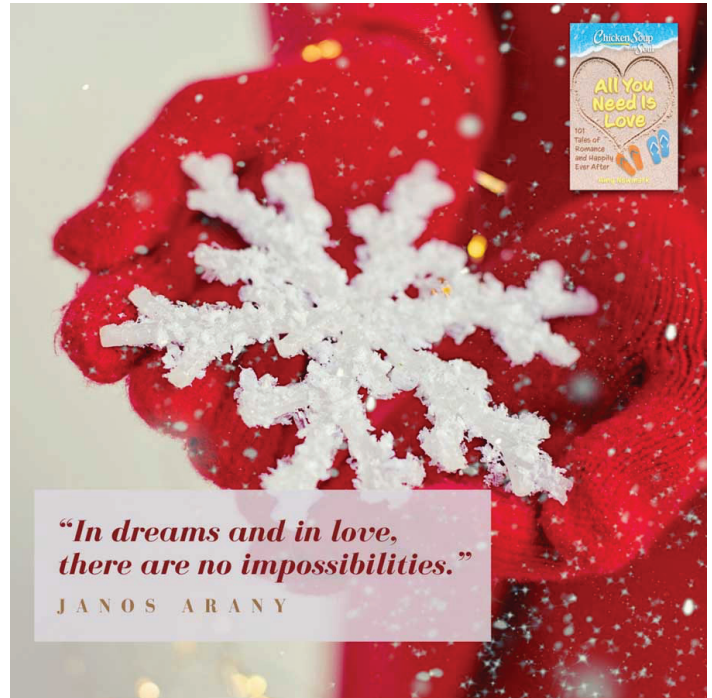


Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 1 of 75

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [2- Columbia Hometown Holiday Party ad](#)
- [3- Middle School / High School Christmas Concert](#)
- [4- Groton Chamber Ad](#)
- [5- GDI JV/C Game Sponsors](#)
- [7- Wage Memorial Library Ad](#)
- [8- Elda Stange 100th Birthday Party](#)
- [8- Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #3 Results](#)
- [9- No. 13 Wolves Fall to No. 18 Vikings in NSIC Dual Action](#)
- [10- Weather Allows Habitat and Access Crews More Time for Improvements and Inspections](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Lobbying group aims to increase video lottery bet limits in 2024 legislative session](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Custer State Park bison auction brings in \\$633,700](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: SD's Johnson votes yes as House sanctions NY member for pulling fire alarm](#)
- [14- Weather Pages](#)
- [19- Daily Devotional](#)
- [20- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [21- Subscription Form](#)
- [22- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [23- News from the Associated Press](#)



Friday, Dec. 8

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, broccoli Normandy blend, fruited Jell-O, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, peas.

Basketball Double Header with Hamlin in Groton: (Gym: Boys C, 4 p.m., Girls C, 5 p.m.) Arena: Girls JV, 4 p.m., Boys JV, 5 p.m., Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity to follow

Junior High Wrestling at Sisseton, 4:30 p.m.

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

Saturday, Dec. 9

Santa Claus Day, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Professional Management Services

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

Movie event at Wage Memorial Library, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Elda Stange's 100th Birthday party, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., St. John's Lutheran Church

ACT Testing, 8 a.m. to noon, Groton Area School.

CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

Social Security: The Social Security Administration is seeking repayment from over a million additional benefit recipients than previously acknowledged, with the total number potentially exceeding two million, as reported by Newsweek.

China Balloon: Taiwan's defense ministry reported the spotting of a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon breaching the sensitive median line in the Taiwan Strait.

War in Ukraine: Ukraine experienced an 87% decline in newly committed aid packages from August to October compared to the previous year, a report by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy showed, marking the lowest level recorded since January 2022.

Unconventional: See what it's like to fly a seven-hour training mission in the U.S. Air Force's B-52 as Newsweek's Naveed Jamali takes to the skies and meets the team that ensures the bomber is still ready for any operation after 60+ years of service. Watch now.

Kia's Electric Revolution: In the ever-evolving transportation landscape, electric cars have emerged as trailblazers, poised to revolutionize how we travel now and in the coming decades.

Israel-Hamas War: Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "it remains imperative" that Israel take steps to minimize harm to civilians, saying there is a "gap between" Israel's "intent to protect civilians" and its ground operations in Gaza.

Abortion Fight in Texas: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton has threatened to imprison any doctor who performs an abortion granted by one of the state's courts to remove an unviable fetus that could make the mother infertile if carried to term.

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!

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 3 of 75

Middle School / High School Christmas Concert



MS Choir

Fa, La, La, La.....Arr. by Ruth Morris Gray
Joy to the World!.....Arr. by Dan Forrest
Featuring: Carlee Johnson, French Horn
Blake Lord, Tuba
Brody Lord, Gavin Kroll, Jackson Hopfinger, and Logan Clocksene, Trombone



Chamber Choir

Christmas Peace Canon.....Arr. Audrey Snyder
Soloist: Gretchen Dinger, Flute

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 4 of 75



HS Choir

In Winter.....Victor C. Johnson
Immanuel: The Savior Is Born.....Words and Music By Steve Dunn
Rockin' Holidays!.....Arr. by Alan Billingsley

**'TIS THE
SEASON TO
SHOP LOCAL**

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 5 of 75



MS Band

Hark! The Herald Tubas Sing.....Arr. by Michael Sweeney

Featuring the Tuba Section

Who Let the Elves Out.....Arr. by Victor Lopez

Santa the Barbarian: Snowpocalypse.....Randall D. Standridge

Mr. Ryan Olson, Narrator

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

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 6 of 75



HS Band

It's Beginning to Look a lot like ChristmasLarry Neeck

Flex Band

Soloist: Blake Lord, Tuba

And the Bells Shall Ring!.....Rob Remeyn

Peace Noel.....Arr. By Bryce

Newton

Christmas Can-Can.....Larry Neeck

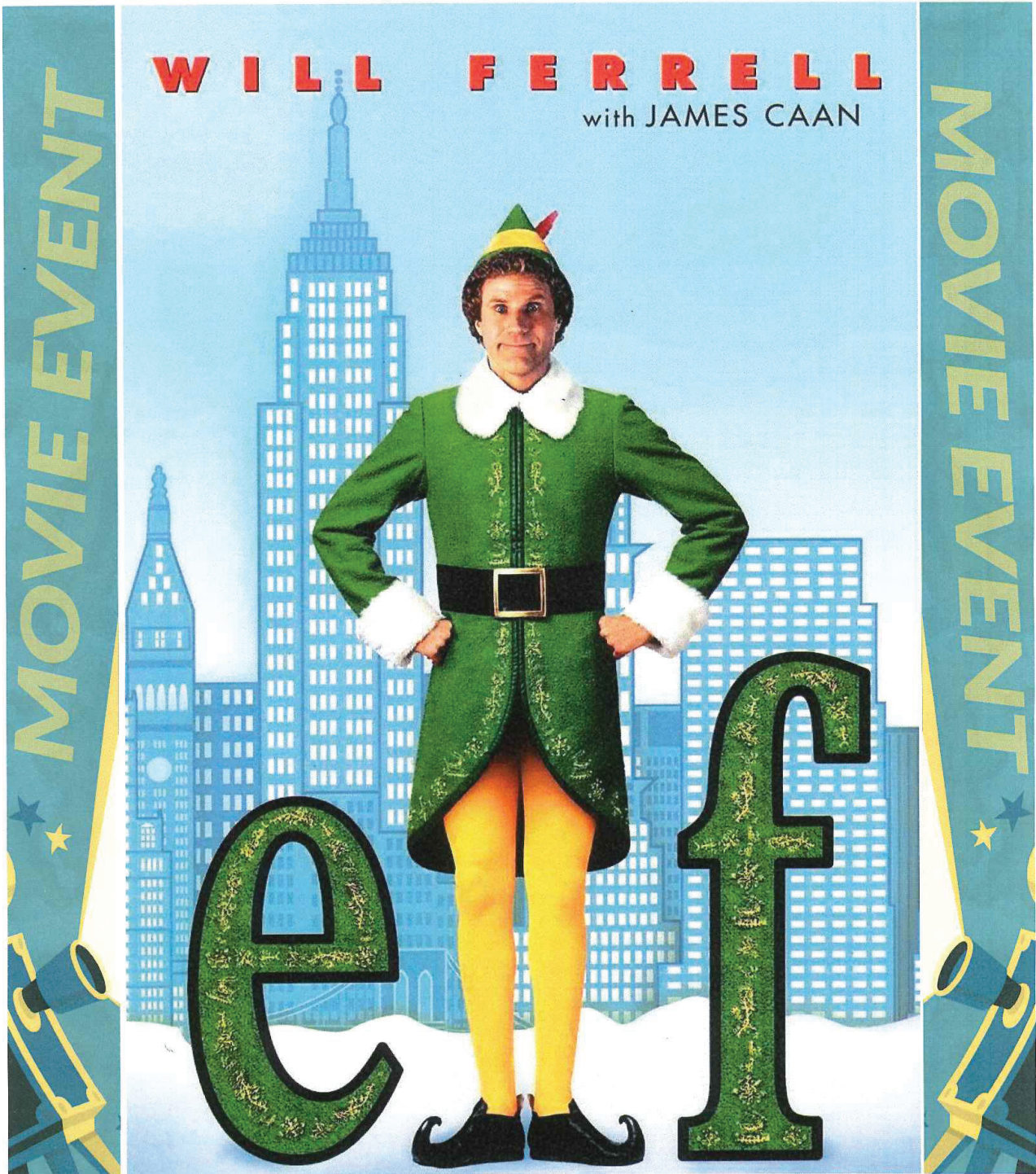


6th-12th Grade Musicians and Audience

Holiday Sing A-long.....Arr. by A. Snyder & J. Moss
Deck the Hall, Jingle Bells, O Christmas Tree, We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 7 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!

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY!



Please join us for a birthday party in honor of
Elda Stange

**Saturday, Dec. 9
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran Church
308 N. 2nd St., Groton**

**RSVP Text/Call Connie Rose at
804-301-7480**

**If unable to attend, please send greetings to:
Elda Stange, PO Box 305, Groton, SD 57445**

Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #3 Results

Team Standings: Coyotes – 8, Shihtzus – 7, Jackelopes – 7, Chipmunks – 6, Cheetahs – 4, Foxes – 4
Men's High Games: Roger Spanier – 237, Charlie Dirks – 196, Brad Waage – 184
Women's High Games: Alexa Schuring – 172, Vicki Walter – 169, Julie Holt – 167
Men's High Series: Charlie Dirks – 514, Tony Waage – 507, Brad Waage – 485
Women's High Series: Alexa Schuring – 439, Vicki Walter – 434, Lori Giedt – 430

Fun Game: Most Strikes - Chipmunks and Foxes both with 25!

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 9 of 75

No. 13 Wolves Fall to No. 18 Vikings in NSIC Dual Action

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 13 Northern State University wrestling team fell behind early against No. 18 Augustana University and was unable to rally back. The Wolves came within one of the Vikings following the fourth weight of the evening, however that is as close as they would get.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 13, AU 21

Records: NSU 3-3 (1-1 NSIC), AU 3-1 (1-0 NSIC)

HOW IT HAPPENED

Augustana opened the dual with a major decision victory by No. 1 Jaxson Rohman; Landen Fischer battled for the Wolves however the match got away from him late in the third

No. 11 Jason Henschel Jr. responded for NSU with a 10-4 decision victory over Jack Huffman at 133-pounds

It was a close bout at 141 as Braydon Mogle dropped an 8-6 decision to No. 10 Hunter Burnett, giving Augustana the 7-3 lead

No. 1 Wyatt Turnquist came out attacking for scoring three points to kick-off the match and racked up extensive ride time against Kyle Boeke; the Winner native tallied a 7-2 decision and earned three team points for NSU

The Vikings rattled off back-to-back victories at 157 and 165 points with a pair of decisions, giving AU a 13-6 lead

Sam Kruger tallied the Wolves first and only extra point victory of the evening recording an 11-1 major decision over Coy Gunderson

AU sealed the match at 184 and 197 with a decision and technical fall, leading 21-10 with one class remaining

Nathan Schauer tallied his second league victory with a 10-3 decision win over Max Balow to cap off the evening

Mason Fey and Ayden Viox opened the dual with a pair of extra match wins for the Wolves; Fey defeated Gavin Gulbrandson by fall at 4:26 and Viox tallied a 2-1 decision over Edward Hajas

FINAL RESULTS

Weight	Summary	NSU	AUG
125	Jaxson Rohman (Augustana (SD)) over Landen Fischer (Northern State) (MD 12-4)	0	4
133	Jason Henschel (Northern State) over Jack Huffman (Augustana (SD)) (Dec 10-4)	3	0
141	Hunter Burnett (Augustana (SD)) over Braydon Mogle (Northern State) (Dec 8-6)	0	3
149	Wyatt Turnquist (Northern State) over Kyle Boeke (Augustana (SD)) (Dec 7-2)	3	0
157	Payton Handevitd (Augustana (SD)) over Cael Larson (Northern State) (Dec 8-4)	0	3
165	Tyler Wagener (Augustana (SD)) over Chase Bloomquist (Northern State) (Dec 4-2)	0	3
174	Sam Kruger (Northern State) over Coy Gunderson (Augustana (SD)) (MD 11-1)	4	0
184	Cade Mueller (Augustana (SD)) over Treyton Cacek (Northern State) (Dec 5-1)	0	3
197	Max Ramberg (Augustana (SD)) over Marshall Vantassel (Northern) (TF 16-0 4:57)	0	5
285	Nathan Schauer (Northern State) over Max Balow (Augustana (SD)) (Dec 10-3)	3	0
174E	Mason Fey (Northern State) over Gavin Gulbrandson (Augustana (SD)) (Fall 4:26)	0	0
285E	Ayden Viox (Northern State) over Edward Hajas (Augustana (SD)) (Dec 2-1)	0	0
Team Score:		13	21

UP NEXT

Northern returns to action next Saturday and Sunday, December 16-17 in Indianapolis. The Wolves will take on the UIndy Midwest Classic. Competition opens at 9 a.m. (CT) each day.

Weather Allows Habitat and Access Crews More Time for Improvements and Inspections

Late arriving winter weather has allowed South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) crews more time for access improvements along the Missouri River.

Crews have been able to extend their work on areas near Pierre along Lake Sharpe to create fishing access along an expansive and popular shore fishing area near Ft. George. This project started in late fall and is scheduled to be completed mid-2024.

Crews have also been busy on Lake Oahe, surveying boat landings, and working on improving conditions for the busy spring and summer fishing season.

During their work, access crews recently discovered the presence of zebra mussels at the East Shore and Cow Creek boat ramps on Lake Oahe.

"While pulling docks, fisheries staff reported finding zebra mussels on several structures," said Jake Davis, Fisheries Program Administrator. "Both detections were then confirmed following these findings."

Following this detection, Lake Oahe is now considered a new zebra mussel confirmed water. The Zebra Mussel Rapid Response Team will place high-profile signs on access areas, actively engage boaters using the infested water, reiterate information on decontamination requirements, and communicate with groups of people and entities that will be potentially affected by the infestation.

"Lake Oahe is an expansive body of water, and we want to be sure all individuals are aware of this confirmation," Davis continued. "This is why education and outreach continue to be our most useful tools for educating all individuals on zebra mussels."

"Lake Oahe is a good example of why our communication approach is critical," said GFP Communications Manager, Nick Harrington. "This is our most popular fishery in the state, with many access locations, and why it is important for all users to be aware of this confirmation."

GFP has significantly enhanced efforts to slow the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in recent years, both educating anglers and boaters to clean, drain, dry every time they are on the water as well as physically inspecting boats prior to and/or after loading.

"The winter season is upon us, but there are still opportunities to put the boats in the water. Regardless the time of year, individuals need to always remember to practice clean, drain, dry." concluded Harrington.

Remember to Practice Clean, Drain, Dry

Remember, every time you are on the water you need to remember to practice clean, drain, dry! Also, if you see a watercraft inspection station, you need to stop and do your part. Remember, you never know when a sasquatch is watching!



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Lobbying group aims to increase video lottery bet limits in 2024 legislative session

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - DECEMBER 7, 2023 4:27 PM

A lobbying group is hoping for bills during the 2024 legislative session to increase lottery revenues across the state.

Matt Krogman, with the South Dakota Licensed Beverage Dealers and Gaming Association, told state lottery commissioners at their meeting Thursday in Pierre that the move would be “proactive” as video lottery revenues, inflated during the pandemic, start to slow down in growth.

State lottery revenue — including video lottery, scratch games and lotto games — jumped 26.97% in fiscal year 2021 and another 10.34% in fiscal year 2022. Growth fell to 2.95% in fiscal year 2023, and the South Dakota Lottery estimates revenue will end fiscal year 2024 at just under a 1% increase.

Video lottery income, which is the money that people lose to the machines, between July and December this year stands at \$135.83 million — a 1.37% decrease from that time last year. While that income is still ahead of pre-pandemic numbers, it’s a sign that lottery spending might be cooling off slightly, said South Dakota Lottery Finance Manager Aric Frost.

“We haven’t really dropped off because that could be a little deceptive with those COVID years. It’s a good thing to see,” Frost told commissioners.

Lottery makes up one of the largest single revenue sources for the state each year, following sales and use tax — which accounted for about two-thirds of state revenue last year — and contractor’s excise tax.

Krogman told commissioners the association is considering three bill ideas for the upcoming legislative session:

- Expand the number of video lottery machines a licensed business can house from 10 to 15 machines.
- Increase the video lottery bet limit from \$2 to \$5 and offer a public statewide progressive jackpot, which is a jackpot which increases each time the game is played but the jackpot is not won, up to \$25,000.

- Or, as an alternative, increase the bet limit from \$2 to \$4 for video lottery.

The bet limit increase to \$5 and statewide progressive jackpot would be a “major change,” Krogman said. Video lottery bet limits have not changed since it was first introduced in South Dakota in 1989.

“I think sometimes people forget about the establishments who have to employ people,” Krogman said. “I mean, they’re businesses who are partnering with the state. ... With my business back home, if I hadn’t made any changes since 1989 I don’t think I’d still be in business.”

Scratch ticket bet limits, by comparison, have increased significantly, Krogman said.

“If we wait until the bad times come, then it’s too late,” Krogman said about lottery revenues. “We need to be proactive and find answers to solutions before they become major problems.”

Sen. Ryan Maher, R-Isabel, introduced a bill last session to increase the video lottery bet limit to \$4 and increase the jackpot, which is the maximum amount someone can win from a video lottery bet, from \$1,000 to \$2,500. The bill failed in the Senate chamber.

Business owners and members of the association presented to the commission at its September meetin-gasking for support to increase bet limits. While the commission doesn’t take official positions on potential legislation, Krogman sought individual support from commissioners on the ideas.

Commissioner Tona Rozum, a former state legislator from Mitchell, said she thinks the effort is “great.”

“We know it’s a giant hill in the Legislature with some naysayers, because I don’t think they understand

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 12 of 75

we are in a business proposition with these people," Rozum said, "and we need to treat them as business partners, which I don't think we always do very well from a state level. So good luck."

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

Custer State Park bison auction brings in \$633,700

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - DECEMBER 7, 2023 4:20 PM

Custer State Park sold 498 bison during its 58th annual auction on Nov. 4, amassing \$633,700.

That was an increase over last year's total of 399 bison and \$391,900.

The Game, Fish and Parks Commission reviewed the numbers during its meeting Thursday in Fort Pierre.

The Custer State Park Fall Classic Bison Auction follows the annual Buffalo Roundup, which has become a tourist draw. The roundup involves herding and health checks on the bison, and separating part of the herd for the auction.

The auction aims to balance the size of the park's bison herd with the grass available for grazing.

This year's higher number of bison sold reflects drier conditions, according to Regional Park Supervisor Matt Snyder, of the Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

"And looking ahead, the extended forecast is showing more dryness," Snyder said, "so we want to protect the range by not overstocking animals on that range and making sure we have enough allocation for the elk, the deer and the sheep — everything else that is home to Custer State Park as well."

Snyder said the auction brought the herd down to 960. He said wetter conditions can result in a herd up to about 1,050.

Animal weights were 50 to 75 pounds heavier than last year.

"That means our forage is good, full of nutrients, and we want to keep it that way," Snyder said.

The average price of a buffalo at the auction was \$1,272.49, compared to \$982.21 in 2022.

Snyder said the funds go back into Custer State Park's \$5.5 million annual operating budget.

There were 13 bison buyers from South Dakota, three from Wyoming, and others from Alabama, California, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and Tennessee.

Snyder said the department is in the process of a two-year study with South Dakota State University using GPS collars to track the herd's movement in the park.

"They're on the cows because they're the ones dictating the movement, so those old matriarch cows," he said. "And what it's doing for us is showing, where are they grazing? How long are they grazing?"

"And that's going to help us decide if that 960 is the number we stick with," Snyder said.

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

SD's Johnson votes yes as House sanctions NY member for pulling fire alarm

BY: SAMANTHA DIETEL - DECEMBER 7, 2023 2:58 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House voted Thursday to censure Democratic Rep. Jamaal Bowman of New York.

The House voted 214-191 along party lines (including a yes vote from South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson) on a resolution to censure Bowman for pulling a fire alarm in the Cannon House Office Building on Sept. 30 while the House considered legislation to prevent a government shutdown. Censure amounts to deep disapproval of a member's actions, but falls short of expulsion.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 13 of 75

In a Sept. 30 statement on X, Bowman said he pulled the fire alarm by mistake and that he was not trying to “delay any vote.”

“Today, as I was rushing to make a vote, I came to a door that is usually open for votes but today would not open,” Bowman said in the statement. “I am embarrassed to admit that I activated the fire alarm, mistakenly thinking it would open the door. I regret this and sincerely apologize for any confusion this caused.”

Three Democrats back censure

During Thursday’s censure resolution vote, three Democrats — Reps. Jahana Hayes of Connecticut, Chris Pappas of New Hampshire and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington — broke from their party to vote “yea.”

Of the five “present” votes, four were Democrats: Susan Wild of Pennsylvania, Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, Deborah Ross of North Carolina and Glenn Ivey of Maryland.

Rep. Lisa McClain, a Michigan Republican, introduced the privileged resolution Tuesday, which required the House to take up the legislation within two days. The House then debated the resolution on Wednesday.

McClain and other Republicans argued that censuring Bowman was a necessary step to hold him accountable for his actions.

“We really shouldn’t even have this debate,” McClain said Wednesday on the House floor. “If you break the law, and you follow due process, there are consequences to your actions, even if you say sorry.”

In response, Bowman said Wednesday on the House floor that the GOP’s censure resolution “continues to demonstrate their inability to govern and serve the American people.”

Democrats defend Bowman

Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries on Wednesday called the censure resolution “fake, fraudulent and fictitious.” He said Bowman has “taken public responsibility for the fire alarm incident” and that the House Ethics Committee “made clear that no further action was required.”

“So why is the author of this resolution and the extreme MAGA Republicans on the floor of the House wasting time and taxpayer resources trying to undermine the credibility of Jamaal Bowman, someone who is doing his best to serve his constituents?” Jeffries said.

Jeffries said Republicans are continuing to “weaponize the censure” as they are “going after Democrats repeatedly week after week after week because you have nothing better to do.”

Two other Democrats have been censured this year, including Reps. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Adam Schiff of California. The resolution against Tlaib targeted her for “promoting false narratives regarding the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel and for calling for the destruction of the state of Israel.”

Schiff was censured for his efforts to investigate former President Donald Trump.

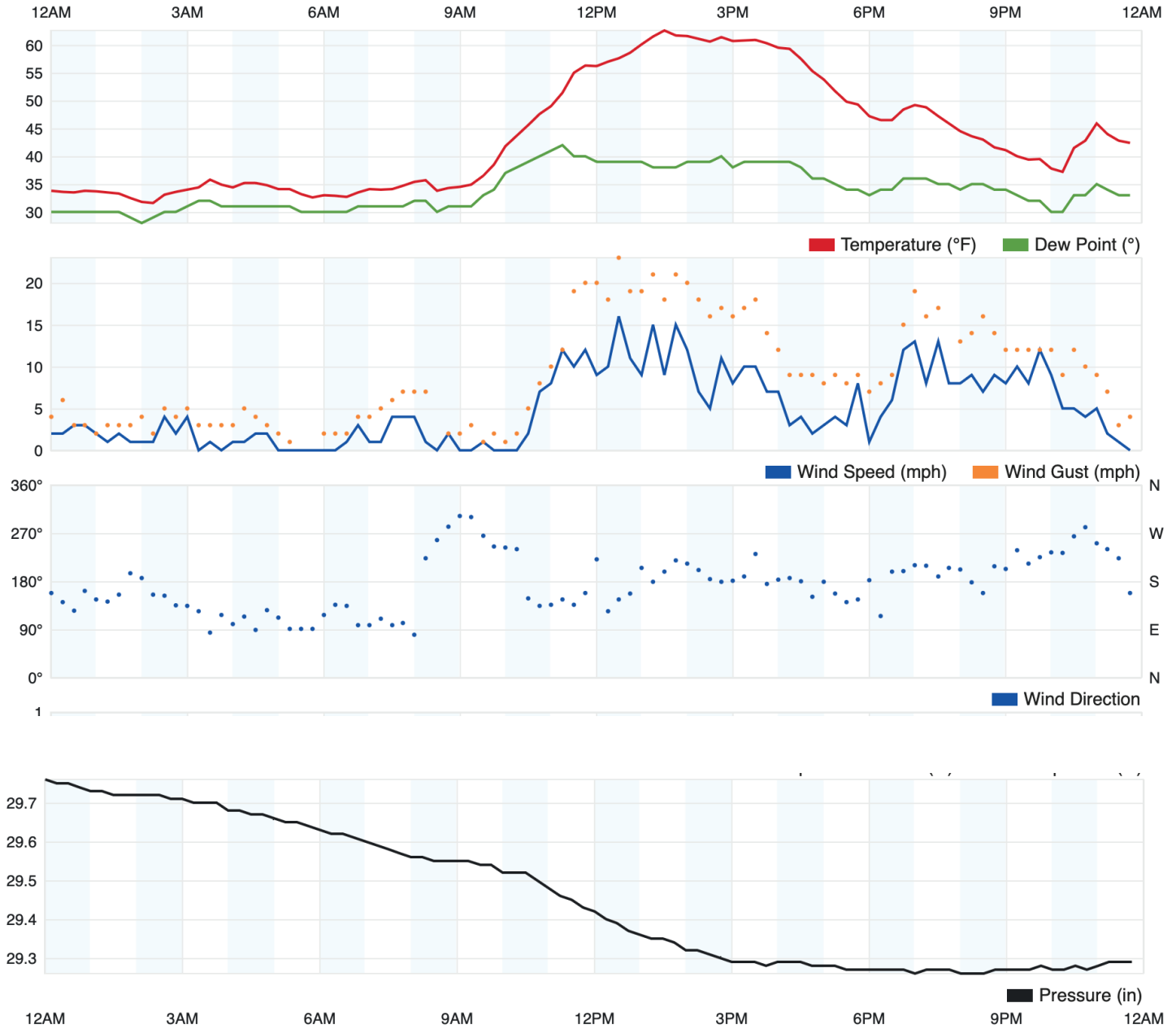
The vote to censure Bowman also follows the expulsion of Republican Rep. George Santos of New York on Dec. 1.

Samantha Dietel is a reporter intern in Washington, D.C. She is pursuing a degree in journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has previously covered the Missouri legislature in Jefferson City as a reporter for the Columbia Missourian.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 14 of 75

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 15 of 75

Fri Dec 8	Sat Dec 9	Sun Dec 10	Mon Dec 11	Tue Dec 12	Wed Dec 13	Thu Dec 14
44° F	32° F	31° F	36° F	29° F	39° F	44° F
26° F	16° F	20° F	15° F	19° F	24° F	27° F
W	NNW	SW	S	WNW	S	S
19 MPH	19 MPH	5 MPH	8 MPH	7 MPH	11 MPH	14 MPH
	40%					



Winds & Winter Weather

December 8, 2023

4:36 AM

Windy Today With Snow Moving In Later

Key Messages

- 40 to 55 mph wind gusts to continue today/tonight
- An area of light to moderate snow migrates from the Missouri valley to the James valley and Sisseton hills late this afternoon through the overnight hours
- The combination of winds and falling snow may reduce visibility and lead to icy roads. Travel may be impacted



**Wind & Winter Weather Advisories:
Now - 9 pm & 9pm - 9am Saturday**

**Wind & Winter Weather Advisories:
Now - 6 pm & 6pm - 6am Saturday**

**Wind Advisory:
Now - 6am Saturday**

**Wind Advisory:
Now - 9am Saturday**



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A system will continue to generate gusty winds today and tonight, however we will also see a band of snow migrate across the area. The combination of winds and snow may result in hazardous travel conditions

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 16 of 75



Snowfall Potential

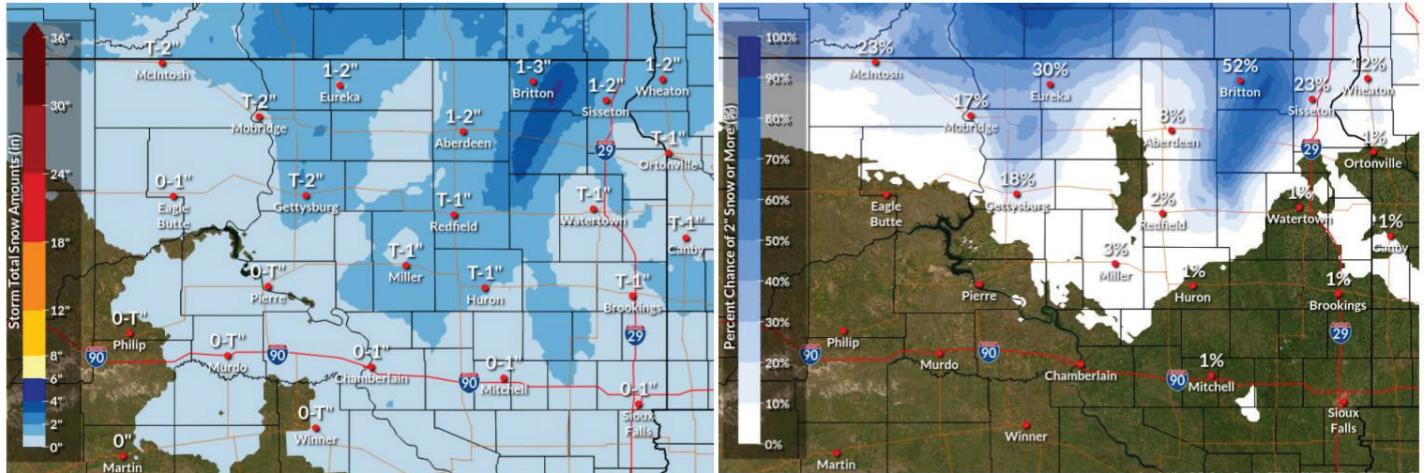
December 8, 2023

4:44 AM

Main impact is the combination snow and wind leading to low visibility and icy roads. Use caution while traveling

Expected Range

Probability of Exceeding 2"



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Snowfall range - and the potential to exceed 2 inches of snow. Remember, the main hazards we anticipate are the combination of falling snow and winds combining to reduce visibility, along with icy roads.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 17 of 75

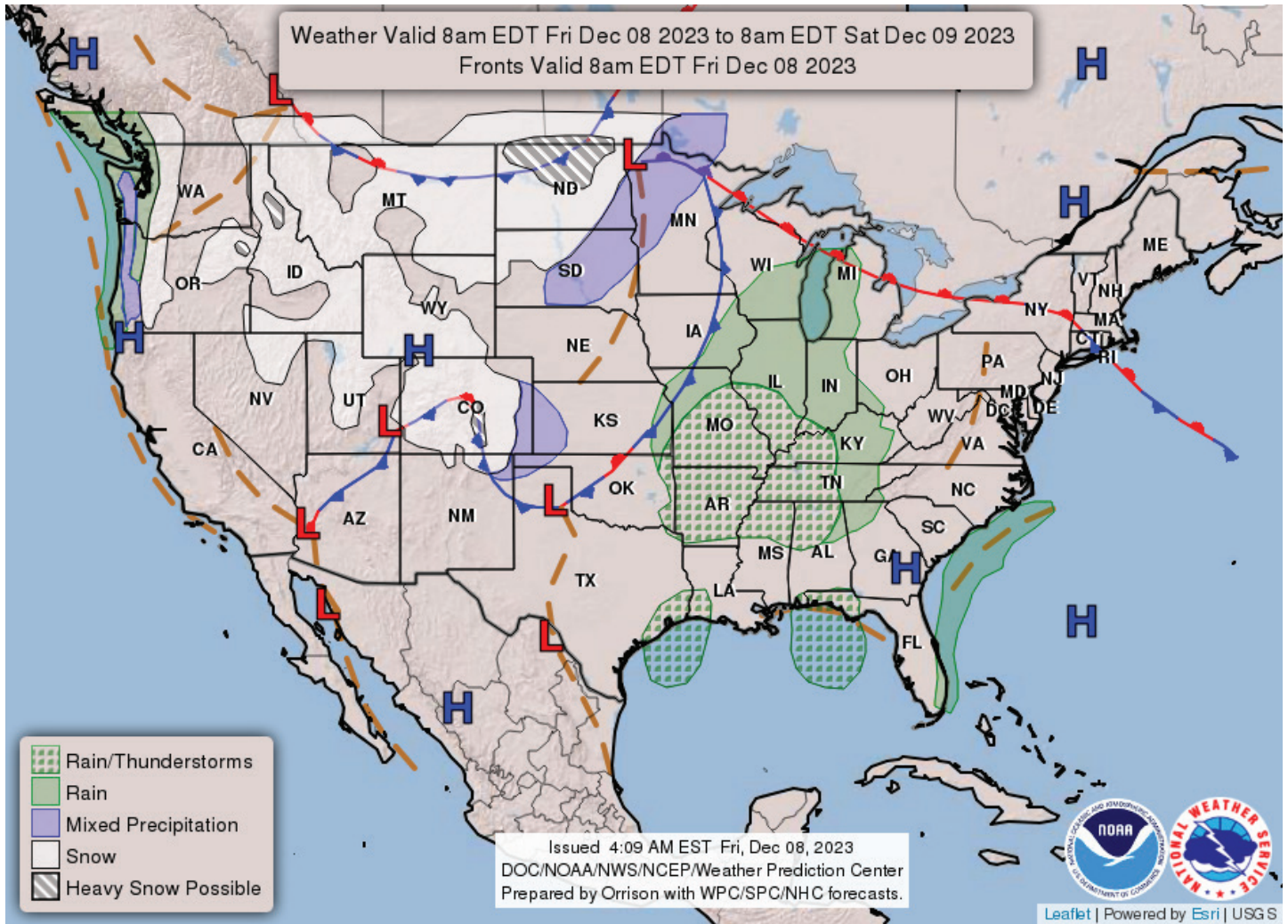
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 63 °F at 1:27 PM
Low Temp: 32 °F at 2:14 AM
Wind: 25 mph at 11:49 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 53 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 2020
Record Low: -27 in 1927
Average High: 32
Average Low: 10
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.16
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.37
Precip Year to Date: 23.17
Sunset Tonight: 4:50:58 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:58:32 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 18 of 75

Today in Weather History

December 8, 1995: A powerful Arctic front moved across west central Minnesota and central, north central, and northeast South Dakota throughout the day with winds of 30 to 60 mph. With temperatures falling and one to four inches of snowfall in the morning and afternoon, the high winds produced blizzard conditions with blowing snow and extreme wind chills of 40 to 70 below zero. Many schools, college classes, and activities were canceled for the day. Travel was also significantly affected.

December 8, 1935: From the Monthly Weather Review for December 1935, "The outstanding flood of December 1935 was the record-breaking overflow of Buffalo and White Oak Bayous at Houston, Texas on the 8 and 9th. This destructive flood was caused by excessive rainfall over Harris County, Texas during a 42 hour period on the 6th, 7th, 8th, with amounts ranging from 5.50 inches at Houston" to 16.49 inches at the Humble Oil Company in the northwestern part of Harris County.

1892 - A tremendous ice fall occurred at Gay Hill, TX. Ice averaged four to six inches in diameter. (David Ludlum)

1938 - The temperature at La Mesa, CA, soared to 108 degrees to set a U.S. record for the month of December. (The Weather Channel)

1963 - Lightning caused the crash of a jet airliner killing 81 persons at Elkton, MD. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - A cold front crossing the northwestern U.S. continued to produce high winds along the coast, and heavy snow blanketed parts of the western U.S. Snowfall totals in the mountains of western Nevada ranged up to 18 inches at Heavenly Valley, and near the Boreal Ski Resort, and winds at Reno NV gusted to 56 mph. Thunderstorms over southern Florida deluged the Florida Keys with up to five inches of rain. Strong winds, gusting to 48 mph at Gage OK, ushered wintry weather into the Central High Plains. Goodland KS, which one day earlier was 63 degrees, was blanketed with two inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Santa Ana winds buffeted southern California, with gusts to 92 mph reported at Laguna Peak. The high winds unroofed buildings, and downed trees and power lines, igniting five major fires, and numerous smaller ones. Damage was estimated at 15 to 20 million dollars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A winter storm spread snow and freezing rain across much of the Atlantic Coast Region, from Georgia to New Jersey. Snowfall totals ranged up to seven inches, at Stanton VA and Tobacco MD. Up to six inches of snow blanketed the mountains of northern Georgia. More than one hundred auto accidents were reported in Gwinnett County GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

A GIFT FOR ETERNITY

Timothy did well in his first semester at college. A sense of excitement was building in the family as the day approached when he would be home for Christmas. His mother wanted to make it a special event, one he would remember for years to come.

"Let's give Timothy a wristwatch for Christmas," she said. "He's done so well and I want him to know how much we appreciate all of his hard work."

"But," protested his father, "what happened to that crushproof, waterproof, shockproof, scratchproof watch we gave him when he left for college?"

"He can't find it," said his mother.

In giving us the gift of His Son, God gave us Someone Who will be with us forever. A Gift that will be with us until the end of our lives and throughout eternity. An indestructible, unchanging, all-powerful, and ever-present Presence.

Jesus promised: "Be sure of this – I am with you always and everywhere, even to the end of the age."

Some would ask, "What does it mean that He will be with us? Did he not leave His disciples when He ascended into heaven?" No, He didn't.

When He left them physically, He sent the Holy Spirit to be His presence with them personally. We know He was called "Immanuel – God with us" when He was born. We know He is with us now through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: It's easy, Father, to lose sight of You and Your messages at this time of the year. But help us to pause, pray frequently and sense Your presence within us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 20 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

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 21 of 75

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 22 of 75



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.05.23

18 35 40 64 67 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$395,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 53 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.06.23

22 24 27 34 43 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,700,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 8 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.07.23

3 11 17 18 38 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 23 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.06.23

17 19 20 21 23

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$82,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 23 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.06.23

3 23 27 67 68 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 52 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.06.23

2 12 37 56 65 21

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$468,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 52 Mins 52 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 23 of 75

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 42, Redfield 9
Chamberlain 35, Corsica/Stickney 33
Dell Rapids 45, Madison 31
Elk Point-Jefferson 49, Canton 37
Estelline-Hendricks 32, Elkton-Lake Benton 29
Faulkton 43, Wessington Springs 37
Flandreau 69, Chester 36
Gayville-Volin High School 44, Alcester-Hudson 27
Iroquois-Lake Preston 63, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 34
Milbank 61, Wahpeton, N.D. 56
Miller 46, Stanley County 38
Mobridge-Pollock 83, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 36
Oelrichs 60, Crazy Horse 40
Philip 47, Bennett County 22
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 65, Brandon Valley 28
Sioux Falls Washington 68, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School 28
St. Mary's, Neb. 67, Gregory 25
Tri-State, N.D. 62, Waverly-South Shore 26
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 55, Menno 24
Waubay/Summit 42, Clark-Willow Lake 35
Gillette Early Bird Tournament=
St. Thomas More 42, Worland, Wyo. 22

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Milbank 69, Sisseton 24
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 56, Kimball/White Lake 53
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 59, Menno 21
Gillette Early Bird Tournament=
St. Thomas More 51, Worland, Wyo. 50

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

FCS playoffs moving into quarterfinals with South Dakota State still the favorite to repeat

By HANK KURZ Jr. AP Sports Writer

If there was any doubt that defending champion South Dakota State is still the team to beat in the Championship Subdivision playoffs, the Jackrabbits provided a resounding answer in their first game: A 41-0 rout of Mercer on Saturday.

The second round went mostly as expected. The only unseeded team to win also is the most dominant in the history of the FCS. North Dakota State, winner of nine of the last 12 national titles, won 35-34 at No. 6 Montana State on a blocked extra point in overtime, eliminating the Bobcats for the fourth time in five years.

That game, though, also highlighted how quickly the competition amps up in the playoffs. The Bison

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 24 of 75

won their opener 66-3 against FCS playoff newcomer Drake.

It was the record 46th playoff victory for the Bison — against four losses — and moved them into the quarterfinals for the 14th straight season. They will be on the road again this weekend, facing third-seeded South Dakota in the DakotaDome.

The Coyotes have reached the quarterfinals for the first time.

Here are the matchups:

FURMAN (10-2) at MONTANA (11-1), Friday, 9 p.m. (ESPN2)

The Paladins, national champions in 1988, have reached the quarterfinals for the ninth time, but first since 2005. The Grizzlies are in their 15th quarterfinal round. The teams played for the 2001 national championship with Montana winning 13-6.

Furman, ranked second late in the season, beat fellow Southern Conference member Chattanooga 26-7 on Saturday, while Montana scored on a blocked punt and fumble return and blew out Delaware 49-19 in the snow in Missoula, Montana.

The Paladins rank third in the FCS, allowing only 92.7 rushing yards per game, and seventh in scoring defense, allowing only 16.8 ppg. But Montana was similar in each category, allowing 14.8 points, fourth overall, and 97.7 rushing yards (ninth).

VILLANOVA (10-2) at SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (12-0), Saturday, noon (ESPN)

The Wildcats would seem to have drawn the short straw in the field having to go to Brookings, South Dakota, to face the defending champions, but in the last 20 years, the Coastal Athletic Association has won five national championships.

Villanova won it in 2009 and hosted the Jackrabbits in 2021, losing 35-21 when Isaiah Davis ran for 174 yards and three TDs. He ran for three more last week.

The Jacks lead the FCS in passing efficiency, total defense (256.8 yards per game), scoring defense (10.3 ppg), third- and fourth-down conversion rates, red zone offense and red zone defense and are in the top five in several other categories.

“What doesn’t impress you with those guys?” Wildcats coach Mark Ferrante said. “We know Isaiah Davis. In 2021, he was a sophomore and had a great game against us in their victory here. ... It’s going to be two teams going toe to toe and hopefully we’ll come out with a victory. Hopefully we’ll make the fewest mistakes.”

NORTH DAKOTA STATE (10-3) at SOUTH DAKOTA (10-2), Saturday, 2:30 p.m. (ABC)

The third-seeded Coyotes won 24-19 at North Dakota State on Sept. 30 and are one of only two programs — South Dakota State is the other — to have beaten the Bison twice since 2011. Both programs, though, have evolved since September, and the visitors have that 14-1 edge in quarterfinal appearances to take into account.

“Is there advantage in that? Maybe,” South Dakota coach Bob Nielson said this week. “You know, they’ve had a lot of players that have been through the grind of the playoff structure. But I like the way that our guys handled the environment last Saturday and the chance to be at home is an advantage for us.”

The Coyotes’ Will Leyland hasn’t missed in 12 field goal attempts this season, with a long of 50 yards. The Bison’s Griffin Crosa is 15 of 18 with a long of 44 yards.

UALBANY (10-3) at IDAHO (9-3), Saturday, 10 p.m. (ESPN+)

These are the unfamiliar players at this level, with the fifth-seeded Great Danes, tri-champions of the Coastal Athletic Conference, making their first appearance this deep in the playoffs and the Vandals making their fifth, but first in 30 years.

Reese Poffenbarger threw for two TDs and ran for two as the Great Danes dispatched CAA rival Richmond, another tri-champion at 7-1, with ease, 41-13.

The Vandals beat Southern Illinois 20-17 with a huge special teams assist. Jermaine Jackson returned a punt 86 yards for a TD, Ricardo Chavez kicked two field goals and Xe’Ree Alexander blocked a winning field goal try at the regulation buzzer.

A rocket attack targets the US Embassy in Baghdad, causing minor damage but no casualties

BY QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — A rocket attack on the sprawling U.S. Embassy in Baghdad caused minor damage but no casualties Friday morning, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

The attack is the first on the embassy located in the heavily fortified Green Zone of Iraq's capital to be confirmed since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war. The Green Zone houses Iraqi government buildings and embassies on the west bank of the Tigris River.

Iran-backed militias in Iraq have claimed responsibility for dozens of attacks that targeted bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since Israel declared war on Hamas two months ago. The U.S. military says 78 attacks have been carried out against U.S. facilities over the past weeks, of which 37 were in Iraq and 41 in Syria.

An Iraqi security official said 14 Katyusha rockets were fired Friday, of which some struck near one of the U.S. Embassy's gates while others fell in the river. The official said the rocket attack caused material damage but no casualties.

A U.S. military official said a multi-rocket attack was launched at American and coalition forces in the vicinity of the embassy complex and the Union III base, which houses offices of the U.S.-led coalition. The official added that no casualties and no damage to infrastructure were reported.

An embassy spokesperson said the U.S. Embassy was attacked by two salvos of rockets at approximately 4:15 a.m. (0215 GMT).

"Assessments are ongoing, but there are no reported casualties on the embassy compound," the official said, adding that no specific group had claimed responsibility for firing the rockets as of Friday morning but early indications pointed to Iran-aligned militias.

"We again call on the government of Iraq, as we have done on many occasions, to do all in its power to protect diplomatic and Coalition partner personnel and facilities," the official said. "We reiterate that we reserve the right to self-defense and to protect our personnel anywhere in the world."

The three officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in a statement that "targeting diplomatic missions is something that cannot be justified." He called the attack an "insult to Iraq, its stability and security," and promised to "pursue the perpetrators of the attack ...and bring them to justice."

Sudani came to power with the support of a coalition of Iran-backed parties. But he also wants continued good relations with the U.S. and has backed the ongoing presence of American troops in his country.

While no group claimed responsibility for the embassy attack, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iran-backed militias, issued statements claiming separate attacks Friday on the al-Asad airbase in western Iraq, which is used by U.S. forces, and on a base located at the Conoco gas field in eastern Syria.

There are roughly 2,500 U.S. troops in Iraq and around 900 others in eastern Syria, on missions against the Islamic State group. In both countries, Iran has militias loyal to Tehran.

In response to attacks against American troops, the U.S. has retaliated with airstrikes three times in Syria since Oct. 17, targeting weapons depots and other facilities linked directly to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and the militias. The U.S. also struck multiple sites in Iraq late last month after a militia group for the first time fired short-range ballistic missiles at U.S. forces at al Asad air base.

Chronic fatigue syndrome is more common than some past studies suggest, CDC says

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials on Friday released the first nationally representative estimate of how many U.S. adults have chronic fatigue syndrome: 3.3 million.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's number is larger than previous studies have suggested,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 26 of 75

and is likely boosted by some of the patients with long COVID. The condition clearly "is not a rare illness," said the CDC's Dr. Elizabeth Unger, one of the report's co-authors.

Chronic fatigue is characterized by at least six months of severe exhaustion not helped by bed rest. Patients also report pain, brain fog and other symptoms that can get worse after exercise, work or other activity. There is no cure, and no blood test or scan to enable a quick diagnosis.

Doctors have not been able to pin down a cause, although research suggests it is a body's prolonged overreaction to an infection or other jolt to the immune system.

The condition rose to prominence nearly 40 years ago, when clusters of cases were reported in Incline Village, Nevada, and Lyndonville, New York. Some doctors dismissed it as psychosomatic and called it "yuppie flu."

Some physicians still hold that opinion, experts and patients say.

Doctors "called me a hypochondriac and said it was just anxiety and depression," said Hannah Powell, a 26-year-old Utah woman who went undiagnosed for five years.

The new CDC report is based on a survey of 57,000 U.S. adults in 2021 and 2022. Participants were asked if a doctor or other health-care professional had ever told them they had myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome, and whether they still have it. About 1.3% said yes to both questions.

That translated to about 3.3 million U.S. adults, CDC officials said.

Among the other findings: The syndrome was more common in women than men, and in white people compared with some other racial and ethnic groups. Those findings are consistent with earlier, smaller studies.

However, the findings also contradicted long-held perceptions that chronic fatigue syndrome is a rich white woman's disease.

There was less of a gap between women and men than some previous studies suggested, and there was hardly any difference between white and Black people. The study also found that a higher percentage of poor people said they had it than affluent people.

Those misperceptions may stem from the fact that patients who are diagnosed and treated "traditionally tend to have a little more access to health care, and maybe are a little more believed when they say they're fatigued and continue to be fatigued and can't go to work," said Dr. Brayden Yellman, a specialist at the Bateman Horne Center in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The report relied on patients' memories, without verifying their diagnoses through medical records.

That could lead to some overcounting, but experts believe only a fraction of the people with chronic fatigue syndrome are diagnosed, said Dr. Daniel Clauw, director of the University of Michigan's Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center.

"It's never, in the U.S., become a clinically popular diagnosis to give because there's no drugs approved for it. There's no treatment guidelines for it," Clauw said.

The tally likely includes some patients with long COVID who were suffering from prolonged exhaustion, CDC officials said.

Long COVID is broadly defined as chronic health problems weeks, months or years after an acute COVID-19 infection. Symptoms vary, but a subset of patients have the same problems seen in people with chronic fatigue syndrome.

"We think it's the same illness," Yellman said. But long COVID is more widely accepted by doctors, and is being diagnosed much more quickly, he said.

Powell, one of Yellman's patients, was a high school athlete who came down with an illness during a trip to Belize before senior year. Doctors thought it was malaria, and she seemed to recover. But she developed a persistent exhaustion, had trouble sleeping and had recurrent vomiting. She gradually had to stop playing sports, and had trouble doing schoolwork, she said.

After five years, she was diagnosed with chronic fatigue and began to achieve some stability through regular infusions of fluids and medications. She graduated from the University of Utah and now works for an organization that helps domestic violence victims.

Getting care is still a struggle, she said.

"When I got to the ER or to another doctor's visit, instead of saying I have chronic disease syndrome, I usually say I have long COVID," Powell said. "And I am believed almost immediately."

Putin will seek another presidential term in Russia, aiming to extend his rule of over two decades

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

Vladimir Putin on Friday moved to prolong his repressive and unyielding grip on Russia for at least another six years, announcing his candidacy in the presidential election next March that he is all but certain to win.

Putin still commands wide support after nearly a quarter-century in power, despite starting an immensely costly war in Ukraine that has taken thousands of his countrymen's lives, provoked repeated attacks inside Russia — including one on the Kremlin itself — and corroded its aura of invincibility.

A short-lived rebellion in June by mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin raised widespread speculation that Putin could be losing his grip, but he emerged with no permanent scars. Prigozhin's death in a mysterious plane crash two months later reinforced the view that Putin was in absolute control.

Putin announced his decision to run in the March 17 presidential election after a Kremlin award ceremony, when war veterans and others pleaded with him to seek re-election.

"I won't hide it from you — I had various thoughts about it over time, but now, you're right, it's necessary to make a decision," Putin said in a video released by the Kremlin after the event. "I will run for president of the Russian Federation."

Tatiana Stanovaya of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center noted that the announcement was made in a low-key way instead of a live televised speech, probably reflecting the Kremlin's spin effort to emphasize Putin's modesty and his perceived focus on doing his job as opposed to loud campaigning.

"It's not about prosperity, it's about survival," Stanovaya observed. "The stakes have been raised to the maximum."

About 80% of the populace approves of Putin's performance, according to the independent pollster Levada Center. That support might come from the heart or it might reflect submission to a leader whose crackdown on any opposition has made even relatively mild criticism perilous.

Whether due to real or coerced support, Putin is expected to face only token opposition on the ballot.

Putin, 71, has twice used his leverage to amend the constitution so he could theoretically stay in power until he's in his mid-80s. He is already the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, who died in 1953.

In 2008, he stepped aside to become prime minister due to term limits but continued calling the shots. Presidential terms were then extended to six years from four, while another package of amendments he pushed through three years ago reset the count for two consecutive terms to begin in 2024.

"He is afraid to give up power," Dmitry Oreshkin, a political analyst and professor at Free University of Riga, Latvia, told The Associated Press this year.

At the time of the amendments that allowed him two more terms, Putin's concern about losing power may have been elevated: Levada polling showed his approval rating significantly lower, hovering around 60%.

In the view of some analysts, that dip in popularity could have been a main driver of the war that Putin launched in Ukraine in February 2022.

"This conflict with Ukraine was necessary as a glue. He needed to consolidate his power," said commentator Abbas Gallyamov, a former Putin speechwriter now living in Israel.

Brookings Institution scholar Fiona Hill, a former U.S. National Security Council expert on Russian affairs, agrees that Putin thought "a lovely small, victorious war" would consolidate support for his reelection.

"Ukraine would capitulate," she told AP this year. "He'd install a new president in Ukraine. He would declare himself the president of a new union of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia over the course of the time leading up to the 2024 election. He'd be the supreme leader."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 28 of 75

The war didn't turn out that way. It devolved into a grueling slog in which neither side makes significant headway, posing severe challenges to the rising prosperity integral to Putin's popularity and Russians' propensity to set aside concerns about corrupt politics and shrinking tolerance of dissent.

Putin's rule has spanned five U.S. presidencies, from Bill Clinton to Joe Biden. He became acting president on New Year's Eve in 1999, when Boris Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned. He was elected to his first term in March 2000.

When he was forced to step down in 2008 by term limits, he shifted to the prime minister's post while close ally Dmitry Medvedev served as a placeholder president.

When Putin announced he would run for a new term in 2012 and Medvedev submissively agreed to become prime minister, public protests brought out crowds of 100,000 or more.

Although Putin has long abandoned the macho photo shoots of bear hunting and scuba diving that once amused and impressed the world, he shows little sign of slowing down. Photos from 2022 of him with a bloated face and a hunched posture led to speculation he was seriously ill, but he seems little changed in recent public appearances.

"He's a wartime president, is mobilizing the population behind him," Hill said. "And that will be the message around the 2024 election, depending on where things are in the battlefield."

Negotiations at COP28 climate talks ramp up as summit enters second and final week

By SETH BORENSTEIN and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United Nations climate conference on Friday began its final week with negotiators expected to zoom in on the future of fossil fuels on a dangerously warming planet.

"It's go-time for governments at COP28 this week," U.N. Climate Chief Simon Stiell said at a press event Friday.

Discussions after a first week of pageantry and official visits now become more difficult, particularly when it comes to language calling for the potential phase-out of the use of emission-spewing fossil fuels. Any language along those lines likely will draw the ire of Saudi Arabia, a major oil producer just next door to the United Arab Emirates. The UAE itself also is planning to boost its oil production from 4 million to 5 million barrels of crude oil a day to take advantage of the fossil fuel market before countries potentially shift away from its use.

Stiell underlined the challenge ahead if the world doesn't limit emissions, describing ice shelves melting causing catastrophic flooding in coastal cities around the globe.

"If we pass these key thresholds, we can never go back from the planet's perspective," he said. A report released Wednesday on the sidelines of the summit warned that melting of ice sheets could reach the point of no return with more warming.

Negotiators this week are working to finalize a key document called the Global Stocktake. It evaluates the world's climate change progress since the 2015 Paris agreement and what needs to be done now to avoid blowing past its goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial times.

A draft of the Global Stocktake was already circulating before Thursday's rest day, although it was packed full of so many possibilities that it's far from clear what the final document will say. Now it's up to officials to haggle over what the future should look like and whether there should be a commitment to phase out oil, coal and natural gas — as climate activists, many experts and some nations say — or something softer.

Professional negotiators who have been working on getting options into shape will turn over their work to senior national officials, many at minister levels, who will have to make the tough political choices.

Stiell criticized the current text before delegates as "a mixture of posturing and lowest common denominator positions."

"Yes, you must make compromises, but not on 1.5 degrees," he said.

COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber said he was "quite positive, hopeful and optimistic" that the summit

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 29 of 75

could bring a “paradigm shift centered around and based on the science.”

Asked if he could guarantee a phase-down of oil, coal and gas would be included in any final text from Dubai, al-Jaber said there would be the “maximum and most-ambitious outcome” without directly answering. “We need a collective decision. This decision will come from the floor,” he said.

EU countries, along with small island countries — oft-victimized by climate change — and some progressive Latin American countries are aligned on calling for a phase-out of fossil fuels, negotiators said. While there will be strong resistance to this measure, officials are confident references to fossil fuels will appear in the final text for the first time and within a timeline compatible with U.N. science reports.

“We cannot negotiate with nature,” said Denmark’s climate minister Dan Jorgenson. “The climate cannot compromise.”

Annalena Baerbock, Germany’s foreign minister, said: “What we need to be successful here is to achieve the goal of phasing out fossil fuels ... not emissions. It does make quite a substantial difference, although only one word distinguishes them.”

Representatives for poor nations and climate advocates are putting a lot of pressure on negotiators for the fossil fuel sections.

“The success of COP28 will not depend on speeches from big stages,” said Uganda climate activist Vanessa Nakate. “It will depend on leaders calling for a just and equitable phase-out of all fossil fuels without exceptions and distractions.”

Away from negotiations, Friday’s theme at the climate conference was youth day, with organizers calling it vital for young people to take part in climate activism because they’ll be most affected by the decisions at COP28. Activists are expected to ramp up calls for stronger action Friday and into the weekend.

The Emiratis continue to insist the COP28 summit will end on time. Earlier Friday morning, COP28 Director-General Majid al-Suwaidi insisted al-Jaber soon would lay out a plan to ensure the summit would be brought to “a successful close by 11 a.m. on the morning of Dec. 12.”

That drew a few surprised looks among journalists at the news conference. Conference of Parties summits on the climate notoriously run days over time. However, Dubai Expo City, the site of the summit, already has started to advertise that it will hold Christmas events for the general public by Dec. 15.

Houston has a population that’s young. Its next mayor, set to be elected in a runoff, won’t be

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A mayoral runoff Saturday between state Sen. John Whitmire, 74, and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, 73, has the fourth-largest city in the U.S. on the verge of picking a new leader who cuts against Houston’s demographic trends. Census figures show Houston is becoming younger, with a median age of around 35 and 25% of the population below 18.

Although other City Halls have not exactly been swept up in a youth movement — New York Mayor Eric Adams is 63 and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass is 70 — the choices in Houston have frustrated some of voters in the Democratic stronghold, particularly younger ones, at a time when the party is searching for new political stars in Texas who might be able to end 30 years of GOP dominance statewide.

“I think the main issue is identifying with the politician. A lot of young people can’t,” said Julian Meza, a 19-year-old history student at Houston Community College who plans to cast a ballot. He added, “I don’t really want to vote for them, but I have no other choice.”

Fellow student Amanda Estela Portillo, a 19-year-old biology major, agreed that she finds it difficult to connect with older candidates.

“It seems like the older generations ... they kind of just like brush it off and are just like, ‘You don’t know what you’re talking about kid. You’re too young.’ And I feel like it’s a sense of hopelessness that a lot of us feel,” Portillo said.

Whitmire and Jackson Lee, who emerged from a crowded field of nearly 20 candidates in the Nov. 7 general election, have both touted their decades of experience in political office. But they also say the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 30 of 75

perspectives of younger voters are important to them and have promised to make young individuals a part of their administration.

On Sunday, Jackson Lee attended an outreach event cosponsored by Houston-based Rap-A-Lot Records that featured speeches by candidates and musical performances and aimed to encourage voters, including younger ones, to go to the polls.

"I want this administration to have people saying, 'I'm good because the mayor cares about me. I'm good because City Hall is open to me,'" Jackson Lee said onstage alongside local rappers including Lil Bushwick, the son of Bushwick Bill, a founding member of the iconic Houston rap group the Geto Boys.

Whitmire, for his part, has held various campaign events with organizations for young professionals, telling one gathering in August that "the future of Houston needs a voice at City Hall."

"Why do young people not get involved in city politics? I think a lot of them have given up on the process," Whitmire said Sunday after a mayoral forum. "I understand their cynicism and their frustration. And that's what I'm offering, experience of a can-do candidate."

Von Cannon, 41, who operated a food truck at Sunday's voter outreach event, said advancing age isn't necessarily a problem for a candidate, but "I think authenticity is a big thing that younger voters look for."

Ronda Prince, chief of operations at Rap-A-Lot Records, said experience is important "but you just cannot ignore and leave out the concerns, the issues that young people have. If you want to reach young people, talk to young people."

Getting younger voters to the polls, particularly in local elections, remains a "huge puzzle" in the city and around the country, said Brandon Rottinghaus, a political science professor at the University of Houston.

"Houston is changing. It's becoming much younger and certainly more Latino, and the demographics in terms of who runs for office and who wins ... doesn't always reflect those changes," Rottinghaus said.

An analysis by Rottinghaus suggested that two-thirds of voters in the Nov. 7 election were over the age of 55. The Harris County Clerk's Office said a review of early voting for the runoff has found an average age of about 62.

Age has been an issue in other political contests — such as next year's presidential race, which seems likely to pit President Joe Biden, 80, against former President Donald Trump, 77. In Texas' general election last month, voters rejected a proposed change to the state Constitution that would have raised the mandatory retirement age for judges by four years, to 79.

One challenge with reaching out to younger people has been making voting more convenient, according to Rottinghaus.

Officials in Democratic-led Harris County, where Houston is located, expanded access during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 with drive-thru voting and 24-hour polling locations, two initiatives popular with younger voters. But those were later banned by the GOP-led Texas Legislature.

Rottinghaus also said some younger voters might not vote because issues they care about often don't factor into local elections.

While the Houston mayoral race has been dominated by discussion of crime, crumbling infrastructure and potential budget shortfalls, other matters that are important to voters like Meza and Portillo, such as supporting reproductive and immigration rights and the LGBTQ+ community, are largely absent.

Kit Delgado, a 19-year-old art student at Houston Community College, said that while a mayor can't really impact those issues much, it's important to younger voters to have someone in office who shares their values.

"If we have a mayor who supports our ideas, maybe we can get a governor who has support of our ideas and then representatives. I think that's a good reason to start voting locally, like for my age group," Delgado said.

Palestinians crowd into ever-shrinking areas in Gaza as Israel's war against Hamas enters 3rd month

By NAJIB JOBAIN, BASSEM MROUE and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Desperate Palestinians fleeing Israel's expanding ground offensive crowded into an ever-shrinking area of the Gaza Strip as the Israel-Hamas war entered its third month Friday. The United Nations warned that its aid operation is "in tatters" because no place in the besieged enclave is safe.

Israel's military assault on Gaza, a tiny, densely populated territory, has led to widespread civilian casualties and mass displacements, triggering international alarm.

The Israeli army said Friday that over the past day the military had struck about 450 targets in the Gaza Strip by air, sea and ground, signaling the continued intensity of its campaign. Palestinian TV stations reported airstrikes on various parts of the territory.

"Airstrikes and random artillery shelling have continued intensely since last night until this morning," said Hassan Al Najjar, a journalist speaking by phone from northern Gaza.

Earlier this week, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres used a rarely exercised power to warn the Security Council of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe," and Arab and predominantly Muslim nations have called for a vote Friday on a Council resolution to demand an immediate cease-fire.

The United States, Israel's closest ally, appears likely to block any U.N. effort to halt the fighting, which was triggered by the deadly Oct. 7 attack by Hamas militants on southern Israel. Still, U.S. concern over the devastation is growing. U.S. officials told Israel ahead of the expansion of its ground offensive to southern Gaza several days ago that it must limit civilian deaths and displacement, saying too many Palestinians were killed when it obliterated much of Gaza City and surrounding areas in the north.

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a call with Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer that casualties are still too high, a senior State Department official said. Blinken told Dermer that Israel must also do more to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private diplomatic discussion.

Israel insists it must crush the military capabilities of Hamas, which rules Gaza, and remove it from power following the group's Oct. 7 attack.

In the first stage of the war, Israel's air and ground campaign focused on the northern half of Gaza, leading hundreds of thousands of residents to flee south. Intense battles continued in parts of the north in recent days, while troops there have rounded up hundreds of Palestinian men.

In photos and video published Thursday, dozens of men are seen sitting in rows on a street in northern Gaza, stripped down to their underwear with their heads bowed as they are being guarded by Israeli troops.

The images were the first showing such detentions in the war. Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said troops have detained and interrogated hundreds of people in Gaza suspected of militant links. U.N. monitors said troops reportedly detained men and boys from the age of 15 in a school-turned-shelter in the town of Beit Lahiya, in the north.

During the war, there has also been a dramatic surge in deadly military raids and an increase on restrictions on Palestinian residents in the occupied West Bank. Israeli forces stormed into a refugee camp in the West Bank on Friday to arrest suspected Palestinian militants, unleashing fighting with local gunmen in which six Palestinians were killed, health officials said. The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment on the operation.

Over the past week, Israeli forces expanded their ground offensive into southern Gaza, with a focus on Khan Younis, the territory's second largest city.

On Friday, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said Israel's air force attacked a home facing the society's office in the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza. It did not give details about casualties.

Medhat Abbas, a spokesperson for the Health Ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza, reported a strike in the city of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, saying it killed and wounded a number of people but gave no exact numbers.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 32 of 75

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.

With the entire Gaza Strip under military assault, tens of thousands of people displaced by the fighting have packed into the border city of Rafah, in the far south of the Gaza Strip, and Muwasi, a nearby patch of barren coastline that Israel has declared a safe zone.

With shelters significantly beyond capacity, many people pitched tents along the side of the road leading from Rafah to Muwasi.

"Humanitarian actors ... are reporting extreme overcrowded conditions and lack of basic resources in Rafah," said the United Nations' humanitarian affairs section.

The ability of U.N. aid agencies to receive vital aid supplies had been "significantly impaired" over the past few days due to trucks and staff being stranded by the fighting, and telecommunications blackout, it said.

"We do not have a humanitarian operation in southern Gaza that can be called by that name anymore," the U.N.'s humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, warned Thursday. The pace of Israel's military assault "has made no place safe for civilians in southern Gaza, which had been a cornerstone of the humanitarian plan to protect civilians and thus to provide aid to them. But without places of safety, that plan is in tatters."

Israel has designated Muwasi on the territory's Mediterranean Coast as a safe zone for those seeking safety from the fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas militants. But the U.N. and relief agencies have called that a poorly planned solution.

Israel's campaign has killed more than 17,100 people in Gaza — 70% of them women and children — and wounded more than 46,000, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which says many others are trapped under rubble. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack and took more than 240 hostages. An estimated 138 hostages remain in Gaza, mostly soldiers and civilian men, after more than 100 were freed, most during a cease-fire last month.

Asteroid will pass in front of bright star Betelgeuse to produce a rare eclipse visible to millions

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — One of the biggest and brightest stars in the night sky will momentarily vanish as an asteroid passes in front of it to produce a one-of-a-kind eclipse.

The rare and fleeting spectacle, late Monday into early Tuesday, should be visible to millions of people along a narrow path stretching from central Asia's Tajikistan and Armenia, across Turkey, Greece, Italy and Spain, to Miami and the Florida Keys and finally, to parts of Mexico.

The star is Betelgeuse, a red supergiant in the constellation Orion. The asteroid is Leona, a slowly rotating, oblong space rock in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

Astronomers hope to learn more about Betelgeuse and Leona through the eclipse, which is expected to last no more than 15 seconds. By observing an eclipse of a much dimmer star by Leona in September, a Spanish-led team recently estimated the asteroid to be about 34 miles wide and 50 miles long (55 kilometers wide and 80 kilometers long).

There are lingering uncertainties over those predictions as well as the size of the star and its expansive atmosphere. It's unclear if the asteroid will obscure the entire star, producing a total eclipse. Rather, the result could be a "ring of fire" eclipse with a miniscule blazing border around the star. If it's a total eclipse, astronomers aren't sure how many seconds the star will disappear completely, perhaps up to 10 seconds.

"Which scenario we will see is uncertain, making the event even more intriguing," said astronomer Gianluca Masa, founder of the Virtual Telescope Project, which will provide a live webcast from Italy.

An estimated 700 light-years away, Betelgeuse is visible with the naked eye. Binoculars and small telescopes will enhance the view. A light-year is 5.8 trillion miles.

Betelgeuse is thousands of times brighter than our sun and some 700 times bigger. It's so huge that if it replaced our sun, it would stretch beyond Jupiter, according to NASA.

At just 10 million years old, Betelgeuse is considerably younger than the 4.6 billion-year-old sun. Scientists expect Betelgeuse to be short-lived, given its mass and the speed at which it's burning through its material.

After countless centuries of varying brightness, Betelgeuse dimmed dramatically in 2019 when a huge bunch of surface material was ejected into space. The resulting dust cloud temporarily blocked the starlight, NASA said, and within a half year, Betelgeuse was as bright as before.

Scientists expect Betelgeuse to go supernova in a violent explosion within 100,000 years.

Bloodshed, fear, hunger, desperation: Palestinians try to survive war's new chapter in southern Gaza

By ISABEL DEBRE, SAMY MAGDY and NAJIB JOBAIN Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The roads are so ravaged that the dead and wounded arrive by donkey cart. Desperate relatives rush bloodied and dust-covered people, many of them children, to the hospital.

Naseem Hassan, a 48-year-old Palestinian medic in the Gaza Strip's southern town of Khan Younis, said it had become impossible to walk through Nasser Hospital, with people spread out everywhere. Some patients, terrified or semiconscious, tugged at his sleeve when he squeezed through the halls. They groaned, slept and died on those bloodstained floors, he said.

His skeletal staff at the 350-bed hospital has struggled to cope with an influx of over 1,000 patients. Without fresh bandages and gauze, Doctors Without Borders said, patients' wounds have become seriously infected, in many cases septic.

"When I think about it for a moment, I start to cry," Hassan said by phone, struggling to be heard over the shouts of the doctors and nurses who remained. "It's a good thing I'm too tired to think."

On Dec. 7, United Nations monitors said the hospital received its first delivery of supplies since Nov. 29. The World Health Organization delivered trauma and emergency care supplies to the area for about 4,500 patients.

In recent days, Israeli tanks have rumbled into southern Gaza, starting with Khan Younis. It's the opening of a grim new chapter in a war that has already killed over 17,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and displaced what the United Nations estimates to be 1.9 million people. The war — which erupted when Hamas militants rampaged through southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and abducting more than 240 others — has severely damaged or destroyed as much as 36% of all the buildings across the entire enclave, according to analysis of publicly available satellite imagery from the European Earth observation program Copernicus taken Wednesday.

Those who took refuge in southern Gaza from the military campaign that reduced the north to rubble over the past two months now find themselves stuck in a cramped, desperate patch of ever-shrinking land as Israel expands its invasion.

"The suffering is really apocalyptic," said Khaled Abu Shaban, 38, an aid worker near Khan Younis. Israel's intensive shelling has forced agonizing choices, he said. Should he venture out to the supermarket or search for well water, at risk of being killed? Or should he let his young daughters go to sleep hungry and thirsty?

His 7-year-old cheered Wednesday, he said, when he brought home a tomato. "It is unacceptable that we are searching for water and anything that we can chew in the 21st century."

The pitched street battles and heavy bombardment have blocked aid groups from delivering vital supplies in Khan Younis, the U.N. said, where hungry families are sometimes streets away from warehouses full of food.

On Tuesday, desperate mobs stormed a warehouse where two days' worth of food aid had piled up before distribution, the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency, known as UNRWA, said, lamenting the dangers that stalled delivery. People snatched whatever they could and ran off with sacks of flour.

"The hunger war has started," said Nawras Abu Libdeh, a worker in Khan Younis with the humanitarian organization Medical Aid for Palestinians. "And this is the worst of all wars."

In central Gaza, which has been so far spared Israel's ground invasion, residents said thousands of jostling

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 34 of 75

Palestinians pounce on aid trucks the moment they arrive, screaming for food and ripping into packages.

"There are 8,000 people in this shelter, and any vegetables disappear before I see them because people seize everything so fast," said Mazen Junaid, a father of six who fled to the central city of Deir al-Balah from northern Gaza. The swelling crowds, he said, make it difficult to breathe and move.

The prices of staple foods have ballooned out of reach, residents said, with a bag of flour now some 450 shekels (\$121). Sugar, emptied from supermarkets, goes for about 40 shekels (\$10) on the black market. Rare wartime luxuries savored over the past few weeks — coffee, eggs, biscuits — have vanished. Without cooking gas, Palestinians chop down whatever trees they find for firewood.

"There is hunger, there is nothing: There is no flour, no water," said Etimad Hassan, who sleeps pressed together with 21 family members in a small tent in Deir al-Balah. Her voice trembled with rage. "We are not animals. Why do they put us in tents like dogs? At least guarantee us a place for shelter."

Adding to the misery, there is little to no treatment available for the 14% of Gaza's population suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure and other chronic heart conditions, said the World Health Organization.

"Asthmatics do not find inhalers. Diabetics do not find insulin," said Ebraheem Matar, a doctor at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah. "Hypertensive patients do not find receptor blockers."

Hassan said her husband abruptly stopped taking his blood pressure medication when he ran out, a withdrawal doctors warned would increase his risk of heart attack. "I'm worried it will kill him," she said.

Junaid said he spends his days begging for food in the streets and scouring pharmacies and health clinics for any anti-inflammatory medication to blunt his throbbing headaches. He checked five pharmacies Thursday and returned home empty-handed.

"We didn't start this war," he said. "What will I do, leave my daughters to die in it?"

Tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, many of whom already fled fighting two or three times, have set off for the southern city of Rafah on the Egyptian border. The Israeli military air-dropped fliers and called and texted evacuation warnings to thousands of civilians across Khan Younis while pressing deeper into the city.

Misery spans the horizon in the southern border town. Thousands of people sleep in the cold outside. Others crowd together wherever they find space.

"You find displaced people in the streets, in schools, in mosques, in hospitals," said Hamza Abu Mustafa, a schoolteacher in Rafah. "You find displaced families everywhere."

Chaotic scenes of sickness and filth unfold at the U.N. shelters in Rafah, bursting at the seams. The U.N. humanitarian office said Wednesday that poor sanitation has led to rampant cases of scabies, lice and diarrhea, raising fears that more serious diseases may soon spread. Aid workers have reported outbreaks of the liver disease hepatitis A.

In Nasser Hospital, the walls thrum with the thunder of battles raging nearby. Hassan, the medic, said his wife, four young daughters and son pleaded with him to join their flight to Rafah.

But Hassan has refused, vowing to persist through the grim routine that drains and haunts him more each day.

"My patients come here because they put their faith in international law. They come to hospitals for care and safety," he said. "I won't leave them even if tanks tear down this hospital."

Sloppy Steelers' playoff hopes take another hit with loss to Patriots

By DAN SCIFO Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The Pittsburgh Steelers had an opportunity to create some separation in the race for an AFC wild-card spot.

Instead, they came crashing back to the pack and saw their playoff hopes take a serious hit with consecutive home losses to two-win teams in five days. The latest, a 21-18 setback against New England on Thursday night in which the Steelers fell into a second-quarter 18-point hole and couldn't recover.

"Obviously, this stings, but we'll be back," coach Mike Tomlin said.

Pittsburgh (7-6) is the first team above .500 in NFL history to lose consecutive games to teams both at

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 35 of 75

least eight games below .500. Pittsburgh began December atop the race for the top wild-card spot in the AFC.

The Steelers were sloppy Sunday in an uninspiring 14-point loss against rebuilding Arizona. On Thursday, Bailey Zappe threw three first-half touchdown passes and New England (3-10) snapped a five-game losing streak.

"I have to play better," Steelers quarterback Mitch Trubisky said. "I feel like I let the guys down. It's disappointing. I didn't play good enough to win."

Trubisky made his first start in nearly a year for Pittsburgh in place of the injured Kenny Pickett, who is out indefinitely after undergoing right ankle surgery.

But Trubisky, despite a late second-half surge, couldn't make a difference, as he finished 22 of 35 for 190 yards. He had a rushing and passing touchdown, but also threw an interception that led to a Patriots touchdown in the second quarter.

"I thought he got better as the game went on," Tomlin said. "Obviously, it wasn't the type of start we needed."

The Steelers, after averaging 171 yards rushing the last five games, managed just 82 yards on the ground against New England, the NFL's No. 3-ranked run defense. Trubisky was the Steelers' leading rusher with 30 yards. Najee Harris ran for 29 yards on 12 carries and Jaylen Warren had 11 yards on seven touches.

The Steelers saw a brief flash of what its offense could be in a 421-yard outburst during a victory over Cincinnati on Nov. 26, a game played just days after firing offensive coordinator Matt Canada. But the same inconsistencies that plagued the Steelers during their loss to Arizona just five days earlier resurfaced, as an inability to sustain drives, penalties and a poorly-timed turnover contributed to another home upset loss to a two-win team.

Pittsburgh went 3 for 14 on third down and 1 for 3 on fourth down, including a deep pass to a well-covered Diontae Johnson on fourth-and-2 at midfield with less than two minutes to play.

"We play to win," Tomlin said. "We wanted to be aggressive. We just didn't get it done."

Trubisky got the Steelers within striking distance with a 25-yard touchdown pass to Johnson late in the second quarter, and a 1-yard sneak with 11:44 to play that brought Pittsburgh within three points, but it wasn't enough.

"We played like crap in the first half," Trubisky said. "We did better in the second half to give us a chance, but I have to play better. That's the bottom line."

High-profile attacks on Derek Chauvin and Larry Nassar put spotlight on violence in federal prisons

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

Derek Chauvin was stabbed nearly two dozen times in the law library at a federal prison in Arizona. Larry Nassar was knifed repeatedly in his cell at a federal penitentiary in Florida.

The assaults of two notorious, high-profile federal prisoners by fellow inmates in recent months have renewed concerns about whether the chronically understaffed, crisis-plagued federal Bureau of Prisons is capable of keeping people in its custody safe.

In the shadow of gangster James "Whitey" Bulger's 2018 beating death at a West Virginia federal penitentiary and financier Jeffrey Epstein's 2019 suicide at a Manhattan federal jail while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges, the Bureau of Prisons is again under scrutiny for failing to protect high-profile prisoners from harm.

Chauvin, 47, the former Minneapolis police officer convicted of murdering George Floyd in 2020, was hospitalized for a week after he was assaulted Nov. 24 at a medium-security federal prison in Tucson, Arizona — the same complex where an inmate tried to shoot a visitor last year with a contraband gun.

Chauvin's suspected attacker, an ex-gang leader, told correctional officers he would have killed him if they hadn't responded when they did, prosecutors said. He was charged last week with attempted murder

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 36 of 75

and has been moved out of Chauvin's prison to a federal penitentiary next door.

Chauvin's family is "very concerned about the facility's capacity to protect Derek from further harm," his lawyer, Gregory Erickson, said. "They remain unassured that any changes have been made to the faulty procedures that allowed Derek's attack to occur in the first place."

Nassar, 60, the ex-U.S. women's gymnastics team doctor who sexually abused athletes, was treated for a collapsed lung after he was stabbed multiple times in the neck, chest and back on July 9 at a federal penitentiary in Coleman, Florida. His attacker was stopped by other inmates before officers arrived.

The attacks on Chauvin and Nassar, among dozens of other assaults and deaths involving lesser-known federal inmates, are symptoms of larger systemic problems within the Justice Department's largest agency that put all 158,000 federal prisoners at risk. They include severe staffing shortages, staff-on-inmate abuse, broken surveillance cameras and crumbling infrastructure.

The violence has challenged a perception — repeated by some lawyers and criminal justice experts quoted in the news media when Chauvin was sentenced last year — that federal prisons are far safer than state prisons or local jails. The inmates suspected of attacking Chauvin and Nassar both have violent histories.

After Chauvin's attack, his mother complained in a since-deleted Facebook post that the Bureau of Prisons was keeping her in the dark on details of the assault and his medical condition — echoing complaints early in the COVID-19 pandemic when families weren't informed about inmates who were dying from the virus until it was too late. The agency said it gave updates on Chauvin's health to everyone he asked to be notified.

"Derek Chauvin's murder of George Floyd was a tragic loss of life and a horrifying reminder of the inequality that pervades our justice system," said Daniel Landsman, the deputy director of policy at the criminal justice advocacy group FAMM, or Families Against Mandatory Minimums.

"However, no one's sentence, regardless of their offense, includes being subjected to violence while they're in prison. The attack on Chauvin is the latest in a long list of incidents that highlight the urgent need for comprehensive independent oversight of our federal Bureau of Prisons," Landsman said.

An ongoing Associated Press investigation has uncovered deep, previously unreported problems within the Bureau of Prisons, including rampant sexual abuse and other staff criminal conduct, dozens of escapes, chronic violence, deaths and severe staffing shortages that have hampered responses to emergencies, including inmate assaults and suicides.

The Bureau of Prisons, with more than 30,000 employees, 122 prison facilities and an annual budget of about \$8 billion, has drawn increased oversight from Congress and scrutiny from government watchdogs in the wake of Bulger and Epstein's deaths.

A law passed last year requires the Bureau of Prisons to overhaul outdated security systems and replace broken cameras — one of several critical issues that came to light in the wake of Epstein's suicide. In some instances, however, the agency has been slow to comply, blaming technological challenges.

Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz, meanwhile, has issued a pair of scathing reports citing management failures, flawed policies and widespread incompetence as factors in Bulger's killing and blaming a "combination of negligence, misconduct and outright job performance failures" for Epstein's suicide.

"The numerous and serious transgressions that occurred in this matter came to light largely because they involved a high-profile inmate," Horowitz wrote in a June report on Epstein's suicide. "The fact that serious deficiencies occurred in connection with high-profile inmates like Epstein and Bulger is especially concerning given that the BOP would presumably take particular care in handling the custody and care of such inmates."

High-profile inmates are labeled in the federal prison system as "Broad Publicity" because of their widespread publicity as a result of their criminal activity or notoriety as public figures. Incidents involving them typically attract far greater media attention and public curiosity than other prison mayhem, but they're often a sign of larger dysfunction.

In the wake of Epstein's suicide, officials at a federal jail in Brooklyn took the unusual step of making

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 37 of 75

his longtime confidant Ghislaine Maxwell wear paper clothing and sleep without bedsheets. They woke her up with flashlights every 15 minutes to make sure she was still alive.

But that's far from the norm. In June, another high-profile inmate, "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski, was found unresponsive in his cell by correctional officers making rounds after midnight at a federal prison medical center in North Carolina. Kaczynski previously attempted suicide while awaiting trial in 1998 but rejected a psychiatrist's diagnosis that he was mentally ill.

Responding to Horowitz, Bureau of Prisons Director Colette Peters wrote that lessons learned from the investigation would be "applied to the broader BOP correctional landscape." But asked by the AP last week, the agency declined to detail what changes, if any, have been made, saying it does not "discuss specific security practices."

Peters also promised a sweeping security review after the Tucson gun breach in November 2022, telling the AP that the Bureau of Prisons would assess safety measures and identify lapses at prison camps, potentially providing lessons for tightening protocols throughout the agency. Asked for an update, the agency said it "does not comment on matters related to investigations."

A spokesperson, Benjamin O'Conne, said the Bureau of Prisons "takes seriously our duty to protect the individuals entrusted in our custody, as well as maintain the safety of correctional employees and the community."

"As part of that obligation, we review safety protocols and implement corrective actions when identified as necessary in those reviews to ensure that our mission of operating safe, secure, and humane facilities is fulfilled," O'Conne said.

Chauvin began his incarceration in solitary confinement at a maximum-security Minnesota state prison, sequestered from other inmates and kept in his cell 23 hours a day "largely for his own protection," his former lawyer wrote in court papers.

He transferred to FCI Tucson in August 2022 after making a deal to simultaneously serve all of his punishment for Floyd's murder in federal prison — a 21-year federal sentence for violating Floyd's civil rights, which was later reduced by seven months, and a 22½-year state sentence for second-degree murder.

Chauvin's sentencing judge, empathizing with him over his isolation in state prison, expressed optimism that he would fare better with fewer restrictions as a federal inmate.

"While for security reasons and for your protection these conditions may have been necessary, I still feel for you and the difficult days you've gone through," U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson told Chauvin at his July 2022 federal sentencing. "Hopefully, the Bureau of Prisons will be able to improve these conditions substantially."

Rather than solitary confinement or protective custody, the Bureau of Prisons placed Chauvin in the "dropout yard" — a housing unit for former police officers, ex-gang members, sexual abusers and other high-risk prisoners.

Though generally thought to be safer for such inmates than the general prison population, those units still see occasional flashes of violence, like Nassar's stabbing in a "dropout yard" unit at the U.S. Penitentiary in Coleman, Florida.

Nassar, who was also convicted of possessing images of child sexual abuse, was attacked in his cell after he purportedly made a lewd comment while watching a Wimbledon women's tennis match on TV. An inmate, identified in prison records as Shane McMillan, stabbed him repeatedly before four other inmates pulled him away.

McMillan was previously convicted of assaulting a federal prison officer in Louisiana in 2006 and attempting to stab another inmate to death at the federal Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, in 2011. He remains locked up in Florida and has yet to be charged with attacking Nassar, who was moved to a federal penitentiary in Pennsylvania. Court records did not list a lawyer for him.

In May 2018, Nassar's lawyers said, he was attacked within hours of being placed in general population at the Arizona federal penitentiary next to Chauvin's prison. Nassar's lawyers, who have not shared details of that assault, blamed it on the notoriety of his case and his seven-day televised sentencing.

In contrast, Chauvin's move to federal prison appeared to start off well. In a brief glimpse of his life as

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 38 of 75

a federal inmate, he appeared by video from FCI Tucson in March — wearing a prison-issued short-sleeve blue button-down shirt — to plead guilty in a Minnesota tax evasion case.

Last month, Chauvin mailed court papers from the prison — complete with his handwritten name and inmate number on the envelope — in a longshot bid to overturn his federal guilty plea. In them, he complained that his ex-lawyer had ignored supposed new evidence of his innocence, but said nothing about how he was being treated behind bars.

Prior to Chauvin's stabbing, there were no public reports of violence toward him — but he was still at risk.

John Turscak, the former Mexican Mafia gang leader and one-time FBI informant accused of attacking Chauvin, told investigators he thought about stabbing him for a month before seeing an opportunity to strike in the law library around 12:30 p.m. local time on Nov. 24, federal prosecutors said.

Turscak stabbed Chauvin 22 times with an improvised knife, only stopping when correctional officers reached him and used pepper spray to subdue him, prosecutors said. FCI Tucson has struggled with low staffing in the past, but the Bureau of Prisons said nearly every correctional officer position is now filled and staffing wasn't an issue the day Chauvin was attacked.

Two employees were working voluntary overtime, but none were on mandatory overtime, nor was the prison using augmentation — a practice in which nurses, teachers, cooks and other staff are pulled from other duties to guard inmates, the agency said.

Chauvin's lawyer said he confirmed to his family that allegations in Turscak's charging document were accurate, adding that the assailant ambushed him from behind.

Turscak told the FBI that he attacked Chauvin because he is a high-profile inmate for killing Floyd, prosecutors said. Turscak said he chose Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, as a symbolic connection to the Black Lives Matter movement and the Mexican Mafia's "Black Hand" symbol, prosecutors said.

Turscak, 52, led a faction of the Mexican Mafia in the Los Angeles area in the late 1990s and was due to be released from federal prison in 2026 after serving more than 30 years for racketeering and conspiring to kill a gang rival. Court records did not list a lawyer for him.

Now, after Turscak's arrest and Chauvin's return to FCI Tucson, Erickson said he and his client's family have more questions — and concerns. They are continuing to push for answers on additional measures, if any, that are being taken to protect Chauvin, and will pursue "any avenues available under the law to ensure his continued safety," Erickson said.

"It remains a mystery how the perpetrator was able to obtain and possess dangerous materials" to fashion a makeshift knife, "and how a guard was unable to reach and apprehend the perpetrator until Derek had been stabbed 22 times," Erickson said.

"Why was Derek allowed into the law library without a guard in close enough proximity to stop a possible attack? the lawyer said. "His family continues to wonder."

LeBron James scores 30 points, Lakers rout Pelicans 133-89 to reach tournament final

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — LeBron James scored 30 points in less than three quarters and the Los Angeles Lakers steamrolled the New Orleans Pelicans 133-89 on Thursday night to reach the championship game in the NBA In-Season Tournament.

The Lakers will play the surprising Indiana Pacers on Saturday night for the inaugural NBA Cup. Indiana advanced with a 128-119 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks in the other semifinal. Unlike the other tournament games, the championship game will not count in the regular-season standings.

Los Angeles' run to the title game, James said, is indicative of the team's potential. He was particularly pleased with the defense, which held New Orleans to 35.8% shooting, and the Lakers also had a 59-42 rebounding advantage.

"I think we are starting to get a feel for what we need to become a team for us to win basketball games, to be consistent," James said. "Defensively, we're really, really starting to tap into that like, OK, we've got

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 39 of 75

to defend every single night. When we defend, we give ourselves a chance to win every night.”

Austin Reaves scored 17 points for Los Angeles, Anthony Davis had 16 points and 15 rebounds and Taurean Prince finished with 15 points.

Trey Murphy III led the Pelicans with 14 points. Zion Williamson had 13 points and Herbert Jones 10.

Pelicans coach Willie Green said he credited his team in the locker room with making the semifinals, “but tonight was a total letdown. We’re all disappointed in our competitive spirit against the Lakers. You’ve got to give them credit. They came out and dominated. ... But tonight we took a step in the wrong direction.”

New Orleans led 30-29 after the first quarter, but James opened the second scoring the Lakers’ first 11 points, and suddenly a one-point deficit was a 40-33 lead.

During that stretch, James made three 3-pointers in a row. The last two came from the league and tournament logo, firing up the pro-Lakers crowd. The nearly 39-year-old superstar even took three charges.

“Any time your best player sacrifices his body, takes three charges in the first half, especially with Zion coming down the paint, it sets a tone,” Reaves said. “That shows to everybody else how locked in he is to win this, and how locked in he is every game.”

By halftime, James had 21 points on 7-of-9 shooting. He went to the bench midway through the third quarter, which should give him plenty of energy for the championship against a Pacers team like that likes to push, well, pace.

“They are young,” Davis said. “They are scrappy. They get out and run, and they play the right way. So it’s going to be a test for our defense for sure.”

Los Angeles has won three consecutive games and four of its past five. Coach Darvin Ham said the focus, aggressiveness and unselfishness during this recent span make the Lakers “damn near unstoppable.”

“It’s a beautiful thing to see this early,” Ham said. “I think the intensity that this tournament brings reveals that because it’s not just a regular-season game. It doesn’t feel like that. The stakes are way higher and you see people in those delicate moments what they are truly made of, at least the beginning stages.”

UP NEXT

Pelicans: Host Minnesota on Monday night.

Lakers: Face Indiana on Saturday night in Las Vegas in the title game.

Israel designates a safe zone in Gaza. Palestinians and aid groups say it offers little relief

By WAFAA SHURAF, JACK JEFFERY and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

MUWASI, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel has designated a small slice of mostly undeveloped land along Gaza’s Mediterranean coast as a safe zone — a place where waves of people fleeing the war can find protection from airstrikes and receive humanitarian supplies for their families.

The reality? The area of Muwasi is a makeshift tent camp where thousands of dazed Palestinians live in squalid conditions in scattered farm fields and waterlogged dirt roads. Their numbers have swelled in recent days as people flee an Israeli military offensive in nearby areas of the southern Gaza Strip.

Roughly 20 square kilometers (8 square miles) in southwest Gaza, Muwasi lies at the heart of a heated debate between Israel and international humanitarian organizations over the safety of the territory’s civilians.

Israel has offered Muwasi as a solution for protecting people uprooted from their homes and seeking safety from the heavy fighting between its troops and Hamas militants. The United Nations and relief groups say Muwasi is a poorly planned attempt to impose a solution for people who have been displaced and offers no guarantee of safety in a territory where people have faced the dangers of continued airstrikes in other areas where the army ordered them to go.

“How can a zone be safe in a war zone if it is only unilaterally decided by one part of the conflict?” said Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner-general of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA. “It can only promote the false feeling that it will be safe.”

The area has no running water or bathrooms, assistance and international humanitarian groups are nowhere to be found, and the tents provide little protection from the coming winter’s cool, rainy weather.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 40 of 75

"It is very cold and there are no necessities of life," said Moneer Nabrees, who fled Gaza City with some 30 family members. He recently arrived in Muwasi and now lives in a nylon tent with displaced family members. "There are lines for everything, even to get drinking water," he said.

Some don't even have enough materials to build a tent.

"At night we were freezing," said Saada Hothut, a mother of four from Gaza City who faced another night with little protection from the elements. "We were covering ourselves with nylon."

UNRWA and other international aid organizations do not recognize the camp and are not providing services there.

Yet Muwasi is poised to play an increasingly important role in the protection of Gaza's civilians, something Israel's allies have implored it to do as it tries to eradicate Hamas.

Some three-quarters of the territory's 2.3 million people have been displaced, in some cases multiple times, since Israel launched its war in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 cross-border attack that left some 1,200 dead. More than 17,000 people in Gaza have died in the war, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Hundreds of thousands of people relocated to southern Gaza from the north after Israeli ground troops entered the area. Now, as Israel widens its ground offensive to the south, tens of thousands of people have found themselves on the move yet again — with few safe places to go.

Israel first mentioned Muwasi as a humanitarian zone in late October. It's not clear how many people Israel believes can live there, and it blames the United Nations for the poor conditions.

Col. Elad Goren, a senior official in the military body overseeing Palestinian civilian affairs, said Israel has been allowing the entry of temporary shelters and winter gear.

"At the end of the day, these are U.N. goods. It's their responsibility to collect the goods and distribute it to the people," he said.

He said Israel does not expect Gaza's entire population to crowd into Muwasi and that there are an additional 150 "shelter areas," including schools and medical clinics, that are coordinated with the U.N. and other organizations. But the army considers Muwasi a permanent safe zone. He noted that the army did not respond to a pair of Hamas rocket launches from Muwasi on Wednesday.

"We understand the population needs a solution of where to be. We want to encourage the population to go to this zone where assistance will be delivered," he said.

But international aid officials have warned that Israel has done nothing to create a true safe zone. Even the United States, Israel's closest ally, has repeatedly said Palestinian civilians need more protection.

A joint statement signed by the leaders of some of the world's largest humanitarian groups, including the top U.N. agencies, Care International, Mercy Corps, and the World Health Organization, said the area could not function as a safe zone until all sides pledge to refrain from fighting there.

"Without the right conditions, concentrating civilians in such zones in the context of active hostilities can raise the risk of attack and additional harm," said the Nov. 16 statement.

In Muwasi, there's little sign that any of that is happening, at least in a way that could support hundreds of thousands of people.

On Thursday, a number of international aid groups condemned Israel's calls for displaced Palestinians to head to Muwasi, describing it as unfit.

"Seventy percent of the surface of that area is deserted," said Danila Zizi, from Handicap International's office in the Palestinian territories. "There are no services, there are no schools, there is no health services. There is nothing."

Instead, people are fending for themselves. Many sleep in their cars or set up their own tents. Like nearly everywhere in Gaza, the aid is not enough for everyone and many are forced to buy their own food, water and firewood.

As Israel has intensified its ground operation in recent days, there has been a sharp rise in the number of displaced people heading to this coastal area. Many have fled nearby Khan Younis and other southern areas that have become front lines of the conflict.

Despite being declared a humanitarian zone, nothing in Muwasi is now given away for free and a black

market has sprouted up. Many basic food items cost 13 or 14 times more than they did before Oct. 7.

With no aid shipments of food arriving, people are forced to venture out and buy whatever they can find. What remains is mostly canned items like tuna, but also rice and tomatoes that people cook over fires back at the camp.

Tents must be built from scratch, at a cost. Displaced families must purchase wood and nylon, then assemble their new home. Those who have no money hope that UNRWA and other organizations will bring aid.

Residents say that one of the most humiliating aspects of life is the lack of privacy and poor hygiene. There are no toilets, so people relieve themselves wherever they can. Some leave the camp and head to nearby hospitals to use their facilities.

The tents will provide little shelter during the coming winter months, when temperatures can dip into the single digits Celsius (mid-40s Fahrenheit).

Tent camps will also revive memories of the Palestinians' greatest trauma — the mass uprooting they call the "nakba" or catastrophe — when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were forced from their homes in the war surrounding Israel's establishment in 1948.

For now, the people living in Muwasi are simply trying to get by.

Bailey Zappe throws for 3 TDs, Patriots damage Steelers' playoff hopes with 21-18 win

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The wins used to come so easy and so often for David Andrews early in his career with the New England Patriots, the veteran center barely noticed them.

That hasn't been the case in 2023. Not with the franchise enduring its worst season in nearly a quarter century and with potentially seismic changes looming.

So yeah, there was a sense of relief after a 21-18 win over Pittsburgh on Thursday night, a throwback of sorts to the Patriots' many big wins over their longtime AFC rival, albeit with far lesser stakes.

The offense that's looked lost for a month gained some momentum behind Bailey Zappe's three touchdown passes. The defense got the stops when necessary and New England (3-10) ended a five-game losing streak while damaging Pittsburgh's increasingly brittle playoff hopes.

"No one has quit in this locker room," said Andrews, a two-time Super Bowl champion. "We're fighting, we're working. We're trying to get better. That's all you can do. That's all you can ask for. It hasn't been perfect."

No, it hasn't. That didn't stop the Patriots from coming into Acrisure Stadium and doing something that's become routine through the years: changing the trajectory of Pittsburgh's season. And not for the better.

The Steelers (7-6) lost to a two-win team at home for the second time in five days, dropping them out of the top spot in the AFC wild-card race.

"This stings," Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin said. "But we'll be back."

Maybe. The Steelers play three of their final four games on the road, all of them against playoff contenders.

Hunter Henry had two touchdown catches for New England. Ezekiel Elliott had 140 yards from scrimmage — 72 receiving, 68 rushing — and caught a TD for the NFL's lowest-scoring offense, which reached the end zone three times for the first time since October.

JuJu Smith-Schuster added 90 yards receiving against the team he starred for earlier in his career.

"It means a lot," Smith-Schuster said. "You know, honestly, you know, starting my crew here and coming back here and getting a 'W,' I love being on this side of the ball, I'll tell you that."

It's a side of the ball New England has rarely been on in 2023. The losses have piled up at a rate not seen since coach Bill Belichick's first season in 2000. That was six Super Bowls and nearly a quarter-century ago.

For three hours on Thursday night, the Patriots found a way to do what they so frequently have done against Pittsburgh: make all the plays that matter. Belichick improved to 15-4 against the Steelers and 10-3 against Tomlin in this latest matchup between the league's two longest-tenured coaches.

Belichick coached his 507th game, moving past George Halas into second-place all-time behind Don

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 42 of 75

Shula (526), but it's hardly a guarantee he'll be back for another season with the Patriots.

New England had totaled 13 points in its previous three games. The Patriots exceeded that in the first half, with Zappe hitting Elliott for an 11-yard score before finding Henry in the end zone twice to build a 21-3 lead, their largest of the season.

The normally stoic Zappe let loose when Elliott scored on the game's first possession, the first time all year New England has reached the end zone on its opening possession.

"It's really hard to score touchdowns in the NFL," Zappe said. "You've got to celebrate each one."

Touchdowns have been nearly as difficult to come by this season in Pittsburgh. Yet the Steelers have remained in the mix thanks in large part to their defense and an ability to thrive in tight games.

Pittsburgh, however, has lost two of its last three one-score games after winning its first six to start the season.

Mitch Trubisky completed 22 of 35 for 190 yards, passing for a touchdown and running for another while filling in for injured Steelers starter Kenny Pickett. Trubisky also threw an ill-advised pass in the first half that was picked off to set up the first of Henry's two scores, and he inexplicably threw deep to a well-covered Diontae Johnson on fourth-and-2 at midfield with just under two minutes left.

Pittsburgh got the ball back with 15 seconds remaining but had no realistic chance to score.

The Steelers managed 264 yards of offense, another step back for a group that briefly seemed on the verge of getting it together after offensive coordinator Matt Canada's firing before Thanksgiving. Pittsburgh piled up 421 yards the following week at Cincinnati, but the offense regressed in Sunday's loss to Arizona.

The Patriots, five days removed from a shutout loss to the Chargers in which they failed to reach the red zone, let alone the end zone, looked far sharper against a team that stressed it wouldn't overlook another also-ran.

It happened again anyway.

INJURIES

Steelers: OLB Alex Highsmith left in the second quarter with a neck injury. Rookie Nick Herbig played the majority of the snaps in Highsmith's absence.

UP NEXT

Patriots: Host Kansas City in a game that was moved from the Monday night timeslot to Sunday, Dec. 17.

Steelers: Visit fellow AFC wild-card contender Indianapolis on Saturday, Dec. 16.

UNLV gunman was unemployed professor who had 150 rounds of ammunition and a target list, police say

By RIO YAMAT and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A 67-year-old college professor who was denied jobs at various Nevada colleges and universities stuffed loaded handgun magazines into his waistband before walking into a University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus building and killing three faculty members, police said.

After police killed him in a shootout, Anthony Polito was found to be carrying nine magazines for a 9mm handgun he'd legally purchased last year and also a list of targets at the school — although none of those shot were on that list, police said Thursday.

He was killed in a shootout with police about 10 minutes after the first reports of shots fired in Beam Hall, a business school building.

Police still had no motive for Wednesday's attack, which also left a 38-year-old visiting professor in life-threatening condition at a hospital.

The university was to remain closed Friday but was tentatively scheduled to reopen next week for finals.

Polito arrived at UNLV at 11:28 a.m., about 15 minutes before the shooting, in a 2007 Lexus that he parked in a lot south of the business school, Clark County Sheriff Kevin McMahill said.

Polito got out of the car, placed items in his waistband and then entered Beam Hall at 11:33 a.m. The first reports of gunfire came at 11:45 a.m., McMahill said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 43 of 75

Terrified students and professors cowered in classrooms and offices as the gunman roamed the top three floors of UNLV's five-story Lee Business School.

University and city police swarmed into and outside the building. UNLV police Chief Adam Garcia has said the first university officer arrived at the business school within 78 seconds of the gunfire report.

Near the main entrance, UNLV officers saw Polito leaving the building and he shot at them, a Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department statement said Thursday night.

The officers fired back, killing him at the scene.

Authorities searched Beam Hall and found two people dead on the third floor and one victim dead on the fourth floor, the statement said.

Investigators believe the wounded survivor was shot on the fifth floor, but he managed to make it to the ground floor.

Student Jordan Eckermann, who was in a second-floor classroom in the business school when the rampage began, said the timestamp on a short cellphone video he recorded showed the building's alarm went off at 11:48 a.m., three minutes after the shooting started.

It's unclear how many shots Polito fired, but the sheriff said Polito brought more than 150 rounds of ammunition to the campus.

Given that sheer number of rounds, McMahill said he believed Polito may have been intending to open fire on the student union next to the business school, where students were hanging out, eating and playing games.

Polito also was carrying what McMahill described as a "target list" of named faculty members both from UNLV and from East Carolina University in North Carolina, where Polito taught at the university's business school from 2001 to 2017.

He resigned from East Carolina as a tenured associate professor, according to a statement Thursday from the university.

"None of the individuals on the target list became a victim," McMahill said, adding that police have contacted everyone on the suspect's list, except for one person who was on a flight.

A dash camera in Polito's car showed that before heading to campus, he stopped at a post office in Henderson, where he was living, police said.

Police discovered that he had dropped off 22 letters to university faculty members across the U.S.

Some contained an unknown white powder that was later found to be harmless, police said.

Police didn't immediately disclose the nature of the letters or other details.

The sheriff said at a news conference that investigators were still looking into a motive but noted that Polito applied for several jobs at various colleges and universities in Nevada and was denied the job each time.

However, Roseman University of Health Sciences in Henderson said Polito had an adjunct faculty contract and taught two courses in the school's the Master of Business Administration program from October 2018 to June 2022. He left when the program was discontinued, said Jason Roth, a spokesperson for the school.

Authorities on Thursday said Polito appeared to be struggling financially. When they arrived at his apartment Wednesday night to search the property, they found an eviction notice taped to his front door, McMahill said.

Inside, detectives found a chair with an arrow pointing down to a document "similar to a last will and testament," McMahill said without elaborating.

Also Thursday, UNLV President Keith E. Whitfield identified two of the victims who were killed as business school professors Patricia Navarro-Velez and Cha Jan "Jerry" Chang. Whitfield said the name of the third victim will be released after relatives have been notified of the death.

In a letter to students and staff, Whitfield said that the shooting "was the most difficult day in the history of our university."

Navarro-Velez, 39, was an accounting professor who held a Ph.D. and was currently focused on research in cybersecurity disclosures and data analytics, according to the school's website.

Chang, 64, was an associate professor in the business school's Management, Entrepreneurship & Technology department and had been teaching at UNLV since 2001. He held degrees from Taiwan, Central Michigan University and Texas A&M University, according to his online resume. He earned a Ph.D. in management information systems from the University of Pittsburgh.

The attack at UNLV terrified a city that experienced the deadliest shooting in modern U.S. history in October 2017, when a gunman killed 60 people and wounded more than 400 after opening fire from the window of a high-rise suite at Mandalay Bay on the Las Vegas Strip, just miles from the UNLV campus.

It wasn't immediately clear how long Polito had been living in the Las Vegas area.

One of Polito's former students at East Carolina, Paul Whittington, said Polito often talked about his regular trips to Las Vegas. He also seemed obsessive over anonymous student reviews at the end of each semester, Whittington said.

Polito told Whittington's class that he remembered the faces of students who gave him bad reviews and would express that he was sure who they were and where they sat, pointing at seats in the classroom, Whittington said.

"He always talked about the negative feedback he got," said Whittington, now 33, who took Polito's intro to operations management class in 2014. "He didn't get a lot of it, but there would always be one student every semester, or at least one student every class, that would give a negative review. And he fixated on those."

Indonesia's youth clean up trash from waterways, but more permanent solutions are still elusive

By EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

BOGOR, Indonesia (AP) — At a lake in the West Javan city of Bogor, children and teenagers paddle toward piles of floating trash, pick it up and store it in their kayaks, before passing it to friends sorting it onshore.

The group of around 20 youngsters started off as a team of one, a decade ago, when Giri Marhara decided to start cleaning up the lake. He was just 16 years old at the time, and already had a penchant for wanting to clean up his environment — from his classroom to his neighborhood.

Young people like Marhara have been at the forefront of environmental and climate change movements in recent years: initiatives like school strikes for climate action, protests at United Nations climate talks and around the world, and local clean ups have often been youth-led. When it comes to waste picking, experts say it's a stop-gap solution, and the larger problem of creating too much waste needs to be addressed. But the relatively small-scale efforts in Indonesia have resonated with younger people, attracting support and attention.

"For me, cleaning up is catharsis, cleaning up is refreshing," said Marhara, who would often be asked by children playing nearby if they could help with the clean ups. "I don't want to miss the opportunity to educate kids that this is something that's positive, something that you should probably try making a habit too," Marhara said, so he encouraged them to help.

They formed a group last year, called the Situ Gede Cleanliness Warrior, named after the lake. They paddle or kayak across the lake, pick up trash, and identify what can be recycled. A local kayaking group lend their boats to Marhara's initiative, and members take turns between paddling across the lake or sorting trash shoreside into what can be recycled or reused and what will need to be disposed.

Over 10 years, Marhara and his friends have collected more than 2,700 kilograms (5,900 pounds) of trash in and around the Situ Gede lake through various initiatives.

But the country's trash problem is far bigger than what the group can take out of waterways.

Indonesia produced more than 35 million tons of waste last year, according to Indonesia's Environmental and Forestry Ministry. It estimates that 35% of waste in the country is unmanaged. Garbage on roadsides, in waterways and natural environments is a common sight.

Waste is also responsible for around 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the World Resources Institute. Much of that comes from food waste, that, if left to decompose in landfills, can emit

methane, a planet-warming gas that is around 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide in the short term.

The trash problem has also raised health concerns: Plastic waste, for example, gets broken down into tiny pieces called microplastics, which can enter the human body. Some studies suggest it can impact the endocrine, nervous and immune systems, and can carry an increased risk of cancers.

"The implications are very serious and need to be addressed," said Abdul Ghofar, an urban and pollution specialist at The Indonesian Forum for the Environment. "There are environmental losses, as well as the health losses, and of course there are economic losses" because of the cost of restoring environments.

There are alternatives to landfill or littering for some waste products: food waste can be composted, and some other types of waste, like certain types of plastic, can be reused or recycled. But environmentalists also say the world needs to make less waste in the first place, as much of it ends up in landfill or in the world's oceans.

"We should be encouraged to find out where the source of the pollution comes from and how to stop it," said Ghofar. "The term among environmentalist is to close the tap, or turn off the tap. This pollution will never end if the source of the pollution is not closed."

But as waste taps stay on, youth-led clean ups can still make an impact, even if it's just for small areas or communities. It's something Trisna Rengganis has witnessed in his neighborhood in Depok, on the outskirts of Jakarta.

The group Ciliwung Depok Community works with neighborhoods around greater Jakarta on conservation efforts like cleaning up rivers and riverbanks.

Rengganis, who volunteers with the group, said that there's a stigma toward those who say the Ciliwung river has a trash problem, even though many residents throw garbage into the water and there's no good waste management system in the area.

But since the cleanup efforts, children from nearby areas have started to visit and play by the river again, a rare sight in the big city, Rengganis said. Seeing children back at Ciliwung's banks reminds him of his childhood, he said.

"They feel comfortable and safe," at the river, Rengganis said. "I hope, on other sides of Ciliwung — the upstream or the downstream areas — they can do the same thing."

Rengganis hopes the momentum to clean up the river and address the region's trash problem continues, so that future generations can also enjoy the area.

Marhara believes that kind of lasting change will need a culture shift that will persist even if waste production is curtailed.

"I am trying to counter the behavior that is causing trash to be out there in the environment," he said, saying the country has a "littering culture."

"I think that the only way to counter that culture is by developing a counterculture," a clean up culture, he said.

UNLV gunman had list of targets at the university and 150 rounds of ammunition, police say

By RIO YAMAT and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The 67-year-old gunman who killed three faculty members and wounded a fourth in a roughly 10-minute rampage at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, had a list of targets at the school and more than 150 rounds of ammunition, police said Thursday.

Clark County Sheriff Kevin McMahill identified the suspect, who was killed in a shootout with police, as Anthony Polito, a longtime business professor who was living in nearby Henderson, Nevada. The sheriff said at a news conference that investigators were still looking into a motive but noted that Polito had applied for several jobs at various colleges and universities in Nevada but was denied the job each time.

However, Roseman University of Health Sciences in Henderson said Polito had an adjunct faculty contract and taught two courses in the school's Master of Business Administration program from October 2018 to June 2022. He left when the program was discontinued, said Jason Roth, a spokesperson for the school.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 46 of 75

McMahill said targets on Polito's list also included faculty members at East Carolina University in North Carolina, where Polito was a professor at the university's business school from 2001 to 2017.

"None of the individuals on the target list became a victim," McMahill said, adding that police have contacted everyone on the suspect's list, except for one person who is on a flight.

Before the shooting, Polito also mailed 22 letters to university faculty members across the U.S., according to footage reviewed by detectives from a dashcam in Polito's vehicle, McMahill said.

Some envelopes contained an unknown white powder that was later found to be harmless, police said. Terrified students and professors cowered in classrooms and offices as the gunman roamed the top three floors of UNLV's five-story Lee Business School around lunchtime Wednesday.

Polito arrived at UNLV about 15 minutes before the shooting in a 2007 Lexus, McMahill said. He exited his car, placed items in his waistband and then entered the business school just after 11:30 a.m. The first reports of gunfire came about 15 minutes later, McMahill said.

The sheriff said the rampage ended around 11:55 a.m., when Polito left the business school and was confronted by police outside the building.

The suspect's weapon, a 9 mm handgun, was purchased legally last year, McMahill said.

Police were still investigating how many rounds were fired during the attack. But the sheriff said that due to the sheer amount of ammunition in the gunman's possession, he believed Polito may have been headed to the student union, which is next to the business school, when university police officers found him and he was killed in the shootout.

McMahill said the shooter brought 11 magazines with him to the campus, and police found nine of them on the shooter after he was killed.

It wasn't immediately clear how many of the school's 30,000 students were on campus at the time, but McMahill said students had been gathered outside the building and the student union to eat and play games. If police hadn't killed the attacker, "it could have been countless additional lives taken," he said.

UNLV President Keith E. Whitfield identified two of the victims who were killed as business school professors Patricia Navarro-Velez and Cha Jan "Jerry" Chang. Whitfield said the name of the third victim will be released after relatives have been notified of the death.

In a letter to students and staff, Whitfield said that the shooting "was the most difficult day in the history of our university."

The wounded man, a 38-year-old visiting professor, was still hospitalized Thursday. McMahill said his condition had been "downgraded to life-threatening" from critical.

Navarro-Velez, 39, was an accounting professor who held a Ph.D. and was currently focused on research in cybersecurity disclosures and data analytics, according to the school's website.

Chang, 64, was an associate professor in the business school's Management, Entrepreneurship & Technology department and had been teaching at UNLV since 2001. He held degrees from Taiwan, Central Michigan University and Texas A&M University, according to his online resume. He earned a Ph.D. in management information systems from the University of Pittsburgh.

The attack at UNLV terrified a city that experienced the deadliest shooting in modern U.S. history in October 2017, when a gunman killed 60 people and wounded more than 400 after opening fire from the window of a high-rise suite at Mandalay Bay on the Las Vegas Strip, just miles from the UNLV campus.

Authorities on Thursday said Polito appeared to be struggling financially. When they arrived at his apartment Wednesday night to search the property, McMahill said, they found an eviction notice taped to his front door. Inside the apartment, detectives found a chair with an arrow pointing down to a document "similar to a last will and testament," McMahill said, though the sheriff did not provide specifics on the contents of that document.

It wasn't immediately clear how long Polito had been living in the Las Vegas area. He resigned from East Carolina University as a tenured associate professor, according to a statement Thursday from the university.

One of Polito's former students at East Carolina, Paul Whittington, said Polito seemed obsessive over anonymous student reviews at the end of each semester.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 47 of 75

Polito told Whittington's class that he remembered the faces of students who gave him bad reviews and would express that he was sure who they were and where they sat, pointing at seats in the classroom, Whittington said.

"He always talked about the negative feedback he got," said Whittington, now 33, who took Polito's intro to operations management class in 2014. "He didn't get a lot of it, but there would always be one student every semester, or at least one student every class, that would give a negative review. And he fixated on those."

Classes at UNLV were canceled through Friday, and the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo canceled events that were scheduled Thursday night at the Thomas & Mack Center at UNLV.

Attention all Barbz: Nicki Minaj has released 'Pink Friday 2,' 13 years after the original

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nicki Minaj's highly anticipated fifth studio album, "Pink Friday 2," is finally here. Out Friday, the 10-time Grammy nominee's 41st birthday, "Pink Friday 2" is Minaj's first full-length release since 2018's "Queen."

The 22-track release is stacked with features, including contributions from Drake, Lil Wayne, J. Cole, Lil Uzi Vert and Future among others.

"This entire album will be the biggest gift I have ever given humanity thus far," Minaj said in a recent livestream. "I have never in my life been so in love with something that I'm working on."

The original "Pink Friday" was released in 2010, with her sophomore album, "Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded," following two years later.

The road to "Pink Friday 2" has been long. Fans suspected it was on the horizon when the rapper tweeted a simple three-character message, "PF2," in the summer of 2020. But it wasn't until this past June that Minaj announced the album title. The release date, originally slated for Oct. 20, was pushed back twice, too.

In the days leading up to the December release of "Pink Friday 2," Minaj's loyal fans, called Barbz, inspired headlines when they created "Gag City," a pink AI metropolis inspired by the album's cover.

In September, Minaj hosted the 2023 MTV Video Music Awards and performed her latest single, the dreamy "Last Time I Saw You" before teasing a fiery new trap cut from "Pink Friday 2."

"I ain't nothing like you," she rapped, "I'm on a whole other level."

Drought vs deluge: Florida's unusual rainfall totals either too little or too much on each coast

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — In Florida, this year has been a tale of two states as far as rainfall totals, with the southeast coast deluged by sometimes-record rainfall and much of the Gulf of Mexico coast facing a drought.

Counties up and down Florida's west side are under new water use restrictions, especially in one area where the water table has gotten so low that wells could dry up. Now Florida's wettest season is over until late spring.

What's happening in Florida could soon become a reality elsewhere, as farmers and residents increasingly have to deal with changes in weather patterns because of climate change. This means hotter temperatures in summer, more powerful hurricanes and other heavier rainstorms and droughts during unexpected seasons.

"You know, as the climate changes, we're going to have to adapt to these extremes," said Dan Durica, a board member at Tampa's Sweetwater Organic Community Farm. "And so you have to know how to deal with like the boom and bust of the, like, climate chaos."

For most people, the restrictions affect lawn and landscape watering, which accounts for about half the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 48 of 75

water used daily in the affected areas. For example, in three counties around Tampa Bay watering is only allowed one day a week depending on a resident's address and only then before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.

"The whole western coast of Florida has been impacted by this deficit rainfall during the rainy season," said Mark Elsner, water supply bureau chief for the South Florida Water Management District. "With the west coast having a deficit about 30%, we didn't get that recharge that we expected. And as a result, we have lower groundwater levels starting the dry season."

The main driver of the precipitation divide was a weaker than typical high pressure system this summer over the western Atlantic Ocean that led to persistently lighter easterly winds, said Robert Molleda of the National Weather Service office in Miami.

"This wind pattern tends to focus most of the precipitation over the interior and eastern side of the peninsula, rather than a more typical east wind pattern which would focus a lot of the daily summer thunderstorms over the western half of the peninsula," Molleda said in an email.

Indeed, in mid-November a no-name storm with wind gusts approaching tropical storm strength lashed Miami, Fort Lauderdale and nearby areas with readings approaching a foot (30 centimeters) of rain over three days. In the Florida Keys, the city of Marathon set an all-time daily record for November when 6.68 inches (17 centimeters) of rain fell in a single day.

In April, a storm that sat over Fort Lauderdale dumped nearly 25 inches (63.5 centimeters) of rain in some areas, causing many neighborhoods to flood. And just during the past 90 days, many parts of South Florida have been inundated again with between 150% and 200% of average rainfall totals, according to the weather service.

Over on the Gulf coast, it's a different story. Drought has persisted for months. All or parts of 14 counties are under water use restrictions imposed by two water management districts that began last week and will remain in force until July, according to agency documents. This affects everything from lawn watering to golf courses to landscaping to agriculture.

"All wasteful water use such as hosing down driveways and impervious surfaces, allowing water to flow unattended and using water in a grossly inefficient manner, is prohibited," the Southwest Florida Water Management District website says.

Violators can be fined varying amounts depending on the jurisdiction. In Hillsborough County, where Tampa is located, fines range from \$100 for an initial offense to \$500 for repeated violations, although a warning is given first.

One of the underground reservoirs Florida relies on, the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer, is 15 feet (4.5 meters) lower this year compared with each of the past four years, according to the South Florida Water Management District. This is threatening supplies in wells in Cape Coral, which is just north of Fort Myers and is still recovering from last year's Hurricane Ian destruction.

Many wells in the area were drilled to shallower depths in past years and now could dry out if the aquifer does not recover, Elsner said.

"Today, they're drilling those wells deeper because we've seen water level declines. So those shallower wells are most susceptible to drying out," he said, noting that more than 100 permits for deeper replacement wells have been issued in Cape Coral during the past couple of years.

Farmers have many methods to reduce water use. Practices include slow-drip irrigation, deep mulching and watering at night when there is less evaporation, Durica said.

Even with all the water conservation efforts, Florida's west coast will need rain to truly ease the water shortage.

Forecasters say it's likely Florida will experience heavier rainfall than usual over the typically drier winter months because of a weather phenomenon known as El Nino, which occurs when waters in the eastern Pacific Ocean grow warmer, impacting climate worldwide.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts a 55% chance of a strong El Niño this winter.

"The hope is that with increased rainfall compared to normal this winter and spring, drought conditions would be alleviated," Molleda said. "The latest drought outlook calls for a likely removal of drought condi-

tions along the Florida Gulf coast sometime between December and February.”

Desperation grows among Palestinians trapped with little aid as Israel battles Hamas in Gaza

By WAFAA SHURAF, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and LEE KEATH Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Desperation grew Thursday among Palestinians largely cut off from supplies of food and water as Israeli forces engaged in fierce urban battles with Hamas militants. Strikes in the southern Gaza town of Rafah sowed fear in one of the last places where civilians could seek refuge.

United Nations officials say there are no safe places in Gaza nearly a week after Israel widened its offensive into the southern half of the territory. Heavy fighting in and around the city of Khan Younis has displaced tens of thousands of people and cut most of Gaza off from aid deliveries. More than 80% of the territory’s population has already fled their homes.

Two months into the war, the grinding offensive has triggered renewed international alarm. U.N Secretary-General Antonio Guterres used a rarely exercised power to warn the Security Council of an impending “humanitarian catastrophe,” and Arab and Islamic nations called for a vote Friday on a draft Council resolution demanding a humanitarian cease-fire.

Guterres explicitly cited Article 99 of the U.N. Charter, which allows the secretary-general to bring to the council’s attention any matter that he believes threatens international peace and security. The power has only been used a handful of times in the history of the world body.

The United States, Israel’s closest ally, appears likely to block any U.N. effort to halt the fighting. Still, U.S. concern over the devastation was growing. Before the southern offensive, U.S. officials told Israel it must limit civilian deaths and displacement, saying too many Palestinians were killed when it obliterated much of Gaza City and the north.

On Thursday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said casualties are still too high in a call with Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer, a senior State Department official said. Blinken told Dermer that Israel must also do more to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private diplomatic discussion.

Speaking at a joint news conference in Washington with visiting British Foreign Secretary David Cameron, Blinken said it remains imperative that Israel put a premium on civilian protection.

“And there does remain a gap between exactly what I said when I was there (last week) between the intent to protect civilians and the actual results that we’re seeing on the ground,” he said.

Israel says it must crush Hamas’ military capabilities and remove it from power following the Oct. 7 attack that ignited the war.

In photos and video published Thursday, at least 100 Palestinian men are seen sitting in rows on a street in northern Gaza, stripped down to their underwear with their heads bowed as they are being guarded by Israeli troops. The Al-Araby Al-Jadeed news outlet said its correspondent Daa Al-Kahlout was among those detained and had been taken to an unknown location.

The images were the first showing such detentions in the Israeli-Hamas war. Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said troops have detained and interrogated hundreds of people in Gaza suspected of militant links.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS WORSENS

In a sign of the growing desperation, thousands of Palestinians crushed together Thursday waiting to receive aid at a U.N. distribution center in the central Gaza city of Deir al-Balah, the crowds growing more frantic as they swelled. Rami Ashour, one those waiting, said he left when it seemed hopeless his turn would come to pick up a ration of flour.

Residents said the chaotic scene has become common in Deir al-Balah, where a trickle of humanitarian aid is met by hordes of hungry and exhausted families sheltering in U.N. schools or with relatives. The World Food Program has warned of a “catastrophic hunger crisis.”

“There are 8,000 people in this shelter, and any vegetables disappear before I see them because people

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 50 of 75

seize everything so fast," said Mazen Junaid, a father of six from northern Gaza.

Deir al-Balah is trapped between ground fighting in northern Gaza and in Khan Younis to the south, and it has continued to come under bombardment. Another 115 bodies arrived at the town's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital over the past 24 hours, the international aid group Doctors Without Borders said.

"The hospital is full, the morgue is full," the group said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Only a few trucks have managed to reach central Gaza in recent days because fighting has largely prevented aid groups from distributing beyond the area of Rafah, at Gaza's far southern end by the Egypt border, the U.N. said. Meanwhile, entry of aid from Egypt has slowed.

Rafah is part of the rapidly shrinking area where civilians can seek shelter, and tens of thousands of people have flowed into it from Khan Younis and elsewhere.

The town, normally home to around 280,000 people, was already hosting more than 470,000 displaced people. Shelters and homes have overflowed, and many people have been sleeping in tents or in the streets. Across Gaza, 1.87 million people — over 80% of the population of 2.3 million — have been driven from their homes.

Even in Rafah, safety has proven elusive. Several strikes hit late Wednesday and early Thursday, sending a wave of wounded and dead streaming into a nearby hospital.

The Israeli military accused militants of firing rockets from open areas near Rafah. It released footage of a strike Wednesday on what it said were launchers positioned outside the town and a few hundred meters (yards) from a U.N. warehouse.

Israel's campaign has killed more than 17,100 people in Gaza — 70% of them women and children — and wounded more than 46,000, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which says many others are trapped under rubble. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war and resulted in the taking of some 240 people hostage. An estimated 138 hostages remain in Gaza, mostly soldiers and civilian men, after 105 were freed during a cease-fire in late November.

BATTLES IN NORTH AND SOUTH

Troops have pushed into Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, which Israeli officials have portrayed as Hamas' center of gravity — something they previously said was in Gaza City and its Shifa Hospital.

In the afternoon, a strike in the center of Khan Younis left a large field of rubble, and survivors said many people were believed buried underneath. Rescuers pulled bloodied women and children from the shells of gutted buildings.

The military said Thursday that it struck dozens of militant targets in Khan Younis, including a tunnel shaft from which fighters had launched an attack.

Heavy fighting was also still underway in the northern refugee camp of Jabaliya, even after two months of bombardment and encirclement by ground troops. The Israeli military said troops raided a militant compound, killing a number of fighters and uncovering a network of tunnels.

The military reported "close-quarter combat" in the nearby district of Shujaiya, including militants found in a tunnel under a school. The reports could not be independently confirmed.

In the evening, a seven-story building in Gaza City's Rimal district was leveled with dozens of people inside, but with medical services collapsed in the north, no ambulances arrived, a neighbor said.

Israel blames the high civilian death toll on Hamas, accusing it of using them as human shields in residential areas. But Israel has not given detailed accounts of its individual strikes, some of which have destroyed entire city blocks.

Israel says some 5,000 militants have been killed, without saying how it arrived at that count. The military says 87 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive.

An anti-tank missile fired from Lebanon into northern Israel killed an Israeli man, the emergency services said. Hezbollah said its fighters attacked Israeli military posts along the border. Israel responded with intense strikes with helicopters, tanks and artillery, the military said.

Hezbollah and other militants in Lebanon have been exchanging fire nearly daily with Israeli forces over the border. Visiting a northern base Thursday, Netanyahu warned that if Hezbollah escalates to all-out

war, Israel's response will be to "turn Beirut and southern Lebanon ... into Gaza and Khan Yunis."

The UN secretary-general invoked 'Article 99' to push for a Gaza cease-fire. What exactly is it?

By The Associated Press undefined

It's called "Article 99." And it hasn't been used for decades. Until this week.

With an intensifying Israeli offensive and escalating civilian casualties, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres invoked a rarely exercised power this week to warn the Security Council of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza. He urged members to demand an immediate humanitarian cease-fire.

Guterres invoked Article 99 of the U.N. Charter — last used over half a century ago — which says the secretary-general may inform the council of matters he believes threaten international peace and security.

Here, Edith M. Lederer, longtime chief U.N. correspondent for The Associated Press, breaks down what this could mean.

WHAT IS ARTICLE 99 AND WHY IS GUTERRES INVOKING IT?

It's a provision of the United Nations Charter, the U.N. constitution. It states that the secretary-general — the U.N.'s top diplomat — may bring to the attention of the Security Council "any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

This gives an important additional power to the secretary-general, since the real power at the U.N. is held by its 193 member nations and especially the 15 countries that serve on the Security Council.

Article 99 is extremely rarely used. The last time it was invoked was during fighting in 1971 that led to the creation of Bangladesh and its separation from Pakistan.

Guterres invoked Article 99 because he sees the situation in Gaza at risk of a "complete collapse" of the territory's humanitarian system and civil order. It was something he felt needed to be done.

HOW LIKELY IS THIS TO HAVE AN EFFECT, GIVEN THE U.S. VETO POWER?

Arab and Islamic nations followed up on Guterres's letter immediately.

The United Arab Emirates, the Arab representative on the Security Council, circulated a short resolution to Security Council members late Wednesday calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. They plan to put that resolution to a vote at a Security Council meeting on Friday morning.

The United States, which is Israel's closest ally and has veto power on resolutions, has not supported a cease-fire. On Tuesday, U.S. Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood said that the role of the Security Council in the Israel-Gaza war is not to get in the way of important diplomacy that's taking place. And he said the Security Council resolution at this time "would not be useful."

This could signal a likely veto, but the U.S. has not said either way.

IN THAT CASE, WHY INVOKE IT?

Because Guterres believes that the humanitarian system and the humanitarian operations in Gaza are collapsing.

He also warns in his letter that in the current situation, "amid constant bombardment by the Israeli Defense Forces and without shelter or essentials to survive, I expect public order to completely break down soon due to the desperate conditions, rendering even limited humanitarian assistance impossible."

Guterres said the situation could get even worse, pointing to possible epidemics and the mass displacement of Palestinians into neighboring countries. He sees a looming disaster.

Previous secretaries-general have brought threats that they saw to international peace and security to the Security Council without mentioning Article 99. This includes Congo in 1960, the U.S. hostage crisis in Iran that began in November 1979, the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 and more recently Myanmar in 2017.

We don't know why they didn't invoke Article 99, and several of the previous secretaries-general are now dead. Guterres has been very outspoken on both the Hamas attacks on Israel and the very high death toll of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Centenarian survivors of Pearl Harbor attack return to honor those who perished 82 years ago

By AUDREY McAVOY and CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (AP) — Ira "Ike" Schab had just showered, put on a clean sailor's uniform and closed his locker aboard the USS Dobbin when he heard a call for a fire rescue party.

He went topside to see the USS Utah capsizing and Japanese planes in the air. He scurried back below deck to grab boxes of ammunition and joined a daisy chain of sailors feeding shells to an anti-aircraft gun up above. He remembers being only 140 pounds (63.50 kilograms) as a 21-year-old, but somehow finding the strength to lift boxes weighing almost twice that.

"We were pretty startled. Startled and scared to death," Schab, now 103, said. "We didn't know what to expect and we knew that if anything happened to us, that would be it."

Eighty-two years later, Schab returned to Pearl Harbor Thursday on the anniversary of the attack to remember the more than 2,300 servicemen killed. He was one of five survivors at a ceremony commemorating the assault that propelled the United States into World War II. Six of the increasingly frail men had been expected, but one was not feeling well, organizers said.

The aging pool of Pearl Harbor survivors has been rapidly shrinking. There is now just one crew member of the USS Arizona still living, 102-year-old Lou Conter of California.

Schab, the oldest of those who attended this year's ceremony, arrived in a wheelchair with his son, daughter and other family.

A crowd of a few thousand invited guests and members of the public joined them in holding a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m., the same time bombs began falling decades ago.

Four F-22 jets flew overhead and broke the quiet, one splitting away from the rest in a "missing man formation" that honored the fallen.

Thursday's ceremony was held on a field across the harbor from the USS Arizona Memorial, a white structure that sits above the rusting hull of the battleship, which exploded in a fireball and sank shortly after being hit. More than 1,100 sailors and Marines from the Arizona were killed and more than 900 are entombed inside.

David Kilton, the National Park Service's interpretation, education and visitor services lead for Pearl Harbor, noted that for many years survivors frequently volunteered to share their experiences with visitors to the historic site. That's not possible anymore.

"We could be the best storytellers in the world and we can't really hold a candle to those that lived it sharing their stories firsthand," Kilton said. "But now that we are losing that generation and won't have them very much longer, the opportunity shifts to reflect even more so on the sacrifices that were made, the stories that they did share."

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs doesn't keep statistics for how many Pearl Harbor survivors are still living. But department data show that of the 16 million who served in World War II, only about 120,000 were alive as of October and an estimated 131 die each day.

There were about 87,000 military personnel on Oahu at the time of the attack, according to a rough estimate compiled by military historian J. Michael Wenger.

Schab never spoke much about Pearl Harbor until about a decade ago. He's since been sharing his story with his family, student groups and history buffs. And he's returned to Pearl Harbor several times since.

The reason? "To pay honor to the guys that didn't make it," he said.

Harry Chandler, 102, recalled raising the flag at a mobile hospital in Aiea Heights in the hills above Pearl Harbor in 1941. He was a Navy hospital corpsman 3rd Class at the time.

Sitting in his front row seat on the ceremony grounds overlooking the harbor on Thursday, Chandler said the memories of the USS Arizona blowing up still come back to him today.

"I saw these planes come, and I thought they were planes coming in from the states until I saw the bombs dropping," Chandler said. They took cover and then rode trucks down to Pearl Harbor where they attended to the injured.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 53 of 75

He remembers sailors trapped on the capsized USS Oklahoma tapping on the hull of their ship to get rescued, and caring for those who eventually got out after teams cut holes in the ship.

"I look out there and I can still see what's going on. I can still see what was happening," said Chandler, who today lives in Tequesta, Florida.

Asked what he wants Americans to know about Pearl Harbor, he said: "Be prepared."

"We should have known that was going to happen. The intelligence has to be better," he said.

Schab's ship, the Dobbin, lost three sailors, according to Navy records. One was killed in action and two died later of wounds suffered when fragments from a bomb struck the ship's stern. All had been manning an anti-aircraft gun.

Marine Corps. Capt. Daniel Hower, the 29-year-old grand-nephew of Conter, the last remaining USS Arizona survivor, delivered the keynote address, reading from a podium as he faced the survivors seated in the front row, Pearl Harbor sitting still behind them beneath a light blue sky and scattered white clouds. Hower acknowledged the collective humility of their military service.

"Whenever my Uncle Lou or any other veteran of World War II is recognized or thanked for their service, they humbly answer: 'We just did what we had to do,'" Hower said.

Hower then hailed their sacrifice, determination, heroism and courage.

"The legacy that you all built remains unmatched and a lesson that keeps on teaching," Hower said.

That Sunday morning had started peacefully for Schab. He was expecting a visit from his brother, who was also in the Navy and was assigned to a naval radio station in Wahiawa, north of Pearl Harbor. The two never did get together that day.

Schab spent most of World War II in the Pacific with the Navy, going to the New Hebrides, now known as Vanuatu, and then the Mariana Islands and Okinawa.

After the war, he worked on the Apollo program sending astronauts to the moon as an electrical engineer at General Dynamics.

Schab has slowed down in recent years. But he still gets together each week for cocktails over Zoom with younger members of his fraternity, Delta Sigma Phi. He drinks cranberry-raspberry juice.

At his age, he's thankful to still be able to return to Pearl Harbor with his family and caregivers. The family has a GoFundMe account to help them raise money for the pilgrimage.

"Just grateful that I'm still here," Schab said. "That's really how it feels. Grateful."

Trump's vow to only be a dictator on 'day one' follows growing worry over his authoritarian rhetoric

By JILL COLVIN and BILL BARROW Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — As Donald Trump faces growing scrutiny over his increasingly authoritarian and violent rhetoric, Fox News host Sean Hannity gave his longtime friend a chance to assure the American people that he wouldn't abuse power or seek retribution if he wins a second term.

But instead of offering a perfunctory answer brushing off the warnings, Trump stoked the fire.

"Except for day one," the GOP front-runner said Tuesday night before a live audience in Davenport, Iowa. "I want to close the border, and I want to drill, drill, drill."

And in case anyone missed it, he reenacted the exchange.

"We love this guy," Trump said of Hannity. "He says, 'You're not going to be a dictator, are you?' I said: 'No, no, no, other than day one. We're closing the border, and we're drilling, drilling, drilling. After that, I'm not a dictator.'"

Trump has a long history of making inflammatory proclamations that spark outrage from detractors and generate a stream of headlines, without ever coming to fruition. Often they are made in a tongue-in-cheek manner that allows Trump's allies to claim he was joking and cite the backlash as another example of a candidate skilled at baiting an out-of-touch press that takes him far too literally.

Trump campaign aides said Thursday that the former president was simply trying to trigger the left and the media with his dictator comment, while also seeking to focus attention on the influx of migrants at the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 54 of 75

border and stubborn inflation, two vulnerabilities for President Joe Biden heading into the 2024 general election.

But the consequences of Trump's rhetoric have been made all too clear, after he refused to accept the results of the 2020 election and a mob of his supporters violently stormed the U.S. Capitol to stop the certification of Biden's victory.

The former president, who has long expressed regard for authoritarian leaders and the power they wield, is now vowing vengeance and retribution as he outlines a second-term agenda marked by an unprecedented expansion of executive power, unparalleled interference in the justice system, and a massive purge of civil servants.

Indeed, hours before his remarks were aired, a longtime ally who is widely expected to serve in a top national security role if Trump returns to the White House vowed to target journalists in a second Trump term.

"We're going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens, who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections," said Kash Patel, even though numerous federal and local officials, a long list of courts, top former campaign staffers and even Trump's own attorney general have all said there is no evidence of the fraud he alleges.

Biden and other critics have seized on Trump's comments, painting him as a threat to democracy as they seek to turn the 2024 election into another referendum on the former president instead of Biden. Cognizant of the risks, Trump's campaign has tried to distance itself from Patel's statement as well as headline-grabbing policy plans proposed by several outside groups staffed by longtime Trump allies, with top aides issuing a statement last month saying the groups did not speak for the campaign.

Trump, too, has tried to turn the tables on Biden, who has increasingly argued the former president poses a fundamental danger to the country. In a speech in Iowa this month, Trump insisted it is really Biden who is the true "destroyer" of democracy, citing the four criminal indictments he is facing as politically motivated efforts to damage his campaign.

It's an argument Trump and his campaign plan to continue to make heading into the 2024 general election.

The Biden campaign's attack, said Trump senior adviser Jason Miller, "is a clear sign that the Democrats believe their only possible pathway to victory is to go scorched earth on President Trump."

Despite Democrats' attempts "to make outlandish statements about what a future Trump term could look like," Miller said, there is now a reference point: "Four years of President Trump in the White House, and he never did any of the types of things that Joe Biden is currently doing to him."

But Trump's own words are clear.

"In 2016, I declared I am your voice. Today, I add, I am your warrior. I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution," he said in March 2023.

In the months since, Trump has repeatedly and explicitly vowed to use the Justice Department to target his enemies in a dramatic break from the long-standing, post-Watergate tradition of independence.

"I will appoint a real special prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president in the history of the United States of America, Joe Biden, the entire Biden crime family, and all others involved with the destruction of our elections, borders and our country itself," he said in a June video.

In an interview with Univision, he went even further. "If I happen to be president and I see somebody who's doing well and beating me very badly, I say, 'Go down and indict them,'" he said.

Last December, he mused about circumventing the Constitution, arguing that the election fraud he alleges "allows for the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution."

He has taken an especially hostile approach to the press, vowing to "rout the fake news media," calling reporters "THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE!" and saying outlets like NBC News and MSNBC should be investigated for treason.

Trump's extensive policy plans also rely on a dramatic expansion of executive power. He wants to strip tens of thousands of career federal workers of their civil service protections, has vowed new ideological tests for those entering the country and has talked about increasing the military's role on domestic soil,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 55 of 75

including sending the National Guard to the border and to cities like Chicago to tackle crime.

He has warned that the gravest threats to the nation come "not from abroad, but from within," has called for expanded use of the death penalty while praising countries that rely on "quick" trials and extrajudicial killings, and has said looters should be shot.

He has continued to praise authoritarian leaders like China's Xi Jinping, Hungary's Viktor Orbán and Russia's Vladimir Putin, while dehumanizing his enemies as "scum" and "thugs" who "live like vermin."

Aides argue the former president did not enact some of his most extreme campaign promises, like jailing his then-rival Hillary Clinton or enacting "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," though he did try to ban foreign nationals from a handful of Muslim-majority countries. They note his campaign operation this time around has been widely praised as more disciplined and professional than his previous efforts — a sign of what could be to come.

But if he wins again, Trump is expected to face far fewer guardrails, including an administration filled with loyalists now experienced in wielding federal power, fewer rivals in Congress and more appointees across the courts.

Quentin Fulks, the No. 2 official on Biden's reelection campaign, pushed back at Trump's attempts to turn the issue back on Biden and said there is no comparison between the men. Biden, he said, is not standing at the presidential podium "saying that he's going to round up his political enemies or use the government to go after his political enemies."

He said it was imperative for Democrats to "call out this rhetoric when we see it and make sure the American people really know what's at stake."

Meanwhile, Ken Cuccinelli, a top immigration official in Trump's administration who now leads a super PAC supporting Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for president, called the former president's dictator remarks "provocative" and vintage Trump.

"Do I think he's trying to needle everybody? Yes, I do. He enjoys doing that," Cuccinelli said. "Does it help improve America? No, it doesn't. And he doesn't care about that because his first concern is Donald Trump."

Jon Rahm bolts for LIV Golf in a stunning blow to the PGA Tour

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

Masters champion Jon Rahm bolted for Saudi-funded LIV Golf on Thursday for what's believed to be more money than the PGA Tour's entire prize fund, a stunning blow that deepens the divide in golf as the two sides were negotiating a commercial deal.

Rahm confirmed the move in an interview with Fox News. Wearing a black letterman's jacket with the LIV logo, he said it was not an easy decision.

"I've been very happy," Rahm said. "But there is a lot of things that LIV Golf has to offer that were very enticing."

He said he would keep private how much the deal was worth amid reports that put his compensation in the \$500 million range, which likely would include equity in his new team. The PGA Tour's total purse in 2023 was about \$460 million.

The development comes 25 days before the deadline for the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund try to finalize their June 6 agreement to become commercial partners in a for-profit enterprise, along with the European tour.

Talks have been going slowly, and Tiger Woods said last week there were a lot of moving parts. The biggest moving part turned out to be the 29-year-old Rahm, the No. 3 player in the world and a two-time major champion approaching his prime, being the latest to defect.

Rahm had been adamant that he has enough money and that he cares only about history and legacy. He recently said he "laughed" whenever he saw his name linked to LIV.

"It was a great offer. The money is great, obviously it's wonderful," Rahm said. "But what I said before is true: I do not play golf for the money. I play golf for the love of the game and for the love of golf. But,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 56 of 75

as a husband, as a father and as a family man I have a duty to my family to give them the best opportunities and the most amount of resources possible and that is where that comes in."

He remains eligible for the majors for the next five years — the Masters for life, the U.S. Open until 2031. Still to be determined is how the move affects his eligibility for the Ryder Cup.

"It's hard to sit here and criticize Jon because of what a great player he is," Rory McIlroy said in an interview with Sky Sports. "Jon is going to be in Bethpage in 2025 (for the Ryder Cup). Because of this decision, the European tour is going to have to rewrite the rules. There's no question about that."

Rahm's addition gives LIV Golf seven of the last 14 winners at the majors.

"LIV Golf is here to stay," Lawrence Burian, the COO of LIV Golf, said in a news release sent out after Rahm's appearance on Fox News.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan had been scheduled to meet this week with Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the head of the PIF. The meeting was delayed until next week, but it wasn't clear if it was still on or how Rahm's announcement affects the negotiations.

Since the stunning commercial partnership was proposed on June 6, the tour has also entertained offers from private equity groups. Those include Fenway Sports Group and Acorn Growth, which includes former AT&T Chairman Randall Stephenson. He resigned from the PGA Tour board out of protest with its deal with Saudi Arabia.

The agreement originally included language to end the poaching of players, but that was removed when the Justice Department had antitrust concerns.

Signing with LIV is counter to everything Rahm has said about the league. He has declared his support for the PGA Tour dating to February 2022, and as recently as August he told a Spanish podcast that "I laugh when people rumor me with LIV Golf. I've never liked the format."

He had said 54 holes with no cut and a shotgun start "is not a golf tournament."

"I want to play against the best in the world in a format that's been going on for hundreds of years," he said at the U.S. Open last year. "That's what I want to see."

He sang a different tune in the Fox interview, saying while money was a factor, there were other elements "that make it so exciting."

"Once you get past that, the love of the game, wanting to grow it to a global market and be part of a team, be a captain and hopefully being a leader to teammates, it is something that is so, so special," Rahm said.

Rahm said he looked forward to having conversation with LIV leaders about potential changes he would like to see, even if he has to wait.

"My goal with this is to grow the game of golf, to make it better — whatever that may be," he said. "I'm an ambitious person, but I'm not a greedy one. I know I can't have everything, so there are some things I will have to sacrifice and for right now, that seems like one that I can live with."

The PGA Tour said in a statement that its focus remains on "unifying the game for our fans and our players."

"We can't speak for decisions that any individual players might make but based on the momentum of the past season and strength of the PGA Tour, along with the accelerated interest from and negotiations with a number of outside investors, we are in position to make our players equity owners and further allow the tour to invest in our members, invest in our fans and continue to lead men's professional golf forward," it said.

Players typically are suspended when they play — the next LIV season starts Feb. 2 — although public promotion of a rival league can lead to immediate suspension unless Rahm chooses to resign from the PGA Tour.

That would leave him only four majors a year to compete against the likes of McIlroy, Scottie Scheffler and the rest of the top 10 in the world ranking.

"Nobody is forcing us to do this. This is our own choice," Rahm said. "And if the product wasn't good, I don't think people would be making this jump. I certainly wouldn't be doing it because, again, I have had a great platform on the PGA Tour and I'm forever grateful for the platform that they've given me. If

lucky, and things go well in the future, I still want to be part of that platform.”

Texas judge grants pregnant woman permission to get an abortion despite state’s ban

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A Texas judge on Thursday gave a pregnant woman whose fetus has a fatal diagnosis permission to get an abortion in an unprecedented challenge over bans that more than a dozen states have enacted since Roe v. Wade was overturned.

The lawsuit by Kate Cox, a 31-year-old mother of two from the Dallas area, is believed to be the first time since the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision last year that a woman has asked a court to approve an abortion. The order only applies to Cox and her attorneys afterward spoke cautiously about any wider impacts, calling it unfeasible that scores of other women seeking abortions would also now turn to courts.

“This can’t be the new normal,” said Marc Hearn, an attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights. “I don’t think you can expect to see now hundreds of cases being filed on behalf of patients. It’s just not realistic.”

State District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble, an elected Democrat, granted a temporary restraining order allowing Cox to have an abortion under what are narrow exceptions to Texas’ ban. Her attorneys said they would not disclose what Cox was planning to do next, citing safety concerns.

Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, whose office argued that Cox does not meet the criteria for a medical exception, issued a statement that did not say whether the state would appeal. But in a letter to three Houston hospitals, Paxton warned that legal consequences were still possible if Cox’s physician provided the abortion.

Cox, who is 20 weeks pregnant, attended the hearing via Zoom along with her husband but did not address the court. Doctors have told Cox that if the baby’s heartbeat were to stop, inducing labor would carry a risk of a uterine rupture because of her prior cesareans sections, and that another C-section at full term would endanger her ability to carry another child.

“The idea that Ms. Cox wants so desperately to be a parent and this law may have her lose that ability is shocking and would be a genuine miscarriage of justice,” Gamble said.

The Center for Reproductive Rights, which is representing Cox, has said this lawsuit is believed to be the first of its kind since Roe v. Wade was overturned. Since that landmark ruling, Texas and 12 other states rushed to ban abortion at nearly all stages of pregnancy. Opponents have sought to weaken those bans, including an ongoing Texas challenge over whether the state’s law is too restrictive for women with pregnancy complications.

“I do not want to continue the pain and suffering that has plagued this pregnancy or continue to put my body or my mental health through the risks of continuing this pregnancy,” Cox wrote in an editorial published in The Dallas Morning News. “I do not want my baby to arrive in this world only to watch her suffer.”

The temporary restraining order stops Texas from enforcing the state’s ban on Cox and lasts for 14 days. Under the restrictions in Texas, doctors who provide abortions could face criminal charges that carry a punishment of up to life in prison. They could also be fined. Pregnant women cannot be criminally charged for having an abortion in Texas.

Paxton told the Houston hospitals the order “will not insulate you” from civil and criminal liabilities, arguing that private citizens could still bring lawsuits and local prosecutors could still bring charges.

Seth Chandler, a law professor at the University of Houston, said he would have concerns as a physician based on both legal issues and Paxton’s “apparent zeal” to enforce the state’s abortion ban.

“If I were one of the doctors involved here, I would not sleep easy performing that abortion,” he said.

Although Texas allows exceptions under the ban, doctors and women have argued that the requirements are so vaguely worded that physicians still won’t risk providing abortions, lest they end up facing criminal charges or lawsuits.

State officials had asked Gamble to deny the request, arguing that Cox has not shown her life is in imminent danger and that she is therefore unable to qualify for an exception to the ban.

The decision was handed down just two days after Cox filed the lawsuit.

Cox learned she was pregnant for a third time in August and was told weeks later that her baby was at a high risk for a condition known as trisomy 18, which has a very high likelihood of miscarriage or stillbirth and low survival rates, according to the lawsuit.

The termination of pregnancies because of fetal anomalies or other often-fatal medical problems is seldom discussed in national debates over abortion. There are no recent statistics on the frequency of terminations for fetal anomalies in the U.S. but experts say it's a small percentage of total procedures.

The lawsuit was filed a week after the Texas Supreme Court heard arguments about whether the ban is too restrictive for women with pregnancy complications. That case is among the biggest ongoing challenges to abortion bans in the U.S., although a ruling from the all-Republican court may not come for months.

Two babies infected with dangerous bacteria sometimes found in powdered infant formula

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The dangerous bacteria that sparked powdered formula recalls and shortages last year has infected two babies this year, killing a Kentucky child and causing brain damage in a Missouri infant.

Federal health officials confirmed Thursday that two cases of invasive infections caused by *cronobacter sakazakii* have been reported in 2023, both in infants who consumed powdered infant formula made by Abbott Nutrition, the company at the center of the 2022 crisis.

Food and Drug Administration officials said there was no evidence that the infections were linked to manufacturing and no reason to issue new recalls. The bacteria are found naturally in the environment and also can make their way into infant formula after the packaging is opened.

"There is no indication of a broader public health concern related to this product at this time," the FDA said in a statement.

Kentucky health officials notified the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Nov. 15 that a child who consumed Similac Total Comfort powdered formula died after being infected with *cronobacter sakazakii*.

In Missouri, 6-week-old Mira White, of Sikeston, was diagnosed in early March with a brain infection caused by the bacteria, which was detected in an open container of Similac NeoSure formula in her home.

The same type of bacteria led federal investigators to shut down an Abbott formula plant in Sturgis, Michigan, last year when inspections sparked by four infant illnesses, including two deaths, showed widespread contamination in the plant.

Since falling ill, Mira has suffered nearly constant seizures and inconsolable bouts of crying, said her 33-year-old mother, Asian Davis. Brain scans showed neurological damage and missing tissue caused by the infection.

"It affected her brain real bad," Davis said. "She'll grow, but it will be a slow progress."

FDA investigators said they "did not identify a causal link" between Mira's infection and the Casa Grande, Arizona, factory that made the formula marketed for premature babies. Abbott officials said they found no *cronobacter* in batches of formula at the plant. The bacteria also weren't found in unopened cans of Similac NeoSure formula from Mira's home.

In Kentucky, the FDA said it "has not found evidence" of contamination after a Nov. 21 inspection at an Abbott plant. Officials did not identify the child or the location of the plant.

Abbott officials said there is no evidence that conditions at the company's manufacturing plants or contamination in sealed products caused the illnesses.

Frank Yiannas, a former FDA official in charge of food safety response, cautioned that a negative test does not guarantee there's no contamination.

"A positive test result means a lot. A negative test result doesn't mean anything," he said.

Food safety advocates say the tragic cases underscore the overlooked risk of powdered formula, particu-

larly for babies born prematurely, as Mira was. And it highlights the need for better education for parents and caregivers about how to prepare and use the crucial food.

Many people don't understand that powdered infant formula isn't sterile, said Mitzi Baum, chief executive of the nonprofit group STOP Foodborne Illness.

The powder itself can harbor potentially dangerous germs — and it is easily contaminated by sources in the home. *Cronobacter sakazakii* bacteria are common in soil and surface water, as well as dry foods.

Very young babies and those born prematurely are vulnerable to illnesses caused by the germ because their immune systems aren't developed enough to fight it off.

Earlier this year, the CDC warned parents to wash their hands and to sterilize equipment and the environment before feeding newborns. The warning followed the 2022 death of a baby from a *cronobacter sakazakii* infection tied to a contaminated breast pump.

The CDC typically receives two to four reports per year of invasive disease caused by *cronobacter*, though officials believe that's an undercount. Starting Jan. 1, the agency will begin formally tracking illnesses from the germ. Powdered infant formula is the most common cause of *cronobacter* infections in babies, the agency said.

Asian Davis said she had never heard of *cronobacter sakazakii* before Mira got sick.

The girl was hospitalized for weeks after her premature birth in January, but was developing normally when she went home in February. In March, within days of feeding Mira the formula, Davis noticed a difference.

"She stopped eating and sucking," Davis recalled. "That mother instinct came in and I said, 'Something's wrong with my baby.'"

After a battery of tests, doctors diagnosed Mira with bacterial meningitis caused by *cronobacter sakazakii* found in her spinal fluid and blood.

On Monday, lawyers representing Davis and her daughter moved to sue Abbott, claiming the company sold a defective product and that it should have warned parents of premature babies that powdered formula can cause serious disease. Officials at the Illinois court where the lawsuit was sent said civil claims can take days to process and that the case was not yet in its system.

The pending lawsuit also includes the family of a second child — Ryker Brown, of DeKalb, Illinois — who developed bacterial meningitis and brain damage in 2021 caused by a *cronobacter* infection after consuming Similac NeoSure formula. It's not clear how he became infected.

The Abbott plant in Michigan is still being monitored under a legal agreement with the FDA.

The agency, which came under fire for a slow response to previous *cronobacter* illnesses, warned three other U.S. formula makers in August to step up efforts to prevent contamination at manufacturing plants.

Davis, a single mother with four older children, has been unable to work at her job as a certified nursing assistant because of Mira's severe needs. She said she joined the lawsuit to raise awareness about the dangers of the rare bacteria — and to provide financially for Mira's future care.

"She will need surgeries, she might need a wheelchair," Davis said. "She might need that stuff for the rest of her life."

Donald Trump returns to court, lauds his defense expert who sees no evidence of accounting fraud

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump returned to his civil fraud trial Thursday to spotlight his defense, renewing his complaints that the case is baseless and heaping praise on an accounting professor's testimony that backed him up.

With testimony winding down after more than two months, the Republican 2024 presidential front-runner showed up to watch New York University accounting professor Eli Bartov.

The academic disputed the crux of New York State Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit: that Trump's financial statements were filled with fraudulently inflated asset values for such signature assets as his

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 60 of 75

Trump Tower penthouse and his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

"My main finding is that there is no evidence whatsoever of any accounting fraud," said Bartov, whom Trump's lawyers hired to give expert perspective. Trump's financial statements, he said, "were not materially misstated."

He suggested that anything problematic — like a huge year-to-year leap in the estimated value of the Trump Tower triplex — was simply an error.

Even while campaigning to reclaim the presidency and fighting four criminal cases, Trump is devoting a lot of attention to the New York trial. He's been a frustrated onlooker, a confrontational witness and a heated commentator outside the courtroom door.

Earlier in the trial, Trump attended several days and spent one on the witness stand while the state was presenting its case. But Thursday marked his first appearance since the defense began calling its own witnesses. He's due to testify again Monday.

He watched keenly Thursday, pointing out documents to his lawyers and at points slapping the defense table or shaking his head over objections to some of Bartov's testimony. During breaks, Trump lauded the witness and assailed the lawsuit, which is putting his net worth on trial and threatens to disrupt the real estate empire that vaulted him to fame and the White House.

"This is a case that should have never been brought," Trump declared as he left for the day, calling the trial "a witch hunt," "election interference" and "a disgrace to America."

James' lawsuit accuses Trump, his company and top executives including his sons Eric and Donald Trump Jr. of misleading banks and insurers by giving them financial statements that padded his net worth by billions of dollars.

The statements were provided to help secure deals, including loans at attractive interest rates available to hyperwealthy people. Some loans required updated statements each year.

Trump denies any wrongdoing, and he posits that the statements' numbers actually fell short of his wealth. He has downplayed the documents' importance in dealmaking, saying it was clear that lenders and others should do their own analyses. And he claims the case is a partisan abuse of power by James and Judge Arthur Engoron, both Democrats.

Bartov testified that financial statements are just starting points for lenders, and that the documents' value estimates are inherently subjective opinions. Differences in such opinions don't mean that there's fraud, the professor said.

He called Trump's financial statements transparent and uncommonly detailed, with caveats that Bartov claimed "even my 9-year-old granddaughter" would understand. So did major Trump lender Deutsche Bank, Bartov maintained.

Deutsche Bank executives have testified that, while expecting clients to provide broadly accurate information, they often adjust the numbers. Internal bank documents pegged Trump's net worth substantially lower than his financial statements did.

But if the bank adjusted the figures that Trump reported, "what if the reported values are incorrect?" the judge asked Bartov. He responded that the bankers didn't necessarily work from Trump's original numbers.

"So then why get them in the first place?" Engoron asked.

Noting that the figures came with pages of notes, Bartov said the package "allowed them to compute the numbers on their own."

State lawyer Kevin Wallace repeatedly complained that Bartov's opinions on Deutsche Bank's approach strayed beyond his expertise, at one point calling him "someone who's hired to say whatever they want in this case."

"You should be ashamed of yourself, talking to me like that!" Bartov exclaimed. "I am here to tell the truth."

The attorney general's office has also hired Bartov as an expert in the past.

Trump has regularly railed about the case on his Truth Social platform. But going to court in person affords him a microphone — in fact, many of them, on the news cameras positioned in the hallway. He often stops to expostulate on his way into and out of the courtroom proceedings, which cameras can't record.

His out-of-court remarks got him fined \$10,000 Oct. 26, when Engoron decided Trump had violated a gag order that prohibits participants in the trial from commenting publicly on court staffers. Trump's lawyers are appealing the gag order.

James hasn't let Trump go unanswered.

"Here's a fact: Donald Trump has engaged in years of financial fraud. Here's another fact: When you break the law, there are consequences," James' office wrote this week on X, formerly Twitter.

The attorney general herself has often come to court when Trump is there, though she didn't Thursday.

While the non-jury trial is airing claims of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records, Engoron ruled beforehand that Trump and other defendants engaged in fraud. He ordered that a receiver take control of some of Trump's properties, but an appellate court has held off on that order. The pause was extended indefinitely Thursday for the appeals process to play out, a development that Trump celebrated.

At trial, James is seeking more than \$300 million in penalties and a prohibition on Trump and other defendants doing business in New York.

Testimony is expected to conclude before Christmas. Closing arguments are scheduled in January, and Engoron is aiming for a decision by the end of that month.

Ospreys had safety issues long before they were grounded. A look at the aircraft's history

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the U.S. military took the extraordinary step of grounding its entire fleet of V-22 Ospreys this week, it wasn't reacting just to the recent deadly crash of the aircraft off the coast of Japan. The aircraft has had a long list of problems in its short history.

The Osprey takes off and lands like a helicopter but can tilt its propellers horizontally to fly like an airplane. That unique and complex design has allowed the Osprey to speed troops to the battlefield. The U.S. Marine Corps, which operates the vast majority of the Ospreys in service, calls it a "game-changing assault support platform."

But on Wednesday, the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps grounded all Ospreys after a preliminary investigation of last week's crash indicated that a materiel failure — that something went wrong with the aircraft — and not a mistake by the crew led to the deaths.

And it's not the first time. There have been persistent questions about a mechanical problem with the clutch that has troubled the program for more than a decade. There also have been questions as to whether all parts of the Osprey have been manufactured according to safety specifications and, as those parts age, whether they remain strong enough to withstand the significant forces created by the Osprey's unique structure and dynamics of tiltrotor flight.

The government of Japan, which is the only international partner flying the Osprey, had already grounded its aircraft after the Nov. 29 crash, which killed all eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members on board.

"It's good they grounded the fleet," said Rex Rivolo, a retired Air Force pilot who analyzed the Osprey for the Pentagon's test and evaluation office from 1992 to 2007 as an analyst at the Institute for Defense Analyses, and who previously warned military officials that the aircraft wasn't safe. "At this point, they had no choice."

The Osprey has become a workhorse for the Marine Corps and Air Force Special Operations Command and was in the process of being adopted by the Navy to replace its C-2 Greyhound propeller planes, which transport personnel on and off at-sea aircraft carriers.

Marine Corps Ospreys also have been used to transport White House staff, press and security personnel accompanying the president. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said they also are subject to the standdown.

While the Ospreys are grounded, Air Force Special Operations Command said it will work to mitigate the impact to operations, training and readiness. The command will continue to fly other aircraft and Osprey

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 62 of 75

crews will continue to train on simulators, spokeswoman Lt. Col. Becky Heyse said.

It was not immediately clear how the other services will adapt their missions.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CLUTCH

The first Ospreys only became operational in 2007 after decades of testing. But more than 50 troops have died either flight testing the Osprey or conducting training flights over the program's lifespan, including 20 deaths in four crashes over the past 20 months.

In July, the Marine Corps for the first time blamed one of the fatal Osprey crashes on a fleet-wide problem that has been known for years but for which there's still not a good fix. It's known as hard clutch engagement, or HCE.

The Osprey's two engines are linked by an interconnected drive shaft that runs inside the length of the wings. On each tip, by the engines, a component called a sprag clutch transfers torque, or power, from one propeller to the other to make sure both rotors are spinning at the same speed. That keeps the Osprey's flight in balance. If one of the two engines fails, the sprag clutch is also a safety feature: It will transfer power from the working side to the failing engine's side to keep both rotors going.

But sprag clutches have also become a worrying element. As the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps began looking at HCE events following incidents in 2022, they determined that the clutches may be wearing out faster than anticipated.

Since 2010, Osprey clutches have slipped at least 15 times. As the system re-engages, hard clutch engagement occurs. In just fractions of a second, an HCE event creates a power spike that surges power to the other engine, which can throw the Osprey into an uncontrolled roll or slide. A power spike can also destroy a sprag clutch, essentially severing the interconnected drive shaft. That could result in the complete loss of aircraft control with little or no time for the pilots to react and save their Osprey or crew, Rivolo said.

In the 2022 crash of a Marine Corps MV-22 in California that killed five Marines, hard clutch engagement created an "unrecoverable, catastrophic mechanical failure," the investigation found. The fire was so intense it destroyed the Osprey's flight data recorder — another issue the Marines have pushed to fix, by requiring new flight data recorders to be better able to survive a crash.

OSPREYS HAVE BEEN GROUNDED BEFORE

After Air Force Special Operations Command experienced two hard clutch engagement incidents within six weeks in 2022, the commander, Lt. Gen. James Slife, grounded all of its Ospreys for two weeks. An undisclosed number of Ospreys across the military were grounded again in February 2023 as work began on clutch replacements.

But getting replacements to all the aircraft at the time depended on their availability, Slife said in 2022.

And even that replacement may not be the fix. Neither the services nor defense contractors Bell Textron or Boeing, which jointly produce the Osprey, have found a root cause. The clutch "may be the manifestation of the problem," but not the root cause, Slife said.

In last week's crash, Japanese media outlet NHK reported that an eyewitness saw the Osprey inverted with an engine on fire before it went down in the sea. If eyewitness accounts are correct, Rivolo said, clutch failure and a catastrophic failure of the interconnected drive shaft should be investigated as a potential cause.

After its investigation of the 2022 crash, the Marine Corps made several recommendations, including designing a new quill assembly, which is a component that mitigates clutch slippage and hard clutch engagement, and requiring that all drivetrain component materiel be strengthened.

That work is ongoing, according to the V-22 Joint Program Office, which is responsible for the development and production of the aircraft. A new quill assembly design is being finalized and testing of a prototype should begin early next year, it said.

WHISTLEBLOWER QUESTIONS

Materiel strength was the subject of a whistleblower lawsuit that Boeing settled with the Justice Department in September for \$8.1 million. Two former Boeing V-22 composites fabricators had come forward with allegations that Boeing was falsifying records certifying that it had performed the testing necessary to ensure it maintained uniform temperatures required to ensure the Osprey's composite parts were

strengthened according to DOD specifications.

A certain temperature was needed for uniform molecular bonding of the composite surface. Without that bond, "the components will contain resin voids, linear porosity, and other defects that are not visible to the eye; which compromise the strength and other characteristics of the material, and which can cause catastrophic structural failures," the lawsuit alleged.

In its settlement, the Justice Department contended Boeing did not meet the Pentagon's manufacturing standards from 2007 to 2018; the whistleblowers contended in their lawsuit that this affected more than 80 Ospreys that were delivered in that time frame.

In a statement to The Associated Press, Boeing said it entered into the settlement agreement with the Justice Department and Navy "to resolve certain False Claims Act allegations, without admission of liability."

Boeing said while composites are used throughout the V-22, the parts that were questioned in the lawsuit were "all non-critical parts that do not implicate flight safety."

"Boeing is in compliance with its curing processes for composite parts," the company said. "Additionally, we would stress that the cause of the accident in Japan is currently unknown. We are standing by to provide any requested support."

ONGOING FIXES

The V-22 Joint Program Office said that since the 2022 incidents, significant progress has been made toward identifying the cause of the hard clutch engagement.

"While the definitive root cause has not yet been determined, the joint government and industry team has narrowed down the scope of the investigation to a leading theory," it said in a statement to the AP. "The leading theory involves a partial engagement of some clutches which have been installed for a lengthy period of time. This has not yet been definitively proven, but the data acquired thus far support this theory."

Bell assembles the Osprey in a partnership with Boeing in its facilities in Amarillo, Texas. Bell would not comment on last week's crash, but said it works with the services when an accident occurs. "The level of support is determined by the service branch safety center in charge of the investigation," Bell spokesman Jay Hernandez said.

In its report on the fatal 2022 crash, the Marine Corps forewarned that more accidents were possible because neither the military nor manufacturers have been able to isolate a root cause. It said future incidents were "impossible to prevent without improvements to flight control system software, drivetrain component material strength, and robust inspection requirements."

Trump appeals ruling rejecting immunity claim as window narrows to derail federal election case

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump is appealing a ruling that found he is not immune from criminal prosecution as he runs out of opportunities to delay or even derail an upcoming trial on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Lawyers for the 2024 Republican presidential primary frontrunner filed a notice of appeal Thursday indicating that they will challenge U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan's decision rejecting Trump's bid to dismiss the case headed to trial in Washington, D.C., in March.

The one-page filing, the first step in a process that could potentially reach the Supreme Court in the months ahead, was accompanied by a request from the Trump team to freeze deadlines in the case while the appeals court considers the matter.

"The filing of President Trump's notice of appeal has deprived this Court of jurisdiction over this case in its entirety pending resolution of the appeal," Trump's lawyers wrote. "Therefore, a stay of all further proceedings is mandatory and automatic."

In a separate statement, Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said one of Trump's "most sacred obligations and responsibilities as President was to ensure that the election process was conducted in a way that complied with the law, including investigating and challenging election fraud and irregularities."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 64 of 75

He added that Trump "has absolute immunity from prosecution, and litigation, for carrying out his sworn and solemn duties as President."

The appeal had been expected given that Trump's lawyers had earlier signaled their plans to pursue all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary, what they say is a legally untested question of a former president's immunity from prosecution. It's part of a broader strategy by him and his lawyers to try to postpone the criminal cases against him until after next year's presidential election, averting trials that could unfold in the heat of the presidential campaign.

The appeals court is expected to schedule dates for written briefs and oral arguments, though it's not clear when those would be.

The argument that Trump is immune from prosecution for actions taken within his role as president has for months been seen as perhaps the most weighty and legally consequential objection to the case made by the Trump lawyers ahead of trial. No former president has ever been prosecuted before, a lack of historical precedent Trump's team has seized on in trying to get the indictment tossed out.

Now that the immunity argument has already been rejected by Chutkan, Trump's best hope at delaying the trial appears to be convincing the D.C. appeals court or ultimately the Supreme Court to pause the case while the higher courts consider his prosecutorial immunity claim.

However, the rejection last week by a three-judge panel of the appeals court of Trump's sweeping claims of immunity in civil cases accusing him of inciting the U.S. Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, suggest he likely faces an uphill battle. While it's possible the Supreme Court may feel compelled to step in to address an unprecedented legal question, there's also no guarantee the justices will take the case up at this stage.

Though it typically takes months for appeals to wind their way through higher courts, the appeals court and the Supreme Court could quickly resolve the question of immunity if the judges want to, said Jessica Roth, a Cardozo School of Law professor who has been following the case.

"It's a very clean, narrow legal issue, and the issue has been fully briefed by the parties and very well laid out in the opinion so it's not like considerable time is needed," she said. "It's a purely legal question that the courts could expedite and decide quickly."

Trump's lawyers have asserted that he cannot face criminal charges because the actions spelled out in the indictment fell within his duties as president.

But Chutkan said that nothing in the Constitution nor American history justifies cloaking former presidents with immunity from prosecution for actions they took while in office.

"Defendant's four-year service as Commander in Chief did not bestow on him the divine right of kings to evade the criminal accountability that governs his fellow citizens," Chutkan, an appointee of President Barack Obama, wrote in her ruling earlier this month.

While the Supreme Court has held that presidents are immune from civil liability for actions within the scope of their their official duties, courts have never before had to grapple with the question of whether that immunity extends to criminal prosecution.

Cheryl Bader, a former federal prosecutor, said she believes the immunity argument will be a losing battle for Trump, even before the conservative-majority Supreme Court.

"I think based on the law and there being no constitutional provision giving former presidents immunity and based on the policy that we don't want to have former presidents being able to commit crimes ... I don't see how this ruling gets reversed," said Bader, head of Fordham University Law School's Criminal Defense Clinic.

"This decision really put Trump in his place, it basically said he's not a monarch and once he leaves office he gets no special treatment in the halls of justice," Bader said.

The case charges Trump with conspiring to subvert the will of voters in a desperate bid to cling to power after he lost the 2020 presidential election to Democrat Joe Biden. It is the first of four criminal cases Trump is facing that's scheduled to go to trial, though it's possible the appeal could delay the case.

Special counsel Jack Smith has separately charged Trump in Florida with illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate after he left the White House. That case is currently set for trial next May, though the judge has signaled that that date might be postponed.

Trump is also charged in Georgia with conspiring to overturn his election loss to Biden. And he faces charges in New York related to hush money payments made during the 2016 campaign. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Israel and US are at odds over conflicting visions for postwar Gaza

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The United States has offered strong support to Israel in its war against the Hamas militant group that rules the Gaza Strip. But the allies are increasingly at odds over what will happen to Gaza once the war winds down.

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, this week announced that Israel would retain an open-ended security presence in Gaza. Israeli officials talk of imposing a buffer zone to keep Palestinians away from the Israeli border. They rule out any role for the Palestinian Authority, which was ousted from Gaza by Hamas in 2007 but governs semi-autonomous areas of the occupied West Bank.

The United States has laid out a much different vision. Top officials have said they will not allow Israel to reoccupy Gaza or further shrink its already small territory. They have repeatedly called for a return of the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority and the resumption of peace talks aimed at establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

These conflicting visions have set the stage for difficult discussions between Israel and the U.S.

Here's a closer look at the issues.

SHAKY COMMON GROUND

Israel declared war on Hamas after the Islamic militant group burst across its southern border on Oct. 7, slaughtering some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping more than 240 others. President Joe Biden quickly flew to Israel on a solidarity mission, and his administration has strongly backed Israel's right to defend itself while providing weapons and military assistance.

Israel has said its goal is to destroy Hamas — a difficult task given the group's deep roots in Palestinian society.

The U.S., which along with other Western countries considers Hamas a terrorist group, has embraced this goal. But as the war drags on, it has expressed misgivings about the dire humanitarian conditions and mounting civilian death toll in Gaza, where health authorities report over 16,000 dead, at least two-thirds of them women and children. Israel says Hamas is to blame by using civilians as human shields.

Over the weekend, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said it is critical that Israel protect Gaza's civilians.

"If you drive them into the arms of the enemy, you replace a tactical victory with a strategic defeat," he said. "So I have repeatedly made clear to Israel's leaders that protecting civilians in Gaza is both a moral responsibility and a strategic imperative."

On Thursday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken went even farther, telling Israel that "civilian casualties remain too high and that Israel must step up its efforts to reduce them," his office said. Blinken also called on Israel to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

DIFFERENT VISIONS

The biggest differences between the allies have emerged over the longer-term vision for Gaza.

Netanyahu has offered only glimpses of what he plans.

On Tuesday, he said the military would retain open-ended security control over the Gaza Strip long after the war ends, suggesting a form of extended Israeli occupation.

Netanyahu ruled out the idea of foreign peacekeepers, saying only the Israeli army could ensure that Gaza remains demilitarized. Netanyahu has also rejected a return of the Palestinian Authority, saying its leader, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas cannot be trusted.

"After destroying Hamas, Gaza will be demilitarized and de-radicalized so that no threat will be posed to Israel from Gaza," said Ophir Falk, an adviser to Netanyahu. "The buffer zone may be part of the demilitarization. That's the plan."

Israel told Western allies and regional neighbors about the buffer zone plans as recently as last week,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 66 of 75

without offering a detailed proposal, according to Egyptians officials and Arab and Western diplomats, who insisted on anonymity to discuss the topic.

The officials said countries informed of the proposal include Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Two Egyptian officials said it appears that Israel doesn't have a detailed workable plan for such a zone, including its width.

"They just say, 'it would be a temporary buffer zone,'" one of the officials said. "But when we asked for details, they don't have answers."

Arab countries, meanwhile, have refused to talk about postwar scenarios while the fighting continues and are demanding a cease-fire. Jordan's foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, for instance, recently said that Arab countries would not "come and clean the mess after Israel."

While no decisions have been taken, these ideas appear to put Israel at odds with the White House.

Biden and other top officials have repeatedly said that a "revitalized" Palestinian Authority must play a role in postwar Gaza and that Israel must seek a two-state solution involving the PA. They have ruled out a long-term re-occupation or redrawing of Gaza's borders.

Vice President Kamala Harris laid out perhaps the clearest U.S. vision during an address in Dubai last weekend.

"Five principles guide our approach for post-conflict Gaza: no forcible displacement, no re-occupation, no siege or blockade, no reduction in territory, and no use of Gaza as a platform for terrorism," she said. "We want to see a unified Gaza and West Bank under the Palestinian Authority, and Palestinian voices and aspirations must be at the center of this work."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has said he would only agree to return to Gaza if it is part of a broader plan aimed at establishing an independent state that also includes the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Israel captured all three territories in the 1967 Mideast war.

Frustration with Netanyahu may not be limited to the U.S.

Amos Harel, the military affairs columnist for the Haaretz daily, said Israeli army commanders believe Netanyahu is motivated by domestic political considerations and refusing to deal with the Palestinian Authority "due to coalition constructions from his far-right partners." Netanyahu and his hardline coalition partners oppose Palestinian independence.

HOW SERIOUS ARE THE DISPUTES?

For now, both sides seem to be focused on the shared goal of destroying Hamas.

"It's important for them that Israel achieve the military goals because this is the starting point for any changes that can happen the day after," said Eldad Shavit, a former high-ranking Israeli intelligence official.

He said U.S. pressure in the short term will be on immediate issues — such as pressure to minimize civilian casualties and to allow more deliveries of humanitarian aid.

The U.S. has indicated that it will show some patience after the fighting subsides.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said the U.S. understands "there will have to be some kind of transition period after the end of major combat operations." He declined to say how long that would take.

But as the death toll in Gaza continues to rise, conditions deteriorate, and Biden enters an election year with significant portions of his Democratic base pushing for an end to Israel's offensive, these differences are likely to grow in the absence of a clear endgame.

Shavit said that tensions could rise if the U.S. at some point concludes that Israel is dragging its feet or ignoring American demands. But for now, "the Americans want Israel to succeed," he said.

Daniel Levy, a former Israeli peace negotiator who is president of the U.S./Middle East Project, a policy institute that studies the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, said the Americans are unlikely to put their foot down.

He cited what he described as a tepid American response to heavy civilian casualties in southern Gaza as an indicator of what lies ahead.

"Israelis have a sense that their road to run is not endless, but they still feel they have lots of road to run," he said.

Jayden Daniels, the dazzling quarterback for LSU, is the AP college football player of the year

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — LSU quarterback Jayden Daniels is The Associated Press college football player of the year, the school's second winner in the past five seasons.

Daniels received 35 of the 51 first-place votes and 130 total points from AP Top 25 poll voters. The Heisman Trophy finalist finished comfortably ahead of Washington quarterback Michael Penix, who was second with 15 first-place votes and 97 points.

Oregon QB Bo Nix was third, with Ohio State receiver Marvin Harrison fourth and Oklahoma State running back Ollie Gordon II fifth. Nix received the other first-place vote. USC quarterback Caleb Williams, the 2022 AP Player of the Year and last year's Heisman winner, did not receive votes this season.

Daniels, Penix, Nix and Harrison are the finalists for the Heisman, which will be presented in New York on Saturday. The winner of the AP award has differed from the Heisman winner just twice in the past two decades.

The last LSU player to be named AP Player of the Year was Joe Burrow in 2019, when he also won the Heisman.

Daniels, a San Bernardino, California, native who transferred to LSU from Arizona State in 2022, has led the nation in total offense this season with 4,946 yards in 12 games (412.2 yards per game). He has passed for 3,812 yards, which ranks third nationally. His 40 TDs passing ties for first nationally with Nix, who has played in one more game than Daniels.

The 6-foot-4, 210-pound Daniels rushed for 1,134 yards and 10 TDs. His 50 touchdowns rushing and passing combined, along with a 2-point conversion on a passing play, has made him responsible for a nation-high 302 points.

As a youth athlete, his nickname was "Smooth," he said in an interview with The Associated Press, "because it looks like I'm not running fast or running hard ... but I'm moving faster than what most people think."

As productive as Daniels has been as a passer, his elusiveness and breakaway speed as a scrambler have distinguished him. During a 52-35 victory over Florida, Daniels became the first Football Bowl Subdivision QB to pass for more than 350 yards and rush for more than 200 in a game.

"His ability to run when things are not there is unique," LSU coach Brian Kelly said. "His speed, his durability, his toughness, puts him up there with the great ones."

Daniels rushed for touchdowns of 85 and 51 yards against Florida, and said the latter exemplified his instinctive approach to scrambling. He said he read a linebacker's eyes before darting behind him and then weaving his way to the end zone.

"It's just all instincts," Daniels said. "It's not something that I think about pre-snap."

His approach comes with risk and puts a premium on toughness.

A big and arguably late hit at Missouri briefly forced Daniels out of that game with a deep bruise in his ribs. He returned to lead LSU to a comeback victory, highlighted by his 35-yard scoring run. The rib injury bothered him for two more games.

"My pain tolerance is high," Daniels said. "I was able to go out there and deal with it."

LSU (9-3) was knocked out of contention for an SEC title when it lost to Alabama, a game in which Daniels spent most of the fourth quarter on the sideline with concussion symptoms after a penalized hit by linebacker Dallas Turner. Until that point, Alabama's defense had struggled to contain Daniels.

"That still burns me," Daniels said. "Obviously, we lost to a very good team, but I felt like it would have been a whole different story if I was in there."

Daniels said it's important to him to credit his team's role in any individual accolades he receives, from the offensive line to the running backs and his pass-catchers.

"Without them, I wouldn't be in a position like this where I was receiving any type of award," Daniels said. "That's my thing, is to make sure they feel a part of it."

An appreciation: How Norman Lear changed television — and with it American life — in the 1970s

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In many American living rooms, the 1960s didn't really begin until Jan. 12, 1971.

That was the night the comedy "All in the Family" debuted, almost instantly changing television and American society with it. Creator Norman Lear, who died at age 101 on Tuesday, was the man behind that transformation.

The series introduced the brash bigot Archie Bunker, his "dingbat" wife Edith, his feminist daughter Gloria and his liberal son-in-law Mike "Meathead" Stivic. From their house in the New York City borough of Queens, they co-existed loudly and watched the world spin uncontrollably.

Archie Bunker, portrayed by Carroll O'Connor, embodied the "American Way" — as most middle-aged white Americans understood it at the time — and watched in confused exasperation as "others" redefined it.

Coming out of a tumultuous decade of fundamental change, and smack in the middle of a contentious war overseas, these realities were hardly foreign to most Americans. They just rarely saw them reflected on television after dinnertime, after the nightly news was over.

HE HELPED TELEVISION COME OF AGE

If not in its infancy, television was barely out of its adolescence at the time. Most people had only one set in their homes — my family had upgraded from black-and-white to color less than two years earlier — and viewers watched the same handful of over-the-airwaves channels. Television programmers — watched closely by network censors and the Federal Communications Commission — rarely tread on topics that risked upsetting anyone.

"Before 'All in the Family,' television comedy was a vast playground for witches, Martians and crazy ladies who constantly dressed in disguises or mistook their husband's boss for the milkman," Aljean Hermetz wrote in The New York Times in 1972.

"Relationships were relentlessly stapled out of cardboard and then wrapped in cellophane with professional-looking bows," Hermetz wrote. "The few non-plastic situation comedies were gentle and relatively melodramatic and contained no meanness."

Bunker was incredulous at a Black neighbor portraying Santa Claus — after all, he reasoned, everyone knew Santa was white, right? He reacted in shock when Sammy Davis Jr. kissed him on the cheek. England, he said, was a "fag" country — a word you wouldn't hear on network television today. Even the sound of a flushing toilet was novel for TV then.

Menopause, miscarriage, marital spats — it was all fair game. Viewers learned to confront reality, and their differences, and find things to laugh about.

"I never thought of the shows as groundbreaking," Lear told the Harvard Business Review in 2014, "because every American understood so easily what they were all about. The issues were around their dinner tables. The language was in their schoolyards. It was nothing new."

The show was such a success, and so quickly, that in 1972 the liberal lead character in Lear's sitcom "Maude" was deciding to undergo an abortion — the year before the Supreme Court legalized abortion with the Roe v. Wade decision.

It wasn't without controversy. Lear asked TV Guide and other publications not to include "abortion" in their pre-show synopses. Two CBS stations in Illinois didn't air it. The network didn't want to air it, either, until Lear told them they'd have to find another show for their Tuesday night schedule.

HE BROADENED THE VOICES THAT WERE HEARD

That was the power that Lear had at the time. By the 1974-75 season, he was behind five of the 10 most-watched programs. And across the 1970s, whether it was race or gender or single parenthood, Lear used that power to create other sitcoms that reflected worlds that had rarely, if ever, been seen on television before.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 69 of 75

There was the junkyard owner memorably portrayed by comic Redd Foxx in "Sanford and Son" ("This is the big one, Elizabeth," he'd say, clutching his chest and pretending to have a heart attack). There was the struggling Black family in the Chicago projects in "Good Times" (with the "dy-no-mite" son portrayed by Jimmie Walker).

And most memorable of all, there was the striving Black family acclimating into a Manhattan "deluxe apartment in the sky" in "The Jeffersons," a series introduced each week by the unforgettable theme song "Movin' on Up."

Actress Bonnie Franklin showed viewers the struggles and triumphs of a single mom raising two daughters in "One Day at a Time," a series that made Valerie Bertinelli America's sweetheart.

It was a run of creative and commercial success never truly duplicated — certainly not by Lear, who had his share of later strikeouts and, for a younger generation, became better known as a liberal activist.

The candor and comedy he brought to the airwaves in the 1970s sealed his status, however, and any television show with realism at its core owes Norman Lear a debt.

In lasting until he was 101, Lear lived long enough to see his work appreciated by those who didn't live through it the first time. "One Day at a Time," for example, was remade from 2017 to 2020 with a Cuban family at its center. And Jimmy Kimmel lovingly helped produce televised run-throughs of some of Lear's classic scripts acted by current stars.

Somehow, it worked. The exercise proved the durability of his scripts — and, instead of sounding dated, how so much of what they discussed is still relevant today.

Best movies of 2023: 'Oppenheimer,' 'Fallen Leaves,' 'May December'

By LINDSEY BAHR and JAKE COYLE AP Film Writers

The Associated Press' Film Writers Lindsey Bahr and Jake Coyle's picks for the best movies of 2023:

LINDSEY BAHR

1. "Oppenheimer"

Christopher Nolan has had so many major films in a relatively short time, that "Oppenheimer" might seem like a given, rather than the triumphant fusion of everything he's passionate about: Large format film; the tension between humanity and science; the turmoil of a brilliant mind; and the wonder of an exceptional group coming together to make an impossible thing (in this case a nuclear weapon) but also on a meta level, the film.

2. "The Zone of Interest"

Like "Oppenheimer," the horror in Jonathan Glazer's "The Zone of Interest" is what is unseen. Depiction bubbled up as a hot topic this year, as though audiences aren't intelligent enough to imagine the worst. In "The Zone of Interest," it's only a wall that separates one Nazi family from the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Glazer's film is a masterclass in atmosphere: A chilling, artful representation of the not so grey areas of complicity.

3. "Priscilla"

Sofia Coppola's "Priscilla" is so beautiful to look at, it's easy not to notice its rigorous restraint and minimalism in storytelling. It provides a singular showcase for her very capable actors, Cailee Spaeny and Jacob Elordi, that's about all the small things — the moments that might be imperceptible were it not for her quiet gaze. That the Elvis estate wasn't on board just means she did her job as an independent artist.

4. "Asteroid City"

The play within a play conceit of Wes Anderson's "Asteroid City" is perhaps his most self-conscious film, made in his signature style but also about his style and the artifice of it. It is immensely rewatchable, funny and quotable, with a career best performance from Scarlett Johansson and a brilliant Margot Robbie cameo.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 70 of 75

5. "May December"

It takes a master like Todd Haynes to authentically blend high camp and melodrama with grounded emotion, but that's what he's managed to do with the sickly entertaining "May December." It's a satire about actors and the Lifetime-ing of human tragedies and a soulful portrait of a victim who doesn't realize it.

6. "Fallen Leaves"

Aki Kaurismäki was, embarrassingly, a blind spot for me. But the Finnish filmmaker's deadpan romance about the missed connections of two lonely souls in a cold, unglamorous, alcohol-soaked setting is a wonderful place to start. Like Holappa and Ansa come to learn, it's never too late to grow.

7. "The Holdovers"

There were a few movies this year that were just so good and so watchable that it feels too easy to select them. Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers" is the best of them: A well written, acted and composed film that makes you feel like you too are stuck in a New England boarding school over a holiday break and learning things about yourself and those in the trenches with you.

8. "Poor Things"

Yorgos Lanthimos crafts a deranged, provocative, unabashedly stylish and funny fairy tale that feels completely fresh. The themes aren't exactly subtle, what with Emma Stone's insatiable Bella Baxter calling her creator (Willem Dafoe) God, but it is one of those huge, ambitious swings that works.

9. "A Thousand and One"

Writer-director A.V. Rockwell made the year's best debut feature in this vibrant portrait of a mother and son in New York City in the 1990s. The city as character may be a tired trope, but here you feel their home changing and gentrifying as their own relationship takes unexpected turns. This grand opening statement is both intimate and epic, with a pulsating soundtrack.

10. "Bottoms"

It's kind of hard to believe that "Bottoms" was a real movie that was really released by a major studio, MGM. Director Emma Seligman and her co-writer/muse/star Rachel Sennott created one of the wildest, funniest, weirdest high school movies that Gen Z still needs to discover and claim. It's ok, there's time.

Also: "20 Days in Mariupol," "Theater Camp," "Blue Jean," "All of Us Strangers," "Eileen," "Showing Up," "You Hurt My Feelings," "Killers of the Flower Moon," "The Eight Mountains," "Anatomy of a Fall," "The Pigeon Tunnel."

JAKE COYLE

1. "Fallen Leaves"

Loneliness and lousy bosses are everywhere in the cold world of Finnish filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki's latest. But there are stirring signs of life beneath the deadpan surface of "Fallen Leaves," a minimalist fable about a maybe-romance between two working-class loners (Alma Pöysti, Jussi Vatanen). Kaurismäki doesn't need much — a trip to the movies, a few good songs, a dog named Chaplin — to say a lot. An 82-minute balm for a bleak world.

2. "The Holdovers"

Alexander Payne's latest, with its cozy, Christmas New England environs, has sometimes been compared to a warm blanket. But there's a strong anti-authoritarian streak running through "The Holdovers," much like the '70s films it models itself on. The cast, including Paul Giamatti, Da'Vine Joy Randolph and newcomer Dominic Sessa, is flawless. There's plenty of warmth here, but there's rage, too — including a lament for a lost spirit of American filmmaking.

3. "The Eight Mountains"

Seasons sweep through Felix Van Groeningen and Charlotte Vandermeersch's gentle tale of friendship set in the Italian Alps. The film, vast and intimate at once, tracks two childhood friends (Luca Marinelli, Alessandro Borghi) over the course of years, enveloping them in a breathtaking high-mountain backdrop and the radiant folk songs of Daniel Norgren.

4. "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse"

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 71 of 75

The year's giddiest and most spectacular film. As good as "Into the Spider-Verse" was, the second chapter pushes dazzlingly against both superhero convention and the limits of animation.

5. "Perfect Days"

The great Japanese actor Koji Yakusho stars as a solitary, soft-spoken public toilet cleaner in Tokyo in Wim Wenders' profoundly lovely ode to the everyday. Though plot and backstory make hesitant inroads, "Perfect Days" is mostly about the day-to-day rhythms of Hirayama, who reads Faulkner at night, takes pictures of trees on his lunch break and listens to cassette tapes (yes, including Lou Reed) while he drives.

6. "Origin"

Ava DuVernay's stirring adaptation of Isabel Wilkerson's "Caste" isn't exactly an adaptation. DuVernay dramatizes Wilkerson's writing of the celebrated nonfiction book, mixing in historical accounts of caste systems with the intimate dramas of Wilkerson's own life. The combination movingly fuses social with personal.

7. "Barbie"

Here's one thing that's not been said enough about Greta Gerwig's runaway sensation: It's the funniest movie of the year. With apologies to Cord Jefferson's blistering debut, "American Fiction," and Nicole Holofcener's white-lie opus, "You Hurt My Feelings," nothing was as clever as Gerwig's I'll-have-my-cake-and-eat-it-too balancing act of brand marketing and gender satire.

8. "La Chimera"

The past in everywhere in Alice Rohrwacher's enchanting 1980-set folk tale, underfoot and in the melancholy eyes of its Englishman protagonist (Josh O'Connor), the gifted but haunted leader of a ramshackle band of tomb-robbers who raid ancient Etruscan burial sites in Tuscany. This is a magical but earthy movie.

9. "All of Us Strangers"

The latest by Andrew Haigh, the British filmmaker of "Weekend" and "45 Years," is an aching, unshakable ghost story. In a dreamy metaphysical daze, the film toggles between the unfolding relationship of two gay men, Adam (Andrew Scott) and Harry (Paul Mescal), and Harry's visitations to his frozen-in-time childhood home where he finds his long-dead parents (Claire Foy, Jamie Bell). It's about family, loss, fiction, romance, coming out, growing older, and it will absolutely level you.

10. "Tótem"

Mexican writer-director Lila Aviles' film is likewise about family and grief, and it, too, has the power to devastate. Aviles' follow-up to her 2018 debut "The Chambermaid" is largely seen through the perspective of young Sol (Naima Senties) on a day when her multigenerational family is preparing a birthday party for her dying father (Mateo García Elizondo). The teeming, distracted lives of her relatives nearly obscure the hard truth at hand for Sol.

Also: "R.M.N.," "Anatomy of a Fall," "Oppenheimer," "You Hurt My Feelings," "A Thousand and One," "Tori and Lokita," "Youth (Spring)," "Killers of the Flower Moon," "The Delinquents," "Orlando: My Political Documentary," "Past Lives," "American Fiction," "Ferrari," "The Boy and the Heron," "Asteroid City"

What to know about the Hall & Oates legal fight, and the business at stake behind all that music

By JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — After more than a half-century of making music together, Daryl Hall is suing John Oates and arguing in arbitration that he can't sell his share of a Hall & Oates business partnership without Hall's permission.

Public court filings have revealed just how wide the rift has grown between the duo famous for hits in the 1970s and '80s, including "Maneater," "Rich Girl" "Kiss on My List" and "I Can't Go for That (No Can Do)."

Hall has accused Oates of blindsiding and betraying him, saying their relationship and his trust in Oates have deteriorated. Oates has said he is "deeply hurt" that Hall is making "inflammatory, outlandish, and inaccurate statements" about him.

A Nashville judge recently paused the sale of Oates' stake in Whole Oats Enterprises LLP to Primary Wave

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 72 of 75

IP Investment Management LLC until an arbitrator weighs in, or until Feb. 17.

Here are some recent developments.

WHY ARE HALL & OATES GOING TO COURT?

The dispute went public on Nov. 16, when Hall filed a lawsuit in a Nashville chancery court asking a judge to stop the sale by Oates so a separate, private arbitration could begin. Hall's lawsuit contends that going to court was the only way to ensure the sale by Oates and others involved in his trust didn't close before an arbitrator could weigh in. Hall filed for arbitration on Nov. 9.

Still, the pair's private business holdings and their agreements are largely blocked from public view, even after a judge unsealed many filings. Oates' attorneys have argued that he lived up to his contractual obligations and didn't go behind Hall's back. They have said the case should have remained only in arbitration, while accusing Hall of publicizing issues from what had been a private disagreement.

A judge put the sale on hold the day the lawsuit was filed, then extended that pause last week.

WHAT IS THE PROPOSED SALE TIMELINE?

A court declaration by Hall shows what kind of valuable Hall & Oates materials Whole Oats Enterprises contains, though it does not describe the value, ownership percentage breakdown or sale price for those materials. The declaration cites materials such as trademarks, personal name and likeness rights, record royalty income and website and social media assets.

The musicians had been considering how to undergo a "global divorce" in late 2022, when Hall said he was entertaining Oates' push to dissolve their touring entity and a separate partnership related to their musical compositions and publishing, Hall's declaration says. Hall, meanwhile, proposed dissolving Whole Oats Enterprises.

Their disputes about Whole Oats Enterprises worsened and hit an impasse, leading them to enter mediation in July, Hall's arbitration filing states.

The filing accuses Oates of quietly negotiating a deal with Primary Wave, while letting Hall continue with normal mediation tasks, costing him time and legal fees.

Oates' team entered into a non-disclosure agreement on Oct. 2 without Hall's knowledge that provided Primary Wave confidential information from the partnership. Blind to the Primary Wave negotiations, Hall and his representatives attended an hourslong mediation the next day. On Oct. 19, Hall's attorneys provided Oates' team with proposed settlement documents, though Oates' team still has not commented on them, the arbitration document says.

The next day, Oates sent Hall the transfer notice and letter of intent describing the sale to Primary Wave, according to Hall's filing.

WHAT WAS DARYL HALL'S REACTION?

The court fight was initially shrouded by corporate legalese and filings unavailable to the public's view. Hall then peeled away the veneer in a point-by-point declaration detailing why he is "deeply troubled by the deterioration of my relationship with, and trust in, John Oates."

Hall's account was filed in early November during arbitration and made public later in the month in the lawsuit. It alleges that Oates and his team engaged in the "ultimate partnership betrayal" by pushing to sell his share while telling Hall's associates that he wanted to maintain his ownership.

Hall alleged that Oates in recent years has become "adversarial and aggressive instead of professional and courteous" toward him. Hall accused Oates of making business demands via a "revolving cast of lawyers."

Hall said he was two days from leaving for a tour across the West Coast, Japan and the Philippines, when Oates first provided notice of the impending sale on Oct. 20.

Hall said he would have never approved a sale to Primary Wave, and takes issue with its business model. Hall expressed concern about how his name and likeness and other assets could be used.

Additionally, he said Oates' team has not provided him with the confidential information disclosed to Primary Wave, which has already owned "significant interest" in Hall & Oates' song catalog for more than 15 years. The New York-based company has struck deals in recent years to buy stakes in the music catalogs of artists like Bing Crosby, Bob Marley, Stevie Nicks, Whitney Houston and Prince.

Deena Merlen, a Connecticut-based partner at Reavis Page Jump LLP with entertainment law expertise, noted that Primary Wave has struck more than \$2 billion in investment deals in about two years, as it buys music rights.

"Primary Wave has been a kid in a candy shop, with a pocket full of cash," said Merlen, who is not involved in the Hall & Oates case. "Not a great stretch to see the temptation for Oates, under the circumstances." WHAT WAS JOHN OATES' REPLY?

In his own declaration, Oates expressed disappointment with his longtime partner's words, saying Hall's accusations of that Oates went behind his back and breached their agreement aren't true. Oates declined to go into specifics, saying he's obligated to keep details private, even if Hall didn't.

Oates argued he had been trying for some time to enhance their business partnership, but Hall has become unwilling to work with him to protect what they created. He also said Hall has been trying for years to be seen as an individual.

According to Hall's arbitration filing, Oates' attorneys have argued the sale is allowed under a section of their business agreement that appears to give one partner a chance to buy the other's share when faced with an outside sale.

Merlen cautioned that without seeing the full agreement — which is under court seal — she can't be certain how the provision works. But she said it appears to be a "right of first refusal," giving non-selling members greater control over proposed transfers, "potentially blocking a sale to a third party they do not want to let in, while at the same time increasing their own ownership stake."

Hall's team has argued other contractual violations void the deal.

"As to whether he (Oates) had the right to do what he allegedly did — or tried to do — with Primary Wave, well, that remains to be seen," Merlen said.

Climate talks shift into high gear. Now words and definitions matter at COP28

By SETH BORENSTEIN, DAVID KEYTON, JOSHUA A. BICKEL and SIBI ARASU Associated Press
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The mood is about to shift, the hours grow longer and the already high sense of urgency somehow amp up even more as the United Nations climate summit heads into its final week.

Every sentence, every word — especially those about the future elimination of planet-warming fossil fuels — will matter at the U.N. conference in oil-built Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Professional negotiators who have been working on getting options into shape will turn over their work to senior national officials, many at minister levels, who will have to make the tough political choices.

"We're heading into quite a political process, less access into the negotiating rooms, negotiations will go deep into the night, a number of nights," said David Waskow, international climate initiative director for the World Resources Institute.

The central question of the talks: What to do about the fossil fuels that are causing climate change. Activists, experts and many developing nations say they must be phased out quickly in favor of clean energy alternatives that can avert the worst damage on a warming planet. They accuse big energy companies and oil-rich nations of dragging their feet by supporting a slower and ambiguous "phase down."

Even with the hard work to come, some of those who are about to do it have this sense of optimism, especially because everyone has the day off on Thursday.

"We had a pretty damn good week here in Dubai already. Now, obviously, there are some complicated issues to still resolve. We all know that. Nobody is ducking and nobody is going to pretend about that," U.S. Special Envoy John Kerry said. "The negotiators are basically trying to put together in each section a relevant a set of options. And then we ministers will have the fun and pleasure next week of kind of noodling through those options."

Multilateral negotiations — involving in this case nearly 200 parties — are much different and often more

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 74 of 75

difficult than the horse-trading two countries can do in bilateral talks, said veteran diplomat Adnan Amin, the COP28 CEO.

The key document is called Global Stocktake. It's the first of its kind in U.N. climate negotiations, saying how far the world has come from the 2015 Paris agreement — where nations agreed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times — and what it has to do next. A draft came out late Monday and negotiators have been poring over it. Next, officials like Amin will get "a very clear sense by the end of the week where people stand on the text."

Amin said there's a rhythm to these climate talks.

"You start off very hopeful, euphoria," Amin said. "Things are happening. Then the negotiations get hard and people start spreading rumors and conjecture and a little bit of depression, and then things start to come up again. And the clarity of the negotiation process becomes clearer. Then you have the political engagement, and that's where the real intensity and excitement comes."

This is all going the way it should, even if it seems overwhelming, said German special climate envoy Jennifer Morgan.

"There's now a text with many, many brackets (choices), 30 different groups of options for the global stocktake that now needs to be consolidated so that ministers next week can start getting into each of those topics and finding solutions," Morgan said. "There's this moment when one thinks, oh, my gosh, so many texts, so many brackets. But I think, actually the process is going along as it should."

EU negotiators say the core document is in pretty good shape and are confident the key issues are clearly defined. Options remain open for ministers taking over the negotiations which is not often the case at this stage of these difficult multilateral talks.

They expect a new text with the latest amendments to be issued in the early hours of Friday morning, for talks to begin in earnest on Friday at a ministerial level and for a presidential-led process similar to talks Glasgow or Paris.

EU countries, along with small island countries — oft-victimized by climate change — and some progressive Latin American countries are aligned on calling for a phase-out of fossil fuels, negotiators said. While there will be strong resistance to this measure, officials are confident references to fossil fuels will appear in the final text for the first time and within a timeline compatible with U.N. science reports.

Representatives for poor nations and climate advocates are putting a lot of pressure on negotiators for the fossil fuel sections.

"The success of COP28 will not depend on speeches from big stages," said Uganda climate activist Vanessa Nakate. "It will depend on leaders calling for a just and equitable phase-out of all fossil fuels without exceptions and distractions."

Wopke Hoekstra, the European Union climate commissioner said the bloc will make a big push on the issue, "giving it our all."

A phase-out "will cost money," Avinash Persaud, climate envoy for Barbados said, asking who'll pay. "I don't understand why they are pushing for it to be global. United States and Canada are two of the richest countries and largest producers of fossil fuels. Why don't we have phase-out there? It's the cheapest place to phase-out and will have the biggest impacts."

Kerry said he gets that.

"There has to be a fairness in the air here," Kerry said. "You know, we don't want people just coming ... feeling maybe, you know, punched a little bit here."

And it's not just fossil fuel language.

"One way or another, next week is going to be really difficult," said Power Shift Africa policy adviser Amy Gillian-Thorpe. "I think we're leaving the lights on the second week. And that's really unfortunate that we haven't been able to move forward, particularly on adaptation issues."

Kerry said the sense of urgency will win out.

"I'm not telling you that everybody's going to come kumbaya on the table," Kerry said. "But I am telling you we're going to make our best effort to get the best agreement we can to move as far as we can, as fast as we can, and that's what people in the world want us to do. It's time for adults to behave like adults

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 08, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 167 ~ 75 of 75

and get the job done.”

Today in History: December 8, U.S. enters World War II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 8, the 342nd day of 2023. There are 23 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 8, 1941, the United States entered World War II as Congress declared war against Imperial Japan a day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

On this date:

In 1765, Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, was born in Westborough, Massachusetts.

In 1886, the American Federation of Labor was founded in Columbus, Ohio.

In 1949, the Chinese Nationalist government moved from the Chinese mainland to Formosa as the Communists pressed their attacks.

In 1980, rock star and former Beatle John Lennon was shot to death outside his New York City apartment building by Mark David Chapman.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev signed a treaty at the White House calling for destruction of intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

In 1991, AIDS patient Kimberly Bergalis, who had contracted the disease from her dentist, died in Fort Pierce, Florida, at age 23.

In 2001, the U.S. Capitol was reopened to tourists after a two-month security shutdown.

In 2008, in a startling about-face, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed told the Guantanamo war crimes tribunal he would confess to masterminding the Sept. 11 attacks; four other men also abandoned their defenses.

In 2011, the 161-day NBA lockout ended when owners and players ratified the new collective bargaining agreement.

In 2014, the U.S. and NATO ceremonially ended their combat mission in Afghanistan, 13 years after the Sept. 11 terror attacks sparked their invasion of the country to topple the Taliban-led government.

In 2016, John Glenn, whose 1962 flight as the first U.S. astronaut to orbit the Earth made him an all-American hero and propelled him to a long career in the U.S. Senate, died in Columbus, Ohio, at age 95.

In 2020, the Supreme Court rejected Republicans' last-gasp bid to reverse Pennsylvania's certification of President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the electoral battleground; the court refused to call into question the certification process in the state.

In 2012, Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel became the first freshman to win the Heisman Trophy.

In 2017, Japanese pitching and hitting star Shohei Ohtani announced that he would sign with the Los Angeles Angels.

In 2022, Russia freed WNBA star Brittney Griner in a high-profile prisoner exchange with the U.S., which released Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout.

Today's Birthdays: Flutist James Galway is 84. Singer Jerry Butler is 84. Pop musician Bobby Elliott (The Hollies) is 82. Actor Mary Woronov is 80. Actor John Rubinstein is 77. Actor Kim Basinger (BAY'-sing-ur) is 70. Rock musician Warren Cuccurullo is 67. Rock musician Phil Collen (Def Leppard) is 66. Country singer Marty Raybon is 64. Political commentator Ann Coulter is 62. Rock musician Marty Friedman is 61. Actor Wendell Pierce is 60. Actor Teri Hatcher is 59. Actor David Harewood is 58. Actor Matthew Laborteaux is 57. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Mussina is 55. Rock musician Ryan Newell (Sister Hazel) is 51. Actor Dominic Monaghan is 47. Actor Ian Somerhalder is 45. Rock singer Ingrid Michaelson is 44. R&B singer Chrisette Michele is 41. Actor Hannah Ware is 41. Country singer Sam Hunt is 39. MLB All-Star infielder Josh Donaldson is 38. Rock singer-actor wa (VOH'-gehl) is 37. Christian rock musician Jen Ledger (Skillet) is 34. NHL defenseman Drew Doughty is 34. Actor Wallis Currie-Wood is 32. Actor AnnaSophia Robb is 30.