU graduate student defeated No. 10 Miles Fitzgerald in a 2-0 decision

UP NEXT

The Wolves close out the regular season on Saturday at No. 14 UMary. Start time is set for 7 p.m. in Bismarck.

MATCH RESULTS

		AU	NSU
125	Landen Fischer (Northern State) over Christian Olsen (Augustana) (Dec 3-1)	0.0	3.0
133	#2 Jack Huffman (Augustana) over Teagan Block (Northern State) (Dec 9-5)	3.0	0.0
141	Hunter Burnett (Augustana) over Kolton Roth (Northern State) (Dec 7-2)	3.0	0.0
149	#7 Wyatt Turnquist (Northern State) over Connor Simmonds (Augustana) (Dec 8-4)	0.0	3.0
157	Devin Bahr (Northern State) over #10 Miles Fitzgerald (Augustan) (Dec 2-0)	0.0	3.0
165	#6 Tyler Wagener (Augustana) over Chase Bloomquist (Northern State) (Dec 6-4)	3.0	0.0
174	Kolby Kost (Augustana) over Kelby Hawkins (Northern State) (Dec 10-4)	3.0	0.0
184	#4 Cade Mueller (Augustana) over Tyson Lien (Northern State) (MD 14-0)	4.0	0.0
197	Max Ramberg (Augustana) over Cole Huss (Northern State) (MD 9-1)	4.0	0.0
285	Zach Peterson (Augustana) over Nathan Schauer (Northern State) (Dec 6-3)	3.0	0.0
	Dual Meet Score:	23.0	9.0

You're Invited!

RESET

women's conference

ROSE HILL CHURCH

12099 ROSE HILL RD, LANGFORD SD

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023

9:30 AM - 2:00 PM

*Women and girls of all generations
are welcome to enjoy a day to reset.*

GUEST SPEAKERS

PASTORS LISA PALMER
AND MICAH LOMBARDI, A
MOTHER-DAUGHTER TEAM



REGISTER ONLINE

THIS IS A FREE EVENT.
REGISTER BY SCANNING
THE QR CODE OR AT
ROSEHILLEFC.COM

CHILDCARE WILL BE AVAILABLE

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 6 of 81

Groton School February 8 2023 Special Meeting Minutes

UNOFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 06-6

SPECIAL MEETING
February 08, 2023

President Gengerke called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm in the GHS Library Conference Room. Members present: Flihs, Harder, Gengerke, Pharis, Rix, and Weismantel. Absent: Smith. Others present were Supt. J. Schwan and Principal B. Schwan.

Moved by Harder, second Weismantel to approve the agenda as proposed. Motion carried.

Pursuant to SDCL 23-3, there was no potential conflict disclosure reported.

Members of the public are allowed five minutes to address the board on any topic of their choice. With no public members requesting to speak, the board proceeded with their agenda items.

Moved by Pharis, second Harder to approve hiring Rebecca Hubsch as Business Manager for the 2023-24 school year. Motion carried.

Moved by Weismantel, second Pharis to go into executive session pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(1) for Middle School/High School Principal interviews at 5:05 pm. Motion carried.

President Gengerke declared the board out of executive session at 9:03 pm.

Moved by Rix, second Flihs to adjourn at 9:04 pm. Motion carried.

M. J. Weber, Business Manager

Deborah Gengerke, President

The addition of signatures to this page verifies these minutes as official.

Gov. Noem Signs Bills into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem has signed several bills into law.

Today, Governor Noem signed the following 26 bills into law:

- SB 7, clarifies emergency commitments of severely mentally ill persons by appropriate regional facilities;
- SB 27, places certain substances on the controlled substance schedule and to declare an emergency;
- SB 28, revises and repeals obsolete provisions related to the Department of Social Services;
- SB 30, revises the criteria for remote sellers who must remit sales tax;
- SB 58, which clarifies that the special amusement excise tax applies to the sale of amusement devices;
- HB 1002, updates the official code of laws;
- HB 1003, repeals provisions requiring prison or jail cost estimates to declare an emergency;
- HB 1004, updates the Internal Revenue Code for purposes of higher education savings plans;
- HB 1005, updates certain citations to federal regulation regarding pipeline safety inspections;
- HB 1010, repeals the sunset date for provisions related to the licensure of behavior analysts;
- HB 1012, repeals the annual grievance reporting requirements for health carriers;
- HB 1013, updates references to certain federal motor carrier regulations;
- HB 1014, updates provisions related to the licensure of speech-language pathologists and speech-language pathology assistants;
- HB 1015, updates provisions related to the licensure of funeral services;
- HB 1018, repeals the authorized forfeiture of property used in the illegal capture of fish;
- HB 1019, repeals certain requirements for Game, Fish, and Parks licensing agents;
- HB 1025, revises the fees for registration of an apiary;
- HB 1026, makes an appropriation for costs related to suppression of wildfires in the state and to declare an emergency;
- HB 1027, makes an appropriation for costs related to disasters in the state and to declare an emergency;
- HB 1028, modifies expiration dates and enforcement actions pertaining to pesticide applicator licenses;
- HB 1033, provides for the uniform administration of tobacco products taxes;
- HB 1034, modifies tax refunds for elderly persons and persons with a disability, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency;
- HB 1036, increases civil penalties for commercial driver's license holders and motor carriers;
- HB 1062, clarifies the convening of recount boards for primary elections;
- HB 1063, requires the Unified Judicial System to assemble a task force to address barriers to services for emerging adults involved in the justice system; and,
- HB 1071, establishes use of force course standards.

Governor Noem has signed 33 bills into law this legislative session.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 8 of 81

GHS Basketball

Boys beat Redfield, free throws propel Huskys to win over Lady Tigers

Groton Area boys defeated Redfield on Thursday, 57-44, in a game played at Redfield. There were seven lead changes and the game was tied three times in the first quarter before the Tigers took a 16-12 lead. Groton Area led at half time, 30-23, and after three quarters, 48-31.

Ryder Johnson led the Tigers with 16 points, five rebounds and four steals. Tate Larson had 13 points, eight rebounds, three assists and three steals. Lane Tietz had 11 points, seven rebounds, four assists and four steals. Cole Simon had five points, two rebounds and four steals. Taylor Diegel had five points. Keegan Tracy had five points, one rebound. Jacob Zak had two points, two rebounds, two assists and one block. Cade Larson had two rebounds and one assist. Logan Ringgenberg had one rebound and one block.

Groton Area made 19 of 36 field goals for 53 percent, three of 20 three-pointers for 15 percent, 10 of 16 free throws for 63 percent, had 28 rebounds, 10 turnovers, 10 assists, 15 steals, 16 team fouls with Zak fouling out and two block shots.

Mitchell Mack scored all 14 of his Redfield points in the first half while Nolan Gall scored all 14 of his points in the second half to lead the Pheasants. Then Jerron Haider and Justin Ratigan each had four points and Zach Akin had three points. Redfield made 19 of 37 field goals for 51 percent, six of 11 free throws for 54 percent, had 19 turnovers and 12 team fouls.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 49-19. Keegan Tracy led the Tigers with 16 points followed by Dillon Abeln with 13 points, Ryder Johnson and Logan Ringgenberg each had six points, Jayden Schwan and Gage Sippel each had three points and Blake Pauli had two points.

Groton won the junior high game, 42-12. Ryder Schelle and Carson Zak each had nine points, Easten Weber had eight, Alex Abeln and Jace Johnson each had four, Blake Lord and TC Schuster each had three points and Ethan Kroll had two points.

Meanwhile in Groton, the Lady Tigers took on Elk Point-Jefferson and watched their first half lead evaporate into defeat, 52-44. Groton Area led after the first quarter, 17-8, and at half time, 26-25. Elk Point-Jefferson took control in the third quarter and led at the break, 39-31. The Huskys won the game from the line, 21-10.

Sydney Leicht led the Tigers with 12 points, two rebounds and one steal. Jerica Locke had 10 points, five rebounds, one assist and five steals. Faith Traphagen had eight points, three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Jaedyn Penning had six points, two rebounds, one assist and one steal. Kennedy Hansen had four points, five rebounds and two assists. Aspen Johnson had two points, one rebound and three steals. Brooke Gengerke had two points, three rebounds and two assists. Brooklyn Hansen had one rebound and two assists.

Groton Area made 11 of 36 field goals for 31 percent, four of 14 three-pointers for 29 percent, had 22 rebounds, nine turnovers, nine assists, 11 steals and 21 team fouls with four players having four fouls. Elk Point-Jefferson made 21 of 24 free throws for 88 percent. Elk Point-Jefferson had 18 team fouls with three players having four fouls that allowed the Tigers to make 10 of 19 free throws for 53 percent.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 37-25. Kennedy Hansen led the Tigers with eight points followed by Faith Traphagen with six, Brooklyn Hansen and Elizabeth Fliehs each had five points, Rylee Dunker had four points, adding two points apiece were McKenna Tietz, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen and Talli Wright, and Laila Roberts made a free throw.

Special thanks to Shane Clark and Jeslyn Kosel for running the GDILIVE.COM broadcast in Groton, and to Ryan Tracy who assisted Paul Kosel in Redfield. Also to Becky Erickson for bringing Jeslyn down to Redfield after the Groton game.

Game sponsors were as follows: Girls JV: Mr. Anonymous. Boys JV: Grandma and Grandpa. JH Boys at Redfield: Akaska Tavern & Bait Shop. The both varsity game sponsors were Bahr Spray Foam, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Chamber of Commerce, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Locke Electric, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc., Spanier Harvesting & Trucking, Thunder Seed with John Wheeting.

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

February 13, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of January 9, 2023 board meeting, February 1, 2023 special board meeting, and February 8, 2023 special board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of January 2023 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of January 2023 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of January 2023 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of January 2023 School Transportation Report.
6. Approve open enrollment #23-18 with special circumstances.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Program Overview Presentation
 - a. Science...K. Gonsoir, T. Kurth, L. Hawkins
 - b. English/Language Arts, Reading...S. Hanten, D. Kurtz, R. Pederson, R. Long-Buechler
3. Approve 2023-2024 school calendar.
4. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Consider bids for elementary roofing repairs.
2. Consider bids for school bus purchase.
3. Discuss and consider architectural proposals for Health Science Lab Renovation and 1969 Gym Renovation.
4. Set 2023 Driver's Education Fee and issue Driver's Education Instructor Agreements.
5. Approve hiring Caitlyn Fischbach as 1st Grade Teacher for the 2023-2024 school year.

ADJOURN

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 10 of 81

GDILIVE.COM

Girls' Basketball
Friday, Feb. 10, 2023

Groton Area hosting Redfield

C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV sponsored by Mr. Anonymous

Varsity Game to follow 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
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
Bahr Spray Foam
Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

Double Header Basketball at Mobridge-Pollock
Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023

Girls JV Game @ 1 PM in HS Gym sponsored by Larry & Val Fliehs
Boys JV Game @ 1 PM in MS Gym sponsored by Ed & Connie Stauch

Varsity Games to follow 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
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
Bahr Spray Foam
Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Transgender advocacy group sues state over contract cancellation

BY: JOHN HULT - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 6:27 PM

On the same day South Dakota lawmakers sent a bill to bar certain kinds of health care for transgender youth to Gov. Kristi Noem's desk, a transgender advocacy organization filed suit against the state over her abrupt cancellation of a Department of Health contract late last year.

The Transformation Project's lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for South Dakota on Thursday afternoon, alleges that the contract cancellation violated federal civil rights law by discriminating on the basis of gender.

It names Noem as a defendant, as well as Melissa Magstadt, the recently appointed head of the health department.

The contract cancellation "was more than a wrong decision, it was unconstitutional and unlawful," according to Brendan Johnson, the attorney representing the nonprofit group.

"Our state government is not above the rule of law, and we look forward to standing with The Transformation Project in this important constitutional challenge," Johnson said in a prepared statement.

The Transformation Project was among several organizations awarded federal grant funds last year to hire and train a community health worker to serve South Dakota citizens. Transgender people were among those the grant funding was designed to help, along with rural Americans and members of other historically marginalized groups.

Gov. Kristi Noem canceled the \$136,000 contract on Dec. 16, shortly after a reporter from a conservative news outlet contacted her office to inquire about it.

Through spokesman Ian Fury, Noem told the outlet she was unaware of the contract's existence.

The Department of Health, which had originally awarded the contract, released a statement shortly afterward alleging that The Transformation Project had failed to live up to its contractual obligations.

The nonprofit rejected those claims at the time, and Johnson announced within a week that his firm, Robins Kaplan, intended to sue.

The lawsuit disputes the state's assertions about contractual errors and accuses the state of caving to political pressure.

The failures outlined in the state's termination letter were "an attempt to apply a thin gloss of contract law to the State's discriminatory actions," the lawsuit says.

The Transformation Project, referred to as "TTP" throughout the text of the complaint, is named as one plaintiff.

"South Dakota's decision to cancel the Contract was based purely on national politics. The State knew about and initially supported TTP's mission; in fact, the State told TTP to request more money than it originally sought," the lawsuit reads.

It alleges that the contract cancellation was a violation of the federal Affordable Care Act's non-discrimination policies.

The other plaintiff in the case, Jack Fonder, is the community health worker hired with contract funds. He remains on staff, and the organization has asked for donations to fund his position.

The lawsuit argues that Fonder's work is critical to the health of South Dakotans who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning or two-spirit (LGBTQ2S).

"In South Dakota, 53% of LGBTQ2S youth have seriously considered suicide in the past year, and 19% report a suicide attempt in the last year. LGBTQ2S youth in South Dakota face staggeringly high rates of anxiety (75%), depression (58%), and threats of harm due to their sexual orientation or gender identity

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 12 of 81

(40%). 80% experience discrimination; 59% desire mental health care but report not having access. LG-BTQ2S adults similarly face discrimination and disparities in health care treatment and access," the lawsuit says.

The Transformation Project initially requested around \$46,000 in grant funding to hire a community health worker, the complaint says, but the state told the organization it could receive up to \$136,000. The group resubmitted its application, and the contract was finalized Sept. 13.

The lawsuit also says Gov. Noem saw backlash in conservative circles after vetoing an "anti-trans youth sports bill" in 2021, noting that 47 conservative organizations publicly criticized her decision. The governor has since "attempted to portray herself as an opponent of transgender people," and signed a bill barring transgender youth from participation in sporting activities that do not align with their sex at birth.

The issue of transgender rights has only heated up in South Dakota since the contract controversy emerged in mid-December. Lawmakers in Pierre advanced a bill restricting certain kinds of health care for transgender youth through the South Dakota Senate on Thursday.

The decision to sign it now lies with Noem, who has previously said that she is supportive of the legislation.

Transformation Project Executive Director Susan Williams responded to the legislation with a statement. "Attacks from the SD State Legislature can make you forget that there are thousands of allies in this state who value you & want you to live a long & happy life right here in South Dakota. We love you & will continue fighting for you each & every day." Williams wrote.

HB 1080 is one of dozens of gender-related proposals filed so far this year by lawmakers in state houses across the country. Utah Governor Spencer Cox signed a measure similar to HB 1080 into law last month.

The Transformation Project has urged supporters to attend "Trans Rights are Human Rights" protests prior to legislative coffee events Saturday morning in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Brookings and Vermillion. It's also among the groups urging people to come to the Capitol on Tuesday for "Visibility Day."

Fury and Kieran Tate, spokesperson for the health department, did not immediately respond to requests for comment Thursday.

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

Lawmakers send transgender youth health care ban to Noem's desk

BY: SETH TUPPER - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 3:30 PM

South Dakota legislators sent a bill to Gov. Kristi Noem's desk Thursday that would ban some forms of health care for transgender youth.

Noem will now decide whether to sign the bill into law. She previously expressed support for the legislation.

Supporters said the bill would protect children and parents from making decisions they might later regret, while opponents said it intrudes on private medical decisions and puts transgender children at risk of harm from a lack of necessary medical care. The bill comes amid a national debate on the subject, with multiple states passing or considering similar legislation.

Sen. Al Novstrup, R-Aberdeen, the bill's prime sponsor in the Senate, advocated for the bill's passage during the Senate debate.

"We need to stand up for the vulnerable children in our state," Novstrup said. "We care deeply about children who are struggling with their identities, and want to provide them with true, meaningful help, not permanent physical damage."

The bill passed by a vote of 30-4, with one senator excused. The no votes came from the chamber's four Democrats: Sens. Shawn Bordeaux of Mission, Red Dawn Foster of Pine Ridge, and Liz Larson and Reynold Nesiba of Sioux Falls. Sen. Josh Klumb, R-Mitchell, was excused.

Failed amendments

Nesiba proposed an unsuccessful amendment that would have required the state Department of Social

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 13 of 81

Services to make mental health counseling available for children with gender dysphoria. He said if the state bans all other forms of health care for transgender children, there should be some protection for the remaining form of legal care.

"If you vote for this amendment, at least you can say that you're serious about not doing harm, that we want to help," Nesiba said. "We want to make sure these kids have access to counseling."

Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, also tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill. His amendment would have allowed prescription puberty blockers for children.

"Puberty blockers can calm a child's anxiety so that counseling can begin," Reed said. "Blockers have a place helping families navigate through an extremely difficult situation."

Bill language

The final version of the bill would apply to health care professionals treating children younger than 18. It would ban the prescribing of puberty blockers; the prescribing of testosterone, estrogen or progesterone in amounts "greater than would normally be produced" by a healthy person; the performing of several forms of surgeries; and the removing of "any healthy or non-diseased body part or tissue."

There are exemptions allowing the banned treatments in situations the bill describes as a "disorder of sex development" – such as when a child has "irresolvably ambiguous" physical sex characteristics. The exemptions also cover children who need treatment for an infection, injury, disease or disorder that has been caused or exacerbated by any of the banned procedures.

Another section of the bill allows for systematic reductions of any drug or hormone treatments already underway when the bill becomes law, if the immediate termination of the treatments would cause harm to the patient.

The bill would authorize lawsuits against any health care professionals who perform the banned procedures, and subject them to the revocation of their professional licenses.

Reaction

Prior hearings on the bill – especially those in legislative committees, where private citizens are allowed to speak – included hours of impassioned testimony. Thursday, civil rights and LGBTQ advocacy groups immediately condemned the bill's final legislative passage.

"Discrimination against a marginalized group is a distraction from the state's real needs and hurts us all," said a written statement from Samantha Chapman, advocacy manager for the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota.

Susan Williams, executive director of The Transformation Project in Sioux Falls, issued a statement addressing transgender youth on social media.

"Attacks from the SD State Legislature can make you forget that there are thousands of allies in this state who value you & want you to live a long & happy life right here in South Dakota," Williams wrote. "We love you & will continue fighting for you each & every day."

The ACLU and Transformation Project are among the groups encouraging protests prior to Saturday morning legislative forums in multiple cities.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Bill would require companies to disclose ag land and foreign owners

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 11:07 AM

In a unanimous vote Thursday, the South Dakota House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee passed a bill requiring companies to disclose whether they own agricultural land and have any foreign owners.

The bill will now move to the full House for consideration.

The bill is a response to a loophole in a law passed in 1979 that was designed to prevent some foreign individuals and governments from owning more than 160 acres of farmland. Despite that law, records in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 14 of 81

2016 published by the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting showed multiple examples of foreigners owning more than 160 acres in South Dakota.

Jon Van Patten is an assistant attorney general for the state and previously served 38 years as a law professor at the University of South Dakota. He told South Dakota Public Broadcasting the 1979 law has a loophole, because it only addresses foreign residents and governments.

"Who else besides an alien and a foreign government could own property? And the answer would be a corporation," Van Patten said.

Under the new legislation, when corporations file already mandated annual reports with the state, they would have to disclose whether they own any agricultural land and whether they have any foreign owners. The bill would not require those owners to say what country they're from.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Pierre, stated during testimony at the Capitol in Pierre that while the bill does not stop foreign corporations from buying agricultural land, it at least identifies them.

"We're just requiring disclosure," Mortenson said. "And then if we want to start closing that loophole, we'll have an enforcement mechanism that the attorney general can start pursuing, and we can build out what that looks like."

The bill received support from members of South Dakota's agricultural community, who view it as a step toward greater accountability and transparency in ownership of the state's agricultural land.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, foreign residents or entities now own over 350,000 acres of ag land in South Dakota. That's about 1% of all South Dakota agricultural land, but a greater than 3,000% increase from 1979. The largest foreign owners of South Dakota farmland are from Europe and Canada.

Land ownership by China, specifically, has become a top concern of Gov. Kristi Noem and other politicians. She supports a bill to establish a vetting process for foreign purchases of agricultural land in South Dakota. That bill, which has not yet had a hearing, includes creating a board to investigate proposed purchases of ag land by foreign interests, and to make recommendations of approval or denial.

"With this new process, we will be able to prevent nations who hate us – like Communist China – from buying up our state's agriculture land," Noem said in a news release.

There is currently no Chinese ownership of ag land in South Dakota, according to the USDA data. The Chinese-owned Sioux Falls Smithfield packing plant does not appear in the data, apparently because it's within Sioux Falls city limits and is classified as industrial land – something Mortenson's bill, which only targets ag land, does not address.

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.

U.S. Senate panel debates safety net spending in upcoming farm bill

BY: ADAM GOLDSTEIN - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 6:05 PM

WASHINGTON — Members of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee quibbled Thursday over spending on crop insurance and ad-hoc disaster relief, previewing potential fights in the 2023 farm bill.

Legislators of both parties emphasized their support at a Thursday hearing for better funding programs that protect underserved producers, and accounting for future natural disasters in crop insurance negotiations.

"Farming remains one of the riskiest businesses, and farmers still need these tools," said Democratic Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow, chairwoman of the committee. "We need to work together to create a farm safety net that is responsive to the needs of all of our farmers."

But Republican members of the committee raised concerns about the amount of recent spending on emergency aid. The committee's ranking member, John Boozman of Arkansas, said authorized farm bill

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 15 of 81

programs formed a better safety net than ad-hoc aid.

"We owe it to all Americans to ensure the bottom does not fall out of agriculture," Boozman said. "We cannot only focus on certain programs and not others when all farm bill programs are necessary to achieve economic sustainability for our farmers, ranchers and rural communities."

The federal farm "safety net" is a collection of policies that provide billions of dollars worth of annual risk protection and income support to American farmers. The programs protect producers from the financial impacts of poor growing seasons, low market prices and disaster relief.

From 2018 through 2021, average annual expenditures included \$8.9 billion for the federal crop insurance program, \$660 million for the standing disaster assistance programs, and \$5.7 billion for the commodity support programs.

If continued into the next farm bill, the Congressional Research Service estimates combined spending on the federal crop insurance, agricultural commodity support and agricultural disaster programs would be \$13.4 billion annually over the next 9 years.

The USDA also administered more than \$65 billion in ad-hoc farm aid from 2019 through 2023, to help farmers navigate trade wars, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessing the net's impacts

USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie, Farm Service Agency Administrator Zach Ducheneaux, and Risk Management Agency Administrator Marcia Bunger briefed the panel on the current state of farm aid programs.

Bonnie said the FSA has processed over 350,000 applications totaling over \$8 billion in payments to livestock and crop producers to help offset losses from 2020 and 2021.

He added that the omnibus spending bill passed last year will allow for close to \$10 billion annually of USDA ad-hoc relief in 2023, similar to recent years.

Bonnie said that crop insurance still remains a "vital tool" for producers, and the department has made efforts to expand crop insurance options in a greater range of options.

Bunger spoke to the necessity of expanding high-quality crop insurance policies to specialty and organic crop producers, along with smaller operations.

"My husband and I have been farming together for the last 40 years, and in the last 27 years, crop insurance has been a cornerstone of our operation," Bunger said. "It's a passion of mine that all of these growers, whether they are beginning farmers, whether they are veterans, that they have the same kind of policy my husband and I have used."

Increasing equity, access to protection

Stabenow asked Bunger about how the Risk Management Agency plans to bolster options for specialty crop producers.

Bunger responded that the agency has been hosting stakeholder meetings across the country, and has worked to ease the application process and lower requirements for insurance plans for small-scale farms.

Democratic Sen. Tina Smith of Minnesota asked how the farm bill could improve access to credit and insurance programs for farmers of color.

Ducheneaux replied that a culture shift must take place within the agency, adjusting tests of credit, using Inflation Adjustment Act resources to make loan modifications and lowering barriers like excessive paperwork.

"We should look to be the lender of first opportunity, as opposed to the lender of last resort," Ducheneaux said.

Sen. Ben Ray Lujan, a Democrat from New Mexico, expressed concern over a lack of eligibility for some drought-stressed New Mexico farmers to receive prevented plant payments due to the Trump administration's "one-in-four" rule. This rule states that agricultural land must be planted, insured, and harvested in one of the past four years to receive prevented plant compensation.

"We have come to hear from groups stakeholders that we maybe didn't have all of the conversations that we needed to have," Bunger replied. "One in four is very regionalized in a lot of cases. And so for

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 16 of 81

this coming year, we've made an exception for several Western states to step outside of that one-in-four." Bunger noted New Mexico will be receiving one of these waivers.

Planning for disaster in the farm bill

A number of senators spoke to the imbalance of farmer aid resources between the farm bill and ad-hoc programs, voicing concerns over inequity and wasteful spending. Ad-hoc farm payments to farmers have dwarfed crop insurance payments, \$70 billion to \$3 billion, over the last 6 years.

"The reality suggests the existing safety nets need to be enhanced, and that we must find a better way to more quickly deliver relief to producers," Boozman said.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican, noted that the crop insurance title of the farm bill is one of the most heavily funded. He asked if there is any way to better set up crop insurance to mitigate the need for ad-hoc funding.

Bonnie noted that reducing paperwork is key to ensuring that existing disaster programs in the farm bill get rolled out quickly, along with expanding access to crop insurance and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

Still, Bonnie noted that while the USDA structures their ad-hoc programs to recruit enrollees into the crop insurance and disaster assistance programs, there is growing interest in the ad-hoc programs among producers.

"I think our job on the implementation side is to get those out as efficiently and quickly as we can to help our producers," Bonnie said. "We're open to discussion."

Addressing foreign ownership

Republican Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa asked, in light of the recent Chinese suspected spy balloon incident, if Congress can use the farm bill to modernize the Agriculture Foreign Investment Disclosure Act.

Bonnie said that monitoring and disclosing of foreign agriculture investments to the USDA is a "paper-based process," and the department lacks enforcement tools to enforce oversight of that paperwork.

Republican Sen. Mike Braun of Indiana asked if the USDA would commit to blocking purchases of land from countries like China, Iran, North Korea and Russia.

Bonnie said that he would not commit to blocking purchases, but offered technical assistance on drafting the legislation.

Adam Goldstein is the D.C. Bureau intern for States Newsroom. Goldstein is a graduate student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, studying digital reporting. He is originally from San Francisco, and loves swimming, cooking, and the San Francisco 49ers.

New U.S. House weaponization panel to probe FBI, IRS, ATF

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 3:16 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Democrats on Thursday urged the GOP lawmakers running the new Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government to work with them on genuine oversight investigations that weren't political or focused on leveling grievances.

Maryland Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin said during the panel's first hearing that the subcommittee "could conceivably become part of a proud history of serious bipartisan oversight stretching from the Teapot Dome investigation to the Boeing investigation to the Watergate hearings to the tobacco hearings to the select committee on the Jan. 6 attack."

"Or it could take oversight down a very dark alley filled with conspiracy theories and disinformation — a place where facts are the enemy and partisan destruction is the overriding goal," Raskin added.

Chairman Jim Jordan, an Ohio Republican, shared few details about exactly where the panel will focus its efforts during the 118th Congress.

But he did mention the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and the Internal Revenue Services as federal agencies likely to get put under the panel's microscope.

He also said the committee would ultimately release a bill to address its concerns.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 17 of 81

"Over the course of our work in this committee, we expect to hear from government officials and experts, like we have here today," Jordan said.

"We expect to hear from Americans who have been targeted by their government, we expect to hear from people in the media and we expect to hear from the FBI agents who came forward as whistleblowers," Jordan added. "We think many of them will sit for transcribed interviews as one did on Tuesday, and we believe several of them will testify in open hearings."

Grassley and Johnson testify

The first panel to testify in front of the subcommittee included Iowa GOP Sen. Chuck Grassley, Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson, Raskin and former Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard.

Grassley and Johnson both spoke about the investigations they've led into the finances and business dealings of Hunter Biden, President Joe Biden's son, as well as how the Justice Department handled the Mueller investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

"It's clear to me that the Justice Department and the FBI are suffering from a political infection that, if it's not defeated, will cause the American people no longer to trust these storied institutions," Grassley said. "It will also threaten the American way of life."

Grassley rebuked Democratic lawmakers for openly questioning his prior investigations and federal investigators for their actions during the past few years, listing former Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, among others.

He then committed to working with the U.S. House panel to help them investigate further.

"Your committee here has an opportunity to help us write the last chapter in this real life drama," Grassley said. "You must relentlessly pursue the facts and the evidence."

Johnson mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed more than 1 million Americans, questioning the motivations behind the economic shutdown and federal research that led to a vaccine, both of which occurred during the Trump administration.

He alleged that the World Health Organization has been "captured" by the Chinese government, that global institutions have been "captured" by the left and that some charitable organizations are exerting more power over public policy than they should be allowed.

"I have barely scratched the surface in describing the complexity, power and destructive nature of the forces that we face," Johnson said.

Johnson called on whistleblowers from throughout the federal government to come forward to share information with the panel.

"Our founders fully understood that government was necessary to avoid anarchy. But they also knew that government power was something to fear," he said. "That's why they devised a set of checks and balances to limit government power and influence over our lives."

Following his Republican colleagues' assertions of Democratic "weaponization" of the federal government, Maryland's Raskin read off a list of actions undertaken by the Trump administration, which he argued were prime examples of the "weaponization" of the Justice Department.

Raskin pressed the panel to work in a bipartisan manner, arguing that "oversight must be organized around a comprehensive search for the truth ... not around revenge."

"It's one thing to engage in systematic oversight driven by a commitment to facts and the truth," Raskin added. "And something radically different to set up a platform for a series of hit-and-run partisan attacks that are just vindictive and debt-driven and meant to frame up a presidential campaign in 2024."

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

China balloon's voyage across Alaska, Montana and U.S. enrages members of U.S. Senate panel

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 3:10 PM

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of U.S. senators grilled Pentagon officials Thursday on why a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon was permitted to fly over Alaska and across the lower 48 states before being shot down off the coast of South Carolina.

The Senate Committee on Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, led by Montana Democrat Jon Tester, featured questions from lawmakers who represent the Western and northernmost regions of the country — areas, they emphasized, that contain sensitive military sites and are geographically more vulnerable to a Chinese incursion.

"As an Alaskan, I am so angry. I want to use other words, but I'm not going to," said the state's Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

"The fact of the matter is Alaska is the first line of defense for America, right? If you're going to have Russia coming at you, if you're going to have China coming at you, we know exactly how they come. They come up and they go over Alaska."

The hearing coincided with bipartisan approval 419-0 Thursday morning in the U.S. House of a resolution condemning the Chinese Communist Party's use of the surveillance balloon as a "brazen violation of United States sovereignty."

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Friday denied that the balloon was conducting surveillance, and said it instead was collecting weather data.

The Pentagon countered that statement the same day, saying that the balloon was carrying surveillance equipment.

In its first public acknowledgement of the balloon on Feb. 2, the Pentagon said it "acted immediately" to protect against collection of sensitive material as soon as the aircraft was detected.

The high-altitude balloon entered U.S. airspace on Jan. 28, approaching Alaska and then remaining "for a short period of time" over the state before moving over Canada, said Melissa Dalton, assistant secretary of defense for homeland defense and hemispheric affairs, in her testimony to the panel.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, determined the balloon was not a significant threat to U.S. citizens or aviation traffic, nor did it pose significant intelligence gathering capability at the time it was over Alaska, and so leaders made the decision to monitor it, Pentagon officials told the committee.

The balloon entered airspace over the continental U.S. on Jan. 31. That same day, President Joe Biden was briefed, and he ordered the military to assess the best option for shooting down the balloon, officials said.

"In determining potential options, the risk of Chinese intelligence collection was deemed to be low to moderate, while the risk to U.S. personnel on the ground was assessed at moderate to significant," Lt. Gen. Douglas Sims II, director of operations for Joint Staff (J3), told the panel in his opening statement.

Because the risk for debris and injury on the ground outweighed the intelligence loss, the military recommended waiting to shoot down the balloon until it was over water, he said.

Initial modeling showed risks of a wide debris field, and officials estimated the balloon was 200 feet tall "with a jetliner-sized payload" hanging beneath it, Dalton said.

Murkowski sounds off

"Seems to me the clear message to China is, 'We got free range in Alaska because they're going to let us cruise over that until we get to more sensitive areas,'" Murkowski said during her questioning, throwing up her arms to emphasize her point and highlighting military sites and equipment in her home state.

"At what point do we say a surveillance balloon, a spy balloon, coming from China is a threat to our sovereignty? It should be the minute it crosses the line, and that line is Alaska," she continued.

Dalton told the panel that in addition to concerns about debris, recovery of the balloon factored into the Pentagon's decision.

"It would've been a very different recovery operation," Dalton said. "As Sen. Murkowski knows, the water

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 19 of 81

depths offshore the Aleutian (Islands) at 6-plus nautical miles go very quickly from about 150 feet to over 18,000 feet. The winter water temperatures in the Bering Sea hover consistently in the low 30s, which would make recovery and salvage operations very dangerous.”

Recovery remains ongoing 6 miles off the coast of South Carolina, where the balloon splashed down Saturday after a U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor shot it with a single missile, officials said.

Earlier balloons

The panel also pressed military officials on why this balloon was shot down while previous Chinese surveillance balloons that the Pentagon said entered U.S. airspace during the Trump administration were left afloat.

Another Chinese surveillance balloon ended up in waters near Hawaii last year, but a Pentagon spokesman Wednesday declined to give specifics about the incident.

The U.S. intelligence community has connected last week’s balloon encroachment to a vast surveillance balloon program operated by the Chinese military, the Washington Post reported Tuesday.

Dalton said last week’s balloon flight “was different than all the rest,” specifically because of its duration.

The balloon’s existence became public late last week as it hovered over Montana, causing Tester to issue a statement Friday calling the development a “completely unacceptable provocation.”

Montana is home to Malmstrom Air Force Base, one of the U.S. nuclear missile sites.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponed a pre-planned trip to Beijing Friday as the balloon continued to move eastward across the U.S.

“Do we have a plan for the next time it happens and how we’re going to deal with it?” Tester asked the military officials during Thursday’s hearing. “Because quite frankly I’ll just tell you, I don’t want a damn balloon going across the United States when we could have potentially taken it down over the Aleutian Islands, no offense to Alaska or Alaskans.”

Dalton said as the recovery in the Atlantic continues, the military is “building our understanding of what capabilities they (China) have and what we need to do going forward.”

When Tester asked what the Chinese were trying to collect during the flight, Principal Deputy Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Jedidiah Royal said a classified setting would be more appropriate for sharing specifics, but “we have some very good guesses about that and we are learning more as we exploit the contents of the balloon and the payload itself.”

Senators immediately went into a classified briefing with the officials following the open hearing.

The U.S.S. Carter Hall continues to collect debris off the coast of South Carolina as a Navy sonar vessel maps the ocean floor for debris.

Officials are urging the public to call law enforcement if they see any debris wash ashore, a Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday.

Ashley Murray covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

White House taps Indiana, New Mexico governors for federal-state council on national security

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 11:34 AM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden announced Thursday the appointment of Govs. Eric J. Holcomb, an Indiana Republican, and Michelle Lujan Grisham, a New Mexico Democrat, to a special bipartisan board that strengthens the federal and state partnership on matters pertaining to national security.

The Council of Governors consists of 10 members selected by the president to serve a two-year term, with no more than five members from the same political party.

The goal is to “increase coordination around preparedness, resilience, and response between the Federal government and state governments, and strengthen the Federal-State partnership that’s critical to protecting our nation from threats to our homeland security,” according to a White House fact sheet.

The White House said in a statement that this year the council will focus on “supply chain resiliency and Federal-State cooperation to mitigate risks to defense critical infrastructure.”

There have been major supply chain issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war that have contributed to inflation and disruptions in the flow of goods.

The White House said that Holcomb and Lujan Grisham will replace former Govs. Kate Brown of Oregon, a Democrat, and Bill Lee of Tennessee, a Republican, both of whom have finished their terms.

The Council of Governors was authorized in 2008 by the National Defense Authorization Act, a must-pass defense measure, and established in 2010 by an executive order during the Obama administration.

The council focuses on homeland security; homeland defense; civil support; state and federal military activities in the United States; and matters involving the National Guard.

“Federal-State cooperation is critical to protecting communities given the evolving challenges and threats facing our country, which range from extreme weather to domestic and international terrorism to a global pandemic,” the White House said.

The other governors sitting on the council include:

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, Co-Chair

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Co-Chair

Delaware Gov. John Carney

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott

Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

SD's pheasant predator bounties are wrong for Nebraska, experts say

BY: PAUL HAMMEL - FEBRUARY 9, 2023 8:59 AM

LINCOLN, Neb. — Pheasant hunting in South Dakota generates an estimated \$220 million a year in retail spending and causes an annual flood of 120,000 orange-clad hunters into the state.

But a Nebraska state senator's effort to try to replicate that kind of economic impact by increasing Nebraska's shrinking pheasant population prompted opposition from biologists and groups that work to increase wildlife populations.

They testified Wednesday that State Sen. Tom Brewer's proposal to pay a \$10 bounty on predators that prey on pheasants — as is done in South Dakota — is the wrong solution to a complicated problem.

Parade of opposition

Opponents of Legislative Bill 400 included the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Pheasants Forever, the Nebraska Sportsmen's Foundation, the Nature Conservancy and famed National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore.

They maintained that the loss of habitat for ring-necked pheasants and poor weather during nesting season are the primary forces that have reduced bird populations since their peak in the 1960s.

Alicia Hardin, a wildlife administrator with the Game and Parks Commission, said a number of studies have found that if the right kind of habitat is provided, and the weather isn't too cold and wet or too dry after birds hatch, pheasants will increase.

Statewide bounties on predators, she said, are hard to sustain financially and don't account for all the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 21 of 81

animals that prey on pheasants and their eggs.

Wildlife acres have declined

Nebraska, Hardin said, has lost about half of the grasslands preserved under the federal Conservation Reserve Program since its peak in the 1990s, which has contributed to the decline in pheasants. About 351,000 acres were enrolled in CRP in 2021.

She added that the Game and Parks Commission, in 2017, launched an initiative to increase pheasant populations, the Berggren Plan, that has impacted 300,000 acres of land. Investing funds in habitat is the best idea, Hardin said.

Increased prices for crops, others said, have contributed to an expansion of plowed fields and a decline in pheasant habitat. Others said modern farming practices, in which pesticides have rid fields of weeds and insects, are also to blame.

Supporters of LB 400, meanwhile, said that populations of coyotes, raccoons and other predators of pheasants appear to have increased, and with a drop in fur prices and trappers, there's no way to control populations without an incentive.

They lamented the lack of opportunities for young hunters and the missed opportunity for spending on motels, food and hunting lodges that would come with more pheasants to pursue.

Brewer says he was ambushed

Brewer, at the conclusion of the public hearing on LB 400 before the Legislature's Natural Resources Committee, expressed some anger that wildlife organizations had "ambushed" him in their opposition testimony, instead of working with him on amendments before the hearing.

He said that one idea suggested at the hearing — giving farmers a property tax break if they set aside acres for wildlife — had merit and that he remains committed to working on solutions.

The Natural Resources Committee took no action on LB 400 after its hearing Wednesday.

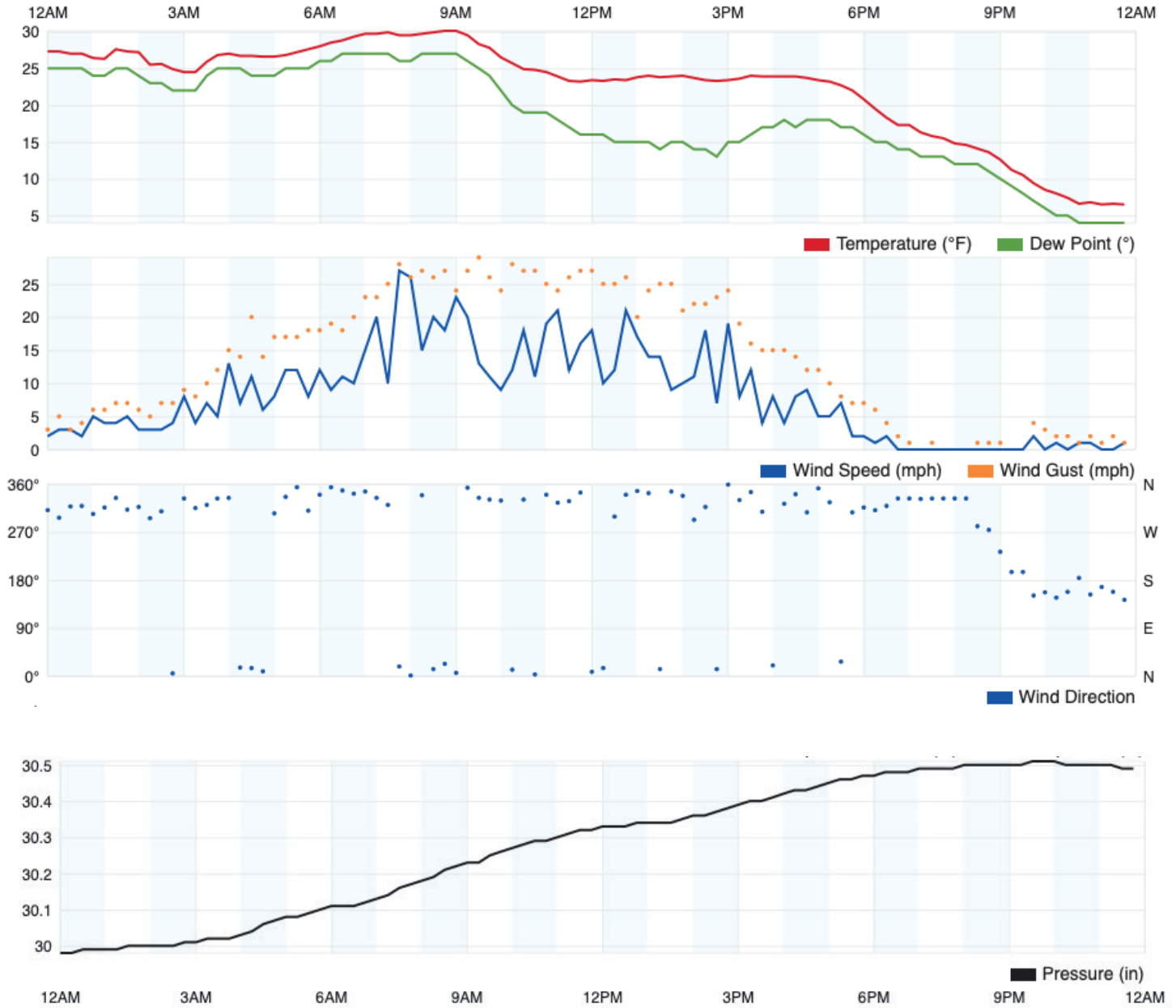
— This story was originally published by the Nebraska Examiner, which like South Dakota Searchlight is part of the States Newsroom network.

Paul Hammel is the senior reporter for the Nebraska Examiner. He has covered the Nebraska Legislature and Nebraska state government for decades. He started his career reporting for the Omaha Sun and was named editor of the Papillion Times in 1982. He later worked as a sports enterprise reporter at the Lincoln Journal-Star. He joined the Omaha World-Herald in 1990, working as a legislative reporter, then roving state reporter and finally Lincoln bureau chief. Paul has won awards from organizations including Great Plains Journalism, the Associated Press and Suburban Newspapers of America. A native of Ralston, Nebraska, he is vice president of the John G. Neihardt Foundation and secretary of the Nebraska Hop Growers.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 22 of 81

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 23 of 81

Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
Patchy Dense Fog then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 30 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 35 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 37 °F

Mild, Dry Next Several Days



Today	Saturday	Sunday
Feb 10, 2023	Feb 11, 2023	Feb 12, 2023
28 to 45°	32 to 52°	32 to 50°

Warmest across central SD, coolest across the Prairie Coteau

- Patchy fog possible** this and Saturday morning
- Windy across the eastern slopes of the Prairie Coteau mainly this evening. **40-45 mph gusts** may result in localized drifting and blowing snow.
- Snow chances increasing** Tuesday into Wednesday



After a cold morning, temperatures will quickly rebound this afternoon and mild air will then persist into early next week. Heads up however for some windy conditions mainly this evening across the eastern slopes of the Prairie Coteau, as well as the potential for morning fog today and Saturday. Snow potential returns into the picture for Tuesday and Wednesday.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 24 of 81

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 30 °F at 9:10 AM

Low Temp: 6 °F at 11:57 PM

Wind: 31 mph at 7:49 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 13 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 53 in 1977

Record Low: -27 in 1988

Average High: 27

Average Low: 4

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.20

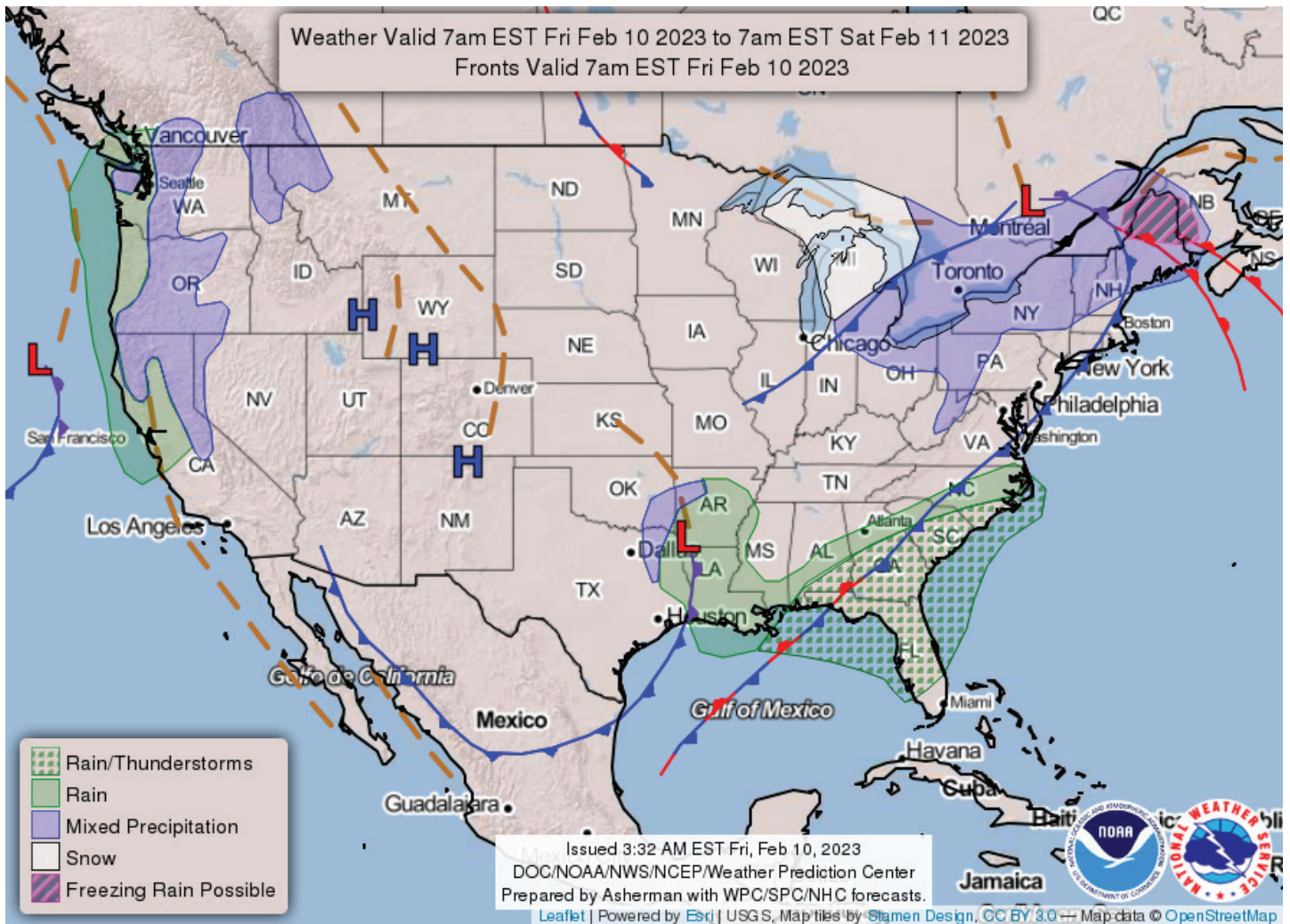
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.75

Precip Year to Date: 0.25

Sunset Tonight: 5:53:28 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38:15 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 25 of 81

Today in Weather History

February 10, 1993: Snow fell across South Dakota from the 10th to the 12th, with over 8 inches in south-central, west-central, and southwest. Some reports included 13 inches at Harrington, 12 inches at Midland, 10.5 inches at Winner, 10 inches near Stephan, Ardmore, and Wagner, 8.5 inches near Lead and Milesville, and 8 inches at Mitchell and Usta.

February 10, 1996: Across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, an intense area of low pressure and an Arctic high-pressure area created strong winds from 35 to 50 mph with gusts to around 65 mph through the afternoon and into the late evening. These high winds combined with the falling snow and the snow on the ground create blizzard conditions and slick roads across northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. Highway 12 from Webster to Summit was closed the evening of the 10th and Interstate-29 from Summit to Sisseton. Hundreds of travelers were stranded at Summit for several hours until conditions improved. Some wind gusts included 61 mph at Mobridge and 66 mph at Pierre and Aberdeen.

February 10, 2013: A powerful area of low pressure brought widespread heavy snow of 6 to as much as 19 inches across South Dakota and into Minnesota. The combination of heavy snow and powerful winds of 30 to 50 mph caused extensive blowing and drifting snow. Roads, highways, and Interstates 29 and 90 were closed for a time, and schools started late or closed on Monday the 11th.

1899 - The temperature at Monterey plunged to 29 degrees below zero, establishing record for the state of Virginia. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1921: Gardner, Georgia, was devastated by a massive, estimated F4 tornado that caused an entire small town section to disappear. The tornado killed an estimated 31 people and injured 100.

1959: St. Louis, Missouri, was hit by a massive F4 tornado that killed 21 and injured 345. Over 2000 buildings were damaged or destroyed, including the St. Louis Arena.

1973 - A major snowstorm struck the southeastern U.S. It produced as much as 18 inches in Georgia, and up to two feet of snow in South Carolina. (David Ludlum)

1978 - As much as eight inches of rain drenched southern California resulting in widespread flooding and mudslides. The heavy rainfall produced a wall of water which ripped through the mountain resort community of Hidden Springs drowning at least thirteen persons. The storm was one of the most destructive of record causing fifty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1981: A morning tornado at Bay Minette, AL, struck the local middle school severely damaging the gymnasium. The tornado hurt 62 people were injured, 44 of whom were students.

1982 - Bismarck, ND, experienced its 45th consecutive day of subzero temperature readings which tied the previous record long string of subzero daily lows ending on the same date in 1937. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the northeastern U.S. produced heavy snow in southeastern Maine. Grand Falls and Woodland received 15 inches, mainly during the early morning hours, while most of the rest of the state did not even see a flake of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Bitter cold arctic air gripped the north central U.S. International Falls MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 35 degrees below zero. Record warm readings were reported in southern California, with highs of 78 at San Francisco and 88 at Los Angeles. San Juan Capistrano CA was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 92 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - For the first time all month winter relaxed its grip on the nation. The temperature at Brownsville TX warmed above 60 degrees for the first time in six days, ending their second longest such cold spell of record. (The National Weather Summary)

2010: Cyclone Pat slams The Cook Islands with 125 mph winds, which destroyed about 80 percent of the island of Aitutaki.

2017: An atmospheric phenomena know as "moonbow" was seen in the Seattle area.

2017: Denver saw their all-time warmest temperature in February with a reading of 79 degrees.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 26 of 81

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

UNSELFISH SERVICE

Where do service and charity end? Certainly, not in the home. Selfish homes produce selfish children and God's Kingdom and God's world suffers. What can be done to change this condition?

"She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy."

There is an obvious route that travels from the head to the heart to the hands. God's Word enters our lives through our head. We hear the Word preached and taught, and read and meditate on the Word each day. But it must not stop there. It must reach into our hearts - the very center of our lives, and then move outward through our hands in service and charity to others. It's the head, heart, hands conception and connection.

What is in our hearts always comes out in our lives. Nobel character is of little good if character is an end in itself. In fact, the sign of our character is seen in what we do in our homes first and then God's world. One pastor said, "A saving faith is always seen in serving others." If we are saved, we will serve.

There can be little doubt that our love for God is always seen in our attitude and actions toward those in need. Proverbs contain many warnings about those who refuse to be charitable, and in fact, reminds us that giving to the poor is the same as lending to God.

"Open arms and extended" hands, however, is much more than giving "things." It is surrendering one's self to serve. It includes time, talents and teaching God's way to others.

Prayer: Father, we owe so much to others because of what You have given us. May we all serve sacrificially by following the example of Your Son, our Savior! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. Proverbs 31:20



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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 27 of 81

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)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 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
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 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
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 28 of 81

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 29 of 81



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.07.23

9 15 46 55 57 4

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 37 Mins 22
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

4 5 29 36 37 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,900,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 37
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.09.23

17 33 35 38 48 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 7 Mins 22
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

1 9 16 26 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$47,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 37
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

40 41 57 64 65 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 36
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.08.23

52 58 59 64 66 9

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 36
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 30 of 81

News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Christian 62, Aberdeen Roncalli 40

Baltic 62, Alcester-Hudson 51

Bridgewater-Emery 66, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 49

Burke 50, Kimball/White Lake 38

Canistota 64, Gayville-Volin 47

Centerville 53, Menno 45

Chester 58, Flandreau 45

Clark/Willow Lake 65, Britton-Hecla 36

Corsica/Stickney 54, Freeman 42

DeSmet 52, Wolsey-Wessington 49

Deubrook 68, Castlewood 51

Douglas 60, Hill City 57

Estelline/Hendricks 59, Elkton-Lake Benton 55

Faith 76, McIntosh 29

Faulkton 63, Potter County 41

Freeman Academy/Marion 76, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 45

Groton Area 57, Redfield 48

Hamlin 64, Deuel 50

Hankinson, N.D. 72, Waverly-South Shore 64

Harding County 89, Tiospaye Topa 44

Hitchcock-Tulare 71, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 65, OT

Howard 60, Dell Rapids St. Mary 57

Hulett, Wyo. 61, Edgemont 35

James Valley Christian 72, Arlington 26

Jones County 65, Dupree 43

Milbank 97, Ortonville, Minn. 43

Mobridge-Pollock 50, Sully Buttes 39

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 63, Ethan 62

Northwestern 62, Great Plains Lutheran 41

Oelrichs 62, Takini 55

Parkston 66, Chamberlain 35

Philip 76, Lyman 53

Pine Ridge 55, Lakota Tech 48

Scotland 60, Bon Homme 53

Sioux Valley 68, West Central 30

Spearfish 75, Custer 52

Tea Area 59, Dell Rapids 58

Timber Lake 80, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 78

Tri-Valley 62, Garretson 39

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 50, Avon 30

Walthill, Neb. 81, Flandreau Indian 53

Western Christian, Iowa 68, Sioux Falls Christian 43

White River 75, Stanley County 46

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 31 of 81

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 53, Huron 28
Aberdeen Roncalli 52, Aberdeen Christian 19
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 48, Freeman Academy/Marion 43
Arlington 44, James Valley Christian 38
Avon 51, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 49
Baltic 54, Alcester-Hudson 48
Canistota 44, Gayville-Volin 33
Centerville 45, Menno 19
Clark/Willow Lake 33, Britton-Hecla 25
Edgemont 55, Hulett, Wyo. 24
Hamlin 60, Deuel 24
Harding County 62, Tiospaye Topa 19
Herreid/Selby Area 50, Leola/Frederick 45
Ipswich 43, Wilmot 37
Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 59, Hitchcock-Tulare 54
Kadoka Area 52, Todd County 43
Lakota Tech 58, Pine Ridge 24
Lower Brule 72, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 36
Lyman 50, Philip 42
Milbank 53, Ortonville, Minn. 23
Northwestern 44, Great Plains Lutheran 40
Rapid City Christian 69, Lead-Deadwood 8
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 50, Bridgewater-Emery 25
Sisseton 67, Tiospa Zina Tribal 31
Spearfish 46, Custer 29
Sully Buttes 48, Mobridge-Pollock 44
Tea Area 70, Dell Rapids 45
Tri-Valley 55, Lennox 51
Walthill, Neb. 63, Flandreau Indian 36
Watertown 48, Mitchell 44
Wessington Springs 56, Warner 43
West Central 58, Sioux Valley 49
Winner 66, Burke 44

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

South Dakota lawmakers seek foreign-owned land investigation

By AMANCAI BIRABEN Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers are advancing a number of bills that would curb Chinese influence in South Dakota's farmland amid concerns among Republican leaders after a spy balloon was spotted and shot down last week.

Republican Rep. Will Mortenson proposed Thursday investigating partnerships between landowners and foreign entities. It comes a week after other lawmakers pushed forth other propositions tackling foreign influence, like banning contracts between state land and foreign countries, and establishing a committee to oversee future foreign purchases.

"We don't know what we don't know, and we're going to start finding out so we can make the next step," Mortenson said, after his bill passed a house committee vote with a unanimous vote.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 32 of 81

The proposals stem from Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's recent history of curbing the state's relationship with China. Last year, she banned state employees and contractors from accessing the video platform TikTok on state-owned devices, citing its ties to China. She also said late last year that the state held no direct investments in China after a review.

Noem's emphasis on her perception of threats posed by China comes as she plans for a series of three policy speeches in Washington that seem to portend the rollout of a possible 2024 bid for the Republican presidential nomination.

Next week, according to a person familiar with Noem's plans, Noem will use one of the three speeches — a Feb. 15 address at the America First Policy Institute — to highlight South Dakota's response to the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party. She'll also discuss an executive order, which Noem signed last month, barring the state from engaging in business with some telecom companies owned or controlled by "evil foreign governments," including China, according to the executive order. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the person is not yet authorized to speak about Noem's plans publicly.

Alan Vester, Noem's deputy general counsel, testified Thursday in support of the bill that would provide further insight into the how much of South Dakota's land is owned by foreign governments.

"Gov. Kristi Noem believes strongly in protecting our state from maligned foreign governments from acquiring foreign agricultural land to the detriment of our state's security, critical infrastructure or food security," Vester said.

Last week, Republican Sen. Erin Tobin proposed an act to create the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to regulate foreign purchases of agricultural land from out-of-country buyers. This oversight is intended to curb international influence in the state's food supply and will be heard further by a Senate committee on agriculture and natural resources Feb. 14.

Tobin has been in discussion with states like North Dakota, where China's government bought a tract of land near their air force base. She said that was an eye-opener to the rest of the country about the lack of knowledge about who's taking ownership in state land and for what purpose, like spying. The committee would do a deep dive to investigate the motives behind any foreign purchase by looking at the buyer's history.

"You realize that China's kind of coming in the front door and nobody's putting any restrictions on anything," Tobin said. "When you really start paying attention and looking at what's happening, you get even more concerned."

Foreign entities and individuals control less than 3% of U.S. farmland, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Of that, those with ties to China control less than 1%, or roughly 600 square miles (340 square kilometers).

Pence subpoenaed by special counsel probing Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

Former Vice President Mike Pence has been subpoenaed by the special counsel overseeing investigations into efforts by former President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 election, according to a person with direct knowledge of the event.

The subpoena to Pence as part of the investigation by special counsel Jack Smith was served in recent days, according to the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Thursday to discuss a sensitive issue.

The extraordinary scenario of a former vice president potentially testifying against his former boss in a criminal investigation comes as Pence considers launching a 2024 Republican presidential bid against Trump. The two have been estranged since a mob of Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6, 2021, in an attempt to stop Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

The subpoena is an aggressive step from a prosecutor who for years led the Justice Department's public corruption section and who oversaw indictments against major political figures. The move sets the stage for a likely executive privilege fight, given Pence's close proximity to Trump for four years as major deci-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 33 of 81

sions were being contemplated and planned. It is unclear whether efforts to secure voluntary testimony from Pence stalled before the subpoena was issued.

Spokespeople for Pence and Smith declined to comment on the issuance of the subpoena, which was first reported by ABC News.

Pence was a central figure in Trump's efforts to stay in power after losing the 2020 election. Trump falsely insisted that his vice president, who had a ceremonial role in overseeing the certification of the election, could simply reject the results and send them back to the battleground states he contested.

On Jan. 6, Trump supporters driven by the lie that the election was stolen marched to the Capitol building, brutally pushed past the police and smashed through the windows and doors while Pence was presiding over the certification of Biden's victory. The vice president was steered to safety with his staff and family as some in the mob chanted, "Hang Mike Pence!"

While the mob was in the Capitol, Trump tweeted, "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution."

Smith, who was named special counsel in November by Attorney General Merrick Garland, has been tasked with overseeing investigations into Trump's attempts to subvert his defeat, his actions leading up to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol and his possession of top-secret government documents at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago.

Federal prosecutors have been especially focused on a scheme by Trump allies to elevate fake presidential electors in key battleground states won by Biden as a way to subvert the vote, issuing subpoenas to multiple state Republican party chairs.

Federal prosecutors have brought multiple Trump administration officials before the grand jury for questioning, including former Trump White House counsel Pat Cipollone and Pence's own former chief of staff, Marc Short.

In a sign of the expanding nature of the investigation, election officials in multiple states whose results were disputed by Trump have received subpoenas asking for communications with or involving Trump and his campaign aides.

A House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack recommended that the Justice Department bring criminal charges against Trump and associates who helped him launch a pressure campaign to try to overturn his 2020 election loss.

'It just rang': In crises, US-China hotline goes unanswered

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Within hours of an Air Force F-22 downing a giant Chinese balloon that had crossed the United States, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reached out to his Chinese counterpart via a special crisis line, aiming for a quick general-to-general talk that could explain things and ease tensions.

But Austin's effort Saturday fell flat, when Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe declined to get on the line, the Pentagon says.

China's Defense Ministry says it refused the call from Austin after the balloon was shot down because the U.S. had "not created the proper atmosphere" for dialogue and exchange. The U.S. action had "seriously violated international norms and set a pernicious precedent," a ministry spokesperson was quoted as saying in a statement issued late Thursday.

It's been an experience that's frustrated U.S. commanders for decades, when it comes to getting their Chinese counterparts on a phone or video line as some flaring crisis is sending tensions between the two nations climbing.

From Americans' perspective, the lack of the kind of reliable crisis communications that helped get the U.S. and Soviet Union through the Cold War without an armed nuclear exchange is raising the dangers of the U.S.-China relationship now, at a time when China's military strength is growing and tensions with the U.S. are on the rise.

Without that ability for generals in opposing capitals to clear things up in a hurry, Americans worry that

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 34 of 81

misunderstandings, false reports or accidental collisions could cause a minor confrontation to spiral into greater hostilities.

And it's not about any technical shortfall with the communication equipment, said Bonnie Glaser, managing director of Indo-Pacific studies at the German Marshall Fund think tank. The issue is a fundamental difference in the way China and the U.S. view the value and purpose of military-to-military hotlines.

U.S. military leaders' faith in Washington-to-Beijing hotlines as a way to defuse flare-ups with China's military has been butting up against a sharply different take — a Chinese political system that runs on slow deliberative consultation by political leaders and makes no room for individually directed, real-time talk between rival generals.

And Chinese leaders are suspicious of the whole U.S. notion of a hotline — seeing it as an American channel for trying to talking their way out of repercussions for a U.S. provocation.

"That's really dangerous," Assistant Secretary for Defense Ely Ratner said Thursday of the difficulty of military-to-military crisis communications with China, when Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley pressed him about China's latest rebuff on Beijing's and Washington's hotline setup.

U.S. generals are persisting in their efforts to open more lines of communication with Chinese counterparts, the defense official said, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "And unfortunately, to date, the PLA is not answering that call," Ratner said, referring to China's People's Liberation Army.

Ratner accused China of using vital channels of communication simply as a blunter messaging tool, shutting them down or opening them up again to underscore China's displeasure or pleasure with the U.S.

China's resistance to military hotlines as tensions increase puts more urgency on efforts by President Joe Biden and his top civilian diplomats and security aides to build up their own communication channels with President Xi Jinping and other top Chinese political officials, for situations where military hotlines may go unanswered, U.S. officials and China experts say.

Both U.S. and Chinese militaries are building up for a possible confrontation over U.S.-backed self-ruled Taiwan, which China claims as its territory. The next flare-up seems only a matter of time. It could happen with an expected event, such as House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's promised visit to Taiwan, or something unexpected, like the 2001 collision between a Chinese fighter and a U.S. Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane over the South China Sea. Without commanders talking in real-time, Americans and Chinese would have one less way of averting greater conflict.

"My worry is that the EP-3 type incident will happen again," said Lyle Morris, a country director for China for the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2019 to 2021, now a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute. "And we will be in much different political environments of hostility and mistrust, where that could go wrong in a hurry."

Biden has emphasized building lines of communications with China to "responsibly manage" their differences. A November meeting between Xi and Biden yielded an announcement the two governments would resume a range of dialogues that China had shut down after an August Taiwan visit by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Last weekend, the U.S. canceled what would have been a relationship-building visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken after the transit of the Chinese balloon, which the U.S. says was for espionage. China claims it was a civilian balloon used for meteorological research.

The same week that China's balloon flew over the U.S., Austin was in the Philippines to announce an expanded U.S. military footprint there, neighboring China, noted Tiehlin Yen, director of the Taiwan Center for Security Studies, a think tank. "America is also very nationalistic these days," Yen said.

"From a regional security perspective, this dialogue is necessary," Yen said.

What passes for military and civilian hotlines between China and the U.S. aren't the classic red phones on a desk.

Under a 2008 agreement, the China-U.S. military hotline amounts to a multistep process by which one capital relays a request to the other for a joint call or videoconference between top officials on encrypted lines. The pact gives the other side 48 hours and up to respond, although nothing in the pact stops top

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 35 of 81

officials from talking immediately.

Sometimes when the U.S. calls, current and former U.S. officials say, Chinese officials don't even pick up. "No one answered. It just rang," recounted Kristen Gunness, a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corporation. Gunness was speaking about a March 2009 incident when she was working as an adviser to the Pentagon's chief of naval operations. Chinese navy vessels at the time surrounded a U.S. surveillance ship in the South China Sea and demanded the American leave. U.S. and Chinese military officials eventually talked - but some 24 hours later.

It took decades of Washington pushing to get Beijing to agree to the current system of military crisis communications, said David Sedney, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense who negotiated it.

"And then once we had it in place, it was clear that they were very reluctant to use it in any substantive purpose," Sedney said.

Americans' test calls on the hotline would get picked up, he said. And when Americans called to give congratulations on some Chinese holiday, Chinese officials would pick up and say thanks, he said.

Anything more sensitive, Sedney said, the staffers answering the phone "would say, 'We'll check. As soon as our leadership is ready to talk, we'll get back to you.' Nothing would happen."

Moldovan prime minister resigns, government collapses

By CRISTIAN JARDAN and STEPHEN McGRATH Associated Press

CHISINAU, Moldova (AP) — Moldova's government collapsed Friday as pro-Western Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita resigned, adding to a series of crises that have gripped the small nation since Russia invaded its neighbor, Ukraine.

Gavrilita told a news conference that the "time has come for me to announce my resignation" and said no one expected her government, elected in the summer of 2021, "would have to manage so many crises caused by Russian aggression in Ukraine."

Gavrilita's premiership was marked by a long string of problems. These include an acute energy crisis after Moscow dramatically reduced supplies to Moldova; skyrocketing inflation; and several troublesome incidents such as missiles from the war in neighboring Ukraine traversing its skies.

"I took over the government with an anti-corruption, pro-development and pro-European mandate at a time when corruption schemes had captured all the institutions and the oligarchs felt untouchable," Gavrilita said. "We were immediately faced with energy blackmail, and those who did this hoped that we would give in."

"The bet of the enemies of our country was that we would act like previous governments, who gave up energy interests, who betrayed the national interest in exchange for short-term benefits," she added.

Moldovan President Maia Sandu thanked Gavrilita on Friday for her "enormous sacrifice and efforts to lead the country in a time of so many crises."

"Despite unprecedented challenges, the country was governed responsibly, with great care and dedicated work," Sandu said. "We have stability, peace and development — where others wanted war and bankruptcy."

Sandu added that she will hold consultations with parliamentary factions and appoint a candidate for the leadership position, without stating when.

Gavrilita, a 41-year-old economist, was appointed prime minister in August 2021 after her pro-Western Party of Action and Solidarity, or PAS, won a parliamentary election on a pro-EU, reformist ticket in the former Soviet republic.

Rescues in Turkey offer moments of relief in quake aftermath

By JUSTIN SPIKE, GHAITH ALSAYED and SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ISKENDERUN, Turkey (AP) — Rescuers pulled several people alive from the shattered remnants of buildings on Friday, some who survived more than 100 hours trapped under crushed concrete in the bitter cold after a catastrophic earthquake slammed Turkey and Syria, killing more than 20,000.

The survivors included six relatives who huddled in a small pocket under the rubble, a teenager who

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 36 of 81

drank his own urine to slake his thirst, and a 4-year-old boy offered a jelly bean to calm him down as he was shimmied out.

But the flurry of dramatic rescues — some broadcast live on Turkish television — could not obscure the overwhelming devastation of what Turkey's president called "the disaster of the century." Entire neighborhoods of high-rise buildings have been reduced to twisted metal, pulverized concrete and exposed wires, and the magnitude 7.8 quake has already killed more people than Japan's Fukushima earthquake and tsunami, with many more bodies undoubtedly yet to be recovered and counted.

Four days after the earthquake hammered a sprawling border region that is home to more than 13.5 million people, relatives wept and chanted as rescuers pulled 17-year-old Adnan Muhammed Korkut from a basement in Turkey's Gaziantep, near the quake's epicenter. He had been trapped there for 94 hours, forced to drink his own urine to survive.

"Thank God you arrived," he said, embracing his mother and others who leaned down to kiss and hug him as he was being loaded into an ambulance.

For one of the rescuers, identified only as Yasemin, Adnan's survival hit home hard.

"I have a son just like you," she told him after giving him a warm hug. "I swear to you, I have not slept for four days. ... I was trying to get you out."

In Adiyaman, meanwhile, rescue crews pulled 4-year-old Yagiz Komsu from the debris of his home, 105 hours after the quake struck. They then turned to trying to reach his mother, according to the HaberTurk television, which broadcast the rescue live. The crowd was asked not to cheer or applaud to avoid scaring the child, who was given a jelly bean, the station reported.

Elsewhere, HaberTurk television said rescuers had identified nine people trapped inside the remains of a high-rise apartment block in Iskenderun and pulled out six of them, including a woman who waved at onlookers as she was being carried away on a stretcher. The crowd shouted: "God is Great!" after she was brought out.

The building was only 600 feet (200 meters) from the Mediterranean Sea and narrowly avoided being flooded when the massive earthquake sent water surging into the city center.

There were still more stories: A German team said it worked for more than 50 hours to pull a woman alive from the rubble of a house in Kirikhan. In the hard-hit city of Kahramanmaras, two teenage sisters were saved, and video of the operation showed one emergency worker playing a pop song on his smartphone to distract them.

And the work continued: One trapped woman could be heard speaking to a team trying to dig her out in video broadcast by HaberTurk television. She told her would-be rescuers that she had given up hope of being found — and prayed to be put to sleep because she was so cold. The station did not say where the operation was taking place.

Even though experts say trapped people can live for a week or more, the chances of finding survivors in the freezing temperatures are dimming.

Still, the rescues Friday provided fleeting moments of joy and relief amid the misery and hardship gripping the shattered region where morgues and cemeteries are overwhelmed and bodies lie wrapped in blankets, rugs and tarps in the streets of some cities.

In Kahramanmaras, a sports hall served as a makeshift morgue to accommodate and identify bodies.

Temperatures remain below freezing across the large region, and many people have no place to shelter. The Turkish government has distributed millions of hot meals, as well as tents and blankets, but was still struggling to reach many people in need.

Across the border, Syrian President Bashar Assad on Friday made his first public appearance in an earthquake-devastated area of the country since the disaster. Assad and his wife, Asmaa, visited survivors at the Aleppo University Hospital, Syrian state media said. He then visited rescuers in one of the hardest-hit areas in the city.

Aleppo, already scarred by years of heavy bombardment and shelling amid the country's grinding civil war, was among the most devastated cities by the Feb. 6 earthquake.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 37 of 81

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Dr. Michael Ryan, WHO's head of emergencies, were expected to arrive in the city later Friday to help support the delivery of assistance.

Assad's visit came a day after the first U.N. aid trucks reached rebel-held northwestern Syria since the quake, underscoring the difficulty of getting help to people there.

The winter weather and damage to roads and airports have hampered the response on both sides of the border. Some in Turkey have also complained that the government was slow to respond, a perception that could hurt Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a time when he faces a tough battle for reelection in May.

Turkey's disaster management agency said more than 18,300 people had been confirmed killed in the disaster so far in Turkey, with nearly 75,000 injured. No figures have been released on how many have been left homeless, but the agency said more than 75,000 survivors have been evacuated to other provinces.

More than 3,300 have been confirmed killed on the other side of the border in Syria, bringing the total number of dead to more than 21,600.

The death toll from the earthquake has eclipsed the more than 18,400 who died in the 2011 earthquake off Fukushima, Japan, that triggered a tsunami and the estimated 18,000 people who died in a temblor near Istanbul in 1999.

Some 12,000 buildings in Turkey have either collapsed or sustained serious damage, according to Turkey's minister of environment and urban planning, Murat Kurum.

Engineers suggested that the scale of the devastation is partly explained by lax enforcement of building codes, which some have warned for years would make them vulnerable to earthquakes. The problem has been largely ignored, experts said, because addressing it would be expensive, unpopular and restrain a key engine of the country's economic growth.

Mustafa Turan counted 248 collapsed buildings between the airport and the center of Adiyaman after he rushed to his hometown from Istanbul following the quake.

The journalist said Friday that 15 of his relatives had been killed, and scores of people were sleeping outside or in tents.

"At night, about 4 a.m., it got so cold that our drinking water froze," he said.

Russia hits targets across Ukraine with missiles, drones

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia unleashed strategic bombers, killer drones and rockets in a barrage of attacks across Ukraine early Friday, as a military push by Moscow that Kyiv says has been brewing for days appeared to pick up pace ahead of the one-year anniversary of its invasion.

The Kremlin's forces focused their bombardments on Ukraine's industrial east, especially the Luhansk and Donetsk provinces that make up the industrial Donbas region where fighting has recently been most intense, the Ukrainian military said. Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces there since 2014.

But the barrage went further, also taking aim at the capital, Kyiv, and Lviv, near Ukraine's Western border with Poland. It also struck critical infrastructure in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city in the northeast. Seven people were wounded there, two of them seriously, regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov said.

Air raid sirens went off across much of the country. The Ukrainian Air Force said its defenses destroyed five Kalibr missiles and five Iranian-made killer drones.

The bombardments could be an effort by Russia to soften up Ukraine's defenses ahead of a ground assault, which Kyiv believes Moscow is planning in the east where the Kremlin is striving to secure areas it has illegally annexed and where it claims its rule is welcomed.

In the Donetsk region, local Ukrainian officials reported that the Russian military deployed additional troops and launched offensive operations. "There is a daily escalation and Russian attacks are becoming active throughout the region," Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 38 of 81

In Luhansk province, the Russian army is trying to punch through Ukrainian defenses, according to regional Gov. Serhii Haidai.

"The situation is deteriorating, the enemy is constantly attacking, the Russians are bringing in a large amount of heavy equipment and aircraft," Haidai said.

There has been little change in battlefield positions for weeks.

Also Friday, Moldova's Ministry of Defense said that a missile was detected traversing its airspace near the border with Ukraine. Moldova's foreign ministry said in a statement that the Russian ambassador in Chisinau has been summoned for talks over the "unacceptable violation".

The ministry said that the missile was detected in its airspace at around 10 a.m. and flew over two border villages before heading toward Ukraine.

The spokesperson for Ukraine's Air Forces, Yuriy Ihnat, told The Associated Press that another missile crossed the airspace of Romania, a NATO member country. Romania's defense ministry denied that, however, saying the closest the missile came to Romania's airspace was approximately 35 kilometers (20 miles).

High-voltage infrastructure facilities were hit in the eastern, western and southern regions, Ukraine's energy company, Ukrenergo, said, resulting in power outages in some areas. It was the 14th round of massive strikes on the country's power supply, the company said. The last one occurred on Jan. 26 as Moscow seeks to demoralize Ukrainians by leaving them without heat and water in the bitter winter.

Zaporizhzhia City Council Secretary Anatolii Kurtiev said the city had been hit 17 times in one hour, which he said made it the most intense period of attacks since the beginning of the full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Ukraine's Air Force shot down 10 Russian missiles over Kyiv, according to the Kyiv City Administration. The fragments of one missile damaged two cars, a house and electricity wires. No casualties were reported.

The Ukraine Air Force said Russia launched up to 35 S-300 anti-aircraft guided missiles on the Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia provinces. Those missiles cannot be destroyed in mid-air by air defenses but they have a relatively short range so the Russians have used them for attacks on regions not far from Russian-controlled territory.

The Khmelnytskyi province in Western Ukraine was also attacked with Shahed drones, according to regional Gov. Serhii Hamalii.

Russia has in the past used Iranian-made Shahed drones to strike at key Ukrainian infrastructure and sow fear among civilians, according to Western analysts. They are known as suicide drones because they nosedive into targets and explode on impact like a missile.

The onslaught lent a sense of urgency to Ukraine's pleas for more Western military support. The need prompted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to make a rare — and daring — two-day trip abroad this week to press allies to grant Kyiv more aid.

Due to the threat of a missile attack, emergency power outages were enacted in Kyiv city, the Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions, according to private energy operator DTEK.

The head of Kyiv City Administration, Serhii Popko, said that Russian Tu-95 strategic bombers, which can carry cruise missiles, were in the air.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said that fragments of a Russian rocket fell in the Kyiv region and damaged a private house and a car.

A Russian rocket fell but did not explode in Ukraine's western Lviv province Friday, according to regional Gov. Maksym Kozytskyi. Kozytskyi said on Telegram that there were no victims when the rocket fell close to a village bus stop.

Moscow's ambitions have narrowed since it launched its full-scale invasion, when the capital Kyiv and the installation of a puppet government were among its targets. It is now focusing its efforts on gaining full control of the Donbas.

Numerous battlefield setbacks, including yielding eastern areas it had initially captured, have embarrassed Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 39 of 81

Russia says it will cut oil production over Western caps

By DAVID McHUGH and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia announced Friday that will cut oil production by 500,000 barrels per day next month after Western countries capped the price of its crude over its action in Ukraine.

"As of today, we fully sell all our crude output, but as we stated before, we will not sell oil to those who directly or indirectly adhere to the 'price ceiling,'" Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said in remarks carried by Russian news agencies.

"In connection with that, Russia will voluntarily cut production by 500,000 barrels a day. It will help restore market-style relations," he said.

Analysts have said one possible Russian response to the cap would be to slash production to try to raise oil prices, which could eventually flow through to higher gasoline prices at the pump as less oil makes it to the global market.

International benchmark Brent crude rose 2.2% Friday, to \$86.42 per barrel.

The Group of Seven major democracies have imposed a \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil shipped to non-Western countries. The goal is to keep oil flowing to the world to prevent price spikes that were seen last year, while limiting Russia's financial gains that can be used to pay for its campaign against Ukraine.

The cap is enforced by barring Western companies that largely control shipping and insurance services from moving oil priced above the limit.

Russia has said it will not sell oil to countries observing the cap, a moot point because Russian oil has been trading below the price ceiling recently. However, the cap, an accompanying European Union embargo on most Russian oil and lower demand for crude have meant that customers in India, Turkey and China have been able to push for substantial discounts on Russian oil.

The impact of a cut of 500,000 barrels per day is an open question as a slowing global economy reduces the thirst for oil.

The OPEC+ alliance of oil producers, which includes Russia, tried to boost oil prices with an October announcement that it would cut production by 2 million barrels per day, only to see prices fall below \$80 per barrel by December.

Asked if Russia consulted OPEC+ members about Moscow's new production cut, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "there had been conversations with some members of the OPEC+" before the move was announced. He didn't offer any details.

But Novak insisted in a statement later that Moscow made the move without consulting anyone.

"It's a voluntary cut; there have been no consultations with anyone regarding it," the deputy prime minister said, according to the Russian media.

The new reduction could be "an early sign that Russia might try to weaponize oil supplies after last year's failed attempt to weaponize natural gas," said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy policy expert at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels.

But that could be difficult to accomplish because it's easier to find alternative supplies of oil, traded through tankers that crisscross the globe, than to replace natural gas, which before the war mostly came by pipeline.

Russian exporter Gazprom has cut off most supplies of natural gas to Europe, citing technical issues and refusal by some customers to pay in Russian currency. European officials call it retaliation for supporting Ukraine.

Europe did suffer from resulting high natural gas prices but has managed to replace much of the lost Russian supply from other sources including shipborne liquefied gas from the U.S. and Qatar. Natural gas prices have since come down from all-time highs last summer but are still three times higher than before Russia massed troops on the Ukraine border.

Corruption endangers world's shrinking fisheries

By FU TING, GRACE EKPU and HELEN WIEFFERING Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 40 of 81

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Indonesia's fisheries minister, Edhy Prabowo was tasked with protecting one of his country's most precious resources: baby lobsters so tiny one can fit on the tip of a finger.

The waters off the nation's many islands and archipelagos had once teemed with lobster. But overfishing in recent decades decimated the crustacean's population, so much so that fishermen turned to catching the hatchlings. They scooped them up by the thousand and shipped them to Vietnamese lobster farms, where the babies are raised to adulthood and sold mostly to dealers in China to meet its enormous demand for seafood.

Concerned that such harvesting was harming lobster populations, Indonesia's fishing ministry in 2016 prohibited the export of the tiny crustaceans. Shortly after taking office, Prabowo lifted the ban. Court documents show that just a month later, in June of 2020, the minister accepted a \$77,000 bribe from a seafood supplier to grant it a permit to sell the hatchlings abroad.

The money kept flowing. In his short stint as minister, Prabowo accepted bribes of nearly \$2 million. He was arrested in 2020 by Indonesian authorities, having used the graft to purchase 26 road bikes, Old Navy children's clothes, Louis Vuitton bags, Rolex watches and two luxury pens. Prabowo, 50, was sentenced to five years in prison for corruption. His attorney declined to comment.

Prabowo's case is not an outlier. It's emblematic of the corruption plaguing dozens of coastal developing countries that play a key role in managing some of the world's most threatened fishing grounds, according to experts and a review of criminal case files and media reports by the AP.

At least 45 government officials have been accused of corruption in the past two decades, the AP found. The allegations range from high-ranking officials like Prabowo accepting large payments from fishing companies to obtain lucrative contracts to low-level civil servants accepting a few thousand dollars to ignore fishermen bringing illegal catch ashore.

"Fisheries corruption can have devastating impacts on marine ecosystems and local communities that may depend on them," said Ben Freitas, the manager of ocean policy at the World Wildlife Fund, based in Washington.

"Countries with weak governments that lack oversight and accountability are more susceptible to corruption risk. And that is where fisheries corruption plays a pernicious role in overfishing. It can lead to the over-exploitation of resources. It is a global problem."

The situation is most critical in areas managed by developing nations because many industrialized countries have already overfished their own waters, forcing them to dispatch fleets of trawlers across the globe to meet growing seafood demand. People worldwide consume twice as much seafood as they did five decades ago, according to United Nations estimates, and 35% of stocks are considered overfished, up from 10%.

Many coastal developing countries depend on fish for millions of jobs and to meet the dietary needs of their populations. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime warned in a 2019 report that failing to tackle corruption will lead to "significant financial, environmental and societal damages."

Such corruption, the report added, "negatively affects developing countries in particular."

Those wishing to conceal their operations or pay bribes to get around restrictions have found fishing to be a welcoming industry.

Companies have little trouble changing the name or flag state of a fishing boat, and it's common practice to register vessels under shell companies in Liberia or the Marshall Islands. Scofflaw ships are known to turn off their location tracking devices, offload illegally caught fish to other boats, or "launder" it by mixing it with their standard catch.

"The lack of accountability, I think, is even greater in the fisheries sector than it is in other environmental-related activities," said Juhani Grossmann, a program leader at the Basel Institute on Governance, which is working on anti-corruption efforts with Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries.

At least with illicit lumber operations, Grossmann said, "you don't have a different shell corporation for every single truck."

The AP review found that most cases of corruption and graft were low-level schemes, like one in India in which prosecutors last year alleged two fisheries officers extorted \$1,100 to approve subsidies for a

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 41 of 81

fish farm. Another involved fishermen reportedly bribing Malaysian officers with at least \$11,000 for every boat they agreed not to report.

This story was supported by funding from the Walton Family Foundation and the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Some are much larger and involve global financial institutions. In 2021, the Swiss bank Credit Suisse admitted to fraudulently financing a massive loan to Mozambique to expand its tuna fishing fleet. A contractor handling the loan paid kickbacks of \$150 million to Mozambican government officials.

Stephen Akester, a fisheries management adviser who has worked in Africa and South Asia for four decades, said there is a long history of foreign companies — particularly from China — forging corrupt relationships with fisheries officials.

"They exploited the weakness of these governments for whom any kind of revenue was big money, even small dollars," he said. "And that still continues today."

In Gambia, a small West African nation nestled along Senegal's coast, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources, Bamba Banja, was charged in 2021 with accepting a bribe from a Chinese company to free a vessel detained for illegal fishing.

According to charging documents, an employee of Golden Lead Company Limited told Gambian authorities that he and another shareholder in 2018 gave Banja 100,000 Gambian dalasi, or about \$1,600, to release the ship. The case is ongoing; Banja's lawyer told the AP that the fisheries secretary denies any wrongdoing.

Authorities in Namibia allege an Icelandic seafood company paid roughly \$6 million in bribes to Namibian officials to be permitted to fish in the country's waters. The so-called "Fishrot" scandal first came to light four years ago; Namibia's former fisheries minister and justice minister are still on trial and have been banned by the State Department from entering the U.S.

The Icelandic company Samherji has denied committing crimes. In a 2021 statement, it said there had been "a lot of chaos" in its Namibian operations and many expenses weren't formally documented.

Corruption is not limited to developing countries. A top European fisheries official in 2019 was linked to a criminal network that sought to launder illegally caught bluefin tuna that arrived in Spain from Italy and Malta via French ports.

The director of Malta's fisheries, Andreina Fenech Farrugia, remains suspended as investigators with the Spanish Civil Guard probe whether she helped the criminal syndicate bypass European Union tuna quotas. According to a transcript of a phone call intercepted by police and published by the newspaper *El Confidencial*, the fisheries director was heard telling a tuna magnate, "You have to pay me."

Spanish authorities declined to comment on the case. Malta's Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights said that Fenech Farrugia was on unpaid leave. She has not been charged with a crime and could not be reached for comment.

The cases reviewed by AP likely represent a small fraction of the corruption that takes place daily as hauls of seafood are transported and sold around the world.

Most cases go undetected, said Adam Graycar, a professor of public policy at the University of Adelaide who has spent much of his career studying corruption.

"You have inspectors colluding with fishing boat owners," he said. "Nobody's going to tell you what's happening or give you any data."

In Ghana, for instance, the fishing ministry has been unmarked by any major corruption scandal. Yet the Environmental Justice Foundation, which has investigated abuses in the fishing sector for two decades, issued a report last year documenting how the West African nation has become ensnared in "a culture of corruption in which bribery and intimidation pervades all levels of fisheries management."

"The environmental and social injustices resulting from the current status quo are myriad, with fishing communities disproportionately bearing the burden of a broken system," the group concluded.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 42 of 81

Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah advocates for better fisheries management in Ghana as convenor of the Fisheries Alliance. In reviewing infractions reported by observers on fishing vessels for a World Bank project in 2016, Yamoah found wide, unexplained gaps in enforcement. The government had penalized some companies, he said, but others were granted a renewed fishing license without question.

"There was no clarity as to why these vessels were not even booked or sanctioned, while there was a clear case of a breach of law," Yamoah said.

Overfishing and illegal fishing have pushed Ghana's fish stocks to near collapse, prompting presidential action and putting the livelihoods and the health of millions of Ghanaians at risk.

The situation, Yamoah said, is growing dire: Some days fishermen spend all day on the water and come back with nothing.

Biden, Lula to put focus on democracy, climate during visit

By DAVID BILLER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Joe Biden and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva meet in Washington Friday, the leaders will share some awareness of what it's like to walk in one another's shoes.

Biden, a centrist Democrat, defeated incumbent Donald Trump in a fraught race, securing victory with thin margins in several battleground states. In Brazil's tightest election since its return to democracy over three decades ago, Lula, the leftist leader of the Workers' Party, squeaked out a win against right-wing incumbent Jair Bolsonaro, who earned the nickname "Trump of the Tropics" and was an outspoken admirer of the former U.S. president.

Both Trump and Bolsonaro sowed doubts about the vote, without ever presenting evidence, but their claims nevertheless resonated with their most die-hard supporters. In the U.S. Capitol, Trump supporters staged the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection seeking to prevent Biden's win from being certified. Last month, thousands of rioters stormed the Brazilian capital aiming to oust the newly-inaugurated Lula.

Friday's Oval Office talks, just over a month after Lula's swearing-in and the failed attempt to topple his presidency, are meant to spotlight that Brazil's democracy remains resilient and that relations between the Americas' two biggest democracies are back on track.

"Lula, he has everything on the table right now to be a democratic champion, given what happened in Brazil over the past month and a half," said Thiago de Aragão, a senior associate of the Americas program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "So, having seen Biden in a similar situation during January 6th, this is something that they can together focus on."

The leaders are expected to discuss efforts to safeguard democracy, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, insecurity in Haiti, migration and climate change, including efforts to stem deforestation of the Amazon, according to a senior Biden administration official who briefed reporters about the meeting on the condition of anonymity.

During his 2020 run for the White House, Biden proposed working with global partners to create a \$20 billion fund that would encourage Brazil to change its approach to the Amazon. Analysts say Friday's meeting marks an ideal opportunity for Biden to announce a follow-up on the campaign pledge.

The senior Biden administration official declined to comment on whether Biden would announce a U.S. contribution to a multilateral climate effort known as the Amazon Fund. The official noted that Biden's special envoy for climate, John Kerry, is expected to soon travel to Brazil.

The two leaders previously met face-to-face in 2009 when Biden was vice president during Lula's first go-round as Brazil's president from 2003 to 2010. Lula later spent 580 days in prison on corruption charges but the conviction was annulled in 2021 on procedural grounds and the Supreme Court later ruled the judge had been biased. Climate was a prominent topic in two recent phone calls between the leaders since Lula's October victory, according to the White House.

But Lula's biggest objective is securing ringing support for the legitimacy of his presidency amid continued unease at home. It remains unclear how the animus Bolsonaro generated will be channeled going forward, and some opposition lawmakers allied with the former president are already calling for Lula's

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 43 of 81

impeachment. Lula sacked the army's commander, with the defense minister citing "a fracture in the level of trust" in the force's top levels.

"You have the environment and other stuff, but Lula sitting down with Biden is an exercise in coup-proofing Brazil's democracy. It basically comes down to that," said Oliver Stuenkel, an international relations professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university and think tank. "There is still genuine concern in the Brazilian government about the armed forces, and the biggest partner in containing the armed forces is the United States."

Bolsonaro, who is facing several investigations in Brazil, traveled to Florida during the final days of his presidency and has remained there since. He applied late last month for a six-month tourist visa to extend his U.S. stay. A group of Democratic lawmakers have urged Biden to expel the former president on the grounds that the U.S. shouldn't provide safe harbor to would-be authoritarians.

The White House and State Department have declined to comment on Bolsonaro's visa status, citing privacy concerns. Valentina Sader, associate director of the Atlantic Council's Latin America Center, said that both Biden and Lula want to tread carefully on the visa issue.

"Lula is walking a fine line with the Bolsonaro visa situation and is looking to avoid being seen as persecuting Bolsonaro," Sader said. "And for Biden, in any way he can avoid this becoming a bigger thing than it needs to be, I think that that will be his choice."

Biden stands ready to discuss Bolsonaro's presence in the United States should Lula raise it, according to the Biden administration official. Analysts have said Lula is unlikely to do so, in part because for him Bolsonaro's absence from Brazil is a welcome change.

Lula was scheduled to meet with Democratic lawmakers and union officials ahead of his meeting with Biden.

Even as Lula has been lauded for his democratic bona fides, he declines to criticize authoritarianism in Venezuela and Cuba, saying the nations are entitled to self-determination, and he often sides with their left-wing leaders.

That marks something of a departure from Biden's pro-democracy agenda, said Bruna Santos, director of the Brazil Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington. But the Brazilian leader is aware of the risks of leaning too close and will measure his words in Washington, she added.

Ukraine could make for a somewhat awkward divergence between the two leaders. Lula previously said the country was as much to blame for the war as Russia, though he more recently clarified that he thought Russia was wrong to invade.

Lula has declined to provide Ukraine with munitions.

Zelenskyy to address summit on Russian Olympic involvement

LONDON (AP) — As Ukraine pushes for Russian athletes to be barred from next year's Paris Olympics and threats of a boycott mount, officials from 30 countries were holding a summit Friday to discuss how to respond.

The International Olympic Committee argues it would be discriminatory to exclude Russia and ally Belarus from the 2024 Olympics entirely. The IOC wants their athletes to compete in a neutral capacity without national symbols.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has previously said any neutral flag for Russia would be "stained with blood," is due to address the online summit by video link. Zelenskyy made surprise visits to Britain and France on Wednesday, pushing for fighter jets to battle Russian invaders in a dramatic speech to the British Parliament.

Friday's meeting was taking place on a day of intense missile and drone strikes by Russian forces against Ukraine.

"President Zelenskyy told the UK in Parliament this week of the suffering still being felt by many Ukrainians. As he did so the IOC was continuing to ignore the international allies stepping up their efforts for peace and disregard how the Olympics will give (Russian President Vladimir) Putin the perfect platform to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 44 of 81

promote Russia and legitimize his illegal war," British Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer, who is chairing the meeting, said in a statement Thursday.

"We're approaching a year since this barbaric invasion began. We must urge the IOC to show that the Olympic values mean something. We must make clear there are consequences to this illegal invasion. We cannot allow Russian athletes to line up alongside Team GB (the British Olympic team) and everyone else on the world stage."

Ukrainian Sports Minister Vadym Guttsait said allowing Russians to compete would further traumatize athletes affected by the war.

"The participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in international competitions will make it impossible for Ukrainian athletes to take part in them, because each of the Ukrainians suffered from Russian aggression in one way or another: They lost their relatives and friends, lost their homes, received psychological trauma, lost the opportunity to do what they love," Guttsait, who also leads the Ukrainian Olympic Committee, wrote in a letter to IOC president Thomas Bach and other Olympic leaders that was published Friday.

Guttsait argued the IOC was focusing too much on the rights of Russians to compete and not enough on the rights of Ukrainians to feel safe around Russian competitors in places like the Olympic village.

"How and in what way will the rights of Ukrainian athletes be protected? Will they be able to step onto the same sports field and compete with the Russian athletes at a time when their families, friends and colleagues are in mortal danger?" he wrote.

Ukraine has previously made public a letter from Bach to Guttsait saying that "threatening a boycott ... goes against the fundamentals of the Olympic Movement and the principles we stand for."

Political leaders of Ukraine's nearby allies in Poland and the Baltic states have said there could be Olympic boycotts if the IOC forges ahead with its plan. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has said Russian and Belarusian athletes should be barred from the Olympics in her city if the war is still going on by then.

The IOC, which last year backed excluding Russians and Belarusians from sporting events on safety grounds, also faces challenges from within its own movement. It has given the federations running individual Olympic sports the final say on the details of readmitting Russian and Belarusian athletes. The sports could impose different rules and move at different speeds, or challenge the IOC's authority entirely.

The governing body of archery said last week that it was "very unlikely" to allow any neutral athletes to compete in 2023, including at Olympic qualifiers. The IOC's plan for Russians and Belarusians to qualify for the Olympics through competitions in Asia, instead of Europe, was not acceptable either, it added. The governing body of track and field has its own restrictions on the Russian team because of doping and its president, Olympic great Sebastian Coe, has said his preferred solution would be for Russia to "get out of Ukraine."

Olympic qualifiers are under way in some sports and start soon in many more. That leaves federations to grapple with how to reshape a process that they thought was finalized years ago.

It could also be up to them to implement the IOC's plan to leave out Russian and Belarusian athletes deemed to be "actively supporting the war in Ukraine." The IOC hasn't defined what constitutes support. Ukraine is particularly concerned that Russian athletes from military sports clubs or who hold military ranks could compete.

"In Russia, sport is an element of politics, powerful propaganda, in this case the promotion of war," Guttsait wrote to Bach.

Many of the national Olympic committees have taken the IOC's line, but some like Ukraine and Latvia say they would rather boycott than compete against Russian athletes. Five sports bodies in the Nordic countries said Tuesday they wanted a ban on athletes and officials from Russia and Belarus.

'We couldn't let go': War tears young Ukrainian family apart

By STEPHEN McGRATH Associated Press

BRASOV, Romania (AP) — University student Vlada Yushchenko was still in her teens and nearly three months pregnant when she hugged her husband at the border, turned away and walked into Moldova.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 45 of 81

Now she's in Romania, one of the millions of Ukrainians forced to flee Russia's invasion. Her baby, Daniel, was born there eight months ago and still hasn't met his father Yaroslav, who is 21 and, like most men of fighting age, prohibited from leaving Ukraine.

The young family's forced separation is an all-too-common story among the estimated 110,000 Ukrainian refugees in Romania — nearly all of them women and children.

"Nobody expected the war was coming and that we weren't going to be together," said Yushchenko, who has settled for now in the central Romanian city of Brasov where she gave birth and shares a two-room apartment with Daniel, her mother, and her terminally ill grandmother.

"For a long time we couldn't let each other go," said Yushchenko, 19, recalling the couple's separation at the border. "We really didn't want this, but at the same time we understood that we have to do this for mine and the baby's health and to be safe."

As the war drags into its second year, the lack of physical contact between the baby and his father, a computer programming student in Kyiv, rankles. Still, their smartphones allow the family a sense of connection.

"Sometimes we burst out in tears (but) we are very happy when we see each other on video," Yushchenko said. "I called (Yaroslav) and sent a photo as soon as I was able to" the day Daniel was born, she added. "It was very emotional, he was very happy, it was unforgettable."

But even that virtual link isn't always there.

In recent months, Russian strikes have targeted critical energy infrastructure across large swathes of Ukraine, which has at times made communication difficult. Yaroslav tries to ease her concerns, Yushchenko said, by warning her of potential outages and telling her not to panic during moments of silence.

Still, seeing footage of the war play out in Ukraine, and knowing her husband is there, only adds to her worries.

"It's very hard to watch the news and see all the misery, the missile strikes, the deaths," said Yushchenko, who between taking care of the baby continues her mathematics and physics studies remotely at the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. "I pray every day that everything will be alright ... in the city where (Yaroslav) lives and in general."

Her faith, among other things, is helping her through the ordeal.

When Daniel was six months old she decided to get him baptized at a local Orthodox church, by a priest who lives in their apartment block and waived the customary fee for the ceremony. They attend Sunday service whenever they can, Yushchenko said.

In her day-to-day life, she often takes "very long walks, sometimes all day" with Daniel around Brasov, a picturesque heritage city nestled in the arching Carpathian mountains. She also sees other Ukrainian mothers living locally who she says she can talk to about babies and motherhood.

Since the war started, more than eight million Ukrainians have fled to other European countries, in the greatest exodus of refugees the continent has seen since World War II.

More than 4,000 have registered with Brasov's Migrant Integration Center, according to Astrid Hamberger, founder of the nongovernmental organization that has helped many of them, including Yushchenko's family, find homes, medical care and social assistance.

"I feel safe here ... we receive a lot of help, which I'm very grateful for," said Yushchenko, who hopes Ukraine wins the war so they can go home and finally be together as a family — and Daniel can meet his father.

"It will be an unforgettable meeting, our child is our happiness," she said.

When asked what she prays for at the church in Brasov, Yushchenko doesn't hesitate to answer.

"I pray for the health of my family and friends and for a peaceful sky in our country," she said, "and ask for the strength to bear all this."

Celebs tout ice baths, but science on benefits is lukewarm

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 46 of 81

The coolest thing on social media these days may be celebrities and regular folks plunging into frigid water or taking ice baths.

The touted benefits include improved mood, more energy, weight loss and reduced inflammation, but the science supporting some of those claims is lukewarm.

Kim Kardashian posted her foray on Instagram. Harry Styles has tweeted about his dips. Kristen Bell says her plunges are "brutal" but mentally uplifting. And Lizzo claims ice plunges reduce inflammation and make her body feel better.

Here's what medical evidence, experts and fans say about the practice, which dates back centuries.

THE MIND

You might call Dan O'Connor an amateur authority on cold water immersion. Since June 2020, the 55-year-old Chicago man has plunged into Lake Michigan almost daily, including on frigid winter mornings when he has to shovel through the ice.

"The endorphin rush ... is an incredible way to wake up and just kind of shock the body and get the engine going," O'Connor said on a recent morning when the air temperature was a frosty 23 degrees (minus-5 Celsius). Endorphins are "feel good" hormones released in response to pain, stress, exercise and other activities.

With the lake temperature 34 degrees (1 Celsius), the bare-chested O'Connor did a running jump from the snow-covered shore to launch a forward flip into the icy gray water.

His first plunge came early in the pandemic, when he went on a bourbon bender and his annoyed wife told him to "go jump in the lake." The water felt good that June day. The world was in a coronavirus funk, O'Connor says, and that made him want to continue. As the water grew colder with the seasons, the psychological effect was even greater, he said.

"My mental health is a lot stronger, a lot brighter. I found some Zen down here coming down and jumping into the lake and shocking that body," O'Connor said.

Dr. Will Cronenwett, chief of psychiatry at Northwestern University's Feinberg medical school, tried cold-water immersion once, years ago while visiting Scandinavian friends on a Baltic island. After a sauna, he jumped into the ice-cold water for a few minutes and had what he called an intense and invigorating experience.

"It felt like I was being stabbed with hundreds of millions of really small electrical needles," he said. "I felt like I was strong and powerful and could do anything."

But Cronenwett says studying cold water immersion with a gold-standard randomized controlled trial is challenging because devising a placebo for cold plunges could be difficult.

There are a few theories on how it affects the psyche.

Cronenwett says cold water immersion stimulates the part of the nervous system that controls the resting or relaxation state. That may enhance feelings of well-being.

It also stimulates the part of the nervous system that regulates fight-or-flight stress response. Doing it on a regular basis may dampen that response, which could in turn help people feel better able to handle other stresses in their lives, although that is not proven, he said.

"You have to conquer your own trepidation. You have to muster the courage to do it," he said. "And when you finally do it, you feel like you've accomplished something meaningful. You've achieved a goal."

Czech researchers found that cold water plunging can increase blood concentrations of dopamine — another so-called happy hormone made in the brain — by 250%. High amounts have been linked with paranoia and aggression, noted physiologist James Mercer, a professor emeritus at the Arctic University of Norway who co-authored a recent scientific review of cold water immersion studies.

THE HEART

Cold water immersion raises blood pressure and increases stress on the heart. Studies have shown this is safe for healthy people and the effects are only temporary.

But it can be dangerous for people with heart trouble, sometimes leading to life-threatening irregular heartbeats, Cronenwett said. People with heart conditions or a family history of early heart disease should consult a physician before plunging, he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 47 of 81

METABOLISM

Repeated cold-water immersions during winter months have been shown to improve how the body responds to insulin, a hormone that controls blood sugar levels, Mercer noted. This might help reduce risks for diabetes or keep the disease under better control in people already affected, although more studies are needed to prove that.

Cold water immersion also activates brown fat — tissue that helps keep the body warm and helps it control blood sugar and insulin levels. It also helps the body burn calories, which has prompted research into whether cold water immersion is an effective way to lose weight. The evidence so far is inconclusive.

IMMUNE SYSTEM

Anecdotal research suggests that people who routinely swim in chilly water get fewer colds, and there's evidence that it can increase levels of certain white blood cells and other infection-fighting substances. Whether an occasional dunk in ice water can produce the same effect is unclear.

Among the biggest unanswered questions: How cold does water have to be to achieve any health benefits? And will a quick dunk have the same effect as a long swim?

"There is no answer to 'the colder the better,'" Mercer said. "Also, it depends on the type of response you are looking at. For example, some occur very quickly, like changes in blood pressure. ... Others, such as the formation of brown fat, take much longer."

O'Connor plunges year-round, but he says winter dunks are the best for "mental clarity," even if they sometimes last only 30 seconds.

On those icy mornings, he is "blocking everything else out and knowing that I got to get in the water, and then more importantly, get out of the water."

Joyous parades and parties kick off New Orleans' Mardi Gras

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The lead up to New Orleans' annual Mardi Gras season intensifies Friday with major nighttime parades down historic St. Charles Avenue and animal lovers gathering at a venerable French Quarter restaurant to pay tribute to four-legged faux royalty.

Galatoire's Restaurant, a fine dining fixture on Bourbon Street, will relax its jackets-required dress code and temporarily ditch its no-pets policy to host the king and queen of the Mystic Krewe of Barkus — two silver Labrador retrievers — at a morning event heralding the Sunday pet parade.

On Friday night, three parades with marching brass bands and colorful floats with costumed riders are to step off in the Uptown area. Other Friday night parades are scheduled in neighboring Metairie, and there will be more than two dozen celebrations almost nightly until Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, which this year falls on Feb. 21.

"If you think about the complex logistics, over multiple neighborhoods, multiple krewes, multiple law enforcement agencies — this is like Times Square on New Year's Eve for two weeks," Kelly Schulz of New Orleans & Company, the city tourism industry's trade association, said during a city news conference Thursday.

Complicating that effort has been a rise in crime and a shortage of police officers, which somewhat muted the celebration's comeback last year. Since parades in 2021 were canceled because of security concerns and the pandemic, some of the routes for the 2022 parades were trimmed.

This year the original routes have been restored and the local police department is bolstered by a contingent of 125 troopers from other parts of the state to help keep order. By various estimates, the local police force has dwindled to about 900 members, which is hundreds fewer than what local experts say is needed.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell and other city officials said they are confident safety can be maintained.

Joe Bikulege — co-owner of Le Bon Temps Roule, a neighborhood bar and music club on Magazine Street — said that businesses and residents welcome the restored routes. "People get traditions and routines based around seeing certain parades," he said in a recent interview.

"That's been taken away for three years," he said.

And, Schulz said, it appears tourists are planning to return in strong numbers.

"We are seeing strong hotel bookings so far," Schulz said. "We are seeing a lot of pent-up demand for travelers to come back to New Orleans. For many this will be their first time, since before COVID, experiencing Mardi Gras."

Mardi Gras is the culmination of Carnival season — which officially begins each year on Jan. 6, the 12th day after Christmas, known as King's Day, in New Orleans and closes with the arrival of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

New Orleans' raucous celebration is the nation's most well-known, but the holiday is also celebrated throughout much of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. Mobile, Alabama, lays claim to the oldest Mardi Gras celebration in the country.

South African rugby player killed by Hawaii police had CTE

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A Black former professional rugby player from South Africa shot by police months after moving to Hawaii suffered from a degenerative brain disease often found in American football players and other athletes subjected to repeated head trauma, autopsy results show.

The finding could help explain Lindani Myeni's bizarre behavior before the deadly 2021 confrontation with Honolulu officers. It also offers another layer of detail about a shooting that gained international attention during heightened calls for police reform following the 2020 murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.

An addendum to Myeni's autopsy report obtained by The Associated Press shows his brain tissue was sent to the Boston University CTE Center, which found the 29-year-old father of two suffered from stage three chronic traumatic encephalopathy. Commonly known as CTE, the disease can only be diagnosed posthumously.

Stage four is the most severe level and experts say it's alarming for someone as young as Myeni to have such a critical case of CTE.

Lindsay Myeni, who filed a wrongful death lawsuit alleging police shot her husband because he was Black, said she was shocked to learn of the CTE diagnosis.

"I had no clue. He had no clue," she said from Richard's Bay, South Africa, where she now lives. "So it was kind of devastating because it felt like ... someone was telling me like, hey, he died from racism at 29, but he was going to be killed from his favorite sport at 50 or 51 anyway."

Police were called to a Honolulu home about a stranger who had entered uninvited. He said, "I have videos of you," claimed a cat at the home was his and made other strange comments, according to Honolulu's prosecuting attorney, who decided not to pursue charges against any of the officers.

Police officials have said officers weren't reacting to his race, but rather his behavior, which put officers' lives in jeopardy. Prosecutors found that deadly force was justified because Myeni physically attacked officers, leaving one with a concussion.

He had been emotional earlier that day about family issues and the couple had visited numerous spiritual sites around the island of Oahu, Lindsay Myeni said, but he showed no signs of CTE symptoms. Those include memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression and depression.

She said that looking back, she wondered if maybe he was depressed or had mood swings during the pandemic, "but didn't we all?"

Myeni started playing rugby at around age 13, and by 19 had played professionally with the Border Bulldogs in South Africa, his wife said. He also played some rugby in Colorado and Florida, she said. She was aware of him only having two or three concussions.

Dr. Masahiko Kobayashi, the Honolulu medical examiner who autopsied Myeni and concluded he died from gunshot wounds, said he suspected CTE after hearing about Myeni's behavior and his contact sports past.

"The case of Mr. Myeni was really simple when I just determined the cause and manner of death. But

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 49 of 81

the circumstances were very complex, and the public was greatly impacted by this case," he said.

Kobayashi said he hoped the CTE finding might provide a clearer picture of what led to Myeni's death.

"We medical examiners sometimes act as a finder of facts more than the cause and manner of death," Kobayashi said. "After I thought about all of this, I believed the results of a CTE study should be a part of a full and complete understanding of the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Myeni, which is why I decided to order the test."

But CTE doesn't help Lindsay Myeni understand what happened that April 14, 2021, night.

"To me, it still doesn't answer any questions as to why you would shoot him," she said.

Myeni's behavior sounded like "classic symptoms" related to CTE, "confusion, disorientation, acting out in a very different way," said Paul Anderson, a lawyer in Kansas City, Missouri, who represents families of athletes with brain injuries, but is not involved in the Myeni case.

The youngest case of stage three CTE diagnosed in medical literature was Aaron Hernandez, 27, making Myeni "an example of pretty severe CTE for someone that age," said Dr. Daniel Daneshvar, an expert on the condition and Harvard Medical School assistant professor.

Hernandez, a former New England Patriots football star, killed himself in 2017 in the prison cell where he was serving a life-without-parole sentence for murder.

While people with CTE tend to have problems with memory, thinking, impulsivity and paranoia, there could be other explanations, Daneshvar said.

"We can't say for sure whether or not CTE in anyone's brain can cause them to do any particular action," he said.

Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney Steven Alm said the CTE finding isn't surprising and doesn't change his conclusion that police were justified in using deadly force.

"It's just a reminder for everybody that danger can come about, either because somebody just has that type of personality or they have some kind of ... mental or emotional disability or, like this," Alm said.

The investigation by Alm's office found that two days before the shooting, Myeni told his kickboxing instructor that he was going through "crazy African spiritual stuff."

About 30 minutes before the shooting, Myeni interjected himself in a situation where police were investigating a vehicle break-in and had to be told to go away by both the victim and officers, according to Alm's investigation.

Myeni then asked one of the officers for money to buy food and tried to get into the back of a police car.

From there, he drove a short distance to a home where tourists who didn't know him were staying. Wearing a feathered headband, he followed them into the house, told the woman, "I have videos of you," claimed a cat there was his and made comments about hunting.

The frightened woman called 911.

Officer body camera videos showed Myeni punching responding officers, leaving one with facial fractures and a concussion. Myeni continued punching an officer even after he was shot once in the chest, Alm said.

Bridget Morgan-Bickerton, a Honolulu attorney representing Myeni's wife, said he wasn't aggressive, "until he was subjected to unjustified aggression, being yelled at, at gunpoint, in the dark to 'get on the ground' with no announcement of who was asking."

Three months before the shooting, the Myenis moved to Hawaii, where Lindsay Myeni grew up, believing it would be safer for their two Black children than in another part of the U.S.

As a single mother of a 2- and 3-year-old, she doesn't know if she can ever return to Hawaii, so they're in South Africa, where the couple met while she was on a Christian mission trip. But it's difficult there, too.

"It's like I even moved out of our little township that he's from and moved to the suburbs because ... it's hard to even be at the house," she said. "I just went for a birthday party back to his home and I'm like, oh, this is so painful."

Mystery Yemen drone strike renews questions over US campaign

By AHMED AL-HAJ and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 50 of 81

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Onlookers gathered around a small, four-door car coated in dried mud, peering through its shattered windows and torn-away roof at three dead men inside.

Tribal leaders identified the three — killed in late January near Yemen's central city of Marib — as suspected members of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, long considered one of the extremist group's most dangerous branches.

They appear to have been killed in a rare drone strike by the U.S., using a weapon that's been deployed sparingly in the past, typically against high-value targets.

The strike renews questions over the U.S. drone campaign in Yemen, now two decades old and just as secretive as ever despite promises from the Biden administration to put more rules in place to govern them. That secrecy, coupled with a years-long war ripping at Yemen, makes it even more difficult to determine and assess the reasons behind suspected American strikes.

The suspected al-Qaida members appear to have been killed by a Hellfire R9X, otherwise known as the "flying Ginsu" or "knife bomb," based on images of the wreckage analyzed by The Associated Press and weapons experts. The R9X, known only to be used by U.S. forces, has been used in other attacks attributed to America, including the Kabul airstrike last year that killed al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri.

The men killed in the Jan. 30 strike were not prominent members of the extremist group. One was identified as a bomb-maker, with little else known about him.

"The R9X is for high-value target killing and we don't have any 'Who is this guy, why does he merit this now?'" said David Sterman, a senior policy analyst at the Washington-based think tank New America, which for years has tracked U.S. drone strikes in Yemen. "If it is a U.S. strike, it raises substantial questions about what is the state of the U.S. drone war in Yemen."

The White House declined to answer questions about the apparent strike,

U.S. Air Forces Central, which oversees the Middle East, said it didn't have any information that its forces carried out any strike in Marib. The CIA, which is believed to have conducted R9X strikes including the one that killed al-Zawahri, declined to comment.

The U.S. government has released few public details about the the R9X Hellfire, which comes from a class of anti-tank missile used across the U.S. military for two decades. Analysts say that instead of a standard explosive warhead, the R9X has six rotating blades that pop just before the missile hits a target. In theory, this helps direct the weapon at a specific person and prevents wider casualties.

The scenes after attacks differ greatly, depending on the type of drone used.

Drones carrying explosives would leave smoldering rubble or even a crater, depending on the size of the munition. In suspected R9X attacks, such as the 2017 strike that killed a deputy al-Qaida leader in Syria, the roofs of targeted cars are torn through with clean lines across a multitude of cuts, while the rest of the vehicle remains intact.

This was also the case in the Jan. 30 strike, carried out in the Wadi Ubaydah area of Marib, some 130 kilometers (80 miles) east of the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. The capital has been held for years by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebel group which has been fighting against a Saudi-led military coalition for eight years.

New America, as well as the London-based investigative organization Airwars, cited experts and local reporting in saying that they suspected an R9X strike.

"It has all the features of other CIA strikes we've seen in the past, but until there's transparency, we can't know for sure," Airwars director Emily Tripp said.

Two local tribal leaders, speaking on condition of anonymity given the ongoing war and the presence of extremists in Marib, told the AP that those killed were AQAP members. Masked al-Qaida fighters surrounded the area after the strike, they said.

The leaders identified one of the dead as Hassan al-Hadrami. The Houthis, through the state-run SABA news agency they control, had identified al-Hadrami in 2021 as one of several "specialized" explosives experts in the al-Qaida branch. The extremists have been planting roadside explosives.

However, al-Hadrami was otherwise unknown to veteran Yemen watchers.

United Nations experts believe AQAP numbers a few thousand members supplemented by foreign fighters. Marib remains a stronghold for al-Qaida even though Saudi-backed allies of Yemen's internationally

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 51 of 81

recognized government in exile are nominally in control of the city.

AQAP claimed the 2019 shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola that saw an aviation student from Saudi Arabia kill three people and wound two. However, it otherwise has been unsuccessful in striking the U.S. while seeing its militants targeted by drone strikes over the last two decades.

The first drone strike of the post-9/11 world was carried out in Marib in 2002 under then-President George W. Bush, after a missile attack killed six people, including a U.S. citizen. Since then, every American president — Barack Obama, Donald Trump and now Joe Biden — has authorized drone strikes in the Arab world's poorest country.

Biden in 2022 issued new guidelines curtailing the use of armed drones outside of war zones, requiring presidential approval before a suspected terrorist is added to the U.S. government's target list for potential lethal action. However, those documents remain classified — making judging the reasons behind suspected strikes that much more difficult.

"These cases are happening in very remote areas with a lack of information," Tripp said. "It would be really good to know what the policy is and the rules are behind those engagements."

Biden faces doubt from some voters who backed Dems in 2022

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hillary Scholten is among the Democrats who had a surprisingly good election night in November.

She became the first Democrat in nearly a half century to win her western Michigan congressional district, bucking expectations about her party's prospects and helping limit the Republican majority in the U.S. House to just four seats. As President Joe Biden prepares for a coming reelection bid, victories like this have bolstered him and his supporters who believe voters rewarded his steady leadership during a period of economic and political turmoil.

But Scholten, who declined in an interview to outright endorse Biden for reelection, suggested that while the president has accomplished a tremendous amount, he wasn't the reason for her victory. She won, she insisted, by appealing to voters as someone "focused on putting the people of their district first over national politics."

That approach tapped into an apparent openness among voters to support Democratic candidates in the midterms even if they weren't necessarily fond of Biden, a discernment that is notable at a time when politics has become increasingly nationalized. Roughly 1 in 6 voters for Democratic House candidates said they disapproved of Biden's job performance, according to AP VoteCast, an extensive nationwide survey of the electorate. Two-thirds of these voters said Biden was not a factor, good or bad, in their midterm decisions.

The findings are a warning sign for both parties at the outset of the 2024 presidential campaign. For Republicans, a constant stream of attacks on Biden may have little effect on voters who will accept him over GOP contenders seen as too extreme. But for Biden, the findings also suggest that the surprisingly strong Democratic performance last year might not translate into energy around his reelection.

"We certainly have a problem as a party if individuals have such low satisfaction with the leader of our party," said Scholten, who also noted she would welcome a competitive Democratic primary, an unlikely prospect for now.

In Michigan and beyond, VoteCast shows that about three-quarters of the midterm voters who backed Democrats but disapproved of Biden were self-identified Democrats or Democratic-leaning independents. Most said party affiliation was not very important to them.

This group was more likely than those who approved of Biden to be sour about the economy, the issue that ranked top among them, and blame the president for inflation. They were overwhelmingly pessimistic about the country's direction. The cohort was younger, more ideologically moderate and from lower-income households.

Shea Comfort of West Chester, Pennsylvania, doesn't think there's enough attention on working people

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 52 of 81

who are struggling to feed their families when the "price of living now outweighs our check." It's not just Biden who isn't doing enough, he said, but he called the president "the biggest liar of them all" and a "puppet on a string."

"None of these guys have seen hungry nights," the 44-year-old cook said of politicians. "The middle class is getting kicked in the spine."

Comfort said he's a Democrat who voted for Biden in 2020 and Gov. Josh Shapiro in 2022, but he's voted for Republicans before and would again. He said he wouldn't vote for Biden for reelection.

"We just were so busy focused on getting (Donald) Trump out of here that we took anything," Comfort said. "But who else can really run that you trust anyway? So, no matter what, it's like you're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't."

These voters made a "political calculus," said Maurice Mitchell, national director of the progressive Working Families Party. That was in their best interest -- both to allow Democrats to advance their economic agenda and to reject GOP extremism -- but that doesn't mean they'll make the same decision in 2024.

"I don't think it makes sense for Democrats to take these voters for granted," Mitchell said. "What Democrats, what the president should be doing is every single day demonstrating to those voters that they're going to push as hard as possible for their interests."

Biden spent much of his State of the Union address this week focusing on so-called kitchen table economic issues that could appeal to voters in a reelection campaign. That approach was successful for some Democrats last year who sought to draw a clear contrast to their Republican opponents.

For example, John Fetterman's campaign flipped Pennsylvania's Senate seat by intentionally focusing on him as an individual -- not any other Democrat -- and his specific opponent, according to Brendan McPhillips, who managed Fetterman's campaign. Fetterman defeated Republican Mehmet Oz, a celebrity surgeon endorsed by former President Donald Trump.

There may have been underlying frustration with the president, McPhillips said, but "I don't think it's the same thing as looking at the Democratic Party or the president side-by-side to the alternative" and choosing the alternative.

In Pennsylvania, the vast majority of voters for Fetterman and Shapiro said they were very concerned that Oz and Republican candidate for governor Doug Mastriano were too extreme. That included the voters who disapproved of Biden.

About 2 in 10 of those who disapproved of Biden yet supported the Pennsylvania Democrats said they did so because they "mostly oppose" the other candidates.

Republican strategists suggest voters with this set of attitudes could defect with the right candidate on the ticket.

In Arizona, this cohort of voters similarly rejected Republican candidates for governor, Kari Lake, and Senate, Blake Masters, both of whom sowed doubt about the results of the 2020 election.

Republican strategist Barrett Marson in Arizona was not surprised by the findings -- he himself voted for Democrat Katie Hobbs for governor despite not being a fan of Biden.

"Up and down the ballot, throughout the country, we saw Republican candidates who were far, far, far outside the mainstream of thought," he said, and they did not appeal to more moderate voters.

This group of swing voters isn't going away, said Lorna Romero Ferguson, also a Republican strategist in Arizona. Republicans instead will have to "learn from 2022 and focus on a nominee from the primary who can actually win statewide," she said.

"That voter bloc is going to be less inclined to just be a party loyalist," said Romero Ferguson. "People have to earn their votes."

Emilee Brewer, a 21-year-old college student from Bangor, Pennsylvania, identifies as a moderate Republican. She voted for Trump in 2020, but since the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, she's felt frustrated with the Republican Party and its nominees.

She chose to back Democrats for governor and for U.S. House in 2022 over their Republican opponents.

"I chose the better candidate," she said. "If the Republican Party wants to continue to grow and be bet-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 53 of 81

ter, we need to realize that we need to elect better candidates.”

No matter who the GOP nominates for president, Biden will have to overcome serious doubts not just about his performance but about his capability and character as well.

Just 15% of voters for Democratic House candidates who disapproved of Biden described him as a strong leader. About half said Biden doesn't care about people like them, and two-thirds thought he lacks the mental capability to serve effectively as president.

Tyva Strong, a 24-year-old liberal living in West Chester, Pennsylvania, voted for Democrats last year. She often chooses Democrats because they are the “lesser of the two evils,” said Strong, who owns a marketing business.

She voted for Biden in 2020 and would vote for him again but thinks he's “not as fit as he could be.”

“He's not the vice president we had when (Barack) Obama was elected. He's aged,” Strong said. “I think he's doing a pretty fair job, but ... maybe sit the next one out.”

SpaceX ignites giant Starship rocket in crucial pad test

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

SpaceX is a big step closer to sending its giant Starship spacecraft into orbit, completing an engine-firing test at the launch pad on Thursday.

Thirty-one of the 33 first-stage booster engines ignited simultaneously for about 10 seconds in south Texas. The team turned off one engine before sending the firing command and another engine shut down — “but still enough engines to reach orbit!” tweeted SpaceX's Elon Musk.

Musk estimates Starship's first orbital test flight could occur as soon as March, if the test analyses and remaining preparations go well.

The booster remained anchored to the pad as planned during the test. There were no signs of major damage to the launch tower.

NASA is counting on Starship to ferry astronauts to the surface of the moon in a few years, linking up with its Orion capsule in lunar orbit. Further down the road, Musk wants to use the mammoth Starships to send crowds to Mars.

Only the first-stage Super Heavy booster, standing 230 feet (69 meters) tall, was used for Thursday's test. The futuristic second stage — the part that will actually land on the moon and Mars — was in the hangar being prepped for flight.

Altogether, Starship towers 394 feet (120 meters), making it the biggest and most powerful rocket ever built. It's capable of generating 17 million pounds of liftoff thrust, almost double that of NASA's moon rocket that sent an empty capsule to the moon and back late last year.

SpaceX fired up to 14 Starship engines last fall and completed a fueling test at the pad last month.

Flocks of birds scattered as Starship's engines came alive and sent thick dark plumes of smoke across the Starship launch complex, dubbed Starbase. It's located at the southernmost tip of Texas near the village of Boca Chica, close to the Mexican border.

NFL Honors: Hamlin joins medical staff that saved his life

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — The first responders who saved Damar Hamlin's life were recognized with a tribute video at “NFL Honors” before being invited onto the stage.

The man they saved was right behind them.

Hamlin made his second appearance in Phoenix during Super Bowl week Thursday night, paying tribute to those who had a hand in giving him a second chance at life.

“My entire life, I felt like God was using me to give others hope and now with a new set of circumstances, I can say he's doing what he's always done,” Hamlin said from the stage at Phoenix Convention Center. “I have a long journey ahead, a journey full of unknowns and a journey full of milestones, but it's a lot easier to face your fears when you know your purpose.”

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 54 of 81

The Buffalo Bills safety received the NFLPA's Alan Page Community Award on Wednesday, a little more than a month after Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and needed to be resuscitated on the field in Cincinnati.

He appeared again at "NFL Honors" on Thursday night after the Bills and Cincinnati Bengals training and medical staffs, along with the staff at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center — collectively called "Team Damar" — were recognized.

Bills assistant athletic trainer Denny Kellington, who performed CPR on Hamlin on the field, also earned a bit of appreciation during "NFL Honors," receiving a fifth-place vote for the NFL's MVP award.

Once onstage, Hamlin personally thanked an ICU doctor named Yusef, who, three nights into his hospital stay, told him he had been through something similar.

"He showed me he was OK and that meant so much to me," said Hamlin, who also thanked everyone on stage. "There was so much uncertainty at the time and just him coming to me, showing I could live a normal life again, it meant so much to me and my mom. I want to give a big thank you to him."

Hamlin collapsed on the field after a collision with Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver Tee Higgins on Jan. 2. The sight of an elite-level athlete nearly dying on the field sent a shock across the NFL and the world.

In the days and weeks after Hamlin's collapse, his toy drive fundraiser received unexpected GoFundMe donations. "Chasing M's" has since raised more than \$9 million.

"Sudden cardiac arrest is something I never would have chosen to be a part of my story, but that's because our own visions are too small even when we think we see the whole picture," Hamlin said. "My vision was about playing in the NFL and being the best player I could be, but God's plan was to have a purpose greater than any game in this world."

Hamlin spent nearly a week in a Cincinnati hospital before being flown to Buffalo, where he spent a couple of days in the hospital before being released on Jan. 11. He has made steady progress in what will be a long recovery, appearing at the Bills facility before attending their divisional game against Cincinnati.

Hamlin received the Alan Page Award on Wednesday and a standing ovation from his peers at "NFL Honors."

"Every day I'm amazed that my experiences could encourage so many others across the country and even across the world — encourage to pray, encourage to spread love and encourage to keep fighting no matter the circumstances," Hamlin said.

Hamlin has said he plans to support young people through education and sports with the GoFundMe donations. He also will use proceeds from the sale of new T-shirts, emblazoned with "Did We Win?" along with his hands in the shape of a heart, to raise money for the trauma center in Cincinnati that treated him.

"I told my teammates you might as well give the man of the year to Damar Hamlin, just for the way he's galvanized our country, brought us together," said Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott, who was selected as the Walter Payton Man of the Year. "(He) made so many people understand the power of prayer, the power of community, the power of coming together and resiliency, not giving up and having faith."

Patrick Mahomes wins 2nd MVP award ahead of Super Bowl

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Patrick Mahomes dominated the voting for the AP NFL Most Valuable Player award. Now, he'll try to break the MVP curse.

Mahomes, who also won in 2018, easily outdistanced Jalen Hurts, receiving 48 of 50 first-place votes from a nationwide panel of media members who regularly cover the league. He earned 490 points to 193 for Hurts, who got one first-place vote, 26 seconds, 11 thirds and 10 fourths.

Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs (16-3) face Hurts and the Philadelphia Eagles (16-3) in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

Mahomes thanked the Chiefs organization and his teammates in a video at NFL Honors on Thursday night.

"I would never be standing here without y'all," Mahomes said. "Every day we've given everything we have together to win the ultimate goal, the Super Bowl. Let's continue to go for that dream this weekend."

The last nine MVPs to play in the Super Bowl that season are 0-9. Kurt Warner was the last to win both the MVP award and Super Bowl following the 1999 season.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 55 of 81

Bills quarterback Josh Allen received the other first-place vote, finishing third with 151 points. Bengals QB Joe Burrow placed fourth and Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson came in fifth.

The 27-year-old Mahomes is the third player to win his second MVP before turning 28, joining Brett Favre (27) and Jim Brown (22).

Mahomes was the 2018 NFL MVP in his first full season as a starter.

The Chiefs lost the AFC championship game that season but Mahomes led them to a Super Bowl victory over San Francisco the following season.

In the second-closest race Thursday, Brian Daboll won AP Coach of the Year after leading the New York Giants to their first playoff appearance in six years.

Daboll received 16 first-place votes and 123 total points to outpace 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan, who got 12 votes for first and 100 points.

Jaguars coach Doug Pederson finished third with 75 points, including five first-place votes.

"It's a tremendous honor," Daboll said. "You don't think about that when you take a job. You think about leading a team and building the culture."

Other awards announced Thursday:

DeMeco Ryans, who spent the past two seasons as the defensive coordinator of the 49ers, was named AP Assistant Coach of the Year. He is now the head coach of the Texans.

Nick Bosa made it a landslide for the AP Defensive Player of the Year award. San Francisco's All-Pro defensive end received 46 first-place votes after leading the NFL with 18 ½ sacks in the regular season.

Bosa and the 49ers lost to the Eagles 31-7 in the NFC title game. He joked that he's ready to start the season now.

"One weekend in Las Vegas is enough for me," Bosa said.

Jets cornerback Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner won the AP Defensive Rookie of the Year award. Gardner, the No. 4 overall pick in the draft, started every game for the Jets. He had two interceptions and allowed just 33 catches on 73 targets.

Jets receiver Garrett Wilson edged out Seattle Seahawks running back Kenneth Walker for the AP Offensive Rookie of the year award.

"This means everything," Wilson said. "You put in a lot of work to end up in this point and to see it come to fruition, it's awesome."

Wilson and Gardner are the third teammates to win the offensive and defensive rookie awards in the same season. Alvin Kamara and Marshon Lattimore did it with the Saints in 2017 and Detroit's Mel Farr and Lem Barney did it in 1967.

"I was more happy for Garrett," Gardner said.

Justin Jefferson ran away with the AP Offensive Player of the Year award. Minnesota's All-Pro wide receiver got 35 first-place votes and earned 192 points, outdistancing runner up Mahomes by a significant margin.

"It means a lot, especially where I come from, this doesn't happen," Jefferson said. "I was always doubted, wasn't highly recruited. Having this award is amazing."

Geno Smith, who earned his first Pro Bowl berth after becoming a full-time starter for the first time since 2014, is the AP Comeback Player of the Year. The Seattle Seahawks quarterback threw for 4,282 yards, 30 TDs and led Seattle to an NFC wild-card berth.

Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott was the Walter Payton Man of the Year. The prestigious award recognizes an NFL player for outstanding community service activities off the field, as well as excellence on the field.

Officer drew gun as he approached Tyre Nichols, report finds

By TRAVIS LOLLER and ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — One of three Memphis Police officers who initially detained Tyre Nichols last month has admitted he did not witness the alleged reckless driving that was the justification for pulling over Nichols but still approached his car while brandishing his gun, according to police documents seeking

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 56 of 81

to bar him from working in law enforcement.

That Jan. 7 traffic stop quickly escalated into a beating, and Nichols died three days later.

Officer Preston Hemphill's own body camera showed that from the very beginning of the traffic stop he and two other officers approached Nichols with force that was disproportionate for the alleged offense of reckless driving, according to a statement from the disciplinary hearing that took place before he was fired.

Hemphill was fired last week but has not been charged for his role in Nichols' beating and arrest, which has sparked widespread outrage and reignited a national discussion of police brutality against Black people. Five other officers, who are Black and were caught on video pummeling Nichols with their fists, feet and a baton, have been charged with murder and other offenses.

Hemphill did not take part in the second, more violent encounter, which took place after Nichols ran from police. But the documents highlight that he was heard on his body camera telling his partner: "I hope they stomp his ass!"

The information about Hemphill's actions is contained in supporting documents attached to a Wednesday request from Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn "CJ" Davis to strip Hemphill, who is white, of his police certification so that he could not work in law enforcement again. Hemphill's lawyer did not immediately comment Thursday because he had not fully read the documents.

The documents help create a fuller picture of the initial encounter with the 29-year-old Nichols that involved Hemphill, Demetrius Haley and Emmitt Martin III. Haley and Martin were fired last month and charged with second-degree murder in Nichols' death along with Tadarrius Bean, Desmond Mills Jr. and Justin Smith.

The police chief has said she saw no justification in video of the incident for pulling Nichols over in the first place.

Meanwhile, the office of the top prosecutor in Memphis said in a statement Thursday that it will review all previous cases, "closed and pending," of the five officers charged in the Nichols investigation. It was not immediately clear how many cases the review by the Shelby County District Attorney's Office will involve, but there is at least a chance that some cases could be re-opened if problems emerge.

The new documents state that Nichols was not given the opportunity to step out of the car before being forced out by Haley. Martin then grabbed one of Nichols' wrists and claimed that Nichols tried to grab his gun. That claim was later repeated by Hemphill and Haley but was contradicted by the video evidence.

Once they had Nichols out of his car, the officers took him to the ground while yelling profanity at him. Hemphill threatened to use a stun gun on Nichols, while placing the gun against Nichols' leg. Martin threatened to break one of his arms. Haley sprayed Nichols in the eyes with pepper spray while he was on the ground.

Nichols, by contrast, was "not using profanity" or showing any "signs of violence," according to the documents. When Nichols managed to get free and started running away, Hemphill deployed his stun gun, even though police policy forbids the use of a stun gun against a subject who is running away or as a means of gaining compliance with someone who is not violent.

The hearing officer also faulted Hemphill for deploying his stun gun while Nichols was in the middle of the street. "You put everyone involved at risk of serious bodily injuries due to oncoming traffic," the statement reads.

Within a few minutes, Bean, Mills and Smith caught Nichols a few blocks away and began beating him. They were joined by Haley and Martin, while Hemphill remained with the vehicle.

In all, 13 officers have either been disciplined or are under investigation for their roles in Nichols' death. Two Shelby County sheriff's deputies were also suspended, and three emergency medical technicians with the Memphis Fire Department have been fired.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy makes emotional appeal for EU membership

By RAF CASERT and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked his Western allies Thursday for more weapons

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 57 of 81

and said "a Ukraine that is winning" its war with Russia should become a member of the European Union, arguing the bloc won't be complete without it.

At the close of a 16-hour summit that ended Friday when Zelenskyy was already gone, the EU leaders pledged they would do all it takes to back Ukraine but offered no firm timetable for EU membership talks to begin as Zelenskyy had hoped.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the leaders agreed to support Ukraine "tirelessly, over the long term ... to win the war."

EU leaders pledged to look over the next month at boosting ammunition production for Ukraine's war effort as it faces fresh challenges from Russia.

EU Council President Charles Michel said the bloc needs to "cooperate with the industrial sector and to ensure that we can speed up the level of production of ammunition and that they can also fulfill the commitments that are needed."

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that a new 10-billion euro sanctions package under discussion would focus on depriving Russia of military goods it needs and cannot get anywhere else.

"The sanctions package "is targeted on goods that are almost irreplaceable from somewhere else," she said.

While in Brussels, Zelenskyy asked Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger to give Ukraine its Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter jets. Slovakia grounded its fleet of MiG-29s last year. "We will work on" the request, Heger replied.

Macron didn't rule out sending French fighter jets to Ukraine, but said Zelenskyy didn't ask for them and they were not Ukraine's most urgent need.

"In no case could warplanes be delivered in the coming weeks," Macron said, notably because of the necessary training. He said France may consider "intensifying" deliveries of other equipment such as artillery or missile systems.

The commitments came after an emotional day at EU headquarters where Zelenskyy wrapped up a rare, two-day trip outside Ukraine to seek new weaponry from the West to repel the invasion that Moscow has been waging for nearly a year. As he spoke, a new offensive by Russia in eastern Ukraine was under way.

Zelenskyy, who also visited the U.K. and France, received rapturous applause and cheers from the European Parliament and a summit of the 27 EU leaders, insisting in his speech that the fight with Russia was one for the freedom of all of Europe.

"A Ukraine that is winning is going to be member of the European Union," Zelenskyy said, building his appeal around the common destiny that Ukraine and the bloc face in confronting Russia.

"Europe will always be, and remain Europe as long as we ... take care of the European way of life," he said.

EU membership talks should start later this year, Zelenskyy said, an ambitious request given the huge task ahead. Such a move would help motivate Ukrainian soldiers in their defense of the country, he said.

"Of course we need it this year," he said, then looked at European Council head Charles Michel, and insisted, tongue-in-cheek: "When I say this year, I mean this year. Two, zero, 23."

Von der Leyen, however, said "there is no rigid timeline." In practice, membership often has taken decades to complete.

Zelenskyy held up an EU flag after his address and the lawmakers stood in somber silence as the Ukrainian national anthem and the European anthem "Ode to Joy" were played in succession.

Before Zelenskyy's speech, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said allies should consider "quickly, as a next step, providing long-range systems" and fighter jets to Ukraine. The response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine "must be proportional to the threat, and the threat is existential," she said.

Metsola also told Zelenskyy that "we have your back. We were with you then, we are with you now, we will be with you for as long as it takes."

Military analysts say Putin is hoping that Europe's support for Ukraine will wane as Russia is believed to be preparing a new offensive.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 58 of 81

The Kremlin's forces "have regained the initiative in Ukraine and have begun their next major offensive" in the eastern Luhansk region, most of which is occupied by Russia, the Institute for the Study of War, said in its latest assessment. "Russian forces are gradually beginning an offensive, but its success is not inherent or predetermined."

Zelenskyy used the dais of the European Parliament hoping to match Wednesday's speech to Britain's legislature when he thanked the nation for its unrelenting support.

That same support has come from the EU. The bloc and its member states have already backed Kyiv with about 50 billion euros (\$53.6 billion) in aid, provided military hardware and imposed nine packages of sanctions on the Kremlin.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by Putin, visited a Siberian arms factory Thursday and said his country will respond to the Western aid by churning out thousands of tanks.

"Our enemy was begging for aircraft, missiles and tanks on a trip abroad," Medvedev said during a visit to the factory in Omsk. "We will naturally increase the output of various types of weapons and military equipment, including modern tanks. We are talking about production and modernization of thousands of tanks."

Fighting in Ukraine intensified Thursday, with Kyiv's military intelligence agency saying Russian forces have launched an offensive in the the partially occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions, with the aim to grab full control of the entire industrial region, known as the Donbas. Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Ukrainian forces there since 2014.

"An escalation is underway and the main goal is to seize Donbas by the end of March," Main Intelligence Directorate spokesman Andriy Yusov told Ukrainian television.

In Donetsk, the front line expanded significantly over the previous day, with fierce battles taking place as Moscow's forces closed in on key Ukrainian-held towns, according to regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. Russian shelling struck a kindergarten, hospital, cultural center, factory and apartment buildings, he said.

"The intensity of the shelling has increased dramatically and we are seeing a significant intensification of activity by the Russian army immediately in the south, center and north of the region," Kyrylenko said. "Russia is again actively using combat aircraft to shell our cities and villages."

Russian forces also stepped up attacks in neighboring Luhansk province, launching "a broad offensive," regional Gov. Serhii Haidai said.

In Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv province, 23 cities and villages came under shelling. In the border city of Vovchansk, shelling damaged about 10 apartment buildings.

Lawyer: Santos had 2017 Pennsylvania theft charge expunged

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

U.S. Rep. George Santos was charged with criminal theft in Pennsylvania in 2017 in connection with bad checks apparently used to buy puppies from dog breeders, according to a lawyer who said she helped the Republican with the case.

The case was ultimately dismissed after Santos said the nine checks, totaling more than \$15,000, were from a checkbook that had been stolen from him, according to information provided to The Associated Press on Thursday by the attorney, Tiffany Bogosian.

The theft case, first reported by Politico, adds to the controversy surrounding the first-term Long Island congressman, who faces multiple investigations and has acknowledged lying about elements of his life story.

A spokesperson for the York County district attorney's office in Pennsylvania, where the charges were filed, said the office cannot comment on expunged cases. Pennsylvania state police officials did not return messages seeking comment.

A congressional aide to Santos referred questions to his attorney, Joseph Murray, who didn't immediately respond to a message seeking comment. Santos has previously denied any illegal doings.

The charges date to a time when Santos claimed to be leading a group, Friends of Pets United, that benefited sick, abandoned or neglected animals.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 59 of 81

Some people familiar with the group have questioned what became of the money it raised. FBI agents recently visited a New Jersey man who complained that Santos had raised \$3,000 for his terminally ill dog, but never delivered the cash or helped the sick animal.

It's not the first time Santos has been linked to a criminal investigation involving checks. Court records in Brazil, first reported by The New York Times, show Santos was the subject of a criminal charge there for using two stolen checks in 2008, when he would have been 19, to buy about \$1,350 worth of items at a clothing shop in the city of Niteroi.

The Times quoted local prosecutors as saying the case was dormant because Santos had never appeared in court. Santos has denied being sought by authorities in South America.

Bogosian said she began helping Santos with the Pennsylvania theft case in 2020, after he told her he had been served with an extradition warrant. She gave the AP email correspondence she had with a Pennsylvania state trooper in February 2020.

In the email to the trooper, she wrote that Santos told her one of four checkbooks he received from his bank disappeared in 2017 and he immediately called the bank, had the checks canceled and put stop pay orders on all the checks. He later closed the account.

In the email, Bogosian said Santos was not aware of the checks written to the dog breeders until after he was charged. Defending her friend, she also wrote that the signatures on the checks differed from each other and from Santos' own signature.

"A review of the below and attached will make clear my client is not only the victim of fraud but so are the additional payees listed below and whom received the attached checks," Bogosian wrote in the email.

Santos, she wrote, suspected that his roommate at the end of 2017, "a person only known as 'Sydney Lima,'" had access to the checks and was perhaps responsible.

The charges were later expunged, but it is not clear exactly why.

The memo lines on some of the bad checks written to the dog breeders said they had been used to buy "puppies."

Shortly after the checks were written, Friends of Pets United held a puppy adoption event at a pet store in New York City, at which people paid hundreds of dollars for the animals.

The New York Times reported Monday that after that adoption event, in November 2017, Santos asked the pet store owner to write a check from the proceeds to Anthony Devolder, the name Santos was going by at the time.

The owner rejected the request and instead made the check payable to Friends of Pets United. The owner, Daniel Avissato, told the Times he later discovered in his bank records that someone had blotted out Friends of Pets United on the check's recipient line and replaced it with Anthony Devolder.

Santos has refused to answer questions about Friends of Pets United, but said in a tweet responding to some of the fundraising allegations that "my work in animal advocacy was the labor of love & hard work."

He said he had rescued many dogs over the years.

The pandemic missing: The kids who didn't go back to school

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS and SHARON LURYE Associated Press

She'd be a senior right now, preparing for graduation in a few months, probably leading her school's modern dance troupe and taking art classes.

Instead, Kailani Taylor-Cribb hasn't taken a single class in what used to be her high school since the height of the coronavirus pandemic. She vanished from Cambridge, Massachusetts' public school roll in 2021 and has been, from an administrative standpoint, unaccounted for since then.

She is among hundreds of thousands of students around the country who disappeared from public schools during the pandemic and didn't resume their studies elsewhere.

An analysis by The Associated Press, Stanford University's Big Local News project and Stanford education professor Thomas Dee found an estimated 230,000 students in 21 states whose absences could not be accounted for. These students didn't move out of state, and they didn't sign up for private school or

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 60 of 81

home-school, according to publicly available data.

In short, they're missing.

"Missing" students received crisis-level attention in 2020 after the pandemic closed schools nationwide. In the years since, they have become largely a budgeting problem. School leaders and some state officials worried aloud about the fiscal challenges their districts faced if these students didn't come back. Each student represents money from the city, state and federal governments.

Gone is the urgency to find the students who left — those eligible for free public education but who are not receiving any schooling at all. Early in the pandemic, school staff went door-to-door to reach and reengage kids. Most such efforts have ended.

"Everyone is talking about declining enrollment, but no one is talking about who's leaving the system and why," said Tom Sheppard, a New York City parent and representative on the city's Panel for Educational Policy.

"No one," he said, "is forthcoming."

A PROBLEM NOT DISCUSSED

The missing kids identified by AP and Stanford represent far more than a number. The analysis highlights thousands of students who may have dropped out of school or missed out on the basics of reading and school routines in kindergarten and first grade.

That's thousands of students who matter to someone. Thousands of students who need help re-entering school, work and everyday life.

"That's the stuff that no one wants to talk about," said Sonja Santelises, the chief executive officer of Baltimore's public schools, speaking about her fellow superintendents.

"We want to say it's outside stuff" that's keeping kids from returning to school, she said, such as caring for younger siblings or the need to work. But she worries teens sometimes lack caring adults at school who can discuss their concerns about life.

"That's really scary," Santelises said.

Discussion of children's recovery from the pandemic has focused largely on test scores and performance. But Dee says the data suggests a need to understand more about children who aren't in school and how that will affect their development.

"This is leading evidence that tells us we need to be looking more carefully at the kids who are no longer in public schools," he said.

Over months of reporting, the AP learned of students and families avoiding school for a range of reasons. Some are still afraid of COVID-19, are homeless or have left the country. Some students couldn't study online and found jobs instead. Some slid into depression.

During the prolonged online learning, some students fell so far behind developmentally and academically that they no longer knew how to behave or learn at school. Many of these students, while largely absent from class, are still officially on school rosters. That makes it harder to truly count the number of missing students. The real tally of young people not receiving an education is likely far greater than the 230,000 figure calculated by the AP and Stanford.

In some cases, this wasn't sudden. Many students were struggling well before the pandemic descended.

Kailani, for one, had begun to feel alienated at her school. In ninth grade, a few months before the pandemic hit, she was unhappy at home and had been moved to a different math class because of poor grades.

Kailani has ADHD and says the white teaching assistant assigned to help her focus in her new class targeted her because she was Black, blaming Kailani when classmates acted up. She also didn't allow Kailani to use her headphones while working independently in class, something Kailani says was permitted in her special education plan to help her focus.

After that, Kailani stopped attending math. Instead, she cruised the hallways or read in the library.

Ultimately, the pandemic and at-home education relieved the anxiety Kailani felt from being in the school building. Kailani preferred online school because she could turn off her camera and engage as she chose.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 61 of 81

Her grades improved.

When the school reopened, she never returned.

A Cambridge schools spokesperson looked into Kailani's complaints. "Several individuals demonstrated great concern and compassion towards her and the challenges she was facing outside of school," Sujata Wycoff said. She said the district has a "reputation of being deeply dedicated to the education and well-being of our students."

LOSING THE PHYSICAL CONNECTION

To assess just how many students have gone missing, AP and Big Local News canvassed every state in the nation to find the most recently available data on both public and non-public schools, as well as census estimates for the school-age population.

Overall, public school enrollment fell by over 700,000 students between the 2019-20 and 2021-22 school years in the 21 states plus Washington, D.C., that provided the necessary data.

Those states saw private-school enrollment grow by over 100,000 students. Home-schooling grew even more, surging by more than 180,000.

But the data showed 230,000 students who were neither in private school nor registered for home-school. Their absences could not be explained by population loss, either — such as falling birth rates or families who moved out of state.

States where kindergarten is optional were more likely to have larger numbers of unaccounted-for students, suggesting the missing also include many young learners kept home instead of starting school.

California alone showed over 150,000 missing students in the data, and New York had nearly 60,000. Census estimates are imperfect. So AP and Stanford ran a similar analysis for pre-pandemic years in those two states. It found almost no missing students at all, confirming something out of the ordinary occurred during the pandemic.

The true number of missing students is likely much higher. The analysis doesn't include data from 29 states, including Texas and Illinois, or the unknown numbers of ghost students who are technically enrolled but rarely make it to class.

For some students, it was impossible to overcome losing the physical connection with school and teachers during the pandemic's school closures.

José Escobar, an immigrant from El Salvador, had only recently enrolled in the 10th grade in Boston Public Schools when the campus shut down in March 2020. His school-issued laptop didn't work, and because of bureaucratic hurdles, the district didn't issue a new one for several weeks. His father stopped paying their phone bills after losing his restaurant job. Without any working technology for months, he never logged into remote classes.

When instruction resumed online that fall, he decided to walk away and find work as a prep cook. "I can't learn that way," he said in Spanish. At 21, he's still eligible for school in Boston, but says he's too old for high school and needs to work to help his family.

Another Boston student became severely depressed during online learning and was hospitalized for months. Back home, he refuses to attend school or leave his room despite visits from at least one teacher. When his mother asked him about speaking to a reporter, he cursed her out.

These are all students who have formally left school and have likely been erased from enrollment databases. Many others who are enrolled are not receiving an education.

In Los Angeles last year, nearly half of students were chronically absent, meaning they missed more than 10% of the school year. For students with disabilities, the numbers are even higher: According to district data, 55% missed at least 18 school days. It's not clear how many students were absent more than that. The city's Unified School District did not respond to requests for this data.

WHEN SCHOOLS DON'T COME THROUGH

Los Angeles officials have spoken openly about attempts to find unschooled students and help remove obstacles that are preventing them from coming to school. Laundry services have been offered, as has help with housing. But for some students and their parents, the problem sits within a school system they

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 62 of 81

say has routinely failed their children.

"Parents are bereft," said Allison Hertog, who represents around three dozen families whose children missed significant learning when California's physical classrooms closed for more than a year during the early pandemic.

Ezekiel West, 10, is in fourth grade but reads at a first grade level. Before the pandemic shutdowns, he was shuffled from school to school when educators couldn't address his impulsive behavior.

During online learning, his mother couldn't get home internet and struggled with the WiFi hotspots provided by the school. She worked as a home health aide and couldn't monitor Ezekiel online.

When he returned to school in fall 2021 as a third grader, he was frustrated that his classmates had made more progress as the years passed.

"I did not feel prepared," he said in a recent phone interview. "I couldn't really learn as fast as the other kids, and that kind of made me upset."

An administrative judge ruled Los Angeles' schools had violated Ezekiel's rights and ordered the district to give him a spot at a new school, with a special plan to ease him back into learning and trusting teachers. The school didn't follow the plan, so his mother stopped sending him in October.

"I can't trust them," Miesha Clarke said. Los Angeles school officials did not respond to requests for comment on Ezekiel's case.

Last month, Ezekiel signed up for a public online school for California students. To enroll him, his mother agreed to give up his special education plan. His attorney, Hertog, worries the program won't work for someone with Ezekiel's needs and is looking for yet another option with more flexibility.

At least three of the students Hertog has represented, including Ezekiel, have disappeared from school for long periods since in-person instruction resumed. Their situations were avoidable, she said: "It's pretty disgraceful that the school systems allowed this to go on for so long."

When Kailani stopped logging into her virtual classes during the spring of her sophomore year, she received several emails from the school telling her she'd been truant. Between two to four weeks after she disappeared from Zoom school, her homeroom advisor and Spanish teacher each wrote to her, asking where she was. And the school's dean of students called her great-grandmother, her legal guardian, to inform her about Kailani's disappearance from school.

They didn't communicate further, according to Kailani. She went to work at Chipotle, ringing up orders in Boston's financial district.

In December, Kailani moved to North Carolina to make a new start. She teaches dance to elementary school kids now. Last month, she passed her high school equivalency exams. She wants to take choreography classes.

But she knows, looking back, that things could have been different. While she has no regrets about leaving high school, she says she might have changed her mind if someone at school had shown more interest and attention to her needs and support for her as a Black student.

"All they had to do was take action," Kailani said. "There were so many times they could have done something. And they did nothing."

Review: Reese Witherspoon, Ashton Kutcher shine in a rom-com

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

If you decide to settle in and watch "Your Place or Mine" to see the sparks fly between Reese Witherspoon and Ashton Kutcher, you'll be initially disappointed. They're not in the same room until the last 12 minutes.

The premise of this particular Netflix rom-com is two old friends switching homes for a week and snapping each other out of their ruts. Might they also fall in love? (Do many rom-coms not end that way?)

In this one, Witherspoon and Kutcher play opposites — he's a rich consultant who lives in a chic but chilly New York apartment; she's an earthy and protective single mom to a 13-year-old boy in Los Angeles. They hooked up 20 years ago but decided friendship was the better path.

These two talk every day, forcing the filmmakers to spend a fortune on split screens. It's an intimate

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 63 of 81

relationship over two decades as each supports and encourages the other. Someone asks him the obvious question — “If you like each other so much, why aren’t you guys together?” — and there is no really good answer. She offers another: “Uh, barf.”

A last-minute emergency triggers the film’s central action: Witherspoon needs to fly to New York but her childcare main option flakes, so Kutcher’s character decides to go to Los Angeles as backup. “You need help and I’m coming,” he tells her. They find themselves in each other’s homes, getting to know each others’ friends and generally shaking things up.

Written and directed by Aline Brosh McKenna, “Your Place or Mine” is cute and light from a creator known more for satires like “Devil Wears Prada” and “My Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.” This Valentine’s Day, it hits the spot if you’re in the mood for pretty people acting insecure and clueless.

At first, though, the film meanders with an alarming lack of urgency, as if Brosh McKenna was happy enough just filling the screen with her two beautiful leads and putting them in pretty places. You might initially mistake it as a rom-com for real estate.

Eventually, each start to see the other as a project that needs fixing. Kutcher tries to loosen up his best friend’s son — snack on junk food, letting him watch scary movies and allowing him to try out for the hockey team, all things forbidden when mom’s around. He sees it all as an extension of work: “That’s what I do: I get in, manage things, no muss, no fuss.”

On the other coast, Witherspoon finds an old manuscript her best friend has hidden from her and decides she must try to get it published. She also flirts with a hunky publisher — Jesse Williams, smoldering — and breaks all logic when she doesn’t immediately fall into the cool, sensual piercing blue of his eyes and never wants to leave... Wait, where was I?

The film soon mines an interesting area, namely how much do best friends really know about each other? When Witherspoon’s character finds the book, she is in shock. “We tell each other everything,” she says. Replies a friend: “Obviously you don’t.” This is also a film that champions taking a chance, going for it and not playing it safe.

The film allows Witherspoon and Kutcher to show off their naturally funny sides, especially when they’re fishes out of water. But many of the scenes drag on and sometimes the exposition is chalky, like when Witherspoon says: “I have to finish this program before the end of the year so I can apply for that open senior accounting position at the regional school district.”

Some smaller roles give important jolts of quirky, like Zoë Chao as a slinky former flame of Kutcher’s character in New York and Tig Notaro and Steve Zahn in LA. Notaro’s wit is as dry as a cactus, while Zahn plays a loopy gardener who is credited for writing two oddball songs on the soundtrack.

Speaking of songs, the producers must have forked over tons of cash to the estate of Ric Ocasek. To establish Kutcher’s character as a fan of The Cars, no less than nine songs — including “Heartbreak City,” “Drive” and “You Might Think” — have been used. The film’s soundtrack could double as a greatest-hits album.

The film builds to — finally! — a scene when Witherspoon and Kutcher are in the same zip code and a nice flipping of the traditional rom-com airport scene on its head. That’s when the film answers the question can men and women just be friends with a strong: “Uh, barf.”

“Your Place or Mine,” a Netflix release, is rated PG-13 for “suggestive material and brief strong language.” Running time: 111 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Slain cinematographer’s Ukrainian relatives sue Alec Baldwin

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Ukrainian relatives of a slain cinematographer are seeking damages in her death from actor Alec Baldwin in connection with a fatal shooting on the set of a Western movie, under a civil lawsuit filed Thursday in Los Angeles.

The new lawsuit against Baldwin was filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court on behalf of Hutchins’ parents and younger sister, who works as a nurse on the outskirts of the Ukrainian capital city of Kyiv and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 64 of 81

is married to a Ukrainian man fighting in the war against Russia.

Cinematographer Halyna Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during a rehearsal in the movie "Rust" in October 2021 at a film-set ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe. Baldwin was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when it discharged, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza.

The new lawsuit alleges negligence and the deprivation of benefits, based on the emotional or financial support that Hutchins previously provided to younger sister Svetlana Zemko and parents Olga Solovey and Anatolii Androsovyh. The lawsuit also names as defendants a long list of "Rust" crew members, an ammunition supplier, producers of the film and affiliated businesses.

Separately, Baldwin and weapons supervisor Hannah Gutierrez-Reed are confronting felony criminal charges of involuntary manslaughter in New Mexico District Court, with a remote first appearance scheduled later this month in which pleas may be entered. Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed have vowed to dispute the charges, while an assistant director has agreed to plead guilty to lesser charges.

Los Angeles-based attorney Gloria Allred described Zemko as a working emergency operating-room nurse who is raising an infant and 4-year-old child while her husband fights in the war.

At a news conference, Allred said that Zemko "had a very close and loving relationship with her big sister, Halyna, and she feels strongly that anyone who is responsible for her loss must be held accountable."

Contacted Thursday, an attorney for Baldwin in New Mexico had no immediate comment.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages as well as legal costs. Allred declined to quantify possible demands.

Matthew Hutchins, widower to Halyna Hutchins, reached an undisclosed settlement with Baldwin and other producers of Rust late last year. Part of the settlement calls for Matthew to be a producer on "Rust" as it potentially resumes filming.

Baldwin has sought to clear his name by suing people involved in handling and supplying the loaded gun. 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, he pointed the gun in her direction and pulled back and released the hammer of the weapon, which discharged.

The new lawsuit against Baldwin, though filed in California, relies on provisions of New Mexico state law regarding the deprivation of benefits, also known as "loss of consortium."

Police officer wants badge back after spy charges dropped

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. (AP) — On a September day in 2020, New York City Police Officer Baimadajie Angwang kissed his toddler goodbye and was about to drive to work when he was surrounded by rifle-toting FBI agents.

You're under arrest, the bewildered cop was told. The charge: Being a secret agent for China.

Angwang, a former U.S. Marine, spent six months in a federal detention center before he was freed on bail while awaiting trial on charges that he fed information about New York's Tibetan community to officials at the Chinese consulate in New York.

Then, just as suddenly, it was over. Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn dropped the charges Jan. 19, saying only that they were acting "in the interest of justice." They didn't explain further.

Now Angwang says he wants to be reinstated to the police force, which suspended him with pay while the case was pending. But more than that, he wants answers.

"Why did you start the investigation on me? Why did you drop all the charges?" said Angwang, who was born in Tibet but was granted political asylum in the U.S. as a teenager.

"We want an explanation. We're demanding it because you owe me," he said during an interview at his attorney's office. "You can't just put me in jail for six months and ruin my name, ruin my reputation and give all this stress to my family members and friends, and then you say, 'in the interest of justice.' You just going to leave it like that?"

China's Communist Party has ruled over Tibet for seven decades and China has claimed a vast stretch

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 65 of 81

of the Himalayas as part of its territory since the 13th century. But the relationship has been fraught with tension, with many Tibetans — some in exile — seeking independence.

The original charge against Angwang was that he began supplying information to Chinese officials on Tibetan independence groups in New York in 2018.

In court documents, prosecutors said Angwang was a threat to national security. He was charged with being an unregistered foreign agent, making false statements to federal investigators, obstruction of justice and wire fraud. There were no allegations of espionage, a more serious accusation.

In building its initial case against Angwang, prosecutors argued that he provided intelligence on ethnic Tibetans who might cooperate with Chinese officials and advised them on how to expand China's "soft power" in New York.

Specifically, the government said, he sought a tit-for-tat arrangement that would give him a 10-year visa to his homeland in return for surveillance information and access to the police department.

The case was built partly on recorded phone calls, including some in which authorities said Angwang called a consular official "big brother" and "boss."

Angwang told The Associated Press his words were either mistranslated from Mandarin or taken out of context. He said he became superficially friendly with Chinese officials because he needed the visa to visit his homeland, so his parents and other relatives could finally meet his daughter.

The judge presiding over the case sought answers about why the charges were dismissed, but federal prosecutors declined to divulge classified information that might have given clues.

The U.S. attorney's office in Brooklyn declined to comment.

The judge agreed to dismiss the case without prejudice, meaning the government could press charges again, a possibility hanging over Angwang but his lawyer suggests is unlikely.

The attorney, John Carman, surmised his client became caught up in the Trump administration's effort to root out Chinese espionage across U.S. institutions, including the economy, academics and other facets of public life. Angwang contends there were shades of racism targeting people with Chinese links.

"I think our criminal justice system sometimes goes off the track when it has a publicity aspect to it and when it has a political aspect to it. And this case had both," Carman said.

Angwang first visited the U.S. as a teen on a cultural exchange visa. He went back to Tibet but later returned to the U.S., saying he had been arrested and beaten by Chinese authorities. He moved in with an uncle in Queens and was granted asylum at age 17.

In his adopted country, Angwang enlisted in the U.S. Marines and served in Afghanistan. After being discharged, he joined the Army Reserves and enrolled in the police academy.

He said it was his way of giving back to a country that has been so good to him.

With the charges dropped, he said he wants to regain the good graces of his Tibetan community, which remains suspicious.

"I'm very proud of my heritage. I love my culture and I love the community," Angwang said. He said he was wrongly depicted as a three-way traitor.

"So I'm a traitor of my birthplace? I'm a traitor of America? I'm a traitor of the Tibetan community — which I was never a traitor. I never betrayed anyone — my fellow Tibetans, my fellow Americans, anybody."

Norbu Choezung, the president of the Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey, a group comprising some 10,000 members of Tibetan heritage, remains wary. He, too, wants the government to provide more details about why it dropped the case.

"It's a little fishy," Choezung said. "We as a community definitely want to dig deeper why his charges have been dropped, and how those things happened."

U.S. District Judge Eric Komitee, who presided over the case, was left with questions but said he was glad Angwang's ordeal was over.

"In some ways a straightforward case but also in some ways, especially given the landscape of statutes at issue, a complicated matter," the judge said, also noting the "fanfare" in which the case was brought.

"It's unfortunate, obviously, that Mr. Angwang did serve as much time as he did in jail pretrial or in detention pretrial," the judge said, "but better late, as they say, than never."

Rescuers push to find survivors of 'disaster of the century'

By JUSTIN SPIKE, GHAITH ALSAYED and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

KAHRAMANMARAS, Turkey (AP) — Rescue workers made a final push Thursday to find survivors of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria that rendered many communities unrecognizable to their inhabitants and led the Turkish president to declare it "the disaster of the century." The death toll topped 20,000.

The earthquake affected an area that is home to 13.5 million people in Turkey and an unknown number in Syria and stretches farther than the distance from London to Paris or Boston to Philadelphia. Even with an army of people taking part in the rescue effort, crews had to pick and choose where to help.

The scene from the air showed the scope of devastation, with entire neighborhoods of high-rises reduced to twisted metal, pulverized concrete and exposed wires.

In Adiyaman, Associated Press journalists saw someone plead with rescuers to look through the rubble of a building where relatives were trapped. They refused, saying no one was alive there and that they had to prioritize areas with possible survivors.

A man who gave his name only as Ahmet out of fear of government retribution later asked the AP: "How can I go home and sleep? My brother is there. He may still be alive."

The death toll from Monday's 7.8 magnitude catastrophe rose to nearly 21,000, eclipsing the more than 18,400 who died in the 2011 earthquake off Fukushima, Japan, that triggered a tsunami and the estimated 18,000 people who died in a temblor near the Turkish capital, Istanbul, in 1999.

The new figure, which is certain to rise, included over 17,600 people in Turkey and more than 3,300 in civil war-torn Syria. Tens of thousands were also injured.

Even though experts say people could survive for a week or more, the chances of finding survivors in the freezing temperatures were dimming. As emergency crews and panicked relatives dug through the rubble — and occasionally found people alive — the focus began to shift to demolishing dangerously unstable structures.

The DHA news agency broadcast the rescue of a 10-year-old in Antakya. The agency said medics had to amputate an arm to free her and that her parents and three siblings had died. A 17-year-old girl emerged alive in Adiyaman, and a 20-year-old was found in Kahramanmaras by rescuers who shouted "God is great."

In Nurdagi, a city of around 40,000 nestled between snowy mountains some 35 miles (56 kilometers) from the quake's epicenter, vast swaths of the city were leveled, with scarcely a building unaffected. Even those that did not collapse were heavily damaged, making them unsafe.

Throngs of onlookers, mostly family members of people trapped inside, watched as heavy machines ripped at one building that had collapsed, its floors pancaked together with little more than a few inches in between.

Mehmet Yilmaz, 67, watched from a distance as bulldozers and other demolition equipment began to bring down what remained of the building where six of his family members had been trapped, including four children.

He estimated that about 80 people were still beneath the rubble and doubted that anyone would be found alive.

"There's no hope. We can't give up our hope in God, but they entered the building with listening devices and dogs, and there was nothing," Yilmaz said.

Mehmet Nasir Dusan, 67, sat watching as the remnants of the nine-story building were brought down in billowing clouds of dust. He said he held no hope of reuniting with his five family members trapped under the debris.

Still, he said, recovering their bodies would bring some small comfort.

"We're not leaving this site until we can recover their bodies, even if it takes 10 days," Dusan said. "My family is destroyed now."

In Kahramanmaras, the city closest to the epicenter, a sports hall the size of a basketball court served as a makeshift morgue to accommodate and identify bodies.

On the floor lay dozens of bodies wrapped in blankets or black shrouds. At least one appeared to be

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 67 of 81

that of a 5- or 6-year-old.

At the entrance, a man wept over a black body bag that lay next to another in the bed of a small truck. "I'm 70 years old. God should have taken me, not my son," he cried.

Workers continued to conduct rescue operations in Kahramanmaras, but it was clear that many who were trapped in collapsed buildings had already died. One rescue worker was heard saying that his psychological state was declining and that the smell of death was becoming too much to bear.

In northwestern Syria, the first U.N. aid trucks since the quake to enter the rebel-controlled area from Turkey arrived, underscoring the difficulty of getting help to people there. In the Turkish city of Antakya, dozens scrambled for aid in front of a truck distributing children's coats and other supplies.

One survivor, Ahmet Tokgoz, called for the government to evacuate people from the region. Many of those who have lost their homes found shelter in tents, stadiums and other temporary accommodation, but others have slept outdoors.

"Especially in this cold, it is not possible to live here," he said. "If people haven't died from being stuck under the rubble, they'll die from the cold."

The winter weather and damage to roads and airports have hampered the response. Some in Turkey have complained that the government was slow to respond — a perception that could hurt Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a time when he faces a tough battle for reelection in May.

"As you know, the earthquake hit an area of 500-kilometer (311-mile) diameter where 13.5 million of our people live, and that made our job difficult," Erdogan said Thursday.

In the Turkish town of Elbistan, rescuers stood atop the rubble from a collapsed home and pulled out an elderly woman.

Rescue teams urged quiet in the hopes of hearing stifled pleas for help, and the Syrian paramedic group known as the White Helmets noted that "every second could mean saving a life."

But more and more often, the teams pulled out dead bodies. In Antakya, more than 100 bodies were awaiting identification in a makeshift morgue outside a hospital.

With the chances of finding people alive dwindling, crews in some places began demolishing buildings. Authorities called off search-and-rescue operations in the cities of Kilis and Sanliurfa, where destruction was not as severe as in other areas. Vice President Fuat Oktay said rescue work was mostly complete in Diyarbakir, Adana and Osmaniye.

Across the border in Syria, assistance trickled in. The U.N. is authorized to deliver aid through only one border crossing, and road damage has prevented that thus far. U.N. officials pleaded for humanitarian concerns to take precedence over wartime politics.

It wasn't clear how many people were still unaccounted for in both countries.

Turkey's disaster-management agency said more than 110,000 rescue personnel were now taking part in the effort and more than 5,500 vehicles, including tractors, cranes, bulldozers and excavators had been shipped. The Foreign Ministry said 95 countries have offered help.

Rihanna promises a 'jam-packed' Super Bowl halftime show

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Rihanna is putting in the work ahead of her Super Bowl halftime show, focusing so hard on what she promises will be "a jam-packed show" that her upcoming birthday and Valentine's Day almost slipped her mind.

"The setlist was the biggest challenge. That was the hardest, hardest part. Deciding how to maximize 13 minutes but also celebrate — that's what this show is going to be. It's going to be a celebration of my catalog in the best way that we could have put it together," Rihanna said.

At a media preview Thursday ahead of Sunday's matchup between the Philadelphia Eagles and Kansas City Chiefs, the music superstar and new mom said her appearance — her first live event in seven years — feels "like it could have only been now."

The singer said she was initially unsure about taking on the challenge of performing during a time when

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 68 of 81

she was three months postpartum and wondered "should I be making major decisions like this right now? I might regret this."

"But when you become a mom, there's something that just happens where you feel like you can take on the world, you can do anything," Rihanna said. "The Super Bowl is one of the biggest stages of the world. As scary as that was, because I hadn't been on stage in seven years, there's something exhilarating about the challenge of it all."

A nine-time Grammy Award-winner, Rihanna has 14 No. 1 Billboard Hot 100 hits, including "We Found Love," "Work," "Umbrella" and "Disturbia." She and rapper A\$AP Rocky recently welcomed her first child.

"At the end of the day, if it flops or it flies, my name has to stand by that. And so I really get involved with every aspect of anything I do," she said.

Halftime performance sponsor Apple Music held a moderated event Thursday, but moderator Nadeska Alexis was the only journalist allowed to ask Rihanna questions.

Rihanna joins a list of celebrated entertainers who have played during Super Bowl halftime shows, including Beyoncé, Madonna, Coldplay, Katy Perry, U2, Lady Gaga, Michael Jackson, Jennifer Lopez, Shakira and The Weeknd. Last year, hip-hop was celebrated with Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, Mary J. Blige and Kendrick Lamar all performing.

The singer had previously declined to perform in the 2019 halftime show out of solidarity with Colin Kaepernick. But she has said that the timing and circumstances this time around were right for her.

Country music star Chris Stapleton will sing the national anthem, while R&B legend Babyface will perform "America the Beautiful." Actor-singer Sheryl Lee Ralph will also perform "Lift Every Voice and Sing." When asked who they were cheering for on Sunday, Ralph said she was rooting for the Eagles while Stapleton and Babyface said they were backing Rihanna.

Ralph applauded the NFL for making an effort toward being inclusive and "represent all people" through the three songs.

"On a day, Super Bowl Sunday, 200 million people coming together to sit and experience it here, what a time and what a way to bring us all together," she said. "I'm very pleased and very happy to be able to be on the 40-yard line."

Babyface said he first started singing "America the Beautiful" as a sophomore for a play in high school.

"It's hard to believe that so many years ago, which is a lot of years ago, that I'm here to sing 'America the Beautiful,'" he said. "Back then, my mom was in the audience and she couldn't believe I was up there on the stage singing. Like the shy kid who actually got up there singing. To think of her looking at this now and see me at this moment singing 'America the Beautiful,' it's full circle."

Oscar winner Troy Kotsur will perform the national anthem in American sign language. Colin Denny will sign "America the Beautiful" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing" will be signed by Justina Miles.

Through an interpreter, Kotsur said performing makes him feel prouder to be an American. Miles said "Lift Every Voice and Sing" represents resilience.

"The national anthem never really resonated with me personally, but the Black national anthem is really inspiring and empowering," Miles said. "This song is so positive and so beautiful. You don't really hear or see it very often. There's many folks who don't even know the Black national anthem even exist. It's not only for me to share this experience with the whole world, but to really bring that empowerment to millions of Black, deaf people all over the country who've never seen that before."

Apple Music this year replaced Pepsi, which sponsored the show for the past 10 years. Terms were not announced, but analysts had expected the league to get at least \$50 million per year for the rights.

Quebec parents recount moments after bus hit daycare center

LAVAL, Quebec (AP) — Parents returned Thursday to the Montreal-area daycare center where two children were killed when a bus rammed into the building, stopping to grieve and to recount the difficult moments they witnessed.

André Beaudoin, a father of a 2-year-old boy who attends the center in Laval, said he had to push through

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 69 of 81

debris Wednesday to help pull injured children from under the bus, which had shattered the front of the building.

"I managed to get four out; the last girl ... her head was stuck really bad," he said.

Beaudoin said he had just parked to drop off his son when he saw the city bus barrel into the daycare. He said he ran into the building, and although most of the children had fled, "we heard the screams" of those still trapped.

Two children, both 4 years old, were killed and six were hospitalized. Pierre Ny St-Amand, a 51-year-old driver with the Laval transit corporation, was arrested at the scene and later charged with two counts of first-degree murder as well as seven other charges, including attempted murder and aggravated assault.

Large sheets of plywood covered the damaged wall Thursday, next to a cheerful sign with pink letters bearing the name of the center, Garderie Éducative Ste-Rose. Piles of debris from the damaged roof and interior lay in the snow.

People, many in tears, stopped by to pay their respects and add to the growing memorial of flowers and stuffed toys in a snowbank outside the center where two 4-year-olds died in the incident.

Two of the six children had been released from the hospital, while four youngsters remained under treatment, Montreal health officials said.

Montreal's Sainte-Justine children's hospital said in a statement that the two children remaining there were in a "favorable" state of health. Two kids remained at a Laval hospital, and doctors said their lives were not in danger.

Pierre Ny St-Amand, a 51-year-old driver with the Laval transit corporation, was arrested at the scene Wednesday. He faces two counts of first-degree murder as well as seven other charges, including attempted murder and aggravated assault.

Authorities said Thursday that they were still trying to understand what could have led someone to drive a bus into the daycare center.

"The motive remains incomprehensible still today," Public Security Minister François Bonnardel told reporters in Quebec City.

Asked what authorities could have done to prevent the incident, Bonnardel said: "No one can predict this kind of event. No one can predict that someone gets up in the morning, takes off with a bus and decides to hit a daycare with a bus."

Witnesses said the driver was delirious after exiting the bus, tore off his clothes and screamed as several people restrained him on the ground until police arrived.

Late Wednesday, a police cruiser and two officers were stationed outside St-Amand's home on a quiet suburban street about 10 kilometers (six miles) from the daycare center. Several neighbors described him as a quiet, pleasant father of two young girls.

One man, Thanh-Ry Tran, said his family got together with St-Amand's family a few times a year, adding that their wives would sometimes help each other in picking up or dropping off children. He said St-Amand had never shown signs of distress.

Lionel Carmant, the government minister responsible for social services, told reporters in Quebec City that regional health officials in Laval found no evidence that St-Amand had received care for mental health issues.

Rioter who menaced officer with Confederate flag gets prison

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Delaware man who threatened a Black police officer with a pole attached to a Confederate battle flag as he stormed the U.S. Capitol was sentenced on Thursday to three years in prison.

Kevin Seefried, 53, tearfully apologized for his participation in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot before U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden sentenced him.

"I never wanted to send a message of hate," Seefried said.

McFadden said it was deeply troubling that Seefried wielded the flagpole as a weapon against the officer.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 70 of 81

"Bringing a Confederate flag into one of our nation's most sacred halls was outrageous," the judge said. McFadden allowed Seefried to remain free until he must report to prison at a date to be determined. Justice Department prosecutors had recommended a prison sentence of five years and 10 months for Seefried, a drywall mechanic from Laurel, Delaware.

Seefried and his adult son, Hunter, stormed the Capitol together after attending the "Stop the Steal" rally, where then-President Donald Trump addressed thousands of supporters in Washington. Kevin Seefried was the 12th rioter to set foot inside the building that day, according to prosecutors.

In October, McFadden sentenced Hunter Seefried to two years of imprisonment.

Widely published photographs showed Kevin Seefried carrying his Confederate flag inside the Capitol after he and his son, then 22, entered the building through a broken window.

Kevin Seefried told an FBI agent that he did not view the Confederate flag as a symbol of racist hate. FBI agents said they did not find any evidence linking him or his son to any far-right extremist groups.

Seefried is embarrassed and ashamed that many may view him as a racist, his lawyers said in a court filing.

"He had brought the flag as a symbol of protest, but had not considered the logic of those who see the flag as a symbol of American racism," they wrote. "Now that photos of him with the flag have become iconic symbols of the horror of January 6, Mr. Seefried completely understands the harm he has caused."

Within a minute of entering the building, Kevin Seefried jabbed his flagpole at Capitol Police officer Eugene Goodman and joined other rioters in chasing the officer up a flight of stairs, a harrowing scene captured on video. Seefried was the first rioter to encounter Goodman near the base of the staircase, prosecutors said.

Goodman, who testified at the Seefrieds' trial, said Seefried cursed at him and jabbed at him with the base of his flagpole three or four times without making contact. Goodman recalled that Seefried asked where members of Congress were counting the votes and said, "You can shoot me, man, but we're coming in."

"That flagpole was not only a weapon capable of causing serious injury; a Confederate Battle flag was affixed to it and it was brandished by a man standing at the front of a volatile, growing mob towards a solitary, Black police officer," prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

Goodman led rioters away from the Senate chamber as senators and then-Vice President Mike Pence were being evacuated. He also directed Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, to turn around and head away from the mob.

McFadden convicted the father and son of riot-related charges in June after hearing two days of trial testimony without a jury. The judge convicted both of obstructing an official proceeding, the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress for certifying President Joe Biden's 2020 electoral victory.

McFadden also convicted the Seefrieds of misdemeanor charges that they engaged in disorderly conduct and illegally demonstrated inside the Capitol. The judge acquitted Hunter Seefried of other misdemeanor charges for clearing a shard of glass from a broken window.

The judge described Kevin Seefried as the "prime mover" in his family's decision to travel to Washington on Jan. 6. McFadden rejected the defense argument that the elder Seefried never intended to interfere with the congressional proceedings.

"I find that he knew what he was doing," McFadden said.

The Seefrieds were the first Capitol riot defendants to get a bench trial on a felony charge. Neither testified.

Nearly 1,000 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the Jan. 6 riot. More than 500 of them have pleaded guilty, mostly to misdemeanors. Approximately 400 have been sentenced, with over half getting terms of imprisonment ranging from seven days to 10 years.

Syria orphans from quake taken in by overwhelmed relatives

By ABBY SEWELL and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A Syrian baby girl whose mother gave birth to her while trapped under the rubble of their home during this week's devastating earthquake now has a name: Aya, Arabic for "a sign from God." With her parents and all her siblings killed, her great-uncle will take her in.

Aya is one of untold numbers of orphans left by Monday's 7.8-magnitude quake, which killed more than

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 71 of 81

20,000 people in northern Syria and southeastern Turkey. The pre-dawn quake brought down thousands of apartment buildings on residents as they were roused from sleep, so entire families often perished.

In most cases, relatives take in orphaned children, doctors and experts say. But those surviving relatives are also dealing with the wreckage of their own lives and families. In the continued chaos days after the quake, with the dead and a dwindling number of survivors still being found, doctors say it's impossible to say how many children lost their parents.

At one hospital in northwest Syria, a red-haired 7-year-old girl, Jana al-Abdo, asked repeatedly where her parents were after she was brought in, said Dr. Khalil Alsfook, who was treating her. "We later found out she was the only one who survived among her entire family," he said Thursday.

In the case of the newborn Aya, her father's uncle, Salah al-Badran, will take her in once she is released from the hospital.

But his own house was also destroyed in the northwest Syrian town of Jenderis. He and his family managed to escape the one-story building, but now he and his household of 11 people are living in a tent, he told The Associated Press.

"After the earthquake, there's no one able to live in his house or building. Only 10% of the buildings here are safe to live in and the rest are unlivable," he said, communicating via voice messages.

Rescue workers in Jenderis discovered Aya on Monday afternoon, more than 10 hours after the quake hit, as they were digging through the wreckage of the five-story apartment building where her parents lived. Buried under the concrete, the baby still was connected by her umbilical cord to her mother, Afraa Abu Hadiya, who was dead, along with her husband and four other children. The baby was rushed to a hospital in the nearby town of Afrin.

Abu Hadiya probably gave birth to the girl and then died a few hours before they were discovered, said Dr. Hani Maarouf at Cihan Hospital in Afrin.

"We named her Aya, so we could stop calling her a new-born baby," said Maarouf. Her condition is improving by the day and there was no damage to her spine, as initially feared, he said.

The U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, said it has been monitoring children whose parents are missing or killed, providing food, clothes and medicine and coordinating with hospitals to track down extended family members who might be able to care for them.

In Turkey, the Ministry of Family and Social Services appealed to potential foster families to submit applications. It said children whose families or relatives could not be found were currently being taken care of in state institutions. Staff were assessing their needs and placing them with registered foster families, the ministry said.

Near the opposition-held Syrian town of Azaz, a non-governmental organization has set up a makeshift orphanage that is now housing about 40 children.

But in many cases, the extended family steps in. Syrians have experience in facing the tragedy of parentless children: Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in Syria's long civil war, which began in 2011, creating unknown numbers of orphans.

Jana, the 7-year-old, was found by rescue workers on Tuesday after 30 hours under the rubble of her family's home in Harem, a Syrian town near the Turkish border, Alsfook said. Her mother, father and three siblings were killed.

She was brought to a hospital in the nearby town of Bab al-Hawa, which was already overwhelmed.

"In our children's section, we have 24 beds and five incubators, but we have been receiving dozens of children. We barely had capacity. And we were the only hospital with a section for pediatric surgery in the area," Alsfook said.

Seen by an AP journalist Wednesday, Jana cried out in pain and confusion in her bed, waving the IV tubes in her arms. Her face was covered with cuts.

Later, an aunt came, and Jana was released to her, Alsfook said.

Alsfook's own home had been destroyed, and his family had moved in with friends. For days he has been treating the rush of injured children, some of whom didn't survive.

"The whole experience was awful. It's hard to hold back your grief after trying to save a child but not

being able to," he said, "because you have to then move on to dozens of other children who needed help."

For now, things are too confusing to determine the number of orphans, said Dr. Muheeb Qaddour, deputy chief of the health department in Syria's Idlib province, which is the center of the country's last opposition-held enclave in the northwest and which was hard hit by the quake.

"But now people are beginning to realize there are many children now without families. There is a great embrace of them by society. Distant relatives take them in before they would go to an orphanage," he said. "Regrettably it is only after the dust of the earthquake settles that things become clear."

Liquor before beer: Spirits beat brews in new market data

By BRUCE SCHREINER and JIM SALTER Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Producers of spirits have new bragging rights in the age-old whiskey vs. beer barroom debate.

New figures show that spirits surpassed beer for U.S. market-share supremacy, based on supplier revenues, a spirit industry group announced Thursday.

The rise to the top for spirit-makers was fueled in part by the resurgent cocktail culture — including the growing popularity of ready-to-drink concoctions — as well as strong growth in the tequila and American whiskey segments, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States said.

In 2022, spirits gained market share for the 13th straight year in the fiercely competitive U.S. beverage alcohol market, as its supplier sales reached 42.1%, the council said.

After years of steady growth, it marked the first time that spirit supplier revenues have surpassed beer — but just barely, the spirit industry group said. Beer holds a 41.9% market share, it said.

"Despite the tough economy, consumers continued to enjoy premium spirits and fine cocktails in 2022," Distilled Spirits Council President and CEO Chris Swonger said.

Overall spirit supplier sales in the U.S. were up 5.1% in 2022 to a record \$37.6 billion, the group said. Volumes rose 4.8% to 305 million 9-liter cases.

Seemingly unfazed, Brian Crawford, president and CEO of the Beer Institute, insisted that beer "remains America's number one choice in beverage alcohol."

"It's interesting to hear liquor companies boast about making money hand-over-fist while simultaneously going state-to-state hunting for more tax carveouts from state legislatures," Crawford said in a statement.

Benj Steinman, president of Beer Marketer's Insights, a leading beer industry trade publication, said the beer industry saw unprecedented growth in the 1970s, growing at a pace of 4% annually. As recently as 2000, beer's share in the alcohol market was 58%.

Over the past several decades, beer's growth has essentially been flat. Meanwhile, spirits have flourished, especially over the past two decades.

"I think there's just a long arc on these things," Steinman said.

Steinman and Bart Watson, chief economist at the Brewers Association, a craft beer industry trade group, agreed there are several reasons for the shift to spirits.

"Some of it's just the younger generation coming up, looking for a lot of variety," Steinman said. "They sometimes like spirits. Cocktail culture is another thing."

Watson cited data showing that liquor has become 20% cheaper relative to beer in recent decades.

"Price is a particularly large part of the story," he said.

Another factor is advertising and marketing. Watson pointed to the success of spirits in its outreach to women. Steinman said distilled spirits now advertise freely, something they didn't do generations ago.

"They've increased their availability. They've increased their ability to advertise. They've had a lot of legislative and policy wins that have enabled growth for distilled spirits," Steinman said.

For spirit producers, reaching the market share milestone was worth toasting.

At Baltimore Spirits Company in Maryland, the head distiller and the manager of its cocktail bar said they are pleased with the rise in the consumption of spirits.

Eli Breitburg-Smith, head distiller and cofounder, said the distillery founders saw a space in the market

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 73 of 81

to make rye whiskey as consumer demand was growing.

"We did see that it was going to be on the rise," he said. "Now, I don't know that we thought it would be overtaking beer or anything like that, but we felt like there was a good space in the market for new whiskey, original whiskey, and people that ... were making a unique product."

Gregory Mergner, the general manager of the distillery's cocktail gallery, said he didn't anticipate spirits rivaling or surpassing beer for market share.

"As ubiquitous as beer is. I don't think anybody could have foreseen whiskey overtaking it," he said.

The spirit sector's rise has coincided with a growing thirst for high-end, super-premium products.

That trend toward premiumization slowed overall in 2022. But it remained strong because of growth in the tequila/mezcal and American whiskey categories, the Distilled Spirits Council said.

More than 60% of the spirit sector's total U.S. revenue last year came from sales of high-end and super-premium spirits, mostly led by tequila and American whiskey, said Christine LoCascio, the group's chief of public policy and strategy. Those high-end products fetch the highest prices.

"While many consumers are feeling the pinch from inflation and reduced disposable income, they are still willing to purchase that special bottle of spirits choosing to sip a little luxury and drink better, not more," LoCascio said.

Within the spirit sector, vodka maintained its status as the top revenue producer at \$7.2 billion, though sales were flat in 2022, the group said.

In the tequila/mezcal category, sales rose 17.2%, or \$886 million, totaling \$6 billion, it said.

Sales for American whiskey were up 10.5%, or \$483 million, to reach \$5.1 billion, it said. The American whiskey category includes bourbon, Tennessee whiskey and rye whiskey.

Brandy and cognac sales were down 12.3%, with revenues totaling \$3.1 billion.

Premixed cocktails were the clear leader as the fastest-growing spirit category.

Sales for premixed cocktails, including ready-to-drink spirit products, surged by 35.8%, or \$588 million, to reach \$2.2 billion, the council said.

Meanwhile, spirit sales volumes in restaurants and bars — referred to as on-premise sales — continued to recover from pandemic-era shutdowns but they remained 5% lower than 2019 levels, the council said. Those sales represent about 20% of the U.S. market.

Off-premise sales volumes at liquor stores and other retail outlets remained steady in 2021 and 2022, after experiencing sharp gains during the pandemic restrictions in 2020, it said.

Meanwhile, there is a crossover strategy brewing in the alcohol market.

Steinman said that even the big players in the beer industry "are playing in all these different growth arenas, including spirits."

Molson Coors changed its name in 2019, going from Molson Coors Brewing Co. to Molson Coors Beverage Co. Watson noted that the No. 2 canned ready-to-drink liquor product, Cutwater, is made by Anheuser-Busch InBev.

For beer producers, the reversal in market-share rankings is no reason to cry in their suds.

Watson cautioned that the market share trend could flip, calling it "likely at some point we'll see beer grow again at the expense of other segments."

Burt Bacharach, legendary composer of pop songs, dies at 94

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Burt Bacharach, the singularly gifted and popular composer who delighted millions with the quirky arrangements and unforgettable melodies of "Walk on By," "Do You Know the Way to San Jose" and dozens of other hits, has died at 94.

The Grammy, Oscar and Tony-winning Bacharach died Wednesday at home in Los Angeles of natural causes, publicist Tina Brausam said Thursday.

Over the past 70 years, only Lennon-McCartney, Carole King and a handful of others rivaled his genius for instantly catchy songs that remained performed, played and hummed long after they were written.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 74 of 81

He had a run of top 10 hits from the 1950s into the 21st century, and his music was heard everywhere from movie soundtracks and radios to home stereo systems and iPods, whether "Alfie" and "I Say a Little Prayer" or "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" and "This Guy's in Love with You."

Dionne Warwick was his favorite interpreter, but Bacharach, usually in tandem with lyricist Hal David, also created prime material for Aretha Franklin, Dusty Springfield, Tom Jones and many others. Elvis Presley, the Beatles and Frank Sinatra were among the countless artists who covered his songs, with more recent performers who sung or sampled him including White Stripes, Twista and Ashanti. "Walk On By" alone was covered by everyone from Warwick and Isaac Hayes to the British punk band the Stranglers and Cyndi Lauper.

Bacharach was both an innovator and throwback, and his career seemed to run parallel to the rock era. He grew up on jazz and classical music and had little taste for rock when he was breaking into the business in the 1950s. His appeal often seemed more aligned with Tin Pan Alley than with Bob Dylan, John Lennon and other writers who later emerged, but rock composers appreciated the depth of his seemingly old-fashioned sensibility.

"The shorthand version of him is that he's something to do with easy listening," Elvis Costello, who wrote the 1998 album "Painted from Memory" with Bacharach, said in a 2018 interview with The Associated Press. "It may be agreeable to listen to these songs, but there's nothing easy about them. Try playing them. Try singing them."

A box set, "The Songs of Bacharach & Costello," is due to come out March 3.

He triumphed in many artforms — and even at the racetrack. He was an eight-time Grammy winner, a prize-winning Broadway composer for "Promises, Promises" and a three-time Oscar winner. He received two Academy Awards in 1970, for the score of "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" and for the song "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" (shared with David). In 1982, he and his then-wife, lyricist Carole Bayer Sager, won for "Best That You Can Do," the theme from "Arthur." His other movie soundtracks included "What's New, Pussycat?," "Alfie" and the 1967 James Bond spoof "Casino Royale."

Bacharach was well rewarded, and well connected. He was a frequent guest at the White House, whether the president was Republican or Democrat. And in 2012, he was presented the Gershwin Prize by Barack Obama, who had sung a few seconds of "Walk on By" during a campaign appearance.

In his life, and in his music, he stood apart. Fellow songwriter Sammy Cahn liked to joke that the smiling, wavy-haired Bacharach was the first composer he ever knew who didn't look like a dentist. Bacharach was a "swinger," as they called such men in his time, whose many romances included actor Angie Dickinson, to whom he was married from 1965-80, and Sager, his wife from 1982-1991.

Married four times, he formed his most lasting ties to work. He was a perfectionist who took three weeks to write "Alfie" and might spend hours tweaking a single chord. Sager once observed that Bacharach's life routines essentially stayed the same — only the wives changed.

It began with the melodies — strong yet interspersed with changing rhythms and surprising harmonics. He credited much of his style to his love of bebop and to his classical education, especially under the tutelage of Darius Milhaud, the famed composer. He once played a piece for piano, violin and oboe for Milhaud that contained a melody he was ashamed to have written, as 12-point atonal music was in vogue at the time. Milhaud, who liked the piece, advised the young man, "Never be afraid of the melody."

"That was a great affirmation for me," Bacharach recalled in 2004.

Bacharach was essentially a pop composer, but his songs became hits for country artists (Marty Robbins), rhythm and blues performers (Chuck Jackson), soul (Franklin, Luther Vandross) and synth-pop (Naked Eyes). He reached a new generation of listeners in the 1990s with the help of Costello and others.

Mike Myers would recall hearing the sultry "The Look of Love" on the radio and finding fast inspiration for his "Austin Powers" retro spy comedies, in which Bacharach made cameos.

In the 21st century, he was still testing new ground, writing his own lyrics and recording with rapper Dr. Dre.

He was married to his first wife, Paula Stewart, from 1953-58, and married for a fourth time, to Jane Hansen, in 1993. He is survived by Hansen, as well as his children Oliver, Raleigh and Cristopher, Brausam

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 75 of 81

said. He was preceded in death by his daughter with Dickinson, Nikki Bacharach.

Bacharach knew the very heights of acclaim, but he remembered himself as a loner growing up, a short and self-conscious boy so uncomfortable with being Jewish he even taunted other Jews. His favorite book as a kid was Ernest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises"; he related to the sexually impotent Jake Barnes, regarding himself as "socially impotent."

He was born in Kansas City, Missouri, but soon moved to New York City. His father was a syndicated columnist, his mother a pianist who encouraged the boy to study music. Although he was more interested in sports, he practiced piano every day after school, not wanting to disappoint his mother. While still a minor, he would sneak into jazz clubs, bearing a fake ID, and hear such greats as Dizzy Gillespie and Count Basie.

"They were just so incredibly exciting that all of a sudden, I got into music in a way I never had before," he recalled in the memoir "Anyone Who Had a Heart," published in 2013. "What I heard in those clubs turned my head around."

He was a poor student, but managed to gain a spot at the music conservatory at McGill University in Montreal. He wrote his first song at McGill and listened for months to Mel Tormé's "The Christmas Song." Music also may have saved Bacharach's life. He was drafted into the Army in the late 1940s and was still on active duty during the Korean War. But officers stateside soon learned of his gifts and wanted him around. When he did go overseas, it was to Germany, where he wrote orchestrations for a recreation center on the local military base.

After his discharge, he returned to New York and tried to break into the music business. He had little success at first as a songwriter, but he became a popular arranger and accompanist, touring with Vic Damone, the Ames Brothers and Stewart, his eventual first wife. When a friend who had been touring with Marlene Dietrich was unable to make a show in Las Vegas, he asked Bacharach to step in.

The young musician and ageless singer quickly clicked and Bacharach traveled the world with her in the late 1950s and early '60s. During each performance, she would introduce him in grand style: "I would like you to meet the man, he's my arranger, he's my accompanist, he's my conductor, and I wish I could say he's my composer. But that isn't true. He's everybody's composer ... Burt Bacharach!"

Meanwhile, he had met his ideal songwriter partner — David, as businesslike as Bacharach was mercurial, so domesticated that he would leave each night at 5 to catch the train back to his family on Long Island. Working in a tiny office in Broadway's celebrated Brill Building, they produced their first million-seller, "Magic Moments," sung in 1958 by Perry Como. In 1962, they spotted a backup singer for the Drifters, Warwick, who had a "very special kind of grace and elegance," Bacharach recalled.

The trio produced hit after hit. The songs were as complicated to record as they were easy to hear. Bacharach liked to experiment with time signatures and arrangements, such as having two pianists play on "Walk on By," their performances just slightly out of sync to give the song "a jagged kind of feeling," he wrote in his memoir.

The Bacharach-David partnership ended with the dismal failure of a 1973 musical remake of "Lost Horizon." Bacharach became so depressed he isolated himself in his Del Mar vacation home and refused to work.

"I didn't want to write with Hal or anybody," he told the AP in 2004. Nor did he want to fulfill a commitment to record Warwick. She and David both sued him.

"Burt's transition is like losing a family member. These words I've been asked to write are being written with sadness over the loss of my Dear Friend and my Musical Partner," Warwick wrote in a statement Thursday. "On the lighter side we laughed a lot and had our run ins but always found a way to let each other know our family like roots were the most important part of our relationship."

Bacharach and David eventually reconciled. When David died in 2012, Bacharach praised him for writing lyrics "like a miniature movie."

Meanwhile, Bacharach kept working, vowing never to retire, always believing that a good song could make a difference.

"Music softens the heart, makes you feel something if it's good, brings in emotion that you might not have felt before," he told the AP in 2018. "It's a very powerful thing if you're able to do to it, if you have it in your heart to do something like that."

New "Toy Story," "Frozen" and "Zootopia" movies on tap

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Disney is working on sequels for "Toy Story," "Frozen" and "Zootopia," three huge hits as the entertainment powerhouse attempts to find its footing under newly returned CEO Bob Iger.

The Walt Disney Co. is undergoing a "strategic transformation," Iger said on Wednesday. That includes 7,000 job cuts announced this week and a renewed focus on core brands and franchises.

Iger, who returned as CEO in November following a challenging two-year tenure by his handpicked successor, Bob Chapek, announced the plans for the new movies during Disney's first-quarter earnings call on Wednesday.

Disney owns Star Wars, Marvel and Pixar. Its latest Marvel movie, "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania," opens on Feb. 17.

The Burbank, California, company said it wants to make sure that executives in charge of content creation have a prominent say in what movies, TV shows or other content to produce, as well as the marketing and distribution of those products.

"Toy Story" is a long-time movie franchise for Disney. The original film, which was the first computer-animated feature film and the debut feature release from Pixar Animation Studios, came out in 1995. It received a Special Achievement Academy Award in 1996, as there was no best animated feature film category at the time.

The most recent sequel, "Toy Story 4" released in 2019 and won two animated film Oscars in 2020, becoming the first franchise to accomplish that. Predecessor "Toy Story 3" won the best animated feature Academy Award in 2011.

A prequel film, called "Lightyear," was in theaters last year.

The original "Frozen" film released in 2013 and won the Academy Award for best animated feature film in 2014. The sequel, "Frozen II," was in theaters in 2019.

Disney made about \$13 billion in worldwide box office in 2019, helped by a strong slate of movies that included "Toy Story 4," "Frozen II," "Avengers: Endgame" and others.

Unlike "Toy Story" and "Frozen," "Zootopia" has yet to have a sequel. The original movie came out in 2016 and won an Academy Award for best animated film in 2017.

Russian diplomat says ties with US in 'unprecedented crisis'

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia-U.S. relations are in a state of "unprecedented crisis" without any sign of improvement, a senior Russian diplomat said Thursday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov argued that the White House's emphasis on increasing weapons supplies to Ukraine to ensure Russia's defeat leaves no room for diplomacy.

"I don't see any prospect for a productive political and diplomatic process," Ryabkov said at a briefing. "We have a very deep and unprecedented crisis in Russia-U.S. relations. The Biden administration has driven them into a deadlock."

Ryabkov warned that the U.S. and its allies must carefully assess the risks stemming from supplying increasingly powerful Western weapons to Ukraine.

"The Americans need to thoroughly and deeply weigh the risks linked to their unabashedly cavalier course," he said.

Ryabkov noted that Moscow doesn't trust Western statements about self-imposed restrictions on a range of weapons supplied to Ukraine in order to avoid escalation, adding that such assurances in the past have served as cover for a steady expansion of the assortment of arms deliveries.

"We don't see any sign of reason in any of the NATO and EU members' capitals," Ryabkov said. "What they are doing isn't going to strengthen their security."

He rejected the U.S. argument that Russia's refusal to allow the resumption of inspections of its nuclear

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 77 of 81

facilities represents a breach of the New START treaty, the last remaining nuclear arms control pact between the two countries.

The New START treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers. The agreement envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.

Just days before the treaty was due to expire in February 2021, Russia and the United States agreed to extend it for another five years.

Russia and the U.S. have suspended mutual inspections under New START since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but Moscow last fall refused to allow their resumption, raising uncertainty about the pact's future. Russia also indefinitely postponed a planned round of consultations under the treaty.

The U.S. State Department last week said that Russia's refusal to allow the inspections "prevents the United States from exercising important rights under the treaty and threatens the viability of U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control." It noted that nothing prevents Russian inspectors from conducting inspections of the U.S. facilities.

Ryabkov on Thursday insisted that Russia has continued to comply with the treaty and exchange information in accordance with it. "We adhere to the treaty and observe its provisions," he said.

At the same time, he reaffirmed Moscow's view that resuming inspections wasn't possible in the current environment.

Ryabkov's comments followed a Russian Foreign Ministry's statement declaring that it was impossible to maintain "business as usual" with Washington at a time when "the U.S. has effectively unleashed a total hybrid war against Russia, which is fraught with a real danger of a direct military confrontation between the two nuclear powers."

It charged that Washington's demand for resuming inspections of Russian nuclear facilities sounds "cynical" after a recent series of Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian air bases housing nuclear-capable strategic bombers that the ministry said relied on U.S. intelligence assistance.

Ryabkov, who met recently with the new U.S. ambassador to Moscow, Lynne Tracy, also said that the Russian Foreign Ministry has lodged a formal complaint to the U.S. Embassy, charging that its use of social networks represented interference in Russia's domestic affairs.

Super Bowl ads will tout Jesus 'gets us' to the masses

By HOLLY MEYER Associated Press

The religiously wary, the spiritually curious — and anyone inclined to appeal to a higher power on game day — are the target audience for a Super Bowl ad campaign with a simple message: Jesus loves them.

A group that includes wealthy Christian boosters is using the biggest megaphone TV marketing money can buy on Sunday to spread the word with two new ads that proclaim "He Gets Us."

They hope to counter the notion that religion is used to divide people, spending about \$20 million to reach more than 100 million viewers at a time when the nation's Christian population — and religious affiliation of any kind — are in decline.

Because religion is a touchy subject and prime-time advertising is so expensive, it is rare for faith to be promoted alongside the Super Bowl's perennially buzzed about beer and fast-food commercials. But the backers of the "He Gets Us" campaign see it as a great opportunity to reach so many people at once.

"It fits with our target audience really well," said campaign spokesperson Jason Vanderground about the NFL and its big game. "We're trying to get the message across to people who are spiritually open, but skeptical."

Christianity is still in the majority in the U.S., with 63% of adults defining themselves as believers, according to a 2021 Pew Research Center survey. But that figure is down from 78% in 2007. About 29% of Americans define themselves as religiously unaffiliated, up from 16% in 2007.

Within the NFL, Christianity has long permeated the culture, and regular fans are accustomed to expressions of faith, from locker-room prayers to Hail Mary passes to players pointing skyward after touchdowns.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 78 of 81

That may help explain why there are so few faith-related ads during the big game, said Paul Putz, assistant director of Baylor University's Faith & Sports Institute. "Football players themselves have often been the advertisements for Jesus," he said.

The league's religious undercurrent was thrust into the spotlight last month after Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed during a crucial game with Cincinnati. Those watching witnessed players praying on the field as medics worked to save Hamlin's life. An outpouring of public prayer followed for days.

Some advertisers, like the Church of Scientology, have opted to air regional ads during the game. But the 30-second and 60-second "He Gets Us" spots will join a modest list of past faith-based ads aired nationally, including some that spurred controversy.

In 2010, the anticipated debut of a Super Bowl ad by Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian ministry long involved in anti-abortion efforts, received pushback from abortion-rights advocates and others in the run-up to the game. The ad featured Pam Tebow, mother of football star Tim Tebow, talking about her challenging pregnancy with her son. She chose not to have an abortion despite medical concerns.

"I think we ended up in the Top 10 for the most controversial ads ... that wasn't the one I wanted, but it's OK. I communicated a message," said Focus on the Family CEO Jim Daly. He said the goal was to reach the most people with "a quick story about the positivity of choosing life."

In spite of the controversy, Daly said he considers the ad a success. The ministry later shared the story of a woman who said she decided not to get an abortion after seeing the ad.

On other occasions, religious themes have been used in a light-hearted way to sell everyday products: In 2018, a Toyota ad featured nuns, a priest, a rabbi, an imam and a Buddhist monk. A California church created a humorous Doritos ad that aired in 2010 after winning the snack brand's Super Bowl ad contest.

On Sunday, one "He Gets Us" ad will be shown during each half. One will focus on how children demonstrate Jesus' love, while the other deals with anger, and how Jesus modeled a different way.

"We think Jesus is a big deal and we want to make a big deal out of it," Vandergrund said. "What better way to do that than to put him in the biggest cultural moment that we have the entire year?"

The "He Gets Us" campaign, which was launched in March 2022, is funded by Hobby Lobby CEO David Green and other anonymous donors. The ads direct people to a website, where they can learn more about Jesus, find Bible reading plans and connect with people online or in-person who can answer their questions.

Super Bowl ads draw enormous attention — sometimes too much — so any company or organization considering spending \$6.5 million for 30 seconds of air time needs to weigh the pros and cons, experts say.

"It's incredibly powerful because you really get to reach people, but you also are inviting lots of discussion and scrutiny and feedback," said Tim Calkins, a Northwestern University marketing professor. A religious organization might decide, for example, that its money would be better spent directly funding programs that benefit people in their community, he said.

There just isn't a huge need to spend millions on Super Bowl ads about Jesus, said Putz of the Faith & Sports Institute.

"Christians can get the word out for free through the network of Christian athletes and coaches developed by sports ministries," he said. These ministries began building connections across the NFL during the 1950s — before the Super Bowl had become a major televised event — and believed that players and coaches would serve as unofficial ambassadors for Christianity, on and off the field, through their words and deeds.

Putz said Don McClanen, founder of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, put it best: "If athletes can endorse shaving cream, razor blades and cigarettes, surely they can endorse the Lord, too."

Several universities to experiment with micro nuclear power

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

If your image of nuclear power is giant, cylindrical concrete cooling towers pouring out steam on a site that takes up hundreds of acres of land, soon there will be an alternative: tiny nuclear reactors that produce only one-hundredth the electricity and can even be delivered on a truck.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 79 of 81

Small but meaningful amounts of electricity — nearly enough to run a small campus, a hospital or a military complex, for example — will pulse from a new generation of micronuclear reactors. Now, some universities are taking interest.

“What we see is these advanced reactor technologies having a real future in decarbonizing the energy landscape in the U.S. and around the world,” said Caleb Brooks, a nuclear engineering professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The tiny reactors carry some of the same challenges as large-scale nuclear, such as how to dispose of radioactive waste and how to make sure they are secure. Supporters say those issues can be managed and the benefits outweigh any risks.

Universities are interested in the technology not just to power their buildings but to see how far it can go in replacing the coal and gas-fired energy that causes climate change. The University of Illinois hopes to advance the technology as part of a clean energy future, Brooks said. The school plans to apply for a construction permit for a high-temperature, gas-cooled reactor developed by the Ultra Safe Nuclear Corporation, and aims to start operating it by early 2028. Brooks is the project lead.

Microreactors will be “transformative” because they can be built in factories and hooked up on site in a plug-and-play way, said Jacopo Buongiorno, professor of nuclear science and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Buongiorno studies the role of nuclear energy in a clean energy world.

“That’s what we want to see, nuclear energy on demand as a product, not as a big mega project,” he said.

Both Buongiorno and Marc Nichol, senior director for new reactors at the Nuclear Energy Institute, view the interest by schools as the start of a trend.

Last year, Penn State University signed a memorandum of understanding with Westinghouse to collaborate on microreactor technology. Mike Shaqo, the company’s senior vice president for advanced reactor programs, said universities are going to be “one of our key early adopters for this technology.”

Penn State wants to prove the technology so that Appalachian industries, such as steel and cement manufacturers, may be able to use it, said Professor Jean Paul Allain, head of the nuclear engineering department. Those two industries tend to burn dirty fuels and have very high emissions. Using a microreactor also could be one of several options to help the university use less natural gas and achieve its long-term carbon emissions goals, he said.

“I do feel that microreactors can be a game-changer and revolutionize the way we think about energy,” Allain said.

For Allain, microreactors can complement renewable energy by providing a large amount of power without taking up much land. A 10-megawatt microreactor could go on less than an acre, whereas windmills or a solar farm would need far more space to produce 10 megawatts, he added. The goal is to have one at Penn State by the end of the decade.

Purdue University in Indiana is working with Duke Energy on the feasibility of using advanced nuclear energy to meet its long-term energy needs.

Nuclear reactors that are used for research are nothing new on campus. About two dozen U.S. universities have them. But using them as an energy source is new.

Back at the University of Illinois, Brooks explains the microreactor would generate heat to make steam. While the excess heat from burning coal and gas to make electricity is often wasted, Brooks sees the steam production from the nuclear microreactor as a plus, because it’s a carbon-free way to deliver steam through the campus district heating system to radiators in buildings, a common heating method for large facilities in the Midwest and Northeast. The campus has hundreds of buildings.

The 10-megawatt microreactor wouldn’t meet all of the demand, but it would serve to demonstrate the technology, as other communities and campuses look to transition away from fossil fuels, Brooks said.

One company that is building microreactors that the public can get a look at today is Last Energy, based in Washington, D.C. It built a model reactor in Brookshire, Texas that’s housed in an edgy cube covered in reflective metal.

Now it’s taking that apart to test how to transport the unit. A caravan of trucks is taking it to Austin, where company founder Bret Kugelmass is scheduled to speak at the South by Southwest conference

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 80 of 81

and festival.

Kugelmass, a technology entrepreneur and mechanical engineer, is talking with some universities, but his primary focus is on industrial customers. He's working with licensing authorities in the United Kingdom, Poland and Romania to try to get his first reactor running in Europe in 2025.

The urgency of the climate crisis means zero-carbon nuclear energy must be scaled up soon, he said. "It has to be a small, manufactured product as opposed to a large, bespoke construction project," he said.

Traditional nuclear power costs billions of dollars. An example is two additional reactors at a plant in Georgia that will end up costing more than \$30 billion.

The total cost of Last Energy's microreactor, including module fabrication, assembly and site prep work, is under \$100 million, the company says.

Westinghouse, which has been a mainstay of the nuclear industry for over 70 years, is developing its "eVinci" microreactor, Shaqqo said, and is aiming to get the technology licensed by 2027.

The Department of Defense is working on a microreactor too. Project Pele is a DOD prototype mobile nuclear reactor under design at the Idaho National Laboratory.

Abilene Christian University in Texas is leading a group of three other universities with the company Natura Resources to design and build a research microreactor cooled by molten salt to allow for high temperature operations at low pressure, in part to help train the next generation nuclear workforce.

But not everyone shares the enthusiasm. Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists, called it "completely unjustified."

Microreactors in general will require much more uranium to be mined and enriched per unit of electricity generated than conventional reactors do, he said. He said he also expects fuel costs to be substantially higher and that more depleted uranium waste could be generated compared to conventional reactors.

"I think those who are hoping that microreactors are going to be the silver bullet for solving the climate change crisis are simply betting on the wrong horse," he said.

Lyman also said he fears microreactors could be targeted for a terrorist attack, and some designs would use fuels that could be attractive to terrorists seeking to build crude nuclear weapons. The UCS does not oppose using nuclear power, but wants to make sure it's safe.

The United States does not have a national storage facility for storing spent nuclear fuel and it's piling up. Microreactors would only compound the problem and spread the radioactive waste around, Lyman said.

A 2022 Stanford-led study found that smaller modular reactors — the next size up from micro — will generate more waste than conventional reactors. Lead author Lindsay Krall said this week that the design of microreactors would make them subject to the same issue.

Kugelmass sees only promise. Nuclear, he said, has been "totally misunderstood and under leveraged." It will be "the key pillar of our energy transformation moving forward."

Today in History: FEB 8, Mary, Queen of Scots beheaded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2023. There are 326 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 8, 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

On this date:

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated.

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding had a radio installed in the White House.

In 1924, the first execution by gas in the United States took place at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as Gee Jon, a Chinese immigrant convicted of murder, was put to death.

In 1952, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed her accession to the British throne following the death of her

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 217 ~ 81 of 81

father, King George VI.

In 1960, work began on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located on Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles.

In 1965, Eastern Air Lines Flight 663, a DC-7, crashed shortly after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport; all 84 people on board were killed. The Supremes' record "Stop! In the Name of Love!" was released by Motown.

In 1968, three Black students were killed in a confrontation between demonstrators and highway patrolmen at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in the wake of protests over a whites-only bowling alley.

In 1971, NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, held its first trading day.

In 1973, Senate leaders named seven members of a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal, including its chairman, Democrat Sam J. Ervin of North Carolina.

In 2007, model, actor and tabloid sensation Anna Nicole Smith died in Hollywood, Florida, at age 39 of an accidental drug overdose.

In 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said a 60-year-old U.S. citizen who'd been diagnosed with the coronavirus had died on Feb. 5 in Wuhan; it was apparently the first American fatality from the virus.

Ten years ago: A massive storm packing hurricane-force winds and blizzard conditions began sweeping through the Northeast, dumping nearly 2 feet of snow on New England and knocking out power to more than a half a million customers.

Five years ago: The federal government stumbled into a shutdown that would end by morning, its second in less than a month, as rogue Senate Republicans blocked a speedy vote on a massive, bipartisan, budget-busting spending deal. For the second time in a week, the Dow Jones industrials plunged by more than 1,000 points as a sell-off in the stock market deepened. Hundreds of thousands lined the streets of Philadelphia as the Eagles celebrated their Super Bowl victory with a parade.

One year ago: Retired Pope Benedict XVI asked forgiveness for any "grievous faults" in his handling of clergy sex abuse cases, but denied any personal or specific wrongdoing after an independent report criticized his actions in four cases while he was archbishop of Munich, Germany. "The Power of the Dog" topped the 2022 Oscar nominations with 10. (It would go on to win just one, best director for Jane Campion.)

Today's birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 91. Broadcast journalist Ted Koppel is 83. Actor Nick Nolte is 82. Comedian Robert Klein is 81. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 80. Singer Ron Tyson is 75. Actor Brooke Adams is 74. Actor Mary Steenburgen is 70. Author John Grisham is 68. Retired NBA All-Star and College Basketball Hall of Famer Marques Johnson is 67. Actor Henry Czerny is 64. Rock singer Vince Neil (Motley Crue) is 62. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa P. Jackson is 61. Movie producer Toby Emmerich is 60. Actor Missy Yager is 55. Actor Mary McCormack is 54. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 53. Actor Susan Misner is 52. Dance musician Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk) is 49. Actor Seth Green is 49. Actor Joshua Morrow is 49. Rock musician Phoenix (Linkin Park) is 46. Actor William Jackson Harper is 43. Actor Jim Parrack is 42. Folk singer-musician Joey Ryan (Milk Carton Kids) is 41. Actor-comedian Cecily Strong is 39. Rock musician Jeremy Davis is 38. Hip-hop artist Anderson.Paak is 37. Actor Ryan Pinkston is 35. NBA star Klay Thompson is 33. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 33. Actor Karle Warren is 31.