

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, Jan. 3

Senior Menu: Beef stew, buttermilk biscuit, Waldorf salad, sherbert.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chicken enchilada pasta, corn

Groton Chamber Meeting, noon, at City Hall

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

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

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

Thursday, Jan. 4

Senior Menu: Chicken cacciatore, rice pilaf, Italian blend vegetables, apple sauce bars, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Pop tarts.

School Lunch: Corn dogs, fries.

Girls Basketball at Clark: (C game at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15, varsity to follow)

Girls and Boys Wrestling at Webster, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 5

Senior Menu: Baked macaroni and cheese with kielbasa, vegetable normandy. Blend fruit, whole

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Tacos.

Boys Basketball hosts Clark/Willow Lake: (C game at 5 p.m., JV at 6:15, varsity to follow)

JH Boys Wrestling at Milbank, 5 p.m.

GDILIVE.COM

GT

Groton Area
Tigers

**Text Paul at
605-397-7460**

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

- ~~Warner Boys JV~~
- ~~Warner Girls JV~~
- Clark Girls C
- Clark Girls JV
- Clark Boys C
- Clark Boys JV
- Tiospa Zina Girls JV
- Tiospa Zina Boys JV
- Dakota Valley Boys C
- Dakota Valley Boys JV
- Dakota Valley Girls JV
- Milbank Girls JV
- Milbank Boys JV
- Great Plains Lutheran Girls C
- Great Plains Lutheran Girls JV
- Northwestern Girls JV
- Northwestern Boys JV

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

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1440

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Harvard President Claudine Gay resigned yesterday, stepping down amid mounting claims of plagiarism and criticism over recent congressional testimony on campus antisemitism. It marks the shortest presidential tenure in the university's history.

Saleh al-Aroui, Hamas' political leader in the West Bank and a founder of its military wing, was killed in an explosion outside Beirut in Lebanon Tuesday alongside two senior commanders, an assassination reportedly carried out by Israel. The attack marks the first such killing

of a Hamas leader outside the Palestinian territories since the start of the war.

Five crew members on a Japanese Coast Guard aircraft were killed after it collided with a passenger plane yesterday that was landing at Tokyo's Haneda Airport. All 379 passengers and crew onboard Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 from Shin Chitose Airport near Sapporo were evacuated safely before the plane was engulfed in flames; the other plane's pilot survived with injuries.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Women's World Cup star Jenni Hermoso testifies against former Spanish soccer chief Luis Rubiales at Rubiales' sexual assault trial.

ABC's "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve" special haul's in 22.2 million viewers, a 35% increase over last year. Universal tops Disney at 2023 global box office; first time since 2015 that Disney wasn't highest-earning studio.

Melissa Hoskins, two-time Australian Olympic track cyclist, dies at 32 after being hit by car; Hoskins' husband reportedly charged with driving car that killed her. Ken Bowman, three-time NFL champion, dies at 81.

Science & Technology

Dutch firm ASML, the world's leading supplier of tools needed to make advanced computer chips, barred from exporting deep ultraviolet lithography machines to China.

Tomato plants produce a waxy substance known as suberin during times of drought, which lets them ration water intake, new study finds.

Libido in male mice linked to single brain circuit; researchers say the structure likely developed early in the evolution of mammals, findings may shed light on the development of human sexuality.

Business & Markets

Markets mostly down on first day of trading for 2024 (S&P 500 -0.6%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq -1.6%); Nasdaq records worst day since October. Apple shares fall 4%, driven by fears of weak iPhone 15 sales.

Tesla meets sales target, selling more than 1.8 million vehicles in 2023; figure for the Elon Musk-led company is up almost 40% from 2022. Fidelity marks down its shares of Musk-owned X (formerly Twitter), estimating the company's value has dropped by almost 72% since October 2022.

Shipping giant Maersk halts cargo transit through the Red Sea until further notice due to attacks by Iran-backed Houthi rebels operating out of Yemen.

Politics & World Affairs

Former President Donald Trump to appeal Maine GOP primary ballot ban; secretary of state's decision accused Trump of violating the 14th Amendment for his role in the events of Jan. 6, 2021. Trump to skip Wednesday GOP primary debate, only Gov. Ron DeSantis (FL) and former Gov. Nikki Haley (SC) to participate.

South Korean opposition leader Lee Jae-myung stabbed in neck during public appearance in the city of Busan; motive of attacker not yet identified, Lee expected to survive attack.

Armed suspect enters, fires shots inside Colorado's Supreme Court; no injuries reported or motive revealed, suspect surrendered to police.

Housing in Groton, fees discussed during first City Council meeting of 2024

The Groton City Council rang in the new year with a look at a housing study and city fees.

At Tuesday's council meeting, council members had a look at draft housing study prepared by Community Partners Research Inc. The company, based in Minnesota, offers consulting services for housing development, housing markets and community development projects.

The 93-page draft report goes over demographics of the Groton community, population trends and income data using information from sources like the U.S. Census Bureau and private data reporting services like Applied Geographic Solutions and Esri, Inc.

The two private data services showcase different predictions for the Groton population through the next five years. Through many of the data points, Applied Geographic Solutions predicted large increases in the population from 2023 to 2028, while Esri, Inc. predicted the number of residents will go down in that same period.

Similarly, Applied Geographic Solutions projects Groton will add 48 households between 2023 and 2028, bringing to total number of households to 638. Esri, Inc. projects Groton will lose seven households during that same period, bringing to total to 564 households.

The report writers conclude both of those national data sources are not reliable in their projections.

"Community Partners Research, Inc., has generated its own forecast which expects the City of Groton to add approximately five households in an average year, or up to 25 households over the five-year projection period," according to the report.

The report points out strengths for housing development in Groton. Those include Groton's proximity to Aberdeen, median home price, adequate land for development, developers and builders willing to invest in housing projects in the area and more.

The report also indicates barriers for development, including limited commercial/retail options, the age and condition of some houses in the area, a limited supply of residential lots available in Groton and limited new rental housing construction since 2010.

Recommendations include improvements to rental housing development, home ownership, single-family new construction, housing rehabilitation and other housing initiatives.

The council approved city fees for 2024.

Those fees include listing of what the city charges for various services, access to the city's rubble site and recreation charges like swimming pool passes and fees to play baseball.

Not many changes were noted from the 2023 fee listing to the 2024 charges.

"Nothing much has changed," Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich told the council. "A couple things that we have are the price of gravel, crushed rock... it looked like it was a couple of years since it went up."

The cost for gravel was increased to reflect changes in the economy, he said.

Sand will now cost \$24.50 per yard (one ton equals one yard), up from \$24.50 per yard in 2023. Crushed gravel will cost \$22 per yard, up from \$20 per yard, and three-quarter inch rock will cost \$42 per yard up from \$36 per bucket (two yards per bucket).

The price of black dirt also increased from \$12 per yard in 2023 to \$19 per yard in 2024.

There were no other increases from the 2023 revised charges approved in November 2023. And while the charges were approved at Tuesday's meeting, the council could review those fees later in the year. The council has adjusted rates mid-year, like upping some swimming pool-related fees for swimming lessons in March 2023.

Heinrich pointed out that the new charges don't include increases in recreation programs like fees to play baseball. While there had been some discussion about baseball and softball fees, what Groton charges is comparable to other leagues in the region.

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"It's a good program to have," Heinrich said. "I don't want to push kids away."

- The election for four council seats is set for April 9. The two-year terms for Ward 1 Councilman Kevin Nehls, Ward 2 Councilman Brian Bahr and Ward 3 Councilman Jason Wambach are ending this year. The one-year appointment of Ward 1 Councilman Jon Cutler is also ending in 2024. Those four, along with anyone else interested in running for council positions, will be able to sign declarations of candidacy and begin circulating nominating petitions on January 26. The deadline to file candidate nominating petitions is February 23. The deadline for candidates to withdraw their name from nomination is also February 23. Mayor Scott Hanlon, Ward 2 Councilwoman Shirley Wells and Ward 3 Councilwoman Karyn Babcock have terms ending in 2025.

- The council approved employee salaries for 2024.
 - o Mayor Scott Hanlon - \$625 per month plus \$125 per special meeting, \$300 per full-day meeting and \$100 per half-day meeting
 - o Council members Brian Bahr, Karyn Babcock, Shirley Wells, Jon Cutler, Kevin Nehls and Jason Wambach - \$3,000 per year plus \$125 per special meeting, \$300 per full-day meeting and \$100 per half-day meeting
 - o Board of Equalization - \$200 per year
 - o Planning and Zoning Commissioners Les Hinds, Cody Lindgren, Jeff Steen, Doug Hamilton and Keith Wipf - \$35 per meeting plus \$70 per special meeting
 - o Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich - \$27.79 per hour
 - o Deputy Finance Officer April Abeln - \$28.98 per hour
 - o Assistant Finance Officer Kelly Locke - \$23.97 per hour
 - o Public Works Coordinator and Street/Water Superintendent Terry Herron - \$37.02 per hour
 - o Wastewater Superintendent Dwight Zerr - \$33.09 per hour
 - o Assistant Street Superintendent Branden Abeln - \$30.75 per hour
 - o Technology Specialist Paul Kosel - \$32.38 per hour
 - o Electric Superintendent Todd Gay - \$57.09 per hour
 - o Electric Lineman Landon Johnson - \$42.03 per hour
 - o Police Chief Stacy Mayou - \$36.30 per hour
 - o Police Officer and Assistant Chief Justin Cleveland - \$33.05 per hour
 - o Police Officer Level One Thomas Strickland - \$30.89 per hour
 - o Police Officer Level Two Benjamin Smith - \$30.16 per hour

- The council also noted that a complete list of volunteers will be kept at City Hall. Those volunteers include people who help at city-sponsored events.

- Recreation league baseball and softball employee applications are due at 5 p.m. Feb. 6. That includes the baseball coordinator, softball coordinator, Legion coach, Junior Legion coach, Junior Teener coach, girls softball coaches for U8, U10, U12 and U14 teams, day baseball/softball coach and concession manager.

- Elizabeth Varin

And then there was one

The Brown County Commission, in their research, has discovered that the Aberdeen American News no longer qualifies as a newspaper of record in South Dakota. As of now, the only newspaper of record in Brown County is The Groton Independent. The Aberdeen Insider will become one either in April or July depending on what is decided during the Legislative Session.

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GHS Boys' Basketball

Zak has double-double, Tietz powers in five three-pointers in Groton's win over Warner

Groton Area's boys varsity team scored 16 straight points at the end of the first half to beat Warner, 69-34. Lane Tietz scored all 26 of his points in the first half which included five of eight three-pointers. He also had one rebound and three assists. Ryder Johnson had 16 points, three rebounds and one steal. Jacob Zak had a double-double on the night with 12 points and 10 rebounds and also had eight assists, one steal and one block. Logan Ringgenberg had five points and two rebounds. Teylor Diegel had four points, one rebound, one assist and two steals. Blake Pauli had three points and one assist. Easton Weber had three points. Colby Dunker had two assists. Kassen Keough had two rebounds and three assists. Turner Thompson had two rebounds. Logan Warrington had one rebound and Karson Zak had two rebounds.

Three-Pointers: Jacob Zak 1, Tietz 5, Johnson 2, Pauli 1, Weber 1.

Groton Area made 15 of 25 two-pointers for 42 percent, 10 of 20 three-pointers for 50 percent, nine of 11 free throws for 82 percent, had 25 rebounds, three turnovers, 20 assists, five steals, 17 team fouls (12 in the first half), and one block.

Zachary Evans led the Monarchs with 12 points while Brody Sauerwein had 10, Hunter Cramer seven, Drew Bakeberg three and Josiah Baum added two points. Warner made 13 of 37 field goals for 35 percent, seven of 15 free throws for 47 percent, had six turnovers and 10 team fouls.

Groton Area won the junior varsity boys game, 46-19. Everyone scored for the Tigers, led by Kassen Keough with 10 points, Turner Thompson eight, Jayden Schwan and Taylor Diegel each had seven, Logan Warrington six, Blake Pauli and Karson Zak each had two and Ethan Kroll had one point.

Jesiah Baum led Warner with seven points.

GHS Girls' Basketball

Kennedy Hanson leads Groton with 16 points, but Tigers fall short against Warner

Warner scored 15 straight points to start the second half to win the girls varsity game, 40-28. The game was tied three times and the lead changed hands eight times when Groton Area held a 20-19 lead early in the third quarter. Warner then went on a 15-point run to take a 34-20 lead early in the fourth quarter.

Kennedy Hanson led the Tigers with 16 points, one rebounds and one assist. Jaedyn Penning had six points five rebounds and two assists. Faith Traphagen had four points, four rebounds, one assist and three steals. Rylee Dunker had two points, two rebounds, one assist and five steals. Jerica Locke had three rebounds, one assist and three steals. Brooklyn Hansen had two rebounds and two steals. Laila Roberts had a steal. Taryn Traphagen had three rebounds and two steals.

Three-Pointers: Kennedy Hansen - 4.

Groton Area made six of 38 two-pointers for 16 percent, four of 17 three-pointers for 24 percent, four of 10 free throws for 40 percent, had 20 rebounds, 15 turnovers, six assists, 16 steals and 12 team fouls.

Kyra Marcuson led the Monarchs with 14 points followed by Ava Nilsson with nine, Stacia Carda had seven, Sophia Hoelt had three and adding two points each were Kyleigh School, Jordyn Jensen and Lauren Marcuson.

Warner made 15 of 38 field goals for 39 percent, six of eight free throws for 75 percent, had 23 turnovers and 13 teams fouls.

Groton Area won the girls varsity game, 34-6. Laila Roberts had 10 points, McKenna Tietz and Mia Crank each had six points, Taryn Trapahgen and Talli Wright each had four points and Faith Trapahgen and Emerlee Jones each had two points.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

New report recommends state efforts to sustain rural ambulance services

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JANUARY 2, 2024 4:52 PM

Some South Dakotans who call 911 won't see an ambulance show up for over half an hour on the western side of the state if they have an emergency. That's because there simply aren't enough ambulances to cover the West River region.

The problem could worsen as volunteer emergency responders age, fewer South Dakotans volunteer to serve as first responders in their communities, and ambulance services continue facing a funding crunch.

Recommendations to address those challenges are outlined in a recently released report to the state Department of Health. The Regional Services Designation Ambulance System Study is an analysis of the state of emergency medical services across South Dakota, meant to ensure sustainability for the industry.

The report was compiled by Healthcare Strategists in partnership with the department. It's the third piece of a \$20 million infusion of funding into South Dakota ambulance systems approved by Gov. Kristi Noem and lawmakers in 2022, including \$11.6 million worth of monitors and defibrillators for ambulances, and a \$1.7 million telemedicine program to connect responders to nurses and health care professionals while dispatched on a service call.

The state Department of Health plans to award at least six planning grants by July to address issues laid out in the new report, including recruitment and retention, equipment upgrades, and improving response times.

"The state's willingness to provide \$7.5 million for future grant funding provides a starting point for improvement," the report summary says, "but there must be a focus for programs that plant the seed of long-term sustainability."

Response times lag in western South Dakota

About 97% of South Dakota's 122 agencies are on scene within 30 minutes of a call more than 90% of the time.

But the southwestern region of the state especially is not meeting the 30-minute response time standard. The majority of "late" responses occur southeast of Rapid City, according to the report.

Wanblee on the Pine Ridge Reservation, for example, is over 30 minutes away from Kadoka, where the nearest ambulance service is stationed, said Laura Schad, program information coordinator for Partnership With Native Americans. Factors that can also impact response times in western South Dakota include poor cell phone service, poorly maintained roads in inclement weather or a responding ambulance driver not being familiar with addresses on reservations.

"Google isn't helpful, and can even be harmful in some cases if an address isn't linked right," Schad said.

Potential solutions highlighted in the report include creating a satellite site in the uncovered southwestern region, or recruiting a new community ambulance service. Or, the report says, the state can determine "a 30-minute standard as unrealistic for this area."

Longer response times have been associated with worse outcomes in trauma cases, with even modest delays becoming life threatening. The goal is to get victims with traumatic injuries from vehicle crashes, for example, to the hospital or trauma center within 60 minutes. That's because victims are more likely to survive and avoid irreversible damage if they receive such care within "the golden hour."

According to a study on ambulance services on reservations by the University of Minnesota, which included

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responses from the Pine Ridge Reservation, the usual time to transfer trauma victims to an emergency department exceeds the golden hour, half of study respondents replied.

Workforce staffing, recruitment and retention struggles

Rural emergency medical services in South Dakota are mostly volunteer-based (though volunteers sometimes receive a small stipend for calls they respond to), with volunteer levels forecasted to decline in the next five to 10 years. That makes recruitment and retention one of the greatest challenges for South Dakota ambulance services.

Some services lack sufficient funding because of the low number of transports and revenue needed to better support personnel. South Dakota ambulance services largely depend on payments from insurers and patients or funding from local governments for funding. Emergency medical services aren't deemed an "essential service" in South Dakota, meaning the state government isn't required to provide or fund them.

Just over a quarter of South Dakota agencies respond to more than 500 calls for service a year. About 65% of agencies serve less than 3,000 people, with 36% of the state's ambulance services serving less than 1,000 people in an area.

One way to reduce drive time and workload for current volunteers, according to the report, is to expand the state's "Telemedicine in Motion" program. It allows responders to treat patients on site, with the guidance of a nurse or other health care professional connected by online cameras and monitors, and then refer them to another provider for later follow-up care. Many patients are transported unnecessarily to hospitals, the report said.

About 70% of 911 responses in South Dakota are not severe and do not need transports for emergency care, yet many of those cases result in transports. Only 0.1% of 911 responses are high acuity or severe.

"The inference is these patients are likely treated and discharged from the emergency departments and not admitted to the hospital," the report said. "More importantly, minor injuries and illnesses are ideal candidates for telemedicine opportunities instead of the historical treat-and-transport to the emergency department."

Emergency room expenses are seven times more costly than an ambulance transport, the report notes, and expanding telemedicine to portable use for ambulance responses could reduce hospital overload, reduce health care costs and improve patient care.

While ambulances wouldn't be reimbursed for transporting those patients to hospitals, they would be reimbursed for the ambulance response and evaluation. The report did not say if such a change would affect revenue for ambulance services or cut costs significantly.

The report says other possibilities to address workforce problems include:

Requiring mutual response with fire departments for "truly life-threatening calls."

Promoting grants for services to purchase auto-loading gurneys to extend the working tenure of volunteers. About half of ambulance services in South Dakota already have auto-loading gurneys, which are estimated to extend a volunteer's service period by five to 10 years.

Creating legislation to incorporate CPR and other life-saving training for all South Dakota middle and high school students and offering college-level credits for high school students who complete emergency medical technician training. Both efforts would educate community members in bystander intervention and introduce teenagers to the profession.

Improving test scores and passing rates for the National Registry of EMT Examination by offering more instruction and support to potential volunteers. South Dakota has a 65% pass rate for EMTs. The state has a 36% pass rate for paramedics, which is lowest in the nation.

Regionalization and statewide efforts

South Dakota lacks a central committee or network for ambulance services to communicate with other service providers or with the state about the issues they face in their communities. Nor does the state monitor, measure or publish patient care standards for ambulance services.

The report recommends improving quality control by reviewing statewide metrics and establishing top-quality metrics to measure and monitor patient care. The report recommends the state establish five top-

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quality metrics within the next two years and expand the monitored list of metrics to 20 in the long term. The report also encourages the state to perform on-site visits with ambulance services every one to two years to increase interaction and communication.

Other ideas to address ambulance service sustainability include:

Hiring full-time coordinators representing multiple ambulance services in a county or region to commit to recruitment and retention efforts.

Establishing a statewide working group of emergency medical services medical directors, which currently operate independently of any statewide quality standards, guidelines or criteria.

Allowing neighboring ambulance services to complete transfers of patients between hospitals. Currently, patients needing transport to another hospital are required by state law to be moved by the local ground ambulance provider or use a helicopter.

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.

December is historically warm in SD, echoing climate change predictions

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - JANUARY 2, 2024 1:53 PM

After a national climate report in November warned of rising temperatures, parts of South Dakota experienced record-setting warmth in December.

The National Weather Service reports that average South Dakota monthly temperatures in December ranged from 5 to 13 degrees above normal, depending on the location. Cities experiencing their warmest December on record included Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Huron, Watertown and Vermillion.

"December 2023 will be one of the warmest on record for the United States once preliminary data is calculated and compared to normal and records," said the weather service.

Low temperatures were another indicator of historic warmth in December.

The coldest temperature last month in Sioux Falls was 11 degrees, according to the weather service. The temperature had previously dipped lower than that in every December of the city's recorded history, dating to the late 1800s. Other cities with a higher-than-ever low temperature in December included Vermillion, Yankton, Mitchell, Gregory, Menno, De Smet, Canton, Tyndall, Howard, Huron and Brookings.

In yet another indicator, Sioux Falls experienced fewer days with a high temperature below freezing — just one — than any previous December, while Huron had its second-fewest such days (three) and Mitchell tied its record (two).

The data echoes predictions issued in November as part of the federal government's Fifth National Climate Assessment. The report predicted "rising temperatures across the region" with the trend "most pronounced in winter" for the Northern Great Plains, which includes South Dakota.

"For instance," the report said, "the number of very cold days has been below the long-term average in Montana since 1985, in Nebraska since 1990, and in Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota since 2000."

The assessment tied the trends to human-caused climate change and said reducing emissions of greenhouse gases — such as carbon dioxide and methane, which trap heat in the atmosphere — are crucial to limiting future warming.

School funding increases aren't always what they appear

Enrollment-based formula punishes some districts unfairly

CHRISTINE STEPHENSON

As a member of the Rapid City Area Schools Board of Education, I was pleased to hear that Governor Kristi Noem proposed a 4 percent increase to school funding during her budget address earlier this month. South Dakota continues to rank 49th in the nation for teacher pay, so any proposed increase to education is welcome.

But I would like to clarify what legislative increases to education funding have actually looked like in Rapid City Area Schools. Last year, the Legislature and governor were broadly praised for increasing state

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education funding by 7 percent. The way it was implemented, though, did not result in an increase in state funding for most districts. In fact, the Rapid City school district saw a drop of \$497,881 in state aid this year despite the Legislature's increase. How did this happen? The explanation lies in the State Aid to K-12 General Education Funding Formula.

The formula is based primarily on enrollment. Every year, on the last Friday in September, the district submits to the state Department of Education the number of students enrolled in the district on that day. The department then uses that number to determine the number of certified teachers a district needs. That number is multiplied by the target teacher salary and then multiplied again to account for support staff, administration, and other non-instructional costs. This final number is what the department calls the total need for state aid.

When the district's enrollment goes down by 245 students, as it did this year, our state aid determination goes down. The funding the state provided to Rapid City schools decreased, despite the 7% increase passed by the Legislature.

While it might seem logical that a district's budget should decrease if its enrollment declines, it is not easy for the district to pivot in real-time to decrease costs to match enrollment. A decrease in 245 students means, on average, that each of our 23 schools lost 10 or so students. Assuming those children weren't all in the same grade, that means that each elementary grade per school decreased by two kids. Could we at the very last minute have moved kids around so that we decreased our elementary school classroom needs by three or four classrooms? Possibly. But last-minute forced transfers of students and staff are extremely unpopular and not good for students. Consolidating in middle school and high school would be just as difficult.

The funding formula has punished Rapid City Area Schools in another significant way. Once a district's "total need for state aid" is determined by the formula, the state determines the "local contribution" before paying any state funds. As the value of real estate in Rapid City has gone up, so has our local contribution. As a result, the money the state provides automatically goes down. Imagine our total need for state aid as a glass: The local contribution is used first to fill the glass, and the state contribution fills in the rest. Property taxpayers in the district end up paying more to educate our kids, the state pays less, and the district doesn't benefit from the funding increase for education.

Changing the entire funding formula is a major undertaking. Still, the Legislature could help Rapid City in one simple way, by assessing enrollment on a three-year average. Taking a three-year average would help the district predict funding and adjust the budget in advance.

The Legislature could also consider ways to increase district funding outside of the funding formula. Rapid City desperately needs bus drivers, paraprofessionals and other support staff. We can't hire for these positions because our total need for state aid hasn't increased with the rising cost of labor in our community. While \$13 may be a competitive wage in rural areas, it is simply too low in Rapid City.

The Legislature could also use its budget surplus to create a zero-interest or low-interest loan fund for districts to build and remodel facilities. With this financing assistance, the district and local taxpayers could more easily afford to keep our facilities safe and up-to-date.

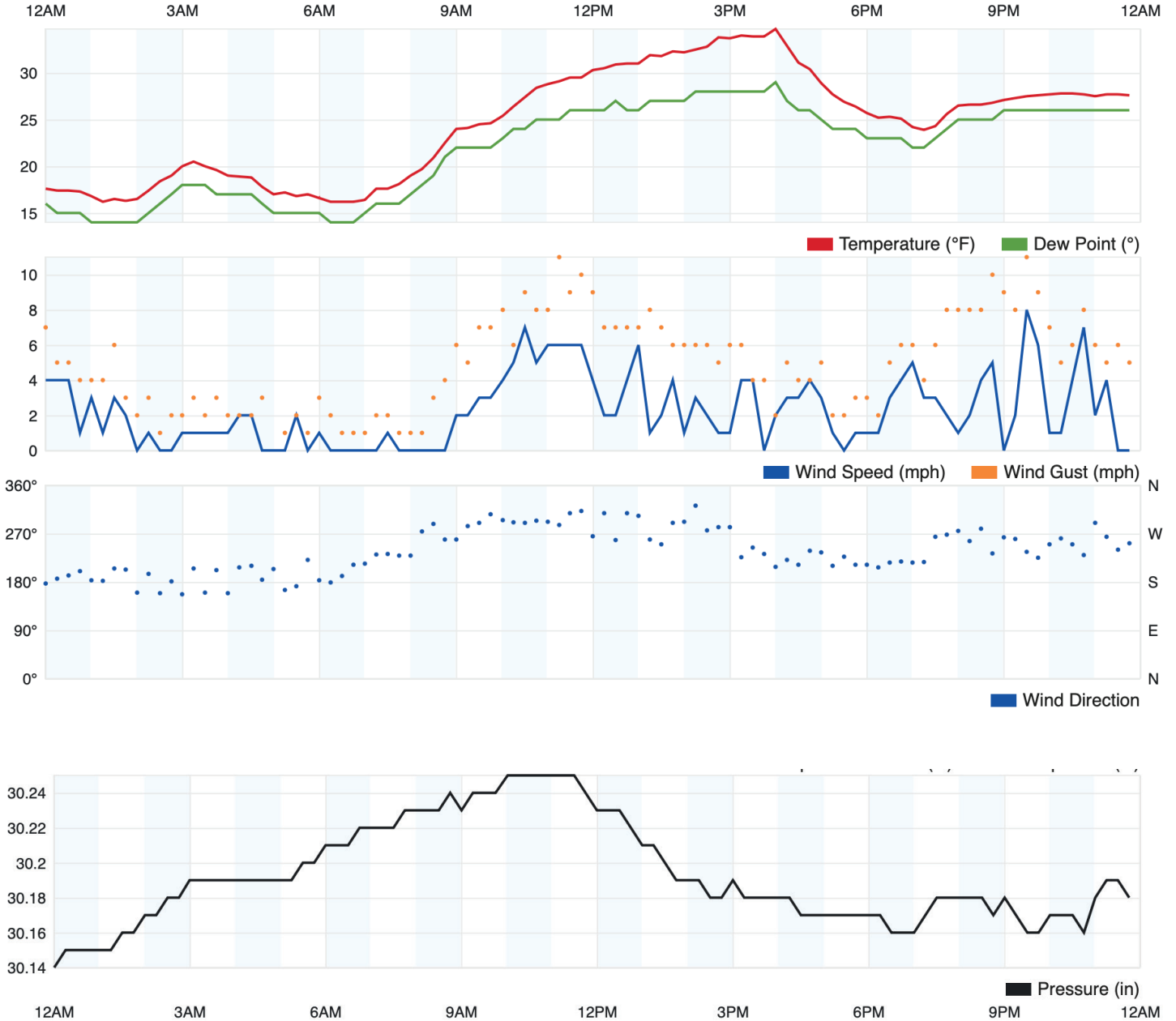
I applaud any effort to increase funding to education in South Dakota, and I'm very appreciative of the hard — and complicated — work done by our legislators to understand and bolster public education. I ask them to carefully consider how the 4% increase in educational spending is applied. Let's work together to ensure those dollars reach Rapid City students.

Christine Stephenson is a member of the Rapid City Area Schools Board of Education. She was born and raised in Rapid City, where she works as a pediatric physical therapist. She and her husband also own Dakota Angler and Outfitter, and are parents to two students in the Rapid City Area Schools.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Jan 3	Jan 4	Jan 5	Jan 6	Jan 7	Jan 8	Jan 9
23°F	26°F	32°F	24°F	22°F	22°F	21°F
8°F	23°F	21°F	10°F	12°F	8°F	10°F
N	S	S	NNW	NE	NE	WSW
11 MPH	14 MPH	9 MPH	11 MPH	6 MPH	5 MPH	8 MPH
					20%	

~ Through the Week ~

	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
	Highs: 21-26°F Lows: 6-13°F	Highs: 24-30°F Lows: 16-20°F	Highs: 28-32°F Lows: 12-20°F
			Chance (20-40%) of light snow east of MO river, higher chances near Coteau

Temperatures will continue to be above average, but below the freezing mark for the rest of the week. We have a chance for some patchy fog possible tonight south of Hwy 12 and east of the Missouri River. Some light snow will also be possible moving into the weekend, accumulations at the moment are minimal.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 35 °F at 3:55 PM

Low Temp: 16 °F at 1:18 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 11:14 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 52 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 51 in 1962

Record Low: -34 in 1912

Average High: 24

Average Low: 3

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.06

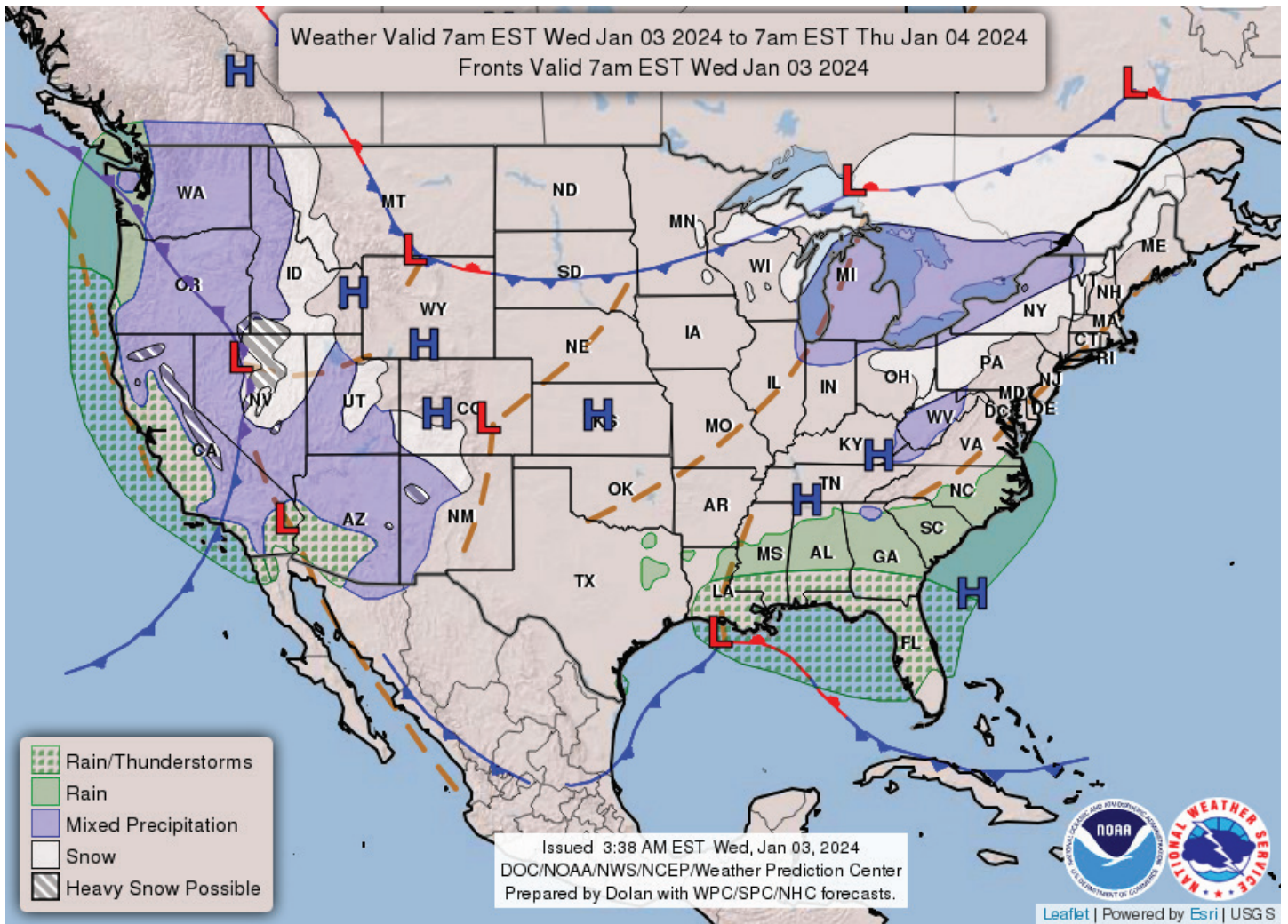
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.06

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:03:06 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:23 am



Today in Weather History

January 3, 1997: A powerful area of low pressure and deep Arctic high pressure brought almost all winter elements to central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota from the afternoon of the 3rd to the morning of the 5th. The storm began with widespread freezing rain, mainly over northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, where significant accumulations of ice occurred on roads, trees, and power lines. Late in the evening of the 3rd, the freezing rain changed to sleet and then snow, with substantial snowfall accumulations of 6 to as much as 27 inches by late on the 4th. As the Arctic high pressure pushed in through the morning and afternoon of the 4th, northwest winds increased to 25 to 45 mph gusting to 55 mph, creating widespread blizzard conditions, drifts up to 20 feet, and wind chills from 40 to 70 below. The massive accumulation of ice and snow across parts of central and mainly across northeast South Dakota resulted in the roof collapse of over 150 rural buildings. The roofs collapsed onto farm machinery and livestock with a lot of the machinery damaged and a lot of animals injured or killed. The collapse of so many buildings from snow and ice was believed to be the first in this area. On most other buildings, the snow had to be shoveled or blown off. One man was killed in west-central Minnesota as he was trying to shovel snow off the roof of a building. One roof collapse near Lake Poinsett, seven west of Estelline, killed four horses, damaged a boat, and flattened a car. The significant snow drifts buried a few homes during the storm. Many power outages also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota as power lines and poles were downed from the heavy ice accumulation. Some people were without power for several days in the extreme cold conditions. The cities of Miranda, Rockham, Zell, Garden City, Bryant, Vienna, Glenham, Hazel, and other cities were without power for many hours. Some of the communities were out of power for up to 2 days.

In Aberdeen, heavy snow blocking a furnace exhaust vent sent three family members to the hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, in Aberdeen, the snowmobile club, the drift busters, were called upon for the first time in several years to deliver medicine, take patients to the hospital, and carry essential workers to work and home. Emergencies were challenging to respond to, making many hours to short distances. Throughout central and northeast South Dakota, many businesses and grocery stores were closed. Interstates 29 and 90 were both closed for a few days, along with most state highways. The rest of the roads were either blocked by huge drifts or had one-lane traffic. Snowplows were called off the streets until conditions improved, and when they did start to clear the roads, they worked 12 to 18 hour days. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with mainly minor injuries. Some people had to be rescued. Travelers and truckers were stranded for several days until the roads opened. When Interstate-29 re-opened, there was a logjam of vehicles for 3 miles. One Watertown policeman said he has never seen an impasse as bad as this in 28 years. Area airports were closed, or flights were canceled or delayed. The mail was delayed for several days, most activities were canceled or postponed, and many schools closed on the 6th. The heavy snowfall from this storm brought the widespread snowpack up to 2 to 5 feet. For the winter season so far, the area had record snowfall and recorded cold. Some of the snowfall amounts include 6 inches at McLaughlin, 8 inches 22 SSW Keldron and 4 NW Onida, 9 inches at Pollock, Timber Lake, Highmore, Mobridge, and Kennebec, 10 inches at Castlewood, Clear Lake, Miller, Fort Thompson, and Clark. Snowfall amounts of 1 to over 2 feet include 12 inches at Eureka, and Redfield, 13 inches at Selby and Aberdeen, 14 inches at Pierre and Roscoe, 15 inches at Ortonville MN, 16 inches at Mellette and Browns Valley, MN 18 inches at Faulkton and 1 ENE Stephan, 20 inches at Webster, 22 inches at Britton, 24 inches at Sisseton, 26 inches 10 NW Britton, and 27 inches at Wheaton.

1824: The oldest known weather information in Oklahoma begins on this today at Fort Gibson in 1824. Now known as Muskogee County.

1949: During the late afternoon hours, an estimated F4 tornado destroyed Warren, Arkansas. The tornado killed 55 people and injured more than 250 others. The destruction of the Bradley mill displaced 1,000 employees.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WATCH WHERE YOU WALK!

Years ago, while marching with my high school band, I was more into my music than I was into following my director. We were to march to the goal line on the football field, make a right turn, and then exit the field. One hundred and eleven musicians followed the directions perfectly. One tuba player kept marching into the end zone, alone, embarrassed, and lost. I was that tuba player.

Everyone needs the Director to be their guide and guard. If we choose otherwise we will end up in an "end zone" - alone, embarrassed, and eternally lost. The alternative?

"A person's steps are ordered by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way?" asks Solomon. Perhaps he was going through a difficult period in his life and he recalled a bit of advice from his father, King David: "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in Him," wrote his Dad. He may have been facing a decision about his future and was struggling to know which path God would have him take. It may have been a family problem or issues with his staff. Wherever he was in his walk with God, he realized the importance of seeking His wisdom.

God has a plan for each of us, and He wants us to follow Him and fulfill that plan. However, He also has given us the freedom to make the ultimate decision: Will we seek His guidance and His will, or choose to go our own way? And, if we seek it, will we know it when we see it?

Again, we turn to the heart of Proverbs: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When we, in humility, bow before Him in complete surrender, seek His will in prayer and study His Word, and ask for the counsel of fellow believers, we can be assured that He will bring His light to our path and protect our every step. Then, we will "know it when we see it!"

Knock, seek, listen, wait, watch, talk with others, and be faithful to Him. He will appear!

Prayer: How foolish we are, Lord, when we do not wait for and trust You. You have our best interests at heart. May we wait patiently as we seek Your guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: A person's steps are ordered by the Lord. How then can anyone understand their own way? Proverbs 20:24



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.02.24

3 18 27 29 64 1

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$140,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 32 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.01.24

7 9 19 36 45 10

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,100,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.02.24

10 24 40 44 48 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 2 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 12.30.23

1 15 17 21 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 2 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.01.24

19 31 40 42 64 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.01.24

12 21 42 44 49 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 51, Avon 50
Bridgewater-Emery 52, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 49
Canistota 57, Elk Point-Jefferson 44
Dell Rapids St. Mary 72, Garretson 51
Freeman 72, Irene-Wakonda 59
Gayville-Volin High School 59, Scotland 50
Gregory 64, Andes Central-Dakota Christian 27
Groton Area 69, Warner 34
Harrisburg 62, Mitchell 53, OT
Herreid/Selby Area 62, McIntosh 40
Hitchcock-Tulare 63, Iroquois-Lake Preston 56, OT
Hot Springs 61, Chadron, Neb. 46
Howard 76, Menno 25
Huron 56, Yankton 50
Ipswich 64, Northwestern 34
Leola-Frederick High School 69, Wilmot 41
Milbank 80, Britton-Hecla 17
Newell 51, Oelrichs 22
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 75, Freeman Academy-Marion 70, OT
Parker 47, Bon Homme 38
Parkston 58, Hanson 54
Potter County 59, Mobridge-Pollock 51
Rapid City Stevens 51, Douglas 24
Redfield 33, Langford 18
Sioux Falls Christian 60, West Central 54
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 71, Brookings 61
St. Thomas More 66, Belle Fourche 44
Stanley County 67, Highmore-Harrold 60
Sturgis Brown 61, Custer 52
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 45, Kimball/White Lake 37
Vermillion 69, Tea Area 49
White River 83, Kadoka Area 52
Winner 39, Chamberlain 18
Wolsey-Wessington 71, Miller 51

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Andes Central-Dakota Christian 64, Gregory 30
Arlington 60, Madison 36
Avon 54, Alcester-Hudson 49
Bon Homme 71, Parker 27
Britton-Hecla 58, Milbank 23
Chadron, Neb. 61, Hot Springs 14
Custer 51, Sturgis Brown 44

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DeSmet 61, Clark-Willow Lake 44
Deubrook 53, Sioux Valley 51
Elk Point-Jefferson 69, West Central 54
Faith 39, Timber Lake 28
Flandreau 57, Castlewood 16
Freeman 57, Irene-Wakonda 44
Garretson 46, Dell Rapids St. Mary 35
Gayville-Volin High School 59, Scotland 12
Herreid/Selby Area 57, McIntosh 26
Highmore-Harrold 63, Stanley County 23
Howard 64, Menno 27
Iroquois-Lake Preston 48, Hitchcock-Tulare 36
Kimball/White Lake 51, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 38
Lennox 65, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 58
Leola-Frederick High School 61, Wilmot 43
McCook Central-Montrose 55, Dell Rapids 41
Miller 54, Wolsey-Wessington 21
Newell 64, Oelrichs 31
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 41, Freeman Academy-Marion 24
Parkston 61, Hanson 41
Pierre T F Riggs High School 41, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School 25
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 53, Bridgewater-Emery 23
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 60, Brookings 30
Socastee, S.C. 34, Marion 22
St. Thomas More 41, Belle Fourche 39
Sully Buttes 58, Philip 44
Tea Area 51, Vermillion 42
Warner 40, Groton Area 28
Winner 56, Chamberlain 17

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

Biden will start the year at sites of national trauma to warn about dire stakes of the 2024 election

By WILL WEISSERT and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is starting the campaign year by evoking the Revolutionary War to mark the third anniversary of the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and visiting the South Carolina church where a white gunman massacred Black parishioners — seeking to present in the starkest possible terms an election he argues could determine the fate of American democracy.

On Saturday, Biden will travel to near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, where George Washington and the Continental Army spent a bleak winter nearly 250 years ago. There, he'll decry former President Donald Trump for the riot by a mob of his supporters who overran the Capitol in an attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Two days later, the president will visit Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, where nine people were shot and killed in a June 2015 white supremacist attack.

Biden's kicking off 2024 by delving into some of the country's darkest moments rather than an upbeat affirmation of his record is meant to clarify for voters what his team sees as the stakes of November's election. During both events, he will characterize his predecessor as a serious threat to the nation's founding principles, arguing that Trump — who has built a commanding early lead in the Republican presidential

primary — will seek to undermine U.S. democracy should he win a second term.

"We are running a campaign like the fate of our democracy depends on it, because it does," Biden reelection campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez said on a conference call with reporters.

Trump, who faces 91 criminal charges stemming from his efforts to overturn his loss to Biden and three other felony cases, argues that Biden and top Democrats are themselves seeking to undermine democracy by using the legal system to thwart the campaign of his chief rival.

"Joe Biden and his allies are a real and compelling threat to our Democracy," Trump campaign senior advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles wrote in a memo this week. "In fact, in a way never seen before in our history, they are waging a war against it."

Biden's channeling of personal grief and national traumas, often into calls for action, has become his political calling card. Tragedies have defined the president's own life, from the 1972 car crash that killed his first wife and infant daughter to his son Beau's death from brain cancer at age 46 in 2015.

In 2020, Biden first won the White House by promising to heal the "soul of the nation" after he said that seeing hate groups marching in Charlottesville, Virginia, with torches and swastikas in 2017 propelled him to run.

Rather than promising to bridge the nation's partisan divide as he did four years ago, Biden will instead stress how Trump and top supporters of his "Make America Great Again" movement pose existential threats.

The president's reelection campaign has publicized Trump's repeating rhetoric used by Adolf Hitler when he suggested that immigrants entering the U.S. illegally are "poisoning the blood of our country," as well as the former president joking that he'd only seek to serve as a dictator on the first day of his second term.

"The leading candidate of a major party in the United States is running for president so that he can systematically dismantle and destroy our democracy," said Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler.

Even if another Republican beats Trump in the GOP primary, Biden's reelection argues the victor would be similar enough to the former president that the campaign's themes would change little.

"Anybody who wins the MAGA Republican nomination is going to have done so by hard-tacking to the most extreme positions that we have seen in recent American history," Tyler said.

A majority of Americans are concerned about the future of democracy in the upcoming election — though they differ along party lines on whom poses the threat.

The Biden campaign also promised it would be "out in full force" to mark the Jan. 22 anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide for nearly 50 years, before the high court overturned the ruling in June 2022.

Biden's team has argued that abortion access and democracy are intertwined in the upcoming election — building on the president's warnings about Trump and "MAGA extremists" that helped Democrats defy historical precedent by retaining control of the Senate and only narrowly losing the House majority to Republicans in the 2022 midterms.

Ukraine trains its sights on Russian border region, seeking to stir up discontent

The Russian military said Wednesday it shot down 12 Ukrainian missiles over Russia's southern Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, as Kyiv's forces seek to embarrass Russian President Vladimir Putin and puncture his argument that life in Russia is going on as normal despite the 22-month war.

Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said the situation in the regional capital, also called Belgorod, "remains tense." The city came under two rounds of shelling Wednesday morning, Gladkov wrote on Telegram.

"Air defense systems worked," he said, promising more details about possible damage after inspecting the area later in the day. Wednesday was a national holiday in Russia.

The Russian side of the border with Ukraine has come under frequent attack in recent days. During the war, Russian border villages have sporadically been targeted by Ukrainian artillery fire, rockets, mortar shells and drones launched from thick forests where they are hard to detect.

Lately, as missiles and drones have fallen on Ukrainian cities, Kyiv's troops have aimed at the Belgorod regional capital, which lies roughly 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

Belgorod, which has a population of around 340,000 people, is the biggest Russian city close to the Ukrainian border. It can be reached by relatively simple and movable weapons such as multiple rocket launchers.

On Saturday, shelling of Belgorod killed more than two dozen people. The attack was one of the deadliest on Russian soil since Moscow's full-scale invasion. Russian officials said the death toll reached 26, including five children, after a new salvo of rockets Tuesday.

Hitting Belgorod and disrupting city life is a dramatic way for Ukraine to show it can strike back against Russia, which in military terms outnumbers and outguns Kyiv's forces.

Putin on Monday lashed out against the Belgorod attacks. "They want to intimidate us and create uncertainty within our country," he said, promising to step up retaliatory strikes.

The Russian government has tried to counter the successful strikes by describing the Ukrainians as "terrorists" who are indiscriminately targeting residential areas while insisting the Russian military only aims at depots, arms factories and other military facilities.

Ukrainian officials never acknowledge responsibility for strikes on Russian territory.

Israel on alert for possible Hezbollah response after senior Hamas leader is killed in Beirut strike

By FADI TAWIL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israel was on high alert for an escalation with Hezbollah on Wednesday after one of the top leaders of the Palestinian Hamas was killed in a strike in Beirut that was widely blamed on Israel and heightened the risk of a broader Middle East conflict.

The killing of Saleh Arouri, the most senior Hamas member slain since the war in Gaza erupted nearly three months ago, provided a morale boost for Israelis still reeling from Hamas' Oct. 7 attack as the militants put up stiff resistance in Gaza and continue to hold scores of hostages.

But its implications for the war remain unclear. Israel has killed several top Hamas leaders over the years, only to see them quickly replaced. And the strike in Hezbollah's southern Beirut stronghold could cause the low-intensity fighting along the Lebanon border to boil over into all-out war.

Much depends on how Hassan Nasrallah — who has led Hezbollah since an Israeli strike killed his predecessor in 1992 — chooses to respond. He has previously vowed to retaliate for any Israeli targeting of allied militant leaders in Lebanon, and was expected to deliver a speech at 6 p.m. (1600 GMT).

Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been exchanging fire almost daily over the Israeli-Lebanese border since the war in Gaza began, but Nasrallah has appeared reluctant to escalate it further, perhaps fearing a repeat of the monthlong 2006 war, in which Israel heavily bombed Beirut and southern Lebanon.

Israeli officials have not commented on the strike that killed Arouri, but Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, said "we are on high readiness for any scenario."

The United States has sought to prevent any widening of the conflict, including by deploying two aircraft carriers and other military assets to the region. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was expected in the region this week.

A HIGH-PROFILE TARGET

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have repeatedly threatened to kill Hamas leaders wherever they are. The group's Oct. 7 attack from Gaza into southern Israel killed around 1,200 people, and some 240 others were taken hostage.

Israel claims to have killed a number of mid-level Hamas leaders in Gaza, but this would be the first time since the war that it has reached into another country to target the group's top leaders, many of whom live in exile around the region.

Arouri was the deputy of Hamas' supreme political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, and headed the group's presence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. He was also a key liaison with Hezbollah. The U.S. State Depart-

ment had listed him as a terrorist and offered a \$5 million reward for information about him.

Haniyeh said Hamas was "more powerful and determined" following the attack, which killed six other members of the group, including two military commanders. "They left behind them strong men who will carry the banner after them," he said of those killed.

Hezbollah called the strike "a serious attack on Lebanon, its people, its security, sovereignty and resistance."

"We affirm that this crime will never pass without response and punishment," it said.

ISRAEL SEEKS A 'CLEAR VICTORY' IN GAZA

The focus of the war remains on Gaza, where Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel is seeking a "clear victory" over Hamas, which has ruled the territory since 2007.

Israel's air, ground and sea assault in Gaza has killed more than 22,300 people, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. The count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The campaign has driven some 85% of Gaza's population from their homes, forcing hundreds of thousands of people into overcrowded shelters or teeming tent camps in Israeli-designated safe areas that the military has nevertheless bombed. A quarter of Gaza's population face starvation, according to the United Nations, as Israeli restrictions and heavy fighting hinder aid delivery.

The unprecedented death and destruction has led South Africa to accuse Israel of genocide in a case filed with the International Court of Justice, allegations Israel has strongly denied and vowed to contest.

Still, Israel appears far from achieving its goals of crushing Hamas and returning the estimated 129 hostages still held by the group after more than 100 were released in a cease-fire deal in November.

Gallant said several thousand Hamas fighters remain in northern Gaza, where Israeli troops have been battling militants for over two months and where entire neighborhoods have been blasted into rubble.

Heavy fighting is also underway in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israeli officials say Hamas' military structure is still largely intact. Yehya Sinwar, Hamas' top leader in Gaza, and his deputies have thus far eluded Israeli forces.

Egypt, which along with Qatar has served as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, has proposed a multistage plan for ending the war in which all hostages would eventually be released in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Israel would withdraw from Gaza and a government of Palestinian technocrats would govern Gaza and parts of the occupied West Bank until elections are held.

Neither Israel nor Hamas have accepted the plan in its entirety, but neither has rejected it outright.

An Israeli delegation was in Cairo on Wednesday to discuss the proposal, according to an Egyptian official who was not authorized to brief media and spoke on condition of anonymity. The official said the killing of Arouri was likely to hamper the negotiations for a couple days.

Rescuers race against time in search for survivors in Japan after powerful quakes leave 62 dead

By HIRO KOMAE, RICHARD COLOMBO and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

SUZU, Japan (AP) — Japanese rescue workers and canine units searched urgently through rubble Wednesday ahead of predicted bitter cold and heavy rain in what the prime minister called a race against time after powerful earthquakes killed at least 62 people in western Japan. Dozens are believed trapped under collapsed buildings.

Ishikawa prefecture and nearby areas were shaken by a 4.9 magnitude aftershock early Wednesday — one of dozens that have followed Monday's magnitude 7.6 temblor centered near Noto, about 300 kilometers (185 miles) from Tokyo on the opposite coast. The quake set off tsunami warnings, followed by waves measuring more than 1 meter (3 feet) in some places.

The first 72 hours are especially critical for rescues, experts say, because the prospects for survival greatly diminish after that.

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"More than 40 hours have passed. This is a race against time, and I feel that we are at a critical moment," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters. "We have received reports many people are still waiting for rescue under collapsed buildings."

Noto's narrow peninsula has added to the challenges in reaching some communities. Water, power and cellphone service were still down in some areas.

Naomi Gonno says she and her children got out of their house just as it came crashing down.

But her children were screaming "Granma," and Gonno saw that her mother was trapped under the smashed house, with only her hand visible. She was able to squeeze her way out through a tiny space, Gonno said.

"I can't believe we're still alive," she said. "We are living in fear."

Relief officials handed out water, blankets, food and other supplies. Search dogs joined military personnel and firefighters trying to find dozens of people who are thought to be trapped, although the exact number is unclear.

Weather forecasts warned of heavy rain in Ishikawa, leading to worries about landslides and further damage to half-crumbled homes. Temperatures were expected to drop to around 4 degrees Celsius (39 degrees Fahrenheit) overnight.

Of the deaths, 29 were counted in Wajima city, while 22 people died in Suzu, according to Ishikawa prefectural authorities. Eleven deaths were reported in other nearby towns, and three were still awaiting official confirmation in Wajima, meaning the overall toll would likely grow to at least 65 people. Dozens of people have been seriously injured, including in nearby prefectures.

Ishikawa Gov. Hiroshi Hase encouraged everyone to use masks, antiseptic and soap to guard against the spread of infectious diseases as evacuees shelter together. Ensuring adequate water supplies and toilets for those who were displaced is a priority, he said.

Nearly 33,000 people are staying at evacuation centers, and some said they were hungry and cold, unable to sleep and afraid.

When Monday's quake hit, Yasuo Kobatake ran out of his house with just one sock on. The shaking threw him to the ground, and a concrete wall came crashing down, barely missing him, he said.

He was eating only rice balls and a few sips of water in paper cups at the elementary school where he and others were sheltering. They slept on cushions, with no blankets.

"It was so cold. I thought I'd freeze to death," he said.

In the aftermath of the quakes and tsunami, boats lay overturned in the sea, roads were blocked by mounds of dirt, and pillars and walls lay scattered from flattened homes. A large fire turned an entire section of Wajima city into ashes.

Officials warned that more major quakes could follow.

Japan is prone to earthquakes, with many fault lines and volcanoes. A massive quake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in 2011 caused widespread damage in northeastern Japan.

No major problems were reported at nuclear plants after Monday's quake. The Shika nuclear plant in Ishikawa suffered a partial electricity failure, but backup power kicked in, ensuring the critical cooling process continued.

Japan is an organized, conformist and relatively crime-free society where warnings are systematically relayed as a public service. Disaster experts say that's helping save lives.

Trump's vows to deport millions are undercut by his White House record and one family's story

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

Noelia Sanchez was born in the rolling farmlands of southwest Missouri, where her Mexican parents worked as seasonal farmworkers in the 1950s.

When she was 1, Noelia and her mother, Aurora, who had no work documents, were rounded up with dozens of other immigrants in a Texas town near the border. The U.S.-born child and her mother were

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forced to go to Mexico along with hundreds of thousands of other people.

Their deportations were part of a U.S. government effort that was known in official papers and the media as "Operation Wetback." The term "wetback," which was used to describe Mexicans who swam or waded across the Rio Grande, is considered a racial slur.

Donald Trump has lauded the Eisenhower-era raids without using their name since he first ran for president and is now promising voters he would begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history, exceeding the 1950s. He has escalated his verbal attacks on immigrants as he seeks a second term, telling supporters twice in recent weeks that immigrants were "poisoning the blood of our country."

People affected by "Operation Wetback" and historians on immigration argue Trump is using fragments of history and rhetoric for political reasons while discounting his own administration's failures to carry out mass deportations, even as it separated families at the U.S.-Mexico border and enacted sweeping restrictions on asylum.

"Families were divided by misapplied immigration policies and discriminatory immigration policies specifically geared toward indigenous people, Mexican Americans, Latinos," said Joaquin Sanchez, Noelia's son, who is now an immigration attorney in Chicago. "These are the types of policies that my family has witnessed for generations."

"Operation Wetback" coincided with a guest worker program that provided legal status to hundreds of thousands of largely Mexican farm workers. Noelia Sanchez, who was born in Missouri, and her mother were able to get their papers in about a year and return to settle in Chicago.

The administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched a military-style campaign in the summer of 1954 seeking to remove Mexican immigrants who were in the country illegally. The operation was named after the term "wetback," which was used to describe Mexicans who swam or waded across the Rio Grande, and it followed several other deportation efforts of the 1940s and 1950s.

Scholars have challenged the 1 million arrests reported under that summer operation, saying that they had included figures from previous years and that the number for that entire year was actually much smaller at about 250,000.

The government relied on scare tactics to prompt people to self-deport so that they could have another chance to return to the U.S.

Experts have highlighted it was no coincidence the deportation drive happened as farmers were looking for guest workers under the Bracero program that began in the 1940s, aimed at allowing Mexican farmworkers to enter the country and work in the U.S. legally. The program excluded women and children, driving some families to enter the country illegally to remain together.

Adam Goodman, a professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, wrote in his book "The Deportation Machine" that organizations such as the ACLU contacted immigration authorities in Chicago and ultimately advised immigrants who were in the country illegally to return to Mexico. Those groups sent a press release with a brochure to all newspapers in Illinois to give the deportation campaign more publicity.

"It was a terror campaign that was designed to scare people from the country," said UCLA history professor Kelly Lytle Hernández. "It was really a PR campaign designed to terrorize communities into self-deporting."

Hernández said the administration would round up a sizable number of people, broadcast it and announce they were traveling to other towns. "There is no way the United States had that force to affect that number of deportations."

Trump often labels immigration as dangerous in his speeches, suggesting people crossing the border are criminals who are trying to invade the U.S. and bring diseases.

Speaking in Ankeny, Iowa, in September, he said, "Following the Eisenhower model, we will carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history."

He invoked the same operation in 2015 when he was first running for president.

But his administration did not deport millions during his four-year presidency as he promised before and after becoming president. Just as in the 1950s, the U.S. government was limited in how many deportations

it could carry out at one time.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, the Trump administration deported about one-third as many immigrants in the country illegally from the interior during its first four fiscal years as the administration of President Barack Obama during the same time frame.

Enforcement sweeps take months of planning, and arresting an immigrant can often require days of surveillance. Officers don't usually carry search warrants, and advocates warn immigrants not to open their doors. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement often struggled to find adequate detention space during the Trump administration, and people can fight their deportation cases for months or years.

The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for information on why his administration did not come close to deporting millions and how a second term would conduct such a large-scale effort.

The Trump administration was more hostile to immigration than any administration in decades. Trump prevented people from applying for asylum at the southwest border, separated children from their families, and built a border wall in environmentally sensitive areas.

Advocates and extremism experts have noted his language echoes writings from Hitler about the "purity" of Aryan blood, which Nazi Germany used to justify murdering millions of Jews during World War II.

Well into his term in 2019, Trump announced on Twitter that he would deport millions the day before he was launching his reelection bid.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is running against Trump for the Republican presidential nomination, hit Trump for his immigration record in the last GOP debate.

"He did say in 2016 he'd have the largest deportation program in history. He deported less than Barack Obama did when Barack Obama was president," he said. "Some of these policies he ran on in '16, I was cheering him on then, but he didn't deliver it."

Both DeSantis and Trump have touted the Eisenhower program as a model. Several candidates in the field have talked about using deadly force at the border or sending the U.S. military into Mexico.

Joaquin Sanchez's grandmother, now 92, still lives in Chicago, in a home she owns a few blocks away from a proposed temporary shelter for newly arriving migrants.

"Grandma laughs at her own experience because she was able to come back and look at her now, and look at her kids," he said. "She's had an incredible trajectory."

Apparent Israeli strike kills senior Hamas figure in Beirut and raises fears conflict could expand

By BASSEM MROUE, TIA GOLDENBERG and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — An apparent Israeli strike in the Lebanese capital of Beirut killed Hamas' No. 2 political leader Tuesday, marking a potentially significant escalation of Israel's war against the militant group and heightening the risk of a wider Middle East conflict.

Saleh Arouri, who was the most senior Hamas figure killed since the war with Israel began, was also a founder of the group's military wing. His death could provoke major retaliation by Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah militia.

The strike hit an apartment in a building in a Shiite district of Beirut that is a Hezbollah stronghold, and Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has vowed to strike back against any Israeli targeting of Palestinian officials in Lebanon.

Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been exchanging fire almost daily over the Israeli-Lebanese border since Israel's military campaign in Gaza began nearly three months ago. But so far the Lebanese group has appeared reluctant to dramatically escalate the fighting. A significant response now could send the conflict spiraling into all-out war on Israel's northern border.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said the strike was carried out by an Israeli drone, and Israeli officials declined to comment. Speaking to reporters, Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari did not directly mention Arouri's death but said, "We are focused and remain focused on fighting against Hamas."

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"We are on high readiness for any scenario," he added.

The killing comes ahead of a visit to the region by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, even as the United States has tried to prevent a spread of the conflict, repeatedly warning Hezbollah — and its regional supporter, Iran — not to escalate the violence.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead with the assault in Gaza until Hamas is crushed and the more than 100 hostages still held by the militant group in Gaza are freed, which he has said could take several more months. At the same time, Israeli officials have increasingly warned in recent days of stepped-up action against Hezbollah unless its cross-border fire stops.

BEIRUT STRIKE

Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have repeatedly threatened to kill Hamas leaders wherever they are. The group's Oct. 7 attack from Gaza into southern Israel killed around 1,200 people, and some 240 others were taken hostage.

Israel claims to have killed a number of mid-level Hamas leaders in Gaza, but this would be the first time it has reached into another country to target the group's top leaders, many of whom live in exile around the region.

Arouri was the deputy of Hamas' supreme political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, and headed the group's presence in the West Bank. He was also a key liaison with Hezbollah.

Tuesday's blast shook a residential building in the Beirut suburb of Musharafieh, killing four people, according to the Lebanese news agency. Hamas confirmed that Arouri was killed along with six other members of the group, including two military commanders.

Haniyeh said the movement was "more powerful and determined" following the attack. "They left behind them strong men who will carry the banner after them," he said of those killed.

Hezbollah called the strike "a serious attack on Lebanon, its people, its security, sovereignty and resistance."

"We affirm that this crime will never pass without response and punishment," it said.

Since the Gaza conflict began, Lebanese have feared their country could be pulled into a full-fledged war. Hezbollah and Israel fought a monthlong war in 2006, when Israeli bombardment wreaked heavy destruction in southern Lebanon.

GAZA COMBAT CONTINUES

Israel's air, ground and sea assault in Gaza has killed more than 22,100 people in Gaza, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. The count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

The campaign has driven some 85% of Gaza's population from their homes, forcing hundreds of thousands of people into overcrowded shelters or teeming tent camps in Israeli-designated safe areas that the military has nevertheless bombed. Israel's siege of the territory has left a quarter of Gaza residents facing starvation, according to the United Nations.

Israel announced Monday that it would withdraw five brigades, or several thousand troops, from Gaza in the coming weeks. Still, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said it would be a mistake to think that Israel is planning on halting the war.

"The feeling that we will stop soon is incorrect," he said Tuesday. "Without a clear victory, we will not be able to live in the Middle East."

Israel has said it's close to achieving operational control over most of northern Gaza, where ground troops have been battling militants for over two months. But Gallant said several thousand Hamas fighters are believed still to be in the north, and residents reported clashes in several parts of Gaza City, as well as in the nearby urban Jabaliya refugee camp.

Fierce fighting has continued in other parts of the Palestinian territory, especially the south, where many of Hamas' forces remain intact and where most of Gaza's population has fled.

Palestinians reported heavy airstrikes and artillery shelling in the southern city of Khan Younis and farming areas to the east. The Palestinian Red Crescent said Israel bombed its headquarters in the city, killing

five people. At least 14,000 displaced people are sheltering in the building, it said.

Fighting was also underway in and around the built-up Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza. The army issued evacuation orders to people living in parts of nearby Nuseirat camp. A strike Tuesday leveled a building in Nuseirat, killing at least eight people, according to officials at the nearby hospital. Associated Press footage showed people pulling several children out of the wreckage.

GENOCIDE CASE

In other developments, officials said Israel will defend itself before the United Nations' top court against charges that it has engaged in genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. The announcement set the stage for what is likely to be a landmark case in international law.

South Africa launched the case Friday at the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Netherlands, saying the Israeli military campaign targeting Hamas has resulted in enough death, destruction and humanitarian crisis in Gaza to meet the threshold of genocide under international law. South Africa asked the court to order Israel to halt its attacks in Gaza.

Israel rarely cooperates in international court cases against it, dismissing the United Nations and international tribunals as unfair and biased. Its decision to respond to the charge signals that the government is concerned about potential damage to its reputation.

The genocide charge strikes at the heart of Israel's national identity. The country sees itself as a bulwark of security for Jews after the Holocaust killed 6 million Jews, and world support for Israel's creation in Palestine in 1948 was deeply rooted in outrage over Nazi atrocities.

The convention against genocide was drawn up by world powers the same year in hopes of preventing similar atrocities.

Eylon Levy, an official in the Israeli prime minister's office, accused South Africa of "giving political and legal cover" to Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack triggered Israel's campaign.

"The state of Israel will appear before the International Court of Justice at the Hague to dispel South Africa's absurd blood libel," he said.

Many South Africans, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, have compared Israel's policies regarding Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with South Africa's past apartheid regime of racial segregation. Israel rejects such comparisons.

Japanese transport officials and police begin on-site probe after fatal crash on Tokyo runway

By FOSTER KLUG and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Transport officials and police began separate investigations at Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Wednesday, a day after a large passenger plane and a Japanese coast guard aircraft collided on the runway and burst into flames, killing five people.

The accident occurred Tuesday evening when the Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 plane landed on one of Haneda's four runways after the coast guard aircraft — a Bombardier Dash-8 — had also entered, preparing to take off. Both sides said they received a go-ahead from aviation officials.

An orange fireball erupted from the aircraft, and the JAL plane continued down the runway covered in flames while spewing gray smoke. Within 20 minutes, all 379 passengers and crew members slid down emergency chutes and survived. The pilot of the coast guard plane, which exploded, evacuated with injuries but five crew members aboard the coast guard plane were killed.

Transport safety officials were focusing on communication between air traffic control officials and the two aircraft to determine what led to the collision.

Police began a separate probe into possible professional negligence. On Wednesday, Tokyo police said that investigators examined the debris on the runway and were to interview the involved parties.

The Japan Airlines A350 had flown from Shin Chitose airport near the northern Japanese city of Sapporo, and the coast guard Bombardier was preparing to depart for Niigata to deliver relief supplies to residents in the central Japan regions hit by powerful earthquakes on Monday that killed more than 60 people.

On Wednesday, six experts from the Japan Transport Safety Board examined what remained of the aircraft, the board said. TV footage showed the severely damaged A350's wings among the charred, broken parts of fuselages. The smaller coast guard plane looked like a mound of rubble.

Transport safety investigators plan to interview the pilots and officials from both sides, as well as air traffic control officials to find out how the two planes simultaneously ended up on the runway, JTSB said.

The two sides had different understandings of their permission to use the runway.

JAL Managing Executive Officer Tadayuki Tsutsumi told a news conference late Tuesday that the A350 was making a "normal entry and landing" on the runway. Another JAL executive, Noriyuki Aoki, said the flight had received permission to land from aviation officials.

The air traffic officials gave the JAL airliner landing permission, while telling the coast guard pilot to wait before entering the runway, NHK television reported Wednesday. But the coast guard pilot said he also had been given permission to take off. The coast guard said officials were verifying that claim.

All passengers and crew members left their baggage and slid down the escape chutes within 20 minutes of the landing as smoke filled the cabin of the burning aircraft — an outcome praised by aviation experts. Videos posted by passengers showed people covering their mouths with handkerchiefs as they ducked down and moved toward the exits. Some passengers told news media they felt safe only after reaching a grassy area beyond the tarmac.

"The entire cabin was filled with smoke within a few minutes. We threw ourselves down on the floor. Then the emergency doors were opened and we threw ourselves at them," Swedish passenger Anton Deibe, 17, told Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet. "The smoke in the cabin stung like hell."

The fire is likely to be seen as a key test case for airplane fuselages made from carbon-composite fibers — featured on the A350 and the Boeing 787 — instead of conventional aluminum skins.

"This is the most catastrophic composite-airplane fire that I can think of. On the other hand, that fuselage protected (passengers) from a really horrific fire — it did not burn through for some period of time and let everybody get out," safety consultant John Cox said.

Haneda's three other runways reopened late Tuesday, but some 100 flights have been canceled due to the closure of the accident-hit runway. The airport was packed Wednesday as many holidaymakers wrapped up their New Year travel, including those who who survived the fire and spent the night at the airport or at nearby hotels, trying to change their flights.

Haneda is the busier of the two major airports serving the Japanese capital, with many international flights, and is favored by business travelers due to its proximity to central parts of the city.

Tuesday's accident was the first severe damage to an Airbus A350, among the industry's newest large passenger planes. It entered commercial service in 2015. Airbus said in a statement it was sending specialists to help Japanese and French officials investigating the accident, and that the plane was delivered to Japan Airlines in late 2021.

JAL operates 16 of the A350-900 version aircraft, according to its website. The twin-engine, twin-aisle A350 is used by a number of long-haul international carriers. More than 570 of the aircraft are in operation, according to Airbus.

New Year's Day quake in Japan revives the trauma of 2011 triple disasters

By HIRO KOMAE and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

SUZU, Japan (AP) — The powerful earthquake that shattered the peace of New Year's Day in central Japan did not spur massive tsunamis like those that scoured the Pacific coast in 2011, killing nearly 20,000 people and forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes.

The tsunamis that did roll in along the Sea of Japan, on Japan's western coast, were mostly just a few feet high, rather than waves up to 5 meters (15 feet) tall predicted in alerts issued just after the magnitude 7.6 quake struck on Monday afternoon.

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But the alarms and evacuation orders, and the dozens of strong quakes that came before and after the main quake on Monday, summoned memories of the triple disasters nearly 13 years ago. ,

As of Wednesday morning, local officials said 62 people were confirmed killed in the quake that struck on the coast of the remote Noto peninsula, 300 kilometers (about 185 miles) northwest of Tokyo.

Searchers were combing through rubble, a task lent urgency by forecasts for heavy rain that could trigger more landslides and collapses, racing against the clock to find survivors. Some were buried in landslides or trapped in houses whose roofs collapsed. Firefighters were using power saws to access people trapped in a small, 7-floor apartment building that fell sideways off its foundation.

"Hardly any homes are standing. They're either partially or totally destroyed," said Masuhiro Izumiya, the mayor of Suzu city, which suffered heavy damage.

Two days after the quake, a man watched silently, wiping his eyes with a towel, as rescuers pulled his wife's body from beneath their collapsed home.

The quake struck on the one day of the year that nearly all Japanese take off: The New Year holiday is the country's biggest festival, when families gather to sit in heated "kotatsu" tables, eat "osechi" delicacies and rice cakes, and just take it easy.

The calm was vanquished by TV announcers who urgently and repeatedly warned people in areas that might be flooded to seek higher ground, without delay.

Tens of thousands of people living in areas near where the quake struck sought shelter in government buildings and schools as authorities warned against returning to buildings possibly weakened by dozens of strong aftershocks.

Others lined up patiently to get drinking water from tanker trucks sent in to help tide residents over until broken pipes could be fixed.

"It's flattened (my house) so we can't get inside. So I'm here with my wife sleeping together in a huddle while talking to others and encouraging each other. That's the situation now." said Yasuo Kobatake, who was visiting his hometown in Suzu when quake occurred.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and other officials sternly warned against posting misleading or "malicious" information online after some people posted videos of the gigantic 2011 tsunami as if it was from Monday's quake.

The disaster was an inauspicious start for 2024. According to Asian astrology, it's a Dragon Year that usually would bring good luck and prosperity. So far, it's brought a quake on Monday and a fiery landing of a Japan Airlines plane in Tokyo on Tuesday after a Japan Airlines flight from the northern island of Hokkaido crashed into a smaller Japan Coast Guard aircraft on the runway. All 379 passengers and crew of the JAL plane escaped. Five people perished on the smaller plane, which had been preparing to deliver relief supplies for quake victims.

The holiday's celebrations turned somber: Kishida postponed plans for a ceremonial New Year visit to the Ise Shrine. Public visits to the Imperial Palace in Tokyo for New Year greetings by the Imperial family were canceled as Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako conveyed their sympathies to victims of the disaster.

The damage is much smaller in scale than in 2011, but still catastrophic.

The Noto area is renowned for old, picturesque wooden-frame homes and shops, often with heavy tile roofs that experts say are most vulnerable to the kind of violent shaking seen in Monday's quake. Most, but not all, of Japan's modern buildings are built to stronger, quake-resistant specifications, usually using reinforced concrete that tends to hold up well.

Much of the damage from Monday's quake to more modern buildings appears to have resulted from landslides and subsidence, which severely damaged homes even 100 kilometers (60 miles) away in Kanazawa, the closest larger city.

Landslides and road collapses left some isolated communities cut off: Residents in Suzu used folding chairs, benches and other things to spell out SOS in a parking lot — much as some distressed quake and tsunami survivors did in 2011.

The 2011 triple disasters along Japan's northeastern coast began with a magnitude 9 earthquake offshore that was more than 125 times more powerful than this week's quake in terms of the total energy it

released, according to an online calculating tool of the U.S. Geological Survey. It unleashed tsunami with waves up to 40 meters (131 feet) high that pounded into the coast, across sea walls and up river valleys, wiping out entire communities in low-lying areas.

It also triggered meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant that led to massive evacuations along the coast due to worries over radiation escaping from the disabled plant that have kept thousands from moving back.

The operator of the nuclear power plant closest to the epicenter of Monday's quake, in Shika, said there were minor problems and damage, but nothing that would cause radiation leaks from the facility, where reactors were idled for safety checks.

Hokuriku Power apologized for quake-related power outages that affected 33,200 homes in the area — some of those who sought refuge said they were too cold without any heating due to the blackouts, with temperatures dipping near freezing overnight.

Further north, at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata prefecture, the world's largest atomic power plant by power capacity, the quake caused water to spill from fuel pools of two reactors. Its operator Tokyo Electric Power, which also is responsible for the wrecked Fukushima plant, said there was no damage or leaks.

TEPCO recently gained permission to restart the Niigata facility, which had been partially shut down at the time of the 2011 quake and has been undergoing safety improvements since that disaster, which did not affect it.

Harvard president's resignation highlights new conservative weapon against colleges: plagiarism

By COLLIN BINKLEY and MORIAH BALINGIT AP Education Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The downfall of Harvard's president has elevated the threat of unearthing plagiarism, a cardinal sin in academia, as a possible new weapon in conservative attacks on higher education.

Claudine Gay's resignation Tuesday followed weeks of mounting accusations that she lifted language from other scholars in her doctoral dissertation and journal articles. The allegations surfaced amid backlash over her congressional testimony about antisemitism on campus.

The plagiarism allegations came not from her academic peers but her political foes, led by conservatives who sought to oust Gay and put her career under intense scrutiny in hopes of finding a fatal flaw. Her detractors charged that Gay — who has a Ph.D. in government, was a professor at Harvard and Stanford and headed Harvard's largest division before being promoted — got the top job in large part because she is a Black woman.

Christopher Rufo, a conservative activist who helped orchestrate the effort, celebrated her departure as a win in his campaign against elite institutions of higher education. On X, formerly Twitter, he wrote "SCALPED," as if Gay was a trophy of violence, invoking a gruesome practice taken up by white colonists who sought to eradicate Native Americans.

"Tomorrow, we get back to the fight," he said on X, describing a "playbook" against institutions deemed too liberal by conservatives. His latest target: efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in education and business.

"We must not stop until we have abolished DEI ideology from every institution in America," he said. In another post, he announced a new "plagiarism hunting fund," vowing to "expose the rot in the Ivy League and restore truth, rather than racialist ideology, as the highest principle in academic life."

Gay didn't directly address the plagiarism accusations in a campus letter announcing her resignation, but she noted she was troubled to see doubt cast on her commitment "to upholding scholarly rigor." She also indirectly nodded to the December congressional hearing that started the onslaught of criticism, where she did not say unequivocally that calls for the genocide of Jews would violate Harvard policy.

Her departure comes just six months after becoming Harvard's first Black president.

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As the figureheads of their universities, presidents often face heightened scrutiny, and numerous leaders have been felled by plagiarism scandals. Stanford University's president resigned last year amid findings that he manipulated scientific data in his research. A president of the University of South Carolina resigned in 2021 after he lifted parts of his speech at a graduation ceremony.

In Gay's case, many academics were troubled with how the plagiarism came to light: as part of a coordinated campaign to discredit Gay and force her from office, in part because of her involvement in efforts for racial justice on campus. Her resignation came after calls for her ouster from prominent conservatives including Rep. Elise Stefanik, a Harvard alumna, and Bill Ackman, a billionaire hedge fund manager who has donated millions to Harvard.

The campaign against Gay and other Ivy League presidents has become part of a broader right-wing effort to remake higher education, which has often been seen as a bastion of liberalism. Republican detractors have sought to gut funding for public universities, roll back tenure and banish initiatives that make colleges more welcoming to students of color, disabled students and the LGBTQ+ community. They also have aimed to limit how race and gender are discussed in classrooms.

Walter M. Kimbrough, the former president of the historically Black Dillard University, said what unfolded at Harvard reminded him of an adage from his mother, a Black graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1950s.

As a Black person in academia, "you always have to be twice, three times as good," he said.

"There are going to be people, particularly if they have any inkling that the person of color is not the most qualified, who will label them a 'DEI hire,' like they tried to label her," Kimbrough said. "If you want to lead an institution like (Harvard) ... there are going to be people who are looking to disqualify you."

Reviews by conservative activists and then by a Harvard committee did find multiple shortcomings in Gay's academic citations. In dozens of instances first published by The Washington Free Beacon, a conservative website, Gay's work includes long stretches of prose that mirror language from other published works. A review ordered by Harvard acknowledged "duplicative language" and missing quotation marks, but it concluded the errors "were not considered intentional or reckless" and didn't rise to misconduct.

Harvard previously said Gay updated her dissertation and requested corrections from journals.

Among her critics in conservative circles and academia, the findings are clear evidence that Gay, as the top academic at the pinnacle of U.S. higher education, is unfit to serve. Her defenders say it isn't so clear-cut.

In highly specialized fields, scholars often use similar language to describe the same concepts, said Davarian Baldwin, a historian at Trinity College who writes about race and higher education. Gay clearly made mistakes, he said, but with the spread of software designed to detect plagiarism, it wouldn't be hard to find similar overlap in works by other presidents and professors.

The tool becomes dangerous, he added, when it "falls into the hands of those who argue that academia in general is a cesspool of incompetence and bad actors."

John Pelissero, a former interim college president who now works for the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, said instances of plagiarism deserve to be evaluated individually and that it's not always so cut and dried.

"You're looking for whether there was intentionality to mislead or inappropriately borrow other people's ideas in your work," Pelissero said. "Or was there an honest mistake?"

Without commenting on the merits of the allegations against Gay, President Irene Mulvey of the American Association of University Professors said she fears plagiarism investigations could be "weaponized" to pursue a political agenda.

"There is a right-wing political attack on higher education right now, which feels like an existential threat to the academic freedom that has made American higher education the envy of the world," Mulvey said.

She worries Gay's departure will put a new strain on college presidents. In addition to their work courting donors, policymakers and alumni, presidents are supposed to protect faculty from interference so they can research unimpeded.

"For presidents to be taken down like this, it does not bode well for academic freedom," she said. "I

think it'll chill the climate for academic freedom. And it may make university presidents less likely to speak out against this inappropriate interference for fear of losing their jobs or being targeted."

Things to know about Minnesota's new, non-racist state flag and seal

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Love it, hate it or yawn at it, Minnesota is set to get a new state flag this spring that echoes its motto of being the North Star State, replacing an old flag that brought up painful memories of conquest and displacement for Native Americans.

During the monthslong selection process, some publicly submitted designs gained cult followings on social media but didn't make the final cut. They included: a loon — the state bird — with lasers for eyes; a photo of someone's dog; famous paintings of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln; and an image of a rather large mosquito.

Instead, the flag design adopted in December includes a dark blue shape resembling Minnesota on the left, with a white, eight-pointed North Star on it. On the right is a light blue field that to those involved in the selection process symbolizes the abundant waters that help define the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

The new state seal features a loon amid wild rice, to replace the image of a Native American riding off into the sunset while a white settler plows his field with a rifle at the ready. The seal was a key feature of the old flag, hence the pressure for changing both.

Unless the Legislature votes to reject the new emblems, which seems unlikely, they will become official May 11. Other states are also considering or have already made flag changes. Here are things to know about Minnesota's new flag and seal, and how the debate unfolded.

WHY THIS DESIGN?

The flag was designed by committee — a commission that included design experts and members of tribal and other communities of color. More than 2,600 proposals were submitted by the public. The commission picked one by Andrew Prekker, 24, of Luverne, as the base design.

The main changes the commission made were rotating the star by 22.5 degrees so it pointed straight north, and replacing the original light blue, white and green stripes with a solid, light blue field. The significance of the light blue area is up to the beholder. The original Dakota name for Minnesota, Mni Sóta Makoce, which will go on the new seal, can be translated as "where the water meets the sky." The commission's chairman, Luis Fitch, said that to him, the light blue represents the Mississippi River, which originates in Minnesota, pointing to the North Star.

THE CRITICISM

It's fair to say that much of the public reaction to the new flag fell into the category of "meh" or worse when the design adoption was announced. But supporters of the new flag hope it will grow on people. It's not like many people were particularly attached to the old flag.

Some criticism circulated by conservatives has been inaccurate. The flag does not resemble that of Somalia nor of its Puntland region.

While it's true that both the original design and the Puntland flag had light blue, white and green stripes in the same order, the commission dropped the stripes in favor of simplicity and symmetry. And it's a stretch to say the final version bears much resemblance to the Somali national flag, which is a solid light blue with a white, five-pointed star right in the center. The state Democratic Party chairman issued a news release taking one GOP lawmaker to task for fueling the spread of the misinformation on social media.

Two Republican lawmakers who were nonvoting members of the commission objected to putting the Dakota name for Minnesota on the seal. They said they will propose letting voters decide up or down this



A final Minnesota's flag design is on display Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023 St. Paul, Minn. The new state flag should feature an eight-pointed North Star against a dark blue background shaped like the state, with a solid light blue field at the right, a special commission decided Monday as it picked a replacement for an older design that many Native Americans considered offensive.

(Glen Stubbe /Star Tribune via AP)

November. That proposal is unlikely to get traction in the Democratic-controlled Legislature. And Democratic Secretary of State Steve Simon, a commissioner who backed both designs, said a referendum would probably be unconstitutional.

Additionally, Aaron Wittnebel — a voting member of the commission for the Ojibwe community — said in a minority report last week that adopting the Dakota phrase on the seal “favors the Dakota people over other groups of peoples in Minnesota.”

THE PRAISE

While the new flag might strike some critics as uninspired — and a waste of time and the \$35,000 budgeted for the commission — the change is important to many Native Americans in a state where there are 11 federally recognized Ojibwe and Dakota tribes.

“Dare I say anything that’s not a Native person being forced off their land is a flag upgrade?!” tweeted Democratic Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe. “Excited to have a new state flag that represents every Minnesotan.”

Democratic state Sen. Mary Kunesh, a descendant of the Standing Rock Lakota, was a chief author of the bill that launched the redesign and a nonvoting member of the commission. She said in a statement that the more than 2,600 submissions and the lively public debate showed that Minnesotans care deeply about their state.

“It was an incredible experience to see our community’s energy and passion captured in the beautiful designs they submitted,” Kunesh said. “From loons and wild rice to water and the North Star, we have captured the essence of our state in the new flag and seal. These designs honor our history and celebrate the future of Minnesota.”

One Indigenous graphic designer is already selling T-shirts online that bear the new design and say, “At least the flag isn’t racist anymore.”

Ted Kaye, secretary of the North American Vexillological Association, who studies flags and was involved in the redesign, has said the new Minnesota flag gets an “A+” from him for its simplicity, uniqueness and inclusion of meaningful symbols.

THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

Several other states also have been redesigning flags.

The Utah Legislature last winter approved a design featuring a beehive, a symbol of the prosperity and the industriousness of its Mormon pioneers. Mississippi chose a new flag with a magnolia to replace a Confederate-themed flag. Other states considering simplifying their flags include Michigan, Illinois and Maine.

US intel confident militant groups used largest Gaza hospital in campaign against Israel: AP source

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is “confident” that Palestinian militant groups used Gaza’s largest hospital to hold “at least a few” hostages seized during their bloody Oct. 7 attack and to house command infrastructure, an American intelligence assessment declassified Tuesday and shared by a U.S. official found.

The assessment offers the firmest U.S. support for Israeli claims about the Shifa hospital complex, which was raided by Israeli forces in November in an operation decried by global humanitarian organizations and some members of President Joe Biden’s party. Yet the information released doesn’t fully back some of Israel’s most significant allegations that the hospital served as the central node for activities by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The U.S. official shared the assessment on the condition of anonymity.

“The U.S. Intelligence Community is confident in its judgment on this topic and has independently corroborated information on HAMAS and PIJ’s use of the hospital complex for a variety of purposes related to its campaign against Israel,” the assessment states. It continues that it believes the groups “used the al-Shifa hospital complex and sites beneath it to house command infrastructure, exercise certain command and control activities, store some weapons, and hold at least a few hostages.”

The U.S. believes that Hamas members evacuated days before Israel raided the complex on Nov. 15 and

that they destroyed sensitive documents and electronics before Israeli troops entered the facility.

U.S. officials had previously pointed to classified intelligence, obtained independently from the Israelis, to offer support for Israel's raid.

"I can confirm for you that we have information that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad use some hospitals in the Gaza Strip, including al-Shifa, and tunnels underneath them to conceal and to support their military operations and to hold hostages," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters a day before Israel entered the hospital.

Gaza's hospitals have played a central role in the dueling narratives surrounding the war that the Hamas-run Health Ministry says has killed 22,100 people — though it does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. Hospitals enjoy special protected status under the international laws of war. But they can lose that status if they are used for military purposes.

Before the raid on the hospital, the Israeli military unveiled a detailed 3D model of Gaza's Shifa Hospital showing a series of underground installations that it said was part of an elaborate Hamas command-and-control center under the territory's largest health care facility. The Israeli military has yet to unveil any infrastructure nearly as sprawling and developed as the purported center.

Powerful earthquakes in Japan leave at least 62 dead. Fears grow about saving people still trapped

By HIRO KOMAE and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

SUZU, Japan (AP) — A series of powerful earthquakes that hit western Japan left at least 62 people dead as rescue workers fought Wednesday to save those feared trapped under the rubble of collapsed buildings.

Aftershocks continued to shake Ishikawa prefecture and nearby areas two days after a magnitude 7.6 temblor slammed the area. The first 72 hours are considered crucial to save lives after disasters.

Water, power and cell phone service were still down in some areas. Residents expressed sorrow about their uncertain futures.

"It's not just that it's a mess. The wall has collapsed, and you can see through to the next room. I don't think we can live here anymore," Miki Kobayashi, an Ishikawa resident, said as she swept around her house.

The house was also damaged in a 2007 quake, she said.

Of the deaths, 29 were counted in Wajima city, while 22 people died in Suzu, according to Ishikawa Prefectural authorities. Dozens of people have been seriously injured, including in nearby prefectures.

Although casualty numbers continued to climb gradually, the prompt public warnings, relayed on broadcasts and phones, and the quick response from the general public and officials appeared to have limited some of the damage.

Toshitaka Katada, a University of Tokyo professor specializing in disasters, said people were prepared because the area had been hit by quakes in recent years. They had evacuation plans and emergency supplies in stock.

"There are probably no people on Earth who are as disaster-ready as the Japanese," he told The Associated Press.

Japan is frequently hit by earthquakes because of its location along the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

Katada warned the situation remains precarious and unpredictable. The March 2011 quake and tsunami in northeastern Japan had been preceded by other quakes.

"This is far from over," Katada said.

Predictions by scientists have repeatedly been proven wrong, such as with the 2016 quake in southwestern Kumamoto, an area previously seen as relatively quake-free.

"Having too much confidence in the power of science is very dangerous. We are dealing with nature," Katada said.

Japanese media's aerial footage showed widespread damage in the hardest-hit spots, with landslides burying roads, boats tossed in the waters and a fire that had turned an entire section of Wajima city to

ashes.

Japan's military has dispatched 1,000 soldiers to the disaster zones to join rescue efforts. It was uncertain how many more victims might still be in the rubble.

Nuclear regulators said several nuclear plants in the region were operating normally. A major quake and tsunami in 2011 caused three reactors to melt and release large amounts of radiation at a nuclear plant in northeastern Japan.

On Monday, the Japan Meteorological Agency issued a major tsunami warning for Ishikawa and lower-level tsunami warnings or advisories for the rest of the western coast of Japan's main island of Honshu, as well as for the northern island of Hokkaido.

The warning was downgraded several hours later, and all tsunami warnings were lifted as of early Tuesday. Waves measuring more than one meter (3 feet) hit some places.

Still, half-sunken ships floated in bays where tsunami waves had rolled in, leaving a muddied coastline.

People who were evacuated from their houses huddled in auditoriums, schools and community centers. Bullet trains in the region were halted, but service was mostly restored. Sections of highways were closed.

Weather forecasters predicted rain, setting off worries about crumbling buildings and infrastructure.

The region includes tourist spots famous for lacquerware and other traditional crafts, along with designated cultural heritage sites.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese joined President Joe Biden and other world leaders in expressing support for the Japanese.

"Our hearts go out to our friends in Japan," he said. "We will provide, and have offered, whatever support is requested by our friends in Japan."

Sheikh Hasina once fought for democracy in Bangladesh. Her critics say she now threatens it

By KRUTIKA PATHI and JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is facing a general election Sunday, a vote she is all but certain to win. Critics say it could further tighten her grip on power after a 15-year-rule that turned a politician who once fought for democratic freedoms into an increasingly autocratic leader.

Hasina's main rival, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, is boycotting the polls, claiming her government cannot ensure a fair vote, and making it increasingly likely the 76-year-old premier will secure her fourth consecutive and fifth overall term in office.

Her supporters say Hasina — the longest-serving leader in Bangladesh's history — and her Awami League have given them a country with a growing industry and humming development projects. The stability has staved off military coups that have shaken the young, predominantly Muslim nation strategically located between India and Myanmar.

But Hasina's political life, like her country, began with violence. On Aug. 15, 1975, a group of military officers behind a coup assassinated her father, Sheikh Mujib Rahman, the first leader of independent Bangladesh.

Some say the brutal act, which also killed nearly her entire family, pushed her to consolidate unprecedented power and motivated her throughout her career in politics.

"Hasina has one very powerful quality as a politician — and that is to weaponize trauma," said Avinash Paliwal, a senior lecturer specializing in South Asian strategic affairs at SOAS University of London.

A source who worked closely with Hasina says her ambition was to create the country envisioned by her father, who led the new nation after its forces, aided by India, defeated Pakistan in 1971.

"She felt her father's work was cut short, and that only she could complete it," they told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak with the media.

After the assassination, Hasina lived for years in exile in India, then made her way back to Bangladesh and took over the Awami League. But the country's military rulers had her in and out of house detention throughout the 1980s until, after general elections in 1996, she became prime minister for the first time.

What followed was a decadeslong power struggle between Hasina and former Prime Minister Khaleda

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Zia, the chief of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, now ailing and under house arrest.

The two women alternated running the country for years in a bitter rivalry that polarized Bangladesh. Hasina has often accused the BNP of courting hard-line extremists that her party, which calls itself moderate and secular, had worked to stamp out. Zia's BNP claims the Awami League is using oppressive tactics to stay in power.

Analysts say that while they project different ideologies, both parties are tainted by a history of electoral violence and politics of retribution.

When Hasina was reelected in 2008, she fixed her sights on the economy and built infrastructure previously unseen in Bangladesh — power lines that reached remote villages, highways, rail lines and ports, and a garment industry that became one of the world's most competitive.

"I thought my family would never have power at home," said Abdul Halim, a rickshaw puller in Dhaka. "Now my entire village has electricity."

Ahead of the vote, Hasina has flaunted some of her signature achievements, such as Dhaka's metro and the country's longest bridge, which she inaugurated in 2021. She has cast herself as the leader of an impoverished nation aspiring to become an upper-middle-income country by 2031.

"Bangladesh will never look back again," Hasina said in 2023. "It will continue marching to be a smart, developed and prosperous country."

But the recent global economic slowdown has not spared Bangladesh, exposing cracks in its economy that have triggered labor unrest and dissatisfaction.

Mohammed Shohid, a driver in Dhaka, said the government has failed to stop price hikes of essential goods — beans and tomatoes have nearly doubled in price over the last two years. "We cannot afford them anymore," he said.

Hasina's critics say her government has used harsh tools to muzzle dissent, shrink press freedoms and curtail civil society. Rights groups cite forced disappearances of critics. The government rejects the accusations.

In the 2018 election, an AL-led alliance won 96% of the parliament seats amid widespread allegations of vote-rigging, which authorities denied. In 2014, all major opposition parties boycotted the vote. The BNP says about 20,000 of its members have been arrested in recent months on trumped-up charges ahead of Sunday's vote.

"There's a history of an autocratic slide in Hasina's decision-making," said Paliwal, the university lecturer. "The current elections may be a final stamp on a full-blown one-party state."

Voters like Dhaka resident Tamanna Rahman, 46, say the prime minister has no real challengers. "We do not have any option but to elect Hasina again."

On the international scene, Hasina has cultivated ties with powerful countries and successfully balanced between rivals. She staunchly supports both India and China, even as the two Asian giants are locked in a standoff over a disputed border region. In turn, Beijing and New Delhi have bankrolled a slew of Bangladesh's infrastructure projects.

She has nurtured historic ties with Russia, even as it presses on fighting in Ukraine while also increasingly courting Western leaders.

"Say what you will about Hasina, but she has managed the great power competition very effectively," said Michael Kugelman, director of the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute.

Hasina also won international praise when she gave shelter to Rohingya Muslims fleeing prosecution in neighboring Myanmar in 2017. Some 1.1 million Rohingya live in overcrowded refugee camps in Bangladesh today, many embarking on deadly sea voyages for a chance of a better life elsewhere.

The United States — the biggest export market for Bangladeshi garments — announced visa restrictions in May on anyone disrupting Bangladesh's electoral process. The announcement came after Washington expressed concerns over human rights violations and press freedoms in the country.

Some of the pressure she has been under became evident during a recent news conference.

"If you talk too much, I will shut down everything," she snapped, her salt-and-pepper hair covered by a traditional sari, her grey eyes fixed on the reporters.

Harvard president Claudine Gay resigns amid plagiarism claims, backlash from antisemitism testimony

By STEVE LeBLANC and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Harvard University President Claudine Gay resigned Tuesday amid plagiarism accusations and criticism over testimony at a congressional hearing where she was unable to say unequivocally that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school's conduct policy.

Gay is the second Ivy League president to resign in the past month following the congressional testimony — Liz Magill, president of the University of Pennsylvania, resigned Dec. 9.

Gay, Harvard's first Black president, announced her departure just months into her tenure in a letter to the Harvard community.

Following the congressional hearing, Gay's academic career came under intense scrutiny by conservative activists who unearthed several instances of alleged plagiarism in her 1997 doctoral dissertation. The Harvard Corporation, Harvard's governing board, initially rallied behind Gay, saying a review of her scholarly work turned up "a few instances of inadequate citation" but no evidence of research misconduct.

Days later, the Harvard Corporation said it found two additional examples of "duplicative language without appropriate attribution." The board said Gay would update her dissertation and request corrections.

The Harvard Corporation said the resignation came "with great sadness" and thanked Gay for her "deep and unwavering commitment to Harvard and to the pursuit of academic excellence."

Alan M. Garber, provost and chief academic officer, will serve as interim president until Harvard finds a replacement, the board said in a statement. Garber, an economist and physician, has served as provost for 12 years.

Gay's resignation was celebrated by the conservatives who put her alleged plagiarism in the national spotlight — with additional plagiarism accusations surfacing as recently as Monday in The Washington Free Beacon, a conservative publication.

Christopher Rufo, an activist who has helped rally the GOP against higher education, said he's "glad she's gone."

"Rather than take responsibility for minimizing antisemitism, committing serial plagiarism, intimidating the free press, and damaging the institution, she calls her critics racist," Rufo said on X, formerly Twitter. "This is the poison" of diversity, equity and inclusion ideology, said Rufo, who has led conservative attacks on DEI both in business and in education.

Gay, in her letter, said it has been "distressing to have doubt cast on my commitments to confronting hate and to upholding scholarly rigor — two bedrock values that are fundamental to who I am — and frightening to be subjected to personal attacks and threats fueled by racial animus."

But Gay, who is returning to the school's faculty, added "it has become clear that it is in the best interests of Harvard for me to resign so that our community can navigate this moment of extraordinary challenge."

Yoel Zimmermann, a visiting research undergrad from Munich, Germany, studying physics at Harvard, said that as a Jewish student he's noticed fellow members of the Jewish community have felt uncomfortable with the climate on campus.

"I think it was about time that Claudine Gay resigned," Zimmerman said. "She just did too many things wrong, especially with her testimony in Congress. I think that was just the kind of final tipping point that should have led to her removal immediately."

Supporters of Gay lamented her resignation.

"Racist mobs won't stop until they topple all Black people from positions of power and influence who are not reinforcing the structure of racism," award-winning author Ibram X. Kendi, who survived scrutiny of an antiracist research center he founded at Boston University, said in an Instagram post.

The Rev. Al Sharpton in a statement called pressure for Gay to resign "an attack on every Black woman in this country who's put a crack in the glass ceiling" and an "assault on the health, strength, and future of diversity, equity, and inclusion."

Critics welcomed her decision.

House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairwoman Rep. Virginia Foxx called Gay's resignation welcome news but said the problems at Harvard are much larger than one leader.

"Postsecondary education is in a tailspin," the North Carolina Republican said in a statement. "There has been a hostile takeover of postsecondary education by political activists, woke faculty, and partisan administrators."

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz, in a statement on X, also weighed in on Gay's resignation.

"A little context. A failure in leadership and denial of antisemitism have a price. I hope that the esteemed Harvard University will learn from this dismal conduct," he wrote.

Gay, Magill and MIT's president, Sally Kornbluth, came under fire last month for their lawyerly answers to a line of questioning from New York Rep. Elise Stefanik, who asked whether "calling for the genocide of Jews" would violate the colleges' codes of conduct.

The three presidents had been called before the Republican-led House Committee on Education and the Workforce to answer accusations that universities were failing to protect Jewish students amid rising fears of antisemitism worldwide and fallout from Israel's intensifying war in Gaza, which faces heightened criticism for the mounting Palestinian death toll.

Gay said it depended on the context, adding that when "speech crosses into conduct, that violates our policies." The answer faced swift backlash from Republican and some Democratic lawmakers as well as the White House. The hearing was parodied in the opening skit on "Saturday Night Live."

Gay later apologized, telling The Crimson student newspaper that she got caught up in a heated exchange at the House committee hearing and failed to properly denounce threats of violence against Jewish students.

"What I should have had the presence of mind to do in that moment was return to my guiding truth, which is that calls for violence against our Jewish community — threats to our Jewish students — have no place at Harvard, and will never go unchallenged," Gay said.

The episode marred Gay's tenure at Harvard — she became president in July — and sowed discord at the Ivy League campus. Rabbi David Wolpe later resigned from a new committee on antisemitism created by Gay, saying in a post on X that "events on campus and the painfully inadequate testimony reinforced the idea that I cannot make the sort of difference I had hoped."

The House committee announced days after the hearing that it would investigate the policies and disciplinary procedures at Harvard, MIT and Penn. Separate federal civil rights investigations were previously opened at Harvard, Penn and several other universities in response to complaints submitted to the U.S. Education Department.

Gypsy Rose Blanchard is free and reflecting on prison term for conspiring to kill her abusive mother

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Gypsy Rose Blanchard said she has found a way to forgive her mother — and herself. But it has been a long journey from years of abuse and the darkest parts of her life splashed across tabloids to living in prison.

Blanchard, now 32, was paroled last week from a Missouri women's prison. Her release came 8 1/2 years after she persuaded her boyfriend at the time to kill her abusive mother, Claudine "Dee Dee" Blanchard — in a desperate bid to be free of her.

For years, her mother forced her to pretend that she was suffering from leukemia, muscular dystrophy and other serious illnesses.

"At first I was really angry with her, very confused. And I'm still confused," Blanchard told The Associated Press in a phone interview Tuesday. "But I understand that she had a lot of mental issues. And so I think that's brought me to a place of forgiveness by just trying to understand where she was coming from. I don't believe that she was evil.

"I know, that she was very sick," she continued. This journey, Blanchard explained, also involved forgiving herself.

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Dee Dee Blanchard had essentially kept her daughter prisoner and duped doctors into doing unnecessary procedures by telling them that her daughter's medical records had been lost in Hurricane Katrina. Gypsy Rose Blanchard's attorney said the mother had Munchausen syndrome by proxy, a psychological disorder in which parents or caregivers seek sympathy through the exaggerated or made-up illnesses of their children.

The mother-daughter duo received charitable donations, and even a home near Springfield from Habitat for Humanity.

Forced to use a wheelchair and feeding tube, Gypsy felt trapped. She said her mother, who lied about Gypsy's age to make her seem younger, prevented her from having much of a relationship with her father — or with anyone else.

"I wish I could go back and tell my younger self, 'Call your dad. Reach out for help with people because they will actually believe you,'" she said. "The main reason why I didn't is because I really felt like nobody would believe me whenever I said that things just wasn't right at home."

When she turned 23, she supplied a knife to her boyfriend, and hid in a bathroom while he repeatedly stabbed her mother, according to the probable cause statement. Then Gypsy and Nicholas Godejohn, who she met on a Christian dating website, made their way by bus to Godejohn's home in Wisconsin, where they were arrested.

Godejohn is serving a life sentence in Missouri while prosecutors cut Blanchard a deal because of the abuse she had endured.

Incarceration was "nothing but self-discovery," she said. She made friends, earned her GED and overcame early shortcomings in her education that left her unable to do basic math. While behind bars, she even met and married someone who forged a relationship with Gypsy by writing to her on a whim.

"I was in a little cocoon. And now that I'm free, I've emerged as a butterfly," she said.

She describes her husband Ryan Scott Anderson, a 37-year-old special education teacher from Lake Charles, Louisiana, as a "teddy bear." In the pre-dawn hours last Thursday, Anderson picked her up at the prison. They had planned to go to the Kansas City Chiefs game on Sunday; she dreamed she might even bump into superstar Taylor Swift as she cheered on her boyfriend, tight end Travis Kelce. Swift's music had been an inspiration to Blanchard.

But going to the game was deemed too much, too soon. Instead she headed to Louisiana and started to settle into post-prison life. Her father also lives in the state, and she said she is finally "getting to know him as an adult."

"This is what I've been wanting for so long," she said. "But it's an adjustment. But it's a wonderful adjustment." She added that given her childhood, it also is her "first taste of actual, real, full fledged freedom."

This week, she is delighting in the little things. She used a Keurig coffee maker for the first time Tuesday. She played video games with her father using a virtual reality headset. She described both experiences as "amazing."

She isn't sure yet what will come next and said she wants to give herself a little bit of time before she decides. Eventually, she wants to have children with her husband. But when is a question mark, as is possibilities for employment. The only jobs she has ever had were all in prison, where she took photos and helped out with janitorial tasks.

"Right now, I'm really not sure what my skill is," she said, "so I'm going to have to kind of discover that over time."

As she adjusts, there has been a fresh round of media coverage. A Lifetime docuseries "The Prison Confessions of Gypsy Rose Blanchard" and her own eBook, "Released: Conversations on the Eve of Freedom" (Penguin Random House) are coming out this month.

Around the U.S. people learned about the bizarre case from the 2017 HBO documentary "Mommy Dead and Dearest" and the 2019 Hulu miniseries "The Act."

While there have been many TV specials and interviews over the years, she steered clear of watching them, fearing it would be "emotionally traumatizing," she said. This docuseries will be the first she has

ever watched.

"I am at least putting myself out there to be a cautionary tale," she said. "because I don't want anyone to have to go through what I went through."

Prosecutors say Sen. Menendez cashed in by linking Qatari royal family member with NJ businessman

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez used his international clout to help a friend get a multimillion-dollar deal with a Qatari investment fund, partly by taking actions favorable to Qatar's government, federal prosecutors said Tuesday in a revised indictment.

The new allegations deepen the legal challenges for Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, who already was charged with wielding his political influence to secretly advance Egypt's interests.

The superseding indictment in New York said the senator and his wife accepted bribes of gold bars and cash from New Jersey real estate developer Fred Daibes as a reward for several corrupt acts that included his help securing a major investment from the Qatari fund.

Prosecutors said Menendez introduced Daibes to a member of Qatar's royal family who was also a principal in the investment firm, met personally with Qatari officials and made public statements supportive of Qatar while the real estate deal was being negotiated.

The indictment said the Qatari investor eventually invested tens of millions of dollars in Daibes' development project, in a deal finalized in 2023.

Adam Fee, a lawyer for Menendez, said in a statement that prosecutors lacked proof of any wrongdoing. "What they have instead is a string of baseless assumptions and bizarre conjectures based on routine, lawful contacts between a Senator and his constituents or foreign officials. They are turning this into a persecution, not a prosecution," he said.

"At all times, Senator Menendez acted entirely appropriately with respect to Qatar, Egypt, and the many other countries he routinely interacts with. Those interactions were always based on his professional judgment as to the best interests of the United States because he is, and always has been, a patriot."

Tim Donohue, a lawyer for Daibes, said he had no immediate comment.

The indictment did not identify the member of the Qatari royal family involved. Messages left with Qatar's consulate in New York and with its sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority, were not immediately returned.

No new charges were added to the latest version of an indictment that already charged Menendez in a bribery conspiracy that allegedly enriched the senator and his wife with a luxury car besides the cash and gold. The allegations involving Qatar occurred from 2021 through 2023.

Other parts of the indictment accuse Menendez, 70, and his wife, Nadine Menendez, of taking bribes from two other New Jersey businessmen besides Daibes. All have pleaded not guilty.

Among other things, Menendez is accused of ghostwriting a letter to fellow senators encouraging them to lift a hold on \$300 million in aid to Egypt.

After his September arrest, the senator gave up his position as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He has resisted calls for him to resign from his Senate seat.

The indictment contains new details about the relationship between Menendez and Daibes, a powerful New Jersey real estate developer.

Daibes has been credited with building out a string of luxury waterfront buildings, known as the "gold coast," in the New Jersey town of Edgewater.

Along the way, he has maintained cozy relationships with local officials, which enabled him to chase off rival developers and renege on promises to build affordable housing, according to a report from the New Jersey State Commission of Investigation.

Daibes already faced federal fraud charges when he was arrested in September on charges that he paid bribes to Menendez, a longtime friend. He was also accused of attempting to convince a federal prosecu-

tor to go easy on Daibes in his bank fraud case.

The indictment said that while the Qatari investment company was considering its investment in the Daibes real estate development, Menendez made multiple public statements supporting the government of Qatar and then provided them to Daibes so he could share them with the Qatari investor and a Qatari government official.

In one August 2021 instance, the indictment said, Menendez used an encrypted messaging application to send Daibes the text of a press release in which he praised the government of Qatar, before texting Daibes: "You might want to send to them. I am just about to release."

Two months later, Menendez and his wife returned from a trip to Qatar and Egypt and were picked up at the airport by Daibes' driver, the indictment said. The next day, it added, Menendez performed an internet search for "how much is one kilo of gold worth."

The Qatari Investment Co. signed a letter of intent to enter a joint venture with a company controlled by Daibes in May 2022, the indictment said. Thereafter, it added, Daibes gave Menendez at least one gold bar.

A search of Menendez's residence produced two 1-kilogram gold bars and nine 1-ounce gold bars with serial numbers showing they'd previously been possessed by Daibes, along with about 10 envelopes of cash with tens of thousands of dollars bearing the fingerprints or DNA of Daibes, the indictment said.

The revised indictment said a Qatari investment official also sent tickets to a Formula One auto racing event to one of Nadine Menendez's close relatives.

The indictment said Menendez did not report any of the cash or gold received by himself or his spouse as required for a U.S. senator on annual financial disclosure forms.

Judge Sidney H. Stein, who is presiding over the case, refused last week to extend a May 5 trial date after defense lawyers requested more time to prepare.

In a letter to the judge late Tuesday, prosecutors said they would not oppose a delayed arraignment of the defendants or an arraignment by video.

Souvenir sellers have flooded the Brooklyn Bridge. Now the city is banning them

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Visitors to New York City hoping to take home a souvenir from the Brooklyn Bridge will now have to settle for a photograph, as vendors are about to be banned from the iconic span.

The new rule, which goes into effect Wednesday, aims to ease overcrowding on the bridge's heavily trafficked pedestrian walkway, where dozens of trinket sellers currently compete for space with tourists and city commuters.

As crowds flocked to the bridge over the holiday season, the situation turned dangerous, according to New York City Mayor Eric Adams. He pointed to videos that showed pedestrians leaping from the elevated walkway onto a bike lane several feet below in order to bypass a human traffic jam.

"It's not only a sanitary issue, it's a public safety issue," Adams said on Tuesday. "People would've trampled over each other. We need order in this city. That is one of our major landmarks."

The new rules will apply to all of the city's bridges — though none have close to as many vendors as the 140-year-old Brooklyn Bridge, which is often lined with tables offering phone cases, knock-off Yankees caps, novelty license plates and more.

Those who sell items on the bridge acknowledge that vendors have proliferated in recent years, driven by relaxed enforcement during the coronavirus pandemic and the availability of low-priced merchandise. A decision two years ago to relocate cyclists to a lane of the roadway also freed up space for stalls.

In the middle span of the bridge, entrepreneurs have now set up nearly a dozen rotating selfie platforms where tourists can pay to take panoramic photos.

MD Rahman, who has sold hot dogs and pretzels out of a cart on the bridge for 15 years, said he understands the need to crack down on the illicit vendors. But he criticized the city's plan as overly broad, since it also applies to veteran sellers, like himself, who hold mobile vending licenses.

"The problem is the illegal and unlicensed people selling things up there," Rahman said, pointing to the newer group of vendors in the middle of the bridge. "To punish everyone, it's crazy. I don't know what is going to happen to my family now."

In recent days, police officers have posted flyers in multiple languages across the bridge, telling vendors they will have to leave. But some had doubts about whether the city would actually follow through on the plan.

"Maybe I come back in a few weeks," said Qiu Lan Liu, a vendor selling hats and T-shirts, many of them featuring the New York Police Department's insignia, NYPD. "I'll see what other people do."

As news spread of the coming ban, some tourists said they were taking advantage of the low-priced souvenirs while they were still available. Ana Souza, an Oklahoma resident, proudly held an "I Love New York" tote she'd found for just \$10, a fraction of the price she'd seen at brick-and-mortar shops.

Jenny Acuchi was visiting New York from Oakland, California. "It's a little crowded, but not as much as I expected," she said. "The thing that makes it crowded is that everyone is taking photos."

Among the supporters of the new rules were some disability rights advocates, who said the ban would immediately improve access for wheelchair users. In a statement, the city's transportation chief Ydanis Rodriguez celebrated the improvements to an attraction he dubbed "America's Eiffel Tower."

Rashawn Prince, who uses the bridge to sell copies of his self-published book, "How to Roll a Blunt for Dummies!" said he was unmoved by the comparison.

"I've been to the Eiffel Tower," Prince said. "There's vendors there, too."

Russian missiles hit Ukrainian cities, killing 5 and injuring at least 130, Kyiv officials say

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's two largest cities came under attack early Tuesday from Russian missiles that killed five people and injured as many as 130, officials said, as the war approached its two-year mark and the Kremlin stepped up its winter bombardment of urban areas.

Air defenses shot down all 10 of the Russian Kinzhal missiles, which can fly at 10 times the speed of sound, out of about 100 of various types that were launched, said Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Ukraine's commander-in-chief.

But other missiles got through in Kyiv and in Kharkiv, the provincial capital of the northeastern region. In Kyiv and its surrounding region, four people were killed and about 70 were wounded, while in the Kharkiv region, one person was killed and about 60 were hurt, the Interior Ministry said.

The Kh-47M2 Kinzhal is an air-launched ballistic missile that is rarely used by Russian forces due to its cost and limited stocks. The barrage fired Tuesday was the highest number used in one attack since the start of the war, Ukraine air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said.

The latest round of attacks by Russia began Friday with its largest single assault on Ukraine of the war, as fighting along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line has subsided into grinding attrition amid winter. At least 41 civilians were killed since the weekend.

At a nine-story Kyiv apartment building where two people were killed, 48-year-old Inna Luhina was getting ready for work when a blast shattered her windows and she and other family members, including her 80-year-old mother, were struck by flying glass.

More than 100 survivors gathered at a school set up as a temporary shelter.

Iryna Dzyhil, a 55-year-old resident of the same building, said the explosion threw her and her husband from their chairs, and a subsequent fire trapped them on the top floor until emergency crews rescued them via the roof.

"They say they're hitting military targets, but they're hitting people, killing our children and our loved ones," Dzyhil said of the Russians.

Russia fired almost 100 missiles of various types in the attacks, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X, formerly Twitter. He claimed at least 70 were shot down, almost all of them in the Kyiv area, noting

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that Western-supplied air defense systems such as Patriots and NASAMS had saved hundreds of lives.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it had launched missile and drone strikes on military industrial facilities in and around Kyiv. Depots storing missiles and munitions supplied by the West also were targeted, it said.

"The goal of the strike has been achieved, all the targets have been hit," it said without elaborating.

It was not possible to independently verify either side's claims.

In his nightly address, Zelenskyy said that since Dec. 29, Russia has used almost 300 missiles and more than 200 Shahed drones against Ukraine.

The attacks created a desolate morning scene in Kyiv, with most cafes and restaurants remaining closed. Many people opted to stay indoors or seek refuge in shelters as powerful blasts shook the city from early morning. Air raid sirens blared for nearly four hours, and the city's subway stations — which serve as shelters — were crowded.

After the air force issued warnings about incoming missiles, people wearing pajamas underneath their coats took sleeping bags, mats and their pets to subway stations while loud explosions echoed above. At one of the central stations, called Golden Gates, hundreds of people filled the spacious underground areas while trains continued to run.

"Perhaps today was the most frightening because there were so many explosions," said resident Myroslava Shcherba.

On Saturday, shelling of the Russian border city of Belgorod killed more than two dozen people. Russia blamed Ukraine for the attack and has struck back repeatedly since then.

The Belgorod attack was one of the deadliest on Russian soil since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started more than 22 months ago. Russian officials said the death toll reached 26, including five children, after a new salvo of rockets Tuesday.

Air defense systems near Belgorod shot down four missiles fired Tuesday by a Ukrainian Vilkha multiple rocket launcher, the Russian Defense Ministry said. Over the previous 24 hours, Ukraine has carried out at least 50 attacks, including shelling and explosives from drones, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said. One person was killed and 11 others were injured by the shelling, he said.

Repeated attacks on Belgorod also prompted city authorities to temporarily shut some of its cinemas and malls. Announcing the closures Tuesday evening on Telegram, Mayor Valentin Demidov said that "everyone should stay home as much as possible" in light of the attacks.

Shortly after Demidov's announcement, Russian media reported loud explosions heard in Belgorod yet again. Gladkov and Russia's Defense Ministry said nine missiles launched by Ukraine were shot down over the region. No casualties were reported.

Cities in western Russia have regularly come under drone attacks since May, although Ukrainian officials never acknowledge responsibility for strikes on Russian territory or the annexed Crimean Peninsula.

"They want to intimidate us and create uncertainty within our country. We will intensify strikes. Not a single crime against our civilian population will go unpunished," Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday, describing the barrage of Belgorod as a "terrorist act."

He accused Western nations of using Ukraine to try to "put Russia in its place." While vowing retribution, he insisted Moscow would only target military infrastructure in Ukraine, but officials in Kyiv report civilian casualties from daily attacks on apartment buildings, shopping centers and residential areas.

In other developments, Russia's Defense Ministry said one of its warplanes accidentally released munitions over the southwestern Russian village of Petropavlovka in the Voronezh region Tuesday, damaging six houses but causing no injuries. It said an investigation will determine the cause of the accident but didn't say what type of weapon the warplane dropped.

In April, munitions accidentally released by a Russian warplane caused a powerful blast in Belgorod, damaging several cars and slightly injuring two people.

Burning Man survived a muddy quagmire. Will the experiment last 30 more years?

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — The blank canvas of desert wilderness in northern Nevada seemed the perfect place in 1992 for artistic anarchists to relocate their annual burning of a towering, anonymous effigy. It was goodbye to San Francisco's Baker Beach, hello to the Nevada playa, the long-ago floor of an inland sea.

The tiny gathering became Burning Man's surrealistic circus, fueled by acts of kindness and avant-garde theatrics, sometimes with a dose of hallucinogens or nudity. The spectacle flourished as the festival ballooned over the next three decades.

Some say it grew too much, too fast.

Things came to a head in 2011 when tickets sold out for the first time. Organizers responded with a short-lived lottery system that left people out of what was supposed to be a radically inclusive event. As Burning Man matured, luxurious accommodations proliferated, as did the population of billionaires and celebrities.

Katherine Chen, a sociology professor in New York City who wrote a 2009 book about the event's "creative chaos," was among those who wondered whether Burning Man "would be a victim of its own success."

Exponential growth led to increasing questions about whether organizers had veered too far from the core principles of radical inclusion, expression, participation and the pledge to "leave no trace."

That last hurdle was never harder to clear than this year as "Burners" tried to leave over Labor Day weekend after torching the 80-foot (24-meter) wooden sculpture that is "the Man."

A rare rainstorm turned the Black Rock Desert into a muddy quagmire 110 miles (175 kilometers) north of Reno, delaying the departure of 80,000 revelers. Once out, organizers had six weeks to clean up under terms of a federal permit.

By the smallest of margins, they passed the test last month, with a few adjustments recommended for the future. The verdict from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management means Burning Man is in line to use federal land again next year.

Debate over the event's future, however, is sure to continue as divisions grow between the aging hippie types and wealthier, more technologically inclined newcomers. Veteran participants fear the newer set is losing touch with Burning Man's roots.

The event has made a quantum leap from a gathering of hundreds to one that temporarily becomes Nevada's third largest city after metropolitan Las Vegas and Reno. The festival drew 4,000 in 1995 and topped 50,000 in 2010.

It's no wonder seasoned Burners sound a bit like griping cribbage players on a rural town square when they mutter: "It ain't like it used to be."

"Back then, it was much more raw," said Mike "Festie" Malecki, 63, a retired Chicago mortician turned California sculptor who made his 13th trip this year to the land of colorful theme camps, towering sculptures, drum circles and art cars.

"There are more (people) who come out to party and don't participate. We call them spectators," he said.

Senior organizers long have wrestled with whether to become more civilized or remain what co-founder Larry Harvey described as a "repudiation of order and authority."

Ron Halbert, a 71-year-old from San Francisco, has worked support for Burning Man's 90-piece orchestra for 20 years and remains optimistic.

"It's still the gathering of the tribe," he said.

The event is permitted tentatively for the same 80,000 attendance cap next year. Organizers are considering some minor changes, though generally resist making new rules, said Marian Goodell, Burning Man Project's chief executive officer.

Critics on social media howled at the mayhem left behind this year, posting photos of garbage piles, abandoned vehicles and overflowing portable toilets while ridiculing the "hippies" and their leave-no-trace mantra.

But that mayhem may have actually helped bring Burning Man back to its roots.

Katrina Cook of Toronto said it forced people to be true to the founding principles of participation and radical self-reliance.

"The rain weeded out the people who didn't want to be there for the right reason," Cook said.

Mark Fromson, 54, was staying in an RV, but the rains forced him to find shelter at another camp where fellow burners provided food and cover. Another principle of Burning Man, he said, centers on unconditional gift giving with no expectation of something in return.

After sunset, Fromson set off barefoot through the muck for a long trek back to his vehicle, slogging through thick clay that clung to his feet and legs. The challenge, he said, was the mark of a "good burn."

Nevertheless, Jeffery Longoria of San Francisco, who marked his fifth consecutive voyage to Burning Man last summer, said its core principles are going to evolve no matter what as a new generation takes over.

"The people that created this community, a lot of them are getting older and retiring and there's a lot of new young people coming in, the kind that have, you know, a couple \$100,000 RVs and are kind of just careless about the environment."

Soren Michael, a Los Angeles technology worker who made his 11th trip this year, said the biggest change has been the ability to communicate with the outside world from the desert.

"It was almost part of the appeal to be disconnected," he said.

Twenty years ago, the psychedelic celebration like none other already was attracting academic scholars — anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, economists and communications professors — curious about how the makeshift civilization functioned without real-world rules.

Burning Man references started popping up in TV episodes and talk show punchlines. The rich and famous began venturing to Black Rock City, as the festival's temporary metropolis is called.

A full-blown exhibit about the phenomenon debuted in 2018 at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington. Even then, veteran Burners complained about the event becoming as much a curiosity to see as to do.

That's in part the problem veterans have with the advent of glamor camping, or glamping, in which private companies provide packaged trips to concierge camps with luxury RVs and lavish meals under chandeliers. Some believe the camps violate Burning Man principles.

The growing number of billionaires and celebrities who fly in on private jets to Black Rock City's temporary airstrip "seems to be everyone's favorite thing to hate," Goodell said. But wealth shouldn't be a cause for shame, she said.

"The question is not about glamping," she said. "Comfort doesn't assume lack of engagement. It's whether you have a glamping camp and you're not really engaging."

Burning Man's purpose remains the same: building a creative, stimulating environment, the essence of which people can take back to their own communities.

"We thought that from the beginning," Goodell said. "We just didn't know it would be 80,000 people."

Trump appeals Maine ruling barring him from ballot under the Constitution's insurrection clause

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday appealed a ruling by Maine's secretary of state barring him from the state's primary ballot over his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, appealed the Maine decision by Democrat Shenna Bellows, who became the first secretary of state in history to bar someone from running for the presidency under the rarely used Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. That provision prohibits those who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office.

The former president is expected to soon appeal a similar ban by the Colorado Supreme Court. That appeal would go to the U.S. Supreme Court, while Bellows' action is being appealed to a Maine Superior Court.

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Trump's appeal on Tuesday asks that Bellows be required to place him on the March 5 primary ballot. The appeal argues that she abused her discretion and relied on "untrustworthy evidence."

"The secretary should have recused herself due to her bias against President Trump, as demonstrated by a documented history of prior statements prejudging the issue presented," Trump's attorneys wrote.

Bellows reiterated to The Associated Press on Tuesday that her ruling was on pause pending the outcome of the appeal, which had been expected.

"This is part of the process. I have confidence in my decision and confidence in the rule of law. This is Maine's process and it's really important that first and foremost every single one of us who serves in government uphold the Constitution and the laws of the state," she said.

Trump's critics have filed dozens of lawsuits seeking to disqualify him in multiple states.

None succeeded until a slim majority of Colorado's seven justices — all of whom were appointed by Democratic governors — ruled against Trump last month. The Colorado court's 4-3 decision was the first time in history the provision was used to bar a presidential contender from the ballot.

Trump lost Colorado in 2020, and he doesn't need to win it again to garner an Electoral College majority next year. But he earned one of Maine's four Electoral College votes in 2020 by winning the state's 2nd Congressional District, so Bellows' decision could have an impact next November.

Critics warned that it was an overreach and that the court could not simply declare that the Jan. 6 attack was an "insurrection" without a more established judicial process.

A week after Colorado's ruling, Bellows issued her own. Critics warned it was even more perilous because it could pave the way for partisan election officials to simply disqualify candidates they oppose. Bellows, a former head of Maine's branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, has previously criticized Trump and his behavior on Jan. 6.

The Constitution's Section 3 has been barely used since the years after the Civil War, when it kept defeated Confederates from returning to their former government positions. The two-sentence clause says that anyone who swore an oath to "support" the Constitution and then engaged in insurrection cannot hold office unless a two-thirds vote of Congress allows it.

Trump's lawyers argue the provision isn't intended to apply to the president, contending that the oath for the top office in the land isn't to "support" the Constitution but instead to "preserve, protect and defend" it. They also argue that the presidency isn't explicitly mentioned in the amendment, only any "officer of the United States" — a legal term they contend doesn't apply to the president.

Trump made the opposite argument defending against his prosecution for fraud by the Manhattan District Attorney's office, contending the case should move to federal court because the president is "an officer of the United States." The prosecutors argued that language only applies to presidential appointees — Trump's position here.

The contention that Section 3 doesn't apply to the president drew a scathing response from the Colorado Supreme Court last month.

"President Trump asks us to hold that Section 3 disqualifies every oathbreaking insurrectionist except the most powerful one and that it bars oathbreakers from virtually every office, both state and federal, except the highest one in the land," the court's majority opinion said. "Both results are inconsistent with the plain language and history of Section 3."

As for history, Congress granted amnesty to most former Confederates in 1872, and Section 3 fell into disuse. Legal scholars believe its only application in the 20th century was being cited by Congress in 1919 to block the seating of a socialist who opposed U.S. involvement in World War I and was elected to the House of Representatives.

But it returned to use after Jan. 6, 2021. In 2022, a judge used it to remove a rural New Mexico county commissioner from office after he was convicted of a misdemeanor for entering the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. Liberal groups sued to block Republican Reps. Madison Cawthorn and Marjorie Taylor Greene from running for reelection because of their roles on that day. Cawthorn's case became moot when he lost his primary in 2022, and a judge ruled to keep Greene on the ballot.

Some conservatives warn that, if Trump is removed, political groups will routinely use Section 3 against opponents in unexpected ways. They have suggested it could be used to remove Vice President Kamala Harris, for example, because she raised bail money for people arrested after George Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police in 2020.

Trump and his allies have attacked the cases against him as "anti-democratic" and sought to tie them to President Joe Biden because the Colorado case and some others are funded by liberal groups who share prominent donors with the Democratic president. But Biden's administration has noted that the president has no role in the litigation.

Those who support using the provision against Trump counter that the Jan. 6 attack was unprecedented in American history and that there will be few cases so ripe for Section 3. If the high court lets Trump stay on the ballot, they've contended, it will be another example of the former president bending the legal system to excuse his extreme behavior.

Planes collide and catch fire at Japan's busy Haneda airport, killing 5. Hundreds evacuated safely

By FOSTER KLUG and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A large passenger plane and a Japanese coast guard aircraft collided on the runway at Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Tuesday and burst into flames, killing five people aboard the coast guard plane, officials said.

All 379 people on Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 got out safely before the Airbus A350 was fully engulfed in flames, Transport Minister Tetsuo Saito confirmed.

The pilot of the coast guard's Bombardier Dash-8 plane escaped but the five crew members died, Saito said. The aircraft was preparing to take off to deliver aid to an area affected by a major earthquake on Monday, officials said.

Television footage showed an orange fireball erupting from the Japan Airlines plane as it collided while landing, and the airliner then spewed smoke from its side as it continued down the runway. Within 20 minutes, all passengers and crew members slid down emergency chutes to get away.

As firefighters tried to put out the blaze with streams of water, the area around the passenger plane's wing caught fire. The flames spread throughout the plane, which eventually collapsed. The fire was extinguished after about six hours.

Tuesday's accident was the first severe damage to an Airbus A350, among the industry's newest large passenger planes. It entered commercial service in 2015. Airbus said in a statement it was sending specialists to help Japanese and French officials investigating the accident, and that the plane was delivered to Japan Airlines in late 2021.

The A350 had flown from Shin Chitose airport near the city of Sapporo, the transport minister said.

The fire is likely to be seen as a key test case for airplane fuselages made from carbon-composite fibers, such as the A350 and the Boeing 787, instead of conventional aluminum skins.

"We don't know that much about how composites burn," said safety consultant John Cox. "This is the most catastrophic composite-airplane fire that I can think of. On the other hand, that fuselage protected (passengers) from a really horrific fire -- it did not burn through for some period of time and let everybody get out."

JAL Managing Executive Officer Tadayuki Tsutsumi told a news conference late Tuesday that the A350 was making a "normal entry and landing" on the runway, without specifying how it collided with the coast guard plane. Noriyuki Aoki, also a managing executive officer at JAL, said the airline maintains that the flight had received permission to land from aviation officials.

Police are expected to investigate the accident on suspicion of professional negligence, NHK television reported.

Coast guard spokesperson Yoshinori Yanagishima said its Bombardier Dash-8 plane, which is based at Haneda, had been due to head to Niigata to deliver relief goods to residents affected by a deadly earth-

quake in the region on Monday. The turboprop Dash-8 is widely used on short-haul and commuter flights. The coast guard pilot reported to his base that his aircraft exploded after colliding with the commercial plane, Vice Commander Yoshio Seguchi told reporters.

Shigenori Hiraoka, head of the Transport Ministry Civil Aviation Bureau, said the collision occurred when the JAL plane landed on one of Haneda's four runways where the coast guard aircraft was preparing to take off. Transport safety officials were analyzing communication between aviation control officials and the two aircraft and planned to interview JAL officials to determine what led to the collision.

Hiraoka praised JAL for "taking appropriate procedures" to safely evacuate all passengers and crew members.

Swede Anton Deibe, 17, a passenger on the Japan Airlines plane, told Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet that "the entire cabin was filled with smoke within a few minutes. We threw ourselves down on the floor. Then the emergency doors were opened and we threw ourselves at them.

"The smoke in the cabin stung like hell. It was a hell. We have no idea where we are going so we just run out into the field. It was chaos," Deibe added.

Another passenger told NHK television that cabin attendants were calm and told everyone to leave their baggage behind, then all lights went off and the temperature inside the cabin started rising. The passenger said she was afraid she might not get off the plane alive.

All passengers and crew members slid down the escape chutes and survived. Some passengers told media interviews that they felt relieved only after reaching a grassy area beyond the tarmac.

JAL said four passengers were taken to a medical facility. NHK said 14 other people were injured.

Cox, the safety consultant, said the cabin crew "did a remarkably great job" getting passengers out of the plane.

"It shows good training," Cox said. "And if you look at the video, people are not trying to get stuff out of the overheads. They are concentrating on getting out of the airplane."

The transport minister said officials were doing their utmost to prevent any delays in the delivery of relief goods to earthquake-hit areas. Transport officials said the airport's three other runways had reopened.

Haneda is the busier of two major airports serving the Japanese capital, with many international and transcontinental flights. It is particularly favored by business travelers due to its proximity to central parts of the city.

The twin-engine, twin-aisle A350 is used by a number of long-haul international carriers. More than 570 of the aircraft are in operation, according to Airbus.

JAL operates 16 of the A350-900 version aircraft, according to its website. It recently announced details of 13 of the newer A350-1000 variant it plans to bring into service, saying it will become "the airline's new flagship for international service after nearly 20 years." The first of those planes arrived a few weeks ago, slated for the Haneda-New York JFK route.

The International Air Transport Association trade group said on the X social media platform that its thoughts were with those aboard the two aircraft, saying that "the last two days have been difficult for Japan."

A Hamas official killed in a Beirut strike had been on Israel's hit list for years

By BASSEM MROUE, ABBY SEWELL and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Saleh Arouri, the deputy political head of Hamas and a founder of the group's military wing, had been in Israel's sights for years before he was killed in a drone strike in a southern suburb of Beirut on Tuesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had threatened to kill him even before Hamas carried out its deadly surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, sparking the ongoing brutal war in Gaza.

Israel had accused Arouri, 57, of masterminding attacks against it in the West Bank, where he was the group's top commander. In 2015, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Arouri as a Specially

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Designated Global Terrorist offering \$5 million for information about him.

Asked about assassination threats against him in an interview with Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen in August, Arouri said, "It is not strange for us for the commanders and cadres of the movement to be martyred."

"I never expected to reach this age, so I am living on borrowed time," he said.

In the same interview, he threatened that in case of a comprehensive war, "Israel will suffer a defeat unprecedented in history."

Born in the town of Aroura in the occupied West Bank, Arouri joined Hamas and eventually went into exile, first to Damascus, where the Syrian government was a strong supporter of the group. But he left in 2011 when Hamas split with President Bashar Assad, siding with the opposition in Syria's civil war.

He went on to Turkey, but had to leave there in 2018 in an exodus of Hamas officials after Ankara improved its relations with Israel and after Qatar — a backer of the Palestinian militant group — was hit by a boycott led by its rival Saudi Arabia and other nations in the region.

Arriving in Beirut, Arouri made few public appearances but helped to pull Hamas closer to Hezbollah's orbit. Hamas was able to build up its political and military presence in Lebanon — but under careful control by Hezbollah.

Arouri also became a key figure in the group's reconciliation with Assad, and he proudly proclaimed himself part of the "Axis of Resistance," the collection of Iran's regional allies, including Hezbollah and Syria.

In early September, Arouri held a meeting with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah that was attended by Ziad Nakhleh, the leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, during which they discussed the situation in the Palestinian territories. A similar meeting was convened after the Israel-Hamas war broke out in October.

Since Oct. 7, Arouri kept a low profile while others in the Hamas political leadership made frequent public appearances in Beirut, including in near-daily press conferences.

He seems to have been hiding in plain sight. He was killed in a strike on an apartment building in the middle of Beirut's southern suburbs, a political and security stronghold of Hezbollah but also a densely populated urban area.

Hamas officials confirmed Arouri's death, along with six other Hamas members, including two military commanders. A Lebanese security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said the attack appeared to have been carried out by a drone that fired missiles into the building, targeting one specific floor.

The explosion shook the surrounding area, shattering windows in neighboring buildings and causing a fire on the street in the Musharafieh district. Residents of the area rushed to the streets around the targeted building, digging through rubble and broken glass looking for survivors or bodies.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency blamed an Israeli drone. Israeli officials declined to comment.

An Associated Press photographer at the scene described seeing at least two bodies and other body parts scattered in the street. Hezbollah security members fired in the air to disperse the crowd gathered around the building.

A witness at the scene, Abbas Ghannam, told the AP that he had heard the sound of a drone before the explosion.

"It was not a military jet, it was a drone. It has a low sound," he said.

If Israel was behind the strike, it would be its first attack on Beirut since the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006.

It could mark a major escalation in the conflict in Lebanon. After Netanyahu's previous threats to Arouri, Nasrallah warned Israel not to target any Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian or Iranian officials in Lebanon saying that would lead to "harsh retaliation" by the group.

Hezbollah said in a statement that the targeting of Arouri "in the heart of the southern suburbs of Beirut" constituted "a serious attack on Lebanon, its people, its security, sovereignty and resistance."

"We affirm that this crime will never pass without response and punishment," it said.

Nasrallah is set to speak Wednesday, on the anniversary of the killing of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani

in a U.S. airstrike. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said Tuesday that the killing of Arouri "once again proved that straw foundation of Zionists is based on assassination and crime," Iranian media reported. He called it a sign of Israel's "heavy defeat" before Palestinian militant groups in the war in Gaza.

CFP 1.0 changed college football, not all for better, and was necessary step in postseason evolution

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The four-team playoff changed college football. Not just the postseason and crowning of a national champion that finally could be called undisputed.

College Football Playoff 1.0, which wraps up a 10-year run Monday night when No. 1 Michigan (14-0) faces No. 2 Washington (14-0) in the national championship game, created a new standard for success — and failure — for teams and conferences. It helped the rich and powerful become more rich and powerful, further nationalized a sport with regional roots and was an imperfect but necessary step in the evolution of the postseason.

"I think what's coming is going to be better, but this worked really well," said Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick, one of the architects of the 12-team system that goes into effect next season.

But not without unintended consequences.

THE POSITIVE

A four-team playoff made sense for college football when it was conceived in 2012, following 16 years of the Bowl Championship Series, which was implemented in 1998 and birthed from the Bowl Coalition and Bowl Alliance earlier in the 1990s.

The BCS gave only two teams a chance to win a national championship in the postseason and often produced unsatisfying results. The four-team playoff fixed that.

"We were able to eliminate any real controversy about who the champion was because it was decided on the field," said Bill Hancock, who was the first executive director of the BCS before moving into a similar role with the CFP.

It's easy to forget now, but the idea of a playoff was shunned by so many in college football at the time that merely uttering the "P" word was taboo.

There was no serious consideration given to going bigger than four. When the conference commissioners finally decided to move to a playoff, it was going to be the smallest possible version, even though it was an enormous change.

"It was a 100% expansion from two to four and have that experience, see how it worked," Swarbrick said.

Hancock said: "It was the obvious next step in the world of 2012, when all we'd ever known was the coalition, the alliance and the BCS for 22 years."

The CFP debuted in 2014 and was a smash hit, drawing record television ratings for ESPN, with New Year's Day semifinals in the Rose and Sugar bowls. And it produced the type of champion that never would have been possible before when an Ohio State team that suffered a bad early season loss peaked late and won it all as the last team in the field.

"Whether it's broadcast ratings, total attendance, whatever it may be, the game has never been more popular. And I think you have to give some credit to the playoff system for helping to make that happen," Swarbrick said.

But that first season also immediately put unintended consequences into the focus when the Big 12 was thrown into a near-crisis because co-champions Baylor and TCU were leapfrogged by Ohio State and the conference was left out.

THE NEGATIVE

"It hurt conference brands," American Athletic Conference Commissioner Mike Aresco said. "Because if you didn't make a four-team playoff, man, there's some problem with your conference."

None more than the Pac-12, among the Power Five conferences. The Pac-12 made the field just three

times in 10 years, including a six-year drought from 2017-22 that was snapped by Washington.

To draw a direct line from CFP exclusion to the demise of the Pac-12 would be an overstatement.

"No, I don't think you could go that far," Aresco said. "On the other hand, did it help the Pac-12? No, of course not."

Even before the CFP, there had been a delineation of conferences in college football. The four-team playoff draw a more stark line and led to new nomenclature: Power Five and Group of Five conferences.

As hard as Aresco pushed back against those terms, they became ubiquitous, and it became apparent the CFP was mostly for the Power Five. AAC champion Cincinnati in 2021 is the only school from a Group of Five conference to reach the final four.

"We looked at it as a P5 invitational at some point," Aresco said.

The CFP generated hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue, the vast majority of which went to the Power Five conferences.

The CFP seemed to create a self-perpetuating cycle that reinforced the idea that certain teams and conferences were superior. The Southeastern Conference never had a team left out, put two teams in the field twice and its teams won six of the first nine CFP titles.

Over 10 years, only 15 teams made the CFP, as the very top tier of programs capable of winning a national championship seemed to shrink.

"A lot of the same teams kept making it, which gave them a huge advantage in recruiting and probably had a somewhat deleterious effect on some of the other schools that were competing with them," Aresco said. "Because if you're in the playoff time and time again, kids want to play in it."

Swarbrick disagrees. He said the consolidation of elite talent is a trend across all college sports over the last couple of decades that just happened to coincide with the four-team CFP.

That consolidation also led to a load of playoff blowouts. Only seven of 20 semifinals and three championship games have been decided by 10 points or fewer.

The decision by the conferences to accommodate bowl tradition, especially when it came to the Rose Bowl, and not play the four-team semifinals on Jan. 1 annually was an admitted mistake. That decision kept down CFP viewership and conceded New Year's Day as college football's biggest showcase.

As many, most notably Alabama coach Nick Saban, predicted, the prestige of the bowls took a massive hit. Especially the top tier of games that were supposed to be rewards for playoff contenders who missed out.

Instead, they became consolation prizes, distorted by player opt-outs and coaching changes. The nadir came last weekend when a shell of an unbeaten Florida State team that was left out of the CFP lost to Georgia in the Orange Bowl by 60 points.

Nick Carparelli, a former Big East administrator who was part of the discussions that led to the creation of the four-team CFP, is now the executive director of Bowl Season.

"Bowl season is different, but it's still important," he said.

Aresco and Swarbrick said expansion ideally would have come much sooner, but that is far from consensus. SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey has often said his conference would have been fine with it staying at four.

Unlike the BCS, which became a punching bag for critics over 16 years, the postseason system itself was not constantly under attack over the last 10 years.

"I don't remember a groundswell after three, four or five years to do something different," Hancock said. "We just didn't have enough years to evaluate."

Witness threat claim delays bail hearing for ex-gang leader held in Tupac Shakur killing

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A bail hearing was postponed Tuesday in Las Vegas for a former Los Angeles-area gang leader charged with orchestrating the killing of hip-hop music legend Tupac Shakur in 1996, giving defense attorneys time to respond to prosecutors' allegations that witnesses in the case may be at risk.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis' court-appointed attorneys sought the delay to respond to prosecutors' allega-

tions, filed last week, that jail telephone recordings and a list of names provided to Davis' family members show that Davis poses a threat to the public if he is released.

No court hearing was held Tuesday. One of Davis' attorneys, Robert Arroyo, told The Associated Press later that the defense wanted to respond in court in writing. He declined to provide details. Arroyo said last week he did not see evidence that any witness had been named or threatened.

Davis is the only person ever charged with a crime in the drive-by shooting that also wounded rap music mogul Marion "Suge" Knight, who is now serving 28 years in a California prison for an unrelated fatal shooting in the Los Angeles area in 2015.

Davis has pleaded not guilty and is due for trial in June on a murder charge. He has remained jailed without bail since his arrest Sept. 29 outside his Henderson home. Las Vegas police had served a search warrant there in mid-July.

Davis, originally from Compton, California, is now housed at the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas, where detainees' phone calls are routinely recorded. If convicted at trial, he could spend the rest of his life in prison.

In a recording of an October jail call, prosecutors say Davis' son told the defendant about a "green light" authorization. Their court filing made no reference to Davis instructing anyone to harm someone, or to anyone associated with the case being physically harmed.

"In (Davis') world, a 'green light' is an authorization to kill," prosecutors Marc DiGiacomo and Binu Palal told Clark County District Court Judge Carli Kierny in the court document, adding that at least one witness was provided assistance from federal authorities "so he could change his residence."

Prosecutors also point to Davis' own words since 2008 — in police interviews, in his 2019 tell-all memoir and in the media — that they say provides strong evidence that he orchestrated the September 1996 shooting.

Davis' attorneys argue that his descriptions of Shakur's killing were "done for entertainment purposes and to make money."

Arroyo and co-counsel Charles Cano have argued their 60-year-old client is in poor health after a battle with cancer that is in remission, poses no danger to the community, and won't flee to avoid trial. They want Kierny to set bail at not more than \$100,000.

Davis maintains that he was given immunity from prosecution in 2008 by FBI agents and Los Angeles police who were investigating the killings of Shakur in Las Vegas and rival rapper Christopher Wallace, known as The Notorious B.I.G. or Biggie Smalls, six months later in Los Angeles.

Davis' bail hearing is now scheduled for Jan. 9.

South Africa's genocide case against Israel sets up a high-stakes legal battle at the UN's top court

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — South Africa has launched a case at the United Nations' top court alleging that Israel's military campaign in Gaza amounts to genocide.

The filing and Israel's decision to defend itself at the International Court of Justice set up a high-stakes showdown before a panel of judges in the Great Hall of Justice.

The case will likely drag on for years. At its heart is the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, drawn up in the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust.

The convention defines genocide as acts such as killings "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

Here are some further details on the case and its ramifications.

WHAT IS SOUTH AFRICA'S ARGUMENT?

South Africa's 84-page filing says Israel's actions "are genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part" of the Palestinians in Gaza.

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It asks the ICJ, also known as the world court, for a series of legally binding rulings. It wants the court to declare that Israel "has breached and continues to breach its obligations under the Genocide Convention," and to order Israel to cease hostilities in Gaza that could amount to breaches of the convention, to offer reparations, and to provide for reconstruction of what it's destroyed in Gaza.

The filing argues that genocidal acts include killing Palestinians, causing serious mental and bodily harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions meant to "bring about their physical destruction as a group." And it says statements by Israeli officials express genocidal intent.

South Africa argues that the court has jurisdiction because both countries are signatories of the genocide convention. The convention's ninth article says disputes between nations over the convention can be submitted to the International Court of Justice.

Many South Africans, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, have compared Israel's policies regarding Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with South Africa's past apartheid regime of racial segregation. Israel rejects such allegations.

WHAT WAS ISRAEL'S RESPONSE?

Israel's government swiftly rejected the genocide claim. A Foreign Ministry statement said South Africa's case lacks a legal foundation and constitutes a "despicable and contemptuous exploitation" of the court.

Eylon Levy, an official in the Israeli prime minister's office, on Tuesday accused South Africa of "giving political and legal cover" to the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that triggered Israel's campaign. But he confirmed that Israel would send a legal team to the Hague "to dispel South Africa's absurd blood libel," he said.

An Israeli official said the country, which has a history of ignoring international tribunals, decided to defend itself for several reasons. Among them are Israel's role in promoting the original genocide convention after the Holocaust and its belief that "we have a strong case." He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was discussing behind-the-scenes deliberations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead with the war until Hamas is crushed and the more than 100 hostages still held by the militant group in Gaza are freed. He's said that could take several more months.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

South Africa's filing includes a request for the court to urgently issue legally binding interim orders for Israel to "immediately suspend its military operations in and against Gaza."

Such orders, known as provisional measures, would remain while the case progresses. They're legally binding but not always followed. In 2022, in a genocide case filed by Ukraine against Russia, the court ordered Moscow to immediately suspend its invasion. The order was ignored, and deadly strikes continue.

The court will soon schedule public hearings. Lawyers for South Africa and Israel can make arguments. Judges drawn from around the world will likely take days or weeks to issue a decision on preliminary measures.

The court will then enter a lengthy process of considering the full case.

Israel could challenge the jurisdiction and seek to have the case thrown out before lawyers start arguing. Other countries that have signed the genocide convention could also apply to make submissions.

IS THE COURT HEARING SIMILAR CASES?

Two other genocide cases are on the busy court's docket. The case filed by Ukraine shortly after Russia's invasion accuses Moscow of launching the military operation based on trumped-up claims of genocide and accuses Russia of planning acts of genocide in Ukraine.

Another ongoing case involves Gambia — acting on behalf of Muslim nations — accusing Myanmar of genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

In a past case brought by Bosnia, the court in 2007 ruled that Serbia "violated the obligation to prevent genocide ... in respect of the genocide that occurred in Srebrenica in July 1995." The court declined to order Serbia to pay compensation. Croatia also sued Serbia in 2015, but the world court ruled that Serbia didn't breach the convention in that case.

ICJ OR ICC?

The Hague calls itself the international city of peace and justice. It is home not only to the ICJ, but to

the International Criminal Court, based just a few miles (kilometers) away, near the North Sea coastline.

The two courts have different mandates.

The ICJ, which held its first sitting in 1946 as the world emerged from the carnage of WWII, adjudicates cases between nations. They're often land and maritime border disputes, as well as disagreements over interpretation of international treaties.

The ICC is much younger. It started work in 2002 with the lofty goal of ending global impunity for atrocities. Unlike the ICJ, it seeks to hold individuals criminally responsible for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The ICC has an ongoing investigation into the Israel-Palestinian conflict, dating back to the last war in Gaza. So far, it has not issued any arrest warrants.

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan said last month that an investigation into possible crimes by Hamas militants and Israeli forces "is a priority for my office."

WHAT ABOUT PAST U.N. CASES?

Two now-defunct U.N. tribunals also held landmark genocide trials.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia convicted a series of high-ranking Bosnian Serbs, including former President Radovan Karadzic and his military chief Gen. Ratko Mladic, for their roles in the July 1995 massacre of more than 8,000 men and boys in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica.

Both Karadzic and Mladic were given life sentences.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda convicted a string of leaders involved in the African nation's 1994 genocide when some 800,000 people, mainly ethnic Tutsis, were slaughtered.

'Bachelorette' Rachel Lindsay's husband, Bryan Abasolo, files for divorce after 4 years of marriage

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The bloom is off the final rose for "Bachelorette" star Rachel Lindsay and husband Bryan Abasolo, who found love on the reality dating show. Court records show that Abasolo filed to end their marriage Tuesday.

He cited irreconcilable differences for the breakup and his filing in Los Angeles Superior Court says the pair separated on Dec. 31.

"After more than 4 years of marriage, Rachel and I have made the difficult decision to part ways and start anew," Abasolo said in a statement posted to his Instagram account. "Sometimes loving yourself and your partner means you must let go."

After competing on Season 21 of "The Bachelor," Lindsay gained fame as the first Black lead on any iteration of "The Bachelor" franchise when she was picked as "The Bachelorette" in 2017. She chose Abasolo as her winning suitor and they married in August 2019. Lindsay, an attorney and author, recently left her correspondent position at entertainment news show "Extra." Abasolo is a chiropractor who has adopted the moniker "Dr. Abs."

In his statement, he asked for respect for their family and friends as they navigate their next steps.

Lindsay has yet to comment on the matter directly on her social media, and her publicists did not immediately return a request for comment. In an Instagram post from New Year's Eve, she called 2023 "one of the hardest years of my life."

The pair have no children together. Abasolo is seeking spousal support from Lindsay and wants her to pay his attorneys' fees. The filing does not indicate the couple has a prenuptial agreement on how their assets should be divided.

South Korean opposition leader is stabbed in the neck. Police say attacker approached for autograph

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and JIWON SONG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's tough-speaking liberal opposition leader, Lee Jae-myung, was stabbed in the neck Tuesday by an unidentified knife-wielding man who attempted to kill the politician during his visit to the southeastern city of Busan, police said.

Lee, 59, the head of the main opposition Democratic Party, was airlifted to a Seoul hospital after receiving emergency treatment in Busan. Lee's party later said he was recovering at an intensive care unit at the Seoul National University Hospital following a two-hour operation.

The attack happened as Lee walked through a crowd of journalists and others after a tour of the proposed site of a new airport in Busan. The attacker approached Lee, saying he wanted his autograph, then stabbed him in the left side of his neck, senior Busan police officer Sohn Jae-han said in a briefing.

Sohn said Democratic Party officials quickly subdued the attacker before police officers detained him. He said 41 police officers had been deployed to the area for crowd control and traffic management.

TV footage showed Lee, his eyes closed, lying on the ground as a person pressed a handkerchief to his neck. A witness, Jin Jeong-hwa, told YTN television that Lee had bled a lot.

Videos circulated on social media showed the suspect, wearing a paper crown reading "I'm Lee Jae-myung," in a possible attempt to pose as a supporter.

Sohn said the suspect, aged about 67, told investigators that he bought the 18-centimeter (7-inch) knife online. He said police are investigating the motive for the attack.

Other officers confirmed to The Associated Press that police are expected to request that the suspect be formally arrested for alleged attempted murder because he told investigators he intended to kill Lee.

Lee's Democratic Party called the incident "a terrorist attack on Lee and a serious threat to democracy." It called on police to make a thorough, swift investigation.

At the Seoul National University Hospital, party spokesperson Kwon Chil-seung told reporters that Lee's jugular vein was damaged and that he had a medical procedure called revascularization. Kwon cited the hospital, whose public affairs office refused to disclose Lee's status, citing privacy rules.

Police and emergency officials earlier said Lee was conscious after the attack and wasn't in critical condition.

President Yoon Suk Yeol expressed deep concern about Lee's health and ordered authorities to investigate the attack, saying such violence would not be tolerated, according to Yoon's office.

Lee lost the 2022 presidential election to Yoon by 0.7 percentage points, the narrowest margin recorded in a South Korean presidential election.

Recent public surveys indicated Lee and his main conservative rival Han Dong-hoon, a former justice minister, are the two early favorites to succeed Yoon as president when his single five-year term ends in 2027.

Since his defeat, Lee has been a harsh critic of Yoon's major policies. Last year, Lee held a 24-day hunger strike to protest what he called Yoon's failure to oppose Japan's release of treated radioactive wastewater from its crippled Fukushima nuclear power, his handling of the country's post-pandemic economy and his hard-line policies on North Korea.

Lee faces an array of corruption allegations, including that he provided unlawful favors to a private investor who reaped huge profits from a dubious housing project in the city of Seongnam, where Lee was mayor for a decade until 2018. Lee has denied legal wrongdoing and accused Yoon's government of pursuing a political vendetta.

Last September, a South Korean court denied an arrest warrant for Lee over the allegations, but Lee faces a continuing investigation by prosecutors. The court hearing was arranged after the opposition-controlled parliament voted to lift Lee's immunity to arrest, a move that reflected growing divisions within his Democratic Party over his legal troubles.

Lee, who also served as governor of Gyeonggi province, which surrounds Seoul, is known for his outspo-

ken style. His supporters see him as an anti-elitist hero who could reform establishment politics, eradicate corruption and solve growing economic inequality. Critics view him as a populist who relies on stoking divisions and demonizing his conservative opponents.

Other violence against high-profile figures has occurred in South Korea in recent years.

In March 2022, Song Young-gil, then the leader of the Democratic Party, was assaulted by a man wielding a hammer during a rally for Lee ahead of the presidential vote. Song was treated for stitches but avoided serious injury.

In 2015, then-U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Mark Lippert was slashed in the face and arm by an anti-American activist. The assault required 80 stitches to close the cut on Lippert's face.

In 2006, Park Geun-hye, then a conservative opposition leader, was knifed by a man with a box cutter during an election rally. She was given 60 stitches to close an 11-centimeter (4-inch) gash on her face. Park was elected president in 2012.

Taylor Swift's new romance, debt-erasing gifts and the eclipse are among most joyous moments of 2023

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — A romance that united sports and music fans, a celestial wonder that drew millions of eyes skyward and a spiritual homecoming for some Native American tribes were just some of the moments that inspired us and brought joy in 2023.

In a year that saw multiple wars, deadly mass shootings, earthquakes, wildfires, sexual harassment stories and other tragedies, these events were among those that broke through the tumult of 2023 and made people feel hopeful.

As Taylor Swift would say, "Hold on to the memories." Here are a few of them:

A FRIENDSHIP BRACELET WITH A PHONE NUMBER

That's how Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce planned to woo superstar Taylor Swift when he went to her Eras Tour concert stop in the Missouri capital. It didn't work — at first.

But the romantic gesture, and public admission of defeat on his "New Heights" podcast, caught the Grammy Award-winner's attention. After the power pair took their relationship public — she went to a Chiefs game and sat in a box with Kelce's mom, to the delight of fans — they began taking the world by storm.

Sportscasters calculated Swift's effect on Kelce's game stats and TV viewership, national magazines offered up comprehensive dating timelines, and Swift fans scoured Kelce's old social media posts to make sure he was fit for their queen.

On tour in Buenos Aires, the then-33-year-old singer changed a lyric from "Karma is the guy on the screen" to "Karma is the guy on the Chiefs." And fans went crazy when she jumped into Kelce's arms for an iconic post-concert kiss.

"I think we're all excited about it. Until they start making good romcoms again, this is what we have," said Michal Owens, a 37-year-old longtime fan from the Indianapolis suburb of Zionsville.

While pint-sized pairs of trick-or-treaters donned glitzy dresses and Chiefs jerseys this Halloween, Owens transformed her outdoor display into a tribute. The mother of three dressed one 12-foot-tall (3.66-meters-tall) skeleton in a Chiefs jersey, another in a sparkly dress and then stacked three smaller skeletons atop one another to create what she called a "tower of Swifties."

"We've got so many things in the world to be sad about," she said. "Why not find something to root for and give us some joy?"

AN AWE-INSPIRING ECLIPSE

From Oregon's coast to the beaches of Corpus Christi, Texas, millions of people in October donned special glasses and gazed upward to take in the dazzling "ring of fire" eclipse of the sun.

"It's kind of spiritual, but in a way that is almost tangible," University of Texas at San Antonio astrophys-

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ics professor Angela Speck said as she recalled the type of eclipse that ancient Mayan astronomers called a "broken sun."

Crowds in the path of the eclipse erupted in cheers when the moon blocked out all but a brilliant circle of the sun's outer edge. Participants at an international balloon fiesta in Albuquerque, New Mexico, whooped from the launch pad. Broadcasters for NASA said they felt a chill as the moon cast a shadow over the earth — and one broadcaster was so overcome with emotion that she began crying.

The phenomenon was a prelude to the total solar eclipse that will sweep across Mexico, the eastern half of the U.S. and Canada, in April 2024. But the next "ring of fire" eclipse won't be visible in the U.S. until 2039 and then only in parts of Alaska.

IN DEATH, A SELFLESS ACT

Surprise letters are showing up in mailboxes, informing recipients that their medical debt is wiped away. They have Casey McIntyre to thank. The 38-year-old New York City book publisher nearly died of cancer in May. But in what her husband, Andrew Rose Gregory, called a "bonus summer," the young mother made plans to help people after she was gone. Her goal: To erase medical debt.

In a message posted after her death in November, she asked for donations, writing, "I loved each and every one of you with my whole heart and I promise you, I knew how deeply I was loved."

By December, the campaign had raised more than \$1 million, enough to erase around \$100 million in debt. That's because the nonprofit RIP Medical Debt says every dollar donated buys about \$100 in debt.

"Her positive spirit is just resonating with a lot of people," said Allison Sesso, the nonprofit's president and CEO.

The effort was inspired by the people McIntyre met during treatment. They weren't just worried about their health but how to pay for their care. She had good insurance — and "couldn't even fathom having to deal with that on top of the cancer," Sesso said.

The fundraiser, which quickly shattered its initial goal of \$20,000, gave her family a sliver of "something positive" to focus on amid their grief. It was particularly hard for the family because when McIntyre died, her daughter was just a toddler, not yet 2.

"This sounds crazy but she didn't seem angry at all," said Sesso. "She was like, 'This happened. I've accepted that this has happened, and I'm going to do this positive thing.'"

A SPIRITUAL HOMECOMING

When the Grand Canyon became a national park over a century ago, many Native Americans who called it home were displaced.

In 2023, meaningful steps were taken to address the federal government's actions. In May, a ceremony marked the renaming of a popular campground in the inner canyon from Indian Garden to Havasupai Gardens, or "Ha'a Gyoh," in the Havasupai language.

It marked a pivotal moment in the tribe's relationship with the U.S. government nearly a century after the last tribal member was forcibly removed from the park. The Havasupai Tribe was landless for a time until the federal government set aside a plot in the depths of the Grand Canyon for members.

Then in August, President Joe Biden signed a national monument designation — over the opposition of Republican lawmakers and the uranium mining industry — to help preserve about 1,562 square miles (4,046 square kilometers) to the north and south of Grand Canyon National Park.

It was another big step for the Havasupai, and for the 10 other tribes that consider the Grand Canyon their ancestral homeland.

The new national monument is called Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni. "Baaj Nwaavjo" meaning "where tribes roam," for the Havasupai people, while "I'tah Kukveni" translates to "our footprints," for the Hopi Tribe.

The move restricts new mining claims and brings tribal voices to the table to manage the environment, said Jack Pongyesva, of the Grand Canyon Trust, an advocacy group that represents tribal and environmental issues in the region.

He said it also could open the door for more cultural tourism, where visitors could learn not just about

the landscape but about the tribes — from the tribes themselves.

Pongyesva, a member of the Hopi Tribe, said the dedication is “The beginning of hopefully this healing and looking back and seeing what was wrong and moving forward together.”

A RESILIENT RETURN

Firs are mainstays of Christmas tree lots. But on the Isle Royale National Park near Michigan’s border with Canada, balsam firs were being devoured.

Gray wolves on the remote island cluster in Lake Superior were already dying out from inbreeding, causing the moose population to become a “runaway freight train” and strip the trees during long, snowbound winters, said Michigan Tech biologist Rolf Peterson.

An ambitious plan was hatched to airlift wolves from the mainland to the park — and it’s starting to make a big difference. A report this year shows the resurging wolf population is thriving and the moose total is shrinking, giving the trees a chance to recover.

There were critics of the plan, but Peterson said there weren’t other viable options. Because of climate change, particularly global warming, there are fewer ice bridges, reducing wolves’ ability to trek from the mainland and diversify the gene pool.

“That was a huge undertaking,” Peterson said, and it turned out “spectacularly well.”

US women are stocking up on abortion pills, especially when there is news about restrictions

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Thousands of women stocked up on abortion pills just in case they needed them, new research shows, with demand peaking in the past couple years at times when it looked like the medications might become harder to get.

Medication abortion accounts for more than half of all abortions in the U.S., and typically involves two drugs: mifepristone and misoprostol. A research letter published Tuesday in JAMA Internal Medicine looked at requests for these pills from people who weren’t pregnant and sought them through Aid Access, a European online telemedicine service that prescribes them for future and immediate use.

Aid Access received about 48,400 requests from across the U.S. for so-called “advance provision” from September 2021 through April 2023. Requests were highest right after news leaked in May 2022 that the Supreme Court would overturn Roe v. Wade — but before the formal announcement that June, researchers found.

Nationally, the average number of daily requests shot up nearly tenfold, from about 25 in the eight months before the leak to 247 after the leak. In states where an abortion ban was inevitable, the average weekly request rate rose nearly ninefold.

“People are looking at looming threats to reproductive health access, looming threats to their reproductive rights, and potentially thinking to themselves: How can I prepare for this? Or how can I get around this or get out ahead of this?” said Dr. Abigail Aiken, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin and one of the letter’s authors.

Daily requests dropped to 89 nationally after the Supreme Court decision, the research shows, then rose to 172 in April 2023 when there were conflicting legal rulings about the federal approval of mifepristone. The Supreme Court is expected to rule on limits on the drug this year.

Co-author Dr. Rebecca Gomperts of Amsterdam, director of Aid Access, attributed this spike to greater public awareness during times of uncertainty.

Researchers found inequities in who is getting pills in advance. Compared with people requesting pills to manage current abortions, a greater proportion were at least 30 years old, white, had no children and lived in urban areas and regions with less poverty.

Advance provision isn’t yet reaching people who face the greatest barriers to abortion care, said Dr. Daniel Grossman, an OB-GYN at the University of California, San Francisco, who was not involved in the research.

"It's not surprising that some people would want to have these pills on hand in case they need them, instead of having to travel to another state or try to obtain them through telehealth once pregnant," he added in an email, also saying more research is needed into the inequities.

Recently, Aiken said, some other organizations have started offering pills in advance.

"It's a very new idea for a lot of folks because it's not standard practice within the U.S. health care setting," she said. "It will actually be news to a lot of people that it's even something that is offered."

States and Congress wrestle with cybersecurity after Iran attacks small town water utilities

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The tiny Aliquippa water authority in western Pennsylvania was perhaps the least-suspecting victim of an international cyberattack.

It had never had outside help in protecting its systems from a cyberattack, either at its existing plant that dates to the 1930s or the new \$18.5 million one it is building.

Then it — along with several other water utilities — was struck by what federal authorities say are Iranian-backed hackers targeting a piece of equipment specifically because it was Israeli-made.

"If you told me to list 10 things that would go wrong with our water authority, this would not be on the list," said Matthew Mottes, the chairman of the authority that handles water and wastewater for about 22,000 people in the woodsy exurbs around a one-time steel town outside Pittsburgh.

The hacking of the Municipal Water Authority of Aliquippa is prompting new warnings from U.S. security officials at a time when states and the federal government are wrestling with how to harden water utilities against cyberattacks.

The danger, officials say, is hackers gaining control of automated equipment to shut down pumps that supply drinking water or contaminate drinking water by reprogramming automated chemical treatments. Besides Iran, other potentially hostile geopolitical rivals, including China, are viewed by U.S. officials as a threat.

A number of states have sought to step up scrutiny, although water authority advocates say the money and the expertise are what is really lacking for a sector of more than 50,000 water utilities, most of which are local authorities that, like Aliquippa's, serve corners of the country where residents are of modest means and cybersecurity professionals are scarce.

Besides, utilities say, it's difficult to invest in cybersecurity when upkeep of pipes and other water infrastructure is already underfunded, and some cybersecurity measures have been pushed by private water companies, sparking pushback from public authorities that it is being used as a back door to privatization.

Efforts took on new urgency in 2021 when the federal government's leading cybersecurity agency reported five attacks on water authorities over two years, four of them ransomware and a fifth by a former employee.

At the Aliquippa authority, Iranian hackers shut down a remotely controlled device that monitors and regulates water pressure at a pumping station. Customers weren't affected because crews alerted by an alarm quickly switched to manual operation — but not every water authority has a built-in manual backup system.

With inaction in Congress, a handful of states passed legislation to step up scrutiny of cybersecurity, including New Jersey and Tennessee. Before 2021, Indiana and Missouri had passed similar laws. A 2021 California law commissioned state security agencies to develop outreach and funding plans to improve cybersecurity in the agriculture and water sectors.

Legislation died in several states, including Pennsylvania and Maryland, where public water authorities fought bills backed by private water companies to force them to upgrade various aspects of their infrastructure, including pipes and cybersecurity measures.

Private water companies say the bills would force their public counterparts to abide by the stricter regulatory standards that private companies face from utility commissions and, as a result, boost public

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confidence in the safety of tap water.

"It's protecting the nation's tap water," said Jennifer Kocher, a spokesperson for the National Association of Water Companies. "It is the most economical choice for most families, but it also has a lack of confidence from a lot of people who think they can drink it and every time there's one of these issues it undercuts the confidence in water and it undercuts people's willingness and trust in drinking it."

Opponents said the legislation is designed to foist burdensome costs onto public authorities and encourage their boards and ratepayers to sell out to private companies that can persuade state utility commissions to raise rates to cover the costs.

"This is a privatization bill," Justin Fiore of the Maryland Municipal League told Maryland lawmakers during a hearing last spring. "They're seeking to take public water companies, privatize them by expanding the burden, cutting out public funding."

For many authorities, the demands of cybersecurity tend to fade into the background of more pressing needs for residents wary of rate increases: aging pipes and increasing costs to comply with clean water regulations.

One critic, Pennsylvania state Sen. Katie Muth, a Democrat from suburban Philadelphia's Montgomery County, criticized a GOP-penned bill for lacking funding.

"People are drinking water that is below standards, but selling out to corporations who are going to raise rates on families across our state who cannot afford it is not a solution," Muth told colleagues during floor debate on a 2022 bill.

Pennsylvania state Rep. Rob Matzie, a Democrat whose district includes the Aliquippa water authority, is working on legislation to create a funding stream to help water and electric utilities pay for cybersecurity upgrades after he looked for an existing funding source and found none.

"The Aliquippa water and sewer authority? They don't have the money," Matzie said in an interview.

In March, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed a new rule to require states to audit the cybersecurity of water systems.

It was short-lived.

Three states — Arkansas, Missouri and Iowa — sued, accusing the agency of overstepping its authority and a federal appeals court promptly suspended the rule. The EPA withdrew the rule in October, although a deputy national security adviser, Anne Neuberger, told The Associated Press that it could have "identified vulnerabilities that were targeted in recent weeks."

Two groups that represent public water authorities, the American Water Works Association and the National Rural Water Association, opposed the EPA rule and now are backing bills in Congress to address the issue in different ways.

One bill would roll out a tiered approach to regulation: more requirements for bigger or more complex water utilities. The other is an amendment to Farm Bill legislation to send federal employees called "circuit riders" into the field to help smaller and rural water systems detect cybersecurity weaknesses and address them.

If Congress does nothing, 6-year-old Safe Drinking Water Act standards will still be in place — a largely voluntary regime that both the EPA and cybersecurity analysts say has yielded minimal progress.

Meanwhile, states are in the midst of applying for grants from a \$1 billion federal cybersecurity program, money from the 2021 federal infrastructure law.

But water utilities will have to compete for the money with other utilities, hospitals, police departments, courts, schools, local governments and others.

Robert M. Lee, CEO of Dragos Inc., which specializes in cybersecurity for industrial-control systems, said the Aliquippa water authority's story — that it had no cybersecurity help — is common.

"That story is tens of thousands of utilities across the country," Lee said.

Because of that, Dragos has begun offering free access to its online support and software that helps detect vulnerabilities and threats for water and electric utilities that draw under \$100 million in revenue.

After Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022, Dragos tested the idea by rolling out software, hardware and installation at a cost of a couple million bucks for 30 utilities.

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"It was amazing, the feedback," Lee said. "You wonder, 'Hey I think I can move the needle in this way' ... and those 30 were like, 'Holy crap, no one's ever paid attention to us. No one's ever tried to get us help.'"

Cold spell in Finland and Sweden sends temperature below minus 40

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Finland and Sweden recorded their coldest temperatures of the winter Tuesday when thermometers plummeted as low as minus 40 degrees Celsius (minus 40 Fahrenheit) as a cold spell grips the Nordic region.

Cold and snow disrupted transportation throughout the region, including in Norway where a major highway in the south was closed due to the weather and ferry lines suspended operations. Swedish train operators said the cold snap caused substantial problems for rail traffic in the Arctic north.

Nikkaluokta, a small village inhabited by indigenous Sami people in northern Sweden, recorded a temperature of minus 41.6 degrees C (minus 42.8 F) early Tuesday, Swedish public broadcaster SVT reported.

"It's the coldest temperature we have had so far this winter, and it will continue to be quite cold weather in the north," SVT meteorologist Nils Holmqvist said.

The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute reported temperatures of minus 30 C (minus 22 F) in several locations in northern Sweden, and issued a warning for snow and wind for central and southern Sweden. Its second-highest warning applies from midnight into Wednesday.

In neighboring Finland, this winter's cold record was recorded in the northwestern town of Ylivieska where temperatures fell to minus 37.8 C (minus 36 F) early Tuesday, and forecasters said temperatures would be lower than minus 40 C in parts of the nation through the week.

Temperatures in the Finnish capital, Helsinki, were expected to hover between minus 15 and minus 20 C (around zero F).

In the southern Norway town of Arendal, officials said schools would be closed Wednesday because it wasn't possible to clear the sidewalks in time for children to get to school.

Several ferry companies throughout the region canceled crossings, including those from southern Norway to Denmark where a key bridge was closed to vehicles with light trailers because of strong winds, Danish officials said.

Turkey detains 33 people suspected of spying for Israel

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish authorities have detained 33 people suspected of spying for Israel, Turkey's state-run news agency reported on Tuesday.

Authorities were still searching for 13 others believed to have links to Israel's Mossad security service, the Anadolu Agency reported.

The suspects were detained in raids in Istanbul and seven other provinces for allegedly planning to carry out activities that included "reconnaissance" and "pursuing, assaulting and kidnapping" foreign nationals living in Turkey, the agency reported.

The suspects were allegedly recruited to spy on Palestinians residing in Turkey as well as Israeli activists opposed to their government, Anadolu said. Israeli officials allegedly contacted the suspects via social media, it said.

The report comes weeks after the head of Israel's domestic security agency, Shin Bet, said in an audio recording that his organization is prepared to destroy Hamas "in every place," including in Lebanon, Turkey and Qatar.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Israel of "serious consequences" if it pressed ahead with its threat to attack Hamas officials on Turkish soil.

Turkey and Israel had normalized ties in 2022 by reappointing ambassadors following years of tensions. But those ties quickly deteriorated after the Israel-Hamas war, with Ankara becoming one of the strongest critics of Israel's military actions in Gaza.

Israel initially withdrew its diplomats from Turkey over security concerns and later announced it was

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recalling its diplomats for political reasons, citing “increasingly harsh statements” from Turkish officials. Turkey also pulled out its ambassador from Israel.

Erdogan’s reaction to the Israel-Hamas war was initially fairly muted. But the Turkish leader has since intensified his criticism of Israel, describing its actions in Gaza as verging on “genocide.” He has called for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be prosecuted for “war crimes” and compared him to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

Erdogan, whose government has hosted several Hamas officials in the past, has also said the militant group — considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and the European Union — is fighting for the liberation of its lands and people.

Today in History: January 3, Alaska becomes the 49th state

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 3, the third day of 2024. There are 363 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Jan. 3, 1959, Alaska became the 49th state as President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a proclamation.

On this date:

In 1777, Gen. George Washington’s army routed the British in the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1861, more than two weeks before Georgia seceded from the Union, the state militia seized Fort Pulaski at the order of Gov. Joseph E. Brown. The Delaware House and Senate voted to oppose secession from the Union.

In 1868, the Meiji Restoration re-established the authority of Japan’s emperor and heralded the fall of the military rulers known as shoguns.

In 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced the United States was formally terminating diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba.

In 1967, Jack Ruby, the man who shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald — the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy — died in a Dallas hospital.

In 1977, Apple Computer was incorporated in Cupertino, California, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Mike Markkula (MAHR’-kuh-luh) Jr.

In 1990, ousted Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces, 10 days after taking refuge in the Vatican’s diplomatic mission.

In 2002, a judge in Alabama ruled that former Ku Klux Klansman Bobby Frank Cherry was mentally competent to stand trial on murder charges in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing that killed four black girls. (Cherry was later convicted, and served a life sentence until his death in November 2004.)

In 2007, Gerald R. Ford was laid to rest on the grounds of his presidential museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan, during a ceremony watched by thousands of onlookers.

In 2008, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama won Democratic caucuses in Iowa, while Mike Huckabee won the Republican caucuses.

In 2013, students from Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, reconvened at a different building in the town of Monroe about three weeks after the massacre that had claimed the lives of 20 first-graders and six educators.

In 2018, President Donald Trump signed an executive order disbanding the controversial voter fraud commission he had set up to investigate the 2016 presidential election after alleging without evidence that voting fraud cost him the popular vote; the White House blamed the decision to end the panel on more than a dozen states that refused to cooperate.

In 2020, the United States killed Iran’s top general in an airstrike at Baghdad’s international airport; the Pentagon said Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran’s elite Quds force, had been “actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members” in Iraq and elsewhere. Iran warned of retaliation.

In 2022, a jury in San Jose, California, convicted Elizabeth Holmes of duping investors into believing that

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her startup company Theranos had developed a revolutionary medical device that could detect diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dabney Coleman is 92. Singer-songwriter-producer Van Dyke Parks is 81. Musician Stephen Stills is 79. Rock musician John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin) is 78. Actor Victoria Principal is 74. Actor-director Mel Gibson is 68. Actor Shannon Sturges is 56. Actor John Ales is 55. Jazz musician James Carter is 55. Contemporary Christian singer Nichole Nordeman is 52. Musician Thomas Bangalter (Daft Punk) is 49. Actor Jason Marsden is 49. Actor Danica McKellar is 49. Actor Nicholas Gonzalez is 48. Singer Kimberley Locke (TV: "American Idol") is 46. Actor Kate Levering is 45. Former NFL quarterback Eli Manning is 43. Actor Nicole Beharie is 39. Pop musician Mark Pontius is 39. R&B singer Lloyd is 38. Pop-rock musician Nash Overstreet (Hot Chelle (shel) Rae) is 37. Actor Alex D. Linz is 35.