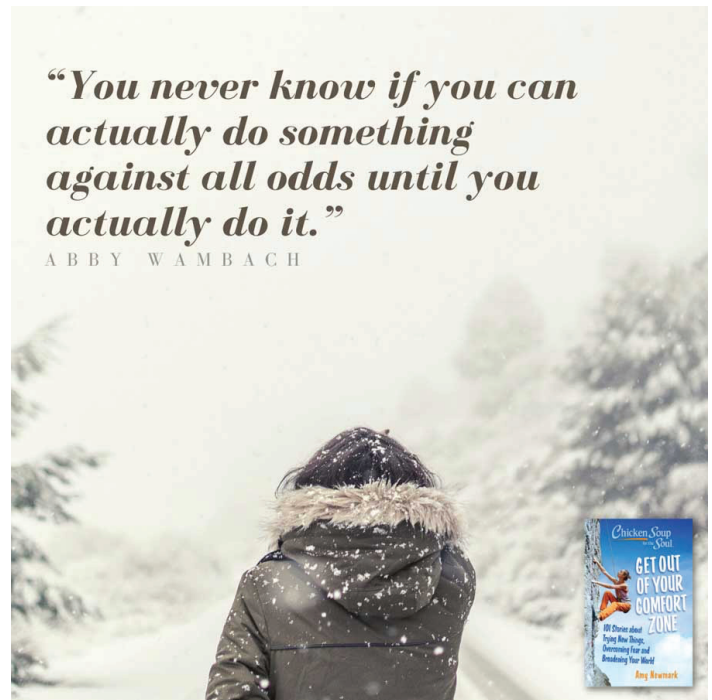


Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 1 of 81

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [1- Queen of Hearts](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [2- GDILIVE sub varsity games available for sponsorship](#)
- [3- Veteran's Day Profile: Neil Wagner](#)
- [5- All Over Roofing Ad](#)
- [5- Dacotah Bak Open House Ad](#)
- [5- Witte Exteriors Ad](#)
- [6- 2023 Groton Area Fall Sports Awards](#)
- [11- Angel Tree Cards Still Left](#)
- [12- SD North Area Honor Band](#)
- [13- NSU Women's Basketball](#)
- [14- NSU Men's Basketball](#)
- [15- Name Released in Pennington County Fatal Crash](#)
- [16- South Dakota Volunteer Fire Departments Receive \\$5 Million in Grant Funding](#)
- [20- Brown County Volunteer Receives Minnie Lovinger Award](#)
- [22- SD SearchLight: Carbon pipeline debate spawns another new organization](#)
- [23- SD SearchLight: SD teachers make less than they did in 2017, when factoring in inflation](#)
- [24- SD SearchLight: House moves to bar use of public lands for housing migrants; SD's Johnson votes yes](#)
- [27- Weather Pages](#)
- [31- Daily Devotional](#)
- [32- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [33- Subscription Form](#)
- [34- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [35- News from the Associated Press](#)



“You never know if you can actually do something against all odds until you actually do it.”

ABBY WAMBACH

Queen of Hearts

The Queen of Hearts drawing resumed Thursday after a week off for Thanksgiving. During the two week span, 718 tickets were sold for \$4590. The jackpot now stands at \$34,940. Della Abeln's name was drawn and she got the Joker with card number 14. She will get \$359. The next drawing is next Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Groton American Legion.

Coming up

Friday, Dec. 01

School Breakfast: Cheese Omelets.
School Lunch: Chicken Tortilla Soup
Tour of Trees at Wage Memorial Library: 3:30pm – 6:30pm

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

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

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 2 of 81

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) said in its economic outlook.

Philippines Dispute: China lashed out at Washington Thursday for continuing to side with U.S. treaty ally the Philippines in an escalating territorial dispute in the South China Sea.

Von Miller Arrested: Buffalo Bills star Von Miller turned himself in on an outstanding warrant for his arrest in an alleged domestic violence case involving his pregnant girlfriend in Dallas. He was released after posting a \$5,000 bond.

Trump Lawyer Sued: Alina Habba, one of Donald Trump's top lawyers, is being accused of "grooming" a former employee of the Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, New Jersey, after the worker was allegedly sexually harassed by a supervisor.

War in Ukraine: During an OSCE ministerial conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appeared to issue an implicit warning to Moldova, cautioning the country against its aspirations to join the European Union, amidst ongoing assertions by the Kremlin that the conflict in Ukraine was instigated by Western powers.

Climate Change: The U.S. will contribute \$17.5 million to a Climate Impact and Response Fund after reaching an agreement with other global leaders on Thursday at the COP28 conference in Dubai.

Guyana Invasion: Brazilian intelligence has warned that the Venezuelan army is going to invade Guyana in the coming days, raising concerns about regional stability and territorial disputes in South America.

Jobless Figures: Unemployment in the U.S. is expected to increase from a current rate of 3.6% to 4.1% in 2024,

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GT
Groton Area
Tigers

Any interest in any of
these basketball games on
GDILIVE.COM?
They are \$25 each.

Girls James Valley Christian JV
Boys Hamlin JV
Girls Hamlin JV
Boys Sisseton JV
Girls Sisseton JV
Girls Roncalli C
Girls Roncalli JV
Boys Roncalli C
Boys Roncalli JV
Girls Aberdeen Christian JV

Text Paul at 605-397-7460

Veteran's Day Profile: Neil Wagner

Editor's Note:

We thought it would be nice to publish the Veteran's Day stories that were told at the Veteran's Day Program. This will be the first in a series of those presented at the program. The stories were told by the high school students. The first is Richard Taylor as told by Cadence Feist.

Neil Wagner served from 1968 until 1971 during the war with Vietnam. He was originally drafted into the Army and then decided to go into the Navy. When asked why he chose the Navy in particular, Neil answered that he wanted to learn a trade and see the world.

Neil started out his time in the military with boot camp. At boot camp, he had to wake up every morning at 4:00 AM for drill and schooling. From boot camp, Neil has a very vivid memory of waking up in the middle of the night and thinking that it was all a dream, though reality quickly set in. It was during this time that he learned the value of starting out your day with a freshly made bed.

While in the Navy, Neil was on three different ships: a tugboat, a barrack ship, and a patrol gun boat, the USS Antelope, which was his favorite of the three. His main job on these ships was to take care of the engines. Part of this was pumping fuel from both sides of the ship. By being a part of the U.S. military, Neil felt that he had a job to do and did his best to do it. Neil was awarded with a Combat Action Ribbon for his time spent on these boats after one of them was shot at by an enemy ship in Vietnam.

Neil also traveled quite a bit during his time in the Navy. He was gone a total of eleven months, and during that time, he traveled to Vietnam, the Philippines, Hawaii, Japan, and San Francisco. There was always plenty of food and supplies on the ships, including exceptional food such as steak and lobster on the patrol gun boat. For fun, they occasionally wrote letters, watched movies, and even used one of the



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 4 of 81

boats for water skiing from time to time. During eleven months away from home, however, he was only ever able to make one phone call to talk to his wife.

When his time in the military ended, Neil moved back to South Dakota. He used the skills he had learned in the military to get a job as a mechanic in Groton for three years before he began farming. He now has five children, eighteen grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren, and his oldest son and daughter are in the Army.

Presentation of Quilt

Neil, on behalf of the community and nation, with our deepest appreciation, we honor your service with this quilt of honor.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 5 of 81



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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 6 of 81



2023 Groton Area Fall Sports Awards

A large crowd was on hand for the fall activities awards recognition event held in the GHS Gym Thursday. The event lasted 61 minutes with pictures being completed in 16 minutes.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

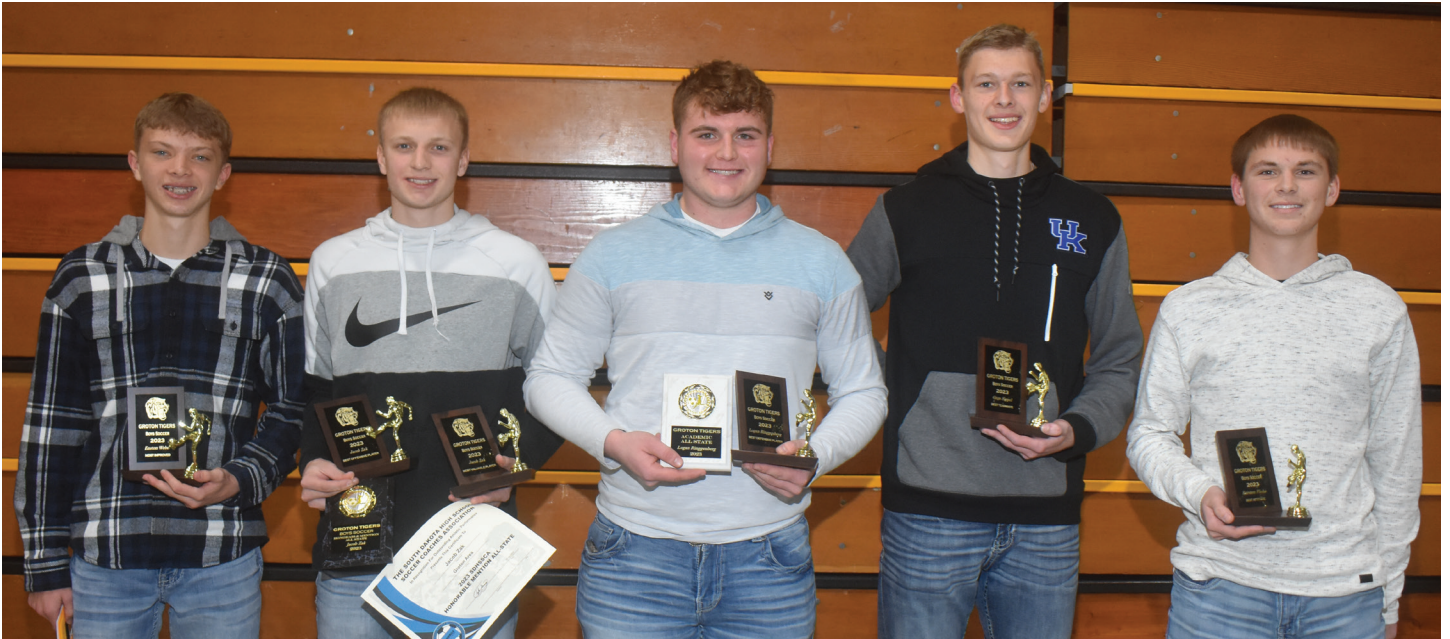


Cross Country

Ryelle Gilbert – MVP, Sydney Holmes – Rookie of the Year, Emily Clark – Sportsmanship Award and Academic All-State, Kason Oswald – Most Improved. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

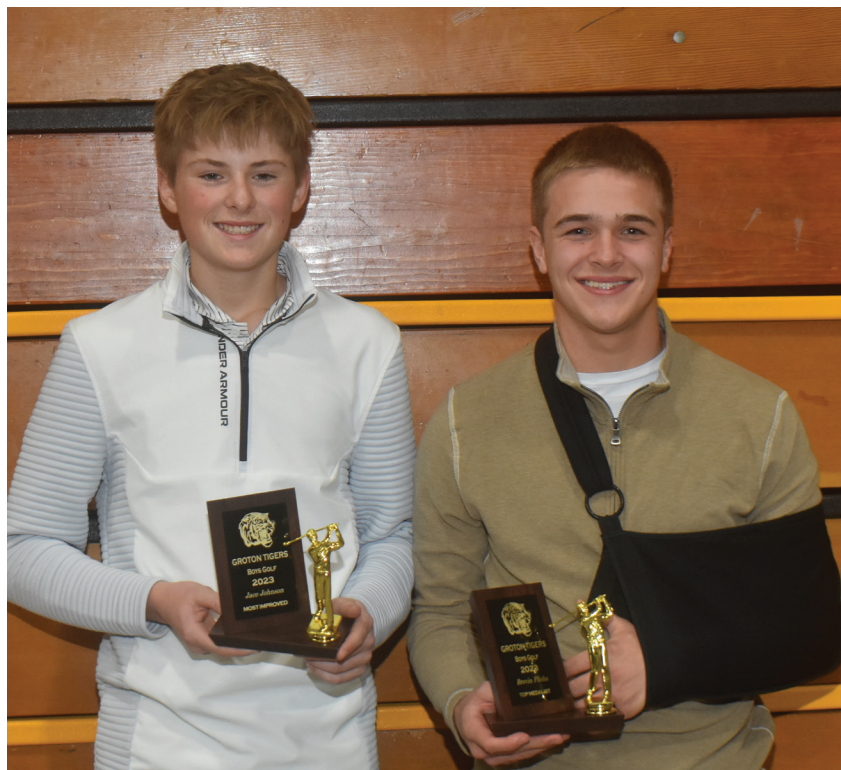
Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 7 of 81



Boys Soccer

Easton Weber – Most Improved, Jacob Zak – MVP, Best Offensive Player, and All-State Honorable Mention, Logan Ringgenberg – Best Defensive Player and Academic All-State, Gage Sippel – Best Teammate, Karsten Fliehs – Best Attitude. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Boys Golf

Jace Johnson – Most Improved, Brevin Fliehs – Top Medalist. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Girls Soccer

Emerlee Jones – Coaches Award, Kennedy Hansen – Miss Universal and First-Team All-State, Jaedyn Penning – Defensive MVP and All-State Honorable Mention, Liz Flihs – Heart and Soul Award, Laila Roberts – All-State Honorable Mention, Jerica Locke – Miss Hustle and First-Team All-State, McKenna Tietz – Offensive MVP. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Volleyball

Anna Fjeldheim – Offensive MVP, NEC All-Conference, Academic All-State, NEC Volleyball Player of the Year, Carly Guthmiller – Defensive MVP and NEC All-Conference, Chesney Weber – Rookie of the Year, Sydney Leicht – Queen of Receive and Academic All-State, Rylee Dunker – Rookie of the Year, Liz Flihs – Sniper and NEC All-Conference. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Football

Back Row: Karsten Jeschke – Scout Team MVP, Colby Dunker – Most Improved Offensive Player and NEC All-Conference, Teylor Diegel – Most Improved Defensive Player and NEC All-Conference, Christian Ehresmann – Defensive MVP and NEC All-Conference, Keegen Tracy – NEC All-Conference Honorable Mention

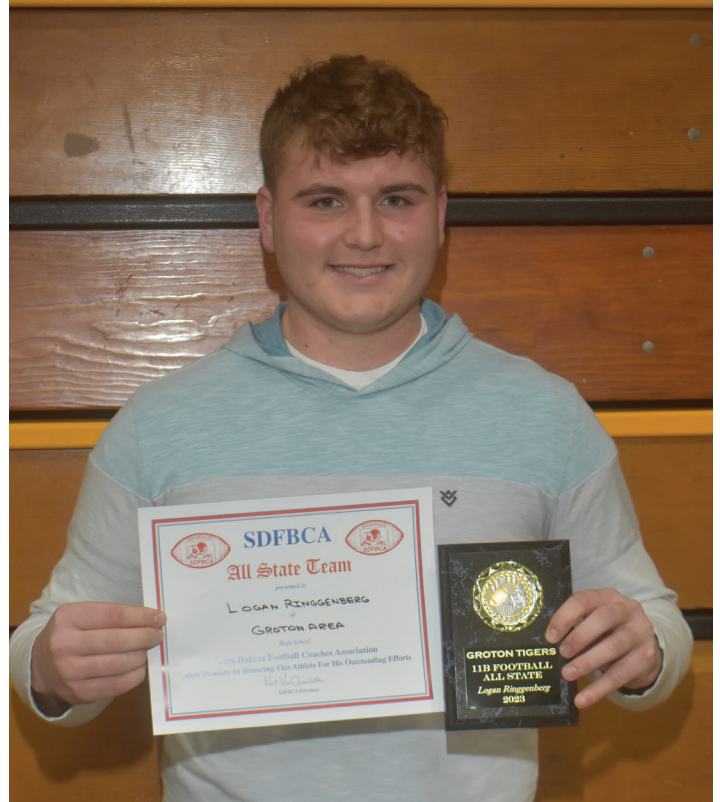
Front Row: Lane Tietz – NEC All-Conference and 11B Academic All-State, Logan Ringgenberg – Co-MVP Lineman, NEC All-Conference, and 11B All-State Football Team, Korbin Kucker – Offensive MVP and NEC All-Conference Honorable Mention, Holden Sippel – Co-MVP Lineman, NEC All-Conference, 11B Academic All-State, Richard Deurre Outstanding Football Player Scholarship Award. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



AD Recognized

Coach Shaun Wanner recognized and presented Alexa Schuring with a Friend of Football award for all of her hard work taking over as the Groton Area athletic director. (Photo by

Paul Kosel)



All-State Football Team

Logan Ringgenberg is only the 23rd GHS athlete to be named to the 11B Football All-State Team. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 11 of 81



Angel Tree Cards Still Left

There are still plenty of cards left on Groton's Angel Trees. The left one is at Lori's Pharmacy on the counter. The right one is at Dollar General right when you walk in.



SD North Area Honor Band by Desiree Yeigh

The 32nd Annual South Dakota North Area Honor Band will present their concert on Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 4:00PM at the Johnson Fine Arts Center on the campus of Northern State University. Dr. Terry Beckler, Professor of Percussion, Bands and Music Education at Northern State University, is the director for this year's event.

Representing twenty-two schools, approximately one hundred students have been selected to participate in the Honor Band. The students that will represent Groton Area are: Cadence Feist, Bari Saxophone; Gretchen Dinger, Flute; Carlee Johnson, French Horn; and Emily Clark, Percussion.

Admission prices for the concert are \$5 for adults and \$3 for students, grades 1-12.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 13 of 81

NSU Women's Basketball

Krueger Earns 200th Career Win Defeating the Dragons

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University women's basketball team pulled away in the second half, defeating MSU Moorhead by 16 in their second NSIC victory of the season. The teams were tied at the half, but the Wolves came out hot in the second shooting 46.7% from the floor. Defensively they held MSUM to a 24.1 field goal percentage in the final 20 minutes.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 60, MSUM 44

Records: NSU 6-2 (2-0 NSIC), MSUM 0-6 (0-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 2077

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State notched ten points in the first quarter, 17 in the second, 15 in the third, and 18 in the fourth; out-scoring MSU Moorhead 33-17 in the second half

The Wolves notched a season high 49 rebounds, and added four blocks and 15 assists

NSU tallied 28 points in the paint, 15 second chance points and seven points off the bench, shooting 36.9% from the floor and 80.0% from the foul line

Northern took care of the basketball, suffering just three turnovers in the game; a single game low in the Krueger-era

Madelyn Bragg sat atop the team scoring 22 points, grabbing seven rebounds, and blocking four Dragon shots

Alayna Benike followed with 15 points and dished out four assist to lead the Wolves, while Brynn Alfson tallied a team leading 11 rebounds

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 22 points, 7 rebounds, 4 blocks, 56.3 field goal%

Alayna Benike: 15 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assist, 42.9 3-point field goal%

Rianna Fillipi: 8 points, 6 rebounds, 3 assists

BEYOND THE BOX

Paula Krueger notched her 200th career win, bringing her all-time record to 200-200

UP NEXT

Northern State finishes their home stretch hosting St. Cloud State and Bemidji State. Tip-off times are set for Friday, December 8th at 7:30 p.m. against the Huskies and Saturday, December 9th at 6 p.m. against the Beavers. Friday's contest is Massage Night, while Saturday is Holiday Hoops with free Santa photos and free admission for youth. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 14 of 81

NSU Men's Basketball

Northern Falls, No. 7 Dragons Pull Away from the Wolves in the Second

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University men's basketball team battled with No. 7 MSU Moorhead from Wachs Arena on Thursday night, falling 86-76. The two teams were tied at the half, however efficient shooting by the Dragons in the second saw them pull away.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 76, MSUM 86

Records: NSU 3-5 (1-1 NSIC), MSUM 7-0 (1-0 NSIC)

Attendance: 2243

HOW IT HAPPENED

The contest was tied at the half, however the Dragons out-scored the Wolves 46-36 in the second Northern shot 40.6% from the floor, 37.5% from the 3-point line, and 73.3% from the foul line in the game, while Moorhead shot 54.8% from the floor 27.3% from the 3-point line, and 65.2% from the foul line NSU recorded a game high 40 rebounds, ten assists, nine made 3-pointers, and five steals

They scored 30 points in the paint, 12 second chance points, ten points off turnovers, and five points off the bench

Jacksen Moni led four of the Wolves five starters in double figures, scoring 24 points and grabbing seven rebounds

Josh Dilling followed with 21, shooting 50.0% from the floor, while Augustin Reede and Michael Nhial added 14 and 11 respectively

Reede led the team shooting 50.0% from the beyond the arc with four made 3-pointers

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Jacksen Moni: 24 points, 41.1 field goal%, 7 rebounds, 2 assists

Josh Dilling: 21 points, 50.0 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 3 assists

Augustin Reede: 14 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists, 2 steals

Michael Nhial: 11 points, 3 rebounds, 2 blocks, 1 assist

UP NEXT

Northern returns to action December 8 and 9 hosting St. Cloud State and Bemidji State. Tip-off times are set for 5:30 p.m. on Friday against the Huskies and 4 p.m. on Saturday versus the Beavers. Friday's contest is Massage Night, while Saturday is Holiday Hoops with free Santa photos and free admission for youth. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

Name Released in Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Single Vehicle Fatal crash
Where: I-90, MM 123, 13 miles east of Wall, S.D.
When: 6:40 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 25, 2023

Driver No. 1: Taylor Schmieding, 26, Rapid City, SD, Fatal injuries
Vehicle No. 1: 2014 Nissan Titan

PENNINGTON COUNTY, S.D.- A 26-year-old Rapid City man has been identified as the person who died from injuries sustained in a single-vehicle crash Saturday, 13 miles east of Wall, S.D.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2014 Nissan Titan pickup truck was traveling westbound on I 90 near mile marker 123. The Nissan left it's lane to the right, overcorrected to the left, and went into the median. When it entered the median the truck rolled over and the driver was ejected from the vehicle.

The 26-year-old male driver of the Nissan Titan, Taylor Schmieding, age 26, of Rapid City, S.D. sustained fatal injuries and was deceased at the scene.
He was not wearing a seatbelt.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

###

South Dakota Volunteer Fire Departments Receive \$5 Million in Grant Funding

PIERRE, S.D. – November 30, 2023 – 251 South Dakota volunteer fire departments from across the state have been awarded grants totaling \$5 million in funding for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Earlier this year, the South Dakota Legislature passed and Governor Noem signed HB1127 appropriating state general funds to the Department of Public Safety creating the grant program to support local volunteer fire departments.

“Volunteer fire departments play a crucial role in safeguarding communities and ensuring public safety by providing rapid response and dedicated service in emergencies,” said State Fire Marshal, Paul Merriman. “They serve as a vital backbone of the state's overall firefighting and disaster management infrastructure. Regular financial support is critical to ensuring their safety and readiness.”

Volunteer fire departments purchase and maintain personal protective equipment for their firefighters. This grant program will help departments purchase new and replacement PPE to protect their firefighters.

PPE includes items such as bunker gear, boots, gloves, wildland firefighting apparel, and self-contained breathing apparatus.

“This funding will have a significant impact for departments statewide that have encountered budget and fundraising challenges,” said Charlie Kludt, President of the South Dakota Firefighters Association. “The funding is very much appreciated and will be put to good use.”

Seventy-five percent of eligible volunteer fire departments participated in the program and received awards ranging from \$720 to \$40,500 depending on their application and need. The grant program is administered by the South Dakota Firefighters Association and the Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Fire Department	Award		
Aberdeen Rural VFD	\$7,775.00		
Academy VFD	\$18,450.00		
Akaska VFD	\$33,300.00		
Alcester VFD	\$33,300.00		
Alexandria VFD	\$18,450.00		
Alpena VFD	\$12,735.00		
Andover VFD	\$21,600.00	Bonesteel VFD	\$22,500.00
Angostura VFD	\$9,287.00	Bowdle VFD	\$33,300.00
Argyle VFD	\$18,450.00	Box Elder VFD	\$14,288.50
Arlington VFD	\$6,137.50	Bradley VFD	\$18,450.00
Armour VFD	\$22,500.00	Brandon VFD	\$9,600.00
Artesian VFD	\$22,500.00	Brandt VFD	\$15,854.50
Ashton VFD	\$11,925.00	Bridgewater VFD	\$22,500.00
Astoria VFD	\$13,500.00	Bristol VFD	\$33,300.00
Aurora VFD	\$22,500.00	Brookings VFD	\$9,990.00
Avon VFD	\$22,500.00	Browns Valley VFD	\$33,300.00
Badger VFD	\$33,300.00	Brownsville VFD	\$1,600.00
Baltic VFD	\$13,500.00	Bruce VFD	\$18,450.00
Batesland VFD	\$33,300.00	Bryant VFD	\$10,660.82
Belle Fourche VFD	\$18,450.00	Buffalo Rural VFD	\$33,300.00
Beresford VFD	\$22,500.00	Burke VFD	\$10,455.00
Big Stone City VFD	\$13,500.00	Camp Crook VFD	\$4,125.00
Bison VFD	\$18,450.00	Canistota VFD	\$22,500.00
Blackhawk VFD	\$4,434.69	Canova VFD	\$22,500.00
Blunt Rural VFD	\$15,549.25	Castle Rock VFD	\$6,900.00

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 17 of 81

Cavour VFD	\$18,450.00	Groton Area VFD	\$22,500.00
Centerville VFD	\$7,500.00	Harrisburg VFD	\$22,500.00
Chamberlain VFD	\$22,500.00	Hartford VFD	\$18,237.50
Chancellor VFD	\$14,310.00	Hayti VFD	\$22,500.00
Claire City VFD	\$22,500.00	Hazel VFD	\$18,450.00
Claremont VFD	\$16,357.70	Hecla VFD	\$15,498.00
Clark VFD	\$18,450.00	Henry VFD	\$22,500.00
Colman VFD	\$8,505.00	Herreid VFD	\$30,192.00
Colome VFD	\$7,548.00	Highmore VFD	\$19,480.50
Colton VFD	\$15,350.00	Hill City VFD	\$10,690.75
Columbia VFD	\$16,200.00	Hitchcock VFD	\$13,500.00
Corona VFD	\$18,450.00	Hosmer Rural VFD	\$18,450.00
Corsica VFD	\$14,400.00	Hot Springs VFD	\$18,450.00
Cresbard VFD	\$33,300.00	Hoven VFD	\$18,450.00
Crooks VFD	\$14,637.00	Hudson VFD	\$29,497.51
Custer VFD	\$12,900.00	Humboldt VFD	\$22,500.00
Dante VFD	\$10,350.00	Hurley VFD	\$16,200.00
De Smet VFD	\$3,750.00	Huron Rural VFD	\$33,300.00
Deadwood VFD	\$14,760.00	Ipswich VFD	\$13,218.00
Dell Rapids VFD	\$22,500.00	Irene VFD	\$22,500.00
Delmont VFD	\$16,901.60	Iroquois VFD	\$22,500.00
Doland VFD	\$40,500.00	Isabel VFD	\$22,500.00
Doty VFD	\$22,500.00	Java VFD	\$17,836.96
Eagle Butte VFD	\$11,437.50	Jefferson VFD	\$22,500.00
Eden VFD	\$18,450.00	Johnson Siding VFD	\$22,500.00
Edgemont VFD	\$22,500.00	Kadoka VFD	\$33,300.00
Elk Point VFD	\$22,500.00	Kennebec VFD	\$15,873.00
Elkton VFD	\$18,450.00	Kimball VFD	\$3,685.90
Enning VFD	\$33,300.00	Lake Andes VFD	\$22,500.00
Estelline VFD	\$11,100.00	Lake Norden VFD	\$40,500.00
Ethan VFD	\$22,500.00	Lake Preston VFD	\$11,100.00
Eureka VFD	\$2,360.70	Langford VFD	\$19,000.00
Fairburn VFD	\$33,300.00	Lead VFD	\$8,565.50
Fairfax VFD	\$19,388.00	Lemmon VFD	\$16,576.00
Faulkton VFD	\$22,500.00	Lennox VFD	\$10,748.50
Fedora VFD	\$22,500.00	Leola VFD	\$40,500.00
Florence VFD	\$22,500.00	Lesterville VFD	\$22,500.00
Fort Pierre VFD	\$18,450.00	Letcher VFD	\$33,300.00
Frankfort VFD	\$9,361.00	Lodgepole VFD	\$720.00
Frederick VFD	\$22,500.00	Long Lake VFD	\$2,598.43
Freeman VFD	\$33,300.00	Ludlow VFD	\$21,423.00
Garden City VFD	\$22,500.00	Lyons VFD	\$22,500.00
Garretson VFD	\$13,500.00	Madison VFD	\$33,300.00
Gary VFD	\$4,797.00	Marion VFD	\$22,107.50
Gayville VFD	\$40,500.00	Martin VFD	\$40,500.00
Geddes VFD	\$18,450.00	Marvin VFD	\$22,500.00
Gettysburg VFD	\$22,500.00	McIntosh VFD	\$33,300.00
Glenham VFD	\$22,500.00	McLaughlin VFD	\$15,133.00
Goodwin VFD	\$22,500.00	Mellette VFD	\$22,500.00
Gregory VFD	\$22,500.00	Menno VFD	\$20,112.50

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 18 of 81

Milbank VFD	\$22,500.00	Rosebud Sioux Tribes VFD	\$33,300.00
Milesville VFD	\$22,500.00	Roslyn VFD	\$22,500.00
Miller VFD	\$33,300.00	Salem VFD	\$2,400.00
Minnekahta VFD	\$22,500.00	Scenic VFD	\$22,500.00
Mission VFD	\$18,450.00	Scotland VFD	\$18,450.00
Mobridge VFD	\$19,471.50	Selby VFD	\$13,500.00
Monroe VFD	\$6,068.00	Seneca VFD	\$18,450.00
Montrose VFD	\$21,362.50	Silver City VFD	\$22,500.00
Mound City VFD	\$11,951.50	Sinai VFD	\$10,800.00
Mt. Vernon VFD	\$7,200.00	Sisseton VFD	\$33,300.00
Murdo VFD	\$22,500.00	Sorum VFD	\$6,119.65
Nemo VFD	\$33,300.00	South Hand VFD	\$15,632.50
New Effington VFD	\$22,500.00	South Shore VFD	\$20,375.00
New Underwood VFD	\$33,300.00	Spencer VFD	\$18,648.00
Newell VFD	\$22,500.00	Split Rock VFD	\$12,137.50
Nisland-Arpan VFD	\$33,300.00	Springfield VFD	\$40,500.00
North Haines VFD	\$3,545.00	St. Onge VFD	\$22,500.00
North Marshal VFD	\$22,500.00	Stickney VFD	\$18,450.00
North Sioux City VFD	\$22,500.00	Stockholm VFD	\$22,500.00
Northville VFD	\$22,500.00	Stratford VFD	\$14,662.76
Nunda VFD	\$19,462.50	Sturgis VFD	\$22,500.00
Oelrichs VFD	\$13,500.00	Summit VFD	\$18,900.00
Oldham VFD	\$15,688.00	Sunset Colony VFD	\$4,033.00
Onaka VFD	\$33,300.00	Tabor VFD	\$23,051.00
Onida VFD	\$33,300.00	Tea VFD	\$8,312.50
Orient VFD	\$15,875.00	Timber Lake VFD	\$22,500.00
Parker VFD	\$23,088.00	Toronto VFD	\$10,050.00
Parkston VFD	\$33,300.00	Town & Country VFD	\$33,300.00
Parmelee VFD	\$4,203.20	Trent VFD	\$22,500.00
Philip VFD	\$33,300.00	Tripp VFD	\$22,500.00
Piedmont VFD	\$22,500.00	Tulare VFD	\$33,300.00
Pierpont VFD	\$33,300.00	Turton VFD	\$22,500.00
Pierre Rural VFD	\$12,210.00	Vale VFD	\$33,300.00
Pierre VFD	\$13,500.00	Valley Springs VFD	\$18,450.00
Plankinton VFD	\$22,500.00	Veblen VFD	\$16,350.00
Platte VFD	\$8,075.00	Vermillion VFD	\$22,500.00
Pollock VFD	\$22,500.00	Viborg VFD	\$24,679.00
Quinn VFD	\$22,500.00	Vivian VFD	\$4,440.00
Ramona VFD	\$16,758.75	Volga VFD	\$7,200.00
Rapid Valley VFD	\$33,300.00	Wagner VFD	\$19,950.00
Ravinia VFD	\$22,500.00	Wakonda VFD	\$22,500.00
Raymond VFD	\$22,181.50	Wallace VFD	\$21,600.00
Redfield Rural VFD	\$1,687.50	Warner VFD	\$22,500.00
Ree Heights VFD	\$33,300.00	Wasta VFD	\$1,750.00
Reliance VFD	\$22,500.00	Waubay VFD	\$33,300.00
Renner VFD	\$33,300.00	Wessington Springs VFD	\$22,500.00
Rochford VFD	\$15,614.00	Wessington VFD	\$16,205.25
Rockerville VFD	\$27,935.00	White Lake VFD	\$13,500.00
Roscoe VFD	\$29,470.50	White River VFD	\$18,037.50

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 19 of 81

White VFD	\$18,000.00
Willow Lake VFD	\$22,500.00
Wilmot VFD	\$13,500.00
Winner VFD	\$13,500.00
Wispering Pines VFD	\$18,450.00
Witten VFD	\$18,450.00
Wolsey VFD	\$22,500.00
Wood VFD	\$18,450.00
Worthing VFD	\$22,500.00
Yankton VFD	\$1,987.50

Brown County Volunteer Receives Minnie Lovinger Award

By Lura Roti for South Dakota Farmers Union

Educating youth is something Margaret Sumption has been passionate about most of her life.

"I have always enjoyed kids, and as a teacher I found that they are generally happy and certainly every day is different," Sumption explains.

Sumption was recognized by South Dakota Farmers Union for her service to rural youth as a volunteer, with the esteemed Minnie Lovinger Award. She served as the Brown County Education Director for several years. She was presented with the award November 30, during an awards banquet held during the South Dakota Farmers Union State Convention in Huron.

"Thanks to the efforts of volunteers like Margaret, each summer hundreds of rural youth attend camps where they receive education on farm safety, teamwork, cooperatives and have the opportunity to develop leadership skills," said Karla Hofhenke, Executive Director of South Dakota Farmers Union.

More about Margaret Sumption

Sumption decided to become a teacher because she always enjoyed school and her teachers. She taught grade school for a few years before she and her husband, John, had children of their own.

When her five sons were school age, Margaret substitute taught and later returned to work in the Frederick Area School District full-time as a para and then served as the school secretary until she retired in 2001.

Raising their sons on the family farm, Margaret and her husband, John, were always in church and active in the Frederick community. And because of her farming background, Sumption said she looked for ways to expose students to agriculture beyond Brown County.

"I always told students, farmers across America don't just raise corn, cows, wheat and soybeans. You eat strawberries and lettuce too. Farmers had to grow that too."

About the time their youngest son, Warren, graduated, the couple became more involved in Farmers Union.

"John came home from a county meeting one day and said, "Margaret, you are the new education director." I said, "OK."

Throughout the years, Margaret said she appreciated the way Farmers Union youth programming taught rural kids about so many aspects of agriculture.

"Farmers Union helped broaden their horizons. It helped them realize that each farm and farmer is unique," she said.

One by one, all five of their sons joined the family farming operation. Margaret said she enjoyed having



Margaret Sumption was recognized by South Dakota Farmers Union for her service to rural youth as a volunteer, with the esteemed Minnie Lovinger Award. She served as the Brown County Education Director for several years. She was presented with the award November 30, during an awards banquet held during the South Dakota Farmers Union State Convention in Huron. Margaret Sumption is pictured here with Ariel Eitrem (left) Senior Advisory Council member from Sioux Falls and Cadence Konechne, (right) Jr. Junior Advisory Council member from Kimball. (Courtesy Photo)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 21 of 81

her grandchildren close to home and getting to be involved their lives.

"All our grandchildren attended Farmers Union Camp. It was fun to see them with other kids and make friends," she said.

Today, Farmers Union member, Mike Traxinger serves as the Brown County Education Director. Sump-tion asked him to take over for her when he returned to his family's Brown County farm. "He has done a great job and expanded the program even more," she said.

More about Minnie Lovinger Award

Established in 2004, the South Dakota Farmers Union Foundation instituted the Minnie Lovinger Award in recognition of the founder of all Farmers Union education programs.

Minnie Lovinger passed away more than 70 years ago, but not before she laid the foundation for all subsequent Farmers Union education efforts. As historian Lyn Oyos wrote in his history of South Dakota Farmers Union, Minnie Lovinger "snatched the thorny chance and broke the trail that others followed. Her soul has never left them in their sowing and reaping."



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Carbon pipeline debate spawns another new organization

SD Ag Alliance forms to 'advocate for reasonable solutions' after South Dakotans First formed to restrict eminent domain

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - NOVEMBER 30, 2023 6:29 PM

A second group has formed in response to disputes over a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline in South Dakota, this time in support of policies that could result in the pipeline's construction.

A news release from the newly formed South Dakota Ag Alliance said it will "mediate and advocate for reasonable solutions to difficult ag and rural development issues" such as carbon pipeline proposals. That includes advocating for policies to provide a better deal and greater peace of mind for affected landowners.

Co-founders Rob Skjonsberg and Jason Glodt are prominent figures in South Dakota politics.

Glodt formerly did governmental affairs work for a carbon pipeline company, Navigator CO2, that has since terminated its proposed project. He is a lawyer and co-founder, with Skjonsberg, of GSG Strategies, a government relations, advocacy and campaign strategy firm. Glodt also served in the administrations of Governors Mike Rounds and Dennis Daugaard.

Skjonsberg, a rancher and farmer, formerly worked as chief of staff for Rounds, served on the state Board of Economic Development Board under Daugaard and worked as a senior vice president of government affairs for the Poet biofuels company.

The two said they are not being paid by anyone to lead the new nonprofit, and they're not working with Summit Carbon Solutions, the remaining company proposing a carbon pipeline in the state.

"I haven't said anything to them," Skjonsberg said.

Summit, based in Iowa, wants to collect carbon dioxide emissions from 32 Midwest ethanol plants, including some in South Dakota. The carbon would be liquefied and transported through a multi-billion-dollar pipeline for burial in North Dakota, making the project eligible for federal tax credits that incentivize the removal of heat-trapping gasses from the atmosphere.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission rejected Summit's permit application in September, citing problems including the route's conflicts with county ordinances that require minimum distances between pipelines and existing features. The company plans to adjust its route and reapply.

Last month, the coalition South Dakotans First formed to protect property rights for landowners in response to Summit's earlier filing — and later withdrawal — of eminent domain actions against more than 150 landowners. "Eminent domain" refers to the power to access private property for public use, provided the owner is justly compensated.

South Dakotans First includes the South Dakota Farmers Union, Dakota Rural Action, Landowners for Eminent Domain Reform and various landowners.

Glodt and Skjonsberg announced their new nonprofit Thursday as the South Dakota Farmers Union annual convention was happening in Huron. Farmers Union President Doug Sombke reacted to the news by phone.

"It's Summit's new public relations group," Sombke said. "I mean, they still want to use eminent domain on us. Why should we negotiate when we won?"

During a convention panel discussion Thursday, landowner Ed Fischbach said South Dakotans First will support legislation including a ban on eminent domain for carbon pipelines. Similar legislation failed last winter at the Capitol in Pierre.

Glodt and Skjonsberg said they applaud a recent policy statement by the South Dakota Farm Bureau

that says if a pipeline company has voluntary access agreements — called easements — with two-thirds of affected landowners, the company should be able to use eminent domain on the rest.

Glodt and Skjonsberg are additionally advocating for state legislation they say will protect landowner rights: reforms of land survey processes, liability protections for landowners, minimum depth requirements for pipelines, and ensuring additional recurring compensation for landowners.

They aim to provide legal and regulatory certainty for carbon pipelines.

“The government shouldn’t be able to move the goalpost after the deal is negotiated in good faith,” Skjonsberg said.

Skjonsberg also wants to replace the minimum setback distances for carbon pipelines adopted by counties with a statewide standard.

“At the state level, we should talk about setbacks,” Skjonsberg said. “You could end up with a complete hodgepodge of setback distances. And if you’re a company, how do you deal with that? It’s nonsense.”

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.

SD teachers make less than they did in 2017, when factoring in inflation

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 30, 2023 1:21 PM

The average South Dakota teacher salary has increased by just over \$6,000 in the last six years, according to a recent state Department of Education report.

That’s enough to meet requirements set forth by the 2016 Legislature, which aimed to increase teacher salaries to competitive rates by increasing the state’s sales tax by half a percentage point. But it means the average South Dakota teacher’s purchasing power is less than it was in 2017, when factoring in inflation.

The Legislature required that school district teacher compensation each year through 2024 be higher than the district’s average compensation in 2017, or else the district’s state aid would be reduced. All South Dakota school districts met the requirement this year.

But the state’s average teacher pay stands at 49th in the nation. Such low salaries are cited as a factor in the statewide teacher shortage.

The average South Dakota teacher salary in 2017 was \$47,096 and rose to \$53,217 in 2023, which is a 13% increase. When factoring in insurance and benefits, average teacher compensation increased from \$60,687 in 2017 to \$68,507 this year, which is also a 13% increase.

The 2017 average salary has the same buying power as a salary of about \$59,000 today, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The U.S. inflation rate was 5% and 8% in 2021 and 2022, respectively. So far in 2023 the rate is around 3%.

Only three school district salary increases in the state outpaced the rate of inflation since 2017: Elk Mountain, Rutland and Tripp-Delmont, though the average salary among the three is \$48,510, and the state’s latest statistical digest said Elk Mountain had only 11 students.

Rapid City teachers saw the lowest increase at 2.5%. Average salaries in Sioux Falls, South Dakota’s largest school district, increased 11.5%.

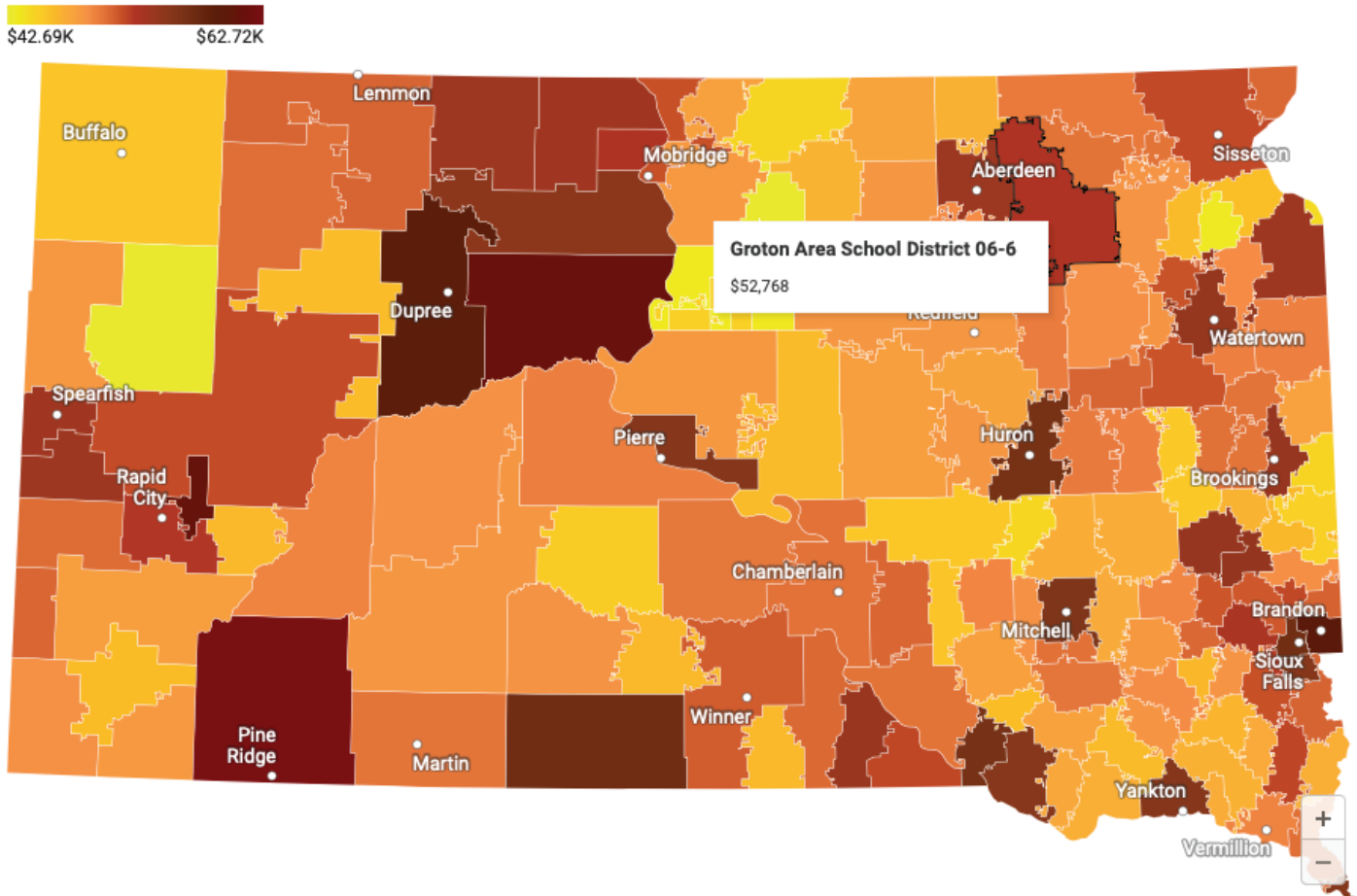
Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She’s spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 24 of 81

Average teacher salary by school district

The school district with the highest average teacher salary in fiscal year 2023 was \$62,715 at Oglala Lakota County Schools. The lowest average teacher salary was \$42,688 at the Newell School District. The state average stands at \$53,217.



Map: Makenzie Huber • Source: [School Finance Accountability Board Report 2023](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

House moves to bar use of public lands for housing migrants; SD's Johnson votes yes

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - NOVEMBER 30, 2023 4:35 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House Thursday passed a bill to bar the use of public lands for temporary housing for migrants applying for asylum.

The bill, H.R. 5283, passed with a majority of Republicans in support (including South Dakota Rep. Dusty Johnson), 224-203.

It's dead on arrival in the U.S. Senate, where Democrats hold a slim majority, and many Democrats criticized the bill as a messaging tactic for the 2024 elections, where hard-line immigration policies are the cornerstone of the GOP platform.

The Senate is currently negotiating a \$14 billion request from the White House for U.S. border security. "The mission of the National Park Service is to conserve the natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment of future generations, not bail out the failed border policies of the Biden administration," the chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Bruce Westerman of Arkansas, said during debate Wednesday.

The push for the bill comes after the Biden administration granted New York City officials' request to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 25 of 81

build temporary housing and facilities for migrant families at Floyd Bennett Field in Southeastern Brooklyn.

The bill prohibits this type of action from land under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Forest Service.

It also revokes a 2023 lease between the National Park Service and New York City to use portions of the Gateway National Recreation Area to provide housing for migrants.

The bill's sponsor, Republican Rep. Nicole Malliotakis of New York, said that New York City's decision to house migrant families on public land is "encouraging people to take that treacherous journey instead of applying (for asylum) from the next safe country."

Migrants in NYC

This is not the first time House Republicans have passed legislation in response to New York City's handling of migrants in its city.

In July, House Republicans passed a bill to bar the use of public K-12 school facilities to provide shelter for migrants seeking asylum. That bill, which will also go nowhere in the Senate, was in response to a May decision by New York City officials to convert several current and former school gyms to temporarily house about 300 migrants.

The top Democrat on the House Committee on Natural Resources, Rep. Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, said the bill voted on Thursday to bar the use of public lands to temporarily house migrants was a "political stunt that will invite even more hateful anti-immigration rhetoric from the extreme MAGA wing of the Republican Party."

During the House Rules Committee meeting on the public lands bill Tuesday, Republicans argued that the area used to house migrants at Floyd Bennett Field posed a danger to Americans who live nearby because there are single adult men in the temporary structures. However, a majority of migrants staying at Floyd Bennett Field are families.

About 500 people are currently living at Floyd Bennett Field for up to 60 days, but it can house up to 2,000 people, according to the lease agreement. As temperatures drop in New York City, there's concern that the plastic tents will not be warm enough for those families, THE CITY reported.

Minnesota Republican Rep. Pete Stauber said the bill is needed because "Republicans are taking action to address our Southern border crisis, because the Biden administration has failed to do so."

Democratic Rep. Chellie Pingree of Maine, said the bill does not help cities dealing with newly arrived migrants. She said a big issue is that because of the current asylum law, migrants have to wait six months before they are authorized to work.

Pingree advocated for her legislation, which would cut that waiting period to 30 days so that migrants aren't spending six months relying "on social safety nets to survive."

The Biden administration recently redesignated the Temporary Protected Status for nearly half a million Venezuelan nationals, which allows them to work in the U.S. The September decision came after multiple requests from cities that have struggled to house asylum seekers and calls from Democratic lawmakers to redesignate TPS for those Venezuelan nationals.

New Jersey Democratic Rep. Bob Menendez said that Republicans were vilifying families seeking refuge.

"This bill has no purpose other than to score cheap political points for House Republicans," he said.

Republican Rep. Juan Ciscomani of Arizona, who came to the U.S. as an immigrant when he was a child and later became a naturalized citizen, argued that New York City's decision would encourage migrants to make the long and dangerous journey to the U.S.

"This is no way to treat immigrants seeking asylum," Ciscomani said.

National parks and citizens

House Republicans argued that national parks should be solely for the use of American citizens.

"Americans shouldn't be denied access to national parks and lands paid for by their tax dollars because of this administration's destructive immigration policies," Rep. Jen Kiggans, Republican of Virginia, said.

However, national parks are not limited to use for only American citizens, as there is no citizenship requirement to enter a park and millions of international visitors attend national parks each year.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 26 of 81

Republican Rep. Tom Tiffany of Wisconsin said that he was concerned about the damage that can be done to a national park by using it to temporarily house people.

He said he wants the bill passed to ensure that "the public lands we all cherish are not transformed into squatting grounds."

Amendments considered

Lawmakers voted on two amendments to the bill, one from Tennessee Republican Rep. Andy Ogles and another from New York Democratic Rep. Nydia Velázquez.

The amendment from Ogles would require the U.S. Department of Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture to submit a report to Congress on the number of immigrants who were housed on federal lands.

"This amendment requires accountability," Ogles said.

Grijalva said the amendment was unnecessary because the bill, if passed into law, would ban migrants from being temporarily housed on federal lands.

"It's a permanent requirement for reporting on nothing, paid for by the taxpayer," he said.

The amendment passed by a voice vote.

The other amendment, by Velázquez, would allow the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to provide housing for migrants under certain criteria.

They would include when the original state those migrants came to has transferred them to another state; the original state has funded that transportation; the original state has not given 48 hours of notice to the governor of the destination state; and if the original state failed to give those migrants accurate information on the conditions of the state they are being transferred to.

That amendment is in response to Republican governors, especially Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who have sent buses of migrants to cities such as New York, often without warning local officials.

Abbott has also sent buses to Washington, D.C., dropping off migrants, in the cold and without proper clothing, outside the residence of Vice President Kamala Harris, who has been tasked by Biden to address the root causes of migration along the Southern border.

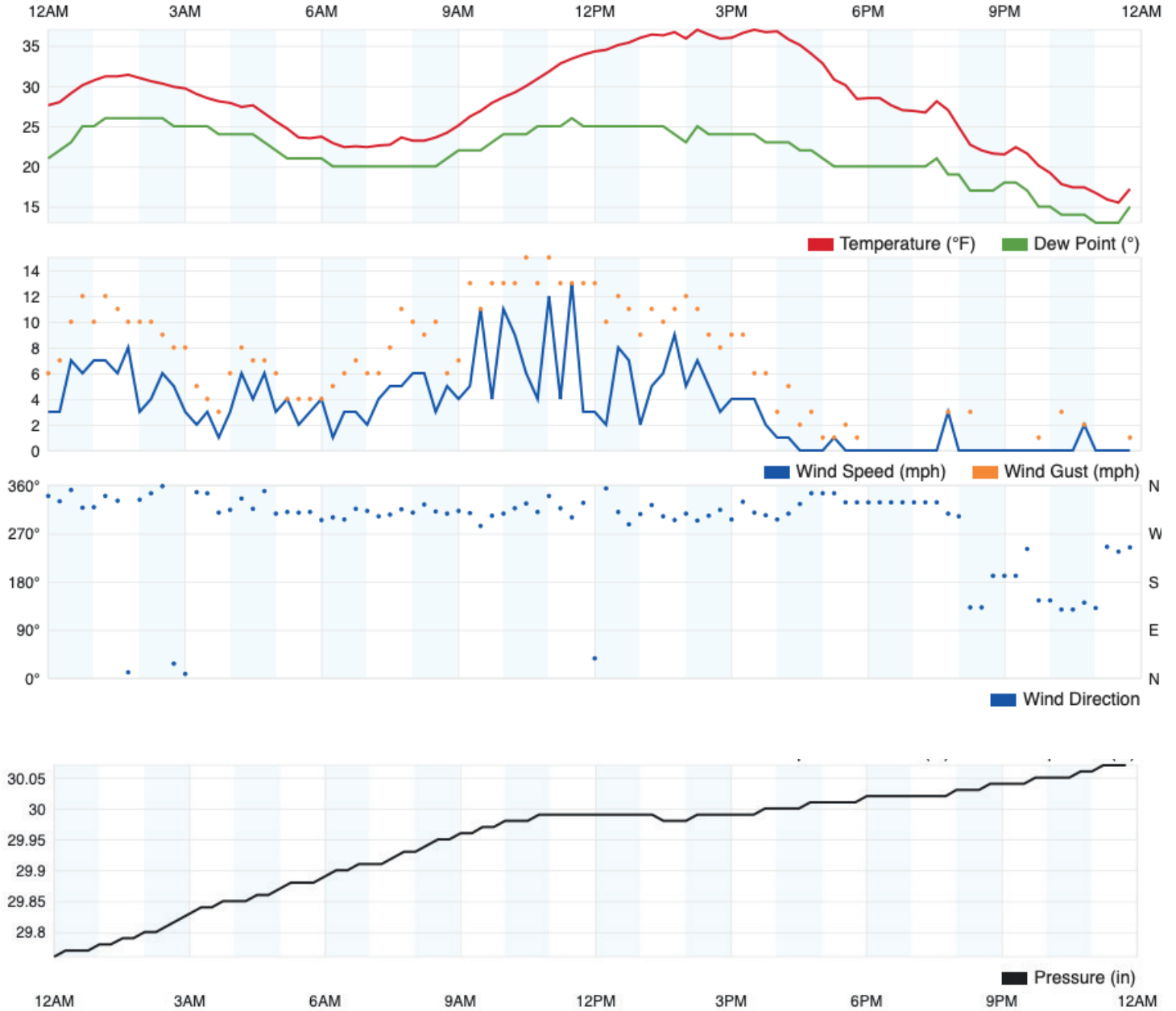
The Velázquez amendment failed, 206 to 223.

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

Groton Daily Independent








Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 27 of 81

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 28 of 81

Fri Dec 1	Sat Dec 2	Sun Dec 3	Mon Dec 4	Tue Dec 5	Wed Dec 6	Thu Dec 7
						
34°F 23°F	37°F 19°F	38°F 21°F	42°F 23°F	39°F 26°F	52°F 32°F	48°F 31°F
S 6 MPH	SSE 10 MPH	S 8 MPH	SW 12 MPH	NNW 9 MPH	S 13 MPH	NNE 11 MPH



The Rest of the week

Today: Partly-Mostly Cloudy. Highs: 31-40°
Wind: S-SE 5-15 mph

Tonight: Partly-Mostly Cloudy. Lows: 14-22°
Wind: SE 10-20 mph

Saturday: Partly Cloudy. Highs: 34-43°
Wind: S-SW 10-15 mph

- Continued Dry Through Sunday Night
- Above Normal Temps Mainly in the 40s Sunday-Monday
- A 15-25% Chance of Light Rain/Light Snow Monday-Monday Night



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Dry conditions look to persist today through the upcoming weekend. Temperatures will remain seasonable the next day or two with daytime readings warming above normal early next week. A weak system may bring a slight chance for a passing rain or snow shower Monday through Monday night.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 29 of 81

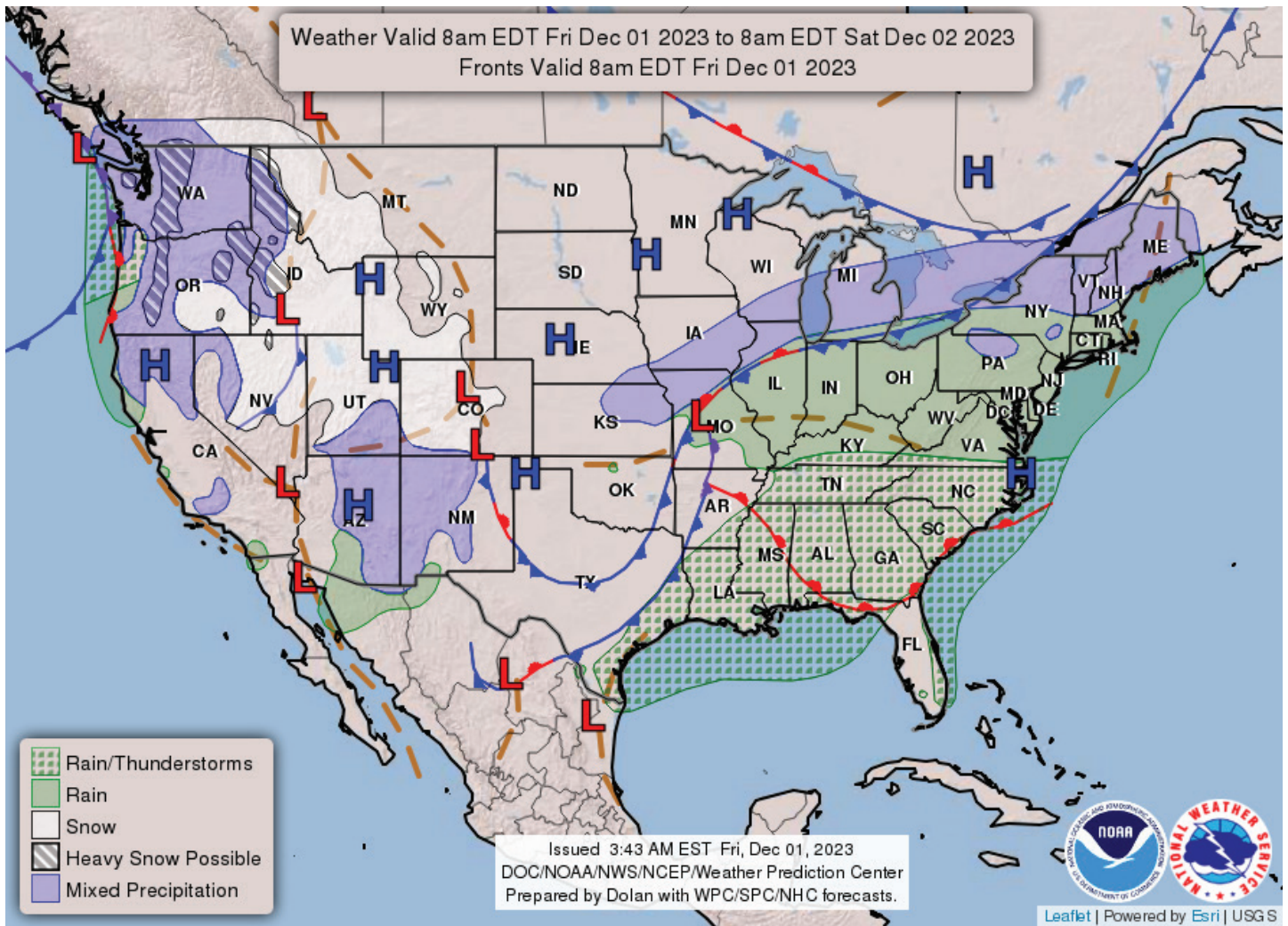
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 37 °F at 2:15 PM
Low Temp: 15 °F at 11:23 PM
Wind: 15 mph at 10:23 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 2 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 2021
Record Low: -24 in 1893
Average High: 35
Average Low: 13
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.02
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.23
Precip Year to Date: 23.17
Sunset Tonight: 4:52:41 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51:17 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 30 of 81

Today in Weather History

December 1, 1985: A storm system with heavy snow, strong winds, and blizzard conditions visited the region on December 1st through 2nd. Most of the snow fell in Minnesota. Snowfall across Minnesota increased from the south during the early morning of December 1st and had spread across most of the state by late morning. Winds in the west-central and southwest parts of the state increased to 40 to 50 mph, causing blizzard conditions. By late morning, drifts had reached 3 feet, and snowplows were pulled off roads from the southwest into central Minnesota due to restricted visibilities. The winds continued through the evening, gradually diminished during the morning of December 2nd. High winds and cold temperatures broke power lines and caused power outages over portions of southern and west-central Minnesota during the afternoon of December 1st and December 2nd. Many highways were impassable, and numerous businesses and schools were closed on the morning of December 2nd until residents could dig out. There were a few travelers that became stranded for up to 6 hours in their vehicles. Traffic accidents also accounted for some injuries and a few deaths. Further west, in South Dakota, strong winds gusted to around 40 mph and produced ground blizzard conditions over most of the state. The low visibilities, road conditions, and strong winds stranded a family for 25 hours south of Colome in Tripp County and another family for eight hours near Lee's Corner in Brule County. Many roads were blocked in the state's central and western parts, and no travel was advised in the east. The blowing and drifting snow reduced visibilities to near zero, and many accidents were reported. The strong winds, along with the previous day's snowfall, caused some damage, including the collapse of the roof of a large barn south of Bemis in Deuel County. Many church services were canceled on December 1, as were many schools on December 2. Temperatures became frigid during the morning of December 2 in the northwest part of the state. Camp Crook in Harding County reported a low of -36 F. Pierre had 2 inches of snow, Aberdeen, Castlewood, Clark, and Redfield had 3 inches, Bryant had 4 inches, Clear Lake, Milbank, and Wilmot had 8 inches. Timber Lake fell to -24F on the 2nd while McLaughlin fell to -30F.

December 1, 1992: A storm system caused numerous traffic accidents and stranded several hundred travelers on December 1st across northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota as Interstate 29 was closed between Watertown and Sisseton. Slush on roadways became ice as high wind gusts were up to 60 mph, and snowfall of one to four inches brought blizzard conditions to some areas. Several semi-trucks jackknifed, and many cars ran into ditches, causing minor injuries. Simultaneously, strong northwest winds further west in central and north-central South Dakota gusted up to 67 mph on the 1st. The high winds shattered windows and blew down trees and signs. The wind rolled a van into a car, causing damage to both vehicles. A wind-blown dumpster damaged another vehicle. The wind also blew toppers off several pickup trucks, causing some damage.

December 1, 2007: A strong low-pressure area moving across the central plains brought widespread snowfall of 6 to 12 inches across northeast South Dakota. The snow began between 4 and 8 am and ended between 7 and 9 p.m. on December 1st. The heavy snow mainly affected travel and Saturday activities. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Clark, Conde, Faulkton, Redfield, and Watertown, 7 inches at Groton, Roscoe, and Sisseton, 8 inches at Britton, Summit, Bryant, 9 inches at Aberdeen and Kidder, and 12 inches at Big Stone City.

1962: The 50th Grey Cup was played in Toronto, Ontario, between the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. Severe lakefront fog halts the game with 9:22 left to play on December 1st. Winnipeg wins the Fog Bowl the following day by a score of 28-27.

1970: Four tornadoes impacted east-central Wisconsin during the morning hours. The strongest tornado, an F3, formed at 10:15 AM near Medina in Outagamie County. The twister moved northeast at 50 mph and destroyed twenty barns and five houses.

2006: A winter storm produced more than 6 inches of snow along a 1,000-mile-long path from central Oklahoma to northern Michigan from November 30-December 1st. The storm also produced significant freezing rain, which impacted the St. Louis area. An estimated 500 or more homes and businesses were without power in the St. Louis area after this storm.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 31 of 81

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

HELP NEEDED!

One of the great American authors, Alex Haley, had a picture on a wall in his office that attracted much attention. It always aroused the interest of his visitors because no one could understand the significance of the photograph to the writer.

On one occasion, a visitor with a perplexed look on his face asked, "Alex, why do you have a picture of a turtle sitting on the top of a fence post?"

Haley replied, "I try to remember how this turtle - me - got on the top of that post."

Sometimes, perhaps most of the time for some of us, it is difficult to admit that if it were not for the help of others, we would not be where we are. From our earliest moments until this present hour, we are encouraged by nearly everyone to believe that "You can do it by yourself!"

Not so! We all need the help of others. Consider two words of advice from God. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah He said, "encourage one another with the words, 'Be strong!'"

Each day God brings individuals into our lives who need help, encouragement, inspiration, an act of kindness, words of sympathy, or a look of empathy. He does this so we can help Him do His work in His world. It's easy to encourage others by simply smiling and saying, "Be strong."

Living life as one of Christ's disciples, and doing the will of God, is to become a voice through which He speaks words of encouragement and a hand that He uses to help others.

Blessed is the Christian who enables others to "be strong!"

Prayer: Father, may we take seriously the fact that You expect us to look to You for guidance and then reach out to others in love and mercy to show Your grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Everyone encourage one another with the words, "Be strong." Isaiah 41:6



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, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 32 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 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 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
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/05/2023 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Fall Dinner, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- 11/11/2023 Groton American Legion Annual Turkey Party 6:30 pm.
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 11/26/2023 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
- 12/02/2023 Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 33 of 81

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 34 of 81



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.28.23

27 37 42 59 61 11

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$355,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 49 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

9 22 24 37 47 10

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,550,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 4
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.30.23

7 12 28 37 41 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 19 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

7 8 14 20 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$73,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 19
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

9 13 16 30 36 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 48
DRAW: Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.23

6 47 50 61 68 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$400,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 48
DRAW: Mins 6 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Warplanes hit targets in Gaza as Israel resumes its offensive and warns of attacks to come in south

By WAFAA SHURAF, BASSEM MROUE and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli fighter jets hit targets in the Gaza Strip minutes after a week-long truce expired on Friday, as the war with Hamas resumed in full force. Black smoke billowed from the besieged territory, and Israel dropped leaflets over parts of southern Gaza urging people to leave their homes, suggesting it was preparing to widen its offensive.

In Israel, sirens warning of incoming rockets blared at several communal farms near Gaza, a sign that militants also restarted attacks, but there were no reports of hits. The renewed hostilities heightened concerns for Palestinians in the tiny coastal enclave as well as about 140 hostages who remain there, after more than 100 were freed during the truce.

Qatar, which has served as a mediator along with Egypt, said negotiators were still trying to reach an agreement on restarting the cease-fire. Qatar's Foreign Ministry singled out Israel's role in the resumption of fighting and said it "complicates mediation efforts and exacerbates the humanitarian catastrophe."

A day earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Israeli officials and urged them to do more to protect Palestinian civilians as they seek to destroy Hamas. Blinken arrived Friday at the COP28 climate talks in Dubai, where he was to meet with Arab foreign ministers and other officials.

Israel's retaliation for Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 raid has killed thousands of Palestinians dead, uprooted most of Gaza's 2.3 million people and led to a humanitarian crisis. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people are now crammed into the territory's south with no exit, raising questions over how any Israeli offensive there could avoid heavy civilian casualties.

It was not clear to what extent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will heed the appeals of the United States, Israel's most important ally. Netanyahu's office said Friday that Israel "is committed to achieving the goals of the war: releasing the hostages, eliminating Hamas and ensuring that Gaza never again constitutes a threat to the residents of Israel."

Only hours in to the renewed offensive, the Health Ministry of Hamas-controlled Gaza said 32 people had been killed and dozens wounded.

In the leaflets it dropped in southern Gaza, Israel urged people to leave homes east of Khan Younis, warning that the southern town was now a "dangerous battle zone." Other leaflets warned residents of several neighborhoods in Gaza City in the north to move south.

The Israeli military also released a map carving up the Gaza Strip into hundreds of numbered parcels, and asked residents to learn the number associated with their location in case of an eventual evacuation. It was not immediately clear how Palestinians would be updated on calls for evacuation.

Hundreds of thousands of people fled northern Gaza earlier in the war, in an extraordinary mass exodus that saw many take shelter in Khan Younis and other places in the south.

One of the first airstrikes Friday destroyed a large building in Khan Younis. Moments later, residents were seen frantically searching the rubble for survivors as medics approached. One wounded person was carried away on a stretcher.

In Hamad City, a Qatari-funded housing development near the city, a strike hit an apartment in a multi-story residential building, while other parts of the building appeared largely intact.

Elsewhere, a strike hit a home near Gaza City in the north, and in the refugee camp of Maghazi, in central Gaza, rescuers clawed through the rubble of a large building hit by warplanes. A foot stuck out of the tangle of concrete and wiring.

Israel has said it is targeting Hamas operatives and blames civilian casualties on the group, accusing the militants of operating in residential neighborhoods. Since the war erupted Oct. 7, in response to a deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel, many of those killed in Israeli bombardments have been women and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 36 of 81

children.

In Israel, white smoke trails could be seen in the skies over Sderot on the border with northern Gaza after Israel's missile protection systems activated.

Netanyahu said the war resumed because Hamas had violated the terms of the truce. "It has not met its obligation to release all of the women hostages today and has launched rockets at Israeli citizens," he said in a statement.

Hamas blamed Israel for the end of the truce, saying in a statement that it had rejected all offers Hamas made to release more hostages and bodies of the dead.

The Israeli military's announcement of the resumption of strikes came only 30 minutes after the cease-fire, which began Nov. 24, expired early Friday.

During the weeklong truce, Hamas and other militants in Gaza released more than 100 hostages, most of them Israelis, in return for 240 Palestinians freed from prisons in Israel.

Virtually all of those freed were women and children, but the fact that few such hostages now remain in Gaza made it hard to reach a deal to extend the cease-fire.

Hamas, a militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years, had been expected to set a higher price for the remaining hostages, especially Israeli soldiers.

Netanyahu has been under intense pressure from families of the hostages to bring them home. But his far-right governing partners have also pushed him to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed, and could abandon his coalition if he is seen as making too many concessions.

A total of 83 Israelis, including dual nationals, were freed during the truce, most of whom appeared physically well but shaken. Another 24 hostages — 23 Thais and one Filipino — were also released, including several men.

The 240 Palestinians released were mostly teenagers accused of throwing stones and firebombs during confrontations with Israeli forces. Several were women who were convicted by military courts of attempting to attack soldiers.

In its Oct. 7 attack on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 240 people captive.

Since then, Israel's bombardment and invasion in Gaza have killed more than 13,300 Palestinians, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The toll is likely much higher, as officials have only sporadically updated the count since Nov. 11. The ministry says thousands more people are feared dead under the rubble.

Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive. It claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence.

The Philippines opens a new monitoring base on a remote island in the disputed South China Sea

By JIM GOMEZ, AARON FAVILA and JOEAL CALUPITAN Associated Press

THITU ISLAND, South China Sea (AP) — The Philippines inaugurated a new coast guard monitoring base Friday on an island occupied by Filipino forces in the disputed South China Sea and plans to expand joint patrols with the United States and Australia to counter China's "pure bullying" in the strategic waterway, a Philippine security official said.

High-seas faceoffs between Chinese and Philippine ships have intensified this year in the contested waters, fueling fears of a larger conflict that could involve the United States. The U.S. has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

China has accused the U.S. of meddling in an Asian dispute and sowing discord in the region.

National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano and other Philippine officials flew to Thitu Island on an air force plane Friday and led a ceremony to open the newly constructed, two-story center that will have radar,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 37 of 81

ship-tracking and other monitoring equipment to monitor China's actions in the hotly disputed waters and other problems, including sea accidents.

"It's no longer gray zone. It's pure bullying," Ano told reporters after the seaside ceremony, describing the actions of Chinese ships as openly flouting international law.

Dwarfed by China's military might, the Philippines decided this year to allow an expansion of the U.S. military presence in its local camps under a 2014 defense pact. It also recently launched joint sea and air patrols with the United States and Australia in a new deterrence strategy that puts the two allied powers on a collision course with Beijing.

Ano said the separate joint patrols involving the U.S. and Australia would continue and could expand to include other nations like Japan once a security agreement being negotiated by Tokyo and Manila was concluded.

"We're open to like-minded countries to join as observers or participants," Ano said.

China has warned that such joint naval patrols must not hurt its "territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests."

Despite Manila's counter-actions, China reasserted its claim to the sea on Friday.

As the Philippine air force aircraft carrying Ano, presidential adviser Andres Centino, Philippine coast guard chief Admiral Ronnie Gavan and other officials approached Thitu, Ano said Chinese forces transmitted a radio warning for them to stay away.

Ano said the Filipino pilots dismissed the message and in turn routinely asserted Philippine sovereign rights and control over the area.

Peering later through a mounted telescope on the island, Ano said he spotted at least 18 suspected Chinese militia ships scattered off Thitu, including a Chinese navy vessel.

Villagers say they have gotten used to the sight of Chinese ships lurking at a distance from Thitu, but a few say they're still haunted at times by the fear of Chinese forces arriving on the island.

"I can't avoid thinking sometimes that they would suddenly barge into our territory," said Daisy Cojamco, a 51-year-old mother of three whose husband works as a town government employee.

Surrounded by white beaches, the tadpole-shaped Thitu Island is called Pag-asa — Tagalog for hope — by about 250 Filipino villagers. It's one of nine islands, islets and atolls that have been occupied by Philippine forces since the 1970s in the South China Sea's Spratlys archipelago.

The Philippines claims the region as its most remote offshore township, under its western island province of Palawan. It has encouraged fishing families to move there with incentives such as free rice, to underscore its control over an area also claimed by China and Vietnam.

The 37-hectare (91-acre) island now boasts internet and cellphone connections, a more stable power and water supply, a newly cemented runway, a wharf, grade school, gymnasium and even an evacuation center in times of typhoons. However, Thitu remains a meagre frontier settlement compared to the Chinese-built Subi island, more than 22 kilometers (14 miles) away.

Subi is one of seven mostly submerged reefs that China transformed starting about a decade ago into a missile-protected cluster of island bases, three of them with military-grade runways, sparking alarm among other claimant states in the South China Sea.

Early this year, the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. launched a strategy of exposing China's provocations in the South China Sea to bring the actions more international attention, according to Philippine officials. The administration reported the Chinese coast guard's use of a military-grade laser and water cannons and the blocking of Philippine patrol ships and supply boats near disputed shoals, ,

Speaking in Honolulu, where he met U.S. military leaders about two weeks ago, Marcos said the situation in the South China Sea "has become more dire" with China showing interest in atolls and shoals that are "closer and closer" to the Philippine coast.

But he stressed that the Philippines wouldn't yield.

"The Philippines will not give a single square inch of our territory to any foreign power," Marcos warned.

Nearly 2 months into the war, many Israelis have no idea if their relatives are dead or alive

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — There was no trace of Hanan Yablonka — not on the 42-year-old Israeli's social media accounts nor on his phone, found in the bullet-riddled car he and four friends tried to flee in after Hamas militants attacked the music festival they were attending in southern Israel.

The friends were killed in the Oct. 7 attack. But nearly two months later, Yablonka's family still has no news about what happened to him. He is one of dozens of people still unaccounted for after Hamas infiltrated Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking about 240 hostages.

Some of the bodies of those who died were so badly burned in fires or explosions during the attacks that there's little left to identify. Others who might still be alive haven't been traced, forcing families to live in limbo.

"It's a big nightmare," Yablonka's niece, Emanuel Abady, told The Associated Press. "Is he alive, is he dead, or where is the body? Maybe he's in Gaza. ... Maybe he got hurt, maybe he got shot, but he's in Gaza."

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, police, the military and investigators grappled with a mass casualty crime scene, trying to identify the dead and the abducted. Getting clear answers for people's whereabouts and the number of dead was, and remains, challenging.

In November, the military adjusted the number of people killed from more than 1,400 to approximately 1,200, but didn't specify why. It's also repeatedly updated the number of hostages believed to have been taken into Gaza. Israeli officials told The Associated Press that dozens of people's fates were still unknown, but wouldn't respond to multiple requests for comment about why it's taken so long to identify them and why the number of dead was adjusted.

The military said it has enlisted the help of archaeologists to apply excavation techniques used in burned and damaged ancient sites to help identify victims. The experts have helped identify at least 10 people.

Some people initially thought to have been taken hostage were proclaimed dead, including Vivian Silver, a Canadian-born Israeli peace activist whose family was recently notified she'd been killed. Others thought to have been killed were found to have been abducted, like 9-year-old Emily Tony Korenberg Hand, who was released Saturday.

Bodies and other human remains have been taken to the Shura military base in central Israel, now converted into a morgue for the identification of victims.

At the start, it was easier to identify bodies that were more intact, according to forensic specialists. But the final stretch has become painstaking with the need to sift through charred bones making it harder to extract and match DNA. Other means of identification, such as fingerprints or dental records, cannot be used.

"It is a long process, sometimes we don't have the right bone or the right sample in order to give the answer. ... When you have difficult samples it takes time," said Gila Kahila Bar-Gal, a professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University who is an expert in wildlife forensics and ancient DNA research and has been volunteering at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine to help identify victims. It can take up to twice as long to identify burned bones, she said.

It's also been challenging to determine how many people were abducted in the chaos that ensued when Hamas penetrated from Gaza into Israel.

"Many people ended up storming through the barrier that day: civilians, militants and Hamas, and it's still pretty unclear the scale of who was taken and who's holding everyone," said Mairav Zonszein, senior analyst on Israel for the International Crisis Group.

Yablonka's niece believes her uncle is still alive and was likely abducted. Through video, text messages and phone calls the family has pieced together the last few hours before he disappeared.

Yablonka was among the thousands who attended the Tribe of Nova Trance music festival near the border with Gaza. A father of two, he loved music, Abady said. But his family didn't know he'd gone to the festival, and it was only when they hadn't heard from him late on Oct. 7 that they started making calls,

combing through social media and contacting the police.

When the sirens warning of Hamas rockets went off that morning, surveillance video received by the family and seen by the AP shows a man the family says is Yablonka in a packed festival parking lot, at one point crouching behind a car. Just before 7 a.m., one of his friends, a man, called Israel's emergency service from the car, saying someone had been shot. Text messages sent by the two women with them to their families said Yablonka was driving and they were trying to escape.

Another video shown to the family revealed the damaged car with its back window blown out and shattered glass, a backpack and clothes strewn on the seat. The car was found near Mefalsim Kibbutz, a few kilometers (miles) from the festival site, with the bodies of Yablonka's friends nearby, Abady said.

There was no trace of Yablonka, including any blood splatter. His keys, phone and identification document were inside. The family has provided DNA samples, along with Yablonka's dental records and medical information in hopes he will be found and identified.

The stress and anxiety of not knowing what happened to a loved one takes a huge psychological and emotional toll, said Sarah Davies, a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"They are living with a gaping hole in their lives. Countless scenarios run through the mind of family members ... imagining the worst and being unable to do anything about it," she said.

For some families, it was too painful to wait for answers.

In early November, Liel Hetzroni's family put some of the 12-year-old's clothes, personal belongings and ashes from where they thought she'd died inside a coffin and buried it alongside her twin brother and aunt.

The three were trapped in a house with dozens of others in Kibbutz Be'eri during an hourslong standoff between Hamas and Israeli soldiers that ended in an explosion, killing nearly everyone inside, said Liel's cousin, Sagi Shifroni.

While the remains of Liel's brother and aunt were quickly identified, there was no trace of Liel for weeks, he said.

"The waiting (wasn't) healthy for the soul or for our family," Shifroni said. Shortly after they buried the coffin, the army informed them that one of her bones had been found.

"It feels good to get an approval for what we knew already," he said. "It's closure."

Myanmar's military is losing ground against coordinated nationwide attacks, buoying opposition hopes

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — About two weeks into a major offensive against Myanmar's military-run government by an alliance of three well-armed militias of ethnic minorities, an army captain, fighting in a jungle area near the northeastern border with China, lamented that he'd never seen such intense action.

His commander in Myanmar's 99th Light Infantry Division had been killed in fighting in Shan state the week before and the 35-year-old career soldier said army outposts were in disarray and being hit from all sides.

"I have never faced these kinds of battles before," the combat veteran told The Associated Press by phone. "This fighting in Shan is unprecedented." Eight days later the captain was dead himself, killed defending an outpost and hastily buried near where he fell, according to his family.

The coordinated offensive in the northeast has inspired resistance forces around the country to attack, and Myanmar's military is falling back on almost every front. The army says it's regrouping and will regain the initiative, but hope is rising among opponents that this could be a turning point in the struggle to oust the army leaders who toppled democratically elected Aung San Suu Kyi almost three years ago.

"The current operation is a great opportunity to change the political situation in Myanmar," said Li Kyar Win, spokesperson for the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, or MNDAA, one of the three militias known as the Three Brotherhood Alliance that launched the offensive on Oct. 27.

"The goal and purpose of the alliance groups and other resistance forces are the same," he told the AP.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 40 of 81

"We are trying to eliminate the military dictatorship."

Caught by surprise by the attack dubbed Operation 1027, the military has lost more than 180 outposts and strongpoints, including four major bases and four economically important border crossings with China.

Both sides claim they have inflicted heavy tolls on the other, though accurate casualty figures are not available. Nearly 335,000 civilians have been displaced during the current fighting, bringing the total to more than 2 million displaced nationwide, according to the United Nations.

"This is the biggest battlefield challenge that the Myanmar military has faced for decades," said Richard Horsey, the International Crisis Group's Myanmar expert.

"And for the regime, this is by far the most difficult moment it's faced since the early days of the coup."

Complicating matters for the military is China's apparent tacit support for the Three Brotherhood Alliance, stemming, at least partially, from Beijing's growing irritation at the burgeoning drug trade along its border and the proliferation of centers in Myanmar from which cybercams are run, frequently by Chinese organized crime cartels with workers trafficked from China or elsewhere in the region.

As Operation 1027 has gained ground, thousands of Chinese nationals involved in such operations have been repatriated into police custody in China, giving Beijing little reason to exert pressure on the Brotherhood to stop fighting.

The military, known as the Tatmadaw, remains far bigger and better trained than the resistance forces, and has armor, airpower and even naval assets to fight the lightly armed militias organized by various ethnic minority groups.

But with its unexpectedly quick and widespread losses and overstretched forces, morale is sagging with more troops surrendering and defecting, giving rise to a wary optimism among its diverse opponents.

The current gains are just part of what has been a long struggle, said Nay Phone Latt, a spokesperson for the National Unity Government, the leading opposition organization.

"I would say the revolution has reached the next level, rather than to say it has reached a turning point," he said.

"What we have now is the results of our preparation, organization and building over nearly the past three years," he said.

THE OFFENSIVE

The Feb. 1, 2021, seizure of power by army commander Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing brought thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators to the streets of Myanmar's cities.

Military leaders responded with brutal crackdowns and have arrested more than 25,000 people and killed more than 4,200 as of Friday, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, and U.N. independent investigators earlier this year accused the regime of being responsible for multiple war crimes.

Its violent tactics gave rise to People's Defense Forces, or PDFs — armed resistance forces that support the National Unity Government, many of which were trained by the ethnic armed organizations the military has fought in the country's border regions for years.

But resistance was fragmented until Operation 1027, when three of the country's most powerful armed ethnic groups, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army in northeastern Shan state, and the Arakan Army in western Rakhine state, assembled a force of some 10,000 fighters, according to expert estimates, and rapidly overran military positions.

Sensing weakness and inspired by the early successes of those attacks, the Kachin Independence Army followed by launching new attacks in northern Kachin state, then joined the Arakan Army to help lead a PDF group to take a town in central Sagaing, the heartland of traditional ethnic Bamar support for the Tatmadaw.

In the eastern state of Kayah, also known as Karenni, an alliance of ethnic armed organizations launched their own attacks, beginning a direct assault on Nov. 11 on the state capital of Loikaw, where the Tatmadaw has a regional command base.

In the fierce ongoing fighting for Loikaw, the military is using artillery and airstrikes to pound militia positions.

But Khun Bedu, head of the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force, one of the biggest militias involved in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 41 of 81

the attack, said it was critical to take the Tatmadaw base.

"We have time, and it is a good opportunity," he told AP.

Completing the encirclement of Tatmadaw forces, the Arakan Army attacked outposts in its home state of Rakhine in the country's west on Nov. 13. Their success has been slow, with the Tatmadaw making use of naval power off the west coast to bombard positions, along with concentrated artillery and air strikes, according to a report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Morgan Michaels, who authored the report and runs the IISS Myanmar Conflict Map project, cautioned that the Tatmadaw has been able to concentrate its forces in strong points by abandoning positions and withdrawing, and remains a formidable force.

"It's not done fighting, and the air and artillery strikes are increasing and becoming more intense," he said. "So we have to see how that plays out."

And despite their talk of ridding the country of the military regime, a lot of the fighting is also about the various groups seizing control of territory, especially the MNDAA, which was pushed out of the Kokang area of Shan state, including the capital Laukkaing, more than a decade ago by the military.

"The military could probably end a lot of this with a deal if it needed to," Michaels said. "It would have to give up something considerable, but I think it could stop the bleeding by giving the MNDAA a considerable concession if they absolutely needed to."

Still, unlike the civil war in Syria where multiple groups have different and often conflicting objectives, in Myanmar the anti-military groups are not fighting among each other, he said.

"It's important to emphasize that many groups have the shared goal of either overthrowing or dismantling or severely depleting the capacity of the military regime," Michaels said.

It was Nov. 15 when the AP first contacted the Tatmadaw captain, reaching him as he was fleeing a position through the jungle near the border town of Monekoe, one of the alliance's primary targets.

He was able to link up with others, and then led a column back to the Monekoe area to take charge of an outpost on Nov. 22, when he gave the AP a grim assessment of his situation.

"We are surrounded by enemies," he said, adding that even local army-affiliated militia could not be trusted.

"Here it is difficult to differentiate between who is enemy or friend," he said.

The captain, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals against himself or his family for talking with the media, said there was not even enough time to eat a meal.

"We have to be always ready in an attack position," he said as the sound of gunfire and an explosion erupted in the background.

"I can't keep talking," he said quickly. "They are coming to attack."

CHINA'S ROLE

Well aware of Beijing's irritation over the criminal activity along its border, the Three Brotherhood Alliance underlined as it launched its offensive that it was committed to "combatting the widespread online gambling fraud that has plagued Myanmar."

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing has tried, unsuccessfully, to turn that on its head and say that the offensive is being funded by the drug trade.

As militia forces have advanced toward the city of Laukkaing, where many of the scam centers were located, their operations have been scattering and many high-level suspects have been captured and turned over to China.

Knowing China's historic ties to the Brotherhood militias and the influence it wields, supporters of Myanmar's ruling generals have held several demonstrations in major cities, including in front of the Chinese Embassy in Yangon, accusing China of aiding the militia alliance.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin skirted a question about those allegations this week, instead telling reporters that Beijing "respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Myanmar" and reiterating calls for peace.

But Beijing's actions speak louder than its words, Horsey said.

"If they really wanted the cease-fire, they do have the leverage to enforce one or get pretty far toward

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 42 of 81

enforcing one," he said. "They haven't done that, so that's telling."

THE CAPTAIN'S DEATH

The AP last made contact with the captain fighting in Shan state on Nov. 23. The call was short.

"I have something to prepare for our outpost," he said hurriedly. "I will call you back."

The next call was from a relative on Nov. 25, who said they had been informed he was killed in a night raid on his outpost and buried on site.

It was not clear exactly where the outpost was located, but only one battle was reported in the region that night.

The Brotherhood's Ta'ang National Liberation Army said its forces attacked a large military outpost in Lashio township on Nov. 23 and took it early the next day.

In its matter-of-fact report, Ta'ang forces said they seized a howitzer, 78 smaller weapons and ammunition, and found the burial site of "more than 50 enemy."

Top world leaders will speak at UN climate summit. Global warming, fossil fuels will be high in mind

By JAMEY KEATEN and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — International climate talks turned to a power game on Friday as dozens of world leaders including the Saudi crown prince and India's prime minister were to speak, but two of the world's most powerful men — President Joe Biden of the U.S. and China's President Xi Jinping — were glaringly absent.

Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, a top oil producer, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, whose biggest cities are regularly choked under poor air, as well as Presidents Emmanuel Macron of France, Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Abdel Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt and Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey were among more than 130 world leaders set to address the United Nations climate conference in Dubai over the next two days. The idea is to try to keep the planet from heating too much because of humankind's actions.

In a fire-and-brimstone kicking off of Friday's parade of VIPs, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, fresh from melting glaciers in Antarctica and Nepal said "Earth's vital signs are failing" and told leaders, "you can prevent planetary crash and burn."

He referred to inequality and conflicts, mentioning the return of bombing in Gaza Friday.

"Climate chaos is fanning the flames of injustice," Guterres said. "Global heating is busting budgets, ballooning food prices, upending energy markets, and feeding a cost-of-living crisis. Climate action can flip the switch."

Guterres, a long-time critic of oil, gas and coal use that is causing climate change, fired his strongest shots yet against the industry, which includes host country United Arab Emirates, saying, "we cannot save a burning planet with a firehose of fossil fuels."

In a direct contradiction to fossil fuel-aligned nations and even the presidency of the talks, he said the only way to limit warming to the goal set in 2015 requires eliminating oil, coal and gas use, saying "not reduce, not abate, phase out."

Britain's King Charles III warned of "a starker and darker world" unless leaders change course.

"The hope of the world rests on the decisions you must take," he told leaders, urging them "to meet it with ambition, imagination, and a true sense of the emergency we face."

"The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth," Charles said.

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, home to most of the world's biggest natural carbon-capture zone on land, the Amazon rainforest, said "the planet is tired of climate agreements that were not fulfilled" and he said he has had enough of "eloquent and empty speeches."

"In the north of Brazil, the Amazon region suffers one of the most tragic droughts of its history. In the South, we are facing tempests and hurricanes that lead to a lot of destruction and death," he said.

Lula, who a year earlier was treated like a rock star after his defeat of right-wing Jair Bolsonaro, called

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 43 of 81

for climate justice for poorer nations that didn't cause the problem and railed against \$2 trillion spent on weapons last year when the money should be spent on fighting hunger and climate change, not wars.

He said Brazil will stop Amazon deforestation by 2030.

But the leaders of the two biggest carbon-polluting nations — responsible for more than 44% of the world's emissions — aren't there to get the in-person message.

Xi and Biden are sitting out this COP, just weeks after announcing a bilateral agreement to help cut down on methane emissions. Their deputies, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and China's First Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, will be attending instead.

Many of the leaders speaking represent countries hard hit by floods, storms, drought and heat waves worsened by climate change from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Those include the islands nations of Palau and the Maldives as well as leaders of Pakistan and Libya, which have been devastated by recent floods that killed thousands.

Against the backdrop of tensions pitting his country against Hamas militants in Gaza, President Isaac Herzog of Israel — whose post is more ceremonial — will be rubbing elbows with some of the biggest power players in the Middle East.

On Thursday, just moments after the opening of the two-week COP28 climate conference in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, nations rallied together to formally create a "loss and damage" fund that will help compensate countries — especially developing ones — for the impacts of floods, droughts and heat waves.

Why hold UN climate talks 28 times? Do they even matter?

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Ask most people what the annual U.N. climate talks are and the likely answer will be: "Huh?" Ask those who do know and the answer may be: "Why should I care?"

The negotiations, called Conference of Parties, are nearly two weeks long and in their 28th iteration in Dubai. Delegates use wonky terms like "NDCs" "1.5 degrees" and "loss and damage," not exactly conversation starters at parties. Any final decision is non-binding, meaning countries can agree to something and then not follow through. And when tens of thousands of people travel to the event, a lot of greenhouse gas emissions are produced, which is contrary to the entire point of the conference.

So why bother?

Even many climate watchers sometimes ask that question, and there is a growing debate about whether the current process needs major reforms. But viewed with a long lens — and with the proviso that progress is often more of a slow trickle than a dramatic event and impact — there are many reasons that the talks can prove worthwhile.

THEY EXERT PEER PRESSURE

The push for compliance (in a public forum) is a key part of COP — in the form of the development of "Nationally Determined Contributions," referred to as NDCs.

These are plans by individual countries to reduce their use of oil, gas and coal, which produce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, and lay out how they plan to adapt to impacts of extreme weather events.

The plans are required by all nations that signed on to the 2015 Paris Agreement, arguably the most significant Conference of Parties to date. The plans are public, setting broad targets that industries and individuals in respective countries can see while also providing a chance for other countries, and news organizations, to scrutinize them. Countries are encouraged and expected to update and "raise ambition" in their plans, creating a level of peer pressure for nations to keep promises.

THEY PRODUCE CLEAR GOALS

That's something that individual entities sometimes have trouble doing.

The Paris agreement established a defining goal that has guided climate discussions ever since: Cut emissions from the burning of fossil fuels to make sure average global temperatures don't go beyond 2

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 44 of 81

degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times, and ideally not over 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Currently, temperatures have increased about 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit).

As extreme weather events driven by climate change have increased and intensified, climate scientists have pushed to limit warming to 1.5. These days, just about every discussion about climate change has 1.5 in mind.

For example, that 1.5 guide is at the heart of the Biden administration's climate goals, which include the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States, the largest climate legislation in U.S. history that is pumping billions of dollars into green energy transition.

It's also used as the lens by which many decisions are seen. When oil companies announce plans to launch new drilling projects that will lock in oil and gas production for decades, policy makers can and do criticize the plans as not keeping within the 1.5 goal. That doesn't necessarily stop oil companies, or anybody, from making decisions that go against the goal. Still, it provides a frame of reference, which is powerful.

THEY FRAME DEBATES

Deciding how to talk about something can be an important part of getting things done.

Last year's climate talks, COP27 in Egypt, produced a landmark agreement for rich countries to contribute to a fund to help developing nations adapt to climate change. For decades, environmental activists had argued that a "loss and damage" fund was necessary because rich nations, which industrialized with fossil fuels, were largely responsible for climate change while developing countries were being hit the hardest, as they didn't have the resources to withstand floods, heat waves, prolonged drought and other manifestations of a warming world.

Early discussions of loss and damage at COPs were always on the fringes, not even on the official agenda. That changed last year, as the topic, and thus the decision, ended up being the centerpiece of the summit.

In a larger sense, today many discussions of climate, from reducing emissions to paying for a transition to green energies like wind and solar, are framed around the idea that rich countries are historically responsible for the current situation and thus have a moral imperative to pay more to confront it.

THEY FOSTER SLOW BUT SOLID PROGRESS

The glacial pace of discussions, with no binding decisions or ways to enforce agreements, may seem like a formula for failure in a world accustomed to visible, sometimes splashy resolutions.

However, seen over the course of nearly 30 years of summits, the outcomes could be called cautiously optimistic successes. For example, 10 years ago the level of greenhouse gas emissions had the world on track to warm 4 degrees Celsius (7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100, which scientists say would create devastating extremes.

Today, models have the world warming by 2 to 2.5 degrees Celsius. That is still significantly beyond the 1.5 target and poses threats to humans; tenths of a degree matter a lot when it comes to extremes.

But overall, humanity is on a much better path. While many factors have gone into lowering the curve on emissions—technological advances, environmental laws in many countries, a move toward electric vehicles, among others—U.N. climate negotiations have undoubtedly been a central factor.

THERE'S NO OTHER OPTION

Ultimately, COP is the only game in town.

Even if none of the above is convincing, the reality is there is currently no other way for the world to collectively address climate change. Consider how difficult it can be for two people to agree on anything. How about 200 countries?

The Conference of Parties process gives every nation in the world, whether rich or poor, large or small, a seat at the table to discuss how climate change is impacting them and how they believe the world should confront it. They also give a forum to people of all walks of life to exchange ideas, from young environmentalists and Indigenous activists to bankers and leaders of many industries.

The wonky speeches, lots of discussion and disagreements will continue, all with the hope of combatting climate change. That is worth a conversation starter at parties.

Rep. George Santos is facing a vote on his expulsion from Congress as lawmakers weigh accusations

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. George Santos of New York is facing a critical vote to expel him from the House on Friday as lawmakers weigh whether his actions, fabrications and alleged lawbreaking warrant the chamber's most severe punishment.

The first-term Republican congressman is at grave risk of becoming just the sixth member of the House to be ousted by colleagues. Expulsion requires support from two-third of the House, a purposefully high bar, but a blistering House Ethics Committee report released on Nov. 16 that accused Santos of breaking federal law may prove decisive.

"I will not stand by quietly," Santos declared on the House floor Thursday as lawmakers debated his removal. "The people of the Third District of New York sent me here. If they want me out, you're going to have to go silence those people and go take the hard vote."

Of the previous expulsions in the House, three were for disloyalty to the Union during the Civil War. The remaining two occurred after the lawmakers were convicted of crimes in federal court. Santos made his case for remaining in office by appealing directly to lawmakers who worry they are setting a new precedent that could make expulsions more common.

House Speaker Mike Johnson is among those who has voiced concerns about removing Santos, though he has told members to vote their conscience. But some Republicans, including Santos' colleagues from New York, said voters will welcome lawmakers being held to a higher standard.

"I'm pretty confident the American people would applaud that. I'm pretty confident that the American people expect that, and I hope that tomorrow, in this great chamber, we set that precedent," said Republican Rep. Anthony D'Esposito, whose district adjoins Santos'.

Santos warned lawmakers they would regret removing a member before they have had their day in court.

"This will haunt them in the future where mere allegations are sufficient to have members removed from office when duly elected by their people in their respective states and districts," Santos said.

The expulsion push is just the latest chapter in what has been a spectacular fall from grace for Santos, a first-term lawmaker initially celebrated as an up-and-comer after he flipped a district from Democrats last year and helped Republicans win control of the House. But, soon after, troubles began. Reports began to emerge that Santos had lied about having Jewish ancestry, a career at top Wall Street firms and a college degree. His presence in the House quickly became a distraction and an embarrassment to the party.

In early March, the House Ethics Committee announced it was launching an investigation into Santos. Then in May, the U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District of New York indicted Santos, accusing him of duping donors, stealing from his campaign and lying to Congress. Prosecutors would later add more charges in an updated 23-count indictment.

The indictment alleges he stole the identities of campaign donors and then used their credit cards to make tens of thousands of dollars in unauthorized charges. Federal prosecutors say Santos, who has pleaded not guilty, wired some of the money to his personal bank account and used the rest to pad his campaign coffers.

Meanwhile, Ethics Committee investigators spent eight months investigating Santos and interviewing witnesses. When their work was complete, the panel said it had amassed "overwhelming evidence" of lawbreaking by Santos that it sent to the Justice Department.

Among other things, the Ethics panel said that Santos knowingly caused his campaign committee to file false or incomplete reports with the Federal Election Commission, used campaign funds for personal purposes and violated the Ethics in Government Act with his financial disclosure statements.

Arguing against expulsion during debate Thursday, Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., said that while he respects the Ethics Committee, he had concerns about how the Santos case was handled. He said he was troubled

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 46 of 81

that a Republican-led committee would submit a report that was so judgmental and publicized.

"The totality of circumstance appears biased," Higgins said. "It stinks of politics and I'll oppose this action in every way."

While the Ethics Committee does have a Republican chairman, its membership is evenly divided. Rep. Susan Wild, the ranking Democrat on the committee, reminded members that the decision approving the investigators' findings was unanimous.

"As the Ethics Committee's report lays out in thorough detail, Mr. Santos has repeatedly, egregiously and brazenly violated the public's trust," Wild said. "Mr. Santos is not a victim. He is a perpetrator of a massive fraud on his constituents and the American people."

Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York held his weekly press conference with a massive photo next to him of Santos and Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia sitting in the House chamber together and laughing. It's an example of how Democrats are looking to tie other Republicans to Santos when possible.

"George Santos is a malignant distraction, and hopefully that issue gets resolved," Jeffries said.

Dak Prescott throws for 3 TDs, Cowboys extend home win streak to 14 with 41-35 win over Seahawks

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Pro Football Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Trailing Seattle in the fourth quarter, Dak Prescott and the Dallas Cowboys knew there was no way they could extend their NFL record of five consecutive 20-point wins at home to start the season.

They kept alive the bigger streak at AT&T Stadium.

Prescott threw three touchdown passes and the Cowboys won their 14th consecutive home game, rallying to beat the Seahawks 41-35 on Thursday night.

Prescott's 12-yard pass to Jake Ferguson put Dallas in front with 4 1/2 minutes remaining as the Cowboys (9-3) set up a rematch with NFC East rival Philadelphia by escaping for a fourth consecutive victory since falling to the Eagles 28-23 to start November.

"I told the team after the game we need games like this," coach Mike McCarthy said. "To get to where you want to go, you have to win these kind of games."

Geno Smith threw three touchdown passes to D.K. Metcalf, including a 73-yarder, as the Seahawks (6-6) got their offense going. But Seattle couldn't avoid a third consecutive loss to drop to .500 for the first time since splitting its first two games of the season.

"There's no concession to losing, but we will definitely build on this," coach Pete Carroll said. "The story is not told what's going to happen."

Dallas' Brandon Aubrey kicked four field goals to extend the 28-year-old rookie's NFL record to 26 consecutive makes to start a career.

Neither team punted, the fifth time in NFL history that's happened. But the Dallas defense, ranked third in the league coming in, got fourth-down stops on the Seahawks' final three possessions. And DaRon Bland made his NFL-leading eighth interception late in the third quarter after he was burned several times earlier in the game.

The Cowboys kept alive their best home winning streak since an 18-game run at old Texas Stadium from 1979-81.

Dallas trailed 35-30 when Zach Charbonnet was stopped on fourth-and-1 near midfield. Seven plays later, Ferguson scored, and Prescott hit Brandin Cooks for the 2-point conversion. Cooks also had a TD catch in the second quarter.

CeeDee Lamb had the other touchdown catch while finishing with 12 catches for 116 yards, and his 24-yard run on a jet sweep helped set up Aubrey's final field goal to put Dallas ahead by six. That came after Smith threw incomplete on fourth down near midfield with 3:11 to go.

Dallas had a double-digit lead entering the fourth quarter in each of the first five breezy home victories.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 47 of 81

This time, it trailed for the first 25-plus minutes after halftime before beating a team with a winning record for the first time this season.

"This was a big one to get," Prescott said. "The first one with a winning record, but more importantly in the fashion that we did. Tough game, down at halftime, down in the fourth quarter. The guys and the team just making plays when plays were needed."

The Seahawks reached midfield with 1:11 left, but Micah Parsons' pressure on fourth down forced Smith to throw the ball into the ground, sealing the victory.

Metcalfe had a season-high 134 yards on six catches in his second career three-TD game as the Seahawks scored touchdowns on five of their first seven drives after coming in with 20 consecutive possessions without an offensive TD.

Smith also ran for a score while throwing for 334 yards with an interception.

Seattle's stretch without an offensive TD ended on its third play — and longest on offense this season — when Metcalfe beat Bland a week after the Dallas cornerback set an NFL record with his fifth interception return for a touchdown this season.

Bland cut in front of Metcalfe to try to break up the slant as safety Donovan Wilson closed in, leaving Metcalfe free up the middle of the field to reach 22.23 mph, the fastest for a ball-carrier since early in the 2020 season, on the way to a 7-3 lead and the Cowboys' first deficit at home this season.

Jaxon Smith-Njigba set up two touchdowns by drawing pass interference penalties in the end zone. On the second, officials ruled Smith-Njigba made a 30-yard TD catch over Bland. But the call on Smith-Njigba's catch was overturned on review.

With 7 seconds remaining before halftime and no timeouts, Smith threw a 1-yard scoring pass before officials said Dallas had called timeout, then threw a 1-yarder to Metcalfe that counted. That gave the Seahawks a 21-20 lead at the break.

Seattle scored again to start the second half on Smith's 5-yard run, but the Cowboys answered with Tony Pollard's 6-yard score as the teams combined for 58 first downs (33 for Dallas, 25 for Seattle) while converting 17 of 28 third downs (9 of 14 for the Seahawks, 8 of 14 for the Cowboys).

"I thought we played a tough four quarters going back and forth," Seattle safety Julian Love said. "Didn't finish it."

INJURIES

Seahawks: LB Jordyn Brooks injured an ankle and didn't return. ... RB Kenneth Walker III missed a second consecutive game with an oblique injury.

UP NEXT

Both teams get the mini-break after consecutive Thursday games, and both have rematches Dec. 10 with division-leading rivals. Seattle visits San Francisco in just its second game since the Niners solidified their NFC West lead with a 31-13 victory at the Seahawks. Dallas' rematch with Philadelphia comes a month after the Eagles took control of the NFC East.

For a male sexual assault survivor, justice won in court does not equal healing

By JEFF McMILLAN Associated Press

When Sam Schultz was sexually assaulted, it felt like a part of them died.

It took eight years and the burgeoning #MeToo movement to spur them to go public and make a police report, and an additional five years for their attackers to plead guilty.

Now, as much as Schultz hopes there's a reckoning coming in gay and queer communities, too, it feels like they are the one shouldering the blame, not the attackers: for coming forward, for harming the men's reputations.

Instead of being able to focus on recovery, Schultz has been saddled with worries from other gay men that talking about sexual abuse in their community will hurt the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 48 of 81

The pain of the assault and ensuing public attention and court proceedings have taken a huge toll.

"It is an exhausting and horrifying journey that I almost quit because it just takes way too much of a person," Schultz said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And to any person who has pursued justice and quit along the way, I get it. The system is not built for us. The system is built to protect certain people."

As many as 95% of male sexual violations go unreported, according to research cited in a review of scientific literature about male victims of sexual assault, published in April in the journal Behavioral Sciences. Four of five men who reported assaults regretted doing so, saying that police were often unsympathetic and disinterested and that the process just added more trauma.

Men may fail to report sexual assault because of stigma, shame, guilt and embarrassment; fear of not being believed; privacy concerns; and worries that their sexual orientation or masculinity will be questioned, according to research cited in the article.

For gay men and other LGBTQ+ people, "their friends and family may not be aware of how they identify. They're afraid that that this will tip people off, to disclose something they're not ready to disclose," said Scott Berkowitz, president of RAINN, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network. "There's in some places a disbelief that this really happens to LGBTQ people."

Prominent male sexual abuse and assault survivors have come forward in recent years, including actor Anthony Edwards, of "ER" fame, who serves as the board chair and national spokesperson for the non-profit 1in6 — so named because of research indicating that at least 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

A similar group, MaleSurvivor, formed in 1995, says it is committed to helping boys and men who have experienced sexual abuse.

And the National Women's Law Center, administrator of the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund, which provides legal aid in cases of sex discrimination or harassment, also offers help to men. It helped pay Schultz's legal fees. Still, just 4% of the people who have sought its support over the years, or about 200, identify as male.

"We have such strong and well-worn stereotypes and ideas about who is a survivor in this country, stereotypes that don't match reality," said Fatima Goss Graves, president and CEO of the National Women's Law Center. "And men as a category don't meet that stereotype, even though all the research has shown us that at least 9% of sexual assault survivors are male."

This story includes discussion of sexual assault. If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673 or go to <https://hotline.rainn.org>.

Schultz, now 37, described a wrenching and maddening journey from assault, when they were 23, to adjudication and beyond.

Schultz was an aspiring opera singer and a graduate student at Houston's Rice University when they met David Daniels, a famous countertenor, and Scott Walters, a conductor, through the city's music circles. Schultz remembers admiring Daniels for being a "proud gay man" in a conservative art form.

The two invited Schultz to the closing of the Houston Grand Opera's "Xerxes," in which Daniels was starring, Schultz said. Later that night at a cast party, the couple invited Schultz to their apartment afterward, cautioning the young singer not to tell anyone, lest others get jealous.

Schultz was handed a drink and later woke up in an unfamiliar room, naked and bleeding. Shock and then fear set in.

"Was I supposed to go to the police? Was I supposed to go to the hospital? Was I supposed to go home? The police didn't feel like a safe option. The hospital certainly didn't feel like a safe option. I went home and I stared at a wall," they said.

Schultz discussed the assault with relatives, friends and a therapist but didn't go public until 2018, when the #MeToo movement provided more comfort in making a report.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 49 of 81

Daniels and Walters were arrested in 2019 and maintained the encounter with Schultz was consensual until, just as the two were going to trial on charges of first-degree aggravated sexual assault, they accepted a deal to plead guilty to sexual assault of an adult, a second-degree felony. Both were sentenced to eight years' probation and required to register as sex offenders.

The men still tell others in the opera community that they aren't guilty, Schultz said, and that the plea was just to avoid prison. Schultz saw others in the opera community rally around the attackers, and was criticized for besmirching the reputation of prominent gay men.

It hurts to see people place more value on their own friendship with the attackers than the hurt they've caused.

"You're failing to recognize how they've criminally impacted my life," Schultz said.

Ted Gideonse, an associate professor of teaching of health, society and behavior at the University of California, Irvine, public health program, noted that for gay and bisexual men, lines of consent have been historically muddy. That doesn't make it right.

The longtime illicit nature of sexual encounters between men meant that by necessity they had to be coded.

Gay men often gather in bars – spaces they feel safe to be themselves. But bars are a place that are already sexually heightened, said Gideonse, a researcher in medical and psychological anthropology.

"There is virtually no sort of admission that gay men or men who have sex with men have a completely different way of interacting around sex than heterosexuals do," Gideonse said.

Differences in what constitutes consent and predation, particularly for things like unwanted touching, are changing generationally, he said.

"The older men are much more like, 'Are you kidding, this is really typical stuff that no one has been bothered with before,' and the younger people saying, 'They just didn't tell you they were bothered,'" Gideonse said.

Schultz agrees there's a need for a discussion about consent within the gay community. In a recent essay in the Washington Blade, an LGBTQ online news magazine, Schultz spoke about the sexualization of young people, and the problems it creates.

"As young queer people, many of us are objectified and reduced to conquests by often older or more powerful peers," Schultz wrote. "We learn to believe that our primary value to many is sex rather than equal treatment and respect."

Just last month, the BBC published a report after a two-year investigation that uncovered stories alleging that Mike Jeffries, the former CEO of clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch, used a middleman to exploit young adult men for sex at events he hosted at his home in New York and at hotels in Paris, London and elsewhere.

A dozen men described events involving sex acts that were run for Jeffries and his partner, Matthew Smith, from 2009 to 2015. Jeffries stepped down from Abercrombie & Fitch in 2014.

Schultz hopes that it's a sign of things changing, and that allegations of men being abused are taken seriously.

After Schultz first told their own story, a man in his 60s heard it on the radio and realized he had been sexually assaulted in college, too.

"He wrote to me that he broke down crying at the breakfast table and for the first time started to understand what had happened to him when he was in college," Schultz said. "And I think a lot of men push experiences away so they don't ever have to deal with them."

Report: Belief death penalty is applied unfairly shows capital punishment's growing isolation in US

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — More Americans now believe the death penalty, which is undergoing a yearslong decline of use and support, is being administered unfairly, a finding that is adding to its growing isolation

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 50 of 81

in the U.S., according to an annual report on capital punishment.

But whether the public's waning support for the death penalty and the declining number of executions and death sentences will ultimately result in the abolition of capital punishment in the U.S. remains uncertain, experts said.

"There are some scholars who are optimistic the death penalty will be totally eradicated pretty soon," said Eric Berger, a law professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "I think what's more likely is it's going to continue to decline. But I think it's less likely that in the foreseeable future it'll totally disappear."

In 2023, there were 24 executions in the U.S., with the final one for the year taking place Thursday in Oklahoma. Additionally, 21 people were sentenced to death in 2023, which was the ninth consecutive year where fewer than 30 people were executed and fewer than 50 people received death sentences, according to a report by the Washington, D.C.-based Death Penalty Information Center.

Only five states — Texas, Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Alabama — conducted executions this year. That was the lowest number in 20 years, said Robin M. Maher, executive director of the nonprofit center, which takes no position on capital punishment but has criticized the way states carry out executions.

"That shows the death penalty is again becoming increasingly isolated in its use in the United States," Maher said.

A Gallup poll from October found 50% of Americans believe capital punishment is applied unfairly, compared to 47% who believe it is fairly implemented, Maher said. This was the highest such number since Gallup first began asking about the fairness of the death penalty's application in 2000.

Catherine Grosso, a professor with Michigan State University's College of Law, said the Gallup survey result could be tied in part to more young people and others questioning the U.S. criminal justice system following the 2020 killing of George Floyd by a police officer.

Nearly 200 death row exonerations since 1975, including three in 2023, also have helped changed people's minds about the fairness of the death penalty, Maher said.

In recent years, various individuals across the country, including conservative legislators, have raised concerns about the death penalty or debated its future, Grosso said.

But in some states including Alabama, Florida, Oklahoma and Texas, the death penalty remains deeply entrenched, Berger said.

Earlier this year, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed bills enacting two new death penalty laws. One allows the death penalty in child rape convictions, despite a U.S. Supreme Court ruling banning capital punishment in such cases. The other law ends a unanimous jury requirement in death penalty sentencing.

"If you commit a crime that is really, really heinous, you should have the ultimate punishment," DeSantis said in May, commenting on the death penalty for child rape convictions.

Ongoing difficulties by states in securing supplies of execution drugs have prompted some states to explore new and untested methods of execution or revive previously abandoned ones, according to the center's report.

Alabama has set a January execution date for what would be the nation's first attempt to execute an inmate with nitrogen gas. In July, Idaho became the fifth state to authorize executions by firing squad. The last time a U.S. inmate was executed by firing squad was in 2010.

The center's report said a majority of states, 29, have either abolished the death penalty or paused executions.

Corinna Lain, a professor at the University of Richmond School of Law in Virginia, said she thinks the number of states that don't have the death penalty could easily rise to 40. But a nationwide ban would need action from the U.S. Supreme Court.

Lain and other experts said that's unlikely to happen as recent actions show the high court is not going to get in the way of states carrying out executions. The center's report said the Supreme Court granted only one stay of execution out of 34 such requests made since its 2022-23 term.

Texas, the nation's busiest capital punishment state, has not been immune to the ongoing debate over the death penalty.

Earlier this year, the GOP-led Texas House passed a bill that would eliminate the death penalty in cases

involving someone was diagnosed with schizophrenia. The bill ultimately failed as it was never taken up by the Texas Senate.

GOP state Rep. Jeff Leach said in March the bill was not part of a secret effort to do away with the death penalty in Texas.

"I believe that in Texas we need the death penalty," Leach said. "But I am, as a supporter of the death penalty, against executing people who at the time they commit the offense had a severe mental illness."

Even in Texas, there can be some change with the death penalty, Berger said.

"But you can't see the kind of change where you could expect them to just say, 'Ah, we're done with capital punishment altogether.' At least not yet," Berger said.

Takeaways from AP's Interview with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

By JAMES JORDAN, SAMYA KULLAB and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — The Associated Press was invited to tour an embattled town in northeastern Ukraine with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as part of an exclusive interview with him. Some takeaways from the session:

THE LOOMING WINTER CAMPAIGN

Zelenskyy said the onset of winter marks a new phase of the 21-month-old war with Russia that will impact not only front-line battlefields but also civilians in cities and towns, as well as the export of grain.

He anticipates a resumption of an intense Russian air campaign. Such attacks last year struck key civilian infrastructure, affecting power, heat and water supplies. Russia also targeted grain silos and ports, hampering export capabilities.

Although Ukraine has robust air defenses, thanks to Western allies, and has managed to thwart most drone and missile attacks on major cities, Russia appears to be intent on overwhelming these capabilities. Zelenskyy said protecting civilian areas in addition to keeping up defenses on the long front line makes the winter campaign especially challenging.

LAST SUMMER'S COUNTEROFFENSIVE

On Ukraine's summer counteroffensive, Zelenskyy admitted it did not produce the results many had hoped for. He said this was due mainly to Ukraine not receiving hoped-for weapons from allies that kept ground forces at a disadvantage.

"Look, we are not backing down, I am satisfied. We are fighting with the second (best) army in the world, I am satisfied," he said referring to the Russian military. But he added: "We are losing people, I'm not satisfied. We didn't get all the weapons we wanted, I can't be satisfied, but I also can't complain too much."

He conceded Ukraine is not able to advance quickly enough and achieve major breakthroughs, but he said that's not a reason to surrender.

THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Zelenskyy said the Israel-Hamas war threatens to divert attention from the conflict in Ukraine at a critical moment, but he did not elaborate on whether there has been a tangible impact on weapons or funds. The crisis in the Middle East also comes ahead of an election year in the United States, where aid to Ukraine is expected to face deeper scrutiny.

"The war here is full-scale, complex, large, global. The biggest war since World War II. So we understand what the challenges may be if the focus of our allies' attention will be scattered," he said. "You see, attention equals help."

DOMESTIC ARMS PRODUCTION

Zelenskyy wants to ramp up Ukraine's domestic arms production, enabling the country to produce its own weapons instead of depending on outside suppliers.

Ukraine is devoting a sizable portion of its budget for weapons manufacturing, including drones, but the nascent industry is not able to meet what is needed to force a decisive shift against better-resourced Russia.

Zelenskyy hopes Western allies will grant Ukraine the licenses to manufacture and repair their weapons.

He also wants cheap loans from the West to fund the plans.

At the same time, he said Russia must not be allowed to bypass sanctions to build weapons that use parts sourced from around the world.

He said he told U.S. President Joe Biden that Putin is afraid of Ukraine becoming militarily independent. "If our production becomes powerful, very powerful, we will depend mostly on ourselves," he said. "Russia understands that all its plans for destabilization, expansion, and occupation of Ukraine will end."

U.S., EUROPE AND CHINA

Commenting on an AP poll that showed nearly half of Americans disapprove of continued aid to Ukraine, Zelenskyy said Kyiv was fighting for the long-term benefit of the U.S. and other countries, an argument he has made before. A Russian victory would compromise Europe's stability, he said, and Russia could invade a NATO country, forcing the deployment of American troops there.

"You think that if our children die, we want someone else's children to die too?" he asked.

Zelenskyy invited Chinese leader Xi Jinping to visit Ukraine, but such a trip has yet to materialize. Still, he said China's continued support of Ukraine is "very important."

China will keep a balance due to "historical and economic relationships" with Russia, he said, adding that "lines that cannot be crossed" include sovereignty, justice and nuclear security.

ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

Ukraine's constitution mandates that it is supposed to hold a presidential election in March 2024, but Zelenskyy said the country is not able to have one, citing the dangers to voters amid shelling and airstrikes. Online balloting would require amending the constitution, he added, and there is the problem of voting in areas occupied by Russia.

Elections "must take place" as soon as Ukraine's security is stabilized, he added.

Russia is expected to hold an election that same month, with President Vladimir Putin likely to run for another six-year term. Zelenskyy said that vote would not be democratic and "everyone knows what the outcome will be," adding that the world should label the balloting illegitimate.

The AP Interview: Ukraine's Zelenskyy says the war with Russia is in a new phase as winter looms

By JAMES JORDAN, SAMYA KULLAB and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the war with Russia is in a new stage, with winter expected to complicate fighting after a summer counteroffensive that failed to produce desired results due to enduring shortages of weapons and ground forces.

Despite setbacks, however, he said Ukraine won't give up.

"We have a new phase of war, and that is a fact," Zelenskyy said in an exclusive interview Thursday with The Associated Press in Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine after a morale-boosting tour of the region. "Winter as a whole is a new phase of war."

Asked if he was satisfied by the results of the counteroffensive, he gave a complex answer.

"Look, we are not backing down, I am satisfied. We are fighting with the second (best) army in the world, I am satisfied," he said, referring to the Russian military. But he added: "We are losing people, I'm not satisfied. We didn't get all the weapons we wanted, I can't be satisfied, but I also can't complain too much."

Zelenskyy also said he fears the Israel-Hamas war threatens to overshadow the conflict in Ukraine, as competing political agendas and limited resources put the flow of Western military aid to Kyiv at risk.

And those concerns are amplified by the tumult that inevitably arises during a U.S. election year and its potential implications for his country, which has seen the international community largely rally around it following Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion.

The highly anticipated counteroffensive, powered by tens of billions of dollars in Western military aid, including heavy weaponry, did not forge the expected breakthroughs. Now, some Ukrainian officials worry whether further assistance will be as generous.

At the same time, ammunition stockpiles are running low, threatening to bring Ukrainian battlefield op-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 53 of 81

erations to a standstill.

With winter set to cloak a wartime Ukraine once again, military leaders must contend with new but familiar challenges as the conflict grinds toward the end of its second full year: There are freezing temperatures and barren fields that leave soldiers exposed. And there's the renewed threat of widespread Russian aerial assaults in cities that target energy infrastructure and civilians.

On Nov. 25, Moscow launched its most extensive drone attack of the war, with most of the 75 Iranian-made Shahed drones targeting Kyiv in a troubling precedent for the months ahead.

"That is why a winter war is difficult," Zelenskyy said.

He gave a frank appraisal of the last summer's counteroffensive.

"We wanted faster results. From that perspective, unfortunately, we did not achieve the desired results. And this is a fact," he said.

Ukraine did not get all the weapons it needed from allies, he said, and limits in the size of his military force precluded a quick advance, he said.

"There is not enough power to achieve the desired results faster. But this does not mean that we should give up, that we have to surrender," Zelenskyy said. "We are confident in our actions. We fight for what is ours."

There were some positive takeaways from the last few months, he said.

Ukraine managed to make incremental territorial gains against a better-armed and fortified enemy, Zelenskyy said.

In addition, the might of Moscow's Black Sea Fleet has been diminished, following Ukrainian attacks that penetrated air defenses and struck its headquarters in occupied Crimea, Zelenskyy added.

And a temporary grain corridor established by Kyiv following Russia's withdrawal from a wartime agreement to ensure the safe exports is still working.

Zelenskyy, though, isn't dwelling on the past but is focused on the next stage — boosting domestic arms production.

A sizeable chunk of Ukraine's budget is allocated for that, but current output is far from enough to turn the tide of war. Now, Zelenskyy is looking to Western allies, including the U.S., to offer favorable loans and contracts to meet that goal.

"This is the way out," Zelenskyy said, adding that nothing terrifies Russia more than a militarily self-sufficient Ukraine.

When he last met with U.S. President Joe Biden, members of Congress and other top officials, he made one urgent appeal: Give Ukraine cheap loans and licenses to manufacture U.S. weaponry.

"Give us these opportunities, and we will build," he said he told them. "Whatever effort and time it will take, we will do it, and we will do it very quickly."

Zelenskyy remains concerned that upheaval in the Middle East, the most violent in decades, threatens to take global attention and resources away from Ukraine's ability to defend itself.

"We already can see the consequences of the international community shifting (attention) because of the tragedy in the Middle East," he said. "Only the blind don't recognize this."

Ukrainians understand "that we also need to fight for attention for the full-scale war," he said. "We must not allow people to forget about the war here."

That change in focus could lead to less economic and military assistance for his country, he said. In an apparent attempt to assuage those fears, U.S. and European officials have continued to visit Kyiv since the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel.

The shift still concerns him, Zelenskyy said.

"You see, attention equals help. No attention will mean no help. We fight for every bit of attention," he said. "Without attention, there may be weakness in (the U.S.) Congress."

Turning to the upcoming U.S. presidential and congressional campaigns, where Biden faces skepticism over his staunch support for Kyiv, Zelenskyy acknowledged that "elections are always a shock, and it is completely understandable."

A recent AP poll in the U.S. showed nearly half of Americans think too much is being spent on Ukraine.

An increasing number of Republicans are not in favor of sending more aid, and it is not clear if or when a request from the White House for additional aid will be approved by Congress.

When asked about this, Zelenskyy replied bluntly that "the choice of Americans is the choice of Americans."

But he argued that by helping Ukraine, Americans are also helping themselves.

"In the case of Ukraine, if resilience fails today due to lack of aid and shortages of weapons and funding, it will mean that Russia will most likely invade NATO countries," he said. "And then the American children will fight."

Zelenskyy has sought recently to ensure Ukraine's war machine was running as it should by making a recent shakeup of top-level government officials, touching on another of his goals to fight graft in a post-Soviet institution rife with corruption as a prelude to joining the European Union.

He said he has to know how weapons, supplies, food and even clothing are being delivered to the front — and what fails to get there.

"On one hand, this is not the job of the president, but on the other hand, I can trust those who did not just pass on the information to me, but told me in person," he said.

The static battle lines have not brought pressure from Ukraine's allies to negotiate a peace deal with Russia.

"I don't feel it yet," he said, although he added: "Some voices are always heard."

Ukraine wants to "push the formula for peace and involve as many countries of the world as possible, so that they politically isolate Russia," he noted.

The war has also made it impossible to hold a presidential election in Ukraine, originally slated for March under the constitution, he said.

Although Zelenskyy said he was ready to hold an election, most Ukrainians are not, believing such a vote to be "dangerous and meaningless" as war rages around them.

With a budget anticipating spending 22% of the country's GDP for defense and national security, Ukraine's economy is being restructured around a war with no end in sight, much like the day-to-day lives of its citizens.

That raised another question: How long can Zelenskyy himself cope with being the leader of a country at war?

There are no words to describe how difficult the job is, he said, but he also can't imagine leaving the post.

"You honestly can't do that," he said. "This would be very unfair, wrong and definitely demotivating."

Detainees in El Salvador's gang crackdown cite abuse during months in jail

By CATERINA MORBIATO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The day he was arrested, Luis was in a government office trying to get a document attesting to his clean criminal history so he could apply for a call center job.

"What I wanted at that time was something better for my life," said the 23-year-old, who was working as a baker.

When his turn came, he was told an agent from the National Civil Police would be involved because there was an offense on his record, an allegation that he had been associated with gang members. Luis was floored. Denying it repeatedly was useless, he recalled, because "at that time people didn't have rights."

That was April 2022, the month after El Salvador President Nayib Bukele received special powers suspending fundamental rights like access to a lawyer or being informed of why you were arrested. Bukele launched a full-scale war against the country's powerful street gangs. The exceptional powers remain in effect more than 1 ½ years and some 72,000 arrests later.

Accused of illegal association without any publicly known evidence, Luis was arrested that day and in less than 24 hours taken to El Salvador's largest prison, La Esperanza, also known as Mariona.

During the 11 months he spent incarcerated, Luis often feared he would die.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 55 of 81

Luis, who asked that only his first name be used to avoid reprisals, is among the some 7,000 prisoners who Justice Minister Gustavo Villatoro said in August had been freed, though most merely were released from pre-trial detention and their cases remain open.

When Luis arrived at Mariona with other detainees, barefoot and wearing only boxers, a double column of club-wielding guards awaited. He says the guards beat the inmates when they entered a room to have their heads shaved, and beat them again on the way out.

In the cell, Luis collapsed and stayed there until another guy came over and asked if he was alive. "I hadn't noticed that on the floor there was a puddle of blood that was my own blood that had spilled from all of the injuries I had on my back and head," he said.

It's still difficult to think about the abuse, he said, but at least he survived prison, unlike many others who were arrested under the special powers.

Human rights organization Cristosal tallied 153 incarceration deaths during the first year of the state of emergency. No victim had yet been convicted, the group said.

"There are registries in the Forensic Medicine Institute that establish the cause of death as strangulation, hanging, blows to the stomach, to the head," said Zaira Navas, legal chief for Cristosal. "Meaning they're violent deaths."

In mid-June, the Attorney General's Office said it had shelved 142 inmate death cases that could not be blamed on guards. El Salvador's Justice and Public Security Ministry did not respond to a request for comment about the treatment of prisoners and prisoner deaths in their facilities.

During a virtual hearing in July with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, El Salvador's Presidential Commissioner for Human Rights and Freedom of Expression Andrés Guzmán denied torture or violations of freedom of expression. Attorney General Rodolfo Delgado said his office has not received any complaints of torture or degrading treatment against citizens.

Navas, who previously was the National Civil Police inspector general, said there should be accountability in the inmate deaths. "When the state decides to make massive arrests without prior investigation, without going to an independent and impartial judge and (instead) ordering detention measures in a generalized way, it assumes the responsibility for all of the people it has arrested," Navas said.

Pedro was arrested in July 2022 and held at Mariona too. From his cell he saw repeatedly how guards would grab prisoners and beat them. He still remembers their screams.

"They jumped on them like they were springs, three guards jumped on them" to the point they lost consciousness, said the 39-year-old man. Other prisoners later told him some of the inmates had been killed by the guards. Pedro also requested that only his first name be used to describe what he witnessed in prison.

Last month, the government allowed AP to tour its new mega-prison built at the start of the state of emergency and now holding some 12,000 alleged or convicted gang members, barely a fourth of its 40,000 capacity. Journalists were allowed to speak to only one pre-selected prisoner.

The still-gleaming new prison was a far cry from the dank, overcrowded Mariona lock-up where Pedro suddenly found himself. He had only been in El Salvador for days, having returned to renew his passport. He was arrested while he was out buying pastries.

Pedro had fled El Salvador years earlier when a gang tried to kill him. In Mexico he received a humanitarian visa and, when his daughter was born there, permanent residency.

Police confiscated his Mexican residency card and still have not returned it.

Like Luis, Pedro was accused of illegal association without the evidence shown to him. He was jailed for seven months. Both men said they were never involved in gangs.

Both men said inmates at the prison were constantly hungry. Guards and privileged inmates took coveted items like sugar and antibiotic ointment from the packages delivered by inmates' families.

They described being packed into cells with as many as 300 other prisoners, including gang members, forced to share two toilets. A receptacle held stagnant, rancid-smelling water used for both flushing the toilets and drinking, Pedro said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 56 of 81

"I got so many illnesses, fungus, rashes on my body, rotting, scabies, boils on my head – terrible bumps leaking blood," Pedro said.

Luis, already hypertensive since before his arrest, believes his incarceration led to the diabetes he was diagnosed with while in the prison.

Luis and Pedro, like most of the 7,000 people the government says it had released through August, have been granted alternatives to pre-trial detention, but both still have to sign in at the courthouse.

Pedro, who says he came out of prison "psychologically destroyed," went 15 days without being able to sleep and didn't leave home.

Bukele is running for a second five-year term — despite a constitutional ban on reelection — largely on the results of his gang crackdown, which has been highly popular in El Salvador. The crackdown has brought new life to the public spaces of communities that once cowered in fear of gang violence.

For Pedro, the crackdown has meant not only losing his job as a gardener in Monterrey, Mexico, but the loss of his Mexican documents. El Salvador won't let him return to Mexico.

"I feel desperate because they have violated my immigration rights. I feel frustrated because I can't leave," Pedro said. He's working as an informal vendor as he tries to pay back debts his family took on after his arrest.

Luis was given his old job back at the bakery, but he knows his future prospects have been narrowed.

He used to love playing soccer, but now won't risk it. "I weigh my freedom against going to the soccer field and knowing that some problem always happens at the field and they could arrest me again," he said.

"So I prefer to be at home," he said. "I don't want to suffer what I've been through again."

DeSantis and Newsom lob insults and talk some policy in a faceoff between two White House aspirants

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an alternate reality, the prime-time showdown between California Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom and Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis on Thursday could have been a preview of a 2024 general election debate.

Instead, it was a hard-to-explain 90-minute clash that pitted one struggling Republican presidential hopeful against a Democratic rival who may or may not seek the presidency in four years.

But for a night, at least, the big-state governors were eager to represent their parties on the national stage as they battled over the economy, pandemic restrictions and President Joe Biden's leadership in a Fox News faceoff peppered with fiery policy disputes and personal insults.

"This is a slick, slippery politician whose state is failing," DeSantis said of Newsom.

The California Democrat defended his state, but was equally eager to shift the discussion to DeSantis' stagnant 2024 presidential bid.

"How's that going for you, Ron? You're down 41 points in your own home state," said Newsom, who is backing Biden for president. "Neither of us will be the nominee for a party in 2024."

The host, Fox News Channel, billed the event hosted by Sean Hannity as "The Great Red vs. Blue State Debate." Yet it was held in a television studio with no audience in Georgia, a location chosen for its key swing-state implications in national politics. And it played out in the heart of presidential primary season with voters in both parties paying closer attention to their 2024 options heading into next fall's general election.

As leaders of two of the three most populous states, DeSantis and Newsom have spent much of the past year poking each other's policy choices and leadership style from afar. But on Thursday night, they got their first chance to challenge each other on the same national stage.

It was hard to watch at times.

The two participants, standing at podiums alone onstage, accused each other of lying repeatedly and talked over each other throughout. And while they largely focused on policy differences, the debate was also deeply personal at times.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 57 of 81

DeSantis called Newsom "a liberal bully." Of DeSantis, Newsom said, "I don't like the way you demean and humiliate people you disagree with."

Hannity struggled to control the action. Over and over, he encouraged the men to give each other "breathing room."

DeSantis, a 45-year-old Republican governor elected to his second and final term last fall, is grasping for momentum in a 2024 campaign plagued by missteps in his bid to defeat former President Donald Trump, who remains the overwhelming front-runner in the GOP primary.

Newsom, California's 56-year-old term-limited Democratic governor, has positioned himself to seek the presidency someday, but like the rest of his party's most ambitious leaders, he declined to challenge Biden for the Democratic nomination in 2024. Instead, he's emerged as a leading defender of Biden and a formal campaign adviser.

He embraced that role Thursday night after DeSantis said he was "joined at the hip with Biden and (Vice President Kamala) Harris." Later, the Florida governor said Biden, at 81 years old, is "in decline" and represents "a danger to the country."

"I'm proud of the work Biden and Harris have done," Newsom said, ticking through unemployment statistics. "I will take Joe Biden at 100 rather than Ron DeSantis any day of the week at any age."

Throughout the event, the Biden campaign was sending out video clips of Newsom's performance. And afterward, Newsom issued a fundraising appeal on Biden's behalf. DeSantis' team, too, issued a steady stream of his own highlights, just as it would during a traditional presidential debate.

Indeed, both Newsom and DeSantis saw Thursday night's meeting as a real opportunity to strengthen their political standing in the short and longer term.

DeSantis' allies talked up the event in recent days as a rare opportunity to prove his strength against one of the nation's most prominent Democrats — a sharp contrast from recent Republican presidential debates where he's struggled to break through on a stage where the candidates agree on most issues. And even some of DeSantis' Republican rivals privately acknowledged he would likely raise a significant amount of money through online donations as a result of the appearance.

Just minutes after the event concluded, DeSantis' campaign sent out a statement from his campaign manager with the headline, "DeSantis Crushes Newsom and Biden, Unites Republicans in Debate Win."

Meanwhile, Newsom, who, like DeSantis, will be out of a job come January 2027, has been eager to broaden his political profile ahead of a possible presidential bid in 2028 — or sooner, should the 81-year-old Biden unexpectedly drop out. But as he has for much of the year, Newsom on Thursday reiterated his support for the Democratic president's reelection.

He was certainly not speaking to the Democratic base by appearing on the conservative-friendly Fox News, although the move was in line with his recent political strategy. In March, Newsom launched the "Campaign for Democracy" committee, which has allowed him to travel to red states that Democrats typically avoid.

When Thursday's conversation turned to the pandemic, DeSantis called Newsom "a lockdown governor" who hurt working people in California while his own kids went to private school.

Newsom was ready for the attack.

Echoing a criticism from Trump, the California Democrat reminded viewers that DeSantis initially backed many of the same pandemic restrictions that he now condemns. He also said DeSantis' later opposition to public health restrictions led to unnecessary deaths in Florida.

"Tens of thousands of people lost their lives. And for what, Ron?" Newsom asked.

Trump's campaign, aware that the unusual event was drawing national attention, unleashed a slew of fresh insults at DeSantis, one of his strongest Republican primary rivals, shortly before it began.

"Ron DeSanctimonious is acting more like a thirsty, third-rate OnlyFans wannabe model than an actual presidential candidate," the Trump campaign wrote, using one of the many nicknames the former president has given his rival. "Instead of actually campaigning and trying to turn around his dismal poll numbers, DeSanctus is now so desperate for attention that he's debating a Grade A loser like Gavin Newsom."

Mediators scrambling for Israel-Hamas truce extension, as hostages-for-prisoners swaps get harder

By WAFAA SHURAF, JACK JEFFERY and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Mediators were scrambling to extend an Israel-Hamas truce set to expire after daybreak Friday, as the two sides appeared to be struggling to agree on how to continue the daily exchanges of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel that have sustained the week-long pause in fighting.

Virtually all of those freed so far have been women and children, but with few such hostages remaining in Gaza reaching a deal on an extension could prove more challenging. Hamas, a militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years, is expected to set a higher price for the remaining hostages, especially Israeli soldiers. About 140 hostages remain in Gaza, with more than 100 having been freed as part of the truce.

Qatar and Egypt, which have played a key role as mediators, are seeking to prolong a truce by another two days. Israel has pledged to resume its blistering offensive, aimed at crushing Hamas, if the militants don't offer what it views as a satisfactory list of captives to be freed in return for an extension.

Israel has vowed to resume the war once hostage releases end, but faces growing pressure from its main ally, the United States to do more to protect Palestinian civilians.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who met Thursday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials on his third visit to the region since the start of the war two months ago, said he hoped the cease-fire could be extended and more hostages could be released.

Blinken also said that if Israel resumes the war and moves against southern Gaza to pursue Hamas, it must do so in "compliance with international humanitarian law" and must have "a clear plan in place" to protect civilians. He said Israeli leaders understood that "the massive levels of civilian life and displacement scale we saw in the north must not be repeated in the south."

International pressure has mounted to pause the war, triggered by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel, as long as possible. Thousands of Palestinians in Gaza have been killed and more than three-quarters of the population of 2.3 million have been uprooted, after weeks of Israeli bombardment and a ground campaign, leading to a humanitarian crisis.

Most of Gaza's population is now crammed into the south with no exit, raising questions over how an Israeli offensive there can avoid heavy civilian casualties.

Late Thursday and into Friday, more Israeli and foreign hostages were swapped for Palestinian.

Hamas freed eight hostages, who were handed to the Red Cross in Gaza and then taken to Israel for medical evaluations and a reunion with their families. Among those freed were two women handed over in Gaza City, an area where Israeli troops have been in control for weeks and have been searching for hostages.

Early Friday, a busload of 30 Palestinian prisoners released by Israel was welcomed home in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Dozens of men, some holding green Hamas flags, greeted the prisoners. The freed detainees were hugged as the crowd chanted, "God is great."

During the truce, at least 10 Israelis a day, along with other nationals, had been freed by Hamas in return for Israel releasing at least 30 Palestinian prisoners. Asked why Hamas released fewer than 10 hostages on Thursday, the military's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, noted that 12 Israeli citizens had been released the day before, implying that the overall total had met Israeli demands.

"We insist on getting the maximum possible," Hagari said. "It's been that way every day and also today."

Netanyahu is under intense pressure from families of the hostages to bring them home. But his far-right governing partners are also pushing him to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed, and could abandon his coalition if he is seen as making too many concessions.

Israel says it will maintain the truce until Hamas stops releasing captives, at which point it will resume military operations, even as the Biden administration has urged it to operate with far greater precision if it does so.

A total of 83 Israelis, including dual nationals, have been freed during the truce, most of whom appear

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 59 of 81

physically well but shaken. Another 24 hostages — 23 Thais and one Filipino — have also been released, including several men.

It's not clear how many of the remaining women hostages are soldiers. For soldiers and the civilian men still in captivity, Hamas is expected to demand the release of high-profile Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks, something Israel has strongly resisted in the past.

Israel says around 125 men are still held hostage.

Before the cease-fire, Hamas released four hostages, and the Israeli army rescued one. Two others were found dead in Gaza.

The 240 Palestinians released so far under the cease-fire have mostly been teenagers accused of throwing stones and firebombs during confrontations with Israeli forces. Several of the freed women were convicted by military courts of attempting to attack soldiers, some of them after being found carrying scissors or knives near security positions.

The Palestinians released early Friday included 22 teenagers and eight Israeli Palestinian women who were arrested since the war started, most of them for pro-Palestinian social media posts, according to the Palestinian Prisoners Club, which advocates for prisoners. Israeli authorities have carried out a crackdown on such posts, arresting more than 270 Palestinian citizens on allegations of inciting violence, according to rights groups.

The truce arrangements have largely held for the past week, and even a deadly Hamas attack in Jerusalem early Thursday did not derail the subsequent swap of hostages for prisoners.

In the attack, two Palestinian gunmen opened fire on people waiting for buses along a main highway entering Jerusalem, killing at least three people and wounding several others, according to Israeli police. A fourth Israeli was shot by security forces who mistook him for an assailant, and died of his wounds later Thursday.

The attackers, brothers from a neighborhood in annexed east Jerusalem, were killed. After the attack, six other members of the family were detained, and the government ordered their house demolished. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack, casting it as retaliation for the killing of women and children in Gaza and the occupied West Bank and other Israeli "crimes."

Early Friday morning, the Israeli military reported intercepting a rocket fired from Gaza. Before the cease-fire, Hamas and other militant groups at times fired dozens to hundreds of rockets per day at Israel.

The war was triggered by an Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas and other Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 240 people captive. Authorities have only provided approximate figures.

Israel's bombardment and invasion in Gaza have killed more than 13,300 Palestinians, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The toll is likely much higher, as officials have only sporadically updated the count since Nov. 11. The ministry says thousands more people are feared dead under the rubble.

Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive. It claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence.

Palestinians in Gaza have called for a permanent end to the war, saying the temporary truces don't resolve the humanitarian catastrophe in the territory. Over 1.8 million people have fled their homes, with more than 1 million sheltering in U.N. schools and struggling to find basic items including cooking gas and flour.

Pressure builds to eliminate fossil fuel use as oil executive takes over climate talks

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Pressure to phase out fossil fuels mounted Thursday on the oil company chief who took over fragile international climate negotiations that opened in Dubai on Thursday in what some say are contradictory dual roles.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 60 of 81

United Nations and climate talks leaders might have relieved some of the pressure when negotiators unanimously approved much-fought over plans to launch and fund a program to compensate poorer nations hit by floods, storms, drought and other climate extremes. Several nations, led by host United Arab Emirates, immediately pledged more than \$420 million for the fund, which took 30 years to approve.

Leaders said they hope the quick win on a key financial issue would set a new tone for negotiations that had put the climate talks newly installed boss on the hot seat and not just because the planet keeps smashing heat records.

Days before the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP28) began, meeting preparation notes were published that linked efforts by the United Arab Emirates national oil company ADNOC to push fossil fuel sales at the same time its CEO and new COP president, Sultan al-Jaber, was meeting to curb climate change. The burning of coal, oil and gas are chief causes of global warming.

Al-Jaber vehemently denied the revelations from the BBC on Wednesday, But several climate negotiations experts say it will likely change the tenor and maybe even the outcome of the two weeks of intense negotiations, taking place about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from where five offshore oil fields flow. More than 100,000 people were registered for the negotiations, more than double the previous high for these new U.N. talks.

"I think the pressure on the COP president to deliver is pretty clear and has been clear for months," German climate envoy Jennifer Morgan told The Associated Press. "That's the focus here to deliver on really a course correction."

Climate negotiations historian Joanna Depledge said, "whether true or not, the revelations are embarrassing, but I don't think they put COP in jeopardy. To the contrary, the hope is that the pressure on UAE will tighten."

"It's understandable if the COP hosts, and other fossil fuel nations, were starting to feel the heat on this issue," said Mohamed Adow, of Power Shift Africa. "Fossil fuels are after all the elephant in the room and these countries can't go on trying to pretend they are not a problem. This extra scrutiny is certainly welcome."

Al-Jaber's two positions were already a source of mistrust. The news coverage brings even more attention to the role of coal, oil and gas in climate change at climate talks and highlights efforts to eliminate use of fossil fuels, said World Resources Institute president Anil Dasgupta.

"On one hand, the disclosures erode trust in the COP president and that will make forging a deal harder," said former U.S. State Department climate lawyer Nigel Purvis, CEO of Climate Advisers. "On the other hand, the UAE now has even more reason to push for a fossil fuel phase-down agreement to show the world that it is serious about becoming the first post-petroleum OPEC country."

Morgan said Germany and Europe were steadfast in their support for a phase-out of fossil fuels, and on Wednesday U.S. climate envoy John Kerry said the United States continues to favor a phase-out.

Climate Analytics CEO Bill Hare said the UAE has pushed for a less stringent "phase-down" instead of a stricter "phase-out" of fossil fuels. He called the phase-down phrase "window dressing" for increased oil and gas drilling.

Recent reporting "absolutely reinforces everyone's concerns about greenwashing," Hare said Thursday. "And that means that the COP president needs to stand back from his oil interests and look at the interests of the planet as a whole."

Hare, like Dasgupta, Purvis, Depledge and others, said in the end the reporting will mean al-Jaber and oil interests will have to shepherd a stronger agreement to get rid of fossil fuels.

United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell told negotiators that he was sick of the "baby steps" taken so far to fight climate change, challenging them to do far more and faster.

"If we do not signal the terminal decline of the fossil fuel era as we know it, we welcome our own terminal decline," Stiell said. "And we choose to pay with people's lives."

Minutes after taking the gavel on the first day of climate negotiations, al-Jaber referred to the need for change in the way the world gets its energy.

"I know there are strong views on the idea of including language on fossil fuels," al-Jaber said. "I ask you all to work together. Be flexible. Find common ground. Come forward with solutions and achieve consensus."

Yet he also talked about the "bold choice" of including oil companies more in climate talks and the push for net zero industry emissions by 2050.

WRI's Dasgupta said there's extra pressure right now because globally multilateralism – when countries work together on issues – is under attack, especially because of recent wars in Ukraine and Gaza and the way the COVID-19 vaccine was distributed. Add to that record heat this year, he said.

"We've seen already at 1.2 degrees warming this year the catastrophic heatwaves, floods and other events that have happened around the world," Climate Analytics Hare said. "We are facing epic wreckage here. If we can't get this problem under control."

Al-Jaber said he hopes negotiators over the next two weeks can change things.

"Let's restore faith in multilateralism," al-Jaber said. "Let's deliver some good news to the world that really needs it today."

What if Donald Trump is convicted? The 2024 Republican convention rules don't address the issue

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Republican National Committee's rules for next year's nominating contest and convention were released this week without addressing a question the GOP could well face next summer: Can the party's delegates vote for a different candidate if the presumptive nominee is convicted of a felony?

Former President Donald Trump is under four criminal indictments that will proceed through the GOP primary season, an overlap of legal and political calendars with no precedent in American politics. Fifteen states and American Samoa hold their GOP primaries on March 5, known as Super Tuesday, which is also the day after his first trial is scheduled to begin in Washington on charges that he unlawfully sought to overturn the 2020 election.

Trump is dominating the Republican field and may secure much of the support he needs by Super Tuesday, by which time almost half of delegates who select the nominee at the GOP convention will have been awarded. Even if he were to be convicted in Washington or another trial, top party leaders and many voters have indicated they would stand by Trump anyway. And Trump and his allies are pushing to dismiss and delay the trials and have worked with state parties to craft rules favorable to him.

The RNC rules don't include any provisions specific to the unprecedented scenario unfolding.

Bound delegates must vote for a particular presidential candidate at the convention based on the results of the primary or caucus in their state. As in past years, every state party must bind its delegates to vote for their assigned candidates during at least the first round of voting at the national convention, with limited exceptions for a small number of delegates. A candidate wins the nomination if they clinch a majority, which is 1,215 delegates.

At next year's convention, which starts July 15 in Milwaukee, there will be opportunities to tweak the rules when they are adopted or to suspend them, which can require two-thirds of delegates to approve on a vote.

"It's a parliamentary body," said Benjamin Ginsberg, a Republican election lawyer. "It can always work its will if it wants to one way or another."

Such last-minute maneuvers are difficult to organize and there are few current signs that delegates might look for another option even with Trump's criminal cases looming.

"They're all going to be chosen at contests in which people are voting for Trump and I think they're unlikely, if he wins the primary, to change up because of a court case," Ginsberg said.

The Trump campaign issued a preemptive warning anyway.

"Any attempt by any swamp rat, by any Washington, D.C., swamp rat, to mess with the rules will be summarily crushed by those of us that know how to run conventions," said Trump advisor Chris LaCivita, who was a senior consultant in charge of rules and floor operations for the RNC in 2016, a year when some

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 62 of 81

Trump opponents considered challenging him at the convention.

One contingency section of longstanding party rules would allow the RNC to free a state from the rules prior to the convention if "compliance is impossible" and "the Republican National Committee determines that granting such waiver is in the best interests of the Republican Party."

Such a waiver would require action by the Republican National Committee's executive committee, which is made up of 29 members, including RNC chair Ronna McDaniel.

The RNC declined to comment on the possibility of the rules being suspended in the case of the nominee being in jail but instead pointed to recent interviews in which McDaniel was asked if Trump should be the nominee if he's convicted of a crime, and she said the party would support the nominee that the voters choose.

"I know this is newsworthy, but, as party chair, I'm going to support who the voters choose. And, yes, if they choose Donald Trump -- the voters are looking at this, and they think there is a two-tiered system of justice. They don't believe a lot of the things that are coming out in this," McDaniel said in a Nov. 12 interview on CNN's State of the Union. "They're making these decisions. And you're seeing that reflected in the polls."

Republicans award delegates to candidates based on their performance in state presidential caucuses and primary elections, which kick off in January and run through June.

Delegates can be unbound by state parties if their assigned candidate drops out, something Trump seems unlikely to do as he has made his criminal cases the central focus of his campaign and declared the charges to be politically motivated.

Unlike in 2016, when the complex delegate process tripped up Trump's then-novice team, he has a more experienced campaign team for his third White House bid, including LaCivita, and his political aides have been working for years to craft rules in the delegate battles that are favorable for a frontrunner, as he is poised to be.

And unlike in 2016, when a large faction within the party resisted Trump's candidacy, the Republican Party has transformed under Trump. He has more loyalists throughout the state and national parties, making it even more unlikely there will be a repeat of the late-stage, failed effort at the 2016 convention when some activists loyal to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz tried to make last-minute changes to free delegates.

Some OPEC+ members will cut the oil that they send to the world to try to boost prices

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and COURTNEY BONNELL Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The OPEC oil cartel led by Saudi Arabia and allied producers including Russia made another big swipe at propping up lagging crude prices Thursday, expanding some output cuts into next year and bringing up-and-coming oil supplier Brazil into the fold.

Lower oil prices have been a good thing for U.S. drivers, who have been able to fill their gas tanks for less money in recent months. But it's bad news for OPEC+ countries whose oil income bolsters their economies and who have faced setbacks in pushing prices higher despite initial fears that the Israel-Hamas war could affect oil flows.

The OPEC+ oil ministers came out of an online meeting with more than 2 million barrels per day in voluntary cuts through the first three months of next year and declared that Brazil would join the bloc in January, bringing one of the world's fastest-growing oil producers into an alliance that is trying to rein in global supply.

However, sweeping cutbacks from OPEC+ and individual member countries since October 2022 have not made lasting changes to oil prices because of concerns about too much crude circulating in a weakening global economy, which could weigh on the thirst for oil for travel and industry.

The market even shrugged off the new move, though it amounts to roughly 2% of global supply.

Jorge Leon, senior vice president of oil market research for Rystad Energy, called it a "bit of disappointing meeting" for OPEC+ and a "bittersweet" one for Saudi Arabia in particular because it couldn't convince

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 63 of 81

the whole group to commit to production cuts.

The market also was let down, because it "was likely expecting a deal covering the first half of next year," he said.

Other energy experts saw the oil bloc's two-part solution for a lagging market more positively. Paul Tossetti, an executive director of S&P Global Commodity Insights, praised the "imaginative ways" of OPEC+ lately in dealing with market challenges from the Americas, climate change efforts and on other fronts.

Taken together, the bloc's two moves Thursday serve to "preserve the unity of the group at a challenging time," Bhushan Bahree, another executive director at the group, wrote.

Saudi Arabia led the deepening voluntary cuts Thursday, extending its reduction of 1 million barrels per day through March. It was followed by Russia, which is cutting 500,000 barrels per day of crude and refined oil products, and then Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman with smaller amounts.

Russia wants higher oil prices to boost the main way it fills its war chest against Ukraine, while the Saudis have to earn nearly \$86 per barrel to meet their planned spending goals, according to the latest estimate from the International Monetary Fund.

Saudi Arabia is trying to fund an ambitious overhaul of the kingdom's economy, reduce its dependence on oil and create jobs for a young population.

But the international benchmark Brent crude has stayed in the low- to mid-\$80 range in recent weeks and fell more than 2% to \$80.91 a barrel following the meeting before settling at \$82.83 Thursday. U.S. crude also dropped 2.5% to \$75.90 before settling at \$75.96 per barrel.

The expanded cuts were expected to keep crude prices in the same range of \$80 to \$85 a barrel for the first half of the year, Leon said.

Lower oil prices have allowed U.S. gas prices to fall or stay steady since Sept. 19, AAA said. Gas is averaging just below \$3.25 a gallon, the motor club said, down about 7% from a month ago.

But that's still higher than when President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, when prices were averaging about \$2.40 a gallon. High inflation has been a political challenge for Biden going into the 2024 election, prompting him to say this week that efforts to improve supply chains and reduce price pressures are a priority.

"President Biden is focused on prices for American consumers, which have been coming down steadily," the White House said in a statement Thursday after the OPEC+ meeting.

U.S. oil production has hit records as OPEC+ has cut back, with producers outside the group expected to keep leading global growth in oil supply next year, the International Energy Agency said.

For instance, daily production in the U.S. averaged 13 million barrels a day in August, an increase of more than 1 million barrels from a year ago, according to the latest monthly figures from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The risk is growing that production cuts could reduce the influence of OPEC+ over oil supplies as other countries boost their output.

"The kingdom is balancing the desire to keep prices high by limiting supply with the knowledge that doing so will lead to a further drop in overall market share," Leon said.

Bringing in Brazil, which the IEA also said has been producing record amounts of oil this year, would give the 23-member OPEC+ a leg up.

Adding Brazil's oil would bring the amount of global production controlled by OPEC+ up to 62%, similar to the share held by the organization when Russia joined in the mid-2010s, Leon said.

José Chrispiniano, press secretary for President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, said the invitation was under analysis.

Henry Kissinger's complicated legacy draws admiration and scorn from across the globe

By FOSTER KLUG and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 64 of 81

TOKYO (AP) — The death of former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger drew both admiration and scorn Thursday from political leaders around the world, highlighting the complicated legacy of Kissinger's views about what it meant to serve America's interests during the Cold War — and how the country should exert its influence.

Kissinger, who died Wednesday at 100, was one of America's most powerful diplomats. During his years serving under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, he shaped the country's foreign policy in ways that led to breakthroughs, including normalizing U.S.-China relations and advancing detente with the Soviet Union.

But during Kissinger's tenure the U.S. also overlooked the rise of brutal regimes in other countries, and critics argue his approach ran counter to democratic ideals and left lasting damage throughout the world.

President Joe Biden, who was a U.S. senator when he first met Kissinger, said, "Throughout our careers, we often disagreed. And often strongly. But from that first briefing — his fierce intellect and profound strategic focus was evident."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was among those who sought out Kissinger's counsel through the decades, said that "to serve as America's chief diplomat today is to move through a world that bears Henry's lasting imprint — from the relationships he forged, to the tools he pioneered, to the architecture he built."

Blinken's tone was echoed by others, including former President George W. Bush, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, China's President Xi Jinping and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called his passing a "huge loss."

"This was a man — whether you agreed with him or not, whether you hold the same views or not — he served in World War II, bravely in uniform, and for decades afterward, which we can all be grateful for and appreciate, just the public service," he said.

For some, that impact led to improved relations, such as when Kissinger's diplomacy helped end the 1973 Mideast war where Israel fought off Egypt and Syria.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog praised Kissinger for laying "the cornerstone of the peace agreement, which (was) later signed with Egypt, and so many other processes around the world I admire."

Many in China mourned Kissinger's passing on social media. State broadcaster CCTV shared an old segment showing his first secret visit to China in 1971, when he broached the possibility of establishing U.S.-China relations and met then-Premier Zhou Enlai.

But across South America, Kissinger is remembered as a key figure who helped prop up bloody military dictatorships. Documents have shown Kissinger's and Nixon's support for the 1973 coup that deposed Chilean President Salvador Allende. That was followed by Gen. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, which went on to violate human rights, murder opponents, cancel elections, restrict the media, suppress labor unions and disband political parties.

"A man has died whose historical brilliance never managed to conceal his profound moral misery," Chile's ambassador to the United States, Juan Gabriel Valdes, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. Chile's leftist President Gabriel Boric reposted the message.

U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern posted a remembrance on X for "all the lives Henry Kissinger destroyed with terrible violence he unleashed in countries like Chile, Vietnam, Argentina, East Timor, Cambodia, and Bangladesh." McGovern also wrote that he never understood why people revered Kissinger.

Kissinger also "heedlessly extended and expanded" the war in Vietnam and the bombing of Cambodia came to "symbolize his ruthless hypocrisy when claiming to support American democracy," according to journalist Elizabeth Becker, who covered Cambodia before the 1975 Khmer Rouge takeover and is the author of "When the War was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution."

"And to what end? Ultimately, no dominoes fell to communism. The only country communist Vietnam invaded was communist Cambodia to overthrow Pol Pot," Becker said.

In Africa, Kissinger's legacy will be forever linked for many to his official visit to apartheid-era South Africa in 1976, just months after the regime's police killed more than 170 Black protesters, most of them

schoolchildren, in the Soweto uprising.

At the time, the United States was allied with South Africa as a buffer against Soviet influence in Africa during the Cold War. Kissinger saw South Africa as "merely a gambit in the game of the Cold War," said John Stremlau, a professor of international relations at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

For all his efforts to keep Soviet influence from expanding at the expense of the United States, among those lauding Kissinger's legacy was Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin said in a message to Kissinger's wife, Nancy, that he was "a wise and far-sighted statesman" and his name "is inextricably linked with a pragmatic foreign policy line, which at one time made it possible to achieve detente in international tensions and reach the most important Soviet-American agreements that contributed to the strengthening of global security."

An appeals court reinstates gag order that barred Trump from maligning court staff in NY fraud trial

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York appeals court Thursday reinstated a gag order that barred Donald Trump from commenting about court personnel after the former president repeatedly disparaged a law clerk in his New York civil fraud trial.

The one-sentence decision came two weeks after an individual appellate judge put the gag order on hold while the appeals process played out.

Trial judge Arthur Engoron, who imposed the restriction, said he now planned to enforce it "rigorously and vigorously."

Trump attorney Christopher Kise called it "a tragic day for the rule of law." Steven Cheung, a spokesperson for Trump's 2024 presidential campaign, complained that the gag order was "nothing but attempted election interference, which is failing terribly."

Engoron imposed the gag order Oct. 3 after Trump posted a derogatory comment about the judge's law clerk to social media. The post, which included a baseless allegation about the clerk's personal life, came the second day of the trial in New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit.

James' lawsuit alleges Trump exaggerated his wealth on financial statements used to secure loans and make deals. Trump denies any wrongdoing. The Republican 2024 front-runner contends the lawsuit is a political attack instigated by James and furthered by Engoron, both Democrats.

Over the trial's first few weeks, Engoron fined Trump \$15,000 for violating the gag order. The judge expanded the order — which initially covered only parties in the case — to include lawyers after Trump's attorneys questioned clerk Allison Greenfield's prominent role on the bench. She sits alongside the judge, exchanging notes and advising him during testimony.

Trump's lawyers sued Engoron, challenging his gag order as an abuse of power.

State lawyers supported the restriction, saying it was a reasonable step to protect Engoron's staff. An attorney for the court system tied Trump's comments to an uptick in nasty calls and messages directed at the judge and law clerk.

A court security captain wrote in a sworn statement last week that Greenfield has been receiving 20-30 calls per day to her personal cell phone and 30-50 messages per day on social media, LinkedIn and two personal email addresses.

The captain reported that Greenfield received enough harassing voicemails to fill a transcript with 275 single-spaced pages, and that about half the harassing and disparaging messages to her were antisemitic.

Trump's lawyers then argued that while messages and calls were "vile and reprehensible," he shouldn't be muzzled because of other people's bad behavior. Trump never called for violence against Greenfield, nor did he or his lawyers ever encourage or condone harassment and threats, the attorneys wrote in a court filing.

They argued that the gag order infringed on his free speech rights.

"As the front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination and as a citizen on trial, President

Trump is well within his rights to comment on what he perceives as bias," Trump's lawyers wrote.

While the gag order was suspended, Trump posted about Greenfield as recently as Wednesday, referring to the judge's "very disturbed and angry law clerk."

In recent days, Trump also assailed the judge's family, citing critical social media posts about him that he asserted came from Engoron's wife. Court system spokesperson Al Baker said Thursday that they did not.

Engoron ruled before the trial that Trump and other defendants engaged in fraud, and he ordered that a receiver take control of some of Trump's properties, putting their future oversight in question. An appeals court has put that order on hold for now.

The trial concerns remaining claims of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records. James is seeking more than \$300 million in penalties and a ban on Trump doing business in New York.

Trump is due to testify, for a second time, Dec. 11. All testimony is expected to wrap up shortly afterward.

Then the two sides are due to submit filings and make their closing arguments in January, under a schedule sketched out Thursday.

The verdict in the non-jury case will be up to Engoron, who said he he hopes to reach a decision by the end of January.

Cities must replace harmful lead pipes within 10 years under new Biden administration plan

By MICHAEL PHILLIS and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most U.S. cities would have to replace lead water pipes within 10 years under strict new rules proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency as the Biden administration moves to reduce lead in drinking water and prevent public health crises like the ones in Flint, Michigan and Washington, D.C.

Millions of people consume drinking water from lead pipes and the agency said tighter standards would improve IQ scores in children and reduce high blood pressure and heart disease in adults. It is the strongest overhaul of lead rules in more than three decades, and will cost billions of dollars. Pulling it off will require overcoming enormous practical and financial obstacles.

"These improvements ensure that in a not too distant future, there will never be another city and another child poisoned by their pipes," said Mona Hanna-Attisha, a pediatrician and clean water advocate who raised early alarms about Flint.

The Biden administration has previously said it wants all of the nation's roughly 9 million lead pipes to be removed, and rapidly. Lead pipes connect water mains in the street to homes and are typically the biggest source of lead in drinking water. They are most common in older, industrial parts of the country.

Lead crises have hit poorer, majority-Black cities like Flint especially hard, propelling the risks of lead in drinking water into the national consciousness. Their impact reaches beyond public health. After the crises, tap water use declined nationally, especially among Black and Hispanic people. The Biden administration says investment is vital to fix this injustice and ensure everyone has safe, lead-free drinking water.

"We're trying to right a longstanding wrong here," said Radhika Fox, head of the EPA Office of Water. "We're bending the arc towards equity and justice on this legacy issue."

Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., and Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., representing states that have faced lead crises, agreed in a joint statement, citing both the new rule and the Biden administration's infrastructure investments. "We can make a lead-free future a reality for all, no matter the color or their skin or their zip code," it said.

The proposal, called the lead and copper rule improvements, would for the first time require utilities to replace lead pipes even if their lead levels aren't too high. Most cities have not been forced to replace their lead pipes and many don't even know where they are.

There are some exceptions to the 10 year lead pipe replacement deadline. A few cities like Chicago with lots of lead pipes may get longer. Water utilities with dense networks of lead pipes — as many as 2,000 of them — could also get more than 10 years, the proposal says.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 67 of 81

The push to reduce lead in tap water is part of a broader federal effort to combat lead exposure that includes proposed stricter limits on dust from lead-based paint in older homes and child-care facilities and a goal to eliminate lead in aviation fuel.

The EPA enacted the first comprehensive lead in drinking water regulations in 1991. Those have significantly helped reduce lead levels, but experts have said they left loopholes that keep lead levels too high and lax enforcement allows cities to ignore the problem.

"We now know that having literally tens of millions of people being exposed to low levels of lead from things like their drinking water has a big impact on the population" and the current lead rules don't fix it, said Erik Olson, an expert with the Natural Resources Defense Council who challenged the original regulations back in the early 1990s. "We're hoping this new rule will have a big impact."

In addition, the EPA announced it wants to lower the level of lead at which utilities are forced to take action. And federal officials are pushing cities to do a better job informing the public when elevated lead levels are found.

Another change involves how lead is measured. Utilities would need to collect more samples and this alone could have significant consequences – when Michigan did something similar, the number of communities flagged for having high lead levels skyrocketed.

The public will have a chance to comment on the proposal and the agency expects to publish a final version of the rule in the Fall of 2024. There is then a waiting period before it goes into effect.

Unlike other contaminants, lead seeps into drinking water that's already left the treatment plant. The main remedy is to add chemicals to keep it from leaching out of pipes and plumbing fixtures. It's hard. A home with dangerous lead levels can be next to a house with no lead exposure at all.

It will ultimately be up to utilities to decide whether to pay the full cost of replacing lead pipes, which is too expensive for many people to afford.

"We strongly, strongly encourage water utilities to pay for it," Fox said.

The American Water Works Association, an industry group, said it supports the agency's pipe replacement goals but there would be significant challenges. Costs are going up, it's hard to secure homeowner permission to do pipe replacement work and other contaminants like harmful "forever chemicals" called PFAS will also vie for financial resources and time, the group said.

President Donald Trump's administration addressed lead in water, issuing new standards just before the end of his term, after years of efforts by advocates. Those rules forced utilities to take stronger action when lead levels rose too high and required them to test day-care centers and schools. They also made communities locate their lead pipes — initial inventories are due in October 2024.

But environmental groups criticized the rule for not going far enough. In response, the Biden administration said it would make the improvements officials announced Thursday.

The 2021 infrastructure law included \$15 billion to find and replace lead pipes. More will be needed. Additional federal funds are available to improve water infrastructure and the EPA is providing smaller communities with extra help. Some states, however, have been slower to attack the problem — a handful declined the first round of federal lead pipe funds.

A few communities have replaced pipes quickly. After crises in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey, officials paid for and efficiently replaced lead pipes, adopting novel rules that required homeowners to let construction crews onto their property to do the work.

Replacing the country's lead pipes will be expensive, but the EPA says the health benefits far outweigh the cost.

Those benefits, Fox said, "are really priceless."

Japan suspends its Osprey flights after the fatal crash of a US Air Force aircraft

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and TARA COPP Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan suspended flights by its Osprey aircraft Thursday, officials said, the day after a U.S. Air Force Osprey based in Japan crashed into the sea during a training mission.

Tokyo said it also asked the U.S. military to ground all Ospreys operating in Japan except for those joining the search operations at the crash site. At least one of the eight crew members aboard was killed, but the status of the others was not yet known.

But the Pentagon said U.S. Ospreys continue to operate out of Japan. The deputy press secretary, Sabrina Singh, said she was not aware of an official request from Japan to freeze Osprey flights.

A senior defense ministry official, Taro Yamato, told a parliamentary hearing that Japan has suspended flights of Ospreys until details of the crash and safety are confirmed. The cause of Wednesday's crash was not yet known.

The U.S.-made Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster, like an airplane, during flight.

Ministry officials said a planned training flight Thursday at the Metabaru army camp in the Saga prefecture in southern Japan was canceled as part of the grounding of all 14 Japanese-owned Ospreys deployed at Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force bases.

"The occurrence of such a major accident causes great anxiety to the people of the region and it is truly regrettable," Defense Minister Minoru Kihara said in a parliamentary hearing Thursday. "We have requested the U.S. side to conduct flights of Ospreys deployed in Japan after their flight safety is confirmed," he said. His language was vague and did not clearly say that all Ospreys should be stood down.

Defense officials said they hoped the U.S. side got the message, but NHK national television said a number of Ospreys flew in and out of a U.S. air base on Okinawa. One U.S. Osprey has joined the rescue operation off Japan's southern coast, defense officials said.

A U.S. defense official said if there was a pause in flights, it could also be to allow the small Air Force Special Operations Command community in Japan time to process its unit's crash, the official said. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive details about the crash.

The coast guard, as well as Japanese troops, searched through the night, and on Thursday the coast guard started using sonar to search underwater for the broken aircraft, which might have sunk to the sea bottom, at a depth of about 30 meters (100 feet).

Ospreys have had a number of crashes, including in Japan, where they are used at U.S. and Japanese military bases, and the latest crash rekindles safety concerns and controversy over the deployment in Japan. In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki had said he would ask the U.S. military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan.

On Thursday, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa met with U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel at her ministry, asking the United States "to promptly provide information to the Japanese side." Emanuel said the focus now is the search for the missing crew members and he thanked Japanese troops, coast guard and local fishermen for "being side by side."

NHK public television and other news outlets reported that the aircraft had requested an emergency landing at the Yakushima airport about five minutes before it was lost from radar. NHK quoted a Yakushima resident saying he saw the aircraft turn upside down, with fire coming from one of its engines, and then an explosion before it fell into the sea.

U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command said the CV-22B Osprey was one of six deployed to Yokota Air Base, home to U.S. Forces Japan and the Fifth Air Force, and assigned to the 353rd Special Operations Wing.

The aircraft had departed from the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, Japanese officials said.

Last year, Air Force Special Operations Command ordered a temporary stand-down of its Osprey fleet

following back-to-back safety incidents where the Osprey clutch slipped, causing an uneven distribution of power to its rotors.

The Marine Corps and Navy have reported similar clutch slips, and each service has worked to address the issue in their aircraft, however clutch failure was also cited in a 2022 fatal U.S. Marine Corps Osprey crash that killed five.

According to the investigation of that crash, "dual hard clutch engagement" led to engine failure.

Separately, a U.S. Marine Corps Osprey with 23 Marines aboard crashed on a northern Australian island in August, killing three Marines and critically injuring at least five others who were taking part in a multi-national training exercise.

Live updates | Two Israeli hostages are released after Hamas and Israel extend their cease-fire

By The Associated Press undefined

A temporary cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war has been extended another day, according to mediator Qatar. The announcement Thursday morning came minutes before the cease-fire was set to expire.

Hamas freed two Israeli hostages Thursday afternoon and they were brought back into Israel, with more expected to follow, the Israeli military said.

Israel had agreed to extend the truce by one day for every 10 militant-held hostages who are freed. The cease-fire, which began Nov. 24 and was originally set to expire on Monday, has paused the deadliest fighting between Israel and Palestinians in decades.

Israel has vowed to resume the war in an effort to end Hamas' 16-year rule of Gaza, but it's facing mounting international pressure to spare southern Gaza a devastating ground offensive like the one that has demolished much of the north.

Roughly 240 hostages were captured by Hamas in its Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel that ignited the war. More than 13,300 Palestinians have been killed since the war began, according to the Hamas-controlled Health Ministry in Gaza, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants. About 1,200 people have been killed in Israel, mostly during the initial incursion by Hamas.

Currently:

— Truce in Israel-Hamas war is extended by a day, minutes before it was set to expire.

— Jake Sullivan says the White House is not seeking conditions on military aid to Israel, despite Biden's comment.

— Israel compares Hamas to the Islamic State group. But the comparison misses the mark in key ways.

— U.S. Senate Majority Leader Schumer warns that antisemitism is on the rise as he pushes for Israel aid.

— A friendship forged over 7 weeks of captivity lives on.

— Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's what's happening in the war:

WHITE HOUSE CONDEMNS JERUSALEM SHOOTING BY HAMAS

WASHINGTON — The White House condemned Thursday's deadly attack by two Palestinian gunmen on people waiting for buses along a main highway entering Jerusalem, saying the attack was "stark reminder" of the enemy Israel is facing.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the attack, which Hamas claimed responsibility for, "technically" didn't violate the terms of the ongoing truce between Israel and Hamas, which only covers Gaza.

"I mean, if anybody's guessing and wondering whether Hamas still has murderous intentions against the Israeli people, just look at what happened in Jerusalem today," Kirby said.

Kirby also expressed hope that the truce, which was extended for a seventh day on Thursday, will be extended again.

"We're working on it literally by the hour to see if we can get this seventh day turned into an eighth and

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 70 of 81

ninth and 10th and beyond," he said.

MACRON WELCOMES RELEASE OF FRENCH ISRAELI HOSTAGE

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the release of a French Israeli hostage on Thursday.

"Mia Schem is free," Macron said on X, formerly Twitter. "I share this great joy with her family and all French people."

Macron also expressed his "solidarity with all those who remain hostages of Hamas. France is working with its partners to secure their release as soon as possible."

ISRAEL RECALLS ITS AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN

MADRID — Israel is recalling its ambassador to Spain for consultations after what it described as "outrageous" remarks by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said Sánchez "had once again repeated baseless accusations" against Israel regarding the war.

"Israel is acting, and will continue to act, according to international law, and will continue the war until all the hostages are returned and Hamas is eliminated from Gaza," Cohen said on X, formerly Twitter. "A single entity is responsible for the October 7 massacre and for the current situation in the Gaza Strip, and that is the Hamas terror organization."

Cohen did not specify Sánchez's remarks, but Sánchez told Spanish National Television on Thursday that while he condemned the Hamas attack, Israel must respect international law.

"With the images we are seeing and the growing number, especially of boys and girls, who are dying, I have sincere doubts that they are complying with this international humanitarian law," Sánchez said.

During a trip with his Belgian counterpart to Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt last week, Sánchez criticized Israel's operations and said a Palestinian state should be recognized. Israel later summoned the Belgian and Spanish ambassadors.

ICC PROSECUTOR TO MEET WITH SURVIVORS OF OCT. 7 ATTACK

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan is visiting Israel "at the request and invitation of survivors & the families of victims of the 7 October attacks," the court said in a tweet.

It says Khan will also visit Ramallah to meet senior Palestinian officials.

"The visit, while not investigative in nature, represents an important opportunity to express sympathy for all victims and engage in dialogue," the court said.

ISRAEL SAYS 2 MORE HOSTAGES RELEASED FROM GAZA

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Thursday that two Israeli hostages were released from captivity in the Gaza Strip.

In a statement, the army said the Red Cross had transferred the two women to Israeli forces. They were to be taken to an Israeli military base.

The two hostages are among a larger group of Israelis expected to be released Thursday as part of the latest extension of a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. Israel was to free some 30 Palestinian prisoners later Thursday.

BLINKEN URGES ISRAEL TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW IN WAR AGAINST HAMAS

TEL AVIV, Israel — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is reminding Israeli leaders of the need for Israel to comply with international law as it prosecutes its war against Hamas in Gaza.

Blinken also said it is imperative that Israel take great care to avoid civilian casualties if it starts major military operations in southern Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have sought shelter after fleeing their homes in the northern part of the territory.

He said the U.S. places great importance on the resumption of a peace process that would eventually lead to the creation of a Palestinian state, something that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opposes.

Speaking Thursday just hours after Israel and Hamas agreed at the last minute to a third extension of their cease-fire agreement, Blinken told Netanyahu that the U.S. will continue "support for Israel's right to protect itself from terrorist violence in compliance with international humanitarian law and urged Israel to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 71 of 81

take every possible measure to avoid civilian harm," the State Department said.

The message aligned with the Biden administration's shifting rhetoric on the war, which began as a full-throated embrace of Israel's response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks but gradually tempered as the number of Palestinian civilian casualties began to rise, prompting widespread international criticism.

To prevent a further exponential increase in civilian casualties, Blinken "stressed the imperative of accounting for humanitarian and civilian protection needs in southern Gaza before any military operations there and urged immediate steps to hold settler extremists accountable for violence against Palestinians in the West Bank," the State Department said Blinken told Netanyahu.

Blinken met with Netanyahu and his war Cabinet in Jerusalem before traveling to the occupied West Bank for talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

ISRAELI MAN BELIEVED HELD HOSTAGE IS CONFIRMED DEAD

The Israeli army has confirmed that Ofir Tzarfati, an Israeli believed to be held hostage in Gaza, is dead. Tzarfati was thought to be among the approximately 240 people taken hostage by Hamas on October 7. He had been celebrating his 27th birthday at a music festival with his girlfriend when Hamas militants stormed into Israel and killed at least 364 people at the festival and kidnapped many others.

Tzarfati's family was originally unclear what happened to him, but a few weeks later, the army notified the family that they believed that Tzarfati was being held in Gaza, according to media reports.

The army did not specify where Tzarfati's body was identified

AT LEAST 3 KILLED AND SEVERAL WOUNDED IN A SHOOTING IN JERUSALEM, POLICE SAY

TEL AVIV, Israel — Two gunman opened fire on a crowded bus station at the entrance of Jerusalem, killing at least three people and wounding several others, according to Jerusalem police.

"The bus station was very crowded, which is why so many people were wounded," said Magen David Adom spokesperson Zaki Heller told Army Radio. According to police, the two gunmen drove toward the bus stop armed with a handgun and an M16 rifle and opened fire. Both were killed at the scene by two soldiers who were near the bus stop.

Jerusalem police chief Doron Turgeman said police believe both attackers were from east Jerusalem. It was unclear if the attack was carried out by a Palestinian militant group or individuals acting on their own, or if it would have any impact on the truce in Gaza.

One 24-year-old woman was pronounced dead at the scene and another man died later at the hospital.

A year ago, a bomb exploded at the same bus stop, killing a 16-year-old boy and wounding 18.

ISRAEL AND HAMAS EXTEND CEASE-FIRE BY ONE MORE DAY

JERUSALEM — Israel and Hamas agreed to extend a temporary truce by another day just minutes before it was set to expire, said Qatar, which has been mediating between the two sides.

The truce was set to expire Thursday morning. Negotiations on extending it came down to the wire, with last-minute disagreements over the hostages to be freed by Hamas in exchange for another day of a halt in fighting.

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said the truce was being extended under the same terms as in the past, under which Hamas has released 10 Israeli hostages per day in exchange for 30 Palestinian prisoners.

ISRAEL RELEASES MORE PALESTINIAN PRISONERS, INCLUDING AHED TAMIMI

Israel released another group of Palestinian prisoners early Thursday in exchange for 16 hostages freed hours earlier by the Islamic militant group Hamas in Gaza.

A bus carrying some of the Palestinian detainees arrived in the West Bank city of Ramallah before dawn. The releases came on the sixth day of a temporary truce in the Israel-Hamas war.

Most prominent among those freed was 22-year-old Ahed Tamimi, an activist who gained worldwide fame in 2017 after a video of her slapping an Israeli soldier went viral on social media.

Israeli troops arrested her at her West Bank home on Nov. 6 for "inciting to terrorism" on her Instagram account. Her mother said Tamimi's account had been hacked.

Review: In concert film 'Renaissance,' Beyoncé offers glimpse into personal life during world tour

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In Beyoncé's concert film, she described her recent Renaissance World Tour as being run like a machine: From lighting to set design, the superstar singer had a hand in everything production-related to ensure her stadium tour exceeded expectations after four years of preparation.

As a perfectionist, Beyoncé was tirelessly determined — working almost 50 days straight — to create an epic concert experience. This comes clear in her movie "Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé," which chronicles the massive tour in support of her seventh studio album. The film — written, directed and produced by Beyoncé — perfectly captures her dazzling performances for the big screen and somewhat unveils intimate behind-the-scenes footage from a normally private singer, who has rarely done interviews in the past decade.

Beyoncé released her nearly three-hour "Renaissance" movie through AMC Theaters in similar fashion as the "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" film, which opened with a record-breaking \$97 million domestically for a concert film last month. But unlike Swift, whose project primarily focused on her onstage performances, Beyoncé took a different approach by offering more insight into her personal life.

"I'm really excited for everyone to see the process," she said in the film.

With "Renaissance," Beyoncé displays more of her human side like in her 2019 Netflix film "Homecoming," which delved into the singer headlining the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. This time, she goes a step further into her story as arguably music's most hardest-working performer, who attempts to juggle being a mother of three children while she maintains her mental and physical fortitude during her tour.

Beyoncé expressed frustration with challenges to her lofty aspirations for her tour and felt she wasn't being heard because she's a Black woman. The tour ultimately grossed around \$500 million, according to Billboard. She opens up about having surgery on her knee, which forced her into rehabilitation a month before her first opening show in Stockholm.

Unlike her tour, Beyoncé confesses she's "not a machine."

But through her aches and pains, Beyoncé — who is the most decorated Grammy artist in history — showed up and performed at a very high level. It's what she demanded of herself and others who mirrored her mentality to make each show come into fruition.

The film showcases a few big-named performers who separately accompanied Beyoncé onstage including Megan Thee Stallion in Houston. During her Los Angeles stint, Kendrick Lamar was special guest along with Diana Ross, who sang to Beyoncé for her 42nd birthday.

But out of all the celebrity appearances, the one who stole the show was Beyoncé's 11-year-old daughter, Blue Ivy, who made her presence felt as a background dancer. Initially, the singer was opposed to pushing Blue into the limelight of performing in front of tens of thousands.

"She told me she was ready to perform, and I told her no," Beyoncé said in the film.

In time, Queen Bey finally gave into her princess, agreeing she had only one time to show her stuff. Her first performance, however, fell under heavy scrutiny on social media from those who criticized Blue Ivy's dance moves as subpar.

But Blue Ivy used the criticism to train harder. She gained confidence as the tour progressed and gained more standing applause each time she hit the stage.

Blue Ivy's maturation brought joy to Beyoncé and to Mathew Knowles, the proud grandfather who was shown saying "Now, that's a Knowles!"

During a stop in Houston, Beyoncé along with her mother, Tina Knowles, drove around her old Third Ward neighborhood before they stopped by her childhood home. The return to her hometown marked another reunion between Beyoncé and all the members of the girl group Destiny's Child — which included Kelly Rowland, Michelle Williams, LeToya Luckett and LaTavia Roberson, who was once ousted from the group.

Now, it appears peace is between them. There were no words exchanged on camera except for a collective hug, which Beyoncé called during her narration a "new birth for us. A lot of healing."

Beyoncé along with her mother shared heartfelt moments of the singer's late uncle Johnny — a Black gay man who introduced her to house music as a child and made her prom dress. She dedicated the "Renaissance" album to him.

The film squeezed in Beyoncé's appreciation for her devoted BeyHive fanbase who were often shown in the audience in various cities. During her shows, she expressed her gratitude for them, calling them "beautiful faces."

Not every song performed on tour made the cut for the film except for jams like "Alien Superstar," "Church Girl" and "Cuff It."

And that's just fine. This "Renaissance" film is more about getting a glimpse into her life - even for just a little bit.

"Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé," an AMC release, is not rated. Running time: 168 minutes. Four stars out of four.

Penguin parents sleep for just a few seconds at a time to guard newborns, study shows

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a challenge for all new parents: Getting enough sleep while keeping a close eye on their newborns. For some penguins, it means thousands of mini-catnaps a day, researchers discovered.

Chinstrap penguins in Antarctica need to guard their eggs and chicks around-the-clock in crowded, noisy colonies. So they nod off thousands of times each day — but only for about four seconds at a time — to stay vigilant, the researchers reported Thursday in the journal *Science*.

These short "microsleeps," totaling around 11 hours per day, appear to be enough to keep the parents going for weeks.

"These penguins look like drowsy drivers, blinking their eyes open and shut, and they do it 24/7 for several weeks at a time," said Niels Rattenborg, a sleep researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Intelligence in Germany and co-author of the new study.

"What's surprising is that they're able to function OK and successfully raise their young," he said.

Chinstrap penguins, named for the thin line of black facial feathers resembling a chinstrap, usually lay their eggs in pebble nests in November. As with many other kinds of penguins, mated pairs share parenting duties. One parent tends to the eggs and chicks alone while the other goes off fishing for family meals.

While the adults don't face many natural predators in the breeding season, large birds called brown skuas prey on eggs and small fuzzy gray chicks. Other adults may also try to steal pebbles from nests. So the devoted parents must be always on guard.

For the first time, the scientists tracked the sleeping behavior of chinstrap penguins in an Antarctic breeding colony by attaching sensors that measure brain waves. They collected data on 14 adults over 11 days on King George Island off the coast of Antarctica.

The idea for the study was hatched when Won Young Lee, a biologist at the Korean Polar Research Institute, noticed breeding penguins frequently blinking their eyes and apparently nodding off during his long days of field observations. But the team needed to record brain waves to confirm they were sleeping.

"For these penguins, microsleeps have some restorative functions — if not, they could not endure," he said.

The researchers did not collect sleep data outside the breeding season, but they hypothesize that the penguins may sleep in longer intervals at other times of the year.

"We don't know yet if the benefits of microsleep are the same as for long consolidated sleep," said Paul-Antoine Libourel, a co-author and sleep researcher at the Neuroscience Research Center of Lyon in France. They also don't know if other penguin species sleep in a similar fragmented fashion.

Scientists have documented a few other animals with special sleeping adaptations. While flying, frigatebirds can sleep one half of their brain at a time, and northern elephant seals can nap for 10 or 15 minutes at a time during deep dives, for example.

But chinstrap penguin microsleeps appear to be a new extreme, researchers say.

"Penguins live in a high-stress environment. They breed in crowded colonies, and all their predators are there at the same time," said Daniel Paranhos Zitterbart, who studies penguins at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts and was not involved in the study.

Microsleeping is "an amazing adaptation" to enable near constant vigilance, he said.

Wartime Israel shows little tolerance for Palestinian dissent

By AMY TEIBEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Bayan Khateeb knows she's a terrible cook. So when she managed to pull off a dish of cooked tomatoes and eggs, she took a photo to show friends on social media.

"Soon we shall eat the Shakshouka of victory!" crowed her caption, which included an emoji of the Palestinian flag.

Khateeb intended the Oct. 8 Instagram post as a joke, she said. But in the fraught atmosphere that has gripped Israel since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, statements that might have once sounded innocuous have taken on more sinister meaning and resulted in scores of arrests.

A classmate saw the post and thought Khateeb, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, was cheering on Hamas. When the post was shared more widely, Khateeb suddenly found herself accused online of supporting terrorism. The next thing she knew, she was suspended from her studies at a prestigious university, ejected from her dorm, fired from her two jobs and interrogated in shackles by Israeli police.

"I felt like I was in a nightmare. You're arresting me, after I was subjected to two weeks of political persecution?" she said. "How did I end up in this situation?"

She was among more than 270 Palestinian citizens who have been arrested in an Israeli crackdown on free speech and political activity since the Hamas attack, according to Adalah, an advocacy organization for Palestinians inside Israel.

Palestinian citizens have also reported intimidation, firings and expulsions from universities, as well as surveillance of their online speech by other civilians.

"People are arrested for anything expressing sympathy for the civilian victims in Gaza," said lawyer Abeer Baker, who represents another woman who was arrested. "Everything that was not in favor of attacking Gaza as such actually puts you in danger of being arrested."

The arrests go to the heart of the dual identity of Palestinian citizens as they struggle to navigate a Jewish-majority society. Palestinian citizens have equal rights on paper but have historically suffered from discrimination in job opportunities, housing, health care and education. The community is one of Israel's poorest.

The arrests also raise questions about Israel's commitment to free speech and the rights of its Palestinian minority, which accounts for a fifth of the country's nearly 10 million people.

"We have undergone many wars. Never was such suppression ever declared before," said Hassan Jaba-reen, the director general of Adalah. "People among themselves speak about living under a dictatorial regime. A Jewish, racist dictatorship."

Police did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Some of the Palestinian citizens arrested over the past five weeks allegedly expressed outright support for Hamas and its onslaught.

"There is nothing better than to wake up to the terror and fear of the Zionists, and missiles falling on their heads," a preschool aide is accused of posting.

But others have been detained because authorities either misinterpreted posts or conflated support for the people of Gaza with support for terrorism, critics say. Prominent Arab leaders in Israel have been arrested for challenging a ban on anti-war protests, and two Arab lawmakers were sanctioned for remarks related to the Hamas attack.

Baker's client, singer and neuroscientist Dalal Abu Amneh, didn't expect to find herself behind bars when she went to Israeli police to file a complaint about threats she received in response to an online post. But

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 75 of 81

like Khateeb, she found herself in shackles and in jail after posting "No victor but God" on social media, with an emoji of the Palestinian flag, on the day of the Hamas attack.

"Dalal believes in God. It means he is the only one who can bring justice, who can bring peace," Baker said. "This sentence was interpreted wrongly as if she said Palestine will win."

Jews aren't immune from punishment, although it is rare. Earlier this month, a court extended the remand of a Jewish teacher who posted anti-war and anti-occupation messages on Facebook and was fired from his job, the Haaretz daily newspaper reported.

Videos posted on social media by Israeli police delivered an unmistakable message: There will be zero tolerance for any identification with the Gaza Strip and the enclave's Hamas rulers.

"We are at war and the orders are unequivocal: There will be zero tolerance for any incident," Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai said in one video.

"Anyone who wants to be a citizen, ahlan wasahlan," Shabtai said, using the Arabic phrase for welcome. "Anyone who wants to identify with Gaza is also welcome — I'll put them on a bus and send them there."

Danny Danon, a lawmaker in the ruling Likud Party, said only a small number of Israel's Arab minority have crossed the line. "But when you see those incidents of radicals trying to promote violence, I think it's necessary to stop it at the initial stages," he said.

Asked whether officials may have gone too far in their crackdown, he said: "I trust our legal system."

The arrests have unfolded under the most right-wing government in Israel's history and amid the trauma of the Hamas attack, which killed at least 1,200 people and resulted in over 240 others being taken hostage.

The violence has not spared Israel's Palestinian citizens: At least 21 were killed in the initial attack and by rocket and mortar fire launched by Hamas and its Lebanese Hezbollah ally, said Atta Abu Mtegem, mayor of the Bedouin city of Rahat. Seven are missing, and possibly captured by Hamas, he said. Others, including soldiers, have died in the fighting.

At the same time, the images of devastation coming out of Gaza have been wrenching for a community with close ties to Palestinians there and in the West Bank. The death toll from Israel's assault on Gaza has topped 13,000, according to health authorities there. Airstrikes have leveled wide swaths of the territory and displaced more than two thirds of its 2.3 million people.

Following the Hamas attack, some Palestinians have been afraid to go to work or mix with Jews, and lawyers and professors are afraid of running afoul of undefined new limits on speech, Jabareen said.

More than 100 Palestinian citizens have been suspended or expelled from universities and colleges over posts, according to Adalah. Arab students at one college had to be extricated from their dormitory after hundreds of Jews, some chanting "Death to Arabs," protested outside, accusing them of disrupting a Sabbath prayer service and hurling eggs, Israeli media reported.

Many Palestinian citizens are afraid to post messages online for fear they will be detained.

"The reality is so bleak that if you call for a cease-fire, you must be a supporter of terrorism," Hanin Majdli, a journalist and editor at Haaretz, wrote in an Oct. 29 opinion piece. "This is the way they continue to deepen the idea of 'the enemy within us.'"

More than 50 of the Palestinian citizens who have been arrested have been indicted. Indictments have also been filed against eight Jewish defendants alleging racially motivated violence, but not for online behavior or the dorm incident.

Lawmakers have also entered the fray with new legislation criminalizing the "systematic consumption of terrorist content" and allowing the government to block or shutter foreign media deemed hostile to the state.

Interior Minister Moshe Arbel, meanwhile, has instructed authorities to look into stripping a Palestinian actress of her Israeli citizenship for posting material that included laughing emojis on a photo of an elderly woman being taken into captivity by Hamas militants, with the caption, "She is going on the adventure of her life."

For now, Khateeb is living in limbo. Her suspension from her data science and engineering program is open ended. She's unemployed, living with her parents and waiting to see if she gets indicted.

"Besides the war that we are experiencing right now," she said, "I am personally experiencing another

war — a war between us, between the citizens of Israel.”

Russia’s Supreme Court effectively outlaws LGBTQ+ activism in a landmark ruling

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russia’s Supreme Court effectively outlawed LGBTQ+ activism on Thursday, the most drastic step against advocates of gay, lesbian and transgender rights in the increasingly conservative country.

Ruling in response to a lawsuit filed by the Justice Ministry, the court labeled what the suit called the LGBTQ+ “movement” operating in Russia as an extremist organization and banned it.

The ruling is the latest step in a decade-long crackdown on LGBTQ+ rights in Russia under President Vladimir Putin, who has emphasized “traditional family values” during his 24 years in power.

Thursday’s closed-door hearing lasted four hours. No one besides Justice Ministry representatives were allowed in, and there was no defendant. Journalists were taken into the courtroom only for the reading of the verdict by Judge Oleg Nefedov, who wore a face mask, apparently for health reasons.

The case was classified, and the ministry didn’t disclose any evidence, saying only that authorities had identified “signs and manifestations of an extremist nature” in the movement it seeks to ban, including “incitement of social and religious discord.”

Multiple rights activists have noted the lawsuit was lodged against a movement that is not an official entity, and that under its broad and vague definition, Russian authorities could crack down on any individuals or groups deemed to be part of it.

“In practice, it could happen that the Russian authorities, with this court ruling in hand, will enforce (the ruling) against LGBTQ+ initiatives that work in Russia, considering them a part of this civic movement,” said Max Olenichev, a human rights lawyer who works with the Russian LGBTQ+ community, contacted by The Associated Press before the ruling.

The lawsuit targets activists and effectively prohibits any organized activity to defend the rights of LGBTQ+ people, Olenichev added.

Multiple Russian independent media outlets and rights groups added rainbow symbols to their logos on social media in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community.

Amnesty International called the ruling “shameful and absurd,” warning it could lead to a blanket ban on LGBTQ+ organizations, violate freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly, and lead to discrimination.

“It will affect countless people, and its repercussions are poised to be nothing short of catastrophic,” said Marie Struthers, the group’s director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

A Russian Orthodox Church spokesman praised the ruling, telling the state-run RIA Novosti news agency that it was “a form of moral self-defense by society” from efforts to push “the Christian idea of marriage and family from the public and legal realms.”

The Justice Ministry has not commented.

Before the ruling, leading Russian human rights groups filed a document with the court that called the lawsuit “anti-lawful,” discriminatory and a violation of the constitution and international human rights treaties that Moscow has signed. Some LGBTQ+ activists said they tried to become a party to the lawsuit but were rebuffed by the court.

“We tried to find some legal logic in this absurdity,” said Igor Kochetkov, a human rights advocate and founder of the Russian LGBT Network rights group.

“We tried to appeal to the Supreme Court’s common sense and say: ‘Look, here I am, a person who’s been involved in LGBT activism for years, who’s been promoting these ideas — ideas of defending human rights, mind you — and this lawsuit concerns me,’” he told the AP.

“They don’t want any trial,” Kochetkov added. “They do not want to address this matter. This is a political order, and they are following it. It is the end of any kind of justice in Russia, by and large.”

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 77 of 81

In 2013, the Kremlin adopted the first legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights, known as the "gay propaganda" law, banning any public endorsement of "nontraditional sexual relations" among minors. In 2020, constitutional reforms pushed through by Putin to extend his rule by two more terms also included a provision to outlaw same-sex marriage.

After sending troops into Ukraine in 2022, the Kremlin ramped up a campaign against what it called the West's "degrading" influence, in what rights advocates saw as an attempt to legitimize the war. That same year, the authorities adopted a law banning propaganda of "nontraditional sexual relations" among adults, also, effectively outlawing any public endorsement of LGBTQ+ people.

Another law passed this year prohibited gender transitioning procedures and gender-affirming care for transgender people. The legislation prohibited any "medical interventions aimed at changing the sex of a person," as well as changing one's gender in official documents and public records. It also amended Russia's Family Code by listing gender change as a reason to annul a marriage and adding those "who had changed gender" to a list of people who can't become foster or adoptive parents.

"Do we really want to have here, in our country, in Russia, 'Parent No. 1, No. 2, No. 3' instead of 'mom' and 'dad?'" Putin said in September 2022. "Do we really want perversions that lead to degradation and extinction to be imposed in our schools from the primary grades?"

Authorities reject accusations of LGBTQ+ discrimination. Earlier this month, Russian media quoted Deputy Justice Minister Andrei Loginov as saying that "the rights of LGBT people in Russia are protected" legally. He was presenting a report on human rights in Russia to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, arguing that "restraining public demonstration of nontraditional sexual relationships or preferences is not a form of censure for them."

Olenichev said the Supreme Court ruling ushers in a number of restrictions, such as participating in, aiding or funding extremist organizations; publicly using certain logos and symbols related with them; or publicly endorsing ideas they propagate. But while a court-mandated ban for an extremist organization to operate comes into force immediately, these restrictions will start 30 days after the ruling, if a defendant doesn't appeal.

The exact nature of these restrictions — such as which symbols will be banned — remains unclear, because the case is classified, and will only become apparent in the first legal actions brought against activists, Olenichev added, although violating them exposes people to prosecution and potential prison terms.

This will likely lead to a decrease in legal, psychological and other aid and support for LGBTQ+ people in Russia get from rights groups and grassroots initiatives, he said, and make the community itself and its needs less visible.

"The authorities are doing everything for the LGBT agenda to disappear from the public square," he added.

Many people will see leaving Russia before they become targeted as the only option, said Olga Baranova, director of the Moscow Community Center for LGBT+ Initiatives.

"It is clear for us that they're once again making us out as a domestic enemy to shift the focus from all the other problems that are in abundance in Russia," Baranova told AP.

Others are determined to stay and continue working with the LGBTQ+ community.

Dasha Yakovleva said Feminitive, a women's group she co-founded, is the only group in Russia's westernmost Kaliningrad region that, in addition to advocating for women's rights, offers support to LGBTQ+ people at the moment and will "look for ways" to continue.

She told AP that she sees value in helping LGBTQ+ people exercise their rights.

"Since our state doesn't intend to do that, then it's the task for our civil society to try to be an island of safety, of advocacy, a connection with the international community," Yakovleva said

Shane MacGowan, lead singer of The Pogues and a laureate of booze and beauty, dies at age 65

By JILL LAWLESS and DAVE BRYAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Shane MacGowan, the boozy, rabble-rousing singer and chief songwriter of The Pogues, who infused traditional Irish music with the energy and spirit of punk, died Thursday, his family said. He was 65.

MacGowan's songwriting and persona made him an iconic figure in contemporary Irish culture, and some of his compositions have become classics — most notably the bittersweet Christmas ballad "Fairytale of New York," which Irish President Michael D. Higgins said "will be listened to every Christmas for the next century or more."

"It is with the deepest sorrow and heaviest of hearts that we announce the passing of our most beautiful, darling and dearly beloved Shane MacGowan," his wife Victoria Clarke, his sister Siobhan and father Maurice said in a statement.

The singer died peacefully with his family by his side, the statement added.

The musician had been hospitalized in Dublin for several months after being diagnosed with viral encephalitis in late 2022. He was discharged last week, ahead of his upcoming birthday on Christmas Day.

The Pogues melded Irish folk and rock 'n' roll into a unique, intoxicating blend, though MacGowan became as famous for his sozzled, slurred performances as for his powerful songwriting.

His songs blended the scabrous and the sentimental, ranging from carousing anthems to snapshots of life in the gutter to unexpectedly tender love songs. The Pogues' most famous song, "Fairytale of New York" is a tale of down-on-their-luck immigrant lovers that opens with the decidedly unfestive words: "It was Christmas Eve, babe, in the drunk tank." The duet between the raspy-voiced MacGowan and the velvet tones of the late Kirsty MacColl is by far the most beloved Pogues song in both Ireland and the U.K.

Singer-songwriter Nick Cave called Shane MacGowan "a true friend and the greatest songwriter of his generation."

Higgins, the Irish president, said "his songs capture within them, as Shane would put it, the measure of our dreams."

"His words have connected Irish people all over the globe to their culture and history, encompassing so many human emotions in the most poetic of ways," Higgins said.

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said MacGowan's songs "beautifully captured the Irish experience, especially the experience of being Irish abroad."

Sinn Fein President Mary Lou McDonald said: "Nobody told the Irish story like Shane — stories of emigration, heartache, dislocation, redemption, love and joy."

Born on Christmas Day 1957 in England to Irish parents, MacGowan spent his early years in rural Ireland before the family moved back to London. Ireland remained the lifelong center of his imagination and his yearning. He grew up steeped in Irish music absorbed from family and neighbors, along with the sounds of rock, Motown, reggae and jazz.

He attended the elite Westminster School in London, from which he was expelled, and spent time in a psychiatric hospital after a breakdown in his teens.

MacGowan embraced the punk scene that exploded in Britain in the mid-1970s. He joined a band called the Nipple Erectors, performing under the name Shane O'Hooligan, before forming The Pogues alongside musicians including Jem Finer and Spider Stacey.

The Pogues — shortened from the original name Pogue Mahone, a rude Irish phrase — fused punk's furious energy with traditional Irish melodies and instruments including banjo, tin whistle and accordion.

"It never occurred to me that you could play Irish music to a rock audience," MacGowan recalled in "A Drink with Shane MacGowan," a 2001 memoir co-authored with Clarke. "Then it finally clicked. Start a London Irish band playing Irish music with a rock and roll beat. The original idea was just to rock up old ones but then I started writing."

The band's first album, "Red Roses for Me," was released in 1984 and featured raucous versions of

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 79 of 81

Irish folk songs alongside originals including "Boys from the County Hell," "Dark Streets of London" and "Streams of Whisky."

Playing pubs and clubs in London and beyond, the band earned a loyal following and praise from music critics and fellow musicians from Bono to Bob Dylan.

MacGowan wrote many of the songs on the next two albums, "Rum, Sodomy and the Lash" (1985) and "If I Should Fall from Grace with God" (1988), ranging from rollicking rousers like the latter album's title track to ballads like "A Pair of Brown Eyes" and "The Broad Majestic Shannon."

The band also released a 1986 EP, "Poguetry in Motion," which contained two of MacGowan's finest songs, "A Rainy Night in Soho" and "The Body of an American." The latter featured prominently in early-2000s TV series "The Wire," sung at the wakes of Baltimore police officers.

"I wanted to make pure music that could be from any time, to make time irrelevant, to make generations and decades irrelevant," he recalled in his memoir.

The Pogues were briefly on top of the world, with sold-out tours and appearances on U.S. television, but the band's output and appearances grew more erratic, due in part to MacGowan's struggles with alcohol and drugs. He was fired by the other band members in 1991 after they became fed up with a string of no-shows, including when The Pogues were opening for Dylan. The band briefly replaced MacGowan with Clash frontman Joe Strummer before breaking up.

MacGowan performed with a new band, Shane MacGowan and the Popes, with whom he put out two albums: "The Snake" in 1995 and "The Crock Of Gold" in 1997. He reunited with The Pogues in 2001 for a series of concerts and tours, despite his well-documented problems with drinking and performances that regularly included slurred lyrics and at least one fall on stage.

MacGowan had years of health problems and used a wheelchair after breaking his pelvis a decade ago. He was long famous for his broken, rotten teeth until receiving a full set of implants in 2015 from a dental surgeon who described the procedure as "the Everest of dentistry."

MacGowan received a lifetime achievement award from the Irish president on his 60th birthday. The occasion was marked with a celebratory concert at the National Concert Hall in Dublin with performers including Bono, Nick Cave, Sinéad O'Connor and Johnny Depp.

Clarke wrote on Instagram that "there's no way to describe the loss that I am feeling and the longing for just one more of his smiles that lit up my world."

"I am blessed beyond words to have met him and to have loved him and to have been so endlessly and unconditionally loved by him and to have had so many years of life and love and joy and fun and laughter and so many adventures," she wrote.

UN weather agency says 2023 is the hottest year on record, warns of further climate extremes ahead

By JAMEY KEATEN and BASSAM HATOUM Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.N. weather agency said Thursday that 2023 is all but certain to be the hottest year on record, and warning of worrying trends that suggest increasing floods, wildfires, glacier melt, and heat waves in the future.

The World Meteorological Organization also warned that the average temperature for the year is up some 1.4 degrees Celsius (2.5 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-industrial times — a mere one-tenth of a degree under a target limit for the end of the century as laid out by the Paris climate accord in 2015.

The WMO secretary-general said the onset earlier this year of El Nino, the weather phenomenon marked by heating in the Pacific Ocean, could tip the average temperature next year over the 1.5-degree (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) target cap set in Paris.

"It's practically sure that during the coming four years we will hit this 1.5, at least on temporary basis," Petteri Taalas said in an interview. "And in the next decade we are more or less going to be there on a permanent basis."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 80 of 81

WMO issued the findings for Thursday's start of the U.N.'s annual climate conference, this year being held in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates city of Dubai.

The U.N. agency said the benchmark of key Paris accord goal will be whether the 1.5-degree increase is sustained over a 30-year span – not just a single year – but others say the world needs more clarity on that.

"Clarity on breaching the Paris agreement guard rails will be crucial," said Richard Betts of Britain's Met Office, the lead author of a new paper on the issue with University of Exeter published in the journal Nature.

"Without an agreement on what actually will count as exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius, we risk distraction and confusion at precisely the time when action to avoid the worst effects of climate change becomes even more urgent," he added.

WMO's Taalas said that whatever the case, the world appears on course to blow well past that figure anyway.

"We are heading towards 2.5 to 3 degrees warming and that would mean that we would see massively more negative impacts of climate change," Taalas said, pointing to glacier loss and sea level rise over "the coming thousands of years."

The nine years 2015 to 2023 were the warmest on record, WMO said. Its findings for this year run through October, but it says the last two months are not likely to be enough to keep 2023 from being a record-hot year.

Still, there are "some signs of hope" – including a turn toward renewable energies and more electric cars, which help reduce the amount of carbon that is spewed into the atmosphere, trapping heat inside," Taalas said.

His message for attendee at the U.N climate conference, known as COP28?

"We have to reduce our consumption of coal, oil and natural gas dramatically to be able to limit the warming to the Paris limits," he said. "Luckily, things are happening. But still, we in the Western countries, in the rich countries, we are still consuming oil, a little bit less coal than in the past, and still natural gas."

"Reduction of fossil fuel consumption -- that's the key to success."

Today in History: December 1 Ukraine chooses independence from Soviet Union

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 1, the 335th day of 2023. There are 30 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 1, 1991, Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly for independence from the Soviet Union.

On this date:

In 1824, the presidential election was turned over to the U.S. House of Representatives when a deadlock developed among John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, William H. Crawford and Henry Clay. (Adams ended up the winner.)

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln sent his Second Annual Message to Congress, in which he called for the abolition of slavery, and went on to say, "Fellow-citizens, we can not escape history. We of this Congress and this Administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves."

In 1941, Japan's Emperor Hirohito approved waging war against the United States, Britain and the Netherlands after his government rejected U.S. demands contained in the Hull Note.

In 1942, during World War II, nationwide gasoline rationing went into effect in the United States; the goal was not so much to save on gas, but to conserve rubber that was desperately needed for the war effort by reducing the use of tires.

In 1952, the New York Daily News ran a front-page story on Christine Jorgensen's sex-reassignment surgery with the headline, "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty".

In 1955, Rosa Parks, a Black seamstress, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat to a white man

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 01, 2023 ~ Vol. 33 - No. 160 ~ 81 of 81

on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus; the incident sparked a year-long boycott of the buses.

In 1965, an airlift of refugees from Cuba to the United States began in which thousands of Cubans were allowed to leave their homeland.

In 1969, the U.S. government held its first draft lottery since World War II.

In 1974, TWA Flight 514, a Washington-bound Boeing 727, crashed in Virginia after being diverted from National Airport to Dulles International Airport; all 92 people on board were killed. On the same day, Northwest Orient Airlines Flight 6231, a Boeing 727, crashed near Stony Point, New York, with the loss of its three crew members (the plane had been chartered to pick up the Baltimore Colts football team in Buffalo, New York).

In 2005, a roadside bomb killed 10 U.S. Marines near Fallujah, Iraq.

In 2009, President Barack Obama ordered 30,000 more U.S. troops into the war in Afghanistan but promised during a speech to cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to begin withdrawals in 18 months.

In 2012, Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher fatally shot his girlfriend, Kasandra Perkins, then drove to Arrowhead Stadium and took his own life in front of the team's coach and general manager.

In 2013, a New York City commuter train rounding a riverside curve derailed, killing four people and injuring more than 70.

In 2017, retired general Michael Flynn, who served as President Donald Trump's first national security adviser, pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about reaching out to the Russians on Trump's behalf. (Trump would later pardon Flynn.)

In 2020, disputing President Donald Trump's persistent, baseless claims, Attorney General William Barr told The Associated Press that the U.S. Justice Department had uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could change the outcome of the 2020 election.

In 2021, the U.S. recorded its first confirmed case of the omicron variant of the coronavirus, in a vaccinated traveler who returned to California after a trip to South Africa.

In 2022, legislation to avert what could have been an economically ruinous freight rail strike won final approval in Congress as lawmakers responded to President Joe Biden's call for federal intervention in the long-running labor dispute.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-director Woody Allen is 88. World Golf Hall of Famer Lee Trevino is 84. Singer Dianne Lennon (The Lennon Sisters) is 84. Television producer David Salzman is 80. Rock singer-musician Eric Bloom (Blue Oyster Cult) is 79. Rock musician John Densmore (The Doors) is 79. Actor-singer Bette Midler is 78. Singer Gilbert O'Sullivan is 77. Former child actor Keith Thibodeaux (TV: "I Love Lucy") is 73. Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., is 71. Country singer Kim Richey is 67. Actor Charlene Tilton is 65. Actor-model Carol Alt is 63. Actor Jeremy Northam is 62. Actor Katherine LaNasa is 57. Producer-director Andrew Adamson is 57. Actor Nestor Carbonell is 56. Actor Golden Brooks is 53. Actor-comedian Sarah Silverman is 53. Actor Ron Melendez is 51. Contemporary Christian singer Bart Millard (MIL'urd) is 51. Actor-writer-producer David Hornsby is 48. Singer Sarah Masen is 48. Rock musician Brad Delson (Linkin Park) is 46. Actor Nate Torrence is 46. Rock/Christian music singer-songwriter Mat Kearney is 45. Actor Riz Ahmed is 41. Actor Charles Michael Davis is 39. Actor Ilfenesh Hadera is 38. R&B singer-actor Janelle Monae is 38. Actor Ashley Monique Clark is 35. Pop-rock-rap singer Tyler Joseph (Twenty One Pilots) is 35. Actor Zoe Kravitz is 35. Pop singer Nico Sereba (Nico & Vinz) is 33. Actor Jackson Nicoll is 20.