

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 1 of 75

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Dacotah Bank Open House ad](#)
- [3- Witte Exteriors Ad](#)
- [4- Angel Tree Cards Left](#)
- [4- GDI JV/C Game Sponsors](#)
- [5- Groton City Council Agenda](#)
- [6- Wage Memorial Library Ad](#)
- [7- Gov. Noem to Deliver 2023 Budget Address](#)
- Today
 - [7- Service Notice: Gary Ruckdashel](#)
 - [7- Groton Chamber Ad](#)
 - [8- SD News Watch: Finding processing for big game tricky in South Dakota](#)
 - [12- That's Life by Tony Bender: Fortunate Son](#)
 - [13- Custer State Park to Conduct Slash Pile Burning](#)
 - [13- BBB Scam Alert: Think twice before buying from these social media ads](#)
 - [14- Columbia Hometown Holiday Party ad](#)
 - [15- Johnson family part of live nativity set in Aberdeen](#)
 - [16- SD SearchLight: Johnson requests field hearings on tribal law enforcement](#)
 - [16- SD SearchLight: Juncos: The birds we're killing just by being ourselves](#)
 - [18- SD SearchLight: North Dakota's Burgum slams Republican rules while ending presidential bid](#)
 - [19- Weather Pages](#)
 - [23- Daily Devotional](#)
 - [24- 2023 Community Events](#)
 - [25- Subscription Form](#)
 - [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
 - [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

Tuesday, Dec. 5

Senior Menu: Scalloped chicken, carrot/broccoli medley, pineapple tidbits, Gingerbread with topping, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Homemade scones.

School Lunch: Meatball subs, corn.

Girls Basketball hosts James Valley Christian: 7th grade game at 4:30 p.m., junior varsity at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

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



St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML Christmas party, noon.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Cookies & Calendars at Dacotah Bank: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 6

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, mixed vegetables, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cereal

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.

Groton Chamber meeting, noon, at City Hall

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; UMYF Angel Tree Shopping and games, 6:30 p.m.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 2 of 75

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

Castro's younger sister Juanita Castro has died in Miami at 90. She fled Cuba for Florida in 1964 and went on to work with the CIA to try to bring about her brother's downfall.

House Explosion: Social media videos showed a house's dramatic explosion in Bluemont, Virginia after reports of shots fired by a suspect using a flare gun, with no injuries or property damage from the flare gun discharges.

Apple Settlement: Apple settled a \$1.8 million class-action lawsuit, after it was accused of misrepresenting the security of its App Store and iTunes gift cards, impacting consumers who faced unauthorized redemptions before using them.

War in Ukraine: Ukraine has targeted Russian-controlled Crimea with tens of drones in an overnight raid, Russia's Defense Ministry said, as both Moscow and Kyiv keep up the pace of intensified winter drone attacks on key infrastructure.

Chinese Economy: Moody's downgraded China's sovereign credit rating outlook to negative, attributing it to potential risks from lower economic growth and the property sector crisis, warning of potential fiscal, economic, and institutional challenges.

Fox Allegations: A former Fox News staffer has filed a lawsuit accusing Tucker Carlson's ex-top producer, Justin Wells, of sexual assault and harassment involving incidents dating to 2008.

Fidel Castro's sister dies: Former Cuban leader Fidel

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 3 of 75

MEMBER FDIC

Cookies & CALENDARS OPEN HOUSE

Stop into the Dacotah Bank Lobby for
cider, coffee, a cookie and a 2024 calendar

TUES., DEC. 5 9:00 - 4:00 PM
7 East US HWY 12 | Groton

DACOTAH BANK



WITTE EXTERIORS LLC

Specializing in Asphalt and Wood Shingles

Call for an estimate

Zack Witte ~ 605-695-7874

Webster, SD

No Contracts!

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 4 of 75



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.

GDILIVE.COM

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 5 of 75

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

December 5, 2023 – 7:00pm

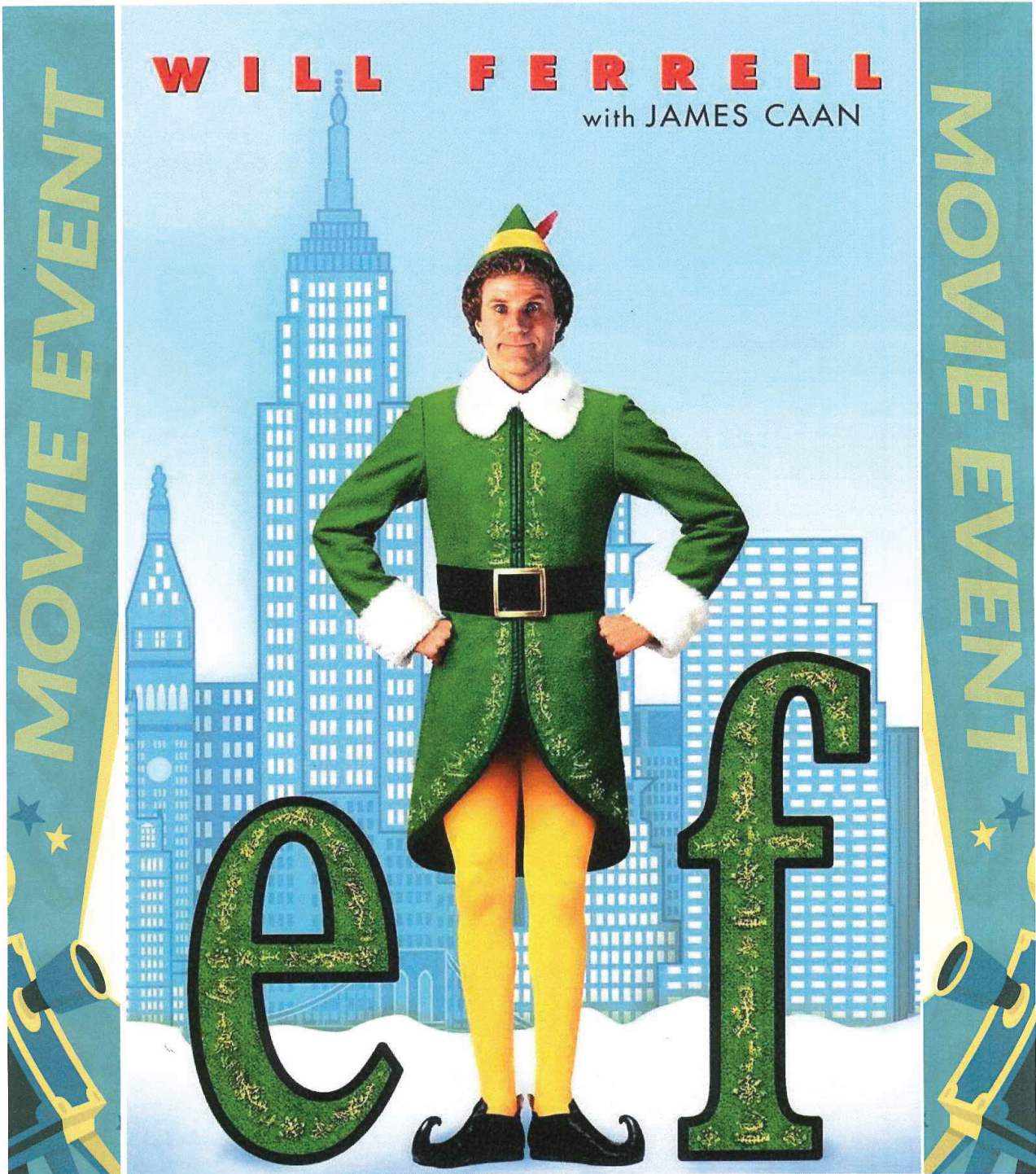
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Mayor to Proclaim December 14, 2023, as Elda Stange Day to Honor her 100th Birthday
4. Department Reports
5. Authorization to Enter into Lease Agreement for New Payloader
6. Sign Proposal from IMEG for the Updated Wastewater Facility Plan
7. Discussion Regarding Building Inspector
8. Reappoint Gordon Nelson as Planning and Zoning Board Representative – 5 Year Term
9. First Reading of Ordinance No. 774 – Supplemental Appropriations No. 2
10. Northeast Council of Governments (NECOG) Joint Cooperative Agreement for 2024
11. Minutes
12. Bills
13. Reminder: Holiday Lighting Contest – December 12th - \$100, \$75, & \$50 Utility Bill Credits to be Given Away
14. Reminder: City Offices will be Closed on December 25th and 26th for Christmas
15. Reminder: 2024 Dog Licenses are Due by December 29, 2023.
16. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
17. Hire Skating Rink Applicants
18. Adjournment

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 6 of 75



Wage Memorial Library
120 N Main St - Groton SD
MUST Preregister by calling the Library!
(605) 397-8422

Saturday, December 9th
11am-1pm
FREE Admission
Jungle Pizza will be served!

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 7 of 75

Gov. Noem to Deliver 2023 Budget Address Today

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem will deliver the 2023 Budget Address, unveiling her budget proposal for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025.

Governor Noem will discuss South Dakota's strong economy, prioritizing people over projects, and the importance of conservative fiscal policies.

The address will take place at 1pm CT/12pm MT in the South Dakota House of Representatives. The address will be livestreamed on South Dakota Public Broadcasting, SD.net, and Facebook.com/GovNoem.

WHAT: Governor Noem to deliver 2023 Budget Address

WHEN: Tuesday, December 5, 2022, 1:00 pm CT/12:00 pm MT

WHERE: South Dakota House of Representatives

WATCH: SDPB, SD.net, and Facebook.com/GovNoem

Service Notice: Gary Ruckdashel

Gary Ruckdashel, the husband of Nancy Clawson (Groton High School Class of 1963), passed away November 29. Services will be held December 21 at 1 pm with visitation at 12 noon. Reception will follow at Messiah Methodist on County Rd 6 Plymouth, MN. The service will also be live streamed.

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce





Finding processing for big game tricky in South Dakota

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

PIEDMONT, S.D. – A sudden shortage of South Dakota butchers and meat cutters willing to process wild game has been bad news for hunters but good news for Josh Clark and the small butcher shop he manages in Piedmont.

On a recent November day, Clark walked through the work area of Cutting Edge Meat Market, one of the few butcher shops in the Rapid City area that still processes whole deer carcasses, and the three employees using knives to cut up venison never looked up from their work.

The workers were too busy to notice Clark ushering a guest through the cutting room and back to a pair of walk-in coolers where dozens of skinned deer killed by South Dakota hunters hung on large hooks.

The month of November – the heart of the deer hunting season in South Dakota – is always busy for butchers who process wild game, as hunters bring in tens of thousands of deer and antelope shot with rifles or bow and arrow. This year, the small butcher shop 10 miles west of Rapid City is swamped, with far more hunters than usual calling with inquiries or just showing up with deer on their vehicles.

“The last few days, it’s been crazy nonstop with call after call and people dragging them in,” Clark said during a mid-November interview. “We’re packed wall to wall, and we’re trying to get them cut and out the door as fast as they’re coming in, but there’s just so many coming in.”

South Dakota butchers exiting wild game market

Some butcher shops have closed or shifted focus, while others no longer take any wild game, and a few will only process wild meat that is already skinned and deboned by the customer. The difficulty in finding butchers to process wild game is part of a larger trend in which South Dakota livestock producers also are unable to find local processing options and must ship cattle, sheep and hogs out of state for slaughter, cutting and packaging, as recently reported by News Watch.

Butchers who still take full deer carcasses say other processors who no longer take wild game or require it to be deboned first may be facing worker shortages, have higher expenses that cut into profitability, or simply do not want the hassle of dealing with wild game processing that often occurs one customer with one animal at a time.

Whereas commercial livestock producers schedule delivery of animals to be slaughtered and butchered during normal work hours and with several animals at once, big game hunters usually arrive at butcher shops with one or two animals at whatever time of day they happen to make a kill.

“The way I see it, it’s just a dying industry,” Clark said. “A lot of other meat plants are sticking to cus-



Josh Clark is a manager at Cutting Edge Meat Market in Piedmont, S.D., one of the only remaining Black Hills butcher shops that processes wild game for hunters. Clark stood between a skinned buffalo and skinned deer in a storage room at the store. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch /

South Dakota News Watch)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 9 of 75



Skinned deer carcasses hang in a cooler at Cutting Edge Meat Market in Piedmont, S.D., one of the few remaining butcher shops in the Black Hills region that still takes whole deer and other big game for processing. (Photo: Bart

Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

tom cutting of buffalo and beef, and they don't want to deal with the hassle and rat race of handling wild game."

'A lot harder for hunters' to process deer

The drop in processors of wild game has made it difficult for hunters – who killed about 55,000 deer and 3,000 antelope in South Dakota in 2022 – to get their animals processed and packaged. One concern is that if hunters who lack the skills or equipment to skin, quarter and debone carcasses on their own can't find a processor willing to take a whole carcass, the animals could be dumped in the garbage or left to rot in the field. Some hunters may choose to give up hunting if they know in advance they won't be able to get a full animal carcass processed.

Paul Sorum, co-owner of Renner Corner Meats just north of Sioux Falls in Renner, said he has seen higher demand for wild game processing services this year compared to others — including from hunters in nearby Minnesota — and that some hunters are growing concerned at the declining options. Renner Corner Meats is one of the few butcher shops that

still takes entire carcasses for processing in the East River region.

"When there are fewer and fewer meat processing plants like ours that are accepting full carcasses, it's getting a lot harder for hunters to find a place to go with that deer," Sorum said. "I think it would be a big problem for hunters if we ended up having to shut that part of the business down."

Deer carcass processing can cost up to \$175

The processing of a deer carcass typically costs from \$100 to \$175 and includes skinning, quartering, deboning and packaging of venison into convenient 1 to 3 pound packages. Deer and antelope are typically cut into roasts and steaks for grilling or panfrying and into ground meat for use in soups, stews, burgers or tacos.

Venison is a lean meat that is similar to beef but with a slightly earthier or gamier flavor. Hunters can also have venison made into jerky or sausage, brats and meat sticks that sometimes include pork, which typically costs extra.

Hunters who want to donate the meat from a deer or antelope to charitable food pantries across the state can work with South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger. Under the program, hunters with animals can contact one of roughly two dozen butchers in South Dakota and drop off an animal carcass or deboned meat for full processing. In most cases, the participating butcher shops assume the cost of processing female animals, while donating a buck typically results in the hunter paying the processing fee.

Some of the butchers enrolled in the program require that the animal be skinned and deboned before being dropped off for processing, and the program does nothing to help hunters who want to eat the wild game meat from animals they have killed.

The wild game processing industry is not overseen or regulated by the state Game, Fish & Parks Department, which manages state hunting seasons, though butcher shops are subject to regular inspection by state and federal regulators. News Watch reached out to the GFP with an interview request and a list of questions, but a spokesman for the agency did not provide responses other than to share a link to Sportsmen Against Hunger.

Home-based butchers help fill the need in South Dakota

The commercial butcher shops that handle wild game have long been bolstered by a network of small,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 10 of 75

home-based meat processors who take animals killed in the fall. However, those processors are also dropping out of the industry or slowing down due to age, increasing volumes or burnout.

One home-based butcher near Rapid City said 2023 will likely be his last year of processing deer for hunters. The man said he is tired of the hassle of taking constant phone calls (100 of them in November) and having deer dropped off at his home unannounced as late as 10 p.m.

The man, who has processed and packaged deer for friends and relatives for decades, refused to have his name published because he is already annoyed by the number of contacts from strangers wanting their deer butchered. One hunter, he said, once dropped off a deer without warning, then entered his home without permission to leave a note on his kitchen table.

But some home-based butchers continue to provide the service of processing wild game from carcass to usable meat portions wrapped in butcher paper, though they often can only be found through word-of-mouth connections.

Meat processors 'overflowing' with wild game

Rex Roseland and his wife, Cheryl, have processed wild game at their home north of Rapid City for decades, but this year feels different in the need for their services, he said.

"When you get swamped, it just takes time to get caught up," Rex Roseland said. "We get a lot of people from previous years, and they keep coming back. But every year it seems like we pick up more people."

Cheryl Roseland said the couple works as a team to get dozens of deer processed annually, with him as the knife man and her engaged more in the meat-grinding and packaging side of the business. They have a cooler and freezer as well as a meat cutting station on their rural property where they charge a \$115 per animal processing fee, which an accountant told them they should raise to remain competitive amid high demand.

The couple may increase their capacity to butcher animals now that Rex Roseland has retired from his job as a salesman, and they are considering adding a new outbuilding to help.

Cheryl Roseland said they enjoy the work and want to help hunters out, but it's getting harder to handle the increasing flow of animals being brought in.

"We've heard from people who are saying, 'Help because we can't find anyplace that will take it,'" she said. "But the thing is, while we can do it, do we have room to add another animal? We will take overflow when we can, but we're overflowing ourselves out here."

Fewer options for meat processing in eastern South Dakota

Hunters in the greater Sioux Falls area lost one option to process whole deer carcasses when Lee's Meats and Sausages of Tea stopped processing carcasses and began taking only deboned wild game meat for processing, at least for this year.

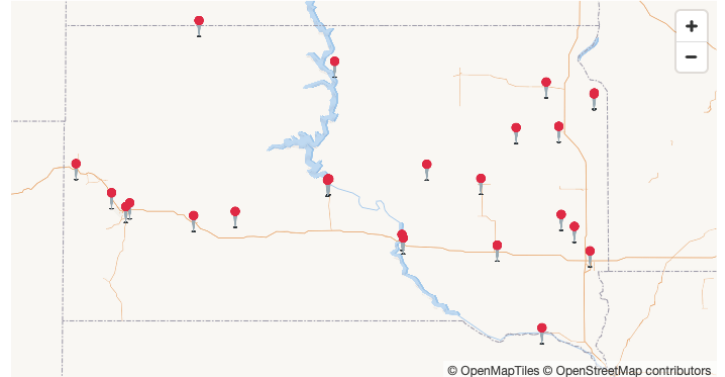
But one venerable option remains for East River hunters, as Renner Corner Meats, located about 10 miles north of Sioux Falls, continued to take full deer, antelope and elk carcasses for processing this season, according to Sorum, a co-owner of the business.

"We're one of the only ones around that are taking the full carcass deer right now, and I'm not sure how much longer we're going to do whole carcasses," Sorum said.

Sorum is aware that other processors have stopped taking in full deer and antelope because it can strain a meat-cutting business. "The consensus is that it could be a lack of employees, or they're too busy

Charitable game processors in South Dakota

This map shows the location of butchers willing to process wild game for the Sportsmen Against Hunger organization, which donates processed wild game meat to charity. These locations, clustered along the Interstate 90 corridor, do not necessarily take in deer and antelope from hunters who want their game processed for home consumption. Some of the butchers only accept wild game that has been skinned and deboned by the hunter prior to drop off.



Source: South Dakota GF&P • Graphic: Michael Klinski /SD News Watch
* Accepts boneless meat/trim only. Hunter pays processing fee.

Made with Flourish

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 11 of 75



A large Dumpster overflows with deer hides outside the Cutting Edge Meat Market in Piedmont, S.D., one of the few remaining butcher shops that will process big game carcasses into packaged meats.

(Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

announce on Facebook that it was no longer taking full deer carcasses for processing.

As time and scheduling permits, employees remove 40 or so deer at a time from the freezers and begin to thaw them in a holding room. The carcasses are then cut, processed and packaged, Sorum said. By law, the entire cutting room must be power-washed and sanitized anytime meat cutters switch from processing wild game for individuals to processing livestock for consumers, he said.

Processing wild game remains profitable, but the overriding reason the business still handles deer and other wild game is to provide an increasingly hard-to-come-by service to hunters and the state and local economy, Sorum said.

"It's a profitable part of the business, but first off we're providing that service for folks in South Dakota," he said. "It's part of tourism and a local hunting industry in which people spend a lot of money in the community."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at sdnewswatch.org.



Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach. Contact Bart at bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org.

with beef and hogs and aren't interested in wild game anymore. Plus, it's difficult work," he said.

Sorum said Renner meats continues to take full carcasses as a service to its customers who hunt and who have come to rely on the quality meats produced by the business.

"We love doing it because it's proving a service to the hunters of South Dakota and the people that come from out of state," he said. "We have awesome products, and we love providing that customer service."

Meat can take up to three months to process

Due to high demand, Sorum said he is telling hunters with a deer or antelope carcass that it could be until late February before they get their processed meat from an animal dropped off in November.

Sorum said Renner meats undergoes a fairly involved process in order to continue processing wild game carcasses for hunters.

Upon arrival, deer carcasses are hung in one of four semi trailers that serve as freezers outside the business. Renner meats can hold about 850 deer in those trailers, which were full on Nov. 25, prompting the business to



Workers at Cutting Edge Meat Market in Piedmont, S.D., were extremely busy processing deer carcasses and meat on a day in mid-November.

(Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 12 of 75

That's Life by Tony Bender: Fortunate Son

When I moved to Denver in 1983, I had a part-time gig in radio nailed down, but I needed another part-time job, so I went to a retail store where I was summarily dismissed by Human Resources. They weren't hiring.

"Where are you from?" she asked absently as I turned to leave.

"North Dakota," I said.

"Come back. We've got a job for you."

I don't know if people from the Dakotas still have the reputation of being good workers and I have no intention of finding out. I'm pooped. But that experience cemented the idea that maybe we are a little bit special out here on the prairies. If so, it's easy to draw a line from our immigrant heritage to now. I know my parents instilled a work ethic in me. Or maybe it was guilt. No matter, it was just as effective.

It's more than that that makes us unique, I think. So many of us were raised in small towns, and the thing about small towns is they have the elbow room to nurture big personalities.

I often describe my experience as a Tom Sawyer childhood, idyllic, a small river town overflowing with adventures and mischief. But what made Frederick, SD, special for me were the characters, the retired old men who often parked on the benches on Main Street to tell stories and bask in the sun.

There were only a couple of "town kids" my age when we moved to Frederick from Edgeley, ND, in 1968, but they lived on the edge of town and were usually occupied with farm-related activities. So my friends were, as my mom affectionately referred to them, "the old farts."

I think the farts decided to adopt me when I started a GRIT paper route in grade school. I had 32 subscribers but I ordered another 20 copies each week to hawk on the street. I realize now that life is about sales in one form or another and sales is about overcoming objections.

"I can't read."

"There are lots of pictures."

My favorite challenge was Werner Groop, a bib-overall-wearing leprechaun. He'd make you work for your 15¢. One day, I was pitching the paper to a couple of farmers outside the Cenex station when Werner interrupted. "Aren't you going to sell me one?"

"I just sold you one at the elevator."

"That must have been my twin brother."

Then it began, a knock-down, drag-out argument over whether or not I was going to sell him (another) paper. He insisted he had a twin. I insisted he did not, but finally I broke down, took his 15¢ as he strode away triumphantly. He did have a brother, Eino, but Eino was as droll as Werner was feisty.

We were fortunate enough to have two cafes—the Hilltop Cafe and the City Cafe. The farts would gather at the City Cafe for coffee mostly to tease Signe and Patsy who didn't have a sense of humor, which made it that much more fun. One day Eino ordered oyster stew for dinner. He fished around in the broth with his spoon for a while before finding an oyster. "Hey, Signe," he said. "Does this one have a brother?" I don't remember how Eino died. It could have been murder.

There were also two bars—the Legion and the Pond(a)rosa. I know. It was spelled with an "A" and I still don't know why. Maybe to stay out of legal trouble with Hoss and Little Joe. The Legion served hard liquor, "The Pond" served 3.2 beer and attracted North Dakota teens on weekends. If you were 18, you could have a beer in Frederick. I learned to play pool there in fourth grade. For 50¢ they'd let you stuff bar rags in the pockets and play as long as you like. Frederick daycare.

Dogs were allowed, too. Dale Doty, who hauled the town's garbage in a 1940's-something truck, stopped in daily for a tap Hamm's—always with a sprinkle of salt—with his sidekick, Skippy, a big black mutt, perched on the stool next to him. Dale also put in a big garden with a small Allis-Chalmers tractor on which he'd modified the seat to accommodate an old couch cushion so Skippy could ride along.

One summer, students from the Bible college in Ellendale, ND, picketed the Pondarosa. I always count the churches and bars in a small town to see who's winning—God or Anheuser Busch. Many years after the bar protest, the Pondarosa fell into disrepair and was torn down. The Methodists and Lutherans are winning.

I had dinner with Mom yesterday. I usually come in on the south entrance, over the river, and past the park. There are shiny new elevators and voids on Main Street where so many of my memories were formed. The memories, though, are still there.

Custer State Park to Conduct Slash Pile Burning

PIERRE, S.D. – Custer State Park, in collaboration with South Dakota Wildland Fire (SDWF), will be burning slash piles in the park this winter as long as conditions allow. The Park's goal is to burn both large machine-made slash piles and smaller hand-built piles. Both the Park and SDWF will be providing personnel and equipment to conduct and monitor the burns throughout the winter.

The piles are created from left-over unsalable woody debris generated by timber sales and small tree thinning projects. The burns are designed to reduce the amount of fuel available for fires and to lessen the risk of fires starting or spreading. Piles can be expected to continue burning for days after ignited. Firefighters will continually monitor the piles until they are out.

BBB Scam Alert: Think twice before buying from these social media ads

Social media advertising is an effective way for small businesses to get the word out about their products. Unfortunately, the same goes for scams. BBB Scam Tracker has received more than 50 online purchase scam reports from consumers across Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota since November 1, many of which were perpetrated on social media. The 2022 BBB Online Scams Report found that online purchase scams were the most common cons reported to Scam Tracker and the category with the most victims.

How the scam works

Products that claim to support charity: As you scroll through your Facebook or Instagram feed, you see an ad from a small business selling adorable jewelry, t-shirts, or other merchandise. The best part? Some of the proceeds from the sale will go to a charity that helps rescue animals, foster children, or support another worthy cause. Some consumers even report getting direct messages from sellers promoting the products and asking them to spread the word to friends and family.

You make your purchase. But when your merchandise never gets delivered, the doubts start to build. When you contact the company about your purchase, they are suddenly unreachable or reply with an autoresponder. In reality, the product never existed. It was all a ploy to get your money.

Free trial offers: Many of these misleading advertisements tout celebrity endorsements and promise a trial of the hottest new skincare or nutritional supplement for a minimal investment of shipping fees. Consumers report that once they agree to the terms and conditions of these offers, they realize they have agreed to multiple monthly shipments for products over \$70-\$100 each.

Before you sign up for these "limited time offers," research the company online, see if there are any other consumer complaints, and read the terms and conditions you agree to carefully. That is a red flag if you can't find any terms and conditions. Watch out for pre-checked boxes and ensure you know who and where the company you are purchasing from.

Counterfeit merchandise: Name-brand goods are prime targets for unauthorized duplication, from sporting goods to designer apparel and handbags. If you purchase any of these products, you may risk not only receiving a poor quality product, but it may not meet environmental and safety regulations either.

Look out for red flags. This includes items priced significantly lower than other retailers are charging, spelling and grammatical errors in the advertisements, and poor-quality images. These are all signs that the advertisement may be for a counterfeit product.

Engaging ads and poor customer service: This category covers a broad spectrum of complaints that BBB receives, from ads for beauty products to trendy clothing to kids' toys. The advertisements look great, and the products are often inexpensive. This means that consumers purchase without researching the website or the company behind it. However, weeks pass, and the products never arrive. When the buyers reach out to customer service, they get a vague answer or don't hear back.

Before buying, do a quick online search. Google the website name with the words "complaints," "reviews,"

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 14 of 75

and "scam" to see what other customers are saying. Check the "About Us" or "Contact Us" information on the company's website to see if they contain actual contact details for the business. If the only way to contact the company is through a form, this is a red flag.

Apps of unknown origin: While scrolling through your feed, you may feel compelled to download the latest "free" app. Beware! By downloading this app, not only are you opening up your device to these unknown entities, but you could be signing up for recurring subscription fees. Victims report being charged fees as high as \$99 every seven days.

Before you enter your username and password, read the reviews. Also, read the app's description carefully and look for spelling and grammatical errors. Check that the developer's website is working and read the terms and conditions carefully (\$99 every 7 days adds up quickly).

How to protect yourself from social media scams

Do your research. Before making a purchase, quickly search for the business in question. Do they have valid contact information? Don't be fooled by professional photography or consumer reviews on their website. These can be lifted from other sites. Check BBB Scam Tracker to see if others have been duped.

Search for previous complaints. Do a Google search of the business name followed by "complaints," "reviews," or "scam" and see what pops up. If you find this business has cheated other people, steer clear.

Use good judgment. Many con artists play on consumers' desire to help those in need. Remember this and use your head, not just your heart, when supporting charitable causes. Go to Give.org to research organizations before giving.



Columbia Hometown Holiday Party

Saturday, Dec. 9

5-7 p.m. at the Columbia Legion

All ages are welcome!

Christmas Music ~ Hayrides

Crafts and Games

Santa Claus

Free will offering supper will be served

Festive or ugly, wear your favorite Christmas attire!

Home decorating winners will be announced!

**Come see the beautifully decorated
Columbia City Park!**



Johnson family part of live nativity set in Aberdeen

A local Groton family recently joined Aldersgate Church- Aberdeen, SD's Back to Bethlehem live nativity set. Matt Johnson and wife, Casey dressed as Joseph and Mary with daughter, Whitley as baby Jesus.

Pictured is the Johnson family- Bentley, Casey holding Whitley, Paisley, Matt holding Luke and Faith. Other activities at the event included horse drawn wagon rides, supper, live music, and crafts. All activities were free will donation with donated can goods encouraged for local charities. (Courtesy

photos from April Abeln)





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Johnson requests field hearings on tribal law enforcement

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - DECEMBER 4, 2023 5:12 PM

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, is asking a congressional subcommittee to conduct field hearings about the lack of adequate law enforcement on Native American reservations.

Johnson made the request Monday in a letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

"As I speak with leaders from South Dakota's nine tribes, it is clear the number one concern facing Indian reservations is the dismal state of law enforcement," Johnson wrote.

Tribes in South Dakota depend largely on the federal government to fund and support their law enforcement activities, based on treaties dating to the 1800s. The Oglala Sioux Tribe is currently suing the federal government over its allegedly insufficient support.

Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out said in a news release that he would welcome field hearings "as an opportunity for members of the House to hear firsthand about the crisis we face every day in our tribal communities."

"A generation of our people are now born plagued by gangs and cartels, human and drug trafficking, organized crime, abuse, and murder," Star Comes Out said.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe and Crow Creek Sioux Tribe have each declared a state of emergency this year due to insufficient law enforcement on their reservations.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe's Pine Ridge Reservation has one officer to every 1,333 people, according to Johnson. The FBI reports that the average U.S. city has about 2 police officers per 1,000 residents.

Johnson cited his efforts to secure resources for tribal police departments and his co-sponsorship of legislation including the Tribal COPS Act, which would bring additional training, compensation and equipment to tribal law enforcement agencies; and the Invest to Protect Act, which would provide grants to small, rural and tribal departments to improve the recruitment and retention of local law enforcement and provide mental health training to officers.

COMMENTARY

Juncos: The birds we're killing just by being ourselves

Humble snowbird's plight is a sign of widespread weakening ecosystems

by PEPPER TRAIL

DECEMBER 4, 2023 4:03 PM

No, this isn't about those folks who spend their winters in Arizona or Florida. The snowbird behind this warning is an actual bird, the dark-eyed junco, a small creature you probably know if you have a bird feeder and maybe even if you don't.

Trim, gray sparrows that flash white tail feathers as they take flight, juncos are called snowbirds because they arrive in our towns with the coming of snow. Come spring, they head back up into the mountains or north to Canada and Alaska for nesting.

Juncos are among the West's most familiar birds, reliable companions on summer hikes and winter days. The total population of the species is estimated to be around 200 million. Juncos are in no danger of extinction, so, what warning could they be giving us?

Juncos may be abundant but they are also in sharp decline. According to the Breeding Bird Survey, a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 17 of 75

decades-long monitoring study of the nation's birds, junco populations are down by 42% since the surveys began in the late 1960s.

But here is the peculiar part: There is no obvious reason for this loss of millions of birds. Juncos are adaptable, not requiring some disappearing habitat. They don't make long-distance migrations to the tropics. Poisons or toxins don't seem to pose a special threat to them.

What seems to be killing juncos is simply ... everything.

Based on numerous studies, the leading human-related cause of death among birds is predation by cats: over 2 billion (yes, billion) birds killed per year in North America.

This is followed by collisions: windows, 600 million birds; vehicles, 200 million; powerlines and communication towers, 43 million.

Then there are pesticides and toxics, 72 million; lead poisoning, 12 million; and oil and wastewater pits, 1 million. That adds up to well over 3 billion dead birds per year.

Nothing on this list is a deliberate effort to get rid of juncos or other birds. They're just byproducts of the way we conduct ourselves in the world.

These dangers, of course, are not faced just by juncos. A review of North American bird populations documents that we have lost almost one-third of our birds since 1970. The researchers summarized their findings in no uncertain terms: "This loss of bird abundance signals an urgent need to address threats to avert future avifaunal collapse and associated loss of ecosystem integrity, function and services."

It's not just bird populations that are collapsing. Insect populations are crashing as well. Studies from the United States, Europe and Asia over the past 10 years document shocking declines in insect populations, as much as 50 to 75%.

If you're plagued by swarms of mosquitoes in the summer, you might think that's not such a bad thing. But insects are crucial to the functioning of just about every ecosystem on Earth, serving as pollinators, decomposers and as food for countless species of critters higher up the food chain.

Is there an exception to this relentless litany of population declines? Why, yes. It's us. Since 1970, the human population of the United States has grown by more than 60%, while bird populations have fallen by a third. That doesn't seem like a coincidence.

Everyone has heard of the canary in the coal mine: the bird that miners brought underground to alert them to dangerous gases such as carbon monoxide. With its small size and fast metabolism, the canary would collapse before the gas reached levels fatal to humans, giving the miners just enough time to escape.

We need to see the humble snowbird for what it is: Our "canary in the world." When even the commonest wild species are suffering drastic declines, do we really believe that a world inhospitable to our fellow creatures will continue to be hospitable to us? As one species after another dwindles away, the structure of the ecosystems that sustain life on Earth is weakening.

The familiar flash of a junco's white tail feathers as I hike along a mountain trail always brings a smile to my face. It's a reminder that keeping common species common is essential to keeping this beautiful planet livable, and for that, I say thank you, little snowbird.

Pepper Trail is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He is a conservationist who writes in Oregon.



A dark-eyed (white-winged) junco. (Doug Backlund/
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks)

North Dakota's Burgum slams Republican rules while ending presidential bid

BY: ROBIN OPSAHL - DECEMBER 4, 2023 4:06 PM

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum announced Monday he would end his campaign to become the 2024 Republican presidential nominee.

In a statement on suspending his campaign, Burgum criticized the Republican National Committee's debate structure, saying the fundraising and polling criteria "ensure advantages for candidates from major media markets on the coasts versus America's Heartland."

"The RNC's clubhouse debate requirements are nationalizing the primary process and taking the power of democracy away from the engaged, thoughtful citizens of Iowa and New Hampshire," Burgum said. "The RNC's mission is to win elections. It is not their mission to reduce competition and restrict fresh ideas by 'narrowing the field' months before the Iowa caucuses or the first in the nation New Hampshire primary."

The governor, who launched his campaign in June, campaigned as a candidate who would focus on issues of economy, energy and national security. He said that Republican presidential candidates needed to focus less on so-called "culture war" issues, like LGBTQ+ subjects and abortion, and talk about policies that impact daily life for Americans.

When Burgum entered the race, there were 12 candidates running for the Republican nomination. As he leaves, six remain: former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson.

Though his campaign was not able to gain the traction needed to make the RNC debate stage, Burgum said his candidacy "shifted the conversation" on America's place in the global economy.

"Now just six months after our campaign launch, we've elevated the importance of an intelligent energy policy that grows jobs and our economy, reduces inflation, is good for the environment and – unlike Joe Biden's fantasy green energy plan – stops enabling and empowering our adversaries, specifically China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela and North Korea," he said.

Burgum has served as North Dakota governor since 2016, having grown to prominence after selling his company, Great Plains Software, to Microsoft for \$1.1 billion in 2001.

While some other candidates have endorsed other presidential candidates on exiting the race, Burgum has not yet offered his support to any other 2024 campaign. He thanked the people he met on the campaign trail and his backers for their support.

"While this primary process has shaken my trust in many media organizations and political party institutions, it has only strengthened my trust in America," Burgum said. "Our nation doesn't need to be perfect to be exceptional. In community after community along this journey, we witnessed the best that America has to offer."

Robin Opsahl is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering the state Legislature and politics. Robin has experience covering government, elections and more at media organizations including Roll Call, the Sacramento Bee and the Wausau Daily Herald, in addition to working on multimedia projects, newsletters and visualizations. They were a political reporter for the Des Moines Register covering the Iowa caucuses leading up to the 2020 presidential election, assisting with the Register's Iowa Poll, and reporting on Iowa's 4th District elections.



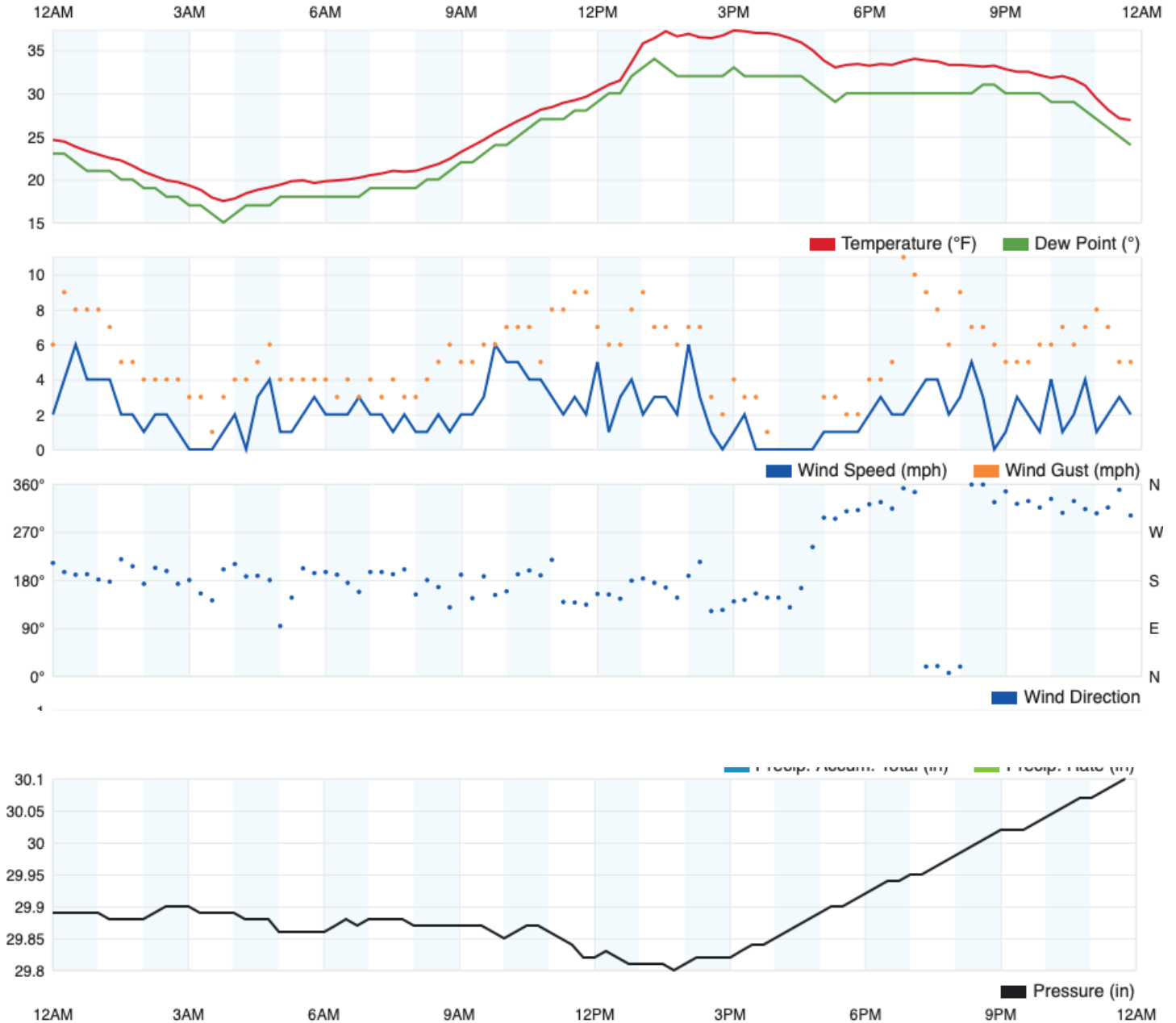
North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum speaks at the Des Moines Register Political Soapbox at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines on Aug. 10, 2023.

(Robin Opsahl/Iowa Capital Dispatch)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 19 of 75

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 20 of 75

Tue Dec 5	Wed Dec 6	Thu Dec 7	Fri Dec 8	Sat Dec 9	Sun Dec 10	Mon Dec 11
38°F 27°F	53°F 31°F	52°F 36°F	44°F 24°F	37°F 18°F	36°F 23°F	33°F 18°F
W 8 MPH	SSW 13 MPH	SSE 11 MPH	W 18 MPH	NNW 12 MPH	W 7 MPH	NE 15 MPH
						10%

Overall, mild and dry for the remainder of the work week.

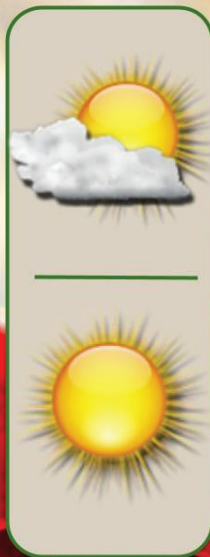


Rest of the Work Week Forecast

December 5, 2023

4:41 AM

overall mild & dry



Today

Partly Sunny, Highs 30s east, 40s west

Wednesday

Partly Cloudy, Mild. Highs 50-66°

Thursday

Mostly Sunny, Still mild. Highs 48-65°

Friday

Mostly Sunny, Cooler. Highs in the 40s

Overall, mild and dry for the remainder of the work week.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 21 of 75

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 37 °F at 3:01 PM

Low Temp: 18 °F at 3:43 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 6:43 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 56 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 57 in 1939

Record Low: -25 in 2005

Average High: 33

Average Low: 11

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.10

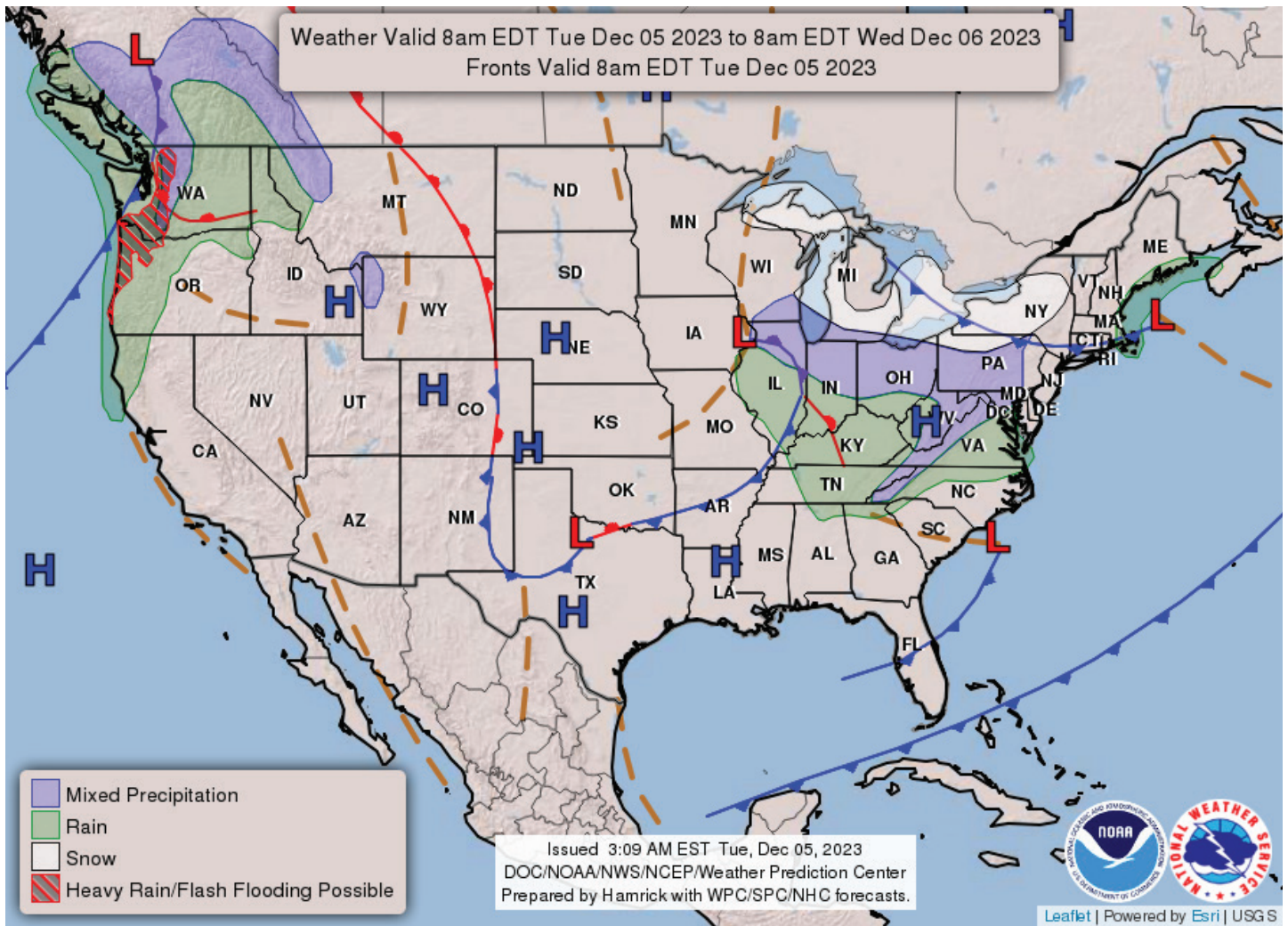
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.31

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:51:26 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:55:35 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 22 of 75

Today in Weather History

December 5, 1960: A storm dropped snow on the entire region from the morning of the 4th to the late afternoon of the 5th, with the highest amounts in the western, central and north central parts of South Dakota. Five to 10 inches of snow fell in these areas. The snow, blown by winds of 30 to 40 mph, caused extensive drifting of streets and highways. A brief period of freezing rain preceded the snow and added to hazardous driving conditions on roads. Schools were closed for one to two days, with 27 towns reporting closed schools in the Aberdeen area alone. Telephone and power disruption was widespread in central and north central counties of the state, as poles and wires were broken by a combination of ice, snow, and the wind. The storm produced mostly rain in the extreme eastern counties of South Dakota into west central Minnesota, with a narrow band of freezing rain preceding light snow immediately to the west. No serious automobile accidents or property damage was reported in this area of freezing rain and light snow.

December 5, 1976: Cold Canadian air moved across South Dakota during the day on Sunday, December 5th. High winds gusted to 63 mph at Philip and 55 mph at Rapid City. One to two inches of snow fell over all of South Dakota; however, many counties in the southeast, south central, and east-central parts of the state received amounts varying from three to five inches. After this storm, nighttime temperatures fell to below zero. Snowfall amounts included 2 inches at Pierre, Aberdeen, and Watertown; and 3 inches at Redfield and Clear Lake.

December 5, 1886: A southern storm dumped heavy snow up into far southwest Virginia. The storm dumped 11 inches in Montgomery Alabama and 22.5 inches in Knoxville, TN. It also dropped 25 inches in Rome, Georgia, and 26 inches in Ashville, North Carolina.

1941 - The temperature at Enosburg Falls soared to 72 degrees to establish a state record for Vermont for the month of December. (The Weather Channel)

December 5, 1953: A tornado outbreak occurred over northeastern Louisiana, southeastern Arkansas, and western Mississippi on this day. At least four confirmed tornadoes touched down. The strongest tornado was rated F5 as it destroyed the town of Vicksburg, Mississippi. This tornado first touched down just west of the Mississippi River in East Madison Parish in Louisiana. The tornado crossed the Mississippi River and tore through the downtown area of Vicksburg. On the ground for seven miles, this tornado caused 38 deaths, 270 injuries, and cost an estimated \$25 million in damages in 1953. Estimated cost adjusted for inflation in 2013 Dollars would be over \$200 million. The NWS Office in Jackson, Mississippi has an interactive track map of this event which includes photos and personal accounts.

1987 - Heavy snow blanketed parts of the north central U.S., and freezing drizzle produced a coat of ice up to half an inch thick in northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. Snowfall totals ranged up to seven inches at Grand Rapids MN, and 12 inches at Seney MI. High winds in the north central U.S. gusted to 63 mph at Pellston MI, and reached 70 mph at Makinaw Bridge MI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - There was only a "flurry" of activity, as for much of the nation winter remained on hold. The cold and snow of winter was primarily confined to the northeastern U.S. Five cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Norfolk NE with a reading of 65 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A warm Pacific storm system brought high winds and heavy rain to western Washington and western Oregon. Up to ten inches of rain deluged the western slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range in Washington State over a three day period, and 500 persons had to be evacuated due to flooding along the Skagit River. Up to five inches of rain drenched northwest Oregon, and winds gusted to 71 mph at Netarts. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major winter storm impacted parts of the Mid-Atlantic and northeastern United States during the 5th-7th. Snowfall accumulations of one to two feet were common across areas of Pennsylvania northward into New England. Boston, MA received 16.2 inches while Providence, RI had the greatest single snowstorm on record with 17 inches, beating the previous record of 12 inches set December 5-6, 1981. Boston's Logan International Airport was closed briefly on the 7th as heavy snowfall made regular airport operations impossible (AFP).

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 23 of 75

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

"LOVE WITH SKIN ON IT"

A young man, who grew up in a housing project, having little hope and few goods, heard an evangelist preaching "love" on a street corner. After listening for a few moments, he shouted to the preacher, "I'm sick and tired of you people talking about love. I want to see love. I want to feel love. I want to see love with some skin on it!"

That's Christmas: "God's love with skin on it."

Paul wrote, "For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body!"

In Jesus, we see Someone bringing love to life – but a very special type of love. It is God's love. We see this love coming to life when Jesus fed the hungry, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, offering water to a thirsty soul, calming the waves to relieve the fears of experienced fishermen, washing dirty feet, spending time with little children, teaching people the truth that brought meaning and purpose to their lives and finally hanging lifeless from a cross – abandoned and alone.

Jesus is God loving through a human heart, healing with a human hand, walking on errands of mercy with human feet, showing love, grace and mercy to those who would do Him harm.

Jesus is God loving the least, the last and the lost. In Jesus, God showed His love with "skin on it."

Prayer: Help us, Father, to put Your "love in our skin" and take Your love to those in need. May we be as faithful in caring for others as You are in caring for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.



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

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 24 of 75

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

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 25 of 75

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

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

E-mail _____

Password _____

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

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 26 of 75



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.01.23

12 47 49 52 65 12

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$377,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 37 Mins 7
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.04.23

4 16 18 36 47 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,650,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 52
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.04.23

1 16 22 39 40 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 7 Mins 7
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.02.23

8 19 23 24 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$78,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 7
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.04.23

21 51 52 59 63 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 36
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.04.23

18 19 27 28 45 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$435,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 36
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Colman-Egan 49, Alcester-Hudson 39

Rapid City Stevens 51, Douglas 20

Sisseton 63, Great Plains Lutheran 33

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

An explosion leveled a home in Arlington, Virginia, as officers tried to serve a search warrant

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — A massive explosion at a duplex where police were investigating reports of shots fired shook a Washington, D.C. suburb Monday and destroyed the home.

All officers escaped serious injury but it was unclear what happened to the suspect who was inside the home when it was leveled by the explosion, Arlington County, Virginia, police spokesperson Ashley Savage said.

Officers went to the home at about 4:45 p.m. after receiving reports of shots fired. They later determined the shots came from a flare gun, Savage said. While police investigated, they obtained a search warrant for the home.

When police later attempted to execute the warrant the suspect fired several rounds inside the home and the explosion occurred just before 8:30 p.m., shooting flames and debris into the air police said.

Savage said it was unclear whether the rounds were fired from a flare gun or a firearm. Police don't have any evidence that others were in the duplex but can't rule out the possibility, she said.

Carla Rodriguez of South Arlington said she could hear the explosion more than 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away and came to the scene but police kept onlookers blocks away.

"I actually thought a plane exploded," she said.

Bob Maynes thought maybe a tree had fallen on his house when he heard the explosion.

"I was sitting in my living room watching television and the whole house shook," Maynes said. "It wasn't an earthquake kind of tremor, but the whole house shook."

Arlington is located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The explosion occurred in Bluemont, a neighborhood in north Arlington where many of the homes are duplexes.

Fire officials do not know the cause of the explosion, said Capt. Nate Hiner, a spokesperson for the Arlington Fire Department.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said federal agents and federal fire investigators were at the scene and assisting in the investigation.

Live updates | Israel pushes deeper south after calling for evacuations in southern Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Israel's military pushed deeper south Tuesday in Gaza after it called for more evacuations in the southern portion of the enclave in its pursuit to wipe out the territory's Hamas rulers. The war has already killed more than 15,000 Palestinians and displaced over three-fourths of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, who are running out of safe places to go.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 28 of 75

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said the death toll in the territory since Oct. 7 has surpassed 15,890, with more than 41,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths, but said 70% of the dead were women and children. Israel says it targets Hamas operatives and blames civilian casualties on the militants, accusing them of operating in residential neighborhoods.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt, which mediated the earlier cease-fire, say they are working on a longer truce. But hopes for another temporary truce faded after Israel called its negotiators home over the weekend. Hamas said talks on releasing more of the scores of hostages seized by militants on Oct. 7 must be tied to a permanent cease-fire.

Currently:

- Israel orders evacuations as it widens its offensive, but Palestinians are running out of places to go.
- Pennsylvania's governor rebukes Philadelphia protesters for chanting outside an Israeli restaurant.
- A global journalist group says the Israel-Hamas conflict is a war beyond compare for media deaths.
- The kibbutz of Nir Oz can illuminate Hamas' hostage strategy, an operation that was unprecedented both in scope and execution.

— Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's what's happening in the war:

FRANCE FREEZES HAMAS LEADER SINWAR'S ASSETS

PARIS — France froze all assets belonging to Hamas' top leader in Gaza starting Tuesday and lasting six months.

Yehya Sinwar is considered the mastermind of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel. A decision published in the Official Journal of the French Republic said that "funds and economic resources owned, held or controlled" by Yehya Sinwar were being frozen. The total value of Sinwar's assets in France was not provided.

TURKEY WARNS ISRAEL NOT TO TARGET HAMAS MEMBERS ON TURKISH SOIL, STATE-RUN NEWS AGENCY SAYS

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's state-run news agency says Turkish intelligence officials have warned their Israeli counterparts of "serious consequences" if they attempt to target members of Hamas on Turkish soil.

The warning, reported by the Anadolu Agency late Monday, came after Ronen Bar, the head of Israel's domestic security agency Shin Bet, said in an audio recording that his organization is prepared to destroy Hamas "in every place," including in Lebanon, Turkey and Qatar.

Anadolu Agency, quoting unnamed Turkish intelligence officials, said "necessary warnings were made" to Israeli officials who were told their actions would "have serious consequences." The agency also quoted the officials as saying that Turkey had prevented "illegal activities" by foreign operatives in the past and that no foreign intelligence agency would be allowed to carry out operations on Turkish territory. Israel's Mossad spy agency has been accused of involvement in a series of assassinations overseas of Palestinian militants and Iranian nuclear scientists over the years.

Turkey has hosted Hamas officials and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said his government considers Hamas to be a liberation organization, not a terrorist group.

SATELLITE PHOTOS SHOW THE ISRAELI MILITARY HAS BEGUN ITS SOUTHERN OFFENSIVE IN GAZA

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Satellite photos analyzed Tuesday by The Associated Press show that the Israeli military has begun its ground offensive in the southern reaches of the Gaza Strip as part of its war against Hamas.

Since the collapse of a temporary cease-fire between Israel and Hamas that saw militant-held hostages swapped for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons, the Israeli military has launched an intense campaign of airstrikes and ground fighting in the southern Gaza Strip as well. The satellite photos released by Planet Labs PBC provide the first clear look at the intensity and scope at which the Israelis are fighting.

The images, shot Sunday by Planet, show Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers just under 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the heart of Khan Younis, the major city of the southern part of the Gaza Strip. Many who fled the Israeli offensive and airstrike campaign in Gaza City's north now live around Khan Younis and other nearby areas after the Israeli military ordered them to evacuate.

Responding to questions from The Associated Press over the satellite images, the Israeli military said it

“takes all feasible measures to mitigate harm to noncombatants.”

The Israeli deployment sits just to the west of Salah al-Din, a main north-south corridor within the Gaza Strip that many used to flee. An AP analysis found positions in four clusters, with a total of around 150 armored personnel carriers, tanks and other vehicles in the area. Israeli soldiers have created packed dirt berms around some of their positions, which can be used for cover.

Fresh tank tracks could be seen chewed through the ground there, suggesting the movements were recent. The maneuver and the number of vehicles there suggests that the Israeli military is preparing to potentially move south in Khan Younis. Fighting already has been reported in the area.

Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed.

FAMILIES OF HOSTAGES HELD BY HAMAS WILL MEET WITH NETANYAHU

TEL AVIV, Israel — The families of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza say they are set to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after demanding a sit-down with him.

The families have sought to meet with Netanyahu and his wartime Cabinet since a truce deal between Israel and Hamas that saw the release of 105 hostages expired Nov. 30. Since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, many families have complained that they were not adequately kept informed of the efforts to secure their loved ones' release. About 240 people were taken hostage.

The families say Netanyahu and other leaders have for days dodged their requests to meet. The meeting is expected to take place Tuesday.

The families say they want to hear from Netanyahu that he has their relatives' fate in mind as Israel moves ahead in its war against Hamas.

Israel strikes in and around Gaza's second-largest city in an already bloody new phase of the war

By NAJIB JOBAIN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel intensified its bombardment in and around Gaza's second-largest city early Tuesday, as ambulances and private cars came racing into a local hospital carrying people wounded in a bloody new phase of the war in Gaza.

Under U.S. pressure to prevent further mass casualties, Israel says it is being more precise as it widens its offensive into southern Gaza after obliterating much of the north. Aerial bombardment and the ground offensive have already driven three-fourths of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes.

At the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, ambulances brought dozens of wounded people in throughout the night. At one point, a car pulled up and man emerged carrying a young boy in a bloody shirt, whose hand had been blown off.

“What's happening here is imaginable,” said Hamza al-Bursh, who lives in the neighborhood of Maan, one of several in and around the city where Israel has ordered civilians to leave. “They strike indiscriminately.”

Residents said troops had advanced following heavy airstrikes to Bani Suheila, a town just outside Khan Younis. Halima Abdel-Rahman, who fled to the town earlier in the war from her home in Beit Lahiya in the north, said they could hear explosions through the night.

“They are very close,” she said. “It's the same scenario we saw in the north.”

Satellite photos from Sunday showed around 150 Israeli tanks, armored personnel carriers and other vehicles just under 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the heart of Khan Younis. The army did not respond to a request for comment and rarely publicizes troop deployments.

FEWER PLACES TO GO

Israel ordered the full-scale evacuation of northern Gaza in the early days of the war and has barred people who left from returning. In the south, it has ordered people out of nearly two dozen neighborhoods in and around Khan Younis. That further reduced the area where civilians can seek refuge in central and southern Gaza by more than a quarter.

Palestinians say that as Israel continues to strike across the besieged territory, there are no areas where

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 30 of 75

they feel safe, and many fear that if they leave their homes they will never be allowed to return.

Israel says it must dismantle Hamas' extensive military infrastructure and remove it from power in order to prevent a repeat of the Oct. 7 attack that ignited the war. The surprise assault through the border fence saw Hamas and other Palestinian militants kill about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and capture some 240 men, women and children.

The military says it makes every effort to spare civilians and accuses Hamas of using them as human shields as the militants fight in dense residential areas, where they have a labyrinths of tunnels, bunkers, rocket launchers and sniper nests.

Hamas is deeply rooted in Palestinian society, and its determination to end decades of open-ended Israeli military rule is shared by most Palestinians, even those opposed to its ideology and its attacks on Israeli civilians. That will complicate any effort to eliminate Hamas without causing massive casualties and further displacement.

Even after weeks of unrelenting bombardment, Hamas' top leader in Gaza, Yehya Sinwar, was able to conduct complex cease-fire negotiations and orchestrate the release of more than 100 Israeli and foreign hostages in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners last week. Palestinian militants have also kept up their rocket fire into Israel, both before and after the truce.

AN UNPRECEDENTED TOLL

The fighting has meanwhile brought unprecedented death and destruction to the coastal strip.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said the death toll in the territory since Oct. 7 has surpassed 15,890 people – 70% of them women and children — with more than 42,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. It says hundreds have been killed or wounded since the cease-fire's end, and many still are trapped under rubble.

An Israeli army official provided a similar figure for the death toll in Gaza on Monday, after weeks in which Israeli officials had cast doubt on the ministry's count. The official said at least 15,000 people have been killed, including 5,000 militants, without saying how the military arrived at its figures. The military says 84 of its soldiers have been killed in the Gaza offensive.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Monday that it was too soon to pass judgment on Israeli operations, but that it was unusual for a modern military to identify precise areas of expected ground maneuvers and ask people to move out, as Israel has done in Khan Younis.

"These are the kinds of steps that we have asked them to undertake," he said. "These are the conversations we're having day in, day out."

Airstrikes and the ground offensive in northern Gaza have reduced large swaths of Gaza City and nearby areas to a rubble-filled wasteland. Hundreds of thousands of residents fled south during the assault.

Leaflets dropped by the Israeli military over Khan Younis in recent days warn people to head further south toward the border with Egypt, but they are unable to leave Gaza, as both Israel and neighboring Egypt have refused to accept any refugees.

The area that Israel ordered evacuated was home to some 117,000 people, and now it also houses more than 50,000 people displaced from the north, living in 21 shelters, the U.N. said. It was not known how many were fleeing.

Adding to the chaos, phone and internet networks across Gaza collapsed again Monday evening, the Palestinian telecom provider PalTel said. It was the latest of several outages that have complicated rescue efforts. Communications were restored early Tuesday.

2 boats adrift in the Andaman Sea with 400 Rohingya aboard desperately need rescue, UN says

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — An estimated 400 Rohingya Muslims believed to be aboard two boats adrift in the Andaman Sea without adequate supplies could die if more is not done to rescue them, according to the U.N. refugee agency and aid workers.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 31 of 75

The number of Rohingya Muslims fleeing by boats in a seasonal exodus — usually from squalid, overcrowded refugee camps in Bangladesh — has been rising since last year due to cuts to food rations and a spike in gang violence.

“There are about 400 children, women and men looking death in the eye if there are no moves to save these desperate souls,” Babar Baloch, the agency’s Bangkok-based regional spokesperson, told The Associated Press.

The whereabouts of the other boat were unclear.

The boats apparently embarked from Bangladesh and are reported to have been at sea for about two weeks, he said.

The captain of one of the boats, contacted by the AP, said he had 180 to 190 people on board. They were out of food and water and the engine was damaged. The captain, who gave his name as Maan Nokim, said he feared all on board will die if they do not receive help.

On Sunday, Nokim said the boat was 320 kilometers (200 miles) from Thailand’s west coast. A Thai navy spokesperson, contacted Monday, said he had no information about the boats.

The location is about the same distance from Indonesia’s northernmost province of Aceh, where another boat with 139 people landed Saturday on Sabang Island, off the tip of Sumatra, Baloch said. Those on the ship included 58 children, 45 women and 36 men — the typical balance of those making the sea journey, he said. Hundreds more arrived in Aceh last month.

About 740,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar to the camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, after a brutal counterinsurgency campaign tore through their communities. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of Rohingya homes, and international courts are considering whether their actions constituted genocide.

Most of the refugees leaving the camps by sea attempt to reach Muslim-dominated Malaysia, hoping to find work there. Thailand turns them away or detains them. Indonesia, another Muslim-dominated country where many end up, also puts them in detention.

Baloch said if the two boats adrift are not given assistance, the world “may witness another tragedy such as in December 2022, when a boat with 180 aboard went missing in one of the darkest such incidents in the region.”

The aid group Save the Children said in a Nov. 22 report that 465 Rohingya children had arrived in Indonesia by boat over the previous week and the the number of refugees taking to the seas had increased by more than 80%.

It said more than 3,570 Rohingya Muslims had left Bangladesh and Myanmar this year, up from nearly 2,000 in the same period of 2022. Of those who left this year, 225 are known to have died or were missing, with many others not accounted for.

“The desperate situation of Rohingya families is forcing them to take unacceptable risks in search of a better life. These perilous journeys show that many Rohingya refugees have lost all hope,” Sultana Begum, the group’s manager for humanitarian policy and advocacy, said in a statement.

To phase out or phase down fossil fuels? That is the question at COP28 climate talks

By SETH BORENSTEIN and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — After days of shaving off the edges of key warming issues, climate negotiators Tuesday zeroed in on the tough job of dealing with the main cause of what’s overheating the planet: fossil fuels.

As scientists, activists and United Nations officials repeatedly detailed how the world needs to phase-out the use of coal, oil and natural gas, the United Arab Emirates-hosted conference opened “energy transition day” with a session headlined by top officials of two oil companies.

Negotiators produced a new draft of what’s expected to be the core document of the U.N. talks, some-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 32 of 75

thing called the Global Stocktake, but it had so many possibilities in its 24-pages that it didn't give too much of a hint of what will be agreed upon when the session ends next week. Whatever is adopted has to be agreed on by consensus so it has to be near unanimous.

"The central issue of this COP, the global stocktake, is to reach a conclusion about the phasing out of fossil fuels," said climate scientist Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics. "And unless we do that, I doubt whether we're going to see an improvement in temperature."

The discussions on the global stocktake makes the climate talks in Dubai "a moment of reflection," said World Resources Institute international climate action director David Waskow. "It spotlights whether we are doing enough to curb emissions, adapt and prepare for climate change and increase finance from developed countries to developing countries."

The options in the draft range from a less-stringent "phasedown of unabated coal power" to a simple but dramatic "an orderly and just phase out of fossil fuels."

Scientists who track climate action said it's crucial to watch the language for loopholes.

"We need to phase out of fossil fuels completely without a back door," said New Climate Institute's Niklas Hohne. "At this conference, there's actually many back doors being proposed at the briefing table ... mainly for prolonging the life of fossil fuels, and one is to talk about 'unabated' fossil fuels."

Including "unabated" means allowing the burning of fossil fuels if their emissions can be captured and stored, a technology that's much talked about but really hasn't proven to work well, Hohne and other scientists have said.

Hohne and Hare's organizations on Tuesday released an updated version of the Climate Action Tracker, which looks at pledges, policies and actions by nations and tries to calculate what kind of temperature increases that means. It found, based on pledges, the world is going in the wrong direction.

A year ago the world's pledges, if fulfilled, would lead to 2.4 degrees Celsius (4.3 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming over pre-industrial times, but now it's up to 2.5 degrees (4.5 Fahrenheit). That's because several nations with weak pledges — especially Indonesia and Iran — have increased emissions so much that the world is heading more on a warmer track, said report lead author Claire Stockwell of Climate Analytics.

"We haven't really seen any action from governments," Stockwell said.

"Many, many countries still fund significant fossil fuel expansion," said New Climate Institute analyst Ana Missirliu. "And in the last year since the previous COP, we've seen quite a cascade of worrying announcements actually starting with the (host country) UAE, whose \$150 billion investment plan to expand its oil and gas industry largely — very largely — overshadows its recent renewable energy investment plans."

Missirliu also pointed to fossil fuel production expansion in the United States, United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.

However, one bright spot is that China, the world's biggest carbon polluter, is now set to hit peak emissions in 2025, years earlier than pledged, and by 2035 will be down to about 2017 levels, Stockwell said.

Activists had a series of events and actions lined up Tuesday at the summit seeking to amp up pressure on conference participants to agree to phase out — not down — coal, oil and gas, responsible for most of the world's emissions, and move to clean energy in a fair way.

A team of scientists reported Tuesday that the world pumped 1.1% more heat-trapping carbon dioxide into the air than last year, largely due to increased pollution from China and India.

Protests — which are limited to "action zones" around the U.N. site — centered on phasing out fossil fuels and calling for finance to ramp up the move to clean energy.

Over 100 countries have pledged to triple their renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by the end of the decade.

Francesco La Camera, director general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, said it's possible to meet the renewable energy goal and welcome the commitment from the international community.

He urged that the transition to clean energy should "be in line with scientific U.N. studies that look at limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius."

More bodies found after surprise eruption of Indonesia's Mount Marapi, raising apparent toll to 23

By MARDI ROSA TANJUNG Associated Press

BATU PALANO, Indonesia (AP) — Rescuers searching the hazardous slopes of Indonesia's Mount Marapi volcano found more bodies among the climbers caught by a surprise eruption two days ago, raising the number of confirmed and presumed dead to 23.

More than 50 climbers were rescued after the initial eruption Sunday, and 11 others were initially confirmed dead. Another eruption Monday spewed a new burst of hot ash as high as 800 meters (2,620 feet) into the air and temporarily halted search operations.

The latest bodies were found not too far from the eruption site, estimated to be only a few meters (yards) away, said Edi Mardianto, the deputy police chief in West Sumatra province. The bodies of five climbers have been recovered, and 18 are presumed dead because they were so close to the eruption of hot gases and ash.

"The rest we want to evacuate are 18 and we expect they are no longer alive. The team will evacuate and take them to the hospital tomorrow or today to be identified," Mardianto said Tuesday.

The rescuers are contending with bad weather and terrain constraints, as the scouring wind brings heat from the eruptions.

A video released by West Sumatra's Search and Rescue Agency showed rescuers evacuating an injured climber on a stretcher off the mountain and into a waiting ambulance to be taken to hospital.

Marapi has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, a level indicating above-normal volcanic activity, prohibiting climbers and villagers within 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) of the peak, according to Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation.

Climbers were only allowed below the danger zone, and they had to register at two command posts or online. However, local officials acknowledged many people may have climbed higher than permitted and residents also could have been in the area, making the number of people stranded by the eruption impossible to confirm.

Marapi spewed thick columns of ash as high as 3,000 meters (9,800 feet) in Sunday's eruption and hot ash clouds spread for several kilometers (miles). Nearby villages and towns were blanketed by tons of volcanic debris that blocked sunlight, and authorities recommending people wear masks and eyeglasses if possible to protect themselves from the ash.

About 1,400 people live on Marapi's slopes in Rubai and Gobah Cumantiang, the nearest villages about 5 to 6 kilometers (3.1 to 3.7 miles) from the peak.

Marapi was known for having sudden eruptions that are difficult to detect because the source is shallow and near the peak, and its eruptions are not caused by deep movement of magma, which sets off tremors that register on seismic monitors.

Marapi has been active since a January eruption that caused no casualties. It is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin.

UN agency cites worrying warming trend as COP28 summit grapples with curbing climate change

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United Nations weather agency is reporting that glaciers shrank more than ever from 2011 and 2020 and the Antarctic ice sheet lost 75 percent more compared to the previous ten years, as it released its latest stark report about the fallout on the planet from climate change.

The World Meteorological Organization served up more evidence of what scientists already know — the Earth is heating — on Tuesday, but this time looking at the trend over a longer period with its latest Decadal State of the Climate report.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 34 of 75

"Each decade since the 1990s has been warmer than the previous one and we see no immediate sign of this trend reversing," its secretary-general, Petteri Taalas, said. "We are losing the race to save our melting glaciers and ice sheets."

Warming oceans and melting of ice sheets caused the rate of sea-level rise to nearly double in less than a generation, he said, and WMO says that bodes ill for low-lying coastal regions and countries.

Experts are divided about one of the most important metrics: The rate of warming.

Former NASA top scientist James Hansen, nicknamed the Godfather of Global Warming for his early warnings, has reported that the rate is accelerating. University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann has argued warming has been steadily increasing since 1990, but isn't speeding up.

"The surface of the planet and the oceans both continue to warm at a steady rate, not an accelerating rate, and that's bad enough," Mann said in an email. He warned that such warming is fueling increasingly dangerous extreme weather events, coastal flooding and many other "disastrous" impacts.

"And the warming and its consequences will continue as long as we continue to generate carbon pollution through fossil fuel burning and other activities, highlighting the critical need for progress at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai taking place right now," he wrote.

The WMO report said that glaciers measured around the world thinned by roughly one meter (about 3 feet) per year on average from 2011 to 2020, and a look at over 40 "reference glaciers" showed the lowest mass balances of any decade.

"The remaining glaciers near the Equator are generally in rapid decline. Glaciers in Papua, Indonesia are likely to disappear altogether within the next decade," WMO said. "In Africa, glaciers on the Rwenzori Mountains and Mount Kenya are projected to disappear by 2030, and those on Kilimanjaro by 2040."

As for the ice-sheet thaw, Greenland and Antarctica lost 38% more ice from 2011 to 2020 than in the previous decade. It also said that sea level rise has accelerated during the decade because of the melting.

China's government can't take a joke, so comedians living abroad censor themselves

By FU TING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Comedian Xi Diao says he knows he should avoid talking politics on stage, but sharing a family name with Chinese President Xi Jinping makes it hard to resist.

Even his name is politically sensitive, the Melbourne-based amateur comedian tells audiences, setting up a joke about a group chat on the Chinese messaging service WeChat being shut down as soon as he joined it.

The 33-year-old civil engineer gets nervous laughs whenever he breaks a de facto rule of Chinese comedy: Don't say anything that makes China look bad. To most comedians, that means no jokes about censorship, no mentioning the president's name, and no discussion of China's extraordinarily strict COVID lockdowns or social topics like domestic violence.

"It is a pity, if the environment were open, there would be somebody world-class coming up," Xi said.

Mandarin-language standup comedy is growing, and not just in China. The medium has taken off in the last decade, and China's expatriate population has established clubs in cities like New York, Tokyo and Madrid.

Comedians are known for bristling at limits, but most Mandarin-language comedians, and many fans, say some topics have no place in the comedy club.

In China there are censors who review jokes in advance, and punish performers who cross political red lines. Earlier this year, an entertainment company was fined about \$2 million when star comedian Li Haoshi made a joke that referenced a Chinese military slogan.

Overseas, comedians say they don't fear punishment, but most say political jokes aren't funny, or make people uncomfortable. Many are not very familiar with political humor, after growing up in a country that largely censors it.

"We make what the audience likes," said Guo Jia, a businessman who runs a comedy club in Tokyo.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 35 of 75

He said discomfort with politics is part of Chinese culture, comparing it to sensitivities about race in the United States.

"There are some areas where people won't go, but it's not typically because of government policies, but more social pressure or culture or religion," said Michel Hockx, a professor of Chinese Literature and director of the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies in University of Notre Dame.

Comedians do push on social boundaries.

For Lin Dongxiao, a 28-year-old comedian who began performing while living in Toronto, it was a chance to talk in public about a congenital disorder that causes limp, and to get crowds laughing with him about how Chinese society treats people with disabilities.

Lin, who performs under the stage name "Guazi," told an audience that women he met online complained that he didn't warn them he had a disability, so he added it to his dating profile.

"You're scrolling ... oh gym trainer, nice body; business executive, million-dollar salary; and then...third-class certificate of disability without any allowance." People burst into laughter.

Standup fan Wenlai Cai, a Los Angeles-based software engineer in her early 30s, said that she enjoys hearing jokes about LGBTQ life and race relations, topics that are strictly off limits in the mainland.

But "there should be limits on (jokes about) high level politics" Cai said. "That is, political leaders, partisanship ... I don't think it's meaningful to talk about."

There are also a few venues that defy Beijing's sensibilities. Women's Idea, a feminist group in New York City, hosts uncensored comedy shows that often hit on politics, encouraging women to express themselves on social and political issues.

But even roundabout references to politics make most Chinese-language audiences uncomfortable, Xi said. After he performed at a Chinese restaurant in Australia, the owner asked him to be careful; at a standup competition, he got zero audience votes. He's wound up performing almost exclusively at English-language venues.

Zhu Jiesheng, who runs a standup comedy club in Madrid, reviews other performers' jokes before they go on stage, asking them to strike jokes that could cross political lines.

But when a comedian insisted on telling jokes about the Shanghai lockdown, Zhu didn't stop him. The audience didn't get the jokes, Zhu said, and it started arguments backstage, leaving him more convinced that politics and comedy don't mix.

Comedians are very aware that people can get into trouble for what they say. Asked about Li Haoshi, comedians said he should have known better.

"Even if you do not make mistakes but someone else does, it affects the whole industry," said Zhong Di, a 30-year-old student in Milan who also performs standup.

Lin, who recently moved back to China to pursue a career in standup, said the industry is still recovering from the crackdown set off by his joke.

The Associated Press couldn't reach Li for comment, and the company that manages him didn't respond to an interview request.

China has a record of harassing its nationals abroad for activism. It has also threatened international stars from abroad with boycotts or bans on performing in China. Nigel Ng, a Malaysian comedian based in the UK who created the popular character "Uncle Roger," lost his Chinese social media accounts after a clip from a live show went viral in which he joked about China listening in through cell phones.

Vicky Xu, a Chinese-born journalist in Australia who also performs standup in English, said that Chinese people have a long history of cracking jokes about sensitive topics.

"If you look back at a lot of the movies or TV shows made in China like 20, 30 years ago, there are more political jokes than today. So how do you explain that?" she said.

Xu, whose work is critical of the Chinese government and who has received blistering blowback from China's official media and nationalist trolls, said that politics affects people's lives in China so much that not talking about it is "ignoring the elephant in the room."

When comedians go back to China, they face restrictions beyond what they impose on themselves

overseas.

Lin said censorship is important to prevent “chaos,” but submitting his material to censors weeks before performances is still a challenge.

“No one told me what I could say or not,” said Lin, “which is pretty hard. I just hand in whatever I have, and change it if it doesn’t get approved.”

In Australia, Xi doesn’t plan to stop kidding about his famous namesake.

“I’m nobody,” Xi said, “and after all, I have an Australian passport ... I will keep telling these jokes.”

‘We are officially hostages.’ How the Israeli kibbutz of Nir Oz embodied Hamas hostage strategy

By LORI HINNANT and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

NIR OZ, Israel (AP) — The engineer and his family cowered in the safe room, dark except for a red remote-control light because they feared the gunmen outside his door would notice anything brighter.

Eyal Barad had just reconfigured the settings on a homemade traffic camera from his cell phone to monitor the Hamas attack unfolding outside his door in the kibbutz of Nir Oz. But his 6-year-old autistic daughter — hiding in the room with him, her mother and her two siblings — could not understand that their lives depended upon silence. Her cries were building into near-screams.

Barad wrapped his arms around the girl, covered her mouth tightly, and looked over her head to his wife. His whispered, agonized question: Should he cut her airflow long enough to knock her unconscious, to keep everybody alive?

But he couldn’t risk killing her. He resolved: “We all go, or we all survive.”

Eight weeks into the Israel-Gaza war, the recent release of dozens of Israeli hostages — with as many still in captivity — is bringing new focus on what Hamas did on Oct. 7, the day its fighters rounded them up from communities across southern Israel. The kibbutz of Nir Oz is perhaps the best place to understand Hamas’ hostage strategy, an operation that was unprecedented both in scope and execution.

For Israelis, Nir Oz stands out as the embodiment of their country’s vulnerability that day, with the absence of Israeli soldiers, the capture of unprotected civilians, their deaths and disappearance into Gaza, and their subsequent exchange for Palestinians. More than 100 Palestinian militants left Nir Oz with some 80 of its roughly 400 residents. That means people from the kibbutz made up a third of the 240 hostages taken in all and nearly half of the Israelis released, with more than 30 still believed to be in Gaza.

Around 20 Nir Oz residents were killed on Oct. 7, and news of deaths in Gaza has started to trickle in.

Those seized from the kibbutz ranged in age from 9 months to 85 years. All were civilians, and more than half were women and children. All 13 Israeli hostages released in the first exchange on Nov. 24 were from Nir Oz, and they bought the freedom of 39 Palestinian prisoners from Israel.

A review of hundreds of messages among Nir Oz residents shared exclusively with The Associated Press, direct interviews with 17 and accounts from many more, security camera footage and Hamas’ own instructions manuals suggests that the group planned well ahead of time to target civilians. Four experts in hostage situations agreed that Hamas’ actions, both the day of the attack and afterwards, indicated a plan to seize civilians to prepare for the war to come.

Danielle Gilbert, a political scientist at Northwestern University who researches hostage-taking, said Hamas and other armed groups generally use hostages as human shields or as currency to negotiate an exchange. But the difference here, she said, is that most armed groups take able-bodied adult men.

“It is extremely rare for armed groups to kidnap children, to kidnap women, to kidnap the elderly and people who are otherwise vulnerable,” she said. “The hostage taker needs to make sure that their hostage can survive captivity.”

Gilbert feared Hamas would see the strategy as as relatively successful, at least in the short term, and potentially worth repeating.

“As much as I hate to say it,” she added, “hostage taking works.”

Hamas has hinted at capturing hostages, but has been vague in public statements about whether it

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 37 of 75

planned to kidnap a maximum of civilians.

"We were shocked by this colossal collapse. We had expected, planned to win, enter the settlements and get what we wanted and take hostages for exchange. But this army was a paper tiger," Ali Barakeh, a Hamas official in Beirut, told The Associated Press on Oct. 9.

Deliberate intent is also laid out in a manual entitled "How to take Captives," which the Israeli army said it found among dead Hamas militants in another kibbutz attacked on Oct. 7: "Separate and isolate (women and children/men). Kill the difficult ones and those who pose a threat."

WE ARE OFFICIALLY HOSTAGES

Hamas' attack on Nir Oz started a little after 6:30 a.m. and lasted 9 long hours.

The first word that something was wrong came at 6:35 a.m. on the kibbutz chat app: "Heavy gunfire has been fired at the council's communities and other communities throughout the country. Stay in protected spaces or the most protected there is until further notice."

Two cars then streamed past the Nir Oz security cameras into the kibbutz, followed by five gunmen, including one who fired a volley into the empty guard post, according to footage seen by AP. The footage is timestamped 6:49 a.m.

Sagui Dekel-Chen was tinkering in the kibbutz machine shop when he saw the armed intruders and raced to a rooftop for a better look. His voice message to the community WhatsApp group was tense: "I believe there are gunshots inside the kibbutz. Everybody: Lock your doors and whoever has a weapon arm yourself."

Dekel-Chen, an Israeli-American, ran home, helped his pregnant wife and their two daughters into the safe room end rigged the door so it couldn't be opened from the outside. Then the 35-year-old father borrowed a gun and prepared to defend the kibbutz with the rest of the community security volunteers, according to his father, Jonathan Dekel-Chen.

By then, almost everyone was in their safe rooms. Nearly every Israeli household has one of these rooms, which are designed as shelters against Hamas rockets. But in communities near Gaza, like Nir Oz, they are stocked with particular care, often with beds, food, water and spare batteries, and residents use them routinely. Few have locks.

Inside her darkened room with her adult daughter and dog, Irit Lahav was messaging with her brother, who was in his own saferoom in another kibbutz. He warned her to find a way to block her door as quickly as possible.

A jewelry designer, Lahav has an eye for seeing the potential in unusual objects. She combined an oar, a vacuum cleaner hose and a long leather cord to block the handle, yanking on the cord from time to time if she saw slack. She watched messages, each one more fearful than the last, flash across her screen to the sound of gunshots outside.

"I keep thinking that the army will come at any minute," she said.

Four hours passed. Five.

A journalist who accompanied Hamas stood on the front lawn of Ada Sagi, the kibbutz Arabic teacher, and excitedly narrated as gunmen raced around him. A stream of Palestinian men, women and children followed, according to Hamas videos and witnesses. Many Palestinians in Gaza see the kibbutzim as illegal settlements on historic lands that they had never set foot in before that day.

"After an hour or more of walking, we were able to enter a kibbutz; the most important kibbutz of the occupation," he said, according to the video widely streamed on Palestinian news sites. "Here is a scene from the heart of the settlement."

The men who shot out the guard post were the first of about seven groups of armed fighters. In all, the Israeli military and kibbutz residents estimate as many as 150 men arrived in cars and pickups nearly simultaneously from different directions, armed to the teeth. The messages flew back and forth on the kibbutz chat and various residents' WhatsApp groups.

9:16 a.m. "How do you lock the safe room?????"

10:15 a.m. "We are officially hostages."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 38 of 75

10:19 a.m. "They are threatening to blow up the house if we don't open up."

One by one, people dropped out of the flow of messages. Some would later appear in Hamas videos.

One terrified mother clutches her two redheaded toddlers as they're led away in a blanket, her eyes huge with fear. A boy is hauled away by his armpits. An elderly woman is pulled to her feet after tumbling off a motorcycle.

The quality of images from Barad's traffic camera was grainy, because it was intended originally just to capture speeding vehicles. A white pickup truck pulled in front of his house, and armed men jumped off and walked off-screen. For about half an hour, the screen filled with the movement of motorcycles, bicycles, stolen farm machinery and gunmen.

Then one attacker emerged from the left, firmly pulling a clearly reluctant unarmed man by the hands. A few minutes later, a motorcycle drove past carrying three people. A cap covered the face of the person trapped in the middle, much smaller than the two others.

From the house across the road, a gunman took position near the closed safe window. A second man yanked open the metal shutter and pulled out a woman. They covered her face and head with a white cloth.

Barad recorded the images of the gunmen taking her, because it was the only thing he could do. He would replay the scene in his head for weeks.

"It looked very rehearsed," Barad said. "It looked like this was the plan."

DON'T TAKE ME. I'M TOO YOUNG.

As the Barad family's safe room filled with smoke, two adolescent brothers were frantically messaging their mother in a nearby kibbutz. It was dawn after a rare night out for Renana Gome Yaacov, who trusted her 16-year-old son to be responsible for his 12-year-old brother.

Her ex-husband and his girlfriend lived within a few hundred meters (yards), she reasoned, so the boys could get help if an emergency arose. Then the alarms sounded across the area.

Around 8:10 a.m., one of the boys called in a whisper: The gunmen were in the house. A few minutes later, another call: Their father had been shot.

Still on the open phone line, she heard the safe room door burst open, with voices shouting in Arabic, which she does not understand. Her younger son tried to reason with the men.

"I could hear him say to them, 'Don't take me. I'm too young,'" she recalled. Then the line went dead.

Yaacov was bitterly aware that in one cruel way she was lucky.

"Some people will probably never know what happened to their dear ones," she said, reflecting on the overheard conversation. "I heard it live."

More messages followed between residents.

12:07 p.m. "I have a gunshot wound in my leg. A bullet went through the door"

12:09 p.m. "Press a cloth as hard as you can on the wound. Tie it"

12:37 p.m. "Is there a chance they're in the house while it's burning? I do not know if I should remove my hand"

12:38 p.m. "Do NOT remove your hand. Just switch hands every so often.

Still no Israeli soldiers.

A Hamas video shot under midafternoon light shows a relatively orderly procession of stolen cars, motorcycles and farm equipment headed across the fields back to Gaza. They carried with them one in every five residents of Nir Oz.

Batsheva Yaalomi was captured along with her husband and their three children. They were separated, and she was placed on a motorcycle with her 10-year-old daughter and the baby. At some point, they managed to scramble off in the fields. She held the baby tight, and they crawled her way through the furrows until after nightfall and escaped.

Finally, sometime around 3:30 p.m., Israeli soldiers arrived. All the Hamas fighters had already left Nir Oz. It took hours longer for the soldiers to confirm that none of the houses was booby-trapped and escort residents from their safe rooms.

Yaalomi's son, 12-year-old son Eitan, was among those freed during the recent truce, as were both Yaacov boys. Also freed were Ada Sagi, the teacher whose front lawn took center stage in a militant propaganda

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 39 of 75

video; and Yafa Adar, the 85-year-old grandmother who was among the first hostages released by Hamas. But the fathers of Eitan and the Yaacov brothers are still among the missing, as is Sagui Dekel-Chen, who sounded the first alarm.

The two youngest hostages, the redheads from Nir Oz – a 4-year-old and his 10-month-old brother – also remain missing, along with their mother. Hamas has said they were killed.

Jonathan Dekel-Chen, Sagui's father and a historian by profession, has methodically gathered accounts from throughout the community to piece together what happened. The Israeli military said no dead Hamas militants were found.

"This was not an attempt to conquer territory," Dekel-Chen said. "This was not an attempt at any kind of liberation. This mission or massacre was extremely well-organized — it must have taken months if not years, cost a fortune."

Hamas went into the kibbutz knowing Judaism's historical preoccupation with hostages, said Étienne Dignat, a French expert on international hostage situations. The Talmud, a set of commentaries on the Torah, specifically condones ransoming of hostages as a communal responsibility, and many ancient scholars considered being hostage a fate worse than death. But the scholars warned against paying too high a price to avoid endangering Jews in the future.

"They knew they were going to have the opportunity to enter kibbutzim, which had never happened before," Dignat said. "And obviously, afterwards, they knew the particular Israeli sensitivity to the fate of women and children."

In all, 240 Palestinian women and teenage prisoners were exchanged during the truce for 110 hostages — 85 Israelis and 25 foreigners.

Israel has a long history of agreeing to lopsided exchanges. Hamas' 2006 seizure of a sole young conscript, Gilad Shalit, consumed Israeli society for five years, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ultimately ordered the release of over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for his freedom. Netanyahu's own brother, Yonatan, led an elite commando squad that successfully rescued 98 hostages from an airplane hijacking in Entebbe, Uganda, in 1976. Yonatan Netanyahu and four hostages were killed.

One of the first hostages to be freed, Yocheved Lifshitz, told a news conference that their first destination was a large room, where about 25 captives were gathered. Then she and four others from Nir Oz, including an injured man, were taken to another room. A few days in – and in another sign of their significance – Hamas leader Yehya Sinwa met with the Nir Oz hostages, she later told Israeli media. A doctor came every few days to check on them and take care of the injured man.

When she was freed, Lifshitz shook the hand of the captor who handed her over. Why?

"They were kind to us. Our needs were supplied," she answered. "They prepared for this. They were prepared for a very long time."

Lebanon's Christians feel the heat of climate change in its sacred forest and valley

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BCHARRE, Lebanon (AP) — Majestic cedar trees towered over dozens of Lebanese Christians gathered outside a small mid-19th century chapel hidden in a mountain forest to celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, the miracle where Jesus Christ, on a mountaintop, shined with light before his disciples.

The sunset's yellow light coming through the cedar branches bathed the leader of Lebanon's Maronite Church, Patriarch Beshara al-Rai, as he stood at a wooden podium and delivered a sermon. Then the gathering sang hymns in Arabic and the Aramaic language.

For Lebanon's Christians, the cedars are sacred, these tough evergreen trees that survive the mountain's harsh snowy winters. They point out with pride that Lebanon's cedars are mentioned 103 times in the Bible. The trees are a symbol of Lebanon, pictured at the center of the national flag.

The iconic trees in the country's north are far from the clashes between Hezbollah militants and Israeli

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 40 of 75

troops along the Lebanon-Israel border in recent weeks against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war. The Lebanese government says Israel's use of white phosphorus and other incendiary weapons has burned tens of thousands of olive trees and other crops in the border area, and impoverished Lebanese farmers fear the shells have contaminated their soil.

But the long-term survival of the cedar forests is in doubt for another reason, as rising temperatures due to climate change threaten to wipe out biodiversity and scar one of the country's most iconic heritage sites for its Christians.

The lush Cedars of God Forest, some 2000 meters (6,560 feet) above sea level near the northern town of Bcharre, is part of a landscape cherished by Christians. The preserve overlooks the Kadisha Valley -- Aramaic for "sacred" -- where many Christians took refuge from persecution over Lebanon's tumultuous history. One of the world's largest collections of monasteries remains hidden among the thick trees, caves and rocky outcroppings along the deep, 35-kilometer (22-mile) valley.

The United Nations' culture agency UNESCO in 1998 listed both the cedar forest and the valley as World Heritage Sites. They've become popular destinations for hikers and environmentalists from around the world. A growing number of Lebanese of all faiths visit as well, seeking fresh air away from the cities.

"People from all religions visit here, not just Christians ... even Muslims and atheists," said Hani Tawk, a Maronite Christian priest, as he showed a crowd of tourists around the Saint Elisha monastery. "But we as Christians, this reminds us of all the saints who lived here, and we come to experience being in this sacred dimension."

Environmentalists and residents say the effects of climate change, exacerbated by government mismanagement, pose a threat to the ecosystem of the valley and the cedar forest.

"Thirty or 40 years from now, it's quite possible to see the Kadisha Valley's biodiversity, which is one of the richest worldwide, become much poorer," Charbel Tawk, an environmental engineer and activist in Bcharre -- unrelated to Hani Tawk -- told The Associated Press

Lebanon for years has felt the heat of climate change, with farmers decrying lack of rain, and forest fires wreaking havoc on pine forests north of the country, similar to blazes that scorched forests in neighboring Syria and nearby Greece. Residents across much of the country, struggling with rampant electricity cuts, could barely handle the summer's soaring heat.

Temperatures have been above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) in Bcharre, not uncommon along Lebanon's coastal cities but unusual for the mountainous northern town.

Nuns in the medieval Qannoubin Monastery, perched on the side of a hill in the Kadisha Valley, fanned themselves and drank water in the shade of the monastery's courtyard. They reminisced about when they could sleep comfortably on summer nights without needing much electricity.

Already, there are worrying signs of the impact on the cedars and Kadisha.

Warmer temperatures have brought larger colonies of aphids that feed on the bark of cedar trees and leave a secretion that can cause mold, Charbel Tawk said. Bees normally remove the secretion, but they have become less active. Aphids and other pests also are lasting longer in the season and reach higher altitudes because of warmer weather.

Such pests threaten to stunt or damage cedar growth.

Tawk worries that if temperatures continue to change like this, cedars at lower altitudes might not be able to survive. Fires are becoming more of a potential danger.

Cedar trees usually grow at an altitude from 700 up to 1,800 meters above sea level. Tawk's organization has planted some 200,000 cedars over the years at higher altitudes and in areas where they were not present. Some 180,000 survived.

"Is it climate change or whatever it is happening in nature that these cedars are able to survive at 2,100 to 2,400 meters?" Tawk asked, while checking on a grove of cedars on a remote hilltop.

Local priests and environmental activists have urged Lebanon's government to work with universities to do a wide-ranging study on temperature changes and the impact on biodiversity.

But Lebanon has been in the throes of a crippling economic crisis for years. State coffers are dried up,

and many of the country's top experts are rapidly seeking work opportunities abroad.

"There is nothing today called the state ... The relevant ministries, even with the best intentions, don't have the financial capabilities anymore," Bcharre Mayor Freddy Keyrouz said. He said he and mayors of nearby towns have asked residents to help with conservation initiatives and Lebanese diaspora abroad to help with funding.

The Maronite Church has strict rules to protect the Cedars of God forest, including keeping development out of it. Kiosks, tourist shops and a large parking lot have been set far away from the forest.

"We don't allow anything that is combustible to be brought into the sacred forest," said Charbel Makhoulf, a priest at Bcharre's Saint Saba Cathedral.

The Friends of the Cedar Forest Committee, to which Tawk belongs, has been looking after the cedar trees for almost three decades, with the church's support. It has installed sensors on cedar trees to measure temperature, wind, and humidity, watching for worsening conditions that could risk forest fires.

Below the forest in the Kadisha Valley, Tawk points to other concerns.

In particular, the spread of cypress trees threatens to crowd out other species, "breaking this equilibrium that we had in the valley," he said.

"We've seen them increase and tower over other species, whether it's taking sunlight, wind, or expanding their roots," he said. "It will impact other plants, birds, insects, and all the reptile species down there."

Steps to protect the valley have actually hurt its biodiversity by removing human practices that had been beneficial, Tawk said.

In the past, herders grazing their goats and other livestock in the valley helped prevent the spread of invasive species. Their grazing also reduced fire hazards, as did local families collecting deadwood to burn in the winter.

But residents left the valley when it became a heritage site and the Lebanese government implemented strict regulations. Few live there now other than a handful of priests and nuns.

"Trees have overtaken places where people lived and farmed," Tawk said. "Now a fire could move from one end of the valley to the other."

Sitting in a cave near the Qannoubine Monastery, Father Hani Tawk listened to the variety of birds chirping in the valley. He said he believes in the community's faith and awareness of nature, engrained since their ancestors took refuge here.

"When you violate that tree, you're intruding on a long history, and possibly the future of your children," he said.

AI's future could be 'open-source' or closed. Tech giants are divided as they lobby regulators

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Tech leaders have been vocal proponents of the need to regulate artificial intelligence, but they're also lobbying hard to make sure the new rules work in their favor.

That's not to say they all want the same thing.

Facebook parent Meta and IBM on Tuesday launched a new group called the AI Alliance that's advocating for an "open science" approach to AI development that puts them at odds with rivals Google, Microsoft and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI.

These two diverging camps — the open and the closed — disagree about whether to build AI in a way that makes the underlying technology widely accessible. Safety is at the heart of the debate, but so is who gets to profit from AI's advances.

Open advocates favor an approach that is "not proprietary and closed," said Darío Gil, a senior vice president at IBM who directs its research division. "So it's not like a thing that is locked in a barrel and no one knows what they are."

WHAT'S OPEN-SOURCE AI?

The term "open-source" comes from a decades-old practice of building software in which the code is

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 42 of 75

free or widely accessible for anyone to examine, modify and build upon.

Open-source AI involves more than just code and computer scientists differ on how to define it depending on which components of the technology are publicly available and if there are restrictions limiting its use. Some use open science to describe the broader philosophy.

The AI Alliance — led by IBM and Meta and including Dell, Sony, chipmakers AMD and Intel and several universities and AI startups — is “coming together to articulate, simply put, that the future of AI is going to be built fundamentally on top of the open scientific exchange of ideas and on open innovation, including open source and open technologies,” Gil said in an interview with The Associated Press ahead of its unveiling.

Part of the confusion around open-source AI is that despite its name, OpenAI — the company behind ChatGPT and the image-generator DALL-E — builds AI systems that are decidedly closed.

“To state the obvious, there are near-term and commercial incentives against open source,” said Ilya Sutskever, OpenAI’s chief scientist and co-founder, in a video interview hosted by Stanford University in April. But there’s also a longer-term worry involving the potential for an AI system with “mind-bendingly powerful” capabilities that would be too dangerous to make publicly accessible, he said.

To make his case for open-source dangers, Sutskever posited an AI system that had learned how to start its own biological laboratory.

IS IT DANGEROUS?

Even current AI models pose risks and could be used, for instance, to ramp up disinformation campaigns to disrupt democratic elections, said University of California, Berkeley scholar David Evan Harris.

“Open source is really great in so many dimensions of technology,” but AI is different, Harris said.

“Anyone who watched the movie ‘Oppenheimer’ knows this, that when big scientific discoveries are being made, there are lots of reasons to think twice about how broadly to share the details of all of that information in ways that could get into the wrong hands,” he said.

The Center for Humane Technology, a longtime critic of Meta’s social media practices, is among the groups drawing attention to the risks of open-source or leaked AI models.

“As long as there are no guardrails in place right now, it’s just completely irresponsible to be deploying these models to the public,” said the group’s Camille Carlton.

IS IT FEAR-MONGERING?

An increasingly public debate has emerged over the benefits or dangers of adopting an open-source approach to AI development.

Meta’s chief AI scientist, Yann LeCun, this fall took aim on social media at OpenAI, Google and startup Anthropic for what he described as “massive corporate lobbying” to write the rules in a way that benefits their high-performing AI models and could concentrate their power over the technology’s development. The three companies, along with OpenAI’s key partner Microsoft, have formed their own industry group called the Frontier Model Forum.

LeCun said on X, formerly Twitter, that he worried that fearmongering from fellow scientists about AI “doomsday scenarios” was giving ammunition to those who want to ban open-source research and development.

“In a future where AI systems are poised to constitute the repository of all human knowledge and culture, we need the platforms to be open source and freely available so that everyone can contribute to them,” LeCun wrote. “Openness is the only way to make AI platforms reflect the entirety of human knowledge and culture.”

For IBM, an early supporter of the open-source Linux operating system in the 1990s, the dispute feeds into a much longer competition that precedes the AI boom.

“It’s sort of a classic regulatory capture approach of trying to raise fears about open-source innovation,” said Chris Padilla, who leads IBM’s global government affairs team. “I mean, this has been the Microsoft model for decades, right? They always opposed open-source programs that could compete with Windows or Office. They’re taking a similar approach here.”

WHAT ARE GOVERNMENTS DOING?

It was easy to miss the “open-source” debate in the discussion around U.S. President Joe Biden’s sweeping executive order on AI.

That’s because Biden’s order described open models with the highly technical name of “dual-use foundation models with widely available weights” and said they needed further study. Weights are numerical parameters that influence how an AI model performs.

“When the weights for a dual-use foundation model are widely available — such as when they are publicly posted on the Internet — there can be substantial benefits to innovation, but also substantial security risks, such as the removal of safeguards within the model,” Biden’s order said. He gave U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo until July to talk to experts and come back with recommendations on how to manage the potential benefits and risks.

The European Union has less time to figure it out. In negotiations coming to a head Wednesday, officials working to finalize passage of world-leading AI regulation are still debating a number of provisions, including one that could exempt certain “free and open-source AI components” from rules affecting commercial models.

Brutal killings of women in Western Balkan countries trigger alarm and expose faults in the system

By JOVANA GEC, SABINA NIKSIC and ZANA CIMILI Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — A man in Bosnia killed his wife and streamed the murder live on Instagram. In neighboring Serbia, 27 women were killed in gender-based attacks this year, despite efforts to raise awareness and reverse the trend. Activists in Kosovo say violence against women there is a “national emergency.”

Throughout the Western Balkans, women are harassed, raped, beaten and killed, often by their partners and after repeatedly reporting the violence to the authorities. The region is staunchly conservative, with a centuries-old tradition of male dominance, but the problem surged following the wars in the 1990s and the political, economic and social crises that have persisted since the conflicts ended.

In response, women’s groups in the region have organized protests to draw public attention and demand action. They have set up help lines and shelters for women. But activists blame authorities for not acting more decisively to protect women and counter a culture of impunity.

The public in Bosnia and in the wider region was brutally shaken into reality in August, when a woman in the northeastern Bosnian town of Gradacac was shot in the head by her former partner, in a live video on Instagram.

The murder was “so gruesome and so tragic” that it was an “eye-opener,” said Jadranka Milicevic, from the Cure (Girls) group.

In the Western Balkans, most countries have passed laws and regulations to combat violence against women but implementation remains incoherent, activists say.

Bosnia, for example, was among the first countries to ratify the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention on violence against women, but the problem has only grown since then, Milicevic said.

“Violence against women and domestic violence are a global phenomenon. They exist everywhere, but it is the state response to the violence that is the key issue,” explained Vanja Macanovic, from the Autonomous Women’s Center in Serbia. “Unfortunately, what we see here (in the Balkans) is that violence is approved. It is a model of behavior that is not sufficiently condemned in public.”

“We have signed all relevant international declarations, resolutions and conventions but their application is questionable,” said Milicevic. “Too many people still perceive (domestic) violence as a private issue, a private matter between two people. They do not understand that it is a social problem.”

Observers cite Bosnia’s lenient sentences for violence and killing of women as one of the key problems. A 2022 report by GREVIO, an expert body monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, said such court practices feed a “sentiment of impunity” that is felt strongly by both the perpetrators and their victims.

Only once was a murderer sentenced to the 40-year maximum in a case where a woman was the victim, Milicevic said. A total of 65 women have been killed in the past 10 years and five have survived attempted murders in the country of 3.3 million people, local data shows.

The situation is similar in Kosovo, another highly patriarchal and male-oriented Balkan society. There, the rape last year of an 11-year-old girl by five assailants triggered street protests demanding safety for women, which led to the resignation of the police chief.

But protesters were out in the streets again later in 2022, angered by two killings in the capital Pristina. A 63-year-old geography teacher was killed by her axe-wielding husband, while a pregnant woman was tracked down outside a hospital by her husband, who killed her while she was waiting to give birth.

A total of 66 women have been killed by partners or husbands since 2000 in Kosovo, a nation of 2 million, while only one perpetrator has been sentenced to life in prison, official statistics show.

Serbian activist Macanovic believes part of the problem is that "institutions are not being held responsible" and there is no consequence for mistakes in handling the cases. This discourages women from turning to the state for help, especially in smaller communities, she added.

"We do not have a well-structured system of responsibility for every professional for wrongful action, or rather lack of action," she said. It is rare for police officers, social services, prosecutors or court officials to be held to account if mistakes are made and a woman is later killed.

Faced with a surge in violence and killings of women, in 2017 Serbia began implementing a special law to deepen cooperation between agencies, take immediate measures against attackers and set up local working groups on the prevention of violence.

Bosnia, too, passed a law on the prevention of domestic violence several years ago. But in the societies that went through wars, where economies and institutions have crumbled, and where ethnic, political and social divisions are fuelled by authorities rather than countered, legal changes alone are not enough, say experts.

Violence has persisted and will continue, believes Vesna Stanojevic, who runs a chain of safe houses for women in Serbia. "Sometimes we take in women who are beaten so hard that they cannot walk or move their head, who have come after being in a hospital, who are about to give birth, have stomach injuries," she said.

"Where did they (attackers) learn that? Who are role models for our children?" she asked. "We should educate and we (societies) obviously are not doing it."

Currently, more than 40 women and children are staying in the shelters run by her organization, she said. "In my 32 years of work, I haven't seen violence decline ... Sometimes there is more, sometimes less, but generally it is always there."

In one of the shelters, a 26-year-old woman said in an interview she decided to leave her partner when she noticed bruises also on their baby son. The woman, who wouldn't give her name for security reasons, said her partner repeatedly raped her, beat and choked her, and kept her and the baby locked in their flat for hours at a time.

Upon leaving, the woman ended up in a hospital with chest injuries and bruising. The man has now been detained. "The last (beating) was really bad," she said. "I knew that if it happened again, neither I nor the baby would remain alive."

Handcuffed and sent to the ER – for misbehavior: Schools are sending more kids to the hospital

By ANNIE MA of The Associated Press and MEREDITH KOLODNER of The Hechinger Report undefined SALISBURY, Md. (AP) — Three times a week, on average, a police car pulls up to a school in Wicomico County on Maryland's Eastern Shore. A student is brought out, handcuffed and placed inside for transport to a hospital emergency room for a psychiatric evaluation.

Over the past eight years, the process has been used at least 750 times on students. Some are as young as 5 years old.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 45 of 75

The state law that allows for these removals, known as petitions for emergency evaluation, is meant to be limited to people with severe mental illness, who are endangering their own lives or safety or someone else's. It's the first step toward getting someone involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital.

But advocates say schools across the country are sending children to the emergency room for psychiatric evaluations in response to behaviors prompted by bullying or frustration over assignments. The ER trips, they say, often follow months, and sometimes years, of their needs not being met.

Black students are more frequently subjected to these removals than their peers, according to available data. Advocates point to students with disabilities also being removed at higher rates.

"Schools focus on keeping kids out rather than on keeping kids in," said Dan Stewart, managing attorney at the National Disability Rights Network. "I think that's the fundamental crux of things."

Schools in Wicomico County agreed not to misuse emergency petitions as part of a 2017 settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice. But while the number of suspensions and expulsions declined, mandated trips to the emergency room ticked up.

Last year, children were handcuffed and sent to the emergency room at least 117 times from Wicomico schools, about once per every 100 students, according to data obtained from public records requests to the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office.

At least 40% were 12 or younger. More than half were Black children, even though a little more than a third of Wicomico public school children are Black.

'TRYING TO GET HIM OUT OF SCHOOL'

In interviews, dozens of students, parents, educators, lawyers and advocates for students with disabilities in Wicomico County said a lack of resources and trained staff, combined with a punitive culture in some schools, are behind the misuse of emergency petitions.

One Wicomico mom, who asked for anonymity because she feared retaliation from the school, recalled the terror she felt when her son's school called and said they were going to have him assessed for a forced psychiatric hospitalization. When she arrived at the school, she said, her son was already in handcuffs. He was put in the back of a police car and taken to the hospital.

"He said his wrists hurt from the handcuffs," the mother said. "He was just really quiet, just sitting there, and he didn't understand why he was in the hospital."

The practice isn't just happening in Wicomico.

Recent data shows New York City schools still call police to take children in emotional distress to the emergency room despite a 2014 legal settlement in which they agreed to stop the practice.

A Kentucky school district was found to have used a psychiatric assessment on kids more than 1,000 times in a year. In Florida, thousands of school-aged children have been subjected to the Baker Act, the state's involuntary commitment statute.

In a settlement with the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights, the Stockton Unified School District in California agreed to protocols that require other interventions before referring students with disabilities for psychiatric evaluation.

In Maryland, Wicomico uses emergency petitions more often per capita than almost every other Maryland district where data is available.

Baltimore City, for example, last year had 271 emergency petitions from schools, compared with Wicomico's at least 117, according to data obtained from law enforcement agencies through public records requests. But Baltimore's student population is five times as large.

Wicomico parents describe struggling to get support for their children when they fell behind on basics like reading and math in early grades. These gaps in learning can lead to frustration and behaviors challenging for teachers to manage.

The Wicomico mother whose son was handcuffed said she fought for years with administrators to obtain accommodations for her child, who is autistic, an experience echoed by other parents. Her son, who also has ADHD, was several years behind in reading by the time he got to middle school. The mother said he was sent to the hospital after an outburst rooted in frustration, not mental illness.

She recalled school officials telling her, "He doesn't have special needs, he just has anger issues.' They

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 46 of 75

were trying to get him out of the school.”

Her son had grown increasingly discouraged and agitated over an assignment he was unable to complete, she said. The situation escalated, she said, when the teacher argued with him. He knocked a laptop on his desk to the floor, and the school called for an emergency petition. After being taken to the hospital in handcuffs, he was examined and released.

“After that, he went from angry to terrified,” she said. “Every time he saw the police, he would start panicking.”

A spokeswoman from the Wicomico County Public Schools said emergency petitions “are used in the most extreme, emergency situations where the life and safety of the student or others are at risk.”

“(Emergency petitions) are not used for disciplinary purposes and frequently do not result from a student’s behaviors,” Tracy Sahler said in an email. “In fact, a majority of EPs are related to when a student exhibits suicidal ideation or plans self-harm.”

School officials did not respond to questions about why the rate of emergency petitions was so much higher in Wicomico than in other counties in Maryland. The Sheriff’s Department declined to share records that would show the reasons for the removals.

EDUCATORS STRETCHED THIN

By law, certain classroom removals must be recorded. Suspensions, expulsions and arrests are the most commonly documented indicators of racial disparities in discipline. Schools are required by law to publicly report the data, which often triggers oversight and investigations.

But with the exceptions of Florida and New York City, most places do not routinely collect information on removals from school for psychiatric assessments.

Without that data, there is no way to hold schools accountable, said Daniel Losen, senior director for the education team at the National Center for Youth Law.

“The civil rights of children is at stake, because it’s more likely it’s going to be Black kids and kids with disabilities who are subjected to all kinds of biases that deny them an educational opportunity,” he said.

Families who have experienced emergency petitions say educators who can communicate with their child are stretched thin, and measures that could de-escalate a situation are not always taken. The day her son was sent to the hospital, the mother recalled, the administrator who had consistently advocated for him was out of the building.

In another instance, a middle schooler said the required accommodations for his learning and behavioral disabilities included taking a walk with a trusted educator when he became agitated. The day he was involuntarily sent to the hospital, that staff member was unavailable. He began yelling and spitting when an administrator blocked him from leaving on his own. He said that by the time police arrived, he was calm and sitting in the principal’s office. Still, he was handcuffed and taken to the hospital, where he was examined and released a few hours later.

Because emergency petitions happen outside the standard discipline process, missed school days are not recorded as suspensions. For students with disabilities, that has special consequences – they are not supposed to be removed from class for more than 10 days without an evaluation of whether they are receiving the support they need.

“If you use the discipline process, and you’re a student with a disability, your rights kick in,” said Selene Almazan, legal director for the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates.

In many places around the country, the resources needed to support students with disabilities are scarce.

On Maryland’s Eastern Shore, lawyers and advocates for families said the spectrum of alternatives for students is limited by both money and geography. Those can include private, out-of-district placements and specialized classrooms for specific needs like dyslexia, for example.

In cases where children need targeted services unavailable in the local district, the district must allow them to be educated outside the school system — and pay for it.

“You’re stuck between a rock and a hard place because you’re like, ‘This kid needs more services,’ but you can’t get the school to agree,” said Angela Ford, clinical director at Maple Shade Youth and Family

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 47 of 75

Services, which serves children with emotional and behavioral disabilities in Wicomico.

EMERGENCY TRIPS INCREASED AFTER SETTLEMENT

The 2017 settlement with the Justice Department required the Wicomico district to reduce the significant racial and disability-related disparities in suspensions, placements in alternative schools and other discipline measures.

The district agreed not to use emergency petitions "where less intrusive interventions ... can be implemented to address the behavioral concern" and not to use them "to discipline or punish or to address lack of compliance with directions."

But since the settlement, many parents, teachers and community leaders said the district has seemed more concerned with keeping suspension numbers down than providing support for teachers to help prevent disruptive behavior.

"If we know how to handle and deal with behaviors, then we will have less EPs," said Anthony Mann, who was an instructional aide at Wicomico County High School last year and is a Wicomico public school parent.

Tatiana Jackson, who has a son with a disability at Wicomico Middle School, agrees teachers need more training. "I don't think they have a lot of patience or tolerance for children with differences. It's like they give up on them."

Wicomico school officials said ongoing professional development for staff includes the appropriate use of emergency petitions.

"Each school has a well-trained team that includes a social worker and school counselor, with the support of school psychologists," said Sahler. "All supports that may be beneficial to assist the student are utilized. However, the safety of the student is paramount and the determining factor is ensuring that there is no unnecessary delay in obtaining aid for the student."

But Denise Gregorius, who taught in Wicomico schools for over a decade and left in 2019, questioned the feasibility of the discipline and behavior strategies taught during professional development.

What the teachers really want, she said, is more support.

After the settlement, which had a two-and-a-half year monitoring period, the number of suspensions and expulsions in Wicomico declined markedly – for Black and white students. But the number of emergency petitions, which don't appear in state statistics, has ticked up.

Other measures of exclusionary discipline remained high, including school arrests. In 2021-22, Wicomico had 210 school-based arrests – the second highest number in the state, while they were 15th in student enrollment. More than three-quarters of the children arrested were Black and 80% were students with disabilities.

"Monitoring the numbers doesn't bring you the solution," said Losen, from the National Center for Youth Law. In many districts, "the problem is more than what they're doing with discipline."

The Department of Justice declined to comment.

BLACK PARENTS POINT TO CULTURE PROBLEM

Some Wicomico parents and educators point to an insular culture in the school district where problems are hidden rather than resolved.

They are frustrated that there is no relationship with the county's mobile crisis unit, which is often relied on in other counties to help de-escalate issues instead of calling the police.

Jermichael Mitchell, a community organizer who is an alum and parent in Wicomico County Schools, said educators often do not know how to empathize and respond to the trauma and unmet needs that may lead to children's behavior.

"A Black kid that's truly going through something, that truly needs support, is always looked at as a threat," he said. "You don't know how those kids have been taught to cry out for help. You don't know the trauma that they've been through."

Studies have found Black and Latino children who have a teacher of the same race have fewer suspensions and higher test scores, but that diversity is lacking in Wicomico County. Wicomico schools have the largest gap between the number of students of color and teachers of color in the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 48 of 75

Wicomico school officials said they do not discriminate against any of their students.

A Wicomico teenager described a years-long process of becoming alienated from school, with an emergency petition as the ultimate break. He said he was bullied in middle school over a series of months until one day he snapped and hit the student who had been taunting him.

The school called the police. He told the officers not to touch him, and that he needed to calm down. Instead, the officers grabbed him and shoved him into the ground, he said. He was handcuffed and transported to the emergency room. But when he returned, he said the only thing that was different was how he felt about the adults in the building.

"I got used to not trusting people, not talking to people at school," he said. "Nothing else really changed."

Israel orders evacuations as it widens offensive, but Palestinians are running out of places to go

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMY MAGDY and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli warplanes heavily bombarded an area around Khan Younis in southern Gaza on Monday as the military ordered mass evacuations from the town in the face of a widening ground offensive that is pushing Palestinians into a progressively shrinking portion of the besieged territory.

The expanded assault posed a deadly choice for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians — either stay in the path of Israeli forces or flee within the confines of southern Gaza with no guarantee of safety. Aid workers warned that the mass movement would worsen the already dire humanitarian catastrophe in the territory.

"Another wave of displacement is underway, and the humanitarian situation worsens by the hour," the Gaza chief of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, Thomas White, said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Adding to the chaos, phone and internet networks across Gaza collapsed again Monday evening, the Palestinian telecom provider PalTel reported. The network has broken down multiple times during the war, making it largely impossible for residents to communicate with each other or the outside world for hours or sometimes several days until it is repaired.

Israel has vowed to eliminate Gaza's Hamas rulers, whose Oct. 7 attack into Israel killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and triggered the deadliest Israeli-Palestinian violence in decades. The war has already killed thousands of Palestinians and displaced over three-fourths of the territory's population of 2.3 million people. Palestinian health officials say bombardment has killed several hundred civilians since a weeklong truce ended Friday.

Already under mounting pressure from its top ally, the United States, Israel appears to be racing to strike a death blow against Hamas — if that's possible, given the group's deep roots in Palestinian society — before any new cease-fire. But the mounting toll is likely to further increase international pressure to return to the negotiating table.

Airstrikes and the ground offensive in northern Gaza have reduced large swaths of Gaza City and nearby areas to a rubble-filled wasteland. Hundreds of thousands of residents fled south during the assault.

Now around 2 million people — most of the territory's population — are crowded into the 230 square kilometers (90 square miles) of southern and central Gaza, where Israel's ground offensive is now moving, threatening to render even larger areas uninhabitable.

Since the truce's collapse, the military has ordered the population out of an area of about 62 square kilometers (24 square miles) in and near Khan Younis, according to the evacuation maps issued by the Israeli military. That further reduces the space available for Palestinians by more than a quarter.

FIGHTING IN CENTRAL GAZA

Constant bombardment on the edges of Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, lit up the sky over the town Monday evening, and a stream of ambulances carrying wounded, including several women and children, flowed to the main hospital.

Over the past few days, Israeli strikes have been "on a ferocious scale," said Mohammed Aghaalkurdi,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 49 of 75

an aid worker with the group Medical Aid for Palestinians in Khan Younis. "Barely has any kind of aid been delivered to the people, nor is there any food left in shops."

He said neighborhoods and shelters were emptying as people fled. Leaflets dropped by the Israeli military warn people to go south toward the border with Egypt, but they are unable to leave Gaza, as both Israel and neighboring Egypt have refused to accept any refugees.

The area that Israel ordered evacuated covers about a fifth of Khan Younis. Before the war, that area was home to some 117,000 people, and now it also houses more than 50,000 people displaced from the north, living in 21 shelters, the U.N. said.

It was not known how many were fleeing. Some Palestinians have ignored past evacuation orders, saying they do not feel any safer since areas where they are told to flee have also been bombed. Many also fear they will never be allowed back to their homes.

It was not clear where Israeli troops have moved into southern Gaza, but the military told people to stay off the main road between Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah, suggesting forces were moving between the two towns.

Satellite photos from Sunday, analyzed by The Associated Press early Tuesday, show Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers just under 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) north of the heart of Khan Younis. The AP analysis found some 150 armored personnel carriers, tanks and other vehicles in the area, at positions in four clusters.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press regarding what the satellite photos showed and their strategy for the offensive.

Israeli media also reported intense fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas militants in northern Gaza — in the Jabaliya refugee camp and the Gaza City district of Shijaiya, both scenes of intense bombardment and battles in recent weeks.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesman, said the army is pursuing Hamas with "maximum force" in the north and south while trying to minimize harm to civilians.

He pointed to a map that divides southern Gaza into dozens of blocks in order to give "precise instructions" to residents on where to evacuate. Most are urged to flee south, but, confusingly, a map posted on X by the military Monday urged people to flee into Fakhari, a district east of Khan Younis that the military ordered evacuated a day before.

"The level of human suffering is intolerable," Mirjana Spoljaric, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said during a rare visit to Gaza. "It is unacceptable that civilians have no safe place to go in Gaza, and with a military siege in place, there is also no adequate humanitarian response currently possible."

The World Health Organization said it was told by Israel to empty its medical supplies warehouse in southern Gaza within 24 hours ahead of an advancing ground operation. COGAT, a body in Israel's defense ministry that deals with Palestinian civilian affairs, denied it had issued such an order.

Spoljaric, the Red Cross president, called for the immediate release of scores of hostages still held by Palestinian militants since the Oct. 7 attack.

In a letter to the Red Cross chief, a group of released Israeli hostages asked to meet her while she is visiting the region and called for more help from the organization to free the remaining 137 captives.

"Every day that passes could be their last, and the suffering they endure is inhuman," wrote the eight freed captives and 102 relatives of hostages still in captivity.

RISING TOLL

The Health Ministry in Gaza said the death toll in the territory since Oct. 7 has surpassed 15,890 people — 70% of them women and children — with more than 42,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said hundreds have been killed or wounded since the cease-fire's end, with many still trapped under rubble.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah received 32 bodies overnight after Israeli strikes across central Gaza, said Omar al-Darawi, an administrative employee. Associated Press footage showed women

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 50 of 75

in tears, kneeling over the bodies of loved ones and kissing them.

The Israeli military said aircraft struck some 200 Hamas targets overnight, with ground troops operating "in parallel," without elaborating. It said troops in northern Gaza uncovered two militant tunnel shafts that held explosives and weapons in a school after coming under attack.

It is not possible to independently confirm battlefield reports from either side.

Israel says it targets Hamas operatives and blames civilian casualties on the militants, accusing them of operating in residential neighborhoods. Still, it does not provide accounting for its targets in individual strikes.

Israel claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence. The military says at least 81 of its soldiers have been killed.

U.S. PRESSURE

The U.S. is pressing Israel to avoid more mass displacements and civilian deaths, a message underscored by Vice President Kamala Harris during a visit to the region. She also said the U.S. would not allow the forced relocation of Palestinians out of Gaza or the occupied West Bank, or the redrawing of Gaza's borders.

But it's unclear how far the Biden administration is willing or able to go in pressing Israel to rein in the offensive, even as the White House faces growing pressure from its allies in Congress.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Monday that it was too soon to pass judgment on Israeli operations, but that it was unusual for a modern military to identify precise areas of expected ground maneuvers and ask people to move out.

"These are the kinds of steps that we have asked them to undertake," he said. "These are the conversations we're having day in, day out."

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support to Israel since the Oct. 7 attack, including rushing munitions and other aid to the country.

Israel has rejected U.S. suggestions that control over postwar Gaza be handed over to the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority as part of a renewed effort to resolve the overall conflict by establishing a Palestinian state.

Gore blasts COP28 climate chief and oil companies' emissions pledges at UN summit

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Don't trust the oil and gas industry to report their actual carbon pollution, said former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, who added that the man leading the United Nations climate talks runs one of the "dirtiest" oil companies out there.

"They're much better at capturing politicians than they are at capturing emissions," Gore told The Associated Press in a sit-down interview.

The Nobel Prize-winning climate activist, author and filmmaker blasted Sultan al-Jaber, the president of the United Nations climate talks, who is also president of the national oil company of the host nation, United Arab Emirates. Gore said al-Jaber's Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. is "one of the largest and one of the dirtiest, by many measures, oil companies in the world."

Gore can make these claims because he just released a massive update of the Climate TRACE database of emissions that he helped create. It tracks carbon pollution from every nation and city across the globe with 352 million pieces of information.

Looking at the data released Sunday, Gore said, "the No. 1 surprise was how far off the reporting from the oil and gas industry is. And we see it here in the United Arab Emirates, you know, nice folks. But the numbers they put out are just not right. And we can prove they're not right."

In a one-hour data-heavy presentation at the U.N. conference, Gore said: "The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company still claims to have no emissions from methane or anything else from the transport of oil and gas. Well, actually, they do. We can see them from space."

"Why can we see the leakage from space if there are no leakages? Well, these were self-reported emis-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 51 of 75

sions," Gore said. Then showing his data: "And this is the actual emissions. And these are the emissions last year here."

In his interview, Gore repeatedly took aim at al-Jaber being picked by the UAE to chair the climate conference. As summit host, the local government chooses the president of the talks.

"He's a nice guy. He's a smart guy. I've known him for years. But he has a direct conflict of interest," Gore said. "And this isn't some kind of nitpicking complaint. This goes to the heart of whether or not the world is going to have the ability to make intelligent decisions about humanity's future."

Gore said "his main job is the head of the oil company. And honestly, when I look at the massive expansion plan that they have to increase their production of oil, 50%, increase their production of gas" when the climate conference ends, he asked, "do you take us for his fools?"

In a rare, combative and brief press conference Monday, al-Jaber defended his record and the idea of bringing oil companies into the efforts to curb climate change.

"They've stepped up," al-Jaber said of oil industry colleagues. "Is it enough? No."

In previous comments, al-Jaber's colleagues have dismissed media coverage detailing ADNOC's expansion plans. The company in 2019 announced plans to expand to 5 million barrels per day.

Al-Jaber made a splash in the beginning of the summit with an announcement that 50 oil companies had pledged to capture leaking and flaring methane emissions from gas production and pipelines. But the problem is that it's voluntary, and when industry in general is asked to report its own emissions they underestimate it by about a third, and most of the worst methane emitters weren't part of the deal, Gore said.

"I want to recall for you that two years ago there was the global methane pledge to reduce methane emissions by 30% by 2030. Well, what's happened? Well, since that pledge was made. Methane emissions have increased almost 2%," Gore said in his public presentation.

"The final problem I have with (the pledge) is that the main issue is phasing out oil and gas production," Gore said in the interview. "And they don't do that. And whenever I see a bright, shiny object held up in front of the public and they say 'look at this, don't look at the actual emissions from oil and gas, look at the bright, shiny object' then I think, you know, come on, we've been down this road before and it's way too late to take us for fools."

"Let's get on with it. The climate crisis is a fossil fuel crisis, and we can solve the climate crisis, stop the temperatures going up, start the healing process by phasing out oil and gas," Gore said. "And I know they don't want to do it. And I know that it's really tough. I mean, look, 80% of the energy we use in our global economy is from fossil fuels."

The former vice president said he hopes he's wrong about al-Jaber and that maybe he can deliver more than others have in the past. But he's not betting on it.

And because world leaders can't even agree where next year's climate talks will be or who will run them, Gore said he has great hope for 2025. That's because it will be in Brazil and run by leftist president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who Gore said "is raring to go."

Gore, who says that he is generally is an optimist, said between climate disasters and public pressure, the world is near a "political tipping point." Climate scientists often use the term "tipping point" for when ecological systems like Arctic sea ice or coral reefs hit a point-of-no-return change.

Gore sees a political version of that approaching.

"We don't have time to be depressed about it," Gore said. "You just got to keep fighting. We'll get there. The question is whether we get there in time, but I think we'll get there."

Thousands protest Indigenous policies of New Zealand government as lawmakers are sworn in

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Thousands of protesters rallied against the New Zealand government's Indigenous policies on Tuesday as the Parliament convened for the first time since October elections.

Demonstrations in the capital, Wellington, and in about a dozen other New Zealand cities and towns were organized by the minor Maori Party, which advocates for the rights of Indigenous New Zealanders

who are known as Maori.

Protesters demonstrated peacefully outside Parliament against what they described as the “anti-Maori” policies of the newly elected conservative-led coalition government.

Maori Party co-leader Rawiri Waititi said the new policies of Prime Minister Christopher Luxon’s administration would take New Zealand “back to the 1800s.”

“Our protest this morning was an activation of our people,” Waititi said.

The National Party-led government promises to review the Treaty of Waitangi and implement potential changes to how that foundation document signed by British colonists and Maori chiefs in 1840 affects modern laws.

The government has also foreshadowed changes to the Maori Health Authority, a statutory agency responsible for ensuring that the New Zealand health system meets Maori needs.

Luxon said his government was “deeply committed to improving outcomes for Maori and non-Maori.”

“Maori have done very well in National-led governments in the past, and they’re going to continue to do well,” Luxon said.

Lawmakers were sworn in on Tuesday after elections on Oct. 14 ousted the center-left Labour Party government that had ruled since 2017.

The Maori Party won six of the 123 seats in the 54th Parliament.

Party lawmaker Takuta Ferris wore a Maori headdress and performed a haka, a traditional dance or challenge accompanied by a chant, as he crossed the chamber to make an affirmation that confirmed his place in the Parliament.

Other Maori Party lawmakers sang traditional Indigenous songs.

Some Green Party lawmakers wore the Arab headdress known as the keffiyeh over their shoulders in a sign of support for Palestinians in the Israel-Hamas war.

Luxon’s National Party won 38% of the vote — the largest proportion of any party. He took almost six weeks after the election to reach a coalition agreement with another two parties: the populist New Zealand First party and the libertarian ACT Party.

ACT Party leader David Seymour described the Maori Party protests as “divisive theatrics” that showed disrespect for the election result.

“New Zealanders elected a government that will treat people equally, regardless of their race,” Seymour said.

“It’s a sad day when a political party is protesting equal rights,” he added.

Governor rebukes Philadelphia protesters for chanting outside Israeli restaurant

The Associated Press undefined

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Protesters marching in Philadelphia against the bombardment of Gaza chanted about genocide Sunday outside an Israeli-style restaurant, leading Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro to call the demonstration “antisemitic.”

In Philadelphia’s Center City and University City neighborhoods, hundreds of people marched to criticize Israel’s military actions in Gaza, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported. A video of demonstrators outside of Goldie Falafel depicted people chanting, “Goldie, Goldie, you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide.”

Shapiro first addressed the protest on X, formerly known as Twitter. Later at an event in suburban Philadelphia, the governor said he told one of the restaurant’s owners that he supported him and his staff.

Michael Solomonov is a prominent Israeli chef who has co-authored three cookbooks and received several James Beard awards. He and Steve Cook, the co-owner, are both Jewish.

“The purposeful gathering of a mob outside of a restaurant simply because it is owned by a Jewish person. Well, that’s antisemitism, plain and simple,” Shapiro said at a separate news conference Monday in suburban Philadelphia.

Goldie Falafel is a vegan kosher restaurant that has five locations in Philadelphia and is owned by the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 53 of 75

restaurant group CookNSolo. Representatives from the group declined to comment.

In a statement, organizers of the protest, Philly Palestine Coalition, called for a boycott of the company's restaurants. They criticized Solomonov's role as a culinary ambassador to Israel, and his recent donation efforts.

"He has made a handsome living passing off Palestinian and other Arab cuisine as 'Israeli food,' the proceeds of which are now supporting the very army that is enacting Israel's genocidal bombing of Palestinians," the organizers wrote.

On Oct. 12, CookNSolo announced on Instagram that they were donating all sales from the day to United Hatzalah, a nonprofit emergency medical service that responds to calls in Israel and the West Bank.

Protest organizers rebuked politicians for taking "the time to condemn our coalition," while not adequately addressing rising hate crimes against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims. They also said recent media coverage has taken away from their mission of drawing attention to "the decades-long oppression of Palestinians."

No arrests were made, though during the course of the evening, several businesses were vandalized, including a bank and a Starbucks, as well as a police vehicle, the Philadelphia Police Department said.

Shapiro called for those who defaced property and broke the law to be arrested and prosecuted. Police said they were investigating and reviewing footage of the area.

"We should have a spirited debate, dialogue, peacefully and respectfully about what's happening in the Middle East," Shapiro said. "I don't want to rob anyone of the ability to do that peacefully, but when it crosses a line and becomes blatant antisemitism, it's critically important that we all speak up."

While campaigning last year, Shapiro talked about his Jewish faith and how it inspires him toward public service.

A line of people stretched into the street outside of Goldie on Monday afternoon, with many coming out to get food and to show support.

White House spokesperson Andrew Bates called it "completely unjustifiable" to target restaurants that serve Israeli food "over disagreements with Israeli policy."

Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel triggered the deadliest Israeli-Palestinian violence in decades. The war has killed thousands and displaced over three-fourths of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people, who are running out of safe places to go.

The war has sparked protests against the war across the U.S. and abroad. Students around the country have faced suspension for demonstrations on college campuses and high school walkouts. Demonstrators who targeted specific companies have largely protested media bias and focused on media outlets, including the New York Times.

Reported cancellation of Virginia menorah lighting draws rebuke from governor

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (AP) — Virginia political leaders, including Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, on Monday condemned the reported cancellation of a menorah lighting at a community event in Williamsburg over apparent concerns related to the Israel-Hamas war.

The criticism from Youngkin and members of the General Assembly from both parties came after the Virginia Gazette reported over the weekend that the ceremony, which had been scheduled for a monthly art and musical festival happening Dec. 10, had been canceled.

Shirley Vermillion, the festival's founder, told the newspaper that the menorah lighting "seemed very inappropriate" in light of the conflict.

"The concern is of folks feeling like we are siding with a group over the other ... not a direction we ever decide to head," Vermillion told the newspaper for Sunday's story.

Youngkin — who has been outspoken in his support of Israel since Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 rampage — said on X, formerly known as Twitter: "Singling out the Jewish community by canceling this Hanukkah celebration is absurd and antisemitic. The event organizers should immediately reconsider their actions and move forward with the menorah lighting."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 54 of 75

Other leaders echoed those concerns, including former Virginia House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn, a Democrat, who called on the group to reverse course.

"Canceling the menorah lighting ceremony and holding Jewish people responsible for the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is shocking and outrageous. This type of hate has no place in Virginia," she wrote on X.

By Monday, the Virginia Gazette reported that a Williamsburg rabbi had found a new location for the ceremony.

The newspaper and other outlets also reported Monday that event organizers said in a statement that the event was never canceled because it was never scheduled in the first place.

"It was proposed but was not consistent with the purpose of this non-religious, community art and music festival, and the proposal was denied. In 14 years this street festival has never had a religious program as one of its events. This is not a discriminatory act but one based on the objectives of the organization and the sincere desire to make this monthly event a place where all people can come together to enjoy MUSIC and ART," the statement said, according to TV station WTKR.

Associated Press inquiries to the organization sent by email were not immediately returned.

Chabad Williamsburg Rabbi Mendy Heber told the newspaper he'd wanted to have the menorah lighting at the festival in an effort to "bring people together with Jewish pride and unity."

It will now be held on William & Mary's campus on Thursday, the first night of Hanukkah, according to the newspaper.

"We're going to make this Hanukkah bigger and brighter than ever," he said. "That is how we respond to darkness."

Former career US diplomat charged with secretly spying for Cuban intelligence for decades

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A former career American diplomat was charged with serving as a secret agent for communist Cuba going back decades in what prosecutors portrayed as one of the most brazen and long-running betrayals in the history of the U.S. foreign service.

Manuel Rocha wept as he sat handcuffed in Miami federal court on charges that he engaged in "clandestine activity" on Cuba's behalf since at least 1981 — the year he joined the U.S. foreign service — including by meeting with Cuban intelligence operatives and providing false information to U.S. government officials about his contacts.

The complaint unsealed Monday is short on specifics of how Rocha may have assisted Cuba. But it provides a vivid case study of what American officials say are long-standing efforts by Cuba and its notoriously sophisticated intelligence services to target U.S. government officials who can be flipped.

"This action exposes one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the United States government by a foreign agent," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. "To betray that trust by falsely pledging loyalty to the United States while serving a foreign power is a crime that will be met with the full force of the Justice Department."

The 73-year-old Rocha, whose two-decade career as a U.S. diplomat included top posts in Bolivia, Argentina and the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, was arrested by the FBI at his Miami home Friday. He was ordered held following Monday's brief court appearance pending a bond hearing Wednesday. His attorney declined to comment.

The Justice Department did not reveal how Rocha attracted the attention of Cuba's intelligence operatives nor did it describe what, if any, sensitive information he may have provided while working for the State Department and in a lucrative post-government career that included a stint as a special adviser to the commander of U.S. Southern Command.

Instead, the case relies largely on what prosecutors say were Rocha's own admissions, made over the past year to an undercover FBI agent posing as a Cuban intelligence operative named "Miguel."

Rocha praised the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro as "Comandante," branded the U.S. the "enemy" and

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 55 of 75

bragged about his service for more than 40 years as a Cuban mole in the heart of U.S. foreign policy circles, the complaint says.

"What we have done ... it's enormous ... more than a Grand Slam," he was quoted as saying at one of several secretly recorded conversations.

To cover his tracks, Rocha referred to Cuba as "the island" and led a "normal life" disguised as a "right-wing person," he said in one of the recordings. Former colleagues and friends described Rocha as a vocal admirer of former President Donald Trump, who took a hard line on Cuba.

John Feeley, who ended a long diplomatic career serving as U.S. ambassador to Panama, said he was surprised how his mentor, who had served administrations of both parties, had so fully embraced Trump's politics.

"It is beyond ironic that he cultivated this cartoonish persona," he said, "and that everyone apparently bought it."

Washington and Havana restored diplomatic relations in late 2014 after a half-century of Cold War acrimony, though the Trump administration reimposed sanctions on Cuba and, in 2021, redesignated it a state sponsor of terrorism. The Biden administration has moved more gingerly to restore some Obama-era concessions.

The charging document traces Rocha's illegal ties to Cuba to well after his departure from the federal government, when he took on lucrative private sector jobs — most recently as a senior adviser to an international public relations firm and prominent U.S. law firm.

The FBI learned about the relationship last year and arranged a series of undercover encounters in discrete locations — a church and outdoor food court — in downtown Miami. Rocha deliberately strayed from the most-direct route to those encounters, pausing along the way in what prosecutors allege was classic, counter-surveillance "tradecraft" taught by Cuba's spymasters.

"It's what I've always been told to do," Rocha told the undercover agent at one of those meetings.

At another meeting, Rocha referred to Cuba shooting down two unarmed planes sent by the Miami-based group of exiles, Brothers to the Rescue, in which four opponents of Castro's government were killed in 1996.

There's no indication in the complaint that Rocha aided the Cubans with the military operation — a major flashpoint in more than a half-century of brinkmanship between the communist-ruled island and its right-wing opponents in Miami. But at the time he served as a senior political officer at the U.S. special interest section in Havana.

"I lived through it, because I was in charge," Rocha was quoted as saying. "That was a time of a lot of tension."

Last Friday, when interviewed by two Diplomatic Security Service agents, Rocha repeatedly lied, including by denying having ever met someone matching the undercover agent's description, according to the charging document.

Rocha's service to Cuba may have gone back even earlier than the start of his U.S. diplomatic career.

The complaint cites Rocha telling the undercover agent that he first proved his loyalty in Chile in 1973 — the year Gen. Augusto Pinochet, with U.S. backing, overthrew the socialist government of Salvador Allende.

"They must have told you something because you mentioned Chile," Rocha told the undercover agent, who presented himself as having reached out to him at the request of higher-ups in Cuba's National Intelligence Directorate. "That inspired trust in me."

Born in Colombia, Rocha was raised in a working-class home in New York City and obtained a succession of liberal arts degrees from Yale, Harvard and Georgetown before joining the foreign service.

He was the top U.S. diplomat in Argentina between 1997 and 2000 as a decade-long currency stabilization program backed by Washington was unraveling under the weight of huge foreign debt, triggering a political crisis that would see the South American country cycle through five presidents in two weeks.

At his next post, as ambassador to Bolivia, he intervened directly in the 2002 presidential race, warning weeks ahead of the vote that the U.S. would cut off assistance to the poor South American country if it were to elect former coca grower Evo Morales.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 56 of 75

"I want to remind the Bolivian electorate that if they vote for those who want Bolivia to return to exporting cocaine, that will seriously jeopardize any future aid to Bolivia from the United States," Rocha said in a speech that was widely interpreted as an attempt to sustain U.S. dominance in the region.

The comments backfired, angered Bolivians and boosted support for Morales, who joked that Rocha was his "best campaign chief." When Morales was finally elected three years later, the leftist leader expelled Rocha's successor as chief of the diplomatic mission for inciting "civil war."

Rocha also served in Italy, Honduras, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and worked as a Latin America expert for the National Security Council.

Criminal cases against American officials accused of doing Cuba's bidding are rare but not unprecedented. A former State Department official, Walter Kendall Myers, was sentenced in 2010 to life in prison for providing classified information to Cuba, and Ana Belen Montes, a former U.S. defense intelligence analyst who was convicted of spying for Cuba, was released from prison in January after a lengthy sentence.

But of all the spy scandals in the last 40 years, Rocha is believed to be the first member of America's elite foreign service to have been accused of betraying their oath, said Kevin Whitaker, a former U.S. ambassador to Colombia.

"If this is true, Rocha has stained the institution of the foreign service," he said. "It's infuriating."

The Supreme Court is taking up a case that could rule out a tax on wealth favored by some Democrats

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up a case Tuesday over a Washington couple's \$15,000 tax bill that is widely seen as a test of a never-enacted tax on wealth.

A decision in favor of Charles and Kathleen Moore of Redmond, Washington, could strike down a provision of the 2017 tax bill that is expected to bring in \$340 billion, threaten other provisions of the tax code and rule out a wealth tax that is favored by some Democrats who argue that the wealthiest Americans don't pay their fair share of taxes.

Paul Ryan, the Wisconsin Republican who was Speaker of the House when the tax bill was passed by a Republican Congress and signed into law by then-President Donald Trump, has called the challenge "misguided" and said "a lot of the tax code would be unconstitutional if that thing prevailed."

The couple is backed by conservative political groups and business interests, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The law applies to companies that are owned by Americans, but do their business in foreign countries. It imposes a one-time tax on investors' shares of profits that have not been passed along to them, in order to offset other tax benefits.

The Moores paid \$15,000 in taxes based on Charles Moore's investment in an Indian company.

They argue that the tax violates the 16th Amendment, which allows the federal government to impose an income tax on Americans. Moore said in a sworn statement that he never received any money from the company, KisanKraft Machine Tools Private Limited.

Some groups allied with the Moores argue that the challenged provision is similar to a wealth tax, which would apply not to the incomes of the very richest Americans, but their assets, like stock holdings, that now only get taxed when they are sold.

Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon said a court ruling for the Moores could stymie legislation like the Billionaires Income Tax he introduced last week. "The Moore case could make it impossible to close those loopholes," Wyden said.

The case also has kicked up ethical concerns and raised questions about the story the Moores' lawyers told in court filings. Public documents show that Charles Moore's involvement with the company, including serving as a director for five years, is far more extensive than court filings indicate.

Senate Democrats had asked Justice Samuel Alito to step aside from the case because of his interactions with David Rivkin, a lawyer who is representing the Moores. The Democrats said Alito had cast doubt

on his ability to judge the case fairly because he sat for four hours of Wall Street Journal opinion page interviews with an editor at the newspaper and Rivkin.

Alito rejected the demands in a four-page statement issued by the court in which he said there "is no valid reason" for his recusal.

World carbon dioxide emissions increase again, driven by China, India and aviation

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The world this year pumped 1.1% more heat-trapping carbon dioxide into the air than last year because of increased pollution from China and India, a team of scientists reported.

The increase was reported early Tuesday at international climate talks, where global officials are trying to cut emissions by 43% by 2030. Instead, carbon pollution keeps rising, with 36.8 billion metric tons poured into the air in 2023, twice the annual amount of 40 years ago, according to Global Carbon Project, a group of international scientists who produce the gold standard of emissions counting.

"It now looks inevitable we will overshoot the 1.5 (degree Celsius, 2.7 degree Fahrenheit) target of the Paris Agreement, and leaders meeting at COP28 will have to agree rapid cuts in fossil fuel emissions even to keep the 2 (degree Celsius, 3.6 degree Fahrenheit) target alive," study lead author Pierre Friedlingstein of the University of Exeter said.

Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees is "just possible" but only barely and with massive emission cuts, said Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Chairman Jim Skea.

"We are clearly not going in the right direction," Friedlingstein said.

This year, the burning of fossil fuel and manufacturing of cement have added the equivalent of putting 2.57 million pounds (1.17 million kilograms) of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every second.

If China and India were excluded from the count, world carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and cement manufacturing would have dropped, Friedlingstein said.

The world in 2023 increased its annual emissions by 398 million metric tons, but it was in three places: China, India and the skies. China's fossil fuel emissions went up 458 million metric tons from last year, India's went up 233 million metric tons and aviation emissions increased 145 million metric tons.

Outside of India and China, the rest of the world's fossil fuel emissions went down by 419 million metric tons, led by Europe's 205 million metric ton drop and a decrease of 154 million metric tons in the United States.

Europe's 8% decrease was across the board with reduced emissions in coal, oil, gas and cement emissions, the report said. The U.S. decrease was almost entirely in coal, with slight increases in oil and gas emissions.

Last year the world's carbon emissions increased but dropped in China, which was still affected by a second wave of pandemic restrictions. This year, China's 4% jump in emissions is similar to the post-pandemic recovery other parts of the world had in 2022, Friedlingstein said.

The calculations are based on data from nations and companies for most of the year with the scientists projecting it through the end of this month.

United Nations Environment Programme Director Inger Andersen said the world needs to get to zero fossil fuel emissions "as fast as possible," with developed nations getting there by 2040 and developing nations by 2050 or at least 2060.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 58 of 75

Arizona rises to No. 1 in the AP Top 25 poll; Gonzaga and North Carolina crack top 10, Duke tumbles

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

It is Arizona's turn to sit atop The Associated Press Top 25 men's college basketball poll.

The Wildcats rose to No. 1 in Monday's poll for the first time in nearly nine years, making Tommy Lloyd's squad the third team to hold the top spot this season. Last week's No. 1 team, Purdue, slid after an overtime loss at Northwestern.

Arizona claimed 59 of 63 first-place votes to move up one spot, putting the Wildcats comfortably ahead of preseason No. 1 Kansas. The Jayhawks rose three spots to No. 2 with a win against last season's NCAA champion, Connecticut.

Arizona hasn't been No. 1 in the AP Top 25 since an eight-week stint that ended in January 2014 under former coach Sean Miller. Lloyd is in his third season after a long run as an assistant at Gonzaga, and his first two teams each spent multiple weeks inside the top five.

"I know when I came to this program, my dream is to make it one of the best in the country," Lloyd said of the possible rise to No. 1 after a weekend win against Colgate. "If you're one of the best in the country, you're going to stumble into being No. 1 once in a while. So you know what? Handle it. And that'll be the message."

It was a busy day for the poll: No team in the Top 25 was in the same spot it was a week ago.

THE TOP TIER

Houston rose three spots to No. 3, while the Boilermakers fell to fourth after the Northwestern loss. UConn slid only one spot to No. 5 after the loss at Kansas, followed by Baylor.

Gonzaga and North Carolina cracked the top 10 for the first time this season.

The Bulldogs jumped four spots to No. 7 after a neutral-court win against USC. The Tar Heels jumped eight spots to No. 9 after beating Tennessee in the ACC/SEC Challenge, followed by a home comeback win against Florida State.

NET RANKINGS

The NCAA's initial NCAA Evaluation Tool rankings were released Monday and differed quite a bit from the AP poll.

Houston was No. 1 in the NET rankings, followed by BYU, Arizona, Creighton and Purdue. Kansas was 16th in the NET.

The NET is the primary sorting tool for determining NCAA Tournament teams.

RISING

The Tar Heels' leap marked the week's biggest jump, though No. 13 Colorado State was right behind them after rising seven spots on the strength of its 8-0 start. There was also a six-spot rise for No. 19 Oklahoma, which made its poll debut last week.

In all, 14 teams climbed from last week's poll, including No. 10 Creighton rising five spots to rejoin the top 10 after spending the first three polls at No. 8.

SLIDING

Duke took the biggest tumble of the week of 15 spots to land at No. 22 after a pair of road losses against unranked opponents. First came a loss at Arkansas then a loss at Georgia Tech after starting point guard Tyrese Proctor went down with an early ankle injury.

No. 15 Miami, No. 17 Tennessee and No. 21 Texas A&M each fell seven spots.

WELCOME ABOARD

Three teams joined this week's rankings.

Wisconsin jumped in at No. 23 after beating then-No. 3 Marquette at home, pushing the Badgers to five straight wins. Clemson followed at No. 24 amid a 7-0 start, while San Diego State is back in the poll at No. 25 for the first time since sitting at No. 17 in the preseason.

FAREWELL (FOR NOW)

Villanova (No. 18), Mississippi State (No. 21) Alabama (No. 23) fell out of the poll.

CONFERENCE WATCH

The Big 12 led all conferences with six ranked teams, including No. 12 Texas and No. 14 BYU.

The ACC was next with four teams, followed by the Big Ten, Big East and Southeastern conferences with three each. The Mountain West Conference had two ranked teams, while the Pac-12, American Athletic, Sun Belt and West Coast each had one.

More than \$950,000 raised for Palestinian student paralyzed after being shot in Vermont

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

More than \$950,000 has been raised for the recovery of one of the three college students of Palestinian descent who was shot in Vermont and is currently paralyzed from the chest down, according to a GoFundMe page set up by his family.

One of the bullets that hit Hisham Awartani on Nov. 25 is lodged in his spine, his family said.

"Hisham's first thoughts were for his friends, then for his parents who were thousands of miles away. He has demonstrated remarkable courage, resilience and fortitude - even a sense of humor - even as the reality of his paralysis sets in," the fundraising page, which was set up on Saturday, states.

Awartani, Kinnan Abdalhamid and Tahseen Ali Ahmad are childhood friends who graduated from a private Quaker school in the West Bank and now attend colleges in the eastern U.S. The 20-year-olds were visiting Awartani's relatives in Burlington for the Thanksgiving break. They were walking to the house of Hisham's grandmother for dinner when they were shot in an unprovoked attack, the family said.

The young men were speaking in a mix of English and Arabic and two of them were also wearing the black-and-white Palestinian keffiyeh scarves when they were shot, Burlington Police Chief Jon Murad said. Authorities are investigating the shooting as a possible hate crime.

"In a cruelly ironic twist, Hisham's parents had recommended he not return home over winter break, suggesting he would be safer in the US with his grandmother," the fundraising page states. "Burlington is a second home to Hisham, who has spent summers and happy holidays with his family there. It breaks our hearts that these young men did not find safety in his home away from home."

All three were seriously injured. Abdalhamid was released from the hospital last week.

The suspected gunman, Jason J. Eaton, 48, was arrested the following day at his Burlington apartment, where he answered the door with his hands raised and told federal agents he had been waiting for them. Eaton has pleaded not guilty to three counts of attempted murder and is currently being held without bail.

The shooting came as threats against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities have increased across the U.S. in the weeks since the the Israel-Hamas war erupted in early October.

Awartani, who speaks seven languages, is pursuing a dual degree in math and archaeology at Brown University, where he is also a teaching assistant, the fundraising page said. He told his college professors that he is determined to start the next semester on time, according to the fundraiser.

"We, his family, believe that Hisham will change the world," the fundraising page states. "He'll change the world through his spirit, his mind and his compassion for those much more vulnerable than himself, especially the thousands of dead in Gaza and many more struggling to survive the devastating humanitarian crisis unfolding there."

Jonathan Majors assault trial starts with competing versions of a backseat confrontation

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jonathan Majors listened silently, head-cocked and eyes down, as a Manhattan prosecutor and his defense attorney offered competing accounts of a violent confrontation in the backseat of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 60 of 75

a car that led to assault charges against the film star and put his rapid Hollywood ascent on pause.

The opening statements Monday in the trial against Majors centered on whether the actor assaulted his former girlfriend, Grace Jabbari, after she read a romantic text message sent to his phone by another woman.

Prosecutors say Majors grabbed the woman's hand so hard he fractured her middle finger, then twisted her arm behind her back and struck her on the side of the head – the latest outburst in an alleged pattern of physical and emotional abuse. An attorney for Majors argued that her client was the true victim, claiming he was left bloodied by the attack, while she spent the rest of the night clubbing.

That the competing versions of the struggle were presented to a jury was itself unusual, a rare instance of a misdemeanor assault case going to trial. For Majors, a 34-year-old rising star, the stakes may be higher than the one year in prison he could face if convicted.

In her opening statements, the actor's attorney, Priya Chaudhry, described the allegations as a revenge plot to "ruin Jonathan Majors and take away everything he has spent his whole life working for."

Pointing to Majors' breakout roles in "Creed III" and his emergence as a key supervillain in the Marvel multiverse, Chaudhry said her client's career "seemed unstoppable until he ended his relationship with Ms. Jabbari and she, hours later, made these false allegations."

Since his arrest in March, an ad campaign for the U.S. Army featuring Majors has been pulled and the release of "Magazine Dreams," a Sundance award-winning filming that he starred in, has been postponed.

Chaudhry also invoked Majors' race – he is Black, Jabbari is white – as a potential reason that he was arrested the day after the confrontation.

In his own opening statements, assistant district attorney Michael Perez described the alleged assault as the culmination of a "cruel and manipulative pattern of psychological and physical abuse" that Majors directed at his partner of two years.

The trial, he said, would show that Majors "demanded total compliance" from his girlfriend, at one point telling her that she needed to model herself after Michelle Obama or Coretta Scott King. If she didn't meet that standard – by staying out late with friends or going to a music festival, for example – Majors would often become angry, throwing household objects or shouting at her, the prosecutor said.

Both prosecution and defense offered clashing narratives about the aftermath of the alleged assault as well.

Once the driver pulled over, Majors fled the scene with his phone as Jabbari chased him "on foot, through traffic, like in a movie," according to Chaudhry. Unable to find Majors, she met three strangers and followed them to a Manhattan night club, where she spent the next few hours drinking and dancing, the defense attorney said.

The prosecutor, meanwhile, said Majors picked Jabbari up and threw her inside the car on multiple occasions after the driver pulled over. He said she accepted the invitation of bystanders in hopes of "temporarily blocking out" the abuse committed by Majors. She returned home after a few hours at the nightclub, took two sleeping pills and fell asleep on the floor of her bathroom, he said.

Jabbari awoke the next morning to Majors standing over her with police officers. Though Perez said she was initially reluctant to report the abuse "because of how he's manipulated her in the past and trained her to stay silent," she soon told police about the alleged assault, leading to the arrest of Majors.

She was hospitalized with minor injuries. Six months later, she was arrested by police after Majors brought a counter-claim against her for assaulting him in the vehicle. Those charges were dismissed by the Manhattan DA the following day.

Perez referenced the arrest on Monday, telling jurors that Majors' "attempts to control and intimidate Ms. Jabbari extended well after he assaulted her."

Jabbari is expected to testify against her former partner in the coming days. Majors did not speak to reporters as he entered and exited the courtroom on Monday.

Global journalist group says Israel-Hamas conflict is a war beyond compare for media deaths

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — With a journalist or media worker killed every day on average in the Israel-Hamas war, the head of the global organization representing the profession said Monday that it has become a conflict beyond compare.

About 60 have been killed since the Oct. 7 start of the war, already close to the same number of journalists killed during the entire Vietnam War half a century ago. Other brutal wars in the Middle East have not come close to the intensity of the current one.

"In a war, you know, a classical war, I can say that in Syria, in Iraq, in ex-Yugoslavia, we didn't see this kind of massacre," Anthony Bellanger, the general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, told The Associated Press.

And since the end of the weeklong cease-fire in Gaza on Friday, the misery has continued, he said: "Unfortunately, we received the bad news this weekend — after the end of this cease-fire — and at least three or four were killed."

Bellanger said they are mourning around 60 journalists, including at least 51 Palestinian ones and also Israeli and Lebanese. Most were killed during Israel's bombardment in the Gaza Strip. He said Israeli journalists were also killed during Hamas' attack in southern Israel that set off the war.

He said those numbers are based on all available sources that the federation uses for its annual report.

Along with the human toll, the premises of many media organizations in Gaza have been destroyed, he said. He estimated there were about 1,000 journalists and media workers in Gaza before the conflict and said that now, no one can get out.

And yet amid the rubble, local journalists continue to do their job, said Nasser Abu Baker, president of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate.

"They lost their families and they continue their work," he said. "They are without houses and they continue their work. ... Without food, without the security for them, without their families. Also, if their families are still alive, they are not with their families because they are living or sleeping in the hospitals."

Bellanger said Israeli authorities were not responsive.

"I called the Israeli government, but they didn't reply. And when I went to Palestine a few days ago, I proposed to the government press office to have a meeting, just to have a follow-up about this call. But nobody replies," he said.

Israel has said it makes every effort to avoid killing civilians and accuses Hamas of putting them at risk by operating in residential areas.

"We want to make sure that journalists are protected. What they're doing on the ground is critical," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told the AP.

The IFJ and Reporters Without Borders have called on International Criminal Court prosecutors to investigate the deaths of journalists and media workers, and ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan has visited the area.

The ICC's prosecution office is already investigating the actions of Israeli and Palestinian authorities dating back to the Israel-Hamas war in 2014. The probe can also consider allegations of crimes committed during the current war.

Khan has called on Israel to respect international law but stopped short of accusing the country of war crimes. He called Hamas' Oct. 7 attack a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Israel argues the ICC has no jurisdiction in the conflict because the Palestinian territories are not an independent sovereign state. Israel isn't a party to the treaty that underpins the ICC and is not one of its 123 member states.

Bellanger didn't see sudden change on the ground coming soon but said that as the chief of the global journalism network, "I don't have the right to be pessimistic."

Janet Yellen is heading to Mexico after Treasury launches a new fentanyl trafficking strike force

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is heading to Mexico this week to promote her agency's new strike force to help combat illicit fentanyl trafficking as the U.S. and China step up efforts to stop the movement of the powerful opioid and drug-making materials into the United States.

In Mexico City, Yellen will talk with government and private sector leaders about stopping illicit finance that funds the drug trade and boosting supply chains through her "friendshoring" initiative. A major focus of the trip will be on stopping fentanyl financing.

The Counter-Fentanyl Strike Force announced Monday will bring together personnel and intelligence from throughout the Treasury Department — from its sanctions and intelligence arms to IRS Criminal Investigations — to more effectively collaborate on stopping the flow of drugs into the country.

The creation of the group and Yellen's Mexico trip are the beginning of the Biden administration's plan to redouble its efforts to stem the tide of illegal fentanyl after President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in California in November. At the meeting, they announced that China is telling its chemical companies to curtail shipments of the materials used to produce fentanyl to Latin America.

China has also resumed sharing information about suspected trafficking with an international database.

Mexico and China are the primary source countries for fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances trafficked directly into the U.S., according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. Nearly all the precursor chemicals that are needed to make fentanyl are coming from China.

Among other things, the Treasury task force will analyze the financial flows of trafficking organizations, especially those that rely on cryptocurrency to move funds; work with local law enforcement in areas hardest hit by the fentanyl epidemic and use financial institution records to detect transactions related to drug and human smuggling.

"Combating the flow of deadly fentanyl into communities across the United States is a top priority for President Biden as well as the Treasury Department," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in a statement. She said the new group will "allow us to bring the department's unrivaled expertise in fighting financial crime to bear against this deadly epidemic."

"Treasury will use every tool at its disposal to disrupt the ability of drug traffickers to peddle this poison in our country."

The Biden administration has taken a slew of actions against fentanyl traffickers — charging powerful traffickers with drug and money laundering offenses and announcing indictments and sanctions against Chinese companies and executives blamed for importing the chemicals used to make the dangerous drug.

Still, fentanyl is the deadliest drug in the U.S. today. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 71,000 people died from overdosing on synthetic opioids such as fentanyl in 2021, up from almost 58,000 in 2020.

The death toll is more than 10 times as many drug deaths as in 1988, at the height of the crack epidemic.

U.S. lawmakers have proposed a variety of measures to combat fentanyl's explosive use in the U.S.

Many of the GOP presidential candidates have said they would use military force against Mexico in response to the trafficking of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

And the leaders of the Senate Banking and Armed Services Committees, along with others, want to compel the Biden administration to declare international fentanyl trafficking a national emergency and pass legislation that would hold Treasury to reporting requirements and enable the president to confiscate sanctioned property of fentanyl traffickers to use for law enforcement efforts.

Treasury officials, including Brian Nelson, the department's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, have been traveling to the southern border this year to work with local authorities on quelling drug trafficking through sanctions efforts.

Nelson will co-chair the strike force with IRS Criminal Investigations Chief Jim Lee.

Nelson said the strike force "will act quickly and decisively with the top specialists from across the de-

partment to nimbly respond to the newest threats.”

AP’s top albums of 2023: Music from Olivia Rodrigo, Peso Pluma, the Rolling Stones and more

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Ten of the top albums of the year, as chosen by Associated Press Music Writer Maria Sherman.

It was a blockbuster year across genres, but only a few could make AP’s list. (SZA’s “SOS” released in December 2022, Ice Spice’s “Like...?” isn’t a full-length release, and the 11 Grammy nominations for “Barbie the Album” is recognition enough.)

Instead of embracing the antiquated practice of ranking very different albums against one another, we’re celebrating the best next to the best. Enjoy.

“Génesis,” Peso Pluma

The year belongs to regional Mexican artists, who brought their banda, norteño, mariachi, sierrero and more to geographies well beyond Mexico and the southwest U.S. As Carín León told The Associated Press earlier this year, it is no longer “regional,” but “global” music. Leading the charge is Peso Pluma, whose third studio album, “Génesis,” became the highest-charting regional Mexican album of all time. Across 14 tracks, Pluma marries contemporary swagger with traditional corridos tumbados, bringing the colorful and once-maligned music to the masses — and making it all his own in the same breath.

“GUTS,” Olivia Rodrigo

In the two years since her tear-jerking ballad “drivers license” came in like a wrecking ball, Olivia Rodrigo experienced a lot of life in a short period of time, resulting in “GUTS,” her sophomore album. Across 12 tracks of big feelings balladry and riot grrrl-informed power pop-punk, Rodrigo expertly soundtracks the throes of fame — and the experience of entering your 20s. From the bloodsucking piano ballad “vampire” to the cheeky backside anthem “bad idea right?” to the Joan Didion-referencing clean screams of “all-american bitch,” Rodrigo makes hard lemonade out of life’s lemons — a sonic treatise on a young woman’s dissatisfaction.

“Lucky,” Megan Moroney

Let’s cut straight to the chase: Country music dominated this year. Morgan Wallen’s “Last Night” and Luke Combs’ cover of Tracy Chapman’s “Fast Car” held onto the top of the Billboard charts for the majority of 2023. But beyond those impressive metrics should be recognition of Megan Moroney, whose stellar debut album “Lucky” emerged fully formed and fully without the male bravado that punctuates much of mainstream country. Her swooning single “Tennessee Orange” was ubiquitous on country radio this year, but it’s the whole of “Lucky” — and Moroney’s position as a Gen Z songwriter with Taylor Swift-level acuity — that makes her one to watch.

“Hackney Diamonds,” The Rolling Stones

Prior to “Hackney Diamonds,” the Rolling Stones hadn’t released an album of original material in 18 years. (That was 2005’s “A Bigger Bang,” and a bigger bang it wasn’t.) No one saw this album coming, as raw and rocking as ever: a collection of 12 crackling songs, their first since the 2021 death of drummer Charlie Watts, produced by Andrew Watt (known for his work with Post Malone and Justin Bieber), featuring Lady Gaga, and a rapturous addition to their already legendary discography. But that’s the Stones for you — it’s as if they invented new ways to approach longevity. AP’s Jocelyn Noveck put it best: This album is their best new work in decades — tight, focused, full of heart and swagger.

“Raven,” Kelela

On her sophomore album, “Raven,” the fluid R&B singer Kelela offers a masterclass in sensual breakbeats and experiences in queer Black motherhood. (She sends potential collaborators a reading list featuring bell hooks and Decolonizing Love in a World Rigged for Black Women’s Loneliness” by Shaadi Devereaux.) If pulling from U.K. garage, ’90s house and electronica has become a trend in 2023, Kelela does it with a restrained intensity — soulful vocals atop dance rhythms, hazy sunset music set in a vintage club, like

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 64 of 75

on the single "Contact." "Loneliness, I see in your eyes / It might just render you blind," she sings. "Baby, let's dance it away."

"Mañana Será Bonito," Karol G

It took decades for reggaetón to be recognized in the mainstream arena and outside of the diverse Latin communities that created it — music comprising Jamaican dancehall riddims, Puerto Rican el underground, Panamanian reggae en español, New York hip-hop and beyond. But even now, when reggaetón enjoys worldwide success, men dominate the conversation: Bad Bunny, Daddy Yankee, J Balvin, and Rauw Alejandro, to name a few. On "Mañana Será Bonito," the greatest album in Karol G's discography, the Colombian superstar proves there's been some serious gender oversight. This album should be considered part of a modern canon for the explosive dem bow of "Ojos Ferrari," the dance-y "Ciaro," the breathy "TQG," featuring Shakira, the Afrobeats of "Carolina."

"New Blue Sun," André 3000

It's not a rap record, but the opening track is titled "I Swear, I Really Wanted to Make a 'Rap' Album but This Is Literally the Way the Wind Blew Me This Time." That one features California alt-jazz experimentalist Carlos Niño and sets the tone for the most daring release of 2023. For the first time in 17 years, André 3000 — half of the best-selling hip-hop duo of all time, Outkast — has released a new album of original material. Across 87 minutes, the musical innovator plays upward of 40 different types of flutes from around the world on this ambient jazz LP. It is a minimal, meditative listening experience — in some ways, ancient and, in others, an extension of the Afrofuturism that André 3000 has always worked to bring to the forefront. In 2014, he told the AP he wondered if he would always be the "Hey Ya!" guy. He can wonder no longer.

"Sundial," Noname

In a little over half-an-hour, Noname's "Sundial" jolts the Chicago rapper-poet's audience. The album is a contentious and confrontational continuation of the spirit felt on 2018's "Room 25," centering Black art and simultaneously unraveling the ways in which it is exploited. The highlight, if just one, is "Namesake," a track where Noname targets Rihanna, Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar's ties to the NFL. "War machine gets glamorized / We play the game to pass the time," she raps, before flipping the lens on herself and her own shakable politics. Ideological quandaries — speaking truth to power and then highlighting the instances where that fails — abound, delivered in smooth packages.

"Rat Saw God," Wednesday

The most exciting band in contemporary indie rock is informed by Drive-By Truckers, delivering an alt-country rock sensibility where narrative storytelling — pulling the listener into the quiet parts of a Carolinas hometown — is as much a part of the sonic fabric as lap steel or guitar fuzz or a poetic line sung out of key. At the heart of "Rat Saw God," Wednesday's fifth album, is a tension that plays out like a sonic embrace. It is an album about the complications of Southern identity, the pride and grit and shame and particularities of American geography that come out in songs about machine guns, race car drivers, crickets, trucks, Dollywood, sedans and Narcan. Evocative, to say the least.

"My Soft Machine," Arlo Parks

It hasn't been too long since Arlo Parks truly made a name for herself in 2021, when her unique brand of introspective R&B earned her a Mercury Award and two Grammy nominations for her debut album "Collapsed in Sunbeams." Parks' acute understanding of writing early-20s ennui has only sharpened. On "My Soft Machine," she expertly navigates an incredible diversity of sound: the reverbed guitars and breathy vocals of "Purple Phase," the '00s pop-rock-meets-soul of "Devotion," the blurry retro "Room (red wings)," and the sweet love song "Impurities." She manages to weave sounds together that shouldn't quite fit together, finding congruency in her downy melodies and romantic lyricism.

The Supreme Court wrestles with OxyContin maker's bankruptcy deal, with billions of dollars at stake

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday wrestled with a nationwide settlement with OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma that would shield members of the Sackler family who own the company from civil lawsuits over the toll of opioids.

The justices seemed by turns reluctant to break up an exhaustively negotiated agreement, but also leery of somehow rewarding the Sacklers.

The agreement hammered out with state and local governments and victims would provide billions of dollars to combat the opioid epidemic. The Sacklers would contribute up to \$6 billion and give up ownership of the company, but retain billions more. The company would emerge from bankruptcy as a different entity, with its profits used for treatment and prevention.

The high court put the settlement on hold during the summer, in response to objections from the Biden administration.

Justice Elena Kagan seemed to sum up the questions that were nagging at some of the justices.

"It seems as though the federal government is standing in the way of that as against the huge, huge, huge majority of claimants," Kagan said.

But later, she also said that in bankruptcies, protection against lawsuits has a price.

"You get a discharge when you put all your assets on the table," she said. "The Sacklers didn't come anywhere close to doing that."

Arguments lasted nearly two hours in a packed courtroom, its doors draped in black in memoriam to retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who died Friday. Chief Justice John Roberts offered a remembrance of the first woman to serve on the court. "She changed the world," Roberts said.

Outside the court, a small but vocal group of protesters opposed the Purdue Pharma agreement. "Shame on Sackler," one banner read. "No Sackler immunity at any \$\$," read another.

The issue for the justices is whether the legal shield that bankruptcy provides can be extended to people such as the Sacklers, who have not declared bankruptcy themselves. Lower courts have issued conflicting decisions over that issue, which also has implications for other major product liability lawsuits settled through the bankruptcy system.

The U.S. Bankruptcy Trustee, an arm of the Justice Department, contends that the bankruptcy law does not permit protecting the Sackler family from being sued. During the Trump administration, the government supported the settlement.

Justice Department lawyer Curtis Gannon told the court Monday that negotiations could resume, and perhaps lead to a better deal, if the court were to stop the current agreement.

Proponents of the plan said third-party releases are sometimes necessary to forge an agreement, and federal law imposes no prohibition against them.

"Forget a better deal," lawyer Pratik Shah, representing victims and other creditors in the bankruptcy, told the justices. "There is no other deal."

Lawyers for more than 60,000 victims who support the settlement called it "a watershed moment in the opioid crisis," while recognizing that "no amount of money could fully compensate" victims for the damage caused by the misleading marketing of OxyContin, a powerful prescription painkiller.

A lawyer for a victim who opposes the settlement calls the provision dealing with the Sacklers "special protection for billionaires."

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson seemed more inclined toward the opponents, saying the Sacklers' insistence on a shield against all lawsuits is "causing this problem."

By contrast, Justice Brett Kavanaugh sounded like a vote to allow the deal to proceed. He said the government was seeking to prevent payment to victims and their families, as well as money for prevention programs "in exchange really for this somewhat theoretical idea that they'll be able to recover money down the road from the Sacklers themselves."

OxyContin first hit the market in 1996, and Purdue Pharma's aggressive marketing of it is often cited as a catalyst of the nationwide opioid epidemic, persuading doctors to prescribe painkillers with less regard for addiction dangers.

The drug and the Stamford, Connecticut-based company became synonymous with the crisis, even though the majority of pills being prescribed and used were generic drugs. Opioid-related overdose deaths have continued to climb, hitting 80,000 in recent years. Most of those are from fentanyl and other synthetic drugs.

The Purdue Pharma settlement would be among the largest reached by drug companies, wholesalers and pharmacies to resolve epidemic-related lawsuits filed by state, local and Native American tribal governments and others. Those settlements have totaled more than \$50 billion.

But the Purdue Pharma settlement would be one of only two so far that include direct payments to victims from a \$750 million pool. Payouts are expected to range from about \$3,500 to \$48,000.

Sackler family members no longer are on the company's board, and they have not received payouts from it since before Purdue Pharma entered bankruptcy. In the decade before that, though, they were paid more than \$10 billion, about half of which family members said went to pay taxes.

A decision in *Harrington v. Purdue Pharma*, 22-859, is expected by early summer.

Recordings show how the Mormon church protects itself from child sex abuse claims

By MICHAEL REZENDES and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

HAILEY, Idaho (AP) — Paul Rytting listened as a woman, voice quavering, told him her story.

When she was a child, her father, a former bishop in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had routinely slipped into bed with her while he was aroused, she said.

It was March 2017 and Rytting offered his sympathies as 31-year-old Chelsea Goodrich spoke. A Utah attorney and head of the church's Risk Management Division, Rytting had spent about 15 years protecting the organization, widely known as the Mormon church, from costly claims, including sexual abuse lawsuits.

Rytting had flown into Hailey, Idaho, that morning from Salt Lake City, where the church is based, to meet in person with Chelsea and her mother, Lorraine.

After a quick prayer, he introduced himself and said he was there "to look into" Chelsea's "tragic and horrendous" story.

Chelsea and Lorraine had come to the meeting with one clear request: Would the church allow a local Idaho bishop, which in the Mormon church is akin to a Catholic priest, to testify at John Goodrich's trial? Bishop Michael Miller, who accompanied Rytting to the meeting, had heard a spiritual confession from Chelsea's father shortly before John Goodrich was arrested on charges of sexually abusing her.

While the details of his confession remain private, the church swiftly excommunicated Goodrich.

Audio recordings of the meetings over the next four months, obtained by The Associated Press, show how Rytting, despite expressing concern for what he called John's "significant sexual transgression," would employ the risk management playbook that has helped the church keep child sexual abuse cases secret. In particular, the church would discourage Miller from testifying, citing a law that exempts clergy from having to divulge information about child sex abuse that is gleaned in a confession. Without Miller's testimony, prosecutors dropped the charges, telling Lorraine that her impending divorce and the years that had passed since Chelsea's alleged abuse might prejudice jurors.

Rytting would also offer hundreds of thousands of dollars in exchange for a confidentiality agreement and a pledge by Chelsea and Lorraine to destroy their recordings of the meetings, which they had made at the recommendation of an attorney and with Rytting's knowledge.

Today, John Goodrich, who did not respond to the AP's questions, is a free man, practicing dentistry in Idaho.

"Going into this meeting with Rytting, I felt like it would be very clear, once everything's laid out that, look, this is not something that we want to cover up," said Eric Alberdi, a church member who attended the meetings as Chelsea's advocate and also made recordings, which he shared with the AP.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 67 of 75

"This is something that we want to uncover for a number of reasons, so that John ... doesn't do this again. So that Chelsea can move forward," said Alberdi, who was not bound by the confidentiality agreement and who has since left the church. "You know, covering this up did not make any sense."

In a statement to the AP, the church said "the abuse of a child or any other individual is inexcusable," and that John Goodrich, following his excommunication, "has not been readmitted to church membership."

Alberdi's recordings provide an unprecedented record of the steps the church normally takes behind closed doors to keep allegations of child sex abuse secret – steps that can leave predators free and children at risk.

"How many people can know the truth and choose to pretend they don't and leave others at risk of the same abuse and they know it and they just don't care?" Lorraine Goodrich said. "I don't understand that. I'll never understand that."

Two years earlier, in the spring of 2015, Chelsea Goodrich, then a 29-year-old graduate student in psychology living in Southern California, began to confront disturbing memories.

While her peers dated and created lasting relationships, she filled with anxiety and dread at the prospect. "Instead of wanting to have a relationship, I just remember feeling terror and confusion and kind of disgust, like all at once, about it," she said during a series of interviews with the AP.

Her memories included several occasions, she recalled, when John Goodrich slipped into her bed at night in their house in Mountain Home, Idaho, to spoon her while he was aroused, pushing himself against her backside. On one occasion, when she was 9, she remembered her father had apologized to her for being aroused while they were playing in the family swimming pool and told her not to tell her mother.

The last similar incident Chelsea recalls occurred during a school field trip to Washington, D.C., where her father admits he climbed into bed with her in a state of arousal and slipped close behind her. John Goodrich admitted that during a recorded conversation, obtained by the AP, with Chelsea, Lorraine and one of Chelsea's brothers.

Lorraine and Chelsea had been recording their confrontations with John about the alleged abuse, which they would later turn over to police.

While grappling with these memories, Chelsea met a Mormon friend she came to trust and with whom she shared these unsettling remembrances. Her new friend told her that her father, Paul Rytting, was a high church official who often dealt with sexual abuse complaints and suggested Chelsea contact him.

Unbeknownst to Chelsea, who believed Rytting's main responsibility was to aid victims, at about that time he was deeply involved in defending the church in a highly publicized West Virginia child sex abuse lawsuit. Several Mormon families had accused the church of allowing a Mormon sex abuser, Christopher Michael Jensen, to babysit for their children, whom he allegedly abused. Jensen was sentenced to serve 35 to 75 years in prison after he was found guilty of abusing two of the children.

As revealed by the AP last year, Rytting made sworn statements in that case – which were sealed by a judge and obtained by the AP -- describing the management of the secretive church Helpline, a phone number set up by the church for bishops to report instances of child sex abuse. Church officials say that they don't keep any records of the reports to the Helpline.

Rytting also revealed the lengths to which the church goes to ensure confidentiality for perpetrators who make spiritual confessions.

"Disciplinary proceedings are subject to the highest confidentiality possible," Rytting said in one affidavit. "If members had any concerns that their disciplinary files could be read by a secular judge or attorneys or be presented to a jury as evidence in a public trial, their willingness to confess and repent and for their souls to be saved would be seriously compromised."

Rytting did not respond to telephone calls or an email with a list of questions. In its statement the church noted that Goodrich's "communications with his bishop were protected by Idaho state law. Only the perpetrator could release the bishop from his obligation under the clergy penitent privilege and he refused to do so."

After meeting Rytting's daughter, Chelsea travelled with her to Salt Lake City and met Paul Rytting while

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 68 of 75

staying at the family home.

At that time, Chelsea didn't feel ready to discuss her memories and kept them to herself, she said. But she eventually told her mother. And when Lorraine Goodrich confronted her husband in their Idaho home, in July of 2015, John confirmed becoming aroused while around his daughter -- but denied any direct sexual contact, according to recordings of the conversations.

In one recorded conversation with Chelsea and Lorraine, he blamed the devil for his decision to climb into bed with his 13-year-old daughter after hearing sexual activity in an adjoining hotel room during the trip to Washington.

"The adversary I'm sure worked on me," he said, using a church term for Satan. "And that's when it was going through my mind when I climbed in bed with Chelsea and was really aroused ... with the intent of spooning and snuggling you but I didn't."

With his family and marriage in turmoil, John revealed details of his relationship with Chelsea to visiting relatives, according to a written statement from the relatives which was ultimately submitted to authorities. They urged him to go to the police. When John said he'd rather talk with a bishop, the Goodrich relatives drove him to Miller's home, where John made his confession.

Less than a year later, on Sept. 1, 2016, Chelsea and her mother met with Mountain Home police and played the recordings of their conversations with John. The next day, after a nearly two-hour interview at police headquarters, officers arrested him.

"Nothing happened," John protested, as police cuffed him during a video interview obtained by the AP. "I'm not ashamed of anything."

It was then that Chelsea decided to enlist Rytting's help and began corresponding with him by email to persuade him to allow Miller to testify against her father.

Chelsea and Lorraine also let Rytting know that church officials may have known about John Goodrich and his daughter for years. John told them, in conversations that were also recorded, that he'd "repented" details of his relationship with Chelsea to several local church leaders. Rytting told them that church leaders said they did not recall hearing any such confessions.

Then, 10 days after John's arrest in Mountain Home, another woman stepped forward with additional allegations of sex abuse after learning of the case against John. The 53-year-old single mother accused him of having nonconsensual sex with her after giving her the drug Halcion, a controlled substance John often used to sedate patients during dental procedures. She alleged that Goodrich drugged her the previous July after she cut off a sexual relationship with him.

The AP is not naming the woman because it does not identify people who make allegations of sexual abuse without their consent.

As detectives investigated the new allegations, John Goodrich, who was still facing charges in Chelsea's case, called the woman at least four times, in conversations she recorded and which the AP obtained. In these conversations, Goodrich asked her to lie to police while admitting he drugged her even as he tried to minimize his actions and repeatedly apologized.

"It was fun as heck, but it was wrong," he said in a recorded conversation. "Just out of principle it was wrong, and I'm just mad as hell at myself."

In July 2017, prosecutors dropped charges against John Goodrich related to Chelsea's allegations.

Six months later, a prosecutor in a neighboring county was crafting a plea deal in which he again would escape sex crime charges.

In the end, John Goodrich pleaded guilty to distribution of a controlled substance, Halcion, and a judge sentenced him to 90 days in jail and three years of probation.

At the initial meeting with Chelsea and Lorraine, Rytting said the clergy-penitent privilege law made it next to impossible for Miller to testify against John Goodrich. Now, four months later, he was back in Hailey with an offer.

Much had changed for Lorraine and Chelsea in the meantime. They'd begun to feel ostracized by the Mormon community. Miller's wife had even removed them from a local church community "sisters" email

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 69 of 75

list, they told Rytting.

Miller had been an advocate for Chelsea.

During the first meeting with Rytting, Miller said John Goodrich, before his excommunication, had tried to backtrack on what he'd told Miller in confession.

"John told me one thing, and then kind of toned it way down to the stake president," said Miller, referring to a higher-ranking church official who oversees several local jurisdictions. "He told the stake president, 'Well, that's not a big deal.' I go, 'Yeah, it's a big deal.'"

"So we know he's lying, and we know he's lying at every level," Rytting responded.

Reached by phone by the AP, Miller refused to discuss details. "It's clergy privilege," he said. "If I say anything, (John Goodrich) can sue me for millions of dollars."

With Rytting in town again, Lorraine and Chelsea first made it clear that they were devastated the prosecutor had dropped the criminal case, according to the recordings.

"(The prosecutor) said 'Too bad the bishop couldn't testify,'" Lorraine told Rytting.

Rytting sounded surprised. He had not known coming into the meeting that the case was dropped, he said. He told them that the church perhaps could reach out to the prosecutor to help get things restarted.

"The message to this prosecutor is, you've got several pretty clear-cut instances where a predator, a sexual predator, has admitted," Rytting said. "And then the victims have provided information. But you don't feel any need to protect the general public?"

"She did say that if the bishop could come forward and tell, then we would have had a case. But there's nothing," Lorraine repeated.

The prosecutor, Jessica Kuehn, now works for the Pennsylvania attorney general's office and did not respond to a request for comment. The AP couldn't determine if the church ever followed up with her about the case.

About an hour into the meeting, Rytting changed the subject abruptly.

"Well, should we talk about why I'm here?" Rytting asked. "I have authorization up to \$300,000."

The offer stunned Chelsea and Lorraine. Months earlier, Rytting told them by email that the church was prepared to pay them \$90,000 - an offer the women were considering.

The payment would be made on the condition that Chelsea and her mother sign an agreement in which they promised never to use Chelsea's story as a basis for a lawsuit against the church - and that they never acknowledge the existence of the settlement.

And there was another key provision: "Second paragraph, I'll be interested in your response," Rytting said, while reviewing the document with them.

"The recommendation is that you acknowledge that there's been some recordings made of all of our communications and that you agreed to destroy those recordings within 10 days of signing this," he said.

Nondisclosure agreements - or NDAs, as they are commonly known - have been used frequently by the Mormon church and other organizations, including the Catholic Church, as well as individuals, to keep sex abuse allegations secret. In addition to her settlement with the church, Chelsea also settled a lawsuit against her father.

In one of their recorded conversations, Rytting told Chelsea that he could check Helpline records, used by Miller to report details of John Goodrich's confession, to see whether her father had ever previously confessed to another bishop to abusing her.

But in the West Virginia abuse case against the church, Rytting gave sworn, written testimony in which he said no one at the Helpline keeps records. And another ranking church official testified in a case in Arizona that the records are destroyed at the end of each day. In comments to the AP, the church declined to clarify Rytting's apparent contradiction about whether the church keeps records on the Helpline.

Still, at their final meeting, Rytting assured Chelsea and Lorraine that church officials denied hearing John Goodrich confess previously to abusing his daughter, a claim the church backed in its statement to the AP. He urged them to accept the funds the church was offering and sign the nondisclosure agreement promising they would never sue the church.

"When John Goodrich engaged in abuse or any other criminal or sexual misconduct, he was acting in

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 70 of 75

an individual capacity and NOT as an agent of the Church," Rytting wrote, ignoring the fact that Goodrich was a bishop at the time. "Accordingly, any damages arising from such misconduct will be apportioned to Mr. Goodrich and not to the Church."

Chelsea and Lorraine, distanced from their family and community, and struggling financially, accepted this assessment and signed the agreement, which did not prevent Chelsea from telling her story.

Earlier this year, Chelsea decided to share it with the AP.

She had tried going to the church for help. She'd tried the criminal justice system. But John was free with access to children through his family and dental practice.

"Right now, my main concern continues to be other children," she said.

Heisman finalists: LSU QB Daniels, Oregon QB Nix, Washington QB Penix Jr., Ohio St WR Harrison Jr.

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

LSU's Jayden Daniels, Oregon's Bo Nix and Washington's Michael Penix Jr., transfer quarterbacks who have all played at least five college seasons, and Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. were announced as the Heisman Trophy finalists on Monday night.

The Heisman has been given to the nation's most outstanding college football player since 1935. This year's winner will be announced Saturday in New York. The top four vote-getters determined by more than 870 voters, which include members of the media and former Heisman winners, are selected as finalists.

With Nix and Penix, the Pac-12 has two Heisman finalists for the first time since 2010 when Stanford's Andrew Luck was the runner-up to Auburn's Cam Newton, and Oregon running back LaMichael James finished third in the balloting.

The Pac-12 is in its final season with its current membership before 10 schools depart, including Oregon and Washington to the Big Ten.

A look at each finalist's road to Manhattan.

DANIELS

Daniels had one of the most prolific seasons in Southeastern Conference history for the 13th-ranked Tigers (9-3), his second at LSU and fifth overall after starting his career at Arizona State. He passed for 3,812 yards and 40 touchdowns and ran for 1,134 yards and 10 TDs.

Daniels is trying to become the third LSU player to win the Heisman, first since Joe Burrow in 2019 — another transfer quarterback in his second season in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Daniels is also trying to become the rare Heisman winner in the BCS/CFP era to win the award with a team that wasn't in contention for a championship late in the season. The last player to win the Heisman on a team with a 9-3 record was Louisville quarterback Lamar Jackson in 2016.

HARRISON

Harrison has 67 catches for 1,211 yards and 15 touchdowns, and his trip to New York gives No. 7 Ohio State (11-1) Heisman finalists in five of the last six seasons.

Harrison's overall numbers lag behind some of the other star receivers around the country, but he was the most consistent threat for a Buckeyes offense that was breaking in a new starting quarterback and dealt with injuries to its supporting cast all season.

He would be the fifth receiver to win the Heisman in the award's 87-year history, but the second in the past four years. Alabama's DeVonta Smith won in 2020 to become the first receiver to take the trophy in nearly three decades.

NIX

While Daniels went from the Pac-12 to the SEC and found stardom, Nix went the opposite way.

After three years at Auburn, the former five-star recruit transferred to Oregon in 2022 and became one of the best players in the country, leading the eighth-ranked Ducks (11-2) to the Pac-12 title game.

Nix has completed 77.2% of his passes, which is slightly behind the major college football record, and has thrown for 4,145 yards and 40 TDs.

PENIX

Penix is in his sixth college season after four injury-filled years at Indiana. He transferred to Washington in 2022 to play for coach Kalen DeBoer, his former offensive coordinator at Indiana, and has guided the second-ranked Huskies to 23 victories, a Pac-12 title and their second College Football Playoff appearance this year.

This season, Penix has passed for 4,218 yards and 33 touchdowns.

Dutch lawyers seek a civil court order to halt the export of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Human rights lawyers went to court in the Netherlands on Monday to call for a halt to the export of fighter jet parts to Israel that could be used in attacks on Gaza.

The organizations allege that delivery of parts for F-35 jets makes the Netherlands complicit in possible war crimes being committed by Israel in its war with Hamas.

The civil case in The Hague opened as the Israeli military renewed calls for mass evacuations from the southern town of Khan Younis, where tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians have sought refuge in recent weeks, as it widened its ground offensive and bombarded targets across the Gaza Strip.

The rights lawyers want The Hague District Court to issue an injunction banning the exports of F-35 parts that are stored in a warehouse in the town of Woensdrecht.

"The state must immediately stop the delivery of F-35 parts to Israel," lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld told the court.

Citing government documents, Zegveld said that Dutch customs asked the government if it wanted to continue exports after the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas that triggered the Israel-Hamas war.

"The warning that the fighter jets can contribute to serious breaches of the laws of war does not, for the (Dutch) state, outweigh its economic interests and diplomatic reputation."

Government lawyer Reimer Veldhuis urged the court's single judge to reject the injunction, saying that even if it were to uphold the rights lawyers' legal arguments and ban exports, "the United States would deliver these parts to Israel from another place."

He added that Israel has the right to self-defense.

"Israel must be able to respond to threats from the region. That must, of course, happen within the framework of international law," Veldhuis said.

He added that the government "believes that a clear risk of serious breaches (of international law) through the use of F-35s cannot at the moment be established."

A ruling is expected within two weeks and can be appealed.

AP's top songs of 2023:

'On My Mama,' 'Flowers,' 'Monaco' and more

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Ten of the best songs of the year, as determined by Associated Press Music Writer Maria Sherman, in no particular order. Dive in.

"On My Mama," Victoria Monét

Buckle up for some positive affirmations! The 10-time Grammy-nominated Victoria Monét, once best known as a hit-maker for Ariana Grande, Fifth Harmony and Chloe x Halle, is getting her flowers these days as a soloist — and passing them right along to the mothers listening. Her blockbuster single "On My Mama" is a loving tribute to her mom and her daughter, with Monét's buttery voice and bright brass production carrying throughout. It may very well be the best R&B track of the year — with one of the best samples, utilizing Charlie Boy's 2009 banger "I Look Good." It takes a real talent to borrow from such a recognizable sound. Monét doesn't just manage to do that — she makes it her own.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 72 of 75

"Monaco," Bad Bunny

Bad Bunny's 2023 album, "Nadie Sabe Lo Que Va a Pasar Mañana," is a reclamation of his past sound, the hard-hitting rap that preceded his mainstream superstardom. Perhaps it's an exercise in getting back to the basics while unraveling the complications of fame, the source material for most of the album's lyrics. At any rate, the combination makes for a more restrained, pointed listen: a true success on the stellar "Monaco," a Latin trap song with a need for speed that wouldn't feel too far removed on his debut album, 2018's "X 100PRE." Benito's smooth, somber baritone carries the track, as does the rush sound of a Formula One car that bleeds into baroque production.

"Flowers," Miley Cyrus

There's a thin line between courageous and corny when it comes to uplifting pop records. Far too often, an empowering song with an ascendant chorus loses all tension and hits the ear like a too-sweet dessert. But on Miley Cyrus' Grammy-nominated "Flowers," her first No. 1 hit in a decade, the pop superstar makes magic happen. It's a summery, retro-pop single teeming with optimism born out of divorce. "No remorse, no regret / I forget every word you said," she sings — the musical equivalent of someone saying, "I'm bored with this conversation" — before launching into a self-help mantra. Then, she finds an emotional solution and musical resolve in her chorus: "I can love me better than you can."

"Boy's A Liar Pt. 2," PinkPantheress and Ice Spice

It is the song of the summer — heck, the year — and it came out in January. The dream team of Bronx rapper Ice Spice and hyperpop-punk hero PinkPantheress made "Boy's a Liar Pt. 2" an examination of modern dating with an undeniable hook. It is so space-y as to take flight; a lackadaisical remix for the current moment. Plus, the pronunciation of "Liar" like "Leo" in the song's chorus is "It's Gonna Be May"-level creativity. What's not to love?

"I Remember Everything," Zach Bryan and Kacey Musgraves

Country artist Zach Bryan knows a thing or two about writing the loneliness of heartbreak into song with cutting specificity. It is one of the reasons his 2022 major label debut "American Heartbreak" was named one of AP's top albums of last year. And it is part of the reason why his 2023 single and first No. 1 track, "I Remember Everything," is one of our favorites of this year. It's confessional, rich, balladic songwriting amplified by his full-hearted voice — those open, resonating notes — and the sweetness of Musgraves' tone.

"Crave," Paramore

Long gone are the burnt orange pop-punk days of Paramore's youth. The Tennessee rock band flirts with animated post-punk these days, experimenting with asymmetrical synth production that mirrors internal anxieties and the external forces that augment them. "Crave" is the latter reflecting on the former: a propulsive, matured band dancing around a prickly guitar riff. But at its core, like in all great Paramore tracks, is frontwoman Hayley Williams stretching her vast vocal range, belting out frustrations and excising misguided desires.

"Rush," Troye Sivan

The opening track and lead single from Australian pop powerhouse Troye Sivan's third full-length album, "Something to Give Each Other," is all falsetto, locker room chants, and utopic homoeroticism: "I feel the rush / Addicted to your touch," a group of men harmonize on the perfect pop of his lead single, "Rush." Bravado is instituted only to drive home a sort of sweaty sexuality, all fun and light atop house and EDM beats. Sivan offered AP a kind of mantra for the song in an interview earlier this year: "Things are good. Life is fun. Sex is great."

"Dumbest Girl Alive," 100 gecs

What came first: the chicken or the egg, 100 gecs or the Internet genre of hyperpop? It doesn't matter. The duo of Laura Les and Dylan Brady are not in the market for sense; rather, their musical art is fueled by pixelated chaos. In the case of "Dumbest Girl Alive," a choice cut from their sophomore LP "10,000 gecs," the only thing that matters is the nu-metal bass lick and distorted vocals that deliver unintelligible lines like "Put emojis on my grave / I'm the dumbest girl alive." It's 2023's best song that sounds like getting sucked into a computer simulation, fun and dumb in equal measure.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 73 of 75

"OMG," NewJeans

In 2023, girl groups dominated the K-pop conversation. At the fore is NewJeans, with their Y2K-nostalgic sound that pulls from the turn of the millennium's R&B and pop music. "OMG" was the catalyst for their fame, with its addictive trap rhythm, propelled by U.K. garage-inspired production, tasteful cowbells (you read that correctly) and a sticky staccato synth that lays a strong foundation, brought to the next level by the quintet's ebullient harmonies. Oh my, oh my god, indeed.

"Tantor," Danny Brown

Danny Brown's absurdist approach to contemporary rap has made him one to watch for years, and "Tantor," the teetering lead single from his long-awaited sixth studio album "Quaranta," is proof. The Alchemist-produced track is, in moments, prog-rock avant-rap, a retro-futuristic hip-hop filtered through, like, "Robocop." If cyborgs aren't your thing, look away — but then you'd be missing one of the most welcomingly clangorous and charming tracks of 2023.

Biden's allies in Senate demand that Israel limit civilian deaths in Gaza as Congress debates US aid

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER AND LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As a cease-fire ticked down last week and Israel prepared to resume its round-the-clock airstrikes, Sen. Bernie Sanders and a robust group of Democratic senators had a message for their president: They were done "asking nicely" for Israel to do more to reduce civilian casualties in Gaza.

Lawmakers warned President Joe Biden's national security team that planned U.S. aid to Israel must be met with assurances of concrete steps from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right government.

"The truth is that if asking nicely worked, we wouldn't be in the position we are today," Sanders said in a floor speech. It was time for the United States to use its "substantial leverage" with its ally, the Vermont senator said.

"And we all know what that leverage is," he said, adding, "the blank-check approach must end."

With Biden's request for a nearly \$106 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs hanging in the balance, the senators' tougher line on Israel has gotten the White House's attention, and that of Israel.

Lawmakers of both major political parties for decades have embraced the U.S. role as Israel's top protector, and it's all but inconceivable that they would vote down the wartime aid. The Democratic lawmakers are adamant that's not their intent, as strong supporters of Israel's right of self-defense against Hamas. But just the fact that Democratic lawmakers are making that link signals the fractures in Congress amid the daily scenes of suffering among besieged Palestinian civilians.

Sanders and the Democratic senators involved say they are firm in their stand that Israel's military must adopt substantive measures to lessen civilian deaths in Gaza as part of receiving the supplemental's \$14.3 billion in U.S. aid for Israel's war.

The warning from friendly Democrats is a complication for the White House as it faces what had already been a challenging task of getting the supplemental aid bill through Congress. Some Republicans are balking at the part of the bill that provides funding for Ukraine's war against Russia, and the funding for Israel was supposed to be the easy part.

The demand is a warning of more trouble ahead for an Israeli government that's often at odds with the U.S. in its treatment of Palestinians.

"There's a big difference between asking and getting a commitment" from Netanyahu's government on a plan to reduce civilian casualties and improve living conditions in Gaza, Maryland Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen told The Associated Press. Van Hollen has been one of the key senators huddling with administration officials on the demands.

"So our goal is to achieve results," Van Hollen said. "And not just set expectations."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 74 of 75

Following the senators' warning, the Biden administration has upped its own demands to Israel since late last week, insisting publicly for the first time that Israeli leaders not just hear out U.S. demands to ease civilian suffering in Gaza, but agree to them.

Over the weekend, as an end to the cease-fire brought the return of Israeli bombardment and Hamas rocket strikes, the Israeli military said it had begun using one measure directed by the Biden administration: an online map of Gaza neighborhoods to tell civilians which crowded streets, neighborhoods and communities to evacuate before an Israeli attack.

Heavy bombardment followed the evacuation orders, and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip said they were running out of places to go in the sealed-off territory. Many of its 2.3 million people are crammed into the south after Israel ordered civilians to leave the north in the early days of the war, which was sparked by the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack in Israel that killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says more than 15,500 Palestinians have been killed, with 70% of them women and children.

On social media, Sanders repeated his call for an end to blank checks for Israel as Israeli forces returned to heavy bombing after the cease-fire.

While Secretary of State Antony Blinken said more measures were coming besides the online map, it wasn't clear if any would lessen civilian deaths or satisfy administration and lawmaker demands.

Israel is the top recipient of U.S. military aid over time.

Trying to attach strings to U.S. aid to Israel isn't unheard of, for Congress or for U.S. presidents. Ronald Reagan, for instance, repeatedly suspended or threatened suspensions of fighter jet deliveries to Israel over its military incursions in the region in the 1980s. This time, though, is notable since it is being discussed in a Democratic-controlled Senate.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan and other White House officials huddled with the Senate Democrats over the warning. Israeli diplomats and military officials also rushed to stem such a move, hosting lawmakers for repeated viewings of video of Hamas atrocities on Oct. 7 to make the case for the U.S. military aid.

Netanyahu's coalition has weathered calls in the past from advocacy groups and individual lawmakers. Objections concerned Palestinian civilian deaths in past Israeli wars against Hamas.

Biden from the start adopted what came to be called his "bear-hug" approach to the Israeli leader — embracing him publicly, and saving any U.S. appeals for changed behavior for private discussions. But when Biden told reporters on Nov. 24 he thought conditioning military aid to Israel was a "worthwhile thought," it helped the proposal gain traction among administration-friendly Democratic senators.

Sanders and the Democrats haven't specified what form the conditions could take, as talks continue. Several Democratic senators contend no additional law is necessary. They say existing U.S. law already mandates that countries receiving U.S. military aid heed human rights concerns.

Some Senate Democrats express dislike of the use of the term conditions and depict their action as more of a determination to influence an outcome.

No matter what, "we're going to do a robust aid package for Israel," said Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat. "But it's got to be consistent with humanitarian aid, and also efforts to reduce the suffering of Gazans who aren't part of Hamas."

Today in History: December 5, Nelson Mandela dies at 95

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 5, the 339th day of 2023. There are 26 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 5, 2013, Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who became South Africa's first Black president, died at age 95.

On this date:

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 164 ~ 75 of 75

In 1791, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna, Austria, at age 35.

In 1792, George Washington was reelected president; John Adams was reelected vice president.

In 1848, President James K. Polk triggered the Gold Rush of '49 by confirming that gold had been discovered in California.

In 1932, German physicist Albert Einstein was granted a visa, making it possible for him to travel to the United States.

In 1933, national Prohibition came to an end as Utah became the 36th state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the 18th Amendment.

In 1952, the Great Smog of London descended on the British capital; the unusually thick fog, which contained toxic pollutants, lasted five days and was blamed for causing thousands of deaths.

In 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged to form the AFL-CIO under its first president, George Meany.

In 1994, Republicans chose Newt Gingrich to be the first GOP speaker of the House in four decades.

In 2009, a jury in Perugia, Italy convicted American student Amanda Knox and her former Italian boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, of murdering Knox's British roommate, Meredith Kercher, and sentenced them to long prison terms. (After a series of back-and-forth rulings, Knox and Sollecito were definitively acquitted in 2015 by Italy's highest court.)

In 2012, Jazz composer and pianist Dave Brubeck died in Norwalk, Connecticut, a day before he would have turned 92.

In 2017, Democratic congressman John Conyers of Michigan resigned from Congress after a nearly 53-year career, becoming the first Capitol Hill politician to lose his job amid the sexual misconduct allegations sweeping through the nation's workplaces.

In 2018, former President George H.W. Bush was mourned at a memorial service at Washington National Cathedral attended by President Donald Trump and former Presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter along with their spouses; former president George W. Bush was among the speakers.

In 2019, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that she had asked the relevant House committee chairs to begin drawing up articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, saying his actions left them "no choice" but to act swiftly; in response. (Trump would be impeached by the House on charges of obstruction and abuse of power, but the Senate voted to acquit in the first of two Trump impeachment trials.)

In 2020, at a Georgia rally where he urged supporters to turn out for a pair of Republican Senate candidates in a January runoff election, President Donald Trump spread baseless allegations of misconduct in the November voting in Georgia and beyond.

In 2021, Bob Dole, who overcame disabling war wounds to become a Senate leader from Kansas, a Republican presidential candidate and then a symbol of his dwindling generation of World War II veterans, died at age 98.

In 2022, Moscow unleashed a massive missile barrage in Ukraine, striking homes and buildings and killing civilians just hours after the Kremlin claimed Ukrainian drones struck two air bases deep inside Russian territory.

Today's Birthdays: Author Calvin Trillin is 88. Actor Jeroen Krabbe (yeh-ROHN' krah-BAY') is 79. Opera singer Jose Carreras is 77. Musician and singer Jim Messina is 76. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL quarterback Jim Plunkett is 76. World Golf Hall of Famer Lanny Wadkins is 74. Actor Morgan Brittany is 72. Actor Brian Backer is 67. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Art Monk is 66. Country singer Ty England is 60. Rock singer-musician John Rzeznik (REZ'-nihk) (The Goo Goo Dolls) is 58. Country singer Gary Allan is 56. Comedian-actor Margaret Cho is 55. Writer-director Morgan J. Freeman is 54. Actor Alex Kapp Horner is 54. Actor Kali Rocha is 52. Rock musician Regina Zernay (Cowboy Mouth) is 51. Actor Paula Patton is 48. Actor Amy Acker is 47. Actor Nick Stahl is 44. Actor Adan Canto is 42. R&B singer Keri Hilson is 41. Actor Gabriel Luna is 41. Actor Frankie Muniz is 38. Actor Ross Bagley is 35. MLB outfielder Christian Yelich is 32.