

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 1 of 71

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 Headlines](#)
- [3- GHS Wrestling](#)
- [4- Lady Tigers have clean sweep over Clark/Wil-low Lake](#)
- [5- '1940-1945: We Will Remember' history of Brown and Day County residents' roles in WWII published](#)
- [5- Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #7 Results](#)
- [6- DANR Announces More Than \\$98 Million for Statewide Environmental Projects](#)
- [8- Groton Chamber of Commerce January Meeting](#)
- [9- School Board Agenda](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Price tag for new prisons, already historic, could grow significantly](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Board moves to strip Western Dakota Tech of fast-track status for law enforcement program](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: DeSantis: Eminent domain needed in pipeline projects like Keystone](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- Subscription Form](#)
- [23- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [24- News from the Associated Press](#)
- [71 - Tonight's Basketball Information](#)



## Friday, Jan. 5

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

## Saturday, Jan. 6

Robotics at Groton Area Gym, 8 a.m.

Girls Varsity Wrestling at Lyman.

Boys JV Invitational at Madison, 9 a.m.

Boys Varsity Invitational at Garretson, 9:30 a.m.

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

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

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

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

**GDILIVE.COM**

Groton Area Tigers

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

**GT**

- Warner Boys JV
- Warner Girls JV
- Clark Girls C
- Clark Girls JV
- Clark Boys C
- Clark Boys JV
- Tiropa Zina Girls JV
- Tiropa 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

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

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 2 of 71

# 1440

In partnership with [smartasset™](#)

A sixth grader was killed and five other people were wounded after a shooter opened fire at a high school in the small Iowa town of Perry yesterday. The attack occurred just before the start of class during the morning drop-off period on the students' first day back from winter break.

Pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly launched a direct-to-consumer website yesterday, allowing its customers to receive third-party prescriptions for its drugs, including its newly approved weight loss injectable Zepbound (similar to Novo Nordisk's Wegovy/Ozempic). Users can be connected to a telehealth service via the site to quickly receive prescriptions before placing an order.

Oscar Pistorius, the South African former Olympic and Paralympic runner, will be released from prison today after serving half of his over 13-year sentence for the 2013 murder of his model girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

ESPN and NCAA sign eight-year, \$920M broadcast rights agreement; deal includes rights to broadcast 40 NCAA championships over the next eight years.

Glynis Johns, Tony-winning and Oscar-nominated actress known for starring role in "Mary Poppins," dies at 100.

The 81st Golden Globe Awards to be presented Sunday (8 pm ET, CBS); see predictions for each category. Elvis Presley holographic concert to debut in London in November.

## Science & Technology

OpenAI to launch its online store featuring third-party GPTs next week; expected to be similar to Apple Store, with ChatGPT-based programs instead of apps. Google begins phasing out the use of cookies, small autogenerated files that track user history on websites in between visits.

New study finds genetic variant associated with male bisexuality also linked to higher rates of self-described risk-taking, fathering more children; findings may suggest the evolutionary advantage of the variant.

Alzheimer's drug combined with targeted ultrasound found to be about 30% more effective in attacking brain plaques.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow +0.0%, Nasdaq -0.6%); Nasdaq falls for fifth consecutive trading session, its longest losing streak since October 2022. Peloton shares up 14% after company announces new fitness hub partnership with TikTok.

Walgreens beats earnings and revenue expectations; shares close down 5% after drugstore chain nearly halves quarterly dividend payout. Ford reports 7.1% increase in US new vehicle sales in 2023, its best US sales year since 2020. French grocery giant Carrefour drops PepsiCo products over price hikes.

US weekly jobless claims drop to 202,000; figure from last week is lowest level since October. December US private payrolls rose for fourth consecutive month.

## Politics & World Affairs

US airstrike in Baghdad, Iraq, kills commander of Iran-backed militia group, comes amid rising tensions in the Middle East. Islamic State claims responsibility for Wednesday's cemetery bombings in Iran that killed at least 84 people.

Former President Donald Trump's properties and hotels reportedly received at least \$7.8M in foreign payments (including \$5.7M from China) during his presidency, per new report from House Oversight Committee Democrats.

Weekend storm expected to bring significant snow to the US East Coast, with areas stretching from central Appalachia to the upper Northeast to see between 6 and 12 inches.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 3 of 71

## GHS Wrestling

Lincoln Krause, Donovan Block, Christian Ehresmann, Korbin Kucker and Charlie Frost were all double winners at the triangular wrestling matches held Thursday in Webster.

### **Redfield 46, Groton Area 36**

- 106: Maddon Odland (Redfield) over Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) (MD 8-0)
- 113: Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) over Tate Neuharth (Redfield) (Fall 3:39)
- 120: Kasey Hermann (Redfield) over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) (Fall 0:31)
- 126: Donavon Block (Groton Area) over Jake Wipf (Redfield) (Fall 3:02)
- 132: Conner Zens (Redfield) won by forfeit
- 138: Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) over Marken Cazeau (Redfield) (Fall 3:28)
- 144: Ayden Understock (Redfield) won by forfeit
- 150: Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) won by forfeit
- 157: Collin Dean (Redfield) over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) (Fall 0:35)
- 165: Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) won by forfeit
- 175: Dylan Murray (Redfield) over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) (Fall 1:37)
- 190: Camden Murray (Redfield) over Isaiah Scepaniak (Groton Area) (Fall 0:36)
- 215: Charlie Frost (Groton Area) won by forfeit
- 285: Grady Fey (Redfield) over Gaviin Englund (Groton Area) (Fall 0:32)

### **Webster Area 40, Groton Area 39**

- 106: Tayten Kurkowski (Webster Area) over Wyatt Hagen (Groton Area) (Dec 7-1)
- 113: Lincoln Krause (Groton Area) over Karstyn Schlechter (Webster Area) (Fall 0:35)
- 120: Tacey Miller (Webster Area) over Noah Scepaniak (Groton Area) (Fall 1:06)
- 126: Donavon Block (Groton Area) won by forfeit
- 132: Walker Zoellner (Groton Area) over Gavon Larson (Webster Area) (Dec 7-4)
- 138: Haeden Jorgenson (Webster Area) won by forfeit
- 144: Trace Shoemaker (Webster Area) won by forfeit
- 150: Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) over Rylan Meuer (Webster Area) (Fall 0:59)
- 157: Gage Baumgarn (Webster Area) over Easten Ekern (Groton Area) (Fall 0:10)
- 165: Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) over Nathan Hubsch (Webster Area) (Fall 3:27)
- 175: Hunter Bourassa (Webster Area) over Ben Hoeft (Groton Area) (Fall 3:17)
- 190: Isaac Nelson (Webster Area) over Drew Thurston (Groton Area) (Fall 3:01)
- 215: Charlie Frost (Groton Area) over Matthew Angiolelli (Webster Area) (Fall 5:38)
- 285: Gaviin Englund (Groton Area) over Gage Miotke (Webster Area) (Fall 0:53)

## GHS Girls' Basketball

### **Lady Tigers have clean sweep over Clark/Willow Lake**

Jaedyn Penning had her best night of the season as she led the girls' basketball team to a 53-26 win over Clark/Willow Lake. The game was played Thursday in Willow Lake.

Groton Area jumped out to a 12-0 lead and led, 14-2, after the first quarter. The Tigers led, 27-4, late in the second quarter before the Cyclones put in nine straight points to make it a 27-13 lead at halftime. The Tigers led, 42-20, at the end of the third quarter.

Penning had 12 points, nine rebounds, one assist and one steal to lead the Tigers. Brooklyn Hansen had nine points, two rebounds, one steal and one block. Faith Traphagen had nine points and four rebounds. Kennedy Hansen had eight points, two rebounds, one assist and one steal. Rylee Dunker had seven points, seven rebounds, three assists and four steals. Jerica Locke had five points, nine rebounds, four assists and four steals. Laila Roberts had four points (four for four from the line), and two steals. Taryn Traphagen had two points and two rebounds.

3-Pointers: Locke 1, Faith Traphagen 1.

Brynn Roehrich and Tehya Vig each led Clark/Willow Lake with six points followed by Kamryn Nesheim with five, Shelby Begeman had four and Shay Michalski added two points.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 16-10. Laila Roberts and Chesney Weber each had four points while Faith Traphagen, Taryn Traphagen, Talli Wright and Mia Crank each had two points. Shelby Begeman led the Cyclones with seven points.

Groton Area won the C game, 25-22. Clark/Willow Lake led, 3-2, after the first quarter and Groton Area scored 13 straight points to take a 21-7 lead, leading 15-7 at halftime. Groton Area led, 23-12, at the end of the third quarter. Clark/Willow Lake scored 10 straight points in the second half and closed to within one, 23-22. Taking the ball out of bounds, Ashlynn Warrington threw the ball into Kella Tracy who was all alone under the basket and she made the shot to put Groton up by three, 25-22, good for the win.

Tracy led the Tigers with nine points followed by Chesney Weber with six, McKenna Tietz and Emerlee Jones each had three points and Sydney Locke and Avery Crank each had two points.

All three games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Shane Clark and Jeslyn Kosel assisting. The C game was sponsored by Jason and Robyn Warrington, the junior varsity game sponsored by Adam and Nichole Wright and the varsity game was sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric, Rix Farms/R&M Farms and Spanier Harvesting and Trucking.

- Paul Kosel



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 5 of 71

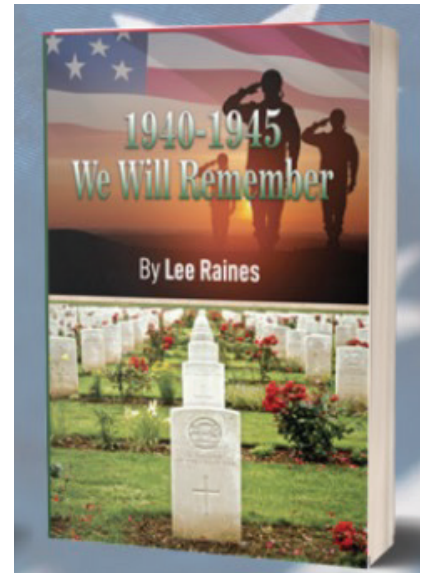
## '1940-1945: We Will Remember' history of Brown and Day County residents' roles in WWII published

Lee Raines' fourth book, "1940-45: We Will Remember" has been published and can be purchased in paperback or on Kindle on Amazon. All of Raines' books can be found on leeraines.com.

A grandmother's diary and news of the day during the war years of 1940-1945 is the impetus for Raines' depiction of rural South Dakota during World War II. This local military history juxtaposes daily farming responsibilities such as rendering lard, selling eggs, harvesting the crops with local community response to war supply shortages and the inevitable but tragic mourning of the deaths of its sons and daughters. Exhaustive efforts have been made to compile a list of those in the Brown and Day county areas who served and who made the greatest sacrifice. Historical battle narratives, military successes and failures throughout the war, and the impact of the war on local economies, demographics and the families of the area are also explored.

"I used various source documents to develop a picture of what life might have been like during the period of 1940-45 from the perspective of farm life and small-town perspectives," Raines said. "I hope to enable the reader to travel the time period using my grandmother's diary as a base of activity, then the preparation of war from the standpoint of the US, the war itself as if overwhelms the world, our introduction to that war after Pearl Harbor and then the impact on a generation of men and women who served their country."

This labor of love includes interviews of WWII veterans and family members and a vault of service and memorial photographs.



**Groton native Lee Raines' fourth book can be purchased online**

## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #7 Results

**1st Third Standings:** Jackelopes – 19, Coyotes – 19, Shihtzus – 16, Cheetahs – 14, Chipmunks – 11, Foxes – 5

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage – 223, Lance Frohling – 203, Brad Larson – 200

**Women's High Games:** Vicki Walter – 185, Emily Sternhagen – 176, Lori Giedt – 161

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage – 605, Lance Frohling – 585, Brad Larson – 501

**Women's High Series:** Vicki Walter – 506, Lori Giedt – 434, Dar Larson – 427

Jackelopes and Coyotes tied for the first third!

**Week #7 Fun Game - Most 9 Spares** - Jackelopes with 27!

## DANR Announces More Than \$98 Million for Statewide Environmental Projects

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$98,188,425 in grants and loans for drinking water, wastewater, and storm water projects in South Dakota.

The \$98,188,425 total consists of \$1,609,000 in grants and \$96,579,425 in low-interest loans, including \$1,682,000 in principal forgiveness to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"I am pleased to announce this financial assistance is available," said DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts. "Safe and reliable water and wastewater infrastructure helps protect our environment and strengthen communities for our kids and grandkids."

Funds were awarded from DANR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, Solid Waste Management Program, and the Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program to the following:

**Davison Rural Water System** received a \$250,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program grant and an additional \$1,000,000 Drinking Water State Revolving fund loan to improve water supply and pressure issues within its system and upgrade to automatic meter reading technology. Davison Rural Water previously received a funding package in April 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 2.125 percent for 30 years.

**Geddes** received \$1,186,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to upgrade a ditch and culvert system with an in-ground stormwater conveyance system. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**Hanson Rural Water System** received an additional \$3,700,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to improve water supply and pressure issues within its system and upgrade its meter technology. Hanson Rural Water previously received a funding package in April 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 1.625 percent for 30 years.

**Hecla** received \$2,500,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan with \$1,682,000 in principal forgiveness to clean and televise wastewater lines and replace a portion of the wastewater piping with new PVC pipe. The terms of the loan are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**Humboldt** received a \$390,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program grant and an additional \$330,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan for sanitary sewer upgrades. The city previously received a funding package in in April 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**Humboldt** also received \$145,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program grant and an additional \$270,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace aging water mains. The city previously received a funding package in in April 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**Lead** received a \$841,425 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to replace aging water lines and better accommodate flow demands. The loan terms are 2.75 percent for 20 years.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 7 of 71

**Sioux Falls** received a \$61,000,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan to install force main from Pumpstation 240 to the city's water reclamation facility. The terms of the loan are 3 percent for 20 years.

**South Eastern Council of Governments** received a \$100,000 Solid Waste Management Program grant for its regional revolving loan fund program. This funding allows the Council to provide low-interest loans for solid waste management and recycling projects in the region.

**Spring Creek/Cow Creek Sanitary District** received a \$492,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program grant and an additional \$300,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan for the construction of an elevated drinking water storage reservoir, including the installation of PVC water main pipe and all necessary appurtenances. The district previously received a funding package in April 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**Watertown** received an additional \$25,000,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan for wastewater treatment facility improvements. The city previously received a funding package in April 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**Valley Springs** received a \$232,000 Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program grant and an additional \$270,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan to construct new well houses. The city previously received a funding package in June 2022 for this project. The loan terms are 3.25 percent for 30 years.

**The Solid Waste Management Program** provides grants and loans for solid waste disposal, recycling, and waste tire projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated funding for the Solid Waste Management Program through the Governor's Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

**The Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program**, funded in part by revenues from the Petroleum Release Compensation Tank Inspection fee and the sale of lotto tickets, provides grants and loans for water, wastewater, and watershed projects. The Legislature annually appropriates dedicated water and waste funding for the Consolidated Water Facilities Construction Program through the Governor's Omnibus Water Funding Bill.

**The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** fund the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs, which provide low-interest loans for wastewater, storm water, water conservation, nonpoint source projects, and public drinking water system projects. The programs are funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The board approved the funding at yesterday's meeting in Pierre.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 8 of 71

## Groton Chamber of Commerce

January 3, 2024

Noon at City Hall

- Individuals present: Christine Hilton, Katelyn Nehlich, Doug Heinrich, Ashley Bentz, April Abeln, Carol Kutter
- Minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Kutter and seconded by Heinrich. All members voted aye.
- Treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$33,027.35. \$3369.40 is currently in the Bucks account. 45 businesses have paid dues so far.
- Correspondence was received from Table Talks. Motion by Kutter and seconded by Abeln to donate \$200 to the faith led ministry for GHS students. All members voted aye.
- All but 1 of the shirt orders have been picked up from City Hall. The total revenue after expenses amount will need to be calculated before our bench restoration project commences.
- The winner of Chamber Bucks as part of Fruit Fusion's 12 days giveaway was Kate Profeta.
- Santa Day was a success! The city paid Santa and PMS will pay Groton Photography \$100 for their services.
- Rosewood Court was very happy for our donation of the Groton Independent and even posted a thank you on their Facebook page.
- An email motion was made by Locke and seconded by Hilton to place a 1/16pd ad within the Snow Queen Section of the Aberdeen Insider of \$100. All members voted aye.
- Topper Tastad will be asked to record the Dakota Broadcasting radio ad for January to promote the Carnival of Silver Skates and the Robotics Pancake Feed.
- Motion by Nehlich and seconded by Abeln to boost our drawing on Facebook for \$50 starting January 5th and ending January 31st. All members voted aye. A Facebook live will be held at our February 7th meeting. Boosted post will include membership benefits.
- Motion by Heinrich and seconded by Kutter to donate tumblers to the 2024 District 6 Meeting to be held at the Groton Legion on April 10th. All members voted aye. Both black and leatherette tumblers will be gifted. Discussion will continue at next meeting if members want to attend with possible meal paid for by the Chamber.
- New business welcomes still need to be planned with Kenzie's Daycare & Preschool and Sun & Sea Travel Co.
- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich to donate \$100 to both the Carnival of Silver Skates and Groton Robotics for their pancake feed. All members voted aye.
- Discussion was held on a possible electronic sign placed at City Hall, but costs were too high.
- Next Meeting: February 7th, 2024, at City Hall at 12:00pm
- Upcoming events
- 01/28/2024 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
- 01/28/2024 86th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 9 of 71

## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

January 10, 2024 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

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

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

#### CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of December 11, 2023 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of December 2023 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of December 2023 School Lunch Report.
4. Approval of December 2023 School Transportation Report.
5. Approve Open Enrollment 24-27.

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of December 2023 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Continued Discussion Regarding Potential School District Opt-Out.
4. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Adopt 2024-2025 School Calendar.
2. Approve resignation of Anna Fuhrman, Ag Instructor, on fulfillment of the 2023-2024 contract terms.
3. Review FY2022 District Audit.
4. Adopt Supplemental Budget #FY24-1.
5. Consider Change Order #1 for HVAC Upgrade Project.
6. Set date and time for annual school board election – April 9, 2024 (7:00 AM to 7:00 PM), and authorize Business Manager to designate officials, with voting precincts in Andover, Bristol, Columbia, and Groton. [3-year terms expiring: Marty Weismantel, Kara Pharis]
7. Consider date for late January School Board meeting.

#### ADJOURN



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Price tag for new prisons, already historic, could grow significantly** **Noem budget address announced \$27 million shortfall for women's prison**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 4, 2024 5:16 PM**

Early in 2023, the South Dakota Legislature budgeted \$60 million for a new women's prison in Rapid City. The state also set aside \$330.9 million to start work on a new men's prison to replace the aging state penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Then, in December, Gov. Kristi Noem surprised some lawmakers by saying the women's prison already has a \$27 million budget shortfall. Her proposed budget would cover that amount and add \$238.2 million to the construction fund for the men's prison, which would be in rural Lincoln County. If adopted, the total money set aside for both projects will grow to \$656.2 million.

A few weeks after Noem's budget address, lawmakers at a community meeting in Harrisburg about the proposed penitentiary said the budget for the men's facility could climb well above the initial \$600 million price tag for the multi-year project.

Noem and the state Department of Corrections did not respond to multiple requests for comments from South Dakota Searchlight.

Lawmakers on the Joint Appropriations Committee, which drafts the annual state budget, haven't heard much from the administration about prison project costs, either, but many have questions.

Without adjusting for inflation, the new penitentiary alone amounts to the largest one-time capital investment in state history. The Sanford Underground Research Lab in Lead is more expensive overall, but state taxpayers aren't on the hook for the lion's share of its costs.

"In terms of the largest construction project the state's ever undertaken, the penitentiary is certainly it," said Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, who sits on the appropriations committee.

Noem, the DOC and lawmakers have all said over the past few years that severe overcrowding at the women's prison in Pierre and safety issues in the state penitentiary – a building whose construction pre-dates statehood – mean that the new facilities are an unavoidable expense for taxpayers.

### **Price increases common in recent years**

Inflation, supply chain problems and workforce shortages in the construction industry caused legislators to approve extra money for nine projects during the 2023 legislative session. Some lawmakers worry a continuation of those trends could push the combined cost of the prison projects to more than \$1 billion.

Venhuizen isn't one of them, though he acknowledges that those factors have led to several years' worth of unexpected price hikes for state work.

An influx of federal cash during and after the COVID pandemic has put the state in a position where it's able to shoulder higher costs for the most part without taking out interest-bearing loans.

Unfortunately, Venhuizen said, the influx had a hand in creating the inflation and workforce issues behind recent cost overruns.

Every state took in pandemic relief, setting off a scramble for contractors as states moved to spend their respective windfalls on roads, bridges and buildings.

"The worst of that is over, construction prices have stabilized, and the construction industry has more of an ability to predict costs," Venhuizen said.

Others aren't quite so hopeful. One appropriator in particular, Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Chris Karr, is frustrated by the lack of information on the growing bill for the women's prison and a lack of certainty on

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 11 of 71

the penitentiary price.

The supplemental budget requests in 2023 for the DEX building on the South Dakota State Fairgrounds, two nursing program expansion facilities and the state public health lab are all fresh in Karr's mind.

Cost overruns, he said, have become a theme for the Noem administration.

"When you look at all the projects the governor has proposed, there's a lack of planning," Karr said. "To me, it feels like they just want to get something passed and figure out the details later."

Karr did vote to allocate funds for the prison projects – projects he sees as necessary and important for the state – but said he's grown wary of swollen price tags.

"I hadn't heard about an increase in the women's prison until it came out in the governor's budget address," Karr said, referring to Noem's speech on Dec. 5.

The \$27 million shortfall was also news to Rep. John Mills, R-Volga.

"That's a big number," said Mills, who sits on the appropriations committee.

The supplemental budget requests approved earlier last year ranged from \$1 million to \$9 million per project. The run of surprise requests for extra money and the potential for far larger requests from the DOC are one reason the committee has asked state agencies to report their final costs after work is complete, Mills said.

Mills, himself in construction, said he understands that numbers can change. But he also said appropriators need to hold agencies accountable and check their work.

"I found it frustrating that we don't have those kinds of records as legislators," Mills said.

## Lawmakers: Cost controls possible

Sen. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls, was also blindsided by the \$27 million figure attached to the women's prison. She sits on the appropriations committee with Mills, Karr and Venhuizen, and said no one got a head's up on the size of the shortfall.

Like Venhuizen, however, she's bullish on the prospects for keeping penitentiary prices in check.

The cost concerns about the nascent penitentiary project stem as much from location-based controversy as any concrete budget reports. During a Dec. 21 meeting in Harrisburg on the penitentiary, Canton Republican Rep. Karla Lems said she'd "heard from appropriators" that the facility could cost double the \$600 million estimate floated last session.

Later, Duba said she has "no idea" where Lems got that number.

The meeting was organized by a group of citizens opposed to the state's penitentiary site selection. Landowners near the plot of ground 15 miles south of Sioux Falls have sued in hopes of forcing the state to comply with county zoning rules.

Duba said that billion-dollar speculation doesn't square with what she's heard from DOC Secretary Kelli Wasko about the men's prison. The DOC chose the site for the penitentiary in part because the state already owns the land. The commissioner of school and public lands owns and oversees the 300-acre property, leasing it for farming and funneling the payments back into state education. The DOC's transfer of about \$8 million to the land office to get its agency listed as "owner" will also be funneled into education.

That price tag is smaller than what it would've been had the state been forced to negotiate with private landowners for a sale, Duba said.

"What I'm hearing is that what we're doing will push the price (of the penitentiary) down," Duba said.

The appropriators interviewed by South Dakota Searchlight all said that it's too early to venture truly educated guesses on final costs.

The penitentiary does not yet have a final design. Ground is not broken; contracts for its construction are many months away.

Venhuizen believes there is room for adjustment in the design process. Not enough to chop the prison price in half, but enough to work around the margins to ease the sting of unexpected costs.

"There is some room to scale the number up or down," Venhuizen said.

Karr's concerns, though, are based on projects where that scaling only went one way: up.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 12 of 71

He pointed to the DEX as an instructive example. "DEX" stands for "Dakota Events Complex," a building pitched by Noem in 2020 as a modern, climate-controlled replacement for a livestock complex at the state fairgrounds in Huron destroyed by a fire in 2020.

Lawmakers voted to shell out \$20 million in 2021 for the DEX. In 2023, the year after the project missed its once-promised 2022 opening, they added \$9 million to the state's share of the DEX budget. The remaining funds, around \$6 million, came from insurance and fundraising.

A ribbon cutting for the facility took place on Aug. 31, 2023. Its official grand opening celebration comes in 2024.

Karr sees more than external factors at play in the upward-moving targets and missed completion dates. He sees a lack of forethought. He doesn't trust that the state has put enough of it into planning for a project that aims to turn a remote patch of soil without electricity, sewer lines or paved roads into a sprawling penitentiary campus that will employ 400 and house three times that.

It's a lot to do by 2026, the DOC's hoped-for opening date.

"Right now, people are just speculating, saying that based on the track record and what we're seeing from the executive branch," Karr said. "Anything they say has been so far off. They say we're going to spend \$600 million. I mean, you just do the math, and you're probably pushing a billion bucks."

## Unexpected costs, unexpected revenues

Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, co-chairs the appropriations committee. Hunhoff and Venhuizen said separately that they knew an overrun was coming on the women's prison project, but that they only heard the \$27 million figure at the governor's budget address.

"I was not aware of the number, but there have been discussions with the Governor's Office," Hunhoff said.

She knows the cost of furniture – beds and the like – has gone up. She also said she knows little beyond that, and that furniture prices alone don't account for such a large number.

"Through the appropriation process, we will get a detailed accounting of exactly what those overruns are, and where those dollars are going," Hunhoff said, referring to the budgeting work lawmakers will begin this month.

Some recent budget adjustments on other projects have been tied to federal spending requirements and federal approval issues.

Just last month, Hunhoff said, appropriators learned that the state's plans to use federal relief dollars on the public health lab and nursing program expansions at Northern State University and Black Hills State University would be rejected unless each included public access areas.

"Well, Black Hills State, Northern, and the public health building all were redesigned," Hunhoff said. "They've made it available to have access for the public to come in."

The state had hoped to use some of the same federal money to renovate the state's existing women's prison and add space for substance abuse treatment. The public access requirement took that money off the table, though.

"You can't do that at a prison," Hunhoff said.

The co-chair echoed Venhuizen on the importance of putting money aside while surpluses remain to avoid interest charges for taxpayers. Prison overcrowding won't end until new facilities come online, she said, so adding more to the state's prison construction fund only makes the state less likely to take out loans.

"If we can start building that fund, then I think that's a benefit to the citizens, and it means it's a priority," Hunhoff said. "I mean, we know we need to do something."

That's a key point for Sen. David Johnson, R-Rapid City, who served on appropriations through 2023 but will not in 2024. The new women's prison will be in his district. In the end, he said, the prisons are necessary. As important as it is to watch the budget, there just aren't as many adjustments the state can make when building a secure facility.

That's one reason Johnson's resigned to accept higher prices as they come. Another is the number of supplemental budget requests he heard as an appropriator.

"It will happen, and the price tag is going to be what it is," Johnson said. "If you start taking shortcuts on something like a prison, you'll pay the price down the line."

As far as asking for better cost estimates, Johnson said it would be nice to see something more firm up front. But firm estimates have been hard to come by in recent years, and Johnson believes many of his fellow lawmakers see adjustments as inevitable. A reliance on anticipated surpluses and supplemental budget requests is "kind of built into the way things get funded," he said.

"We can't predict what inflation is going to be," he said. "But we do know we'll have a surplus."

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

## Board moves to strip Western Dakota Tech of fast-track status for law enforcement program

**School had been able to offer certification through graduation**

**BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 4, 2024 12:25 PM**

The Law Enforcement Officers Standards Commission voted unanimously on Wednesday to strip Western Dakota Technical College of its ability to offer a quick path to certification for graduates of its police-focused criminal justice program.

The Rapid City school had been one of three in the state with an "articulation agreement" through the commission. The others are Lake Area Technical College in Watertown and Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls.

Western Dakota was the first to ink an agreement with the state in 1997. Southeast followed in 2005; Lake Area signed its agreement in 2015.

The agreements allow law enforcement-track graduates to bypass a 13-week stint at the Law Enforcement Training Academy and earn "reciprocity" through the commission, meaning their degree and the passage of a reciprocity exam are enough to certify them as South Dakota peace officers.

The agreements also allow the commission to terminate the contracts with 60 days' notice. Commission member Steve Allender told South Dakota Searchlight after Wednesday's meeting that he doubts there's a path forward for Western Dakota to return to the commission's good graces.

"It's not believed they're going to be able to come into compliance or that they're willing to come into compliance," Allender said.

Each school with an articulation agreement must meet certain requirements. One is for instructors to have, maintain and document a "nationally recognized credential" in their area of expertise.

Last month, the school asked the state to lower its standards for instructor training, according to Hank Prim, the training administrator with the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation.

"During the course of that conversation, we learned that certain emergency vehicle operation course (EVOC) instructors did not hold the nationally recognized expertise credential," Prim said.

The school's December request came after nearly two years of back-and-forth to bring the program back into compliance with expectations, Prim said. As late as November, Prim saw a path forward for the school through remediation.

The late-stage request for an adjustment in standards was a final straw for commissioners.

"It isn't supposed to be a shortcut," Andy Howe, the Clay County sheriff and a member of the commission, said after the meeting. "The students put in the effort, and there's no reason that the standards should be lowered."

Western Dakota Tech did not attend the commission meeting. Ann Bolman, president of Western Dakota Tech, said in a statement afterward that she was "surprised" to learn of the commission's decision, and



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 14 of 71

that the school hopes to work with the commission to come back into compliance with program requirements within 60 days. That's the number of days it takes for a termination to take effect under the terms of the articulation agreement.

Bolman's statement noted that the school's program recently earned accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. An April 2023 press release from the school on that accreditation says the process involved "a rigorous self-assessment, requiring a review of policies, practices, and processes against internationally accepted public safety standards."

That accreditation doesn't clear a path for state-level, graduation-based officer certification, but Bolman offered it as evidence that her school's law enforcement program can prepare students for police work.

"As we strive to meet the highest standards in all of our programs, and were preparing for our next annual audit, we had asked the Commission to please clarify training agencies for EVOC instructors and are awaiting response," Bolman wrote. "It is our desire to work with the Commission to resolve any concerns it might have and fulfill its reciprocity requirements in the 60-day period before the agreement is slated to end."

## Trouble started in 2022

Western Dakota Tech had been in "noncompliance" status with the state commission since spring of 2023. As with the termination of its agreement this week, the school's placement in noncompliance status only came after several problems.

In April of 2022, five of the 12 Western Dakota students who took the reciprocity exam failed.

Those students, it turned out, hadn't finished their coursework, Prim said. The school accused the state Division of Criminal Investigation of pushing the students to take the exam early, Prim said, and asked that the five be allowed to re-test.

An investigation, which included interviews with students and faculty, revealed that the school had chosen the testing dates, Prim said.

That set in motion a series of meetings, audits, interventions and efforts on the part of the law enforcement training to address four main issues at the school:

Inaccurate or false reports.

Students testing before final semester.

Failure to report required retention information.

Failure to produce instructor credential records.

The commission was informed that the school had been placed on noncompliance status at its April meeting. At each commission meeting since, Prim has updated its members on remediation plans and potential paths forward.

The Wednesday meeting was the first at which Prim suggested taking action, although he did not recommend termination of the agreement with the school. He presented it as one of three options. Commissioners also could have voted to suspend the school, or continue working through remediation.

After about 40 minutes of discussion in a closed executive session, the commissioners returned to cast their votes in favor of termination.

## Reaction from commission

Allender, a former Rapid City police chief who later served as his city's mayor, told South Dakota Searchlight after the meeting that the loss of Western Dakota Tech as a reciprocity-ready school after so many second chances is "embarrassing."

"There's just been either a lack of willingness or lack of ability to come into compliance. There's been finger pointing, I think, going on. But I've seen all the documentation, and I'm embarrassed, not only for Western Dakota, but I'm embarrassed that the state has spent so much time and so much effort trying to get this organization into compliance."

Commissioner and Lincoln County State's Attorney Tom Wollman said after the meeting that he cast his vote after considering that the school had "been given ample time to remedy the situation," but did not

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 15 of 71

seem interested in doing so.

"I was shocked that they didn't have anybody at the meeting," Wollman said.

Western Dakota was not notified about or invited to the meeting, spokesperson Pam Stillman-Rokusek said Thursday. DCI spokesman Tony Mangan confirmed that no invitation had been offered.

The loss "certainly doesn't help" to address a shortage of qualified law enforcement in the state, Allender said. But he also said the school had been producing fewer graduates in recent years.

The statement from the school said that 13 students graduated from the program in spring of 2023. A year earlier, the statement said, nine students made it all the way through.

Howe, the Clay County sheriff, said he doesn't expect the Western Dakota Tech issue to have a serious long-term impact. There are criminal justice graduates all over the state, educated at other two- and four-year institutions.

"Those programs don't produce certifications, but they do produce graduates who have that criminal justice focus," Howe said.

Western Dakota will still have its program, as well, Howe said. At the commission meeting, Prim said that law enforcement trainers will work with the current students in the Western Dakota program to make sure they're able to take the reciprocity exam after completing their coursework.

Bolman, the Western Dakota Tech president, said the school will maintain its law enforcement program, which is one track a student can choose as they work toward a two-year criminal justice degree.

"The reciprocity agreement is not necessary for WDTC to offer the Law Enforcement program," Bolman wrote. "It is a benefit to employers as it streamlines their onboarding process for new officers. It is the desire of WDTC for the reciprocity agreement to continue as it helps in the effort to meet the workforce shortage for law enforcement agencies."

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

## **DeSantis: Eminent domain needed in pipeline projects like Keystone**

**BY: ROBIN OPSAHL, IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH - JANUARY 4, 2024 6:30 AM**

As the debate over carbon capture pipelines continues, Republican presidential candidate Ron DeSantis said Tuesday in Iowa that the use of eminent domain covered projects like the Keystone XL oil pipeline because the production of energy serves a public use.

The Florida governor, speaking at a Council Bluffs town hall on Gray TV, did not comment on the specific carbon dioxide pipeline projects being debated in Iowa. Iowa voters submitted questions for DeSantis, including a question asking if he would "support taking land by eminent domain or a private company for the private gain."

DeSantis answered that he opposed "expansive" eminent domain use, and that he supported private property rights.

"It is a legitimate power that our founders recognized, but it's limited to public purposes," DeSantis said. "So sometimes you need to build the interstate highway system, like they did under (former President Dwight D.) Eisenhower. Sometimes you need to do things like the Keystone XL pipeline for energy that has a public use. But that's different than something for just private gain."

Though the question did not mention carbon dioxide pipelines directly, the role of eminent domain in Iowa projects has been a highly divisive topic across the political spectrum. Two pipeline projects are still pending while a third project failed following difficulties with government procedures.

Final arguments in the Summit Carbon Solutions project are due Jan. 19. The Iowa Utilities Board will decide whether to approve the company's use of eminent domain for land easements along the proposed route. The project has been denied a permit in South Dakota, but the company plans to reapply.

In a 2023 Des Moines Register/Mediacom Iowa Poll, 78% of Iowans opposed companies using eminent

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 16 of 71

domain to build carbon capture pipelines in Iowa. On the 2024 Iowa campaign trail, presidential candidates have largely said they are against the use of eminent domain in carbon capture pipeline projects.

Forum moderator Dave Price, Iowa political director for Gray TV, also asked DeSantis if he believed carbon dioxide pipelines should receive federal tax credits. Though DeSantis did not say directly that pipeline projects should receive federal funding, he called for the U.S. to increase domestic energy production in "reliable energy" including oil, gasoline and biofuels. He criticized President Joe Biden's energy policies and policies like the Inflation Reduction Act that encourage transitioning to renewable energy sources, saying these measures will lead to "rolling blackouts throughout this country" and a reliance on foreign countries.

"I don't ever want us to go hat in hand to Venezuela, or to Saudi Arabia, for energy," DeSantis said. "Energy, strength and dominance. Against what Biden's trying to do. It's good for consumers — you'll pay less in gas, you'll pay less in energy costs. But it's good for our national security because we control our own destiny."

With less than two weeks until the 2024 Iowa caucuses, DeSantis and other Republican candidates are campaigning across the first-in-the-nation state in hopes of pulling off an upset against former President Donald Trump, the frontrunner for the GOP presidential nomination in Iowa and nationwide. DeSantis asked Iowa Republicans for their support on caucus night, Jan. 15, saying that he will be able to accomplish more in office as president, and that he would be more likely to win than Trump in the 2024 general election.

He also said Trump and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley see his campaign as a challenge.

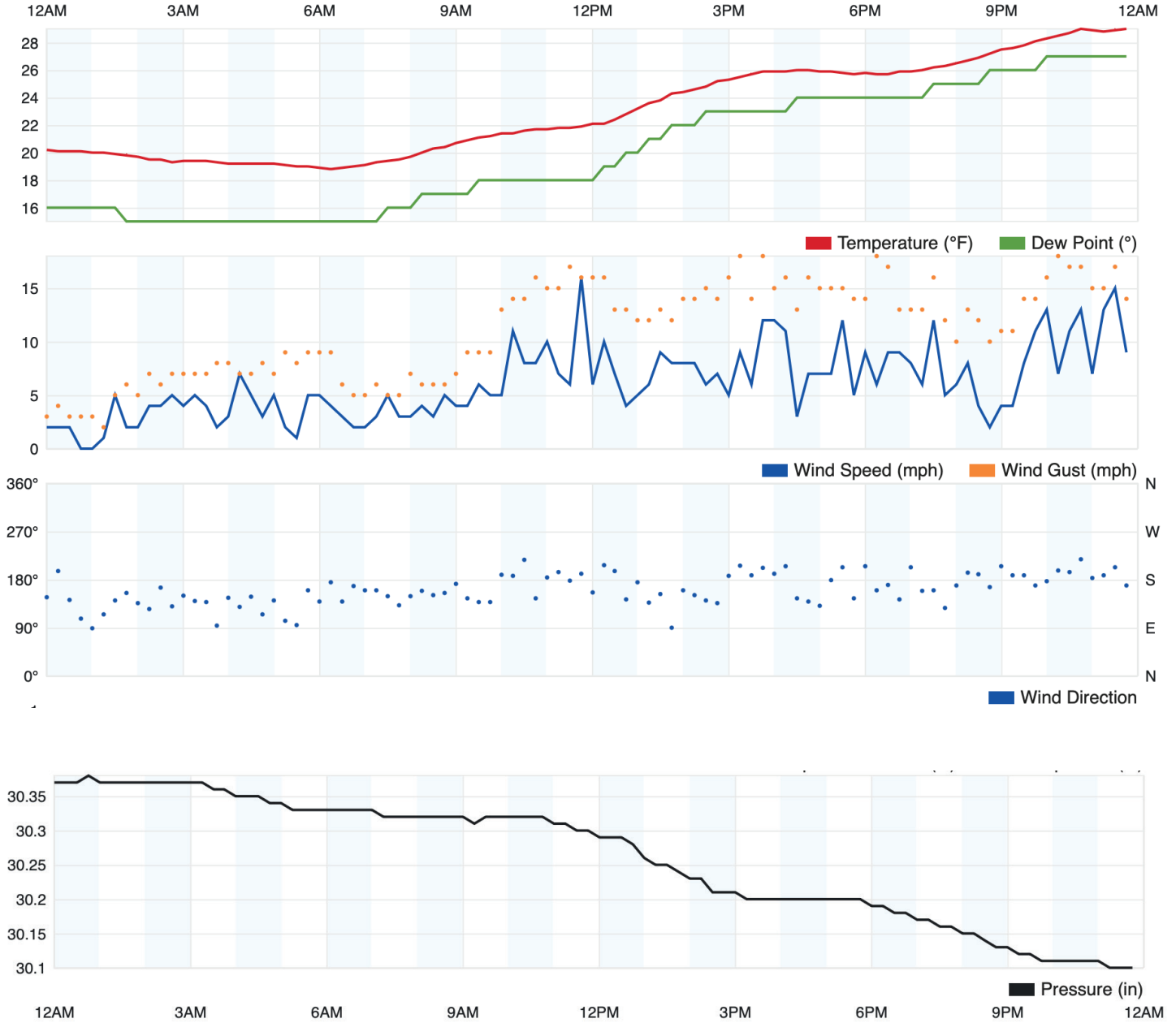
"Who's the number one guy that all these people have been going after, spending up \$40 million?" DeSantis said. "You know, Trump and Haley have spent all this money attacking me because they see me as the threat. And you know, a lot of people in Washington see me as the threat. A lot of the New York and D.C. corporate media outlets have been gunning for me from day one, trying to do anything they can to do. Because I think they know if nominated, I will win."

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 17 of 71

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs






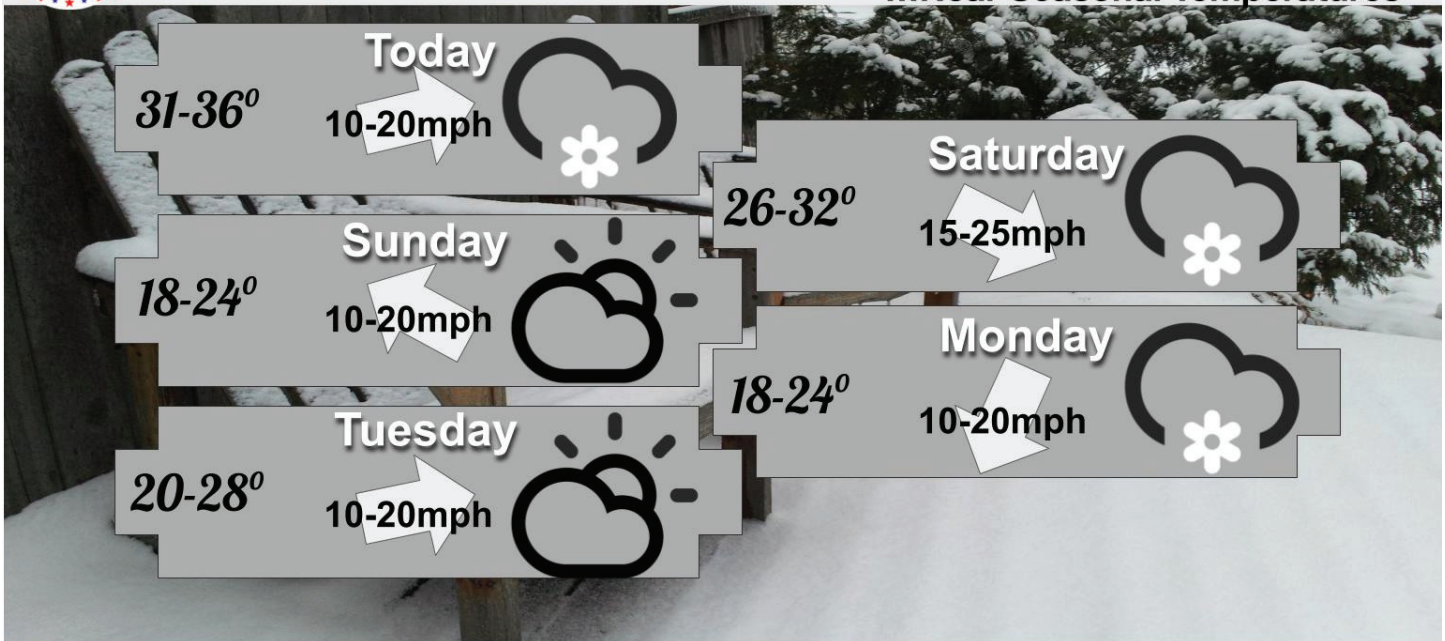
# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 18 of 71

Fri Jan 5	Sat Jan 6	Sun Jan 7	Mon Jan 8	Tue Jan 9	Wed Jan 10	Thu Jan 11
34°F 24°F	27°F 10°F	21°F 14°F	22°F 5°F	20°F 14°F	22°F 1°F	5°F -7°F
S 11 MPH	NNW 14 MPH	ENE 7 MPH	NE 9 MPH	WSW 6 MPH	SSW 15 MPH	NNW 15 MPH
10%	30%		20%		20%	20%

 **Off And On Light Snow Chances** January 5, 2024  
3:07 AM

...Near Seasonal Temperatures



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The next few days feature off and on chances for light snow and near seasonal temperatures.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 19 of 71

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 29 °F at 10:45 PM

Low Temp: 19 °F at 6:03 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 11:18 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 54 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 63 in 2012

Record Low: -32 in 1924

Average High: 24

Average Low: 3

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.10

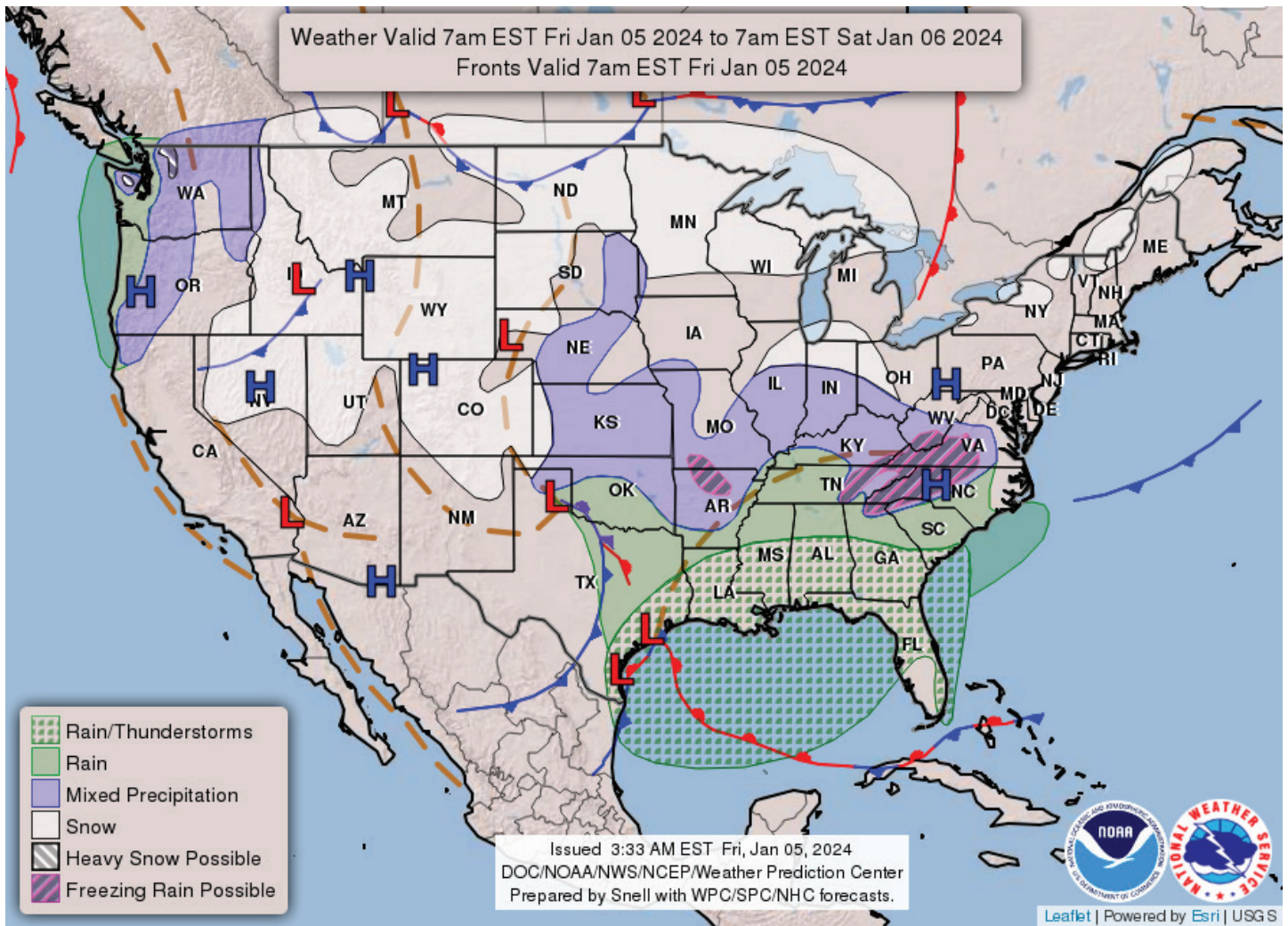
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.10

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:05:06 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:07 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 20 of 71

## Today in Weather History

January 5, 1994: A low-pressure system traveled from the Dakotas, across southern Minnesota, and to the Great Lakes Region, from the late morning of the 5th, through the early evening of the 7th. By the early evening hours on the 7th, up to three and one-half feet of snow had fallen along the higher terrain of Lake Superior. The storm also produced heavy snow across parts of central Minnesota. Six inches or more occurred across much of central Minnesota. In west-central Minnesota, Wheaton and Artichoke Lake received 5 inches, with 6 inches at Browns Valley.

January 5, 2012: Numerous record high temperatures were broken across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota throughout the week. Some of the records were broken by as much as 12 to 17 degrees and held 80 to 90 years. Aberdeen surpassed their record high for January by 3 degrees with 63 degrees on Thursday, January 5th. Kennebec tied their all-time record high for January with 70 degrees on January 5th.

1835 - It was a record cold morning in the eastern U.S. The mercury at the Yale Campus in New Haven CT plunged to 23 degrees below zero, and reached 40 below in the Berkshire Hills of Connecticut. (David Ludlum)

1880: Snow began falling in Seattle, Washington, and would continue for much of the week. When it was over, more than 5 feet of snow was recorded.

1884: One of only two days in history during which the temperature at Louisville, Kentucky, never rose above zero. The low was 20 degrees below, with a high of 1 below zero.

1888: Snowfall amounts of 3.5 to 5 inches fell over Sacramento, California. The heaviest snow in recent history was two inches on February 4-5th in 1976.

1892: From the History of Fayetteville, Georgia, "Another traumatic event occurred in Fayetteville on the evening of January 5, 1892, about six o'clock in the evening. A terrible tornado or cyclone struck the town of Fayetteville just as many had sat down for dinner. The storm killed three people and injured many more as its raging force destroyed numerous residences, outbuildings, and structures, including the academy, as well as killing abundant livestock. The event was written about as far away as Savannah."

1904 - Bitterly cold air gripped the northeastern U.S. Morning lows of -42 degrees at Smethport PA and -34 at River Vale NJ established state records. (The Weather Channel)

1913 - The temperature at the east portal to Strawberry Tunnel reached 50 degrees below zero to tie the record established at Woodruff on February 6, 1899. (David Ludlum)

1962: Two tornadoes, about 100 yards apart and each making paths about 100 yards wide, followed parallel paths from southeast to northwest through the edge of the Crestview, Florida's residential area. These tornadoes killed one and injured 30 others.

1982 - A three day rainstorm in the San Francisco area finally came to an end. Marin County and Cruz County were drenched with up to 25 inches of rain, and the Sierra Nevada Range was buried under four to eight feet of snow. The storm claimed at least 36 lives, and caused more than 300 million dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 - A massive winter storm spread heavy snow from the southwestern U.S. into the Rockies. In Utah, the Alta ski resort reported a storm total of 42 inches of snow. Winds gusted to 64 mph at Albuquerque NM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms helped produce heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Snow fell at the rate of four to five inches per hour, and snowfall totals ranged up to 69 inches at Highmarket NY. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A strong Pacific cold front produced heavy snow and high winds in Nevada. Winds gusted to 80 mph north of Reno, while up to two feet of snow blanketed the Lake Tahoe ski area. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the Central Gulf Coast Region. New Orleans, LA, was drenched with 4.05 inches of rain in 24 hours. An overnight storm blanketed the mountains of northern Utah with up to eleven inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### YES, BUT DOES IT WORK?

A well-recognized inventor called his closest friends together to unveil the new electric motor he had just finished. He stood in front of the group with his new product displayed on an elegant black velvet tablecloth, highlighted by a spotlight.

"Gentlemen," he said in a voice that exposed his pride, "this is my most recent invention - a newly designed electric motor. What do you think of it?"

"Put it to work," said one of the engineers, "I can't tell a thing about it until I see it in action."

If we say that we are Christ's disciples, others will only recognize us as His disciples when they see us "in action." In writing to the Ephesians, Paul said that we are to be "careful how you live...(by making)... the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Do not act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what God wants you to do." And then, "just do it!"

When Paul referred to "these evil days," he was emphasizing the urgency of presenting the Gospel message to others. Then, as now, "evil" has penetrated society in such a compelling manner that it is difficult to see good or goodness in the way many Christians behave. What was considered "inappropriate" behavior for Christians" has now become "appropriate" by many who profess to be Christians. Has God's Word changed, or what people believe about His Word?

As the engineer said, "Put (your faith) "to work."

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to be aware of our witness in this world and to "understand" how we ought to live as Your disciples. May our lives represent You well! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Ephesians 5:15-20



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 22 of 71

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# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 23 of 71



## 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: 17 Hrs 26 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.03.24

10 17 31 47 51 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,150,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 41 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.04.24

10 15 30 45 46 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 56 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.03.24

9 10 21 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 56 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.03.24

8 9 17 31 56 23

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 25 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.03.24

30 31 38 48 68 8

Power Play: 10x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$35,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 25 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 24 of 71

News from the  Associated Press

## Thursday's Scores The Associated Press

### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Andes Central-Dakota Christian 68, Burke 62  
Arlington 65, DeSmet 23  
Bennett County 41, Hot Springs 29  
Brandon Valley 55, Watertown 39  
Canton 68, Dell Rapids 28  
Chadron, Neb. 62, Lakota Tech 47  
Colman-Egan 61, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 31  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 52, Estelline-Hendricks 38  
Deuel 42, Webster 34  
Edgemont 55, Crawford, Neb. 50  
Ethan 52, Avon 38  
Faulkton 54, Herreid/Selby Area 50, OT  
Florence-Henry 54, Wilmot 27  
Freeman 59, Bridgewater-Emery 48  
Groton Area 56, Clark-Willow Lake 23  
Hamlin 77, Tiospa Zina 23  
Hanson 63, Viborg-Hurley 61  
Harding County 80, McIntosh 12  
Hay Springs, Neb. 61, Oelrichs 27  
Howard 55, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 51  
Iroquois-Lake Preston 57, Deubrook 45  
James Valley Christian 51, Wolsey-Wessington 44  
Kimball/White Lake 56, Colome 21  
Lennox 63, Rock Valley, Iowa 30  
Lyman 49, Gregory 27  
McLaughlin 46, Stanley County 28  
Mobridge-Pollock 43, Miller 30  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 65, Tri-Valley 50  
Platte-Geddes 41, Corsica/Stickney 39  
Redfield 42, Britton-Hecla 36  
Sioux Falls Washington 58, Aberdeen Central 39  
Spearfish 43, Hill City 32  
Tea Area 57, West Central 47  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 47, Scotland 15  
Warner 53, Ipswich 18  
White River 69, Kadoka Area 54  
Winner 62, Todd County 28

### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Aberdeen Central 72, Sioux Falls Washington 66  
Andes Central-Dakota Christian 56, Burke 52  
Baltic 58, Beresford 45  
Britton-Hecla 62, Redfield 52

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 25 of 71

Chester 65, Parker 59, 2OT  
Corsica/Stickney 57, Platte-Geddes 47  
Crawford, Neb. 46, Edgemont 35  
Dell Rapids 65, Canton 61  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 64, Estelline-Hendricks 51  
Deubrook 74, Iroquois-Lake Preston 41  
Deuel 60, Webster 58  
Ethan 63, Avon 56  
Faith 82, Timber Lake 66  
Flandreau 52, McCook Central-Montrose 27  
Florence-Henry 76, Wilmot 36  
Freeman 54, Bridgewater-Emery 48  
Gregory 72, Lyman 44  
Hamlin 81, Tiospa Zina 41  
Harding County 77, McIntosh 33  
Highmore-Harrold 82, Sully Buttes 62  
Hill City 54, Spearfish 51  
Hot Springs 54, Pine Ridge 46  
Howard 68, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 40  
Ipswich 55, Warner 45  
Jones County 55, Philip 50, 2OT  
Lennox 63, Rock Valley, Iowa 52  
Leola-Frederick High School 65, Aberdeen Roncalli 51  
McLaughlin 66, Stanley County 54  
Mitchell Christian 70, Menno 61  
Mobridge-Pollock 62, Miller 58, OT  
Pierre T F Riggs High School 52, Sioux Falls Lincoln High School 46  
Sioux Valley 66, Garretson 25  
Sundance, Wyo. 58, Newell 19  
Tri-Valley 67, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 34  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 64, Scotland 42  
Viborg-Hurley 76, Hanson 54  
Watertown 64, Brandon Valley 55  
Waubay/Summit 62, Langford 30

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

## **B-1 bomber crashes at South Dakota Air Force base, crew ejects safely**

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A B-1 Lancer bomber from Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota crashed Thursday, with all four of its crew members ejecting, the Air Force said.

The B-1 crashed "at approximately 5:50 p.m. today while attempting to land on the installation. At the time of the accident, it was on a training mission. There were four aircrew on board. All four ejected safely," the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth said in a statement.

At the time of the crash visibility was poor with freezing temperatures and low clouds, according to automated weather reporting equipment recording airfield conditions.

The B-1 is a conventional supersonic bomber that first came into service in the 1980s. It has been used to support the U.S. bomber presence in the Asia-Pacific region and to conduct close air support missions in U.S. operations in Afghanistan. It does not carry nuclear weapons.

While 100 were originally built, fewer than 60 remain in service at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas and Ellsworth Air Force Base.

## **Pilot accused of threatening to shoot airline captain midflight calls it a misunderstanding**

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Attorneys clashed Thursday in a Utah courtroom over opposing characterizations of a fight between two commercial airline pilots in which the co-pilot allegedly threatened to shoot the captain for suggesting they divert the flight for a passenger's medical emergency.

Former Delta Air Lines pilot Jonathan J. Dunn, 42, made his first federal court appearance Thursday in Salt Lake City after he was indicted by a grand jury on Oct. 18, 2023, and charged with interfering with a flight crew. His lawyer, John W. Huber, who was once Utah's top federal prosecutor, tried to characterize the altercation as "a misunderstanding," while prosecutors described it as a "grave offense."

The heated argument had erupted in the cockpit of a 2022 flight from Atlanta to Salt Lake City, on which Dunn was the first officer, or co-pilot.

The captain, who is not named in court documents, had proposed diverting their commercial flight to Grand Junction, Colorado, if the passenger's condition worsened, the U.S. Attorney's Office alleges. Dunn objected and threatened multiple times to shoot the captain, whom he accused of "going crazy," the documents state.

If convicted, Dunn could face up to 20 years in prison. Judge Jared C. Bennett set his trial date for March 12.

Dunn acknowledged threatening the captain but said his remarks were intended as a joke, according to new court documents detailing the altercation. The captain did not perceive the threats as a joke and told authorities that he was concerned Dunn would use his firearm to "relieve" him of command of the aircraft.

Huber, Dunn's attorney, argued Thursday that he should not be considered dangerous, reminding the judge that his client has no criminal history.

The new court documents reveal that Dunn seemed to recognize the gravity of his actions, telling Delta officials, "This could have been much worse. In hindsight if I had been threatened, I would not be able to operate."

Dunn, of Rapid City, South Dakota, had been authorized by the Transportation Security Administration to carry a firearm on board. The TSA has since revoked that authority, and Delta says Dunn no longer works for the airline.

The program authorizing some pilots to carry guns on domestic flights emerged as a security measure after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, said Ross Aimer, an aviation expert and the CEO of Aero Consulting Experts. After the government realized it would be too expensive to have an air marshal on every flight, it allowed pilots such as Dunn to volunteer for a training program to become federal flight deck officers.

Participating pilots must be vetted and attend a training course at a federal law enforcement center in New Mexico before they're authorized to carry a gun on board, according to the TSA. And all pilots undergo regular medical exams in which they're required to disclose whether they have depression or anxiety, as well as their use of medications, drugs and alcohol.

"There are extensive protocols attached to how you carry this weapon," Aimer said of the officers' training. "You're not supposed to take it out of the cockpit, or even out of the holster, unless it's absolutely necessary."

All commercial pilots receive training on how to calmly settle disagreements and are required to immediately report if a colleague is showing signs of any concerning behavior, he said.

The altercation occurred on the last leg of a three-day cross-country rotation that Dunn and the captain completed together. The captain reported having problems with Dunn questioning his decisions throughout the entire rotation and attempting to be, what he called a "right-seat captain."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 27 of 71

Dunn is an Air Force Reserve lieutenant colonel who was demoted from his previous position for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine. The Air Force suspended his access to sensitive information and to the air operations center because of the midflight altercation, a spokesperson said.

His indictment came a few days before an off-duty Alaska Airlines pilot riding in a cockpit jump seat tried, midflight, to shut off the engine of a Horizon Air jet. Joseph David Emerson, who told police he was suffering from depression and had taken psychedelic mushrooms, was subdued by the captain and copilot and arrested after the plane diverted to Portland, Oregon. He has pleaded not guilty to charges of attempted murder in an Oregon state court.

The judge outlined conditions that would allow Dunn to return home before the trial — prompting him to turn and smile at his wife and four young children. His two daughters shared nervous glances throughout the hearing while his youngest son squirmed on his mom's lap.

Bennett instructed Dunn to remain at his current residence — he has been living at his in-laws' house in South Dakota — and to surrender his passport as well as any firearms. He cannot access guns before the trial or contact any witnesses in the case.

## Jobs report for December will likely conclude another solid year of US hiring in 2023

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bringing resurgent inflation down was never expected to be so relatively pain-free. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned of hard times ahead after the Fed began jacking up interest rates in the spring of 2022 to attack high inflation. Economists predicted that the much higher borrowing costs that resulted would cause a recession, with layoffs and rising unemployment, in 2023.

Yet the recession never arrived, and none appears to be on the horizon. The nation's labor market, though cooler than in the sizzling-hot years of 2022 and 2023, is still cranking out enough jobs to keep the unemployment rate near historic lows.

The trend toward slower, but still healthy, hiring likely continued in December. The Labor Department is expected to report Friday that employers added a still-solid 160,000 jobs last month, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet. That would mean that the economy had added 2.7 million jobs in 2023 — an average of 226,000 a month.

Economists have predicted that the unemployment rate ticked up from 3.7% to 3.8%. But even that modest rise would mean that the jobless rate remained below 4% for the 23rd straight month — the longest such streak since the 1960s.

The resilience of the job market has been matched by the durability of the overall economy. Far from collapsing into a recession, the U.S. gross domestic product — the total output of goods and services — grew at a vigorous 4.9% annual pace from July through September. Strong consumer spending and business investment drove much of the expansion.

Despite the economy's steady growth, low unemployment, healthy hiring and cooling inflation, polls show many Americans are dissatisfied with the economy. That disconnect, which will likely be an issue in the 2024 elections, has puzzled economists and political analysts.

A key factor, though, is the public's exasperation with higher prices. Though inflation has been falling more or less steadily for a year and a half, prices are still 17% higher than they were before the inflation surge began in the spring of 2021.

At the same time, though, average hourly pay has outpaced inflation over the past year, leaving Americans with more money to spend. Indeed, as they did for much of 2023, consumers, a huge engine for U.S. economic growth, hit the stores in November, shopped online, went out to restaurants or traveled.

Since March 2022, the Fed has raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times, lifting it to a 22-year high of about 5.4%. Those higher rates have made loans costlier for companies and households, but they are on their way toward achieving their goal: Conquering inflation.

Consumer prices were up 3.1% in November from a year earlier, down drastically from a four-decade



high 9.1% in June 2022. The Fed is so satisfied with the progress so far that it hasn't raised rates since July and has signaled that it expects to make three rate cuts this year.

Beyond a hard hit to the housing market, higher rates haven't taken much of an economic toll.

"A lot of the resilience was in parts of the economy that aren't particularly sensitive to interest rates," like healthcare and government, said Nick Bunker, economic research director for North America at the Indeed Hiring Lab.

The job market has cooled as inflation has subsided, though nowhere near enough to signal that a recession is on the way. Job growth in 2023 amounted to a monthly average of 232,000 through November, a solid figure but down from a record 606,000 a month in 2021 and 399,000 in 2022. And much of the hiring in recent months has been confined to only a few industries. Just three sectors of the economy — healthcare, governments and hotels and restaurants — accounted for 91% of the 199,000 added jobs in November.

Normally, slowing job growth might be a cause for concern. But under the current circumstances, with inflation still above the Fed's 2% annual target, a more moderate pace of hiring is seen as just what the economy needs. Lower demand for workers tends to ease the pressure on employers to raise pay to keep or attract workers — and to then pass on their higher labor costs to their customers by raising prices.

And the labor market appears to be decelerating in a relatively painless way: Employers are posting fewer job openings but not laying off many workers. The number of Americans who apply each week for unemployment benefits — a proxy for job cuts — has remained unusually and consistently low.

## **Iran mourns those slain in Islamic State-claimed suicide blasts as death toll rises to 89**

By AMIR VAHDAT, VAHID SALEMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

KERMAN, Iran (AP) — Iranian officials tried Friday to link Israel and the U.S. to an Islamic State group-claimed suicide bombing while speaking to a mass funeral for some of the 89 people killed in the attack, seeking to intertwine the assault with wider Middle East tensions from the Israel-Hamas war.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and the top commander of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard sought to make the link without offering evidence for their claims. The gathered crowd in front of flag-draped caskets shouted in response: "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

"The enemy always sees the power of the Islamic Republic. The whole world is recognizing this power and this ability," Raisi said, without directly naming any country. "Be sure, the initiative is in the hands of our powerful forces. The place and time will be determined by our forces."

Iranian state television also sought to link America to the attack. At one point, it re-broadcast comments from 2016 from then-presidential candidate Donald Trump, who wrongly accused then-President Barack Obama of being the "founder" of the extremist group.

Critics have blamed Obama's decision to pull troops from Iraq in 2011 for allowing the group, once an affiliate of al-Qaida, to thrive and ultimately hold vast swaths of Iraq and Syria in its self-declared caliphate by 2014. U.S. troops under both Obama and Trump then battled alongside allied forces to retake that territory.

Gen. Hossein Salami, the commander of the Guard, similarly sought to make the connection.

"They can only act as agents and mercenaries of American politics and Zionism," Salami said. "But we give them this warning, ... wherever you are, we will find you. You cannot avoid divine punishment by disappearing. If you live for 1,000 years, we will find you."

In Wednesday's attack, one suicide bomber killed himself, then another attacked 20 minutes later as people and emergency workers tried to help the wounded in Kerman, about 820 kilometers (510 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran. The attack targeted a commemoration for Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, killed in 2020 by a U.S. drone strike as he led its expeditionary Quds Force.

Soleimani had been part of the Iranian response to the Islamic State group in Syria, while focusing on

keeping embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad in power. He also had extensive ties to proxy groups around the wider Mideast, including Hamas. But the U.S., which killed Soleimani as part of wider tensions over its collapsed nuclear deal with world powers, saw Soleimani as the mastermind behind deadly roadside bombings targeting American soldiers in Iraq.

The two attacks on Wednesday killed at least 89 people and wounded about 280 others, authorities said Friday in an update of the death toll. The attacks have sparked condemnation from around the world, even amid Iran's wider tensions with the West over its nuclear program.

Pope Francis offered a condolence telegram to express his deep sadness over the "loss of life caused by the recent explosions in Kerman," the Vatican said on Friday.

Francis "invokes upon all the people of Iran the Almighty's blessings of wisdom and peace," the Vatican said.

The Islamic State group claimed the attack Thursday in a statement that named the two bombers and described it as part of a new campaign linked to Israel's war in the Gaza Strip. The statement bore some differences to previous claims made by the Islamic State group in other attacks it has claimed in Iran, though experts said it appeared to be legitimate and came from online channels associated with the extremists. Much of the group's leadership has been killed and replaced in the years since 2014.

It's unclear why the two Iranian leaders chose to focus on the U.S. and Israel, rather than on the Islamic State group, during their remarks Friday. Iran has retaliated in the past over IS-claimed attacks, including launching ballistic missiles into Syria.

However, the Islamic State group has grown stronger in recent years in neighboring Afghanistan, just some 360 kilometers (225 miles) east of Kerman, since the Western-backed government in Kabul fell to the Taliban in 2021.

Iran and the Taliban have maintained diplomatic ties since the takeover, though there have been border skirmishes and tensions over water supplies between the two nations. Iranian officials say at least 12 of the dead in Wednesday's bombings were Afghans.

## Olympic runner Oscar Pistorius freed on parole after serving nearly 9 years for girlfriend's murder

By GERALD IMRAY, NQOBILE NTSANGASE and MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — Olympic runner Oscar Pistorius was released from prison on parole early Friday morning and was believed to be at his uncle's mansion after authorities secretly moved the world-famous double-amputee athlete who killed his girlfriend at an undisclosed time to avoid the glare of news crews waiting outside the jail.

South Africa's Department of Corrections announced in a two-sentence statement at around 8:30 a.m. that Pistorius had been released and was "now at home." It gave no more details other than to confirm Pistorius' new status as "a parolee."

Pistorius, 37, served nearly nine years of his murder sentence of 13 years and five months for the fatal shooting of model and law graduate Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day 2013. He became eligible for early release from prison having served at least half his sentence and was approved for parole in November.

Department of Corrections spokesperson Singabakho Nxumalo told The Associated Press that Pistorius was processed according to procedure: taken from the Atteridgeville Correctional Center prison in the South African capital, Pretoria, to a parole office before being released to his family. Nxumalo declined to say what time Pistorius was released and where he was.

"I can only tell you he was released this morning," Nxumalo said.

Pistorius was expected to initially live at his uncle's home in an upscale Pretoria suburb after his release. A police van was outside that house and a police officer was seen coming out later Friday. The officer declined to comment to reporters. Three black private security vehicles were also parked in front of the mansion.

The Department of Corrections said ahead of Pistorius' release that it would not publicize his parole time

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 30 of 71

and he was not going to be “paraded” so as to keep him away from the media that has trailed him since he shot Steenkamp multiple times through a toilet door at his Pretoria villa more than a decade ago.

Pistorius will live under strict parole conditions until the remainder of his murder sentence expires in December 2029.

Steenkamp’s mother, June Steenkamp, said in a statement that she had accepted Pistorius’ parole as part of South African law.

“Has there been justice for Reeva? Has Oscar served enough time? There can never be justice if your loved one is never coming back, and no amount of time served will bring Reeva back,” June Steenkamp said. “We who remain behind are the ones serving a life sentence.”

“With the release of Oscar Pistorius on parole, my only desire is that I will be allowed to live my last years in peace with my focus remaining on the Reeva Rebecca Steenkamp Foundation, to continue Reeva’s legacy.”

The Department of Corrections has emphasized that the champion Paralympic sprinter’s release — like every other offender on parole — does not mean that he has served his time.

Some of Pistorius’ parole conditions include restrictions on when he’s allowed to leave his home, a ban on consuming alcohol, and orders that he must attend programs on anger management and on violence against women. He must also perform community service.

Pistorius will also have to regularly meet with parole officials and will be subjected to unannounced visits by authorities. He is not allowed to leave the Waterkloof district without permission and is banned from speaking to the media until the end of his sentence. He could be sent back to jail if he is in breach of any of his parole conditions.

South Africa does not use tags or bracelets on paroled offenders so Pistorius will not wear any monitoring device, Department of Corrections officials said. But he will be constantly monitored by a department official and will have to inform the official of any major changes in his life, such as if he wants to get a job or move to another house.

Pistorius has maintained that he shot 29-year-old Steenkamp by mistake. He testified that he believed Steenkamp was a dangerous intruder hiding in his bathroom and shot four times through the door with his licensed 9 mm pistol in self-defense.

Prosecutors said he killed his girlfriend intentionally during a late-night argument.

Steenkamp’s family did not oppose his parole application in November, although June Steenkamp said in a victim statement submitted to the parole board then that she didn’t believe Pistorius had been fully rehabilitated and was still lying about the killing.

Before the killing, Pistorius was seen as an inspiring role model after having had both of his legs amputated below the knee as a baby because of a congenital condition. He became a champion sprinter on his carbon-fiber running blades and made history by competing at the 2012 London Olympics.

His murder trial destroyed his image. He was accused of being prone to angry outbursts and acting recklessly with guns, while witnesses testified about various altercations he had with others, including an argument in which he allegedly threatened to break a man’s legs.

Pistorius was first convicted of culpable homicide — a charge comparable to manslaughter — and sentenced to five years in prison for killing Steenkamp. After appeals by prosecutors, he was ultimately found guilty of murder and had his sentence increased, although that judgment by the Supreme Court of Appeal still didn’t definitively rule that he knew it was Steenkamp behind the bathroom door.

Pistorius was first sent to prison in 2014, released on house arrest in 2015 during an appeal, and then sent back to prison in 2016. He was initially incarcerated at the maximum security Kgosi Mampuru II Prison in Pretoria but was moved to Atteridgeville early in his sentence because it’s better suited to holding disabled prisoners.

Reaction to Pistorius’ parole has been muted in South Africa, a stark contrast to the first days and months after Steenkamp’s killing, which sparked angry protests outside of Pistorius’ court hearings calling for him to receive a long prison sentence. There is no death penalty in South Africa.

"He has ticked all the necessary boxes," said Themba Masango, secretary general of Not In My Name International, a group that campaigns against violence against women. "And we can only wish and hope Oscar Pistorius will come out a better human being."

"We tend to forget that there is a possibility where somebody can be rehabilitated."

## Families in Gaza search desperately for food and water, wait in long lines for aid

By MOHAMMED JAHJOUH and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

MUWASI, Gaza Strip (AP) — Stranded in a corner of southern Gaza, members of the Abu Jarad family are clinging to a strict survival routine.

They fled their comfortable three-bedroom home in northern Gaza after the Israel-Hamas war broke out nearly three months ago. The 10-person family now squeezes into a 16-square meter (172-square foot) tent on a garbage-strewn sandy plot, part of a sprawling encampment of displaced Palestinians.

Every family member is assigned daily tasks, from collecting twigs to build a fire for cooking, to scouring the city's markets for vegetables. But their best efforts can't mask their desperation.

At night "dogs are hovering over the tents," said Awatif Abu Jarad, an older member of the family. "We are living like dogs!"

Palestinians seeking refuge in southern Gaza say every day has become a struggle to find food, water, medicine and working bathrooms. All the while, they live in fear of Israeli airstrikes and the growing threat of illnesses.

Israel's bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza, now in its 13th week, have pushed almost all Palestinians toward the southern city of Rafah along the Egyptian border. The area had a prewar population of around 280,000, a figure that has bulged to over 1 million in recent days, according to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees.

Rafah's apartment blocks are crammed with people, often extended families who have opened their doors to displaced relatives. West of the city, thousands of nylon tents have sprung up. Thousands more people are sleeping in the open, despite the cool and often rainy winter weather.

Most of northern Gaza is now under the control of the Israeli army, which early in the war urged Palestinians to evacuate to the south. As the war progressed, more evacuation orders were issued for areas in the south, forcing Palestinian civilians to crowd into ever smaller spaces, including Rafah and a nearby sliver of land called Muwasi. Even these purportedly safe spaces are often hit by airstrikes and shelling.

The war broke out on Oct. 7 after Hamas militants stormed into southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people and abducting 240 others. The fighting has killed over 22,400 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

According to Nouman, Awatif's brother, the conflict drove the family the entire length of Gaza. They fled their home in the northern border town of Beit Hanoun on the first day of the war and stayed with a relative in the nearby town of Beit Lahia.

Six days later, the intensity of Israeli strikes in the border area sent them south to Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza City. As people started to evacuate the hospital two days later, they traveled to the Nuseirat urban refugee camp in central Gaza, making the 10-kilometer (6-mile) journey on foot.

They stayed in a cramped U.N. school building in Nuseirat for over two months, but left on Dec. 23 as the Israeli army turned its focus toward Hamas targets in central Gaza refugee camps.

They escaped to Muwasi on Dec. 23, believing it was the safest option. On the first night, they slept out in the open. Then they bought nylon and wood in a Rafah market to build a tent.

Nouman, an accountant, sleeps on the nylon-covered floor with his wife, sister, six daughters and one grandchild. They sleep on their sides to conserve space.

He said the tent cost 1,000 shekels, about \$276. "It is completely crazy," he said. In Rafah's demand-driven war economy, larger pre-built family tents now range from \$800 to \$1,400.

The family's hardship begins at 5 a.m. Nouman said his first job is to start a small fire to cook breakfast,



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 32 of 71

while his wife and daughters knead dough for flatbread and then wash their utensils and metal cooking griddle.

After eating, their attention turns to fetching water and food, tasks that take up most of the daylight hours.

Nouman said he and several of his younger relatives collect jugs of water from one of the public pipes nearby, water that is exclusively used for washing and not suitable for drinking. Next, they head to one of the dozens of drinking water tankers dotted across the city, where they wait in line for hours.

A gallon of drinking water costs one shekel, or 28 cents. Some, so desperate for cash, wait in line just to sell their space.

After the water is fetched, family members move between several open markets to hunt for vegetables, flour and canned food for that evening's meal. Meanwhile, Nouman busies himself with scouring the ground for twigs and bits of wood to make a fire.

Food prices have soared. Gaza is facing acute food and medicine shortages and is dependent largely on aid and supplies that trickle in through two crossings, one Egyptian and one Israeli, and what has been grown in the recent harvest. More than half a million people in Gaza — roughly a quarter of the population — are starving, the United Nations said in late December.

Dalia Abu Samhadana, a young mother sheltering with her uncle's family in a crowded house of 20 in Rafah, says the only food staples at her local market are tomatoes, onions, eggplants, oranges and flour. All are virtually unaffordable.

A 25-kilogram (55-pound) bag of flour before Oct. 7 cost around \$10. Since then it has fluctuated between \$40 and \$100.

"My money has almost run out," said Abu Samhadana, unsure of how she will be able to feed her daughter.

Displaced Palestinians in Rafah are entitled to free aid if they register with the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, which hands out flour, blankets, and medical supplies at 14 spots across southern Gaza. They often spend hours in line waiting for the aid to be distributed.

Abu Samhadana, who is originally from the nearby southern town of Khan Younis, said she has tried to register for free aid several times but has been turned away due to the lack of available supplies.

The U.N. agency is simply overwhelmed and is already providing support to 1.8 million people in Gaza, according to Juliette Touma, its communications director. She said she did not know if the agency had stopped registering new aid seekers.

With few options left, some hungry Palestinians in Rafah have resorted to grabbing packages from aid trucks as they pass by. The U.N. refugee agency confirmed that some supplies of aid had been snatched from moving trucks but did not provide any details.

Hamas police escorting aid trucks from border crossings to U.N. warehouses have been seen beating people, mostly teenagers, as they try to grab what they can. In some cases, they have fired shots into the air. In one incident, a 13-year-old boy was killed when Hamas police opened fire.

Meanwhile, health officials warn of the growing spread of diseases, especially among children.

The World Health Organization has reported tens of thousands of cases of upper respiratory infections, diarrhea, lice, scabies, chickenpox, skin rashes and meningitis in U.N. shelters.

The rapid spread of disease is mainly due to overcrowding and poor hygiene caused by a lack of toilets and water for washing.

The Abu Jarad family dug its own makeshift toilet attached to the tent to avoid communal bathrooms. Still, the family is vulnerable to disease.

"My granddaughter is 10 months old, and since the day we came to this place, she has been suffering from weight loss and diarrhea," said Majeda, Nouman's wife.

Going to the pharmacy offers little help. "We can't find any (suitable) medicines available," she said.

## Survivors are found in homes smashed by Japan quake that killed 94 people. Dozens are still missing

By HIRO KOMAE, AYAKA MCGILL and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

WAJIMA, Japan (AP) — A woman was pulled carefully from the rubble 72 hours after a series of powerful quakes started rattling Japan's western coast. Despite rescue efforts, the death toll Friday grew to at least 94 people, and the number of missing was lowered to 222 after it shot up the previous day.

An older man was found alive Wednesday in a collapsed home in Suzu, one of the hardest-hit cities in Ishikawa Prefecture. His daughter called out, "Dad, dad," as a flock of firefighters got him out on a stretcher, praising him for holding on for so long after Monday's 7.6 magnitude earthquake.

Others were forced to wait while rescuers searched for loved ones.

Ishikawa officials said 55 of those who died were in the city of Wajima and 23 were in Suzu, while the others were reported in five neighboring towns. More than 460 people have been injured, at least 24 seriously.

The Earthquake Research Institute at the University of Tokyo found that the sandy coastline in western Japan shifted by up to 250 meters (820 feet) seaward in some places.

The earthquakes set off a large fire in the town of Wajima, as well as tsunamis and landslides in the region. With some routes cut off by the destruction, worries grew about communities in which water, food, blankets and medicine had yet to arrive.

The United States announced \$100,000 in aid Friday, including blankets, water and medical supplies, and promised more help would come. Dodgers major leaguer Shohei Ohtani also announced aid for the Noto area, though he did not disclose the amount.

Thousands of Japanese troops have joined the effort to reach the hardest-hit spots on the Noto Peninsula, the center of the quake, connected by a narrow land strip to the rest of the main island of Honshu.

Experts warned of disease and even death at the evacuation centers that now house about 34,000 people who lost their homes, many of them older.

Masashi Tomari, a 67-year-old oyster farmer who lives in Anamizu city in Ishikawa, said it was tough sleeping on the floor with just one blanket. There was no heating until two stoves finally arrived Thursday — three days after the 7.6 quake struck.

"This is a terrible, cold place," he said.

Tomari felt at a loss thinking about his home, where broken glass and knocked over items littered the floor. It was pitch dark at night because the area was still out of power.

But Tomari and others were already thinking about rebuilding.

Sachiko Kato, who owns a clothing shop in Anamizu, put up a yellow notice as a warning inside her store where the walls have tipped slanted, and a red one for the shed in the back that was completely flattened.

"So many stores were on this street. Now, they're all gone. Maybe we can work hard to rebuild," she said.

As of Friday, running water was not fully restored in Anamizu. Kato had to get water from a nearby river to flush the toilet.

Dozens of aftershocks have rattled Ishikawa and the neighboring region in the past week. Japan, with its crisscrossing fault lines, is an extremely quake-prone nation. Weather forecasts called for rain and snow over the weekend, and experts warned of more aftershocks.

The region affected by the latest quakes is famous for its craftwork, including lacquerware, knives, ceramics, candles and kimono fabric.

Tsutomu Ishikawa, who oversees a resin company called Aras that makes fashionable plates and cups, said no lives were lost around him, but the atelier was seriously damaged.

He apologized for delayed deliveries and expressed determination to pick up and rebuild, while acknowledging the challenges. "We are feeling a deep helplessness that works we created with so much love are gone."

Sachiko Takagi, who owns a kimono shop on a street lined with picturesque stores in Wajima, said she was lucky her 80-year-old store — inherited over generations — was still standing. Others were not so lucky.

"These people do not have the energy to start something from scratch," she said. "I really wonder what will happen to this street."

## Los Angeles County has thousands of 'unclaimed dead.' These investigators retrace their lives

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Arusyak Martirosyan struggles to open the door of a stranger's one-bedroom apartment overflowing with the belongings from a life lived but not claimed in death.

Wedged against the door is a giant box of Gain laundry detergent and plastic tubs piled high. Blouses and T-shirts, suspended by hangers over a living room curtain rod, block out almost all sunlight. Bins and boxes, brimming with more clothes, hide the carpet. Empty takeout containers and Tupperware, with bugs trapped inside, cover the stove.

The 74-year-old woman died in October in the hospital, and weeks later no one had come forward for her remains. Wearing a Tyvek protective suit and trailed by the building's property manager, Martirosyan hunts for a greeting card or letter sent to her that could have a family member's address on the return label — anything that would lead to a relative who could give this woman a proper burial.

Martirosyan acts as a living representative of those Los Angeles County calls "the unclaimed dead." She is one of more than a dozen investigators who work for the Public Administrator, an understaffed and little-known branch of the county's Department of the Treasurer and Tax Collector.

Her job is to unearth who the woman was beneath all her belongings and find out who she loved, who loved her and what she wanted after her death.

Martirosyan and her colleagues spend three years investigating a case before relinquishing the deceased to a communal gravesite, a last resort in the county cemetery. Similar work is done in cities across the U.S. but in Los Angeles, with one of the nation's largest homeless populations, the efforts are particularly difficult.

It is a painstaking process to retrace a life. Investigators, who handle about 200 cases yearly, are given a manila file folder containing a name, birthdate and little else for each death.

"I go through their lives in so many ways," Martirosyan said. "They do become mine."

In the beginning, it's a race against time. The person's body lays frozen in the county morgue as the investigators scramble to find family before being forced to give the go-ahead to cremate the remains.

For weeks, they call nursing homes and houses of worship, scour public records and ancestry websites and comb through homes and apartments.

"We're like stepping into the shoes of the dead person," said Dennis Cotek, one of Martirosyan's supervisors, who acknowledges he often thinks about the lives he has encountered even after going home for the day.

"I always say a little prayer for them," he said.

The deceased may not have any surviving next-of-kin, or their loved ones can't afford to pay for an individual burial. Other times, estranged relatives refuse to be involved or a friend is unable to petition a court to take possession of their remains.

Martirosyan, who has been on the job just over a year, said her work has made her keenly aware of her own mortality and spurred tearful but important conversations with her teenage son.

"This is going to happen, in one way or another, to all of us," she said.

That's also what largely drives her and the rest of the army of public servants on their quest to bring dignity to tens of thousands of people who die alone in the most populous U.S. county. Their efforts culminate with a communal burial and a multilingual, interfaith ceremony, an event that has been held annually since 1896.

The most recent ceremony on Dec. 14 recalled the universal devastation and loneliness of the pandemic. The burial of 1,937 people included for the first time those who died from the coronavirus. Among the

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 35 of 71

dead were immigrants, children and homeless people.

"We don't know enough about the people we are burying today to really do them justice," county supervisor Janice Hahn said.

Several dozen people, some wiping away tears, attended the outdoor ceremony as clergy members prayed over the communal grave in the county cemetery. Each laid a white rose at the gravesite.

"I wished we could have been there for all of them when they were still alive, in a better way, so that they didn't have to die completely disconnected and alone," said Susan Rorke, a local resident who has attended the services for a decade. "I may end up in this graveyard in a ceremony when I die. So I don't miss this event."

Many people at the service were county employees like Martirosyan and Carlos Herrera, a maintenance worker who has volunteered to help dig the graves for more than 30 years.

In early December, Herrera and his team dug a 14-foot-deep (4.27 meters) plot for the 1,937 plastic boxes containing the ashes of each person and, if known, a label with their names. The site was marked by a flat gravestone. It bears no names; only the year of their deaths, which was 2020 for this group.

Cotek and Martirosyan are just beginning to retrace the life of the 74-year-old woman. The investigators searched her apartment in November, having only a few basic facts in the manila folder, including a local pastor's phone number and the date when she moved into the apartment: 1988.

Martirosyan methodically flipped through folders in a filing cabinet as Cotek pulled worn black-and-white composition notebooks off a bookshelf.

Framed Korean Bible verses hung on the walls. They found disability benefit forms, a blank U.S. citizenship application, bank statements — all potentially important clues that went into an evidence bag.

Back at their office in downtown Los Angeles, the investigators handed over the evidence bag to a colleague with a suggestion to look in Korea for potential relatives.

If no one is found after three years, the county will handle the woman's interment. If she left behind enough money in her estate, her ashes would go into an individual niche with a nameplate in a columbarium, where urns are stored.

While her possessions were not deemed to be worth selling, the county has a warehouse full of boxes of belongings, including vinyl records, Barbie doll collections, classic cars and framed artwork, that it auctions off to pay for niches for other decedents. If there's not enough to cover that, the person's ashes will be placed in the communal grave.

The woman could be buried there in 2026.

The day after searching her apartment, Martirosyan nets a breakthrough on another case. A woman cries upon learning by phone that her mother, from whom she had been estranged, has died. It's devastating news for the daughter, but it means her mother won't end up in the county's unclaimed grave.

"This is a good day for us," Martirosyan said. "At least for this portion of their lives, they're connected."

But in a county of nearly 10 million, there's always another life yet to be claimed.

Martirosyan turns to her backlog of cases and begins again.

## **Blinken heads to the Mideast again as fears of regional conflict surge**

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Biden administration grapples with an increasingly tense and unstable situation in the Middle East, Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to the region this weekend for the fourth time in three months on a tour expected to focus largely on easing resurgent fears that the Israel-Hamas war could erupt into a broader conflict.

With international criticism of Israel's operations in Gaza mounting, growing U.S. concerns about the end game, and more immediate worries about a recent explosion in attacks in the Red Sea, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, Blinken will have a packed and difficult agenda. He leaves just days after a suspected Israeli attack killed a senior Hamas leader in Beirut and, while a White House spokesman said "nobody should be shedding a tear" over his death, it could further complicate Blinken's mission.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 36 of 71

"We don't expect every conversation on this trip to be easy," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. "There are obviously tough issues facing the region and difficult choices ahead. But the secretary believes it is the responsibility of the United States of America to lead diplomatic efforts to tackle those challenges head on, and he's prepared to do that in the days to come."

Blinken leaves late Thursday on his latest extended Mideast tour, which will take him to Turkey, Greece, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank and Egypt.

Apart from Gaza-specific priorities he will bring to Israel — including pressing for a dramatic increase in humanitarian aid to Gaza, a shift toward less intense military operations and a concerted effort to rein in violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank by Jewish settlers — Blinken will be seeking regional assistance in calming the situation.

"It is in no one's interest, not Israel's, not the region's, not the world's, for this conflict to spread beyond Gaza," Miller said. The key elements to preventing this will be deterring attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels on commercial Red Sea shipping, deterring attacks on Israel by Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah and deterring attacks on U.S. military facilities and interests by Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.

Yet, U.S. influence with Iran is minimal and it must rely either on its own military deterrence or on partners to make the case with Iran that a regional war would be catastrophic.

"Strategically, Iran is winning," said Paul Salem, head of the Washington-based Middle East Institute. He said Hezbollah and the overall network of Iranian-allied groups are pleased with what the current level of hostilities has achieved.

"Iran is sitting pretty," he said. "It doesn't need to do anything dramatic. It is kind of on the winning side."

Since the Gaza war erupted with Israel's response to the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attacks, the Biden administration has been seriously concerned about a potential spread in the conflict.

It had breathed a sigh of relief in the weeks following the start of the the Israeli operation, when it successfully counseled Israeli officials not to mount pre-emptive strikes against Hezbollah in Lebanon and sent two aircraft carrier strike groups to the eastern Mediterranean to serve as a deterrent.

Two and a half months later, though, the chances of a regional war have increased with Israel determined to strike Hamas operatives and leaders no matter where they are. Meanwhile, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and pro-Iran militias have been stepping up attacks on U.S., Israeli and international interests.

As with his previous Mideast visits, Blinken will be concentrating on expanding humanitarian aid to Gaza, pressing Israel to minimize civilian Palestinian casualties, pushing for the release of hostages held by Hamas and stressing the importance of planning for the administration of a postwar Gaza.

But, his agenda has been clouded by recent developments, including a drone strike attributed to Israel that killed Hamas deputy leader Saleh Arouri in Beirut's southern suburbs, explosions in Iran that targeted a memorial service for U.S.-assassinated Revolutionary Guard commander Qassem Suleimani, a drone attack on a pro-Iranian Iraqi militia group in Baghdad and U.S. and allied responses to Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

For example, the first speech by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah during the Israel-Hamas war, nearly a month into the conflict, was widely seen by analysts as telegraphing that his group had no interest in engaging in a full-on war with Israel.

On Wednesday, however, following the killing of Arouri, Nasrallah took a more belligerent tone and appeared to be making a case to the Lebanese people that a wider war might be necessary.

Nasrallah said Hezbollah had so far calibrated between "the need to support Gaza and to take into account Lebanese national interests," which have limited its military involvement. But he said in the event that "war is launched on us, then Lebanese national interests require that we take the war to the end, without limits."

On Thursday, an armed unmanned surface vessel launched from Houthi-controlled Yemen got within a "couple of miles" of U.S. Navy and commercial vessels in the Red Sea before detonating, just hours after the White House and a host of partner nations issued a final warning to the Iran-backed militia group to cease the attacks or face potential military action.

And, in Baghdad on Thursday, a U.S. airstrike on the headquarters of an Iran-backed militia killed a high-ranking commander, identified as Abu Taqwa, with the Popular Mobilization Force, or PMF. A U.S. defense official said Taqwa was targeted because he was actively involved in attacks on U.S. personnel.

An Iraqi military spokesman, Yehia Rasool, said the Iraqi army blames the U.S.-led International Coalition Forces for the "unprovoked attack on an Iraqi security body operating in accordance with the powers granted to it by" the Iraqi military.

The primary mission of the U.S.-led coalition is to fight the Islamic State, the Sunni group that many believe was behind Wednesday's bombing in Iran.

## Baltimore celebrates historic 20% drop in homicides even as gun violence remains high

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Long plagued by rampant gun violence, Baltimore recorded less than 300 homicides last year for the first time in nearly a decade, ending a surge that began in 2015 following the death of Freddie Gray, which sparked civil unrest and prompted widespread calls for police reform.

The 20% annual decrease, which city leaders called the largest ever, suggests Baltimore's ongoing anti-violence efforts are working.

"We're finally seeing those efforts paying off and saving lives," Mayor Brandon Scott said at a news conference earlier this week.

To some extent, Baltimore's 2023 data is reflected nationwide as many cities have reported declines over the past several months following a pandemic peak.

But to Baltimoreans whose loved ones were among the 263 people killed last year in the city, the positive trend is bittersweet. Dozens of mourners gathered outside City Hall for a candlelight vigil Wednesday night where elected officials and community leaders read aloud the victims' names.

"We're nowhere near where we want to be, but 20% is substantial. We have to celebrate," said Ray Kelly, a longtime Baltimore police reform activist who attended the vigil. "That's 60 less families getting heartbreaking news."

While pinpointing a specific cause for the decrease is virtually impossible, officials and residents cited a confluence of factors that likely contributed, including law enforcement initiatives and community supports. An uptick in youth violence beginning in early 2023 added urgency to the work.

Scott, a Democrat who is running for reelection this year, heralded his administration's comprehensive violence strategy, which seeks to address the root causes of gun violence by treating it as a public health crisis and combining targeted enforcement actions with resources and social programs that help people choose a different path.

Those efforts have coincided with a series of court-ordered police reform measures aimed at curbing unconstitutional policing practices. The city's police department was placed under a federal consent decree after the Justice Department launched an investigation in the wake of Gray's death from spinal injuries sustained during transport in a police van.

Since then, Baltimore's annual homicide count has remained stubbornly above 300, a number that has come to symbolize an undesirable high-water mark in a city consistently ranking among the nation's most violent per capita.

Scott noted last year's drop in homicides was accompanied by a decrease in unconstitutional arrests. A recent report from the city's consent decree monitoring team says officers are making fewer arrests without probable cause.

"There's much more work to be done," Baltimore Police Commissioner Richard Worley said. "I think we've shown over the last couple years that we can both reduce crime and reform a police department at the same time."

Nonfatal shootings also decreased about 7% last year, according to Baltimore police data, while gun

violence soared in neighboring Washington, D.C.

Baltimore homicide detectives solved about 45% of their cases in 2023, a modest increase from the year before despite a deepening manpower shortage that has severely impacted the unit, agency leaders said. Nationwide, the homicide clearance rate hovers between 50% and 60%.

While clearing cases brings families closure and helps build public trust, officials said, the issue of curbing gun violence extends far beyond solid policework.

"Police are not going to solve this problem alone. There's just no way," Director Steven Dettelbach of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said following a Baltimore news conference Thursday morning.

Targeted enforcement is key, said U.S. Attorney for Maryland Erek L. Barron. He said police and prosecutors are using their limited resources to go after a relatively small number of known trigger pullers.

Local, state and federal law enforcement leaders touted their collective work to target Baltimore's most violent offenders, dismantle drug trafficking organizations and seize illegal guns.

Baltimore police are building stronger gun cases, in part because they are working with federal investigators and using ballistics technology to trace individual firearms. In turn, prosecutors are charging more gun cases in federal court, where defendants often face harsher penalties, they said.

About six months after Scott took office in December 2020, he released a five-year plan he hoped would reduce Baltimore gun violence by 15% annually. He created a new office to oversee anti-violence efforts, including the city's flagship Safe Streets program, which employs conflict mediators with credibility and knowledge of the streets.

The plan also includes a Group Violence Reduction Strategy, which is still being rolled out. It relies on a collaboration between Baltimore police and community groups to target potential shooters and victims, offering them services and support, including employment opportunities, therapy and life coaching. Similar initiatives have seen success in other cities.

While the numbers are promising, city officials and community leaders acknowledged the gaping shortfall that remains when it comes to meeting the needs of young Black men from Baltimore's poorest and most overlooked neighborhoods. Most perpetrators of violence grow up in poverty and attend underperforming schools. Signs of the local drug trade are all around them and vacant houses line their streets.

For Brunetta Phair, whose older brother was shot and killed last spring, the city's recent progress has brought her family little comfort.

"It's still not enough," she said. "I understand the numbers are going down, but it's just not enough."

Clifton Phair, 59, died May 10 from multiple gunshot wounds, according to police. A Baltimore native, he joined the military after high school and left behind two adult children, his sister said.

"He came home from work, stopped to talk to his neighbor and ended up dead," Brunetta Phair said. She attended Wednesday's vigil to honor her brother's memory and remind city officials that his family is still waiting for answers as the case remains unsolved.

## **Police officer convicted of killing a Colorado man is set to learn if he will spend time behind bars**

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A Colorado police officer convicted of killing Elijah McClain, a young Black man walking home from a store, is expected to learn Friday whether a judge will sentence him to prison or he will receive probation.

McClain's mother also may speak at the sentencing hearing.

Among the three officers charged in McClain's 2019 death, Randy Roedema was the only one found guilty and was the most senior officer who initially responded to the scene. A jury convicted the former Aurora officer in October of criminally negligent homicide, which is a felony, and third-degree assault, which is a misdemeanor.

McClain's killing received little attention at the time, but gained renewed interest the following year as

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 39 of 71

mass protests swept the nation after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. McClain's death became a rallying cry for critics of racial injustice in policing.

In a separate trial, two paramedics were recently convicted for injecting 23-year-old McClain with an overdose of the sedative ketamine after police put him in a neck hold. Sentencing will come later this year for the paramedics, who had been trained to use ketamine to treat "excited delirium" — a disputed condition some say is unscientific, rooted in racism, and used to justify excessive force.

McClain was stopped by police after a 911 caller reported that he looked suspicious. Another officer put his hands on McClain within seconds, beginning a struggle and restraint that lasted about 20 minutes before paramedics injected him with ketamine. Experts say the sedative ultimately killed McClain, who was already weakened from struggling to breathe while being pinned down after inhaling vomit into his lungs.

For Roedema, criminally negligent homicide, defined as killing someone by failing to recognize a substantial risk to their life, carries a punishment of probation up to three years in prison. The assault conviction is punishable by probation up to two years in jail.

Judge Mark Warner, a former prosecutor who has been a judge for nearly 20 years, will have to determine a fair sentence by weighing how this homicide case compares to others he has seen in his career, said former district attorney George Brauchler. A first conviction can lead to a sentence of probation, but the judge must also consider that Roedema was a uniformed police officer, given special authority and respect by society, and a jury convicted him of taking a life, Brauchler said.

"I don't know how that person gets to go home that night," said Brauchler, who prosecuted the 2012 Aurora theater shooting case. "I think that would be very tough."

Even if Warner decided to put Roedema on probation, he could require him to spend up to 90 days in jail first as part of that sentence, Brauchler said.

Roedema's sentences for the assault and homicide charge are likely to be served at the same time, and not back-to-back for a longer sentence, since they involve the same actions. If Roedema is sent to prison, he would be eligible for parole in a year and likely sent to a halfway house before then, under prison regulations, he said.

Roedema helped hold McClain down while paramedics administered the ketamine. He was often visible in the body camera footage shown over and over to jurors, and could be heard directing others how to restrain him.

The same jury that convicted Roedema acquitted former officer Jason Rosenblatt, whose lawyers stressed that he wasn't close to McClain when the ketamine was injected.

A different jury acquitted officer Nathan Woodyard a few weeks later, after he testified that he put McClain in a neck hold, briefly rendering him unconscious. Woodyard testified that he feared for his life after Roedema said McClain had grabbed for one of their guns. Prosecutors say the gun grab never happened.

Aurora Fire Rescue paramedics Jeremy Cooper and Peter Cichuniec were convicted last month. Cichuniec, the senior officer, was found guilty of the most serious charge faced by any of the first responders: felony second-degree assault. It carries a mandatory prison sentence of between five and 16 years in prison.

In a statement after those final verdicts, McClain's mother, Sheneen McClain, said having three out of the five defendants convicted was not justice, merely "a very small acknowledgment of accountability in the justice system."

"There were at least 20 individuals there the night my son was alive and talking before he was brutally murdered. Aurora Colorado Police Department and Fire Department kept everyone else on their payroll because both of those departments lack humanity, refusing to admit their inhumane protocols," she said.

The paramedics' verdicts came a day after a jury in Washington state cleared three police officers of all criminal charges in the 2020 death of Manuel Ellis, a Black man who was shocked, beaten and restrained face-down as he pleaded for breath.

Candace McCoy, professor emerita at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, does not see the recent acquittals there or in Colorado as a sign that the push for police reform is waning. Instead, she said it is a reflection of how hard it is to convict police officers of crimes because jurors tend to give them the benefit of the doubt for how they act in emergencies.



While it was rare to prosecute cases against law enforcement in the past, the fact that more of them are being pursued now is not enough to create police reform, she said.

"The way to change and reform the police is to change the culture and the departments, and individual prosecutions will not do that," McCoy said.

## Teen kills 6th grader, wounds 5 others and takes own life in Iowa high school shooting, police say

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

PERRY, Iowa (AP) — A teen armed with a shotgun and a handgun unleashed terror at an Iowa high school on the first day of classes in the new year, authorities said, killing a sixth grader and wounding five others as people hunkered down in classrooms, barricaded offices and fled the barrage of bullets.

The suspect, a 17-year-old student at the school in Perry, died of what investigators believe was a self-inflicted gunshot wound, an Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation official said. An administrator, later identified by his alma mater as Perry High School Principal Dan Marburger, was among the five wounded Thursday as students returned from winter break.

Authorities identified the shooter as Dylan Butler, 17, but provided no information about a possible motive. Two friends and their mother who spoke with The Associated Press said Butler was a quiet person who had been bullied for years.

Authorities said Butler had a pump-action shotgun and a small-caliber handgun. Mitch Mortvedt, the state investigation division's assistant director, said during a news conference that authorities also found a "pretty rudimentary" improvised explosive device and rendered it safe.

The suspect's motive was being investigated and authorities were looking into "a number of social media posts" he made around the time of the shooting, Mortvedt added.

A law enforcement official briefed on the investigation said federal and state investigators were interviewing Butler's friends and analyzing Butler's social media profiles, including posts on TikTok and Reddit.

Shortly before Thursday's shooting, Butler posted a photo on TikTok inside the bathroom of Perry High School, the official said. The photo was captioned "now we wait" and the song "Stray Bullet" by the German band KMFDM accompanied it. Investigators have also found other photos Butler posted posing with firearms, according to the official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Sisters Yesenia Roeder and Khanya Hall, both 17, said alongside their mother, Alita, that Butler was bullied relentlessly since elementary school, but it escalated recently when his younger sister started getting picked on, too. His parents brought it up to the school, they said, and that was the "last straw" for Butler.

"He was hurting. He got tired. He got tired of the bullying. He got tired of the harassment," Yesenia Roeder Hall, 17, said. "Was it a smart idea to shoot up the school? No. God, no."

Calls to Perry Community Schools' Superintendent Clark Wicks, as well as school board members, were unanswered Thursday, and an emailed request for comment was not immediately returned.

Police arrived within minutes after an active shooter was reported at 7:37 a.m. Thursday, authorities said.

Perry High School senior Ava Augustus was awaiting a counselor in a school office when she heard three shots. Unable to flee through a small window, she and others barricaded the door and were ready to throw things if necessary.

"And then we hear 'He's down. You can go out,'" Augustus said through tears. "And I run and you can just see glass everywhere, blood on the floor. I get to my car and they're taking a girl out of the auditorium who had been shot in her leg."

Three gunshot victims were treated at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines, a spokesperson said. Others were taken to a second hospital, a spokesperson for MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center confirmed.

Mortvedt said one person was in critical condition but the injuries didn't appear to be life-threatening, and the others were stable.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 41 of 71

Hundreds of people gathered for a candlelight prayer vigil Thursday evening at a park where hours earlier, students had been brought to reunite with their families after the shooting. Bundled up against freezing temperatures, they listened to pastors from many faiths and heard a message of hope in both English and Spanish.

A post on the high school's Facebook page said it would be closed Friday and counseling services would be available for students, faculty and others in the community.

"This senseless tragedy has shaken our entire state to its core," Gov. Kim Reynolds said.

In Washington, President Joe Biden and U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland were briefed on the shooting.

Mass shootings across the U.S. have long brought calls for stricter gun laws from gun safety advocates, and Thursday's did within hours. But the idea has been a non-starter for many Republicans, particularly in rural, GOP-leaning states like Iowa, which will hold its first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses Jan. 15.

As of July 2021, Iowa does not require a permit to purchase a handgun or carry a firearm in public, though it mandates a background check for anyone buying a handgun without a permit.

Perry has about 8,000 residents and is about 40 miles (65 kilometers) northwest of Des Moines, on the edge of the state capital's metropolitan area. It is home to a large pork-processing plant and low-slung, single-story homes spread among trees now shorn of their leaves by winter. The high school and middle school are connected, sitting on the east edge of town.

The high school is part of the 1,785-student Perry Community School District. Perry is more diverse than Iowa as a whole. Census figures show 31% of its residents are Hispanic, compared with less than 7% statewide. Those figures also show nearly 19% of the town's residents were born outside the U.S.

Zander Shelley, 15, was in a hallway when he heard shots and dashed into a classroom, according to his father, Kevin Shelley. Zander was grazed twice and hid in the classroom before texting his father.

Kevin Shelley, who drives a garbage truck, told his boss he had to run. "It was the most scared I've been in my entire life," he said.

He later posted a photo on Facebook of his son being treated at the Methodist Medical Center and said the boy was feeling fine.

"I am still shaking," he added, "and tho I dont show it I'm not OK."

## Capitol riot, 3 years later: Hundreds of convictions, yet 1 major mystery is unsolved

By ALANNNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of far-right extremist groups. Former police officers. An Olympic gold medalist swimmer. And active duty U.S. Marines.

They are among the hundreds of people who have been convicted in the massive prosecution of the Jan 6, 2021, riot in the three years since the stunned nation watched the U.S. Capitol attack unfold on live TV.

Washington's federal courthouse remains flooded with trials, guilty plea hearings and sentencings stemming from what has become the largest criminal investigation in American history. And the hunt for suspects is far from over.

"We can not replace votes and deliberation with violence and intimidation," Matthew Graves, the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, told reporters on Thursday.

Authorities are still working to identify more than 80 people wanted for acts of violence at the Capitol. And they continue to regularly make new arrests, even as some Jan. 6 defendants are being released from prison after completing their sentences.

The cases are playing out at the same courthouse where Donald Trump is scheduled to stand trial in March in the case accusing the former president of conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss in the run up to the Capitol attack.

Here's a look at where the cases against the Jan. 6 defendants stand:

BY THE NUMBERS

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 42 of 71

More than 1,230 people have been charged with federal crimes in the riot, ranging from misdemeanor offenses like trespassing to felonies like assaulting police officers and seditious conspiracy. Roughly 730 people have pleaded guilty to charges, while another roughly 170 have been convicted of at least one charge at a trial decided by a judge or a jury, according to an Associated Press database.

Only two defendants have been acquitted of all charges, and those were trials decided by a judge rather than a jury.

About 750 people have been sentenced, with almost two-thirds receiving some time behind bars. Prison sentences have ranged from a few days of intermittent confinement to 22 years in prison. The longest sentence so far was handed down to Enrique Tarrío, the former Proud Boys national chairman who was convicted of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors described as a plot to stop the transfer of power from Trump to President Joe Biden.

Many rioters are already out of prison after completing their sentences, including some defendants who engaged in violence. Scott Fairlamb — a New Jersey man who punched a police officer during the riot and was the first Jan. 6 defendant to be sentenced for assaulting law enforcement — was released from Bureau of Prisons' custody in June.

## ALL EYES ON THE SUPREME COURT

Defense attorneys and prosecutors are closely watching a case that will soon be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court that could impact hundreds of Jan. 6 defendants. The justices agreed last month to hear one rioter's challenge to prosecutors' use of the charge of obstruction of an official proceeding, which refers to the disruption of Congress' certification of Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory over Trump.

More than 300 Jan. 6 defendants have been charged with the obstruction offense, and so has Trump in the federal case brought by special counsel Jack Smith. Lawyers representing rioters have argued the charge was inappropriately brought against Jan. 6 defendants.

The justices won't hear arguments in March or April, with a decision expected by early summer. But their review of the obstruction charge is already having some impact on the Jan. 6 prosecutions. At least two defendants have convinced judges to delay their sentencing until after the Supreme Court rules on the matter.

## RIOTERS ON THE LAM

Dozens of people believed to have assaulted law enforcement during the riot have yet to be identified by authorities, according to Graves. And the statute of limitations for the crimes is five years, which means they would have to be charged by Jan. 6, 2026, he said.

Several defendants have also fled after being charged, including a Proud Boys member from Florida who disappeared while he was on house arrest after he was convicted of using pepper spray gel on police officers. Christopher Worrell was sentenced on Thursday to 10 years in prison after spending weeks on the lam.

The FBI is still searching for some defendants who have been on the run for months, including a brother-sister pair from Florida. Olivia Pollock disappeared shortly before her trial was supposed to begin in March. Her brother, Jonathan Pollock, is also missing. The FBI has offered a reward of up to \$30,000 for information leading to the arrest of Jonathan Pollock, who is accused of thrusting a riot shield into an officer's face and throat, pulling an officer down steps and punching others.

Another defendant, Evan Neumann, fled the U.S. two months after his December 2021 indictment and is believed to be living in Belarus.

## WHAT ABOUT THE PIPE BOMBER?

One of the biggest remaining mysteries surrounding the riot is the identity of the person who placed two pipe bombs outside the offices of the Republican and Democratic national committees the day before the Capitol attack. Last year, authorities increased the reward to up to \$500,000 for information leading to the person's arrest. It remains unclear whether there was a connection between the pipe bombs and the riot.

Investigators have spent thousands of hours over the last three years doing interviews and combing through evidence and tips from the public, said David Sundberg, assistant director in charge of the FBI Washington Field Office.

"We urge anyone who may have previously hesitated to come forward or who may not have realized they had important information to contact us and share anything relevant," he said in an emailed statement on Thursday.

The explosive devices were placed outside the two buildings between 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 5, 2021, but officers didn't find them until the next day. Authorities were called to the Republican National Committee's office around 12:45 p.m. on Jan. 6. Shortly after, a call came in for a similar explosive device found at the Democratic National Committee headquarters. The bombs were rendered safe, and no one was hurt.

Video released by the FBI shows a person in a gray hooded sweatshirt, a face mask and gloves appearing to place one of the explosives under a bench outside the DNC and separately shows the person walking in an alley near the RNC before the bomb was placed there. The person wore black and light gray Nike Air Max Speed Turf sneakers with a yellow logo.

## **Nikki Haley draws more attacks from Republican rivals after a televised town hall in Iowa**

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nikki Haley's rivals for the Republican presidential nomination are ratcheting up their attacks on her as Iowa's first-in-the-nation voting draws closer.

The barbed news releases, attack ads and amped up back-and-forth come as the former South Carolina governor and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis battle for a distant second place to former President Donald Trump with less than two weeks until Iowa's leadoff caucuses. DeSantis and Haley each appeared on CNN Thursday night for separate town halls in Iowa.

For months, Trump has trained his focus on DeSantis, who has long argued that he's the party's best chance at unseating Trump from atop the field. But in recent weeks, Trump's campaign has increasingly shifted its target to Haley, calling her a "sellout" and criticizing her stances on taxes and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Her campaign on Thursday said Trump's attention to Haley, who served as his United Nations ambassador, reflects his concern that she is gaining on him.

DeSantis, who is preparing to face off against Haley next week in their first one-on-one debate, jumped on Haley, too, for telling a roomful of likely voters Wednesday night in New Hampshire — the first-in-the-nation GOP primary state — that they would have the opportunity to "correct" the decision made by Iowa caucusgoers. The comment could signal that she not only doesn't expect to win Iowa but that she doesn't expect to place second to DeSantis.

"You know, Iowa starts it," said Haley. "You know that you correct it ... and then my sweet state of South Carolina brings it home."

DeSantis' campaign called Haley's comments "insulting" to Iowa voters. In a radio interview Thursday, he said her characterization was "disrespectful."

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, who has endorsed DeSantis, posted on X, "I trust Iowans to make their own decisions. No 'corrections' needed!"

Asked by CNN Thursday night about her characterization of the caucuses — and drawing an initial groan from the crowd — Haley made light of her comments, saying the early states have a friendly rivalry, faulting politics for being "too serious and too dramatic" and pointing out, "If I didn't love Iowa, I wouldn't keep coming to Iowa."

DeSantis has also been critical of Haley's omission last week of slavery when a voter asked her about the causes of the Civil War — a response she walked back 12 hours later.

"You know, I noticed that Nikki Haley has had some problems with some basic American history," DeSantis said last week in Iowa.

Haley was asked again about her Civil War answer Thursday night, giving a wide-ranging response that



ran from facing discrimination as a girl of Indian descent growing up in rural South Carolina to her push as governor that the state remove the Confederate battle flag from its Statehouse grounds.

Moments later, DeSantis' campaign posted a clip on X with the comment, "DAY 9 of Nikki Haley trying to clean up her Civil War gaffe." It also pointed to a quote from her response: "I had Black friends growing up."

Trump's conservative allies have recirculated an old clip of the then-South Carolina governor urging an audience not to reference people who entered the U.S. illegally as "criminals." Those comments came a month after Trump's 2015 launch speech, in which he said immigrants from Mexico are bringing drugs and crime with them.

Make America Great Again Inc., Trump's super PAC, sent out a release blasting Haley's 2015 border comments — without pointing out when they occurred. In her presidential campaign, Haley has argued for more border security, visiting the U.S.-Mexico border and arguing that "we need to do whatever it takes to actually stop this inflow of illegal immigrants."

On Wednesday, Trump's campaign went up with an ad characterizing Haley as weak on immigration and lumping her in with President Joe Biden in opposing Trump's commitment to a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

In response, Haley's campaign sent out a fact check, pointing out that she had said in 2015 that more than a wall was needed to secure the border and that, as governor, she had fought to implement E-Verify. That program required South Carolina employers to substantiate workers' permission to work legally in the state — something she has pledged to take nationwide if elected president.

Haley's campaign said Trump's increasing focus on her showed that he was getting nervous.

"Donald Trump must be seeing the same Nikki momentum we're seeing, and he's clearly threatened," spokesperson Olivia Perez-Cubas said. "This is a two-person race between Nikki and Trump."

## **17-year-old kills sixth grader, wounds five others in Iowa school shooting, police say**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

PERRY, Iowa (AP) — A 17-year-old opened fire at a small-town Iowa high school before classes resumed on the first day after the winter break, killing a sixth-grader and wounding five others Thursday as students barricaded in offices, ducked into classrooms and fled in panic.

The suspect, a student at the school in Perry, died of what investigators believe is a self-inflicted gunshot wound, an Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation official said. Authorities said one of the five people wounded was an administrator, later identified by his alma mater as Perry High School Principal Dan Marburger.

Authorities identified the shooter as Dylan Butler, 17, and provided no information about a possible motive. Two friends and their mother who spoke with The Associated Press said Butler was a quiet person who had been bullied for years.

Perry has about 8,000 residents and is about 40 miles (65 kilometers) northwest of Des Moines, on the edge of the state capital's metropolitan area. It is home to a large pork-processing plant and low-slung, single-story homes spread among trees now shorn of their leaves by winter. The high school and middle school are connected, sitting on the east edge of town.

Authorities said Butler had a pump-action shotgun and a small-caliber handgun. Mitch Mortvedt, the state investigation division's assistant director, said during a news conference that authorities also found a "pretty rudimentary" improvised explosive device and rendered it safe.

The suspect's motive is being investigated and authorities are looking into "a number of social media posts" he made around the time of the shooting, Mortvedt added.

A law enforcement official briefed on the investigation said federal and state investigators are interviewing Butler's friends and analyzing Butler's social media profiles, including posts on TikTok and Reddit.

Shortly before Thursday's shooting, Butler posted a photo on TikTok inside the bathroom of Perry High School, the official said. The photo was captioned "now we wait" and the song "Stray Bullet" by the Ger-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 45 of 71

man band KMFDMD accompanied it. Investigators have also found other photos Butler posted posing with firearms, according to the official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Sisters Yesenia Roeder and Khamya Hall, both 17, said alongside their mother, Alita, that Butler was bullied relentlessly since elementary school, but it escalated recently when his younger sister started getting picked on, too. His parents brought it up to the school, they said, and that was the "last straw" for Butler.

"He was hurting. He got tired. He got tired of the bullying. He got tired of the harassment," Yesenia Roeder Hall, 17, said. "Was it a smart idea to shoot up the school? No. God, no."

Calls to Perry Community Schools' Superintendent Clark Wicks, as well as school board members, were unanswered Thursday, and an emailed request for comment was not immediately returned.

Perry High School senior Ava Augustus said she was awaiting a counselor in a school office when she heard three shots. Unable to flee through a small window, she and others barricaded the door and were ready to throw things if necessary.

"And then we hear 'He's down. You can go out,'" Augustus said through tears. "And I run and you can just see glass everywhere, blood on the floor. I get to my car and they're taking a girl out of the auditorium who had been shot in her leg."

Three gunshot victims were being treated at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines, a spokesperson said. Others were taken to a second hospital, a spokesperson for MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center confirmed.

Mortvedt said one person was in critical condition but the injuries didn't appear to be life-threatening, and the others were stable.

Hundreds of people gathered for a candlelight prayer vigil Thursday evening at a park where hours earlier, students had been brought to reunite with their families after the shooting. Bundled up against freezing temperatures, they listened to pastors from many faiths and heard a message of hope in both English and Spanish.

A post on the high school's Facebook page said it would be closed Friday and counseling services would be available for students, faculty and others in the community.

"This senseless tragedy has shaken our entire state to its core," Gov. Kim Reynolds said.

In Washington, President Joe Biden and U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland were briefed on the shooting.

The shooting occurred ahead of Iowa's Jan. 15 first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses. GOP candidate Vivek Ramaswamy had a 9 a.m. campaign event scheduled in Perry about 1 1/2 miles (2 kilometers) from the school but canceled it to hold a prayer and intimate discussion with area residents.

Mass shootings across the U.S. have long brought calls for stricter gun laws from gun safety advocates, and Thursday's did within hours. But that idea has been a non-starter for many Republicans, particularly in rural, GOP-leaning states like Iowa.

As of July 2021, Iowa does not require a permit to purchase a handgun or carry a firearm in public, though it mandates a background check for anyone buying a handgun without a permit.

Ramaswamy said the shooting is a sign of a "psychological sickness" in the country. In Des Moines, GOP rival and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said gun violence "is more of a local and state issue" in an interview with the Des Moines Register and NBC News.

The high school is part of the 1,785-student Perry Community School District. Perry is more diverse than Iowa as a whole. Census figures show 31% of its residents are Hispanic, compared with less than 7% statewide. Those figures also show nearly 19% of the town's residents were born outside the U.S.

Authorities said officers arrived within minutes after an active shooter was reported at 7:37 a.m. Thursday. Emergency vehicles surrounded the complex.

"Officers immediately attempted to locate the source of the threat and quickly found what appeared to be the shooter with a self-inflicted gunshot wound," Mortvedt said.

Rachael Kares, an 18-year-old senior, was wrapping up jazz band practice when she and her bandmates

heard four gunshots, spaced apart.

"We all just jumped," Kares said. "My band teacher looked at us and yelled, 'Run!' So we ran."

Kares and many others scrambled out past the football field, as people yelled, "Get out! Get out!" She said she heard additional shots, but didn't know how many. She was more concerned about getting home to her 3-year-old son.

Zander Shelley, 15, was in a hallway when he heard shots and dashed into a classroom, according to his father, Kevin Shelley. Zander was grazed twice and hid in the classroom before texting his father.

Kevin Shelley, who drives a garbage truck, told his boss he had to run. "It was the most scared I've been in my entire life," he said.

He later posted a photo on Facebook of his son being treated at the Methodist Medical Center and said the boy was feeling fine.

He added: "I am still shaking and tho I dont show it I'm not OK."

## **Nevada judge is back to work a day after being attacked by defendant who jumped atop her**

By KEN RITTER and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A Nevada judge was back to work a day after being attacked by a defendant in a felony battery case who was captured on courtroom video charging forward and "supermaning" over the judge's bench after it became clear that he was being sentenced to prison, a court official said Thursday.

The defendant, Deobra Redden, is scheduled to face Clark County District Court Judge Mary Kay Holthus again Monday morning for his rescheduled sentencing, according to Chief Judge Jerry Wiese.

At a news conference Thursday, Wiese shared a statement from Holthus, who fell back from her seat against a wall when the defendant landed atop her and grabbed her hair, toppling an American flag onto them. Holthus suffered some injuries and was evaluated but not hospitalized, courthouse officials said.

"She wanted me to thank all of the well-wishers and others who have expressed concern for her and her staff," Wiese said. "She is extremely grateful for those who took brave action during the attack."

In a bloody brawl, Redden had to be wrestled off the judge Wednesday morning by her law clerk, Michael Lasso, and several court and jail officers — including some who were seen throwing punches. One courtroom marshal was hospitalized for treatment of a bleeding gash on his forehead and a dislocated shoulder, and Lasso was treated for cuts on his hands.

Wiese credited Lasso for his quick action, saying he was the "primary person" who pulled the defendant off the judge "and probably kept her from having more severe injuries."

Redden, 30, was jailed on \$54,000 bail in connection with the attack but refused to return to court on Thursday on the new charges, so a judge rescheduled his next appearance for Jan. 9. Records show that he faces 13 counts including extortion and coercion with force. Seven of the new counts are battery on a protected person, referring to the judge and officers who came to her aid.

"It happened so fast it was hard to know what to do," said Richard Scow, the chief county district attorney, who was prosecuting Redden for allegedly attacking a person with a baseball bat last year.

District Attorney Steve Wolfson said the suspect's criminal record is marked by mostly violent offenses and includes prior convictions for three felonies and nine misdemeanors. He said Redden should be held without bail as "an extreme danger to the community and a flight risk."

"He's been violent his entire adult life," Wolfson said.

Redden's defense attorney on Wednesday, Caesar Almase, declined to comment.

At the sentencing hearing, Redden wasn't shackled or in jail garb because he had been released from custody as part of a deal with prosecutors, in which he pleaded guilty in November to a reduced charge of attempted battery resulting in substantial injuries. He was initially charged in the baseball bat attack with assault with a deadly weapon, court records show.

On Wednesday, he wore a white shirt and dark pants as he stood next to his attorney and asked the judge for leniency while describing himself as "a person who never stops trying to do the right thing no

matter how hard it is.”

“I’m not a rebellious person,” he told the judge, adding that he doesn’t think he should be sent to prison. “But if it’s appropriate for you, then you have to do what you have to do.”

Moments later, as the judge made it clear she intended to put him behind bars, and the court marshal moved to handcuff him and take him into custody, Redden yelled expletives and charged forward. People who had been sitting with him in the courtroom audience, including his foster mother, began to scream.

Records show Redden, who lives in Las Vegas, was evaluated and found competent to stand trial in the battery case before pleading guilty to the reduced charge. He previously served prison time in Nevada on a domestic battery conviction, records show.

Holthus was a career prosecutor with more than 27 years of courthouse experience when she was elected to the state court bench in 2018.

## **Houthis launch sea drone to attack ships hours after US, allies issue final warning**

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An armed unmanned surface vessel launched from Houthi-controlled Yemen got within a “couple of miles” of U.S. Navy and commercial vessels in the Red Sea before detonating on Thursday, just hours after the White House and a host of partner nations issued a final warning to the Iran-backed militia group to cease the attacks or face potential military action.

Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of U.S. Navy operations in the Middle East, said it was the first time the Houthis had used an unmanned surface vessel, or USV, since their harassment of commercial ships in the Red Sea began after the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. They have, however, used them in years past.

Fabian Hinz, a missile expert and research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said the USV’s are a key part of the Houthi maritime arsenal and were used during previous battles against the Saudi coalition forces that intervened in Yemen’s war. They have regularly been used as suicide drone boats that explode upon impact.

Most of the Houthis’ USVs are likely assembled in Yemen but often fitted with components made in Iran, such as computerized guidance systems, Hinz said.

At the United Nations, U.S. deputy ambassador Christopher Lu said at a emergency Security Council meeting on Wednesday that Iran has supplied the Houthis with money and advanced weapons systems, including drones, land attack cruise missiles and ballistic missiles. He said Iran also has been deeply involved in planning the Houthis’ attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

He said the United States isn’t seeking a confrontation with Iran, but Tehran has a choice.

“It can continue its current course,” Lu said, “or it can withhold its support without which the Houthis would struggle to effectively track and strike commercial vessels navigating shipping lanes through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.”

This raises questions as to whether any action against the Houthis would also address Iran’s role in any way, which could risk widening the conflict.

A statement Wednesday signed by the United States, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom gave the Houthis what a senior Biden administration official described as a final warning.

“Let our message now be clear: we call for the immediate end of these illegal attacks and release of unlawfully detained vessels and crews,” the countries said in the statement. “The Houthis will bear the responsibility of the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy, and free flow of commerce in the region’s critical waterways.”

Pentagon spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder would not say whether any military action would follow Thursday’s launch of the sea drone.

“I’ll let the statement speak for itself, which, again, represented many nations around the world and



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 48 of 71

highlighted that if these strikes don't stop, there will be consequences," Ryder said.

Since late October, the Houthis have launched scores of one-way attack drones and missiles at commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea. U.S. Navy warships have also intercepted ballistic missiles the Pentagon says were headed toward Israel. Cooper said a total of 61 missiles and drones have been shot down by U.S. warships.

In response to the Houthi attacks, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in December announced Operation Prosperity Guardian, with the United States and other countries sending additional ships to the southern Red Sea to provide protection for commercial vessels passing through the critical Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

Cooper said 1,500 commercial ships have been able to transit safely since the operation was launched on Dec. 18.

However, the Houthis have continued to launch missiles and attack drones, prompting the White House and 12 allies to issue what amounted to a final warning Wednesday to cease their attacks on vessels in the Red Sea or face potential targeted military action.

Cooper said Operation Prosperity Guardian was solely defensive in nature and separate from any military action the U.S. might take if the Houthi attacks continue.

The U.S., United Kingdom and France are providing most of the warships now, and Greece and Denmark will also be providing vessels, he said.

## Glynis Johns, 'Mary Poppins' star who first sang Sondheim's 'Send in the Clowns,' dies at 100

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Glynis Johns, a Tony Award-winning stage and screen star who played the mother opposite Julie Andrews in the classic movie "Mary Poppins" and introduced the world to the bittersweet standard-to-be "Send in the Clowns" by Stephen Sondheim, has died. She was 100.

Mitch Clem, her manager, said she died Thursday at an assisted living home in Los Angeles of natural causes. "Today's a sad day for Hollywood," Clem said. "She is the last of the last of old Hollywood."

Johns was known to be a perfectionist about her profession — precise, analytical and opinionated. The roles she took had to be multi-faceted. Anything less was giving less than her all.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm not interested in playing the role on only one level," she told The Associated Press in 1990. "The whole point of first-class acting is to make a reality of it. To be real. And I have to make sense of it in my own mind in order to be real."

Johns' greatest triumph was playing Desiree Armfeldt in "A Little Night Music," for which she won a Tony in 1973. Sondheim wrote the show's hit song "Send in the Clowns" to suit her distinctive husky voice, but she lost the part in the 1977 film version to Elizabeth Taylor.

"I've had other songs written for me, but nothing like that," Johns told the AP in 1990. "It's the greatest gift I've ever been given in the theater."

Others who followed Johns in singing Sondheim's most popular song include Frank Sinatra, Judy Collins, Barbra Streisand, Sarah Vaughan and Olivia Newton-John. It also appeared in season two of "Yellowjackets" in 2023, sung by Elijah Wood.

Back when it was being conceived, "A Little Night Music" had gone into rehearsal with some of the book and score unfinished, including a solo song for Johns. Director Hal Prince suggested she and co-star Len Cariou improvise a scene or two to give book writer Hugh Wheeler some ideas.

"Hal said 'Why don't you just say what you feel,'" she recalled to the AP. "When Len and I did that, Hal got on the phone to Steve Sondheim and said, 'I think you'd better get in a cab and get round here and watch what they're doing because you are going to get the idea for Glynis' solo.'"

Johns was the fourth generation of an English theatrical family. Her father, Mervyn Johns, had a long career as a character actor and her mother was a pianist. She was born in Pretoria, South Africa, because her parents were visiting the area on tour at the time of her birth.

Johns was a dancer at 12 and an actor at 14 in London's West End. Her breakthrough role was as the

amorous mermaid in the title of the 1948 hit comedy "Miranda."

"I was quite an athlete, my muscles were strong from dancing, so the tail was just fine; I swam like a porpoise," she told *Newsday* in 1998. In 1960's "The Sundowners," with Deborah Kerr and Robert Mitchum, she was nominated for a best supporting actress Oscar. (She lost out to Shirley Jones in "Elmer Gantry.")

Other highlights include playing the mother in "Mary Poppins," the movie that introduced Julie Andrews and where she sang the rousing tune "Sister Suffragette." She also starred in the 1989 Broadway revival of "The Circle," W. Somerset Maugham's romantic comedy about love, marriage and fidelity, opposite Rex Harrison and Stewart Granger.

"I've retired many times. My personal life has come before my work. The theater is just part of my life. It probably uses my highest sense of intelligence, so therefore I have to come back to it, to realize that I've got the talent. I'm not as good doing anything else," she told the AP.

To prepare for "A Coffin in Egypt," Horton Foote's 1998 play about a grand dame reminiscing about her life on and off a ranch on the Texas prairie, she asked the Texas-born Foote to record a short tape of himself reading some lines and used it as her coach.

In a 1991 revival of "A Little Night Music" in Los Angeles, she played Madame Armfeldt, the mother of Desiree, the part she had created. In 1963, she starred in her own TV sitcom "Glynis."

Johns lived all around the world and had four husbands. The first was the father of her only child, the late Gareth Forwood, an actor who died in 2007.

## Israeli defense minister lays out vision for next steps of Gaza war ahead of Blinken visit

By NAJIB JOBAIN, JULIA FRANKEL and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's defense minister on Thursday laid out his vision for the next phase of the war in Gaza, describing how Israeli forces would shift to an apparently scaled-down "new combat approach" in northern Gaza, while continuing to fight Hamas in the south of the territory "for as long as necessary."

Ahead of a visit by the U.S. secretary of state, Yoav Gallant also outlined a proposal for how Gaza would be run once Hamas is defeated, with Israel keeping security control while an undefined, Israeli-guided Palestinian body runs day-to-day administration, and the U.S. and other countries oversee rebuilding.

Israel has come under heavy international pressure to spell out a post-war vision but so far has not done so. The issue is likely to be on the agenda in Secretary of State Antony Blinken's talks this weekend in Israel and other countries in the region. The United States has pressed Israel to shift to lower-intensity military operations in Gaza that more precisely target Hamas, after nearly three devastating months of bombardment and ground assaults.

The vagueness of many of Gallant's provisions made it difficult to assess how much they mesh with the U.S. calls.

The document issued by Gallant was titled a "vision for Phase 3" of the war, and Gallant's office said the phase had not yet begun. It also said the ideas were Gallant's and not official policy, which would have to be set by Israel's war and security cabinets.

Gallant, who is a member of both cabinets, may be aiming to put his personal plan before the Americans ahead of others in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, which includes hard-right members likely to want a tougher approach.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 22,400 people, more than two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The ministry's count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack, in which militants killed some 1,200 people and abducted around 240 others.

Much of northern Gaza, which troops invaded two months ago, has been flattened beyond recognition. Associated Press footage from Gaza City showed people wandering through a shattered landscape with large fields of broken concrete and splintered wood and streets lined with toppled buildings.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 50 of 71

With the focus now in the south, Israeli forces are battling Hamas militants in the city of Khan Younis and in urban refugee camps in the center of the territory.

Some 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes and squeezed into smaller slivers of the territory. Israel's siege of the territory has caused a humanitarian crisis, with a quarter of the population starving because not enough supplies are entering, according to the U.N.

At the same time, airstrikes and shelling across Gaza continue to destroy houses, burying families taking shelter inside.

An Israeli strike Thursday flattened a home in Muwasi, a small rural strip on Gaza's southern coastline that Israel's military had declared a safe zone. The blast killed at least 12 people, Palestinian hospital officials said. The dead included a man and his wife, seven of their children and three other children ranging in age from 5 to 14, according to a list of the dead who arrived at Nasser Hospital in nearby Khan Younis.

There was no immediate response from Israel's military.

## GALLANT'S VISION

Gallant's statement underlined that the war would go on until Hamas' military and government capabilities are eliminated and the more than 100 hostages still in captivity are returned.

In the north, the statement said, forces will shift to a new approach that includes raids, destruction of tunnels, "air and ground activities and special operations." The aim would be "the erosion" of the remaining Hamas presence.

There was no word whether northern Gaza's population, which has almost entirely been driven south, would be allowed to return.

The statement did not clarify how the new approach would differ from current operations, but Gallant has previously said it would be a lower scale. Israel began last week to withdraw some troops from northern Gaza, where the military says it has largely gained operational control after weeks of heavy fighting with Hamas. Still, Gallant has said several thousand Hamas fighters remain there.

In the south, he said, fighting would continue "as long as is deemed necessary."

After the war, the statement said, Israel will keep security control, taking military action in Gaza when necessary to ensure there are no threats and maintaining inspections of all goods entering the territory.

Gallant said there would be no Israeli civilians in Gaza, ruling out calls by some in Israel's far-right for a return of Jewish settlers to the territory.

Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005 after a 38-year presence.

Palestinian entities — apparently local civil servants or communal leaders— would run the territory, with Israel providing "information to guide civilian operations," the statement said without elaborating. A multinational task force, led by the U.S., would be in charge of rebuilding.

The apparent picture of an Israeli-dominated Palestinian administration for Gaza differs starkly from U.S. calls for a revitalized Palestinian Authority to take control of the territory and a start to new negotiations toward creating a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have rejected that idea.

## FEARS OF WIDER WAR

An apparent Israeli strike that killed a top Hamas leader in Beirut has stirred fresh fears that the conflict could expand into other parts of the Middle East — a prospect that is also likely to be high on Blinken's agenda.

The killing of Saleh Arouri prompted warnings of retaliation from Hamas' ally, the Lebanese Hezbollah militia. But there was no immediate escalation in the daily exchanges of rocket fire and shells between Hezbollah and the Israeli military over the two countries' border. Regional tensions climbed as a U.S. airstrike killed an Iranian-backed militia leader in Iraq and as Yemen's Houthi rebels continued attacks on ships in key Red Sea shipping lanes.

At the same time, Israel has stepped up warnings of tougher military action against Hezbollah unless it pulls its fighters out of the border region, as called for under a U.N.-brokered 2006 cease-fire. Israel says that is the only way tens of thousands of Israelis who evacuated from communities in the north can return.

Gallant said Thursday that there was a "short window of time" for diplomacy with Hezbollah. But he said Israel was determined to bring about "a new reality in the northern arena, which will enable the secure return of our citizens."

## **With more records, world sees how Jeffrey Epstein leveraged powerful to abuse vulnerable girls**

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A new batch of unsealed documents pertaining to Jeffrey Epstein's sexual abuse of teenage girls was released Thursday, adding several hundred pages to a trove of information detailing how the financier leveraged connections to the rich, powerful and famous to recruit his victims and cover up his crimes.

The 19 documents, or about 300 pages, were half as many as the over 40 released Wednesday. The documents so far — with more to come — were sprinkled with names of celebrities and politicians who socialized with Epstein or worked with him in the years before he was publicly accused nearly two decades ago of paying underage girls for sex.

They also contained the accounts of some of Epstein's young victims, many of whom were high school students who took payments of \$200 to give him illicit massages.

The records being unsealed were part of a lawsuit filed by one of those victims, Virginia Giuffre, against Ghislaine Maxwell, who was Epstein's former girlfriend, household manager and chief recruiter of young, vulnerable females. That lawsuit was settled in 2017, but documents in the case are still being released years later.

Most of the names in those records are familiar to anyone who has followed the scandal closely.

It was during Maxwell's criminal trial two years ago that Epstein's victims, some of whom aspired to be models or artists, described how he dropped the names of his famous and influential friends to suggest that he was the victims' ticket to reaching their dreams. Maxwell, 62, was convicted of sex-trafficking charges and is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

Epstein killed himself in 2019 while he was awaiting trial on sex- trafficking charges. The roughly 250 documents being unsealed, starting this week, mostly rehash what has long been known about a man who traveled in elite circles until his arrest.

But they have included a few fresh details about a pyramid of abuse that grew over three decades and damaged dozens of teenage girls and young women.

The documents unsealed Thursday included an excerpt from the deposition of one those victims, a girl who was in high school when she went to his house, thinking she had been hired to give him a massage.

"I don't recall exactly how I was propositioned to get there. I was just there, and all of a sudden something horrible happened to me," she said, adding that Epstein removed her clothes without her consent the first time she met him.

She said she had worked "very, very hard" over the years to forget the details of her sexual encounters.

The victim, whose name remained sealed, said that a high school classmate had suggested the job to her. Later, she learned that girls who referred other girls to Epstein were paid kickbacks.

She herself brought other girls from her high school to Epstein's house. None of them were her friends, she said.

"Sometimes I would go over and I would just swim and I would get paid, or I would take a nap and I'd get paid, or I would just hang out and I'd get paid," she said. "It wasn't my assumption that they were coming over to do anything. I did not know, once the door was closed or once they went to another area of the home. I often just went over and did my own thing while they were doing whatever they were doing. It was none of my business."

Other documents released Thursday largely focused on legal squabbles over Giuffre's lawsuit and her connection to a British tabloid reporter whom Maxwell's lawyers accused of compelling her to fabricate some of her allegations.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 52 of 71

Among the famous people in Epstein's orbit before he was exposed as a sexual predator were former Presidents Donald Trump and Bill Clinton, singer Michael Jackson and magician David Copperfield, according to the accounts of his victims and other witnesses quoted in newly released documents. None of those men were accused of wrongdoing.

There were also repetitions of well-known stories about Britain's Prince Andrew. He was sued by Giuffre, who said she had sexual encounters with the royal when she was 17. The prince, who denied the allegations, settled the lawsuit in 2022.

Thousands of documents in Giuffre's lawsuit against Maxwell had been made public previously, but some sections had been blacked out because of privacy concerns. U.S. District Judge Loretta A. Preska ordered last month that those redactions be lifted, mostly because names in the documents had already been made public through news coverage or through other court proceedings.

Clinton previously said through a spokesperson that although he traveled on Epstein's jet several times, he never visited his homes, had no knowledge of his crimes, and hadn't spoken to him since his conviction. Trump has also said he once thought Epstein was a "terrific guy," but that they later had a falling-out.

While many of the people whose names appear in the court records aren't accused of doing anything wrong, there are also many references to Jean-Luc Brunel, a French modeling agent who was close to Epstein and who killed himself in a Paris jail in 2022 while awaiting trial on charges that he raped underage girls. Giuffre was among the women who accused Brunel of sexual abuse.

Separately, Brunel's estate was sued this week by a woman who alleges that he and others sexually assaulted her while she was working as a model in New York. She says that on one occasion, she was driven to a home in Canada and kept there for several days while men abused her. The lawsuit, filed in state court in California, does not mention Epstein or Maxwell.

More documents were expected to be released on Friday and Monday.

## **Court records bring new, unwanted attention to rich and famous in Jeffrey Epstein's social circle**

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Before and after he was exposed as a pedophile, Jeffrey Epstein loved to mingle with the world's elite.

The millionaire invited politicians and academics to his private island and luxury homes. He offered celebrities rides on his private jet. He and his girlfriend, the socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, hung out with princes and supermodels. They made donations that brought them into contact with leading philanthropists.

After Epstein killed himself while awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges in 2019, many of those people have apologized for associating with him and said they were unaware he was habitually abusing underage girls.

Newly released court records have revved up interest again in the big names who associated with Epstein and Maxwell, who is serving a 20-year prison term for helping recruit and abuse Epstein's victims.

Many of those people have never been accused of any wrongdoing, but have nonetheless become the subject of a whirlwind of conspiracy theories. Others have, for years, been denying claims made by one of Epstein's victims — Virginia Giuffre — that they participated in illicit sex.

Here is a look at some of the people who have been getting renewed attention because of the release of the documents, which included deposition testimony by Epstein's victims, people who worked for him, Giuffre and Maxwell.

Jean-Luc Brunel

The court records contain repeated references to Jean-Luc Brunel, a French modeling agent and close friend of Epstein who killed himself in a Paris jail in 2022 while awaiting trial on charges that he raped underage girls. Brunel was accused by Giuffre and others of using promises of modeling work to induce people, including minors, into sexual encounters.

Brunel's estate was sued this week in California by a woman who alleges that he and others sexually

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 53 of 71

assaulted her while she was working as a model in New York. She says that on one occasion, she was driven to a home in Canada and kept there for several days while men abused her.

Brunel's attorneys have maintained his innocence, saying his suicide "was not guided by guilt but by a deep sentiment of injustice."

Leslie Wexner

The records also contain fleeting references to Leslie Wexner, the retail titan behind Victoria's Secret, The Limited and other store chains. Epstein had managed Wexner's money for years, but their relationship soured following Epstein's 2006 arrest in Florida and jail term for paying an underage girl for a sexual act.

After Epstein was indicted on federal sex-trafficking charges and killed himself in jail, Wexner said he had been embarrassed by his ties to Epstein. He also publicly accused Epstein of misappropriating "vast sums" of his fortune but didn't offer details.

Alan Dershowitz

Among the more familiar names in the records is Alan Dershowitz, a former Epstein attorney and retired Harvard University law professor. Giuffre had long accused Dershowitz of sexually abusing her a half-dozen times in Florida, New York, New Mexico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

But Giuffre withdrew her claim against Dershowitz in 2022, saying she "may have made a mistake" in identifying him as one of the men she had sex with at the request of Epstein or Maxwell. "I was very young at the time," she said, and "it was a very stressful and traumatic environment." Dershowitz said at the time that she deserved credit for acknowledging her error.

Prince Andrew

Some of the most sensational allegations have involved Britain's Prince Andrew, who was a longtime friend of Maxwell's and continued visiting Epstein even after his imprisonment in Florida for a sex crime.

Giuffre sued the prince in 2021, claiming that when she was 17 she had sex with him multiple times at Maxwell's request.

Andrew denied her claims, saying he didn't remember ever meeting her. The allegations damaged his public standing and led Andrew to withdraw from some royal duties.

Giuffre and Andrew settled the lawsuit in 2022 without it ever going to trial.

The newly released records include mentions of Giuffre's allegations and a transcript of a deposition in which she was questioned by Maxwell's attorneys about whether she made up some of her stories about powerful men to impress reporters.

Giuffre insisted she was telling the truth, and that inaccuracies in some of her published interviews were the fault of reporters.

The unsealed court papers also included a more detailed version of a well-known story by one of Epstein's victims, Johanna Sjoberg, who described an evening at his New York home involving Giuffre, Maxwell and Prince Andrew.

At one point, she testified, they pulled out a puppet of Prince Andrew that had been made for a British television program.

"And they decided to take a picture with it, in which Virginia and Andrew sat on a couch," Sjoberg said. They put the puppet on Virginia's lap, and I sat on Andrew's lap, and they put the puppet's hand on Virginia's breast, and Andrew put his hand on my breast, and they took a photo."

Bill Clinton

The former president flew several times on Epstein's private jet, and once publicly praised the financier's intellect and philanthropic efforts.

Sjoberg testified in her deposition that, while she never met Clinton, Epstein once remarked to her that "Clinton likes them young." She took the remark as a reference to young women or girls.

Clinton has not been accused of wrongdoing, though, by any of Epstein's victims. He has previously said through a spokesperson that while he traveled on Epstein's jet he never visited his homes, had no knowledge of his crimes and hasn't spoken to Epstein since his Florida conviction.

Other documents released included legal arguments over whether Clinton should be deposed. Giuffre's attorneys argued the former president was a "key person who can provide information about his close

relationship" with Epstein.

Donald Trump

The records briefly mention former President Donald Trump, who socialized with Epstein but also is not accused of misconduct. Video footage unearthed by NBC News following Epstein's federal indictment in 2019 showed the two chatting at a party at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in 1992.

The video had been recorded as part of a profile of Trump, who was newly divorced at the time. It shows the future president surrounded by young women, whom NBC identified as cheerleaders for the Buffalo Bills.

Later in the video, Epstein arrives at Trump's Florida estate, and the two men are seen talking and gesturing at the women on the dance floor.

"I knew him like everybody in Palm Beach knew him," Trump said when the video emerged. "He was a fixture in Palm Beach. I had a falling out with him a long time ago. I don't think I've spoken to him for 15 years."

Stephen Hawking

The new records include a single reference to the late theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking. His name appears, misspelled, in an email Epstein sent proposing a reward be paid to anyone who could debunk a baseless claim that Hawking had participated in "an underage orgy."

Hawking, who died in 2018, had attended one of Epstein's academic gatherings in 2006.

Glenn Dubin

The records include a claim from Giuffre that she was pressured to have sex with billionaire Glenn Dubin, a claim he denies. Giuffre said in a deposition that Maxwell "told me to go to Glenn Dubin and give him a massage, which means sex."

Dubin has said he has flight records and other evidence proving Giuffre's allegations against him are false.

Epstein dated Eva Andersson-Dubin, a former Miss Sweden, off and on in the mid-1980s, and the two remained friends after breaking up. Andersson-Dubin later married Dubin with whom she had three children. Andersson-Dubin testified in Maxwell's federal trial, saying she trusted Epstein with her young daughters and denying taking part in a group sexual encounter with a key accuser.

Bill Richardson

Giuffre also claims she was pressured to have sex with former U.S. ambassador and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson. The new documents include a few mentions of Richardson, including a deposition in which Giuffre says she had been ordered to give him a massage.

Richardson, who died last year, previously said that Giuffre's claims were fabricated. A spokesperson in 2019 denied that he had ever met Giuffre.

George Mitchell

Former U.S. Senator George Mitchell was also among the men Giuffre claims abused her. Like Richardson, Mitchell also denied ever meeting her. The new records contain little mention of Mitchell.

## **FACT FOCUS: Images made to look like court records circulate online amid Epstein document release**

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

After dozens of previously sealed court documents related to financier Jeffrey Epstein were made public on Wednesday, social media users began spreading false accusations about major public figures whose names appeared in the release — and some who hadn't been named at all.

Two people singled out in viral false claims containing images made to look like snippets from court documents were late-night host Jimmy Kimmel and theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who died in 2018. In both cases, the images were used in an effort to tie the men to illicit activities involving Epstein.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

**CLAIM:** Court documents connected to a lawsuit involving Epstein that were released this week include details about Hawking's "proclivities" and accusations about a sexual encounter with Kimmel.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 55 of 71

**THE FACTS:** The images were fabricated to look like part of the court documents. They are not among the records that were released this week. In both cases, the images show what are alleged to be question-and-answer sessions with unidentified participants.

In the fake image involving Hawking, the questioner asks, in reference to Epstein, "Did Jeffrey ever talk to you about Stephen Hawking's proclivities?" The respondent answers, "Yes, he liked watching undressed midgets solve complex equations on a too-high-up chalkboard." Additionally, the respondent replies "yes" when asked whether Hawking "frequented the island for pleasure." The other image includes an exchange about Kimmel in which the respondent says they gave him multiple massages and had sex with him at the comedian's suggestion.

Posts that shared the images had received tens of thousands of views on X, formerly Twitter, and other social media platforms as of Thursday.

Hawking is mentioned twice in the documents that were released. One reference involves a 2015 email from Epstein offering a monetary award to friends, family or acquaintances of Virginia Giuffre, one of Epstein's victims, if they could help disprove allegations that the physicist had participated in an "underage orgy" on one of Epstein's islands. The other is a request for Giuffre to turn over all photos or videos of her with a number of individuals, including Hawking. But there is no reference to any "proclivities."

In 2006, a few months before Epstein was charged with multiple counts of unlawful sex with a minor, Hawking was one of many scientists who attended a five-day conference in the Caribbean funded by Epstein. The physicist appears in multiple pictures from the event.

Kimmel does not come up in the documents at all. Ahead of their release, social media users wrongly claimed that his name might appear, spurred by a comment New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers made Tuesday on ESPN's "The Pat McAfee Show." Kimmel said in response on X that he had never met Epstein and that Rodgers' "reckless words put my family in danger."

Moreover, the purported document snippet that mentions Kimmel states that it is part of page 1,375, but only 944 pages of records had been made public when the image began spreading.

Other major public figures social media users have falsely claimed are named in the documents include Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks, Elon Musk and many more.

There was much speculation before the release that the records amounted to a list of rich and powerful people who were Epstein's "clients" or "co-conspirators." But the records come from a 2015 lawsuit filed by Giuffre against Epstein's former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell, which was settled two years later.

U.S. District Judge Loretta A. Preska, who ordered the release, said most of the names were already public. They include many of Epstein's accusers, members of his staff who told their stories to tabloid newspapers, people who served as witnesses at Maxwell's trial, people who were mentioned in passing during depositions but aren't accused of anything salacious, and people who investigated Epstein, including prosecutors, a journalist and a police detective.

There are also boldface names of public figures known to have associated with Epstein over the years, but whose relationships with him have already been well documented elsewhere.

Previous documents from the case were released in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. About 60 of 250 records currently being released had been made public as of Thursday evening, with more expected in the coming days.

Epstein killed himself in jail in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges. Maxwell is serving a 20-year prison term for helping Epstein sexually abuse underage girls.

## **Trump's lawyers want special counsel Jack Smith held in contempt in 2020 election interference case**

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawyers for former President Donald Trump on Thursday pressed to have special counsel Jack Smith's team held in contempt, saying the prosecutors had taken steps to advance the 2020



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 56 of 71

election interference case against him in violation of a judge's order last month that temporarily put the case on hold.

Citing "outrageous conduct," the Republican presidential candidate's attorneys told U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan in Washington, D.C., that she should consider holding Smith and two of his prosecutors in contempt for turning over to the defense thousands of pages of evidence and an exhibit list while the case was paused and for filing a motion that they said "teems with partisan rhetoric" and "false claims."

"In this manner, the prosecutors seek to weaponize the Stay to spread political propaganda, knowing that President Trump would not fully respond because the Court relieved him of the burdens of litigation during the Stay," the lawyers wrote. "Worse, the prosecutors have announced their intention to continue this partisan-driven misconduct indefinitely, effectively converting this Court's docket into an arm of the Biden Campaign."

A spokesman for Smith declined to comment on the motion. The motion says that Trump's lawyers have conferred with prosecutors, who object to the defense attorneys' request.

The contempt motion lays bare the simmering tension between prosecutors and defense lawyers in the landmark case charging Trump with scheming to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. It also highlights the stark division between the Smith team's desire to keep the case on track for a March 4 trial date and Trump's efforts to delay the prosecution, until potentially after the November election, in which Trump is the Republican front-runner.

At issue is a Dec. 13 order from Chutkan after Trump appealed to a higher court an earlier ruling that rejected his claims that he is immune from prosecution.

In her order last month, Chutkan, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, said that Trump's appeal "automatically stays any further proceedings that would move this case towards trial or impose additional burdens of litigation" on Trump.

Chutkan's order suggested that requiring additional discovery or briefing would impose a burden on Trump. However, it does not appear to explicitly bar the filing of court papers or prohibit prosecutors from providing information to the defense.

Prosecutors acknowledged in a filing late last month that the case had been paused, but they said the government would "continue to meet its own deadlines as previously determined" by the court "to promote the prompt resumption of the pretrial schedule" if and when the case returns to Chutkan.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit is set to hear arguments on Tuesday on the immunity question and has signaled that it intends to move quickly, though additional appeals are still likely after that. The arguments are crucial because they concern the legally untested question of whether a former president is immune from prosecution and because the outcome is expected to help determine the fate and timing of the case.

In their motion, defense lawyers say Smith's team should be punished for nudging the case forward during the pause by producing nearly 4,000 pages of potential evidence. The lawyers also objected to a Smith team motion last month arguing that Trump should be prevented from "raising irrelevant political issues or arguments in front of the jury," including that the prosecution against him is vindictive and selective or was coordinated by Biden.

Besides a contempt finding, Trump's lawyers are asking the court to require prosecutors to get permission from the court before submitting any further filings. The defense wants prosecutors to reimburse Trump for attorneys' fees and other expenses "that he has incurred responding to the prosecutor's improper productions and filings."

The election case is one of four criminal prosecutions against Trump. He is charged in Florida with illegally retaining classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate, and faces a state prosecution in Georgia that accuses him of trying to subvert that state's 2020 presidential election as well as a New York case charging him with falsifying business records in connection with a hush money payment to a porn actress.

## The AP Top 25 remains a college basketball mainstay after 75 years of evolution

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

When he first moved from coaching into broadcasting in the early 1980s, Dick Vitale would keep track of what was happening across the college basketball landscape by picking up the newspaper every morning.

Just about every score would be listed there. Important games might have box scores, giving Vitale a little more information. And the biggest games of the day might have full stories, providing a more rounded picture of what had transpired.

"People stayed up late to publish that stuff for the next morning," Vitale recalled.

These days, just about every Division I men's college basketball game is available to watch somewhere, whether broadcast on television or streamed on an app. Highlights rip across social media the minute they happen, and forums provide fans a chance to not only rehash what happened but discuss the finer points of their favorite teams.

All of which makes voting for the AP men's college basketball poll easier. And at times harder.

The Top 25 is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. The initial poll sent in January 1939 installed Saint Louis at No. 1, but it would not be long before Kentucky took over the top spot, the first of 125 weeks it has spent there over the years.

And much like the way college basketball has evolved, so has the poll. What began with 20 teams and contracted to 10 in the 1960s expanded to its now-familiar Top 25 for the 1989-90 season. The panel of voters has become more inclusive, adding more women and minorities to help rank the best teams in the nation every Monday.

But the biggest evolution might be in the way those voters formulate their opinions.

"In the early years, the eye test was more of a factor," said Jerry Tipton, who spent more than four decades covering the Wildcats for the Lexington Herald-Leader, and who was a regular AP voter. "I hate to say that because there's many more games now. But as time went on, it was more word-of-mouth. I got to know people and other writers covering teams, and there was conversation on who was good and that sort of things. And now we see many more games.

"It's amazing to me," added Tipton, who retired as a full-time beat writer in 2022, "to see how many games are on TV, and I tried to watch as many as I could, just to have a sense of what was going on."

That's fairly easy for AP voters such as Seth Davis of CBS, who has an entire command center at his disposal.

"If I'm putting in a long day in the studio," he said, "I'll be able to keep an eye on probably two dozen games. I have access to reams of research material, and very capable researchers who are in my ear, passing along stat nuggets and important info. I'd actually argue it's more important to know what happened than watch games, although I try to do both."

Voters know that fans are watching, too. They hear about their ballots on social media, or in emails and direct messages. There are entire websites that are devoted to tracking what teams they are voting for each week.

That's something else that voters never had to worry about in the early days of the AP Top 25.

"I love the way technology has progressed," said Vitale, a longtime ESPN color analyst who remains one of the 63 media members that submit ballots each week. "It's great for the sport to see all the games on TV, from small mid-majors to the classic top-10 matchups. I like being able to watch as many games as I can. It makes me a better analyst.

"The AP voters take it seriously," he added, "and they try to make sure the most deserving teams are ranked."

## **A Texas father and son are arrested in the killings of a pregnant woman and her boyfriend**

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A father and son in Texas have been charged in the killings of an 18-year-old pregnant woman who disappeared before Christmas and her boyfriend, who authorities say were fatally shot in the head before their bodies were moved and discovered days later in a car.

The arrests Wednesday night came more than a week after the bodies of Savannah Nicole Soto, 18, and Matthew Guerra, 22, were found in the parking lot of a San Antonio apartment complex, a crime scene that the city's police chief originally described as "very, very perplexing."

San Antonio police Sgt. Washington Moscoso told reporters that their deaths appeared to be the result of a drug deal, but did not elaborate.

Soto's family has said her baby was overdue and that she had been scheduled to be induced when she went missing the weekend before Christmas. Moscoso said investigators now believe the couple were killed on Dec. 21, meaning they had been dead for several days before police found them in Guerra's car the day after Christmas.

The killings have drawn attention beyond Texas and Moscoso said "misinformation" about the case had taken off on social media.

"These two individuals are the only suspects that we were looking for," he said.

Police said Christopher Preciado, 19, was charged with capital murder and his father, Ramon Preciado, 53, was charged with abuse of a corpse for allegedly helping to move the bodies. Online records for the Bexar County magistrate early Thursday did not indicate whether either man had attorneys and San Antonio police did not immediately respond to phone and email messages.

As he was placed in a patrol car late Wednesday night, Ramon Preciado was asked by reporters whether he had remorse.

"Aren't you sorry for lying about what you're saying? You don't even know what's going on. You just make stuff up like always," Preciado said.

His son did not comment as police escorted him to a separate vehicle.

Moscoso said prosecutors may pursue more charges against the men, whom he described as the only suspects in the killings. He said information on Soto's cellphone that was found in the car led them to another vehicle seen on surveillance video. Authorities publicly released that footage last week in hopes that someone would recognize the people in the video.

That vehicle led police to a house where they found the father and son. He said Ramon Preciado answered the door and cooperated with the investigation.

"He knew why the police were there," Moscoso said.

Bexar County District Attorney Joe Gonzales on Thursday commended police for the arrests and said his office would make charging decisions once they received the complete investigation files. Gonzales said in a statement that if Preciado is indicted for capital murder, his staff would consider whether to pursue the death penalty.

The county medical examiner's office had ruled both deaths homicides caused by gunshot wounds to the head. Moscoso did not specify where the killing took place before the couple was moved to the apartment complex.

Soto had been scheduled to have labor induced the weekend before Christmas, her family told KENS-TV. But her mother said she got no answer when she knocked on the door of Soto's apartment in the suburb of Leon Valley.

The family spent Christmas night searching the area and Leon Valley police issued a missing person alert.

## Two companies will attempt the first US moon landings since the Apollo missions a half-century ago

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — China and India scored moon landings, while Russia, Japan and Israel ended up in the lunar trash heap.

Now two private companies are hustling to get the U.S. back in the game, more than five decades after the Apollo program ended.

It's part of a NASA-supported effort to kick-start commercial moon deliveries, as the space agency focuses on getting astronauts back there.

"They're scouts going to the moon ahead of us," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson.

Pittsburgh's Astrobotic Technology is up first with a planned liftoff of a lander Monday aboard a brand new rocket, United Launch Alliance's Vulcan. Houston's Intuitive Machines aims to launch a lander in mid-February, hopping a flight with SpaceX.

Then there's Japan, which will attempt to land in two weeks. The Japanese Space Agency's lander with two toy-size rovers had a big head start, sharing a September launch with an X-ray telescope that stayed behind in orbit around Earth.

If successful, Japan will become the fifth country to pull off a lunar landing. Russia and the U.S. did it repeatedly in the 1960s and 70s. China has landed three times in the past decade — including on the moon's far side — and is returning to the far side later this year to bring back lunar samples. And just last summer, India did it. Only the U.S. has put astronauts on the moon.

Landing without wrecking is no easy feat. There's hardly any atmosphere to slow spacecraft, and parachutes obviously won't work. That means a lander must descend using thrusters, while navigating past treacherous cliffs and craters.

A Japanese millionaire's company, ispace, saw its lander smash into the moon last April, followed by Russia's crash landing in August. India triumphed a few days later near the south polar region; it was the country's second try after crashing in 2019. An Israeli nonprofit also slammed into the moon in 2019.

The United States has not attempted a moon landing since Apollo 17's Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt, the last of 12 moonwalkers, explored the gray, dusty surface in December 1972. Mars beckoned and the moon receded in NASA's rearview mirror, as the space race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union came to a close. The U.S. followed with a handful or two of lunar satellites, but no controlled landers — until now.

Not only are Astrobotic and Intuitive Machines looking to end America's moon-landing drought, they're vying for bragging rights as the first private entity to land — gently — on the moon.

Despite its later start, Intuitive Machines has a faster, more direct shot and should land within a week of liftoff. It will take Astrobotic two weeks just to get to the moon and another month in lunar orbit, before a landing is attempted on Feb. 23.

If there are rocket delays, which already have stalled both missions, either company could wind up there first.

"It's going to be a wild, wild ride," promised Astrobotic's chief executive John Thornton.

His counterpart at Intuitive Machines, Steve Altemus, said the space race is "more about the geopolitics, where China is going, where the rest of the world's going." That said, "We sure would like to be first."

The two companies have been nose to nose since receiving nearly \$80 million each in 2019 under a NASA program to develop lunar delivery services. Fourteen companies are now under contract by NASA.

Astrobotic's four-legged, 6-foot-tall (1.9-meter-tall) lander, named Peregrine after the fastest bird, a falcon, will carry 20 research packages to the moon for seven countries, including five for NASA and a shoebox-sized rover for Carnegie Mellon University. Peregrine will aim for the mid-latitudes' Sinus Viscosities, or Bay of Stickiness, named after the long-ago silica magma that formed the nearby Gruithuisen Domes.

Intuitive Machines' six-legged, 14-foot-tall (4-meter-tall) lander, Nova-C, will target the moon's south polar region, also carrying five experiments for NASA that will last about two weeks. The company is targeting 80 degrees south latitude for touchdown. That would be well within Antarctica on Earth, Altemus noted,



and 10 degrees closer to the pole than India landed last summer.

Scientists believe the south pole's permanently shadowed craters hold billions of pounds (kilograms) of frozen water that could be used for drinking and making rocket fuel. That's why the first moonwalkers in NASA's Artemis program — named after Apollo's twin sister in Greek mythology — will land there. NASA still has 2025 on the books for that launch, but the General Accountability Office suspects it will be closer to 2027.

Astrobotic will head to the south pole on its second flight, carrying NASA's water-seeking Viper rover. And Intuitive Machines will return there on its second mission, delivering an ice drill for NASA.

Landing near the moon's south pole is particularly dicey.

"It's so rocky and craggy and full of craters at the south pole and mountainous, that it's very difficult to find a lighted region to touch down safely," Altemus said. "So you've got to be able to finesse that and just set it down right in the right spot."

While Houston has long been associated with space, Pittsburgh is a newcomer. To commemorate the Steel City, Astrobotic's lander will carry a Kennywood amusement park token, the winner of a public vote that beat out the Steelers' Terrible Towel waved at football games, dirt from Moon Township's Moon Park, and a Heinz pickle pin.

The lander is also carrying the ashes or DNA from 70 people, including "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry and science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke. Another 265 people will be represented on the rocket's upper stage, which will circle the sun once separated from the lander. They include three original "Star Trek" cast members, as well as strands of hair from three U.S. presidents: George Washington, Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy.

## Islamic State group claims responsibility for Iran suicide bombings killing at least 84 people

By JON GAMBRELL and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The Islamic State group claimed responsibility Thursday for two suicide bombings targeting a commemoration for an Iranian general slain in a 2020 U.S. drone strike, the worst militant attack to strike Iran in decades as the wider Middle East remains on edge.

Experts who follow the group confirmed that the statement, circulated online among jihadists, came from the extremists, who likely hope to take advantage of the chaos gripping the region amid Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Wednesday's attack in Kerman killed at least 84 people and wounded an additional 284. It targeted a ceremony honoring Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, held as an icon by supporters of the country's theocracy and viewed by the U.S. military as a deadly foe who aided militants who killed American troops in Iraq.

On Thursday, chunks of asphalt appeared missing from the roadway where one bomb went off, suggesting the bomb had been packed with shrapnel to increase its deadly effects. Another spot still bore congealed blood from the wounded.

"The moment I turned around to tell my husband's sister, 'Let's go to the square,' the bomb exploded," 38-year-old Mahdieh Sazmand told The Associated Press from her Kerman hospital bed. "If we were just 10 steps further we would have been right over the bomb."

The Islamic State group claim identified the two attackers as Omar al-Mowahed and Seif-Allah al-Mujahed. The claim said the men carried out the attacks with explosive vests. It also used disparaging language when discussing Shiites, which the Islamic State group views as heretics.

The statement did not mention which regional arm of the extremists carried out the attack, which other claims in the past have had. But Aaron Y. Zelin, a senior fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said that some previous claims have not specified the regional arm, and that the latest claim came directly from an account associated with the group.

The group likely hoped to see Iran strike at Israel, widening its war on Hamas into a regional conflict

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 61 of 71

that Islamic State could potentially take advantage of, Zelin said.

"This falls under the modus operandi of IS, especially since it was such a mass casualty attack," Zelin said. "They are kind of like the Joker. They want to see the world burn. They don't care how it happens as long as it benefits them."

The Islamic State group previously claimed a June 2017 attack in Tehran on parliament and a masoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini that killed at least 18 people and wounded more than 50. The group has claimed two other assaults as well.

The extremist group, which once held vast territory across Iraq and Syria in a self-described caliphate it declared in 2014, ultimately were beaten back by U.S.-led forces. It has been in disarray in the years since, though it has mounted major assaults. In neighboring Afghanistan, for instance, the Islamic State group is believed to have grown in strength since the fall of the Western-backed government there to the Taliban in 2021.

The claim came as the extremists separately called on supporters around the world to avenge the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip by attacking Christians and Jews. The group also criticized Palestinian factions for allying with Iran, saying that Tehran only has taken advantage of the situation to appear as the defender of Palestinians.

Iranian government officials did not immediately acknowledge the claim, though state media reported on it. Officials had been indirectly blaming Israel for the attack and in Kerman on Thursday, passers-by stepped on signs bearing the image of the Israeli flag with the slogan "Death to Israel" written in Farsi across them.

An earlier report by the state-run IRNA news agency, later aired by state television, quoted an unnamed "informed source" as saying that surveillance footage from the route to the commemoration at Kerman's Martyrs Cemetery clearly showed a male suicide bomber detonating explosives.

The official said the second blast "probably" came from another suicide bomber, though it hadn't been determined beyond doubt.

Mohammad Mehdi Ghalekhani, a volunteer with the Revolutionary Guards' Basij force, suffered wounds in an attack he described as being horrific.

"I didn't get what happened exactly, this happened very suddenly," he told the AP. "When this happened many people died, and most people were injured. Those who died didn't have any intact body part — no whole hands or faces."

The Iranian state media reports gave new distances for how far apart the blasts happened, describing them as occurring 1.5 kilometer (about a mile) and 2.7 kilometers (1.68 miles) away from Soleimani's crypt. The official said the bombers likely chose the locations because they were outside of the security perimeter for the commemoration.

An earlier death toll of 103 was twice revised lower after officials realized that some names had been repeated on a list of victims and due to the severity of wounds suffered by some of the dead, health authorities said. Many of the wounded were in critical condition, however, so the death toll could rise.

Authorities plan to hold a mass funeral service Friday for those killed, though plans for the event changed late Thursday, possibly over security concerns in Kerman, about 820 kilometers (510 miles) southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran.

The gathering marked the fourth anniversary of the killing of Soleimani, the head of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq. The explosions occurred as long lines of people gathered to mark the event.

The attacks came a day after a deputy head of the Palestinian militant group Hamas was killed in a suspected Israeli strike in Beirut. Another Revolutionary Guard commander was killed in a suspected Israeli airstrike in Syria late last month as well.

Those strikes, as well as attacks on shipping in the Red Sea by Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen known as Houthis, have raised concerns about the Israel-Hamas war escalating into a wider regional conflict.

## Oscar Pistorius is set to be released on parole. He will be strictly monitored until December 2029

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — Oscar Pistorius is due to be released from prison Friday to live under strict conditions at a family home having served nearly nine years of a murder sentence for the shooting death of girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.

The double-amputee Olympic runner from South Africa is set to leave the Atteridgeville Correctional Centre in Pretoria after being approved for parole in November, the second time he had applied. It will give the world a chance at its first glimpse in nearly a decade of the one-time sporting superstar who stunningly fell from grace after shooting Steenkamp multiple times through a closed toilet door at his home in the predawn hours of Valentine's Day 2013.

South Africa's Department of Corrections declined to give any detail of when and how Pistorius would be released, saying "inmates and parolees are never paraded." Pistorius' public profile "does not make him different from other inmates nor warrant inconsistent treatment," the Department of Corrections said in a statement Wednesday.

Pistorius, 37, is expected to initially reside at his uncle's luxurious mansion in the upscale Pretoria suburb of Waterkloof, where he lived during his dramatic murder trial and was held under house arrest for a period from 2015-2016. On Thursday, bright yellow traffic barriers had been placed across a road leading to his uncle's house, possibly in preparation for Pistorius' arrival.

The multiple Paralympic champion will live under correctional supervision until the remainder of his murder sentence of 13 years and five months expires in December 2029, the Department of Corrections said. Serious offenders in South Africa are eligible for parole after serving at least half of their sentence, which Pistorius has done.

Pistorius has maintained that he shot Steenkamp, a 29-year-old model and law graduate, by mistake. He testified that he believed Steenkamp was a dangerous intruder hiding in his bathroom and shot through the door multiple times with his licensed 9 mm pistol in self-defense.

Prosecutors said he killed his girlfriend intentionally during a late-night argument.

Steenkamp's family did not oppose his parole application in November, although her mother, June Steenkamp, said in a victim statement submitted to the board that made the decision that she didn't believe Pistorius had been fully rehabilitated and was still lying about the killing.

The Corrections Department has emphasized that his release — like every other offender on parole — does not mean that he has served his time.

Some of Pistorius' parole conditions include restrictions on when he's allowed to leave his home, a ban on consuming alcohol, and orders that he must attend programs on anger management and on violence against women. He will have to perform community service.

Pistorius will also have to regularly meet with parole officials at his home and at correctional services offices and will be subjected to unannounced visits by authorities. He is not allowed to leave the Waterkloof district without permission and is banned from speaking to the media until the end of his sentence. He could be sent back to jail if he is in breach of any of his parole conditions.

South Africa does not use tags or bracelets on paroled offenders so Pistorius will not wear any monitoring device, Department of Corrections officials said. But he will be constantly monitored by a department official appointed to his case and will have to inform the official of any major changes in his life, such as if he wants to get a job or move house.

Before the killing, Pistorius was held up as an inspiring role model having had both of his legs amputated below the knee as a baby because of a congenital condition. He became a champion sprinter on his carbon-fiber running blades and made history by competing at the 2012 London Olympics. He was widely admired for his apparent humble nature.

But his murder trial shattered that reputation and revealed another side to his life. He was accused of being prone to angry outbursts and acting recklessly with guns, while witnesses testified about various

altercations he had with others, including an argument in which he allegedly threatened to break a man's legs.

Pistorius was first convicted of culpable homicide — a charge comparable to manslaughter — and sentenced to five years in prison for killing Steenkamp. After appeals by prosecutors, he was ultimately found guilty of murder and had his sentence increased, although that judgment by the Supreme Court of Appeal still didn't definitively rule that he knew it was Steenkamp behind the toilet door.

Pistorius was first sent to prison in 2014, was released on house arrest during an appeal in 2015 and was sent back to prison in 2016.

Reaction to Pistorius' parole has been muted in South Africa, a stark contrast to the first days and months after Steenkamp's killing, which enraged many and sparked angry protests outside of Pistorius' court hearings calling for him to receive a long prison sentence. There is no death penalty in South Africa.

"He has ticked all the necessary boxes," said Themba Masango, Secretary General of Not In My Name International, a group that campaigns against violence against women. "And we can only wish and hope Oscar Pistorius will come out a better human being."

"We tend to forget that there is a possibility where somebody can be rehabilitated."

## Putin speeds up a citizenship path for foreigners who enlist in the Russian military

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — President Vladimir Putin on Thursday signed a decree that speeds up a path to Russian citizenship for foreigners who enlist in the country's military amid the 22-month-old war in Ukraine.

The move comes as Moscow is trying to replenish its troops in Ukraine by various methods, including the recruitment of migrants. Russia is a magnet for hundreds of thousands of people from poorer Central Asian countries, and many of them seek citizenship each year.

Putin first allowed fast-track citizenship for foreigners who sign contracts with the Russian army in September 2022, shortly after announcing a partial mobilization to draft 300,000 reservists for Ukraine.

Those immigrants who signed a contract for at least a year and take part in active hostilities for at least six months were allowed to apply for citizenship without demonstrating sufficient knowledge of Russian or the fact that they'd lived in the country for five straight years under a residency permit. Spouses and children were also eligible to apply. Authorities were obligated to decide on such applications within three months, according a presidential decree at the time.

Another Putin decree from May 2023 additionally simplified the procedure: the clause about participating in active hostilities for at least six months was removed, and anyone who signed at least a year-long contract during the Kremlin's "special military operation" in Ukraine, as well as their spouses and children, was allowed to apply in the fast-track procedure.

The decree signed Thursday made the citizenship path even quicker, saying a decision on such applications shouldn't take more than a month, instead of three. There was no immediate comment from the Kremlin on why Putin decided on that change.

The new decree comes amid regular media reports of police raids in Russian cities that target migrants. According to the reports, those detained in such raids are often offered or even pressured to sign contracts with the military, and those who have recently acquired Russian citizenship are sent to enlistment offices to determine whether they're eligible for mandatory service.

The most recent raid, reported by the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper, took place on New Year's Eve in St. Petersburg and saw more than 3,000 migrants detained in the streets. The report cited an anonymous police source as saying the goal of the raid was finding men to recruit into the army.

In fall 2022, Moscow authorities ran advertisements for enlistment and offers of fast-track citizenship in Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz languages on several bus routes, the RBK news outlet reported. Mayor Sergei Sobyanin also promised to set up a makeshift enlistment site at a government service office for migrants outside Moscow.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 64 of 71

Since invading Ukraine, Russia's leadership has sought to boost its military strength. Putin has twice ordered it to increase the number of troops, most recently in December, to bring it to a total of 1.32 million. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has declared a force of 1.5 million is needed "to guarantee the fulfillment of tasks to ensure Russia's security." He didn't say when the military would reach that size.

The Kremlin previously considered the size of its military as sufficient, but the calculus changed after hopes for a quick victory were shattered by fierce Ukrainian resistance.

In August 2022, Putin ordered an increase in the size of the Russian military to 1.15 million starting from Jan. 1, 2023. In September 2022, he ordered the mobilization of 300,000 reservists. That number is counted as part of the military's current strength.

While Putin repeatedly has said there was no need to round up more, his mobilization decree is open-ended, allowing the military to call up additional reservists when needed and essentially keep those already drafted serving indefinitely. That decree also banned soldiers from terminating their contracts.

Regional authorities have tried to bolster the ranks by forming volunteer battalions for Ukraine. Across Russia's vast territory, a campaign to entice more men to enlist has been underway for months, with advertisements promising cash bonuses, recruiters making cold calls to eligible men, and enlistment offices working with universities and social service agencies to lure students and the unemployed.

Putin said last month that 486,000 new soldiers have signed contracts with the military in 2023. He didn't say how many of them were foreign nationals.

Some media reports and rights groups say the authorities also have offered amnesty to prisoners in exchange for a tour of military duty.

Both Russia and Ukraine have kept a tight lid of secrecy on their military casualties. The Russian military has confirmed only just over 6,000 military casualties, but Western estimates are much higher. In October, the U.K. Defense Ministry said Russia has "likely suffered 150,000-190,000 permanent casualties," a number that included troops that have been killed and permanently wounded.

## Average long-term mortgage rates edge higher, snapping 9-week slide

By ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate edged higher this week, ending a nine-week slide that gave prospective homebuyers some breathing room after home loan borrowing soared to the highest level in more than two decades.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage inched up to 6.62% from 6.61% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 6.48%.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners refinancing their home loans, kept easing this week, bringing the average rate to 5.89% from 5.93% last week. A year ago, it averaged 5.73%, Freddie Mac said.

This week's slight increase in the average rate on a 30-year home loan follows a sharp pullback in mortgage rates since late October, when it climbed to 7.79%, the highest level since late 2000.

The move mirrored a decline in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing loans. The yield, which in mid October surged to its highest level since 2007, has moved lower on expectations that inflation has cooled enough for the Federal Reserve to shift to cutting interest rates after yanking them dramatically higher since early 2022.

The Fed has opted to not move rates at its last three meetings, which has also given financial markets a boost.

"Given the expectation of rate cuts this year from the Federal Reserve, as well as receding inflationary pressures, we expect mortgage rates will continue to drift downward as the year unfolds," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist.

Housing economists expect that the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will decline further this year, though forecasts generally see it moving no lower than 6%.

Despite mostly falling since October, the average rate on a 30-year home loan remains sharply higher than just two years ago, when it was 3.22%. That large gap between rates now and then has helped

limit the number of previously occupied homes on the market by discouraging homeowners who locked in rock-bottom rates from selling.

"While lower mortgage rates are welcome news, potential homebuyers are still dealing with the dual challenges of low inventory and high home prices that continue to rise," Khater said.

The sharp runup in mortgage rates over the past two years pushed up borrowing costs on home loans, reducing how much would-be homebuyers can afford even as home prices have kept climbing due to a stubbornly low supply of properties on the market. That's weighed on sales of previously occupied U.S. homes, which slumped 19.3% through the first 11 months 2023.

## Microsoft's new AI key is first big change to keyboards in decades

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Computer keyboards are making room for an artificial intelligence chatbot button as Microsoft unveils its first major keyboard redesign in three decades.

Starting this month, some new personal computers that run Microsoft's Windows 11 operating system will have a special "Copilot key" that launches the software giant's AI chatbot.

Getting third-party computer manufacturers like Dell to add an AI button to laptops is the latest move by Microsoft to capitalize on its close partnership with ChatGPT-maker OpenAI and make itself a gateway for applications of generative AI technology.

Although most people now connect to the internet — and many AI applications — by phone rather than computer, it's a symbolic kickoff to what's expected to be a competitive year as tech companies race to outdo each other in AI applications even as they haven't yet resolved all the ethical and legal ramifications. The New York Times last month sued both OpenAI and Microsoft alleging that tools like ChatGPT and Copilot — formerly known as Bing Chat — are infringing on copyrighted news articles.

The keyboard redesign will be Microsoft's biggest change to PC keyboards since it introduced a special Windows key in the 1990s. Microsoft's four-squared logo design has evolved, but the key has been a fixture on Windows-oriented keyboards for about three decades.

The newest AI button will be marked by the ribbon-like Copilot logo and be located near the space bar. On some computers it will replace the right "CTRL" key, while on others it will replace a menu key.

Microsoft is not the only company with customized keys. Apple pioneered the concept in the 1980s with its "Command" key marked by a looped square design (it also sported an Apple logo for a time). Google has a search button on its Chromebooks and was first to experiment with an AI-specific key to launch its voice assistant on its now-discontinued Pixelbook.

But Microsoft has a much stronger hold on the broader PC market through its licensing agreements with third-party manufacturers like Lenovo, Dell and HP. About 82% of all desktop computers, laptops and workstations run Windows, compared to 9% for Apple's in-house operating system and just over 6% for Google's, according to market research firm IDC.

Dell Technologies on Thursday was the first to unveil a Copilot key on its newest XPS laptops.

Microsoft hasn't yet said which other computer-makers are installing the Copilot button beyond Microsoft's own in-house line of premium Surface devices. It said some of the companies are expected to unveil their new models at next week's CES gadget show in Las Vegas.

## The key question about fiery crash at Tokyo airport: Did one or both planes have OK to use runway?

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

Passengers on Japan Airlines Flight 516 were buckled up and ready to land at Tokyo's Haneda Airport as their pilot made a final approach. "Cleared to land," the pilot repeated after receiving an instruction from air traffic control to put the jet down on a specific runway.

About two minutes later, the Airbus A350 that had traveled from New Chitose Airport near Sapporo was

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 66 of 71

engulfed in an orange fireball on the ground, spewing gray smoke from the side.

Manabu Kotake, a Sapporo resident visiting Tokyo, felt a strong bang and initially thought the airliner had made a rough touchdown. He looked out the window and observed flames, then noticed a burning smell. Seated near the engine, Kotake saw it falling apart.

"I panicked and thought I may not be able to survive," he told Japanese news agency Jiji Press.

The A350 had collided with a much smaller coast guard plane that had received permission to approach the same runway but no takeoff clearance, according to a transcript of traffic control communications from the minutes before Tuesday's crash. Experts say neither the JAL pilot nor air traffic controllers may have realized the Bombardier Dash-8 already had entered the runway by the time the airliner came in.

With investigators focused on how traffic control communicated with the two planes during the busy holiday travel period, the big question to have emerged so far is why the coast guard plane was there.

The pilot of the coast guard plane, which was leaving on a mission to deliver relief goods to earthquake survivors in central Japan, evacuated with serious burns, but five crew members were killed. All 379 passengers and crew members of Flight 516 survived after an evacuation that took 18 minutes.

After their safe escape down emergency chutes, some passengers have shared details of their harrowing ordeal with the media.

Television footage of a survivor's video captured flight attendants repeatedly urging passengers to stay calm and to leave their belongings behind while making their way toward the closest of three frontward emergency exits that were usable. At first, passengers remained seated while waiting for attendants' directions, some lowering their heads to avoid the smoke filling the cabin.

"Please let us out!" a child shouts. In another footage, a number of passengers, including a woman holding a baby to her chest, ducks down and cautiously edges toward an exit while covering their mouths and eyes with towels.

Yasuhito Imai, a Tokyo resident who was returning from Sapporo, his hometown, said children were crying and some people shouting, but many others kept calm and followed instructions to leave the burning plane on emergency chutes.

"We could evacuate without panicking," he told Jiji, thanking other passengers and crew members.

Investigators from the Japan Transport Safety Board recovered flight data and voice recorders from the Bombardier on Wednesday as they examined what remained of the aircraft, the board said. The probe has focused on the communication between the traffic control and each pilot to figure out why the two planes ended up on the same runway.

Both the JAL and the coast guard pilots have said they had permission to use the runway where they collided. The coast guard has said officials were working to verify the coast guard pilot's reported claim that he had received permission to take off.

JAL officials said the pilot of the A350 has reported not seeing the Bombardier after he received authorization to make a normal landing. JAL spokesperson Keiko Miyoshi said the airline's position is that traffic control never instructed its pilot to abort the landing and perform a "go-around" instead.

Japan's Transport Ministry released a transcript Wednesday of air traffic control communications of about 4 minutes and 25 seconds before the crash. It does not show the coast guard plane getting a clear green light to take off.

According to the transcript, the control tower gave the JAL plane permission to land and noted that there was a departing plane without identifying it. Two other departing flights were standing by around that time. The JAL pilot acknowledged its instructions by repeating "Cleared to land," according to the transcript.

The coast guard plane said it was taxiing to the same runway, and traffic control instructed it to proceed to the stop line before the runway. The controller noted the coast guard gets the priority among departing flights, and the pilot repeated he was moving to the stop line. "No. 1, thank you," the pilot says.

Some experts think the use of the term No. 1 might have reflected the coast guard pilot's misunderstanding that he had permission to move on to the runway. Others suspect the coast guard members were in a rush to depart because of their supply delivery mission.

Two minutes later, there was a three-second pause, apparently indicating the time of the collision.

## South Korea views the young daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as his likely successor

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and JIWON SONG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The young daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is seen as her father's likely heir apparent, South Korea's spy agency said Thursday, its first such assessment on the preteen who was unveiled to the outside world a little more than a year ago.

There has been intense outside debate and speculation about her, reportedly about 10 years old and named Ju Ae, since she made her first public appearance in November 2022, when she watched a long-range missile test launch with her father.

The girl has since accompanied her father to a slew of major public events, with state media calling her Kim Jong Un's "most beloved" or "respected" child and churning out footage and photos proving her rising political standing and closeness with her father.

A senior general knelt and whispered to her when she clapped while watching a military parade at a VIP observation stand in September. She was photographed standing in front of her father at one point during a visit to the air force headquarters in November, with both Kims wearing sunglasses and long leather jackets. In a New Year's Eve celebration at a packed Pyongyang stadium Sunday, Kim Jong Un kissed her on the cheek and she did the same to her father.

Most of these scenes are something that had been unimaginable in North Korea, where Kim is the subject of a strong and loyal following that treats him like a god.

South Korea's main spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, said Thursday that it sees Kim Ju Ae as her father's likely successor, citing a comprehensive analysis of her public activities and the state protocols provided to her.

The NIS public affairs office told The Associated Press that it still considers all possibilities regarding the North's power succession process because Kim is still young, has no major health issues, and has at least one other child. Kim turns 40 on Monday.

Earlier Thursday, lawmaker Youn Kun-Young said the nominee for the NIS chief position, Cho Tae-yong, had given him that assessment. In phone conversations with the AP, Youn, a member of parliament's intelligence committee, said Cho's written responses to his questions contained no other details about Kim Ju Ae.

The NIS has a spotty record in confirming developments in North Korea, one of the world's most secretive nations. North Korea's state media have yet to make any direct comments on the succession plan, including whether Kim Ju Ae has any siblings.

Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said that while the NIS currently sees a high possibility of Kim Ju Ae getting primed to become her father's successor, few can predict whether she would eventually become the North's next leader. Cha added that Kim Ju Ae lacks political achievements that he said are essential to be formally anointed as the country's future leader.

Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea, said that Kim Jong Un likely believes his daughter has the capacity and resolve to succeed him as leader. He said Kim Jong Un's obesity appears so serious that "it won't be surprising even if he collapses tomorrow."

"By accompanying her father on major events, it's like she's learning kingship and building a human network at a tender age," Cheong said.

NIS and officials from other parts of South Korea's government earlier said it was premature to view Kim Ju Ae as her father's heir, given Kim Jong Un's relatively young age and North Korea's Confucianism-influenced, male-nominated power structure. They had said the girl's repeated appearances were more likely meant to shore up public support for Kim's family and his plan to one day hand power over to one of his children.

Since its foundation in 1948, North Korea has been successively ruled by male members of the Kim family. Kim Jong Un inherited power upon his father Kim Jong Il's death in late 2011. Kim Jong Il took over power after his father and state founder Kim Il Sung died in 1994.



The name of Ju Ae matched what retired NBA star Dennis Rodman called Kim's baby daughter, whom he said he saw and held during a trip to Pyongyang in 2013. The NIS told lawmakers in a private briefing last year that Kim Ju Ae has an older brother and a younger sibling whose gender the agency hadn't confirmed.

The NIS said at the time that Kim Ju Ae had never been enrolled in an official education facility and was getting homeschooled in Pyongyang, according to some of the lawmakers who attended the briefing.

Cheong, the Sejong Institute analyst, called the NIS intelligence on the older brother inaccurate, though he agrees that Kim Ju Ae has a younger sibling.

Revealing the young Kim Ju Ae came as a huge surprise to foreign experts because neither Kim Jong Un nor Kim Jong Il were mentioned in North Korean state media before they became adults.

## **Vatican says no heresy in allowing blessings for same-sex couples after pushback by some bishops**

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — After pushback by some bishops in Africa, Poland and elsewhere, the Vatican on Thursday defended the recent move by Pope Francis to allow blessings for same-sex couples, insisting there is nothing "heretical" involved.

In a five-page statement, the Holy See's office to safeguard doctrinal orthodoxy expressed understanding that some bishops' conferences need more time for "pastoral reflection" on the pontiff's formal approval for such blessings.

But "there is no room to distance ourselves doctrinally" from the Declaration about the blessings "or to consider it heretical, contrary to the Tradition of the Church or blasphemous," said the statement by the office, formally called the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The new rule of blessings came last month in the form of a declaration, an important Catholic church document.

Some bishops immediately said they wouldn't implement the new policy.

"Prudence and attention to the ecclesial context and to the local culture could allow for different methods of application" of the new blessings rule, "but not a total or definitive denial of this path that it proposed to priests," Thursday's statement said.

Still, the orthodoxy watchdog office on Thursday acknowledged that in situations where "there are laws that condemn the mere act of declaring oneself as a homosexual with prison and in some cases with torture and even death, it goes without saying that a blessing would be imprudent." It added: "It is clear that the Bishops do not wish to expose homosexual persons to violence."

However, the statement called it "vital" that these bishops conferences "do not support a doctrine different from that of the Declaration signed by the pope."

Thursday's statement took pains to stress the Vatican's position that "remains firm on the traditional doctrine of the Church about marriage, not allowing any type of liturgical rite or blessing similar to a liturgical rite that can create confusion."

The pontiff's approval reversed a 2021 policy by the Vatican's doctrine office which barred such blessings on the grounds that God "does not and cannot bless sin."

The Vatican holds that gay people must be treated with dignity and respect, but that gay sex is "intrinsically disordered." Catholic teaching says that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and woman, is part of God's plan and is intended for the sake of creating new life.

Zambia's bishops conference said same-sex couple blessings were "not for implementation in Zambia." The bishops conference of Malawi said "blessings of any kind" for "same-sex unions of any kind" would not be permitted.

In Zambia, gay sex is punishable by between 15 years and life in prison and the law puts it in the same section as bestiality. Malawi's laws call for up to 14 years in prison for homosexual sex, with the option of corporal punishment for those convicted.

Zambian bishops said there should be "further reflection" on the blessings and cited the country's laws against homosexuality and its "cultural heritage" that rejects same-sex relationships as reasons for its decision.

Francis in his papacy has made a decade-long effort to make the church a more welcoming place for the LGBTQ+ community. But his approach continues to spark resistance among traditionalist and conservative Catholic leaders.

Thursday's statement stressed that the Vatican was allowing "short and simple pastoral blessings."

"This non-ritualized form of blessing, with the simplicity and brevity of its form, does not intend to justify anything that is not morally acceptable," the dicastery's statement said.

The statement was signed off by Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, an Argentine prelate who is a theological adviser to Francis.

It concluded by saying that in some places, some "catechesis will be necessary that can help everyone to understand that these types of blessings are not an endorsement of the life led by those who request them" nor an "absolution, as these gestures are far from being a sacrament or a rite."

## **What is the Epiphany? Why is it also called Three Kings Day? And when do Christians celebrate it?**

Associated Press undefined

Christians around the world will mark the Epiphany on Jan. 6 with a series of celebrations that go from parades and gift-giving for children to the blessing of water. The holiday is also called the Feast of Epiphany, Three Kings Day and Theophany.

Why is it known with different names?

Some Western Christian churches know the feast day as Three Kings Day. It recalls the visit of three Magi, or wise men, to the infant Jesus, and their sense of wonder at the encounter. It is the 12th day after Christmas and closes the Christmas season.

Eastern traditions call it Theophany, and they focus on the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Orthodox Christians also know it as the Baptism of Christ.

What does Epiphany mean?

The Greek word "epiphaneia" means "appearance" or "manifestation," and it refers to the manifestation of Jesus to the world, according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

How is it celebrated?

The day is often celebrated by Catholics in Spain with parades that include decorative floats carrying people dressed as the biblical kings who brought gifts to the infant Jesus. Children in Spain and in some parts of Latin America traditionally unwrap holiday gifts that elsewhere in the world are delivered by Santa Claus on Christmas Day.

Greeks celebrate Epiphany with blessing of the waters ceremonies across the country, which is primarily Orthodox.

In Bulgaria, some observers plunge into rivers and lakes to retrieve crucifixes, in an old ritual marking the feast of Epiphany, also known as the Apparition of Christ.

By tradition, a crucifix is cast into the waters of a lake or river. It's believed that the person who retrieves it will be freed from evil spirits and will be healthy through the year. After the cross is fished out, the priest sprinkles believers with water using a bunch of basil.

When is it celebrated?

Orthodox Christian churches in Bulgaria, Greece and Romania celebrate the feast on Jan. 6. But for Orthodox Churches in Russia, Serbia and Ukraine that follow the Julian calendar, Epiphany is celebrated on Jan. 19, as their Christmas Eve falls on Jan. 6.

What is the origin of Epiphany?

It originated in the Eastern church and originally included a celebration of the birth of Jesus, according

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 70 of 71

to Encyclopedia Britannica, which in its entry says that by the fourth century, the church in Rome began celebrating Epiphany separately on Jan 6.

## Today in History: January 5, 'Waiting for Godot' premieres in Paris

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 5, the fifth day of 2024. There are 361 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 5, 1953, Samuel Beckett's two-act tragicomedy "Waiting for Godot," considered a classic of the Theater of the Absurd, premiered in Paris.

On this date:

In 1896, an Austrian newspaper, Wiener Presse, reported the discovery by German physicist Wilhelm Roentgen (REN't-gun) of a type of radiation that came to be known as X-rays.

In 1914, auto industrialist Henry Ford announced he was going to pay workers \$5 for an 8-hour day, as opposed to \$2.34 for a 9-hour day. (Employees still worked six days a week; the 5-day work week was instituted in 1926.)

In 1925, Democrat Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming took office as America's first female governor, succeeding her late husband, William, following a special election.

In 1933, construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge. (Work was completed four years later.)

In 1943, educator and scientist George Washington Carver, who was born into slavery, died in Tuskegee, Alabama, at about age 80.

In 1949, in his State of the Union address, President Harry S. Truman labeled his administration the Fair Deal.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed assistance to countries to help them resist Communist aggression in what became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon announced that he had ordered development of the space shuttle.

In 1994, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, former speaker of the House of Representatives, died in Boston at age 81.

In 1998, Sonny Bono, the 1960s pop star-turned-politician, was killed when he struck a tree while skiing at the Heavenly Ski Resort on the Nevada-California state line; he was 62.

In 2004, foreigners arriving at U.S. airports were photographed and had their fingerprints scanned in the start of a government effort to keep terrorists out of the country.

In 2011, John Boehner (BAY'-nur) was elected speaker as Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives on the first day of the new Congress.

In 2022, Australia denied entry to tennis star Novak Djokovic, who was seeking to play for a 10th Australian Open title later in the month; authorities canceled his visa because he failed to meet the requirements for an exemption to COVID-19 vaccination rules.

In 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his armed forces to observe a unilateral 36-hour cease-fire in Ukraine for the Orthodox Christmas holiday, the first such sweeping truce move in the nearly 11-month-old war.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Robert Duvall is 93. Juan Carlos, former King of Spain, is 86. Singer-musician Athol Guy (The Seekers) is 84. Actor-director Diane Keaton is 78. Actor Ted Lange (lanj) is 76. Rock musician Chris Stein (Blondie) is 74. Former CIA Director George Tenet is 71. Actor Pamela Sue Martin is 71. Actor Clancy Brown is 65. Singer Iris Dement is 63. Actor Suzy Amis is 62. Actor Ricky Paull Goldin is 59. Actor Vinnie Jones is 59. Rock musician Kate Schellenbach (Luscious Jackson) is 58. Actor Joe Flanigan is 57. Talk show host/dancer-choreographer Carrie Ann Inaba is 56. Rock musician Troy Van Leeuwen (Queens of the Stone Age) is 56. Actor Heather Paige Kent is 55. Rock singer Marilyn Manson is 55. Actor Shea Whigham is 55. Actor Derek Cecil is 51. Actor-comedian Jessica Chaffin is 50. Actor Bradley Cooper is 49. Actor January Jones is 46. Actor Brooklyn Sudano is 43. Actor Franz Drameh is 31.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Jan. 05, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 195 ~ 71 of 71

## Boys' Basketball

Clark/Willow Lake @ Groton Area  
Friday, January 5, 2024

Game Times/Locations: Main Court in Arena

- 5:00PM - Boys C
- 6:00PM - Boys JV
- o Halftime Entertainment: Middle School Drumline
- 7:30PM - Boys Varsity
- o Halftime Entertainment: Groton HS Dance Team.

Prior to the Boys Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.

ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$5.00 Students: \$4.00.

CONCESSIONS: Will be available

LOCKER ROOM: Clark/Willow Lake will use the far back locker room down the JH Locker Room Hallway.

Team Benches – Groton: South Bench  
Clark/Willow Lake: North Bench

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site. AED is located near the ticket booth.

Livestream: [GDIlive.com](http://GDIlive.com) (must pay to watch) or NFHS

C Game Officials: Marty Weismantel, Justin Hanson, Kristi Zoellner

Varsity Officials: Eric Donat, Daren Lorenz, Paul Rozell

Announcer: Mike Imrie

Scoreboard: Kristen Dolan

Official Book: Alexa Schuring

Shot Clock Operator: Marty Weismantel

National Anthem: Groton HS Pep Band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh

**Thank you, Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director**