

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, Feb. 19

No Senior Meal

No School - President's Day

Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Boys Basketball: Dakota Valley at Groton Area. Junior varsity game at 4:30 p.m. followed by varsity.

Tuesday, Feb. 20

Senior Menu: Ham rotini bake, mixed Monterey blend, peas, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

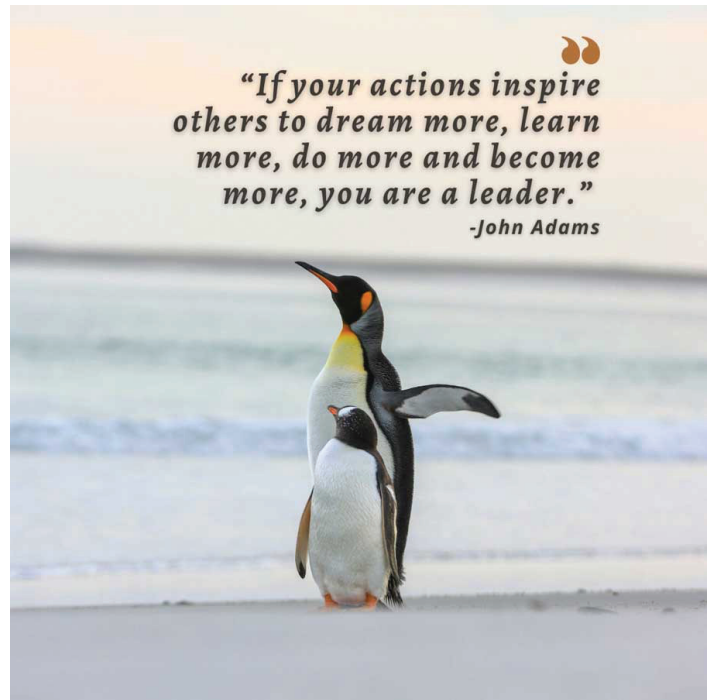
School Lunch: Hot dots, fries.

Girls Basketball Region 1A: 7:30 p.m.: Groton Area vs. Webster Area at Aberdeen Roncalli.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

-John Adams

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

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

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 21

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, vegetable winter blend, carrot bars, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Cheese nachos.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Service at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.; Soup Supper (Emmanuel Men serving), 6 p.m.; Worship, 7 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Community coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m., Lent Bible Study, 7 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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1440

In partnership with **smartasset**[™]

Nearly 400 people were arrested in Russia amid demonstrations mourning the Friday death of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, according to rights groups. Prison officials claimed Saturday the 47-year-old died of sudden death syndrome, a catch-all term for various causes of cardiac arrest. Navalny's family has been unable to locate the body.

England's worst measles outbreak in more than a decade has spread from its original hot spot in the West Midlands region to areas around the country, according to new government data. Roughly two-thirds of the cases have been reported in children 10 years old and younger, with almost half in children under the age of 4.

Egypt appears to be building a fortified wall along its border with the Gaza Strip, according to newly analyzed satellite photos. The construction—which has not been publicly acknowledged by the Egyptian government—comes as Israel appears ready to advance into the city of Rafah, which sits directly across the border.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Oppenheimer" is big winner at 2024 British Academy Film Awards, hauling in seven wins, including best film; see full list of BAFTA winners.

NASCAR Cup's season-opening Daytona 500 postponed due to rain; rescheduled for this afternoon (4 pm ET, Fox).

East beats West 211-186 in NBA's All-Star game; see weekend highlights here. Lefty Driesell, college basketball coaching legend and Basketball Hall of Famer, dies at 92.

Science & Technology

NASA says material recovered from its OSIRIS-REx mission to the asteroid Bennu is double the amount expected. Samples expected to provide insights into the early formation of the solar system; see previous write-up.

Food allergy treatment to lessen severity of common reactions approved by US health officials; injectable drug targets a naturally produced antibody involved in triggering allergy symptoms.

Engineers demonstrate small, tamper-proof identification tags that can be fixed to nearly any physical item to prove authenticity.

Business & Markets

Markets end five-week winning streak (Dow -0.4%, S&P 500 -0.5, Nasdaq -0.8%); higher-than-expected inflation numbers stoke fears Federal Reserve may delay interest rate cuts.

Apple to be fined almost \$540M by the European Union over claims policies regarding Apple Music on iPhones were anticompetitive.

Biden administration expected to relax planned tailpipe emission regulations as automakers call for more time to bring electric vehicle costs down; current rules would require two-thirds of new light-duty fleets to be electric by 2032.

Politics & World Affairs

Two police officers and a paramedic shot and killed, one other wounded during domestic incident call in Burnsville, Minnesota, early Sunday; suspect killed at scene. Large propane tank found under Virginia home that exploded Friday, killing one firefighter, injuring 10 others. Newly installed Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry (R) declares state of emergency amid police shortage.

West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin (D) says he will not launch an independent bid for president. Democrat Rep. Dean Phillips (MN-03) announces layoffs to presidential campaign, will remain in race.

Poverty rate in Argentina reaches 57% in January, highest level in two decades; comes amid broad economic reforms, including currency devaluation, under new Libertarian President Javier Milei.

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Groton Area February Students of the Month



Holden Sippel
Senior



Faith Traphagen
Junior



Rylee Dunker
Sophomore



Kira Clocksene
Freshman



Sydney Locke
Eighth Grade



Asher Johnson
Seventh Grade



Asher Zimmerman
Sixth Grade

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.

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NEC Boys' Basketball

Musical chairs for number two

It appears that Groton Area should maintain the number one spot for Region 1A; however, the number two spot has musical chairs. It's been Waubay/Summit, Milbank and Tiospa Zina all in the hunt for the second seed. Sunday morning, it was Milbank. By Sunday afternoon, it was Tiospa Zina. Of course, Groton Area has two games left. The Tigers were 1.5 points ahead of the number two seed place last week. Now, the Tigers are less than a point. A big game this week for number two features Milbank and Tiospa Zina on Friday.

For the Northeast Conference, Hamlin wins the championship outright with Groton Area in number two.

Aberdeen Roncalli 58, Clark-Willow Lake 35

Clark-Willow Lake 59, Tiospa Zina 49
Deuel 60, Sisseton 51
Hamlin 90, Britton-Hecla 31

Hamlin 52, Clark-Willow Lake 38
Aberdeen Roncalli 46, Deuel 34








Tiospa Zina 76, Redfield 33
Groton 77, Britton-Hecla 35
Milbank 68, Webster 49

Feb. 23: Tiospa Zina at Milbank

Boys NEC Standings

	NEC	Overall
Hamlin	10-0	17-3
Groton Area	9-1	14-4
Clark/Willow Lake	7-3	9-10
Roncalli	7-3	13-7
Milbank	6-3	13-5
Deuel	5-5	8-12
Tiospa Zina	4-5	13-6
Webster Area	3-7	8-11
Britton-Hecla *	2-8	4-16
Sisseton	1-9	3-16
Redfield	0-10	1-19
* Class B Team		

Region 1A Standings

		Season			Seed Pts
#	Name	W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Groton Area	14	4	.778	43.056
2	 Tiospa Zina	13	6	.684	42.105
3	 Milbank	13	5	.722	41.944
4	 Waubay/Summit	13	6	.684	41.632
5	 Aberdeen Roncalli	13	7	.650	41.500
6	 Webster Area	8	11	.421	39.211
7	 Sisseton	3	16	.158	36.316
8	 Redfield	1	19	.050	34.150

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NEC Girls' Basketball

Sisseton wins the Northeast Conference title this year with a perfect 10-0 record. Now attention switches to regional competition as Sisseton and Roncalli are the host sites for Region 1A.

Feb. 13
Sisseton 65, Deuel 26
Clark-Willow Lake 62, Tiospa Zina 33
Hamlin 54, Britton-Hecla 36

FINAL Girls NEC Standings









Sisseton	10-0	18-1
Hamlin	9-1	13-7
Roncalli	8-2	17-3
Groton Area	7-3	13-7
Milbank	6-4	11-9
Deuel	4-6	6-14
Clark/Willow Lake	4-6	8-12
Webster Area	3-7	7-13
Redfield	3-7	6-14
Britton-Hecla *	1-9	7-13
Tiospa Zina	0-10	1-19

* Class B Team

Feb. 15
Aberdeen Roncalli 54, Deuel 43
Milbank 60, Webster 37
Hamlin 51, Clark-Willow Lake 44

Feb 16
Groton 69, Britton-Hecla 31
Redfield 58, Tiospa Zina 29

Girls Region 1A Standings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Sisseton	18	1	.947	46.263
2	 Aberdeen Roncalli	17	3	.850	44.750
3	 Groton Area	13	7	.650	42.850
4	 Milbank	11	9	.550	41.000
5	 Waubay/Summit	10	10	.500	39.700
6	 Webster Area	7	13	.350	38.950
7	 Redfield	6	14	.300	38.250
8	 Tiospa Zina	1	19	.050	34.450

Yankton County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Hwy 50, Mile marker 393, 7 miles east of Yankton, SD

When: 8:49 p.m., Saturday, February 17, 2024

Driver 1: Male, 45, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2002 Ford Van

Seat Belt Used: No

Driver 2: Male, 29, life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 2: 2021 Chevrolet Tahoe

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Passenger: Female, 28, minor injuries

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Yankton County, S.D.- A 45-year-old man died Saturday evening in a two-vehicle crash in Yankton County.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates a Ford van was traveling eastbound in the westbound lanes of SD Highway 50 near Gayville. At the same time, a Chevrolet Tahoe was traveling westbound in the westbound lanes of Highway 50. The vehicles crashed head-on. The driver of the van received fatal injuries. He was not wearing a seatbelt. The driver of the Tahoe was wearing a seatbelt and received serious life-threatening injuries and was flown by helicopter to a Sioux Falls hospital. The passenger in the Tahoe was transported to a nearby hospital with minor injuries. She was also wearing a seatbelt.

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

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

Names Released in Deuel County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Hwy 15, Mile marker 129, 2 miles west and 1 mile north of Toronto, SD

When: 11:38 a.m., Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Driver 1: Nancy Lue Meyer, 68-year-old female from Toronto, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2012 Chevrolet Impala

Seat Belt Used: Under investigation

Driver 2: Eddie E. Waldner, 62-year-old male from Volga, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 2: 2016 Peterbilt Conventional Semi

Seat Belt Used: Under investigation

Deuel County, S.D.- A 68-year-old Toronto, SD woman died Wednesday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash in Deuel County.

Preliminary crash information indicates Nancy L. Meyer, the driver of a 2012 Chevrolet Impala was traveling south on SD 15, lost control on icy roads and slid across the center line directly in front of a 2016 Peterbilt semi driven by Eddie E. Waldner. The front of the semi struck the passenger side of the Impala. Both vehicles went off the roadway into the west ditch. Meyer was pronounced deceased on scene. There were no passengers in the vehicle. Waldner had no injuries. Seatbelt use is under investigation for both drivers.

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

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

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Watertown Youth Tourney Results for Groton

TOTS 31-34: Watson Herron's place is 3rd and has scored 8.0 team points.

Round 1 - Griffen Gerrish (watertown) won by fall over Watson Herron (Groton) (Fall 0:27)

Round 2 - Watson Herron (Groton) won by major decision over Rhett Myhre (Minnesota) (Maj 14-1)

Round 3 - Theo Bortz (watertown) won by fall over Watson Herron (Groton) (Fall 0:20)

TOTS 40-44: Ryker Herron's place is 1st and has scored 20.0 team points.

Round 1 - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Hudson Morris (Claremont) (Fall 3:56)

Round 2 - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by injury default over Jack Tadlock (watertown) (Inj. 3:00)

Round 3 - Ryker Herron (Groton) won by fall over Bennett Vandersnick (Hazel) (Fall 0:18)

BANTAM 71-77: Kroy Khali's place is 1st and has scored 17.0 team points.

Round 1 - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Darin Peterson (Colton) (Fall 0:19)

Round 3 - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by major decision over Reed Trapp (Milbank) (Maj 9-0)

Round 4 - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Leon Hahn (Chester) (Fall 2:41)

Round 5 - Kroy Khali (Groton) won by fall over Grayson Bevers (watertown) (Fall 2:02)

Ipswich Youth Tournament Results for Groton Tuff Tigers

Tots 52-61: Vic Flihs's place is 3rd and has scored 9.0 team points.

Round 1 - Vic Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Lincoln Kolb (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (Fall 4:29)

Round 2 - Kru Peterson (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) won by decision over Vic Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Dec 14-10)

Round 3 - Kohen Resel (Miller) won by fall over Vic Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 3:25)

Bantam 50-56: Levi Davis's place is 5th and has scored 5.0 team points.

Round 1 - Henry Schaffner (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) won by major decision over Levi Davis (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Maj 10-2)

Round 2 - Rowan Richard (MATPAC Wrestling) won by decision over Levi Davis (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Dec 6-5)

Round 3 - John Lechner (warner northwestern) won by decision over Levi Davis (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Dec 4-0)

Round 4 - Levi Davis (Groton Tuff Tigers) received a bye () (Bye)

Round 5 - Elmer Braun (Ipswich Area) won by fall over Levi Davis (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 0:21)

Bantam 56-61: Roman Bahr's place is 3rd and has scored 7.0 team points.

Round 1 - Roman Bahr (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by decision over Teague Resel (Miller) (Dec 7-2)

Round 2 - Cayson Howard (Ipswich Area) won by fall over Roman Bahr (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 1:18)

Round 3 - Kasper Weisz (Redfield) won by decision over Roman Bahr (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Dec 5-2)

Midget 51-56: Bennett Iverson's place is 4th and has scored 4.0 team points.

Round 1 - Carter Olson (Mobridge Youth Wrestling) won by fall over Bennett Iverson (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 1:45)

Round 2 - Tobias Jones (Miller) won by tech fall over Bennett Iverson (Groton Tuff Tigers) (TF 15-0)

Round 3 - Gabriel Shempert (Mobridge AAU Wrestling) won by fall over Bennett Iverson (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 0:54)

Midget 57-58: Carter Zoellner's place is 1st and has scored 20.0 team points.

Round 1 - Carter Zoellner (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Kamdyn Frost (Tea) (Fall 1:15)

Round 2 - Carter Zoellner (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Ramiro Flores (Faulkton Trojans) (Fall 0:40)

Round 3 - Carter Zoellner (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Ryker Hoffman (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (Fall 3:44)

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Midget 60-62: Bo Flihs's place is 2nd and has scored 14.0 team points.

Round 1 - Bo Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Peyton Jandel (warner northwestern) (Fall 1:02)

Round 2 - Bowdrey Logan (Doland) won by fall over Bo Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 2:43)

Round 3 - Bo Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Alec Griese (Hoven Greyhounds) (Fall 0:33)

Midget 78-80: Samuel Flihs's place is 2nd and has scored 12.0 team points.

Round 1 - Hayzen Davis (Governor Wrestling) won by fall over Samuel Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 1:17)

Round 2 - Samuel Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Jacob Powell (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (Fall 1:41)

Round 3 - Samuel Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by decision over Axton Geist (Faulkton Trojans) (Dec 8-5)

Midget 112-118: Keenan Moody's place is 1st and has scored 18.0 team points.

Round 1 - Keenan Moody (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Jonathan Becker (warner northwestern) (Fall 1:04)

Round 2 - Keenan Moody (Groton Tuff Tigers) received a bye () (Bye)

Round 3 - Keenan Moody (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Lincoln Pederson (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (Fall 0:27)

Novice 65-72: Bentley Ehresmann's place is 1st and has scored 18.0 team points.

Round 1 - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton Tuff Tigers) received a bye () (Bye)

Round 2 - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by injury default over Easton Pochop (Redfield Youth Wrestling) (Inj. 2:15)

Round 3 - Bentley Ehresmann (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Jared Steiger (Mobridge Youth Wrestling) (Fall 0:57)

Novice 77-80: Brayson Hubbs's place is 3rd and has scored 9.0 team points.

Round 1 - Brayson Hubbs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Anderson Braun (warner northwestern) (Fall 0:13)

Round 2 - Ryder Long (warner northwestern) won by fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 3:00)

Round 3 - Carter Lane (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) won by fall over Brayson Hubbs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 0:36)

Novice 79-82: Preston Hinkelman's place is 1st and has scored 18.0 team points.

Round 1 - Preston Hinkelman (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Jeremyah Heidzig (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (Fall 0:21)

Round 2 - Preston Hinkelman (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Graham Reuer (warner northwestern) (Fall 0:56)

Round 3 - Preston Hinkelman (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by decision over Coy Stephenson (Faulkton Trojans) (Dec 6-2)

Novice 84-92: Adam Flihs's place is 2nd and has scored 14.0 team points.

Round 1 - Connor Van Wagner (Ipswich Youth) won by decision over Adam Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Dec 12-5)

Round 2 - Adam Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Markem Wright (Dupree) (Fall 1:20)

Round 3 - Adam Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Taitum Traversie (Timber Lake Youth Wrestling) (Fall 0:40)

Novice 87-93: Parker Zoellner's place is 1st and has scored 20.0 team points.

Round 1 - Parker Zoellner (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Colt Warriner (Governor Wrestling) (Fall 1:08)

Round 2 - Parker Zoellner (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Xzander Logan (Doland) (Fall 3:49)

Round 3 - Parker Zoellner (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Draycen Easterby (Ipswich Area) (Fall 1:08)

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Novice 129-140: Hank Flihs's place is 2nd and has scored 14.0 team points.

Round 1 - Hank Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Tristan Powell (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (Fall 0:37)

Round 2 - Hank Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by forfeit over Hudson Maack (Aberdeen youth wrestling club) (FF)

Round 3 - Corbin Dawson (Britton Hecla Wrestling Club) won by fall over Hank Flihs (Groton Tuff Tigers) (Fall 3:25)

Girls Midget 77-86: Elsy Hagen's place is 1st and has scored 6.0 team points.

Round 1 - Elsy Hagen (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Harper Opsahl (Ipswich Tigers) (Fall 1:27)

Round 2 - Elsy Hagen (Groton Tuff Tigers) won by fall over Harper Opsahl (Ipswich Tigers) (Fall 0:56)

DIRECTOR OF NURSING

\$10,000 Sign-On Bonus

REGISTERED NURSE

\$5,000 Sign-On Bonus

LPN - NIGHTS

\$5,000 Sign-On Bonus

CNA

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Applications are available on our website www.sundialmanor.com

Contact Clay at 605-492-3615 or clayb@sundialmanor.com

Sun Dial Manor is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer
(0214.0221)

Finance Officer Wanted

The Town of Andover is seeking a Finance Officer. This is a part time position. Must know word and excel. Resume can be sent to P O Box 35,

Andover, SD 57422, or email to bsmith@nvc.net. A complete job description is available by call 605-265-0236. EOE. (0214.0221)



Groton Daily Independent

Boys Basketball Game

Dakota Valley @ Groton Area

Monday, February 19th, 2024

Game Times/Location: Main Court in Arena

- 4:30 PM → Boys JV
- 5:45 PM → Boys Varsity

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: Dakota Valley will use the far back locker room down the JH Locker Room Hallway.

**Team Benches – Groton: South Bench
Dakota Valley: North Bench**

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site. AED is located near the ticket booth.

Livestream: GDlive.com (must pay to watch) or NFHS

Varsity Officials: Eric Donat, Paul Rozell, Levi Pearson

Announcer: Mike Imrie

Scoreboard: Kristen Dolan

Official Book: Alexa Schuring

Shot Clock Operator: Kristi Zoellner

National Anthem: Recording

Thank you, Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

Yearly Recap - Offense

By Jordan Wright

With the Super Bowl behind us, it's time to take one last look back on the 2023 NFL season. The Minnesota Vikings finished with a disappointing 7-10 record and failed to reach the playoffs - a stark reversal from the 2022 season, which saw the Vikings finish with a 13-4 record even with one of the worst defenses in the league.

The NFL is a quarterback-driven league, so it's no surprise the Vikings finished with a poor record considering Kirk Cousins went down with an injury halfway through the season. Prior to the injury, Cousins was playing some of the best football of his career. In eight games this season, Cousins completed 216/311 passes (69.5%) for 2,331 yards, 18 touchdowns and five interceptions. If you extrapolate those numbers out to a full season, Cousins would have been in the conversation for MVP. Instead, the Vikings had to scramble to find a replacement and keep the season afloat. The team traded for journeyman QB Josh Dobbs right before the trade deadline, and although he was able to capture lightning in a bottle for a few games, eventually Dobbsmania fizzled out. Fifth-round draft pick Jaren Hall came in and played admirably, but was clearly not ready to play. Nick Mullens got a few starts as well, and while he put up some good stats, he also threw too many interceptions. Needless to say, it was a carousel at the one position in football where you NEED stability.

To make matters worse, the Vikings were unable to turn to their running game to help support the anemic passing attack. Dalvin Cook was cut prior to the season, and Alexander Mattison failed to take advantage of being the lead back. In fact, he was the first starting running back in Vikings history to fail to reach the end zone. Ty Chandler and Cam Akers also got carries, and while both showed promise, it's too early to tell if either one is capable of replacing Alexander as the starter.

As if all that wasn't enough, the football gods decided to take away Justin Jefferson for much of the season as well. JJ only played in 10 games and was forced to leave many of those games early because of injury, yet he still managed to surpass 1,000 yards for the season (which is especially impressive considering how many different quarterbacks were throwing him the ball). T.J. Hockenson was second on the team with 960 yards, but he missed the final two games of the season after a cheap shot by the Detroit Lions' safety blew out Hockenson's knee. Rookie Jordan Addison was third, putting up a very respectable 960 yards and leading the team with 10 touchdowns.

If you needed any more reason as to why the 2023 season was completely off the rails, look no further than the offensive line. For years, the Vikings' offensive line was the weak link on the offense. This year, however, it was a strength for the team. Offensive tackles Christian Darrisaw and Brian O'Neill are perhaps the best tackle duo in the league. The Vikings brought in Dalton Risner to play left guard, Garrett Bradbury was a familiar presence at center, and Ed Ingram actually made improvements this year.

Make sure to check back next week, as we break down the 2023 Minnesota Vikings defense. Skol!

"No Man is an Island"

"No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." This is the beginning of a poem from 1624. In it, the poet John Donne appreciates how humans are all connected. Indeed, humans are social beings, and social connection is a factor in our health.

We all know the importance of a healthy diet and exercise for our health. We are getting better at understanding the importance of mental health. One thing we do not discuss much, however, are the benefits of social connection.

Our relationships with family, friends, people at work and in the community have a major impact on our health and well-being. Those who are socially connected and have stable and supportive relationships can more easily make healthy choices and have better mental and physical health outcomes. Social connections can help us cope with stress, anxiety, depression, and hard times. Rates of most any disease are lower for those that feel a high sense of community. This includes lower rates of heart disease, strokes, dementia, depression, and anxiety. Social connection with others can improve sleep, decrease your risk of death, and reduce your risk of violence and suicide.

Similarly, marriage decreases your risk of disease. While you may not need to get married to have a life-long partner, the benefits of a long-term relationship are well established. Marriage has been found to help with lower rates of cancer, dementia, and increases your chances of surviving a heart attack.

Loneliness is becoming more rampant even as cities grow larger and transportation faster. We seem to have everything right on our phones to keep us company. Somehow, despite all these advances in technology, or perhaps because of them, people can feel ever more isolated and alone.

So how do we build community? How do we foster social connections? One way is to encourage face to face contact, to get people together. Schools, sporting events, churches, grocery stores, coffee shops, parks, concerts, festivals, and more all help to build community. Civic organizations and volunteering can help foster social connections and help us find meaning and purpose.

You can improve your social connections right now. You could call someone. You could consider going to a local basketball game, visiting someone alone in their home, or seek out a volunteer opportunity. When you increase your sense of social connection and community, you can improve your health. When you brighten up someone else's day, you often brighten your own.

John Donne's famous poem "No Man is an Island" ends with a warning: "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook and Instagram featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its 22nd season of health information based on science, built on trust, streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Andrew Ellsworth, MD

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Are people typically taking into account climate risks when they shop for a new home?

-- Mary S., Old Forge, PA

It's true that climate risks are increasingly a factor for Americans when purchasing their next residence. A September 2023 study by Zillow found that upwards of 80 percent of prospective home buyers in the U.S. consider climate risks—floods, wildfires, extreme temperatures, hurricanes, drought—when shopping for a new home.

"Climate risks impact where most prospective buyers shop for a home," reports Zillow senior population scientist Manny Garcia. "While all generations juggle trade-offs like budget, floor plans and commute times, younger home shoppers are more likely to face another consideration: They want to know if their home will be safe from rising waters, extreme temperatures and wildfires."

It's no wonder that climate concerns are a bigger issue now more than ever for real estate given the uptick in extreme weather events and the fact that those born after 1980 (Gen Z and Millennials) comprise 54 percent of all home buyers in the U.S. Younger home buyers are much more likely to consider climate risks than older ones, and first-time buyers make up half of all home buyers.

Meanwhile, Redfin, a leading U.S. brokerage with an industry standard real estate listings website, recently began publishing air quality data in its home listings alongside information about schools, walkability and pricing history. The air quality data is one of the categories under the "climate" tab on all Redfin listings. The data behind this feature comes from Risk Factor, a tool that pings multiple environmental monitors to predict specific environmental/climate risks. Homes.com and Realtor.com are among the other companies also offering this info from Risk Factor in their real estate listings.

"Seeing all the data helps people quantify the risk when deciding if they're going to live in one county or another county," Daryl Fairweather, chief economist at Redfin, tells The Washington Post. "What's probably going to happen over time is that [poor air quality] is just another type of weather that people either can adapt to, or they say it's not worth it."

And you don't have to be shopping for a new home to consider climate risks. There is much you can do to mitigate climate risks at your current address. According to ClimateCheck, which offers a free online property report on climate risks for any U.S. address, every homeowner today should consider updating building structures and materials to improve durability and resistance to extreme weather. Landscaping appropriately for the type of climate risks in your area can also be considered. Also, homeowners should create an action plan for disaster scenarios, purchase appropriate insurance and actively participate in community-wide efforts to mitigate climate damage. By taking proactive measures before a disaster occurs, you can safeguard your home from significant destruction. Additionally, this foresight can substantially reduce the financial burden and time required for post-severe weather event recovery efforts.

Whether you're buying a new home or staying put in your current one, you're going to need to factor climate risks into your decision making moving forward as the world warms.



Upwards of 80 percent of prospective home buyers in the U.S. consider climate risks when shopping for a new home. Credit: Pexels.com.

Broton Daily Independent

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BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY

February 20, 2024 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Special Event Temporary Alcoholic Permit for Brown County Fair Foundation
5. Discuss the Liquor License for Brown County Fair Foundation for 2 nights of Rodeo during BCF
6. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign YMCA Drawdown #4 for CDBG Grant
7. Authorize Chairman to sign the Contract with North Central Steel for Expo Roof
8. Rachel Kippley, Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Fairboard Appointments
 - b. Fair Contracts
 - i. Golf Carts
 - ii. Grandstand Cleaning
9. Lynn Heupel, County Auditor
 - a. Resolution to Establish Vote Centers Locations for 2024
10. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. Open Bids for Gravel Truck & Road Machinery
 - b. Open Bids for Road Oil
 - c. Open Bids for Gravel Material
 - d. Open Bids for Asphalt Concrete Plant Mix Materials
11. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of February 13, 2024
 - b. Claims
 - c. Travel Requests
 - d. Lease
 - e. Claim Assignment
 - f. Sheriff Reports
12. Other Business
13. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
14. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at

<https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

February 20, 2024 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

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

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Authorization to Bid 2024 Street Resurfacing Project
4. Authorization to Begin Accepting 2024 Gravel Quotes
5. Discussion Regarding Maintenance of Alley East of Main Street
6. January Finance Report
7. Minutes
8. Bills
9. SDML District 6 Annual Meeting – April 10, 2024 – 6pm at the Groton American Legion
10. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
11. Continued Discussion Regarding Building Inspector/Code Enforcement
12. First Reading of Ordinance No. 775 – 2024 Summer Salaries
13. Open Applications for Remaining Summer Employment Positions
14. Hire Summer Baseball/Softball Employees
15. Adjournment

AGENDA

BROWN COUNTY PLANNING/ZONING COMMISSION REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETINGS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024 – 7:00 PM
BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX in the BASEMENT
(STAIRWAY AND ELEVATOR ACCESS TO BASEMENT)

- I. **Call to Order:** for Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission
- II. **Roll Call:** David North - Vice Chair, Dale Kurth, Patrick Keatts, James Meyers, Carrie Weisenburger, County Commissioner Mike Gage, and Stan Beckler-Chairman.
- III. **Approval of, February 20, 2024, Agenda:** Motion: 1st _____ 2nd _____
- IV. **Approval of January 16, 2024, Minutes:** Motion: 1st _____ 2nd _____

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

- V. **Old Business:**
 1. **Sign-up sheet:** On the table by the door entrance, and you can clearly mark YES or NO if you want to speak to the Board on any Agenda Item.
 2. **Permits:** Anyone present that has submitted a Variance Request or Conditional Use Petition to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) is still required to get their required PERMITS from the Zoning Office before starting their project if their Petition gets approved. Penalties may be assessed per Ordinance when starting projects without proper permits in place.
- VI. **New Business:** *Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission as Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA).*
 1. **Variance to Lot Size** in an Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) described as *proposed* Lots 1 & 2, "Tunby Addition" in the N1/2 of Section 14-T126N-R61W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (40437 & 40455 114th Street, Shelby Twp.)
 2. **Variance to Building Setbacks** in a Mini-Agriculture District (M-AG) described as "Claeys' Outlot A" in the SE1/4 of Section 20-T128N-R63W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (38954 104th Street, Savo Twp.)
 3. **Variance to Lot Size** in an Agriculture Preservation District (AG-P) described as *proposed* Lot 1, "Warner Dairy First Addition" in the E1/2 of the SW1/4 of Section 7-T121N-R63W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (38824 144th Street, Warner Twp.)
- VII. **Other Business:**

Completed as Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) & going to Planning Commission

AGENDA

BROWN COUNTY PLANNING/ZONING COMMISSION REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETINGS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024 – 7:00 PM
BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX in the BASEMENT
(STAIRWAY AND ELEVATOR ACCESS TO BASEMENT)

PLANNING COMMISSION

- I. **Old Business:**
- II. **New Business:** *Brown County Planning/Zoning Commission as Planning Commission.*
 10. **Preliminary & Final Plat** for financial purposes on a property described as “Tunby Addition” in the N1/2 of Section 14-T126N-R61W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (40437 & 40455 114th Street, Shelby Twp.)
 11. **Preliminary & Final Plat** for conveyance purposes on a property described as “Warner Dairy First Addition” in the E1/2 of the SW1/4 of Section 7-T121N-R63W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, South Dakota (38824 144th Street, Warner Twp.)
- III. **Other Business:** *Executive Session if requested.*
- IV. **Motion to Adjourn:** 1st _____ 2nd _____



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Open primaries effort attracts big contributions from South Dakotans and Colorado group

Campaign finance reports detail money raised and spent by ballot question committees

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 18, 2024 11:08 AM

An ongoing effort to create open primary elections received some big contributions from South Dakotans in 2023, and also received a little more than half of its donations from a Colorado-based political action committee funded in large part by a Georgia billionaire, according to recently filed campaign finance reports.

"Our open primaries effort in South Dakota has caught the attention of many groups nationally," said Joe Kirby, a leader of the open primaries effort, in an emailed statement.

The Colorado PAC is Unite America. It raised \$3.67 million in 2023, according to its federal campaign finance reports. Its biggest contributor was Arthur Blank, co-founder of the Home Depot and owner of the NFL's Atlanta Falcons, who gave the group \$1 million. That was one of seven individual contributions of \$200,000 or more that Unite America received last year.

Unite America gave contributions totaling \$451,150 to the South Dakota Open Primaries ballot question committee. The committee, which received \$818,000 in total contributions in 2023, is circulating petitions to place a measure on statewide ballots Nov. 5 that would establish top-two primaries for gubernatorial, congressional, legislative and county races. Candidates for each office would run in an open primary, regardless of their party affiliation.

"Unite America is an organization which advocates for election reform around the country," Kirby said. "They are funded by individuals who believe that election reforms like open primaries and ranked choice voting will improve the quality of politics in America."

South Dakota's primary elections are currently split by political party. Democrats allow the state's nearly 150,000 independents and non-politically affiliated voters to vote in their primaries, but Republicans do not. Republicans dominate general elections and hold every statewide office, while Democrats hold only 11 of the state's 105 legislative seats. Kirby has said the primary system "discourages competition, encourages hyper partisanship and excludes hundreds of thousands of voters."

The committee's state campaign finance report for 2023 shows it also received large donations from a group of Sioux Falls residents, among other, smaller individual contributions. The large contributions included a combined \$82,500 from David and Deanna Knudson; a combined \$80,000 from Joe and Jennifer Kirby; \$50,000 apiece from Tom Heinz, Dan Kirby and Drey Samuelson; and \$25,000 from John Fiksdahl.

Unspecified "consulting" costs of \$657,000 constituted most of the committee's expenditures. The committee started 2023 with about \$45,000 and ended it with a balance of about \$204,000.

Unlike some other states, South Dakota's campaign finance laws and rules allow disclosures such as "consulting" without specific information revealing who was paid and for what.

The open primaries group is just one of the South Dakota ballot question committees that recently submitted required year-end campaign finance reports.

According to their reports, the committees raised a combined total of \$1.25 million and spent \$1.12 million last year. In the early stages of a ballot question campaign, expenses may include paying petition circulators to gather the thousands of signatures needed from registered voters to place a question on the ballot.

Supporters of eight potential ballot questions are circulating petitions. Additionally, the Legislature has exercised its authority to place one measure on the ballot.

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There are no limits on contributions to ballot question committees in South Dakota. Following are summaries of the campaign finance reports from committees with significant financial activity in 2023.

Dakotans for Health

Dakotans for Health is the committee circulating ballot measures that would reestablish abortion rights in South Dakota and repeal the state sales tax on food.

The group's campaign finance report for 2023 shows about \$185,000 in donations, including \$119,706 from individual contributions. The biggest individual donations were \$5,000 apiece from Elizabeth Ziegler, of Rapid City; Stan Adelstein, of Rapid City; Evelyne Rozner, of Seattle; Vincent Ryan, of Boston; and Susan Cullman, of Stamford, Connecticut.

The organization started the year with about \$96,000 and spent about \$249,000. Expenses included \$167,000 on consulting, \$44,000 on salaries, and \$1,950 on advertising. The group's ending balance was about \$32,000.

Dakotans for Health's fundraising included a \$55,000 contribution from another committee, Takeitback.Org-Advocacy. Democratic political activist and former congressional candidate Rick Weiland is the chair and treasurer of both Takeitback.org and Dakotans for Health.

Committees are not required to disclose the names of contributors who donate \$100 or less. Takeitback.org's report shows \$33,845 worth of those contributions and \$23,559 of individual contributions of more than \$100 from people in multiple states.

Life Defense Fund

The Life Defense Fund is the group encouraging South Dakotans to "decline to sign" the abortion rights ballot petitions, hoping to prevent the measure from getting on the ballot.

The group's campaign finance report shows about \$211,000 in income, including \$87,931 from entities such as local or regional right-to-life committees.

Another \$28,000 came from individuals who gave \$100 or less, and \$92,000 came from individuals who gave more than \$100.

The biggest individual donation came from Adam and Joy Broin of Sioux Falls, who gave \$5,050.

The committee spent about \$209,000, including \$61,000 on advertising and \$120,000 on consulting. The committee started 2023 with about \$17,000 and ended with about \$19,000.

Marijuana

Petitions are circulating for two marijuana-related measures. One proposes to legalize a limited form of recreational adult marijuana use, possession and distribution. The other would repeal the state's existing medical marijuana program.

The Grow South Dakota Ballot Committee raised about \$24,000. The group aims to legalize recreational marijuana for people over 21 years old.

HomeSlice Media Group donated \$16,300 worth of creative services and travel expenses to the committee. The committee's chairman, Brad Jurgenson, is president of HomeSlice Media. Major cash donors included Puffy's marijuana dispensary in Rapid City and the Flower Shop of Dell Rapids. Both gave \$10,000. Grow South Dakota spent about \$800.

South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws Inc. also works to legalize marijuana. It raised no money and spent no money, but received \$5,000 worth of staff time and website operations from the Marijuana Policy Project in Washington, D.C.

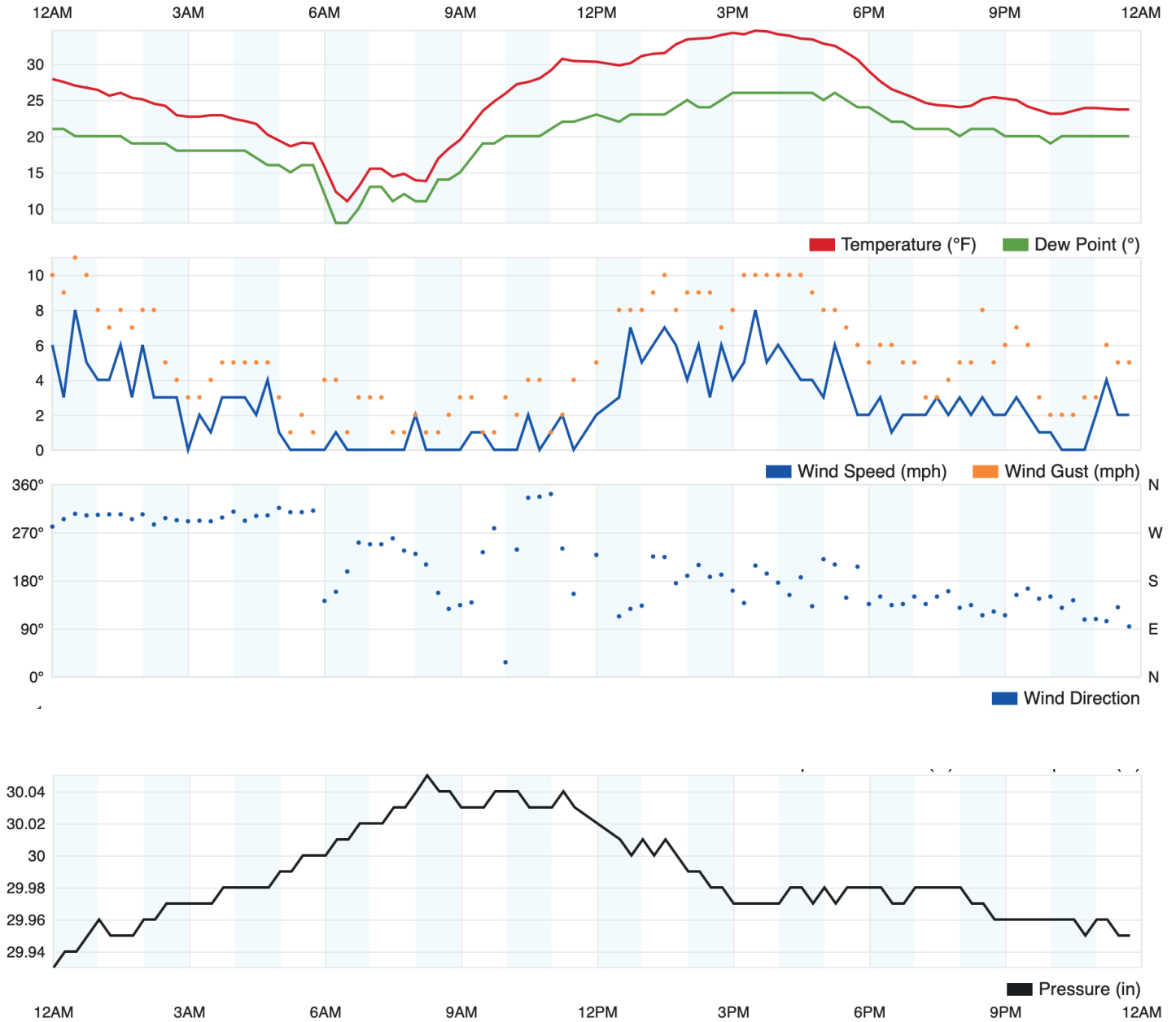
On the other side of the issue, Protecting South Dakota Kids (the group that opposed legalizing marijuana in 2022) took in about \$4,400 and spent \$176.

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

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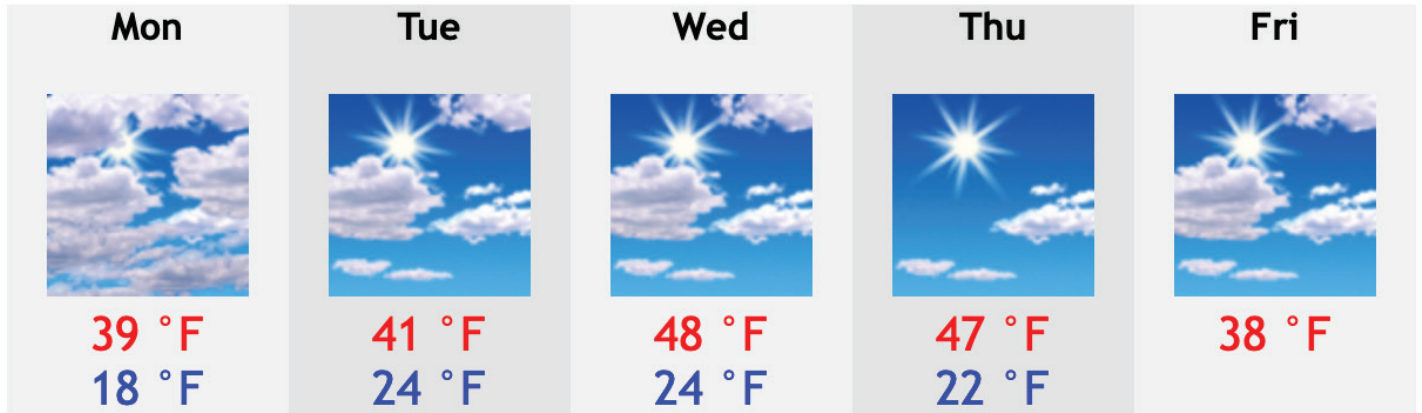
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



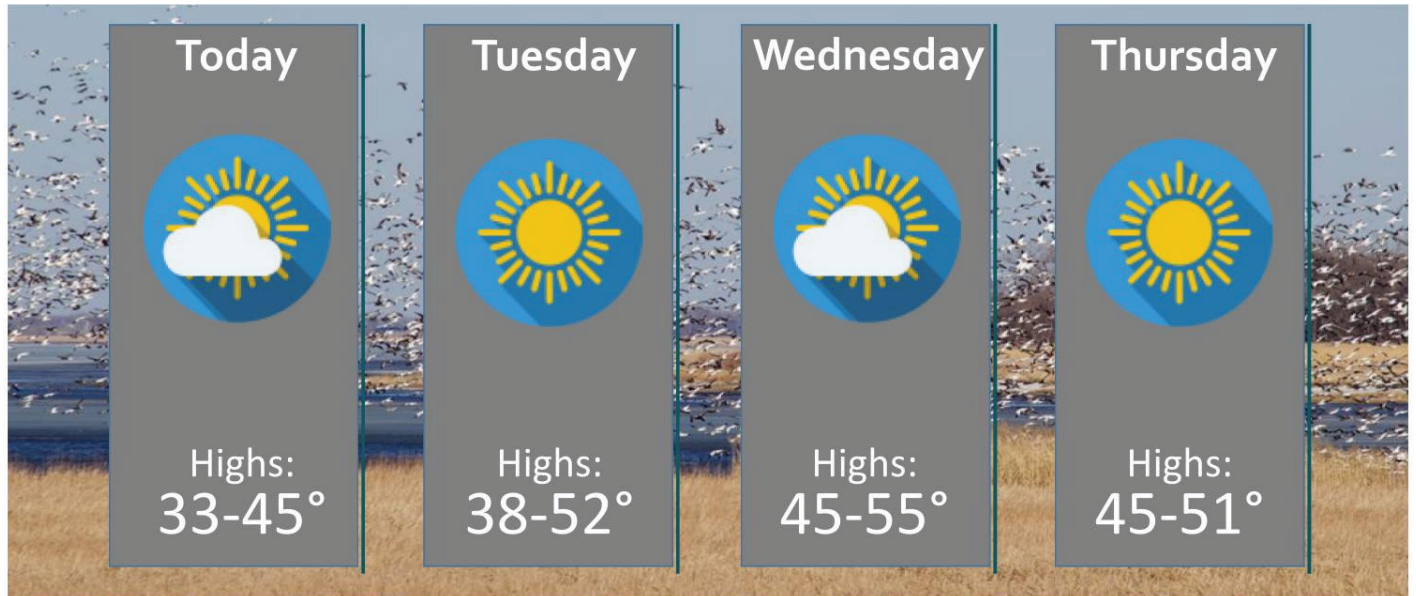
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Continued Mild & Dry

February 19, 2024
3:08 AM



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Dry conditions and seasonally mild temperatures will continue through most of the work week. May be a little cooler to end the work week before another surge in mild weather.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 35 °F at 3:29 PM

Low Temp: 11 °F at 6:27 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 12:24 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 39 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 1930

Record Low: -34 in 1929

Average High: 30

Average Low: 8

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.40

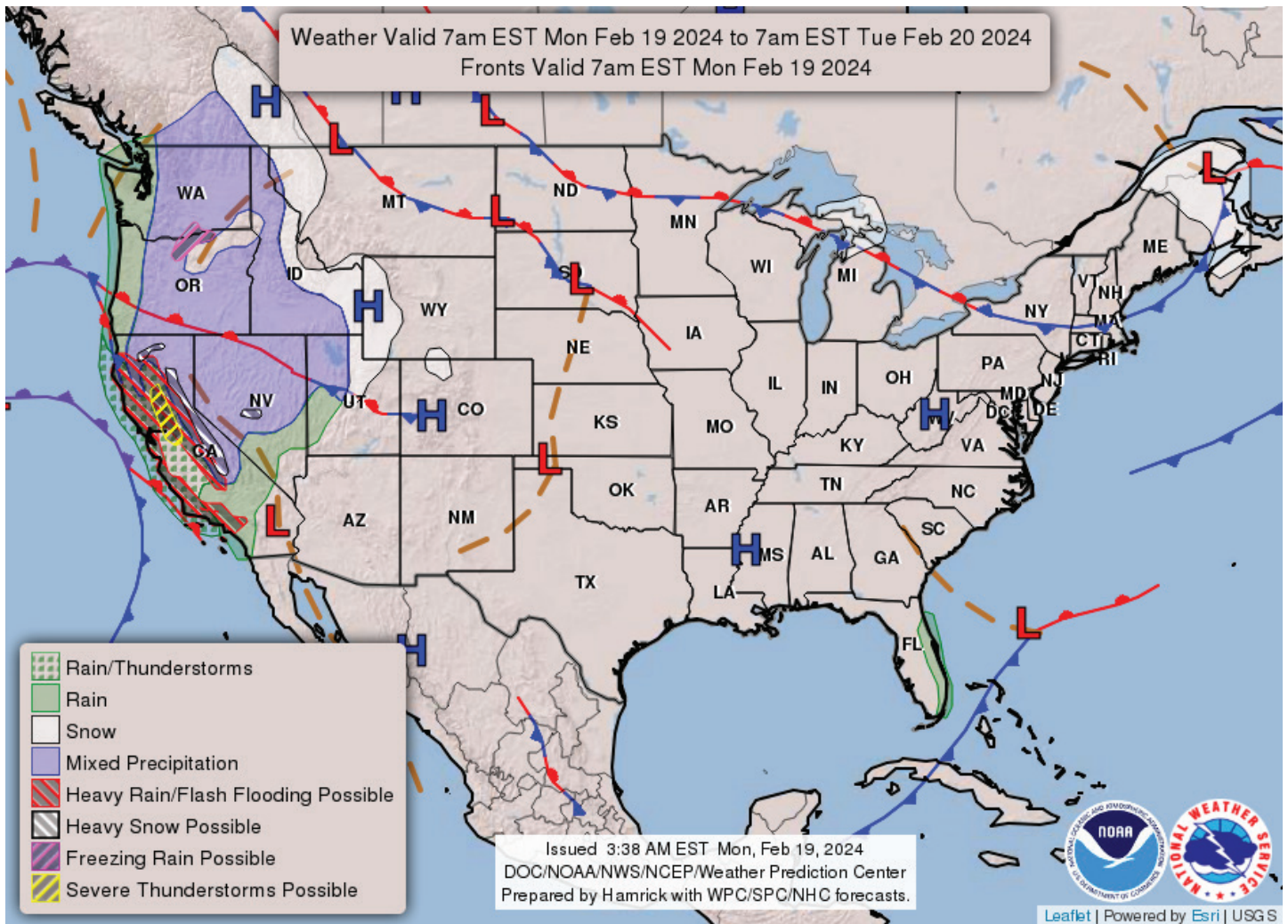
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.07

Average Precip to date: 0.95

Precip Year to Date: 0.07

Sunset Tonight: 6:06:05 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:24:42 am



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Today in Weather History

February 19th, 2000: Due to the arid and windy conditions, a fire believed to have been started by a discarded cigarette burnt about 1,300-acre of grassland between Kennebec and Lower Brule. The fire threatened a ranch but changed directions before anyone had to be evacuated.

February 19th, 2008: An Arctic air mass and blustery northwest winds brought extreme wind chills during the evening and early morning hours to northeast South Dakota. Wind chills ranged from 35 to 50 degrees below zero. The winds diminished in the early morning hours of the 20th, allowing air temperatures to fall to record or near-record lows across northeast South Dakota. Ten new record lows, ranging from 23 to 30 degrees below zero, were set for February 20th. Several water pipes were broken in Aberdeen and Roslyn. Also, many vehicles did not start along with late school starts or closings.

1884: Severe thunderstorms spawned sixty tornadoes in the southeastern U.S., killing more than 420 people and causing three million dollars damage. The tornado outbreak hit Georgia and the Carolinas the hardest.

1888: Severe thunderstorms over southern Illinois spawned a violent tornado in Jefferson County and devastated the southeast half of Mount Vernon. The tornado killed 24 people, injured 80 others, and destroyed or damaged 300 homes and 50 businesses. In addition, overturned wood stoves ignited many fires in the wreckage. The tornado currently stands as the 9th deadliest Illinois tornado on record and was one of the first disasters to which the American Red Cross responded.

1884 - Severe thunderstorms spawned sixty tornadoes in the southeastern U.S., killing more than 420 persons and causing three million dollars damage. Georgia and the Carolinas hardest were hit in the tornado outbreak. (David Ludlum)

1954 - High winds across the southern half of the Great Plains, gusting to 85 mph, caused the worst duststorms since the 1930s. Graders were needed in places to clear fence high dirt drifts. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm over the southern and central Rockies produced 28 inches of snow at Echo Lake CO, and two feet of snow at Gascon NM and Los Alamos NM. Mora County NM was declared a disaster area following the storm. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms in the southeastern U.S. drenched Valdosta GA with more than five inches of rain, and the 24 hour rainfall total of 7.10 inches at Apalachicola FL more than doubled their previous 24 hour record for February. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - An upper level weather disturbance brought heavy snow to parts of Nebraska, with six inches reported at Loup City and Surprise. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A moist Pacific storm worked its way into New Mexico and southern Colorado. Up to 36 inches of snow blanketed the Wolf Creek and Red Mountain passes of southwest Colorado, and up to 15 inches of snow was reported around Trinidad. In New Mexico, the eastern slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains were blanketed with 9 to 28 inches of snow, and 50 to 60 mph wind gusts were reported from Taos to Albuquerque. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2011 - Strong winds reaching as high as 40 mph with gusts to 53 mph topple the 48 year old National Christmas tree. The 42 foot tall Colorado blue spruce sat just south of the White House on the Ellipse. It was transplanted there from York, Pennsylvania in 1978. The Weather Doctor

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

A salesman was calling on one of his favorite customers - an elderly gentleman who owned a country store. He found "Old Sam" sitting on the porch of his store, gently rocking back and forth with an old Labrador retriever lying quietly beside him. As he walked up the steps, he said, "That's a beautiful dog. Does your dog bite?"

"Nope," said "Old Sam," as he continued to rock.

The salesman reached down to pet the dog. Just as he touched the dog's head, it growled and snapped viciously at him. He jumped back and shouted, "I thought you said that your dog didn't bite!"

"I did. My dog doesn't bite. But that's not my dog," responded "Old Sam."

All of us collect information. It is an ongoing process in everyone's life. But the value of the information depends on the questions we ask. Otherwise, the information is useless.

Thomas, the disciple, known as "the doubter," once asked, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know 'the way'?" Jesus replied, "I am 'the way' and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus answered life's most important question, and one everyone must answer: "Do you know 'the way' to God?" Jesus left no doubt about the route: We can only get to God through Him. "The way" that Jesus taught is established on God's "truth" and promises eternal "life."

Prayer: Lord, we thank You that Your Son clearly and consistently explained the only way to come to You is through Him. May, we in faith, accept Your "way." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6



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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.16.24

19 23 39 42 67 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$493,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 17 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

6 8 10 14 33 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,100,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 32 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.18.24

18 31 42 46 47 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 47 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

10 20 27 29 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$55,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 47 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

14 47 49 61 66 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 16 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 02.17.24

6 28 59 62 69 21

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$330,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 16 Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Russian authorities extend a probe into Navalny's death as allies accuse officials of cover-up

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

The mother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny on Monday was denied access to a morgue where his body was believed to be kept after his death in an Arctic penal colony, and Navalny's allies accused authorities of trying to hide evidence.

Navalny's spokesperson Kira Yarmysh said that the Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal investigation agency, informed Lyudmila Navalnaya that the cause of her son's death remained unknown and that the official probe had been extended. "They lie, buy time for themselves and do not even hide it," Yarmysh posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Many world leaders blamed President Vladimir Putin and his government for Navalny's death Friday at age 47. Navalny's team said he was "murdered," and charged that officials' refusal to hand over his body was part of a cover-up.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov slammed what he described as "boorish" and "inadmissible" statements by Western leaders who held Putin responsible for Navalny's death.

"Those statements can't do any harm to the head of our state, but they certainly aren't becoming for those who make them," Peskov said in a call with reporters.

Yarmysh said that Navalny's 69-year-old mother and his lawyers were not allowed into the morgue in Salekhard on Monday morning. The staff didn't answer when they asked if the body was there, Yarmysh said.

Asked when Navalny's body could be handed over to his family, Peskov responded that the Kremlin was not involved in those proceedings, adding that the official probe was continuing in line with the law.

Navalny's ally Ivan Zhdanov denounced the Russian authorities as "lackeys and liars." "It's clear what they are doing now — covering up the traces of their crime," he wrote Monday.

Navalny's death has deprived the Russian opposition of its most well-known and inspiring politician less than a month before an election that is all but certain to give Putin another six years in power. It dealt a devastating blow to many Russians, who had seen Navalny as a hope for political change following his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin.

Nearly 300 people have been detained by police in Russia as they streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repression with flowers and candles to pay tribute to Navalny, according to OVD-Info, a group that monitors political arrests. The U.S. and British ambassadors also mourned Navalny's death at a memorial in Moscow.

Authorities cordoned off some of the memorials across the country and were removing flowers at night, but they kept appearing.

Over 50,000 people have submitted requests to the Russian government asking for Navalny's remains to be handed over to his relatives, OVD-Info said.

Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk Friday and became unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. An ambulance arrived, but he couldn't be revived, the service said, adding that the cause of death is still "being established."

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He received three prison terms since his arrest, on a number of charges he has rejected as politically motivated.

After the last verdict that handed him a 19-year term, Navalny said he understood he was "serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime."

His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, was in Brussels Monday and is expected to meet with European Union for-

eign ministers and other EU officials. On Sunday, she published a picture of the couple on Instagram in her first social media post since her husband's death, with the caption "I love you."

Gaza Health Ministry says over 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel-Hamas war

By WAFAA SHURAFU and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — More than 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in the territory since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, Gaza's Health Ministry said Monday.

The ministry said 107 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours. That brings the total number of fatalities to 29,092 since the start of the war.

The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its records, but says around two-thirds of those killed were women and children. It says over 69,000 Palestinians have been wounded.

The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government in Gaza but maintains detailed records of casualties. It's figures from previous wars in Gaza have largely matched those of U.N. agencies and even Israel.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel from Gaza on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage. More than 100 captives were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Israel responded by launching one of the deadliest and most destructive military campaigns in recent history on the besieged enclave, which has been ruled by Hamas since 2007.

Israel says it has killed over 10,000 Palestinian militants, without providing evidence. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames the high death toll on Hamas because the militant group fights in dense residential neighborhoods.

The war, which shows no sign of ending, has driven around 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million from their homes and has left a quarter of the population starving, according to U.N. officials.

Top UN court opens hearings into Israel's occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state.

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Palestinian foreign minister on Monday accused Israel of apartheid as he urged the United Nation's top court to declare that Israel's occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state is illegal and must end immediately and unconditionally.

The allegation came at the start of historic hearings into the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state. The case stands against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war, which immediately became a focal point of the day — even though the hearings were meant to center on Israel's open-ended control over the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip and annexed east Jerusalem.

Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister Riyad al-Maliki said he stood before the International Court of Justice "as 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, half of them children, are besieged and bombed, killed and maimed, starved and displaced."

"More than 3.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank, including in Jerusalem, are subjected to colonization of their territory and racist violence that enables it," he added.

The session, expected to last six days, follows a request by the U.N. General Assembly for a non-binding advisory opinion into Israel's policies in the occupied territories. Judges will likely take months to issue an opinion.

"The United Nations enshrined in its charter the rights of all peoples to self-determination and pledged to rid the world of the gravest breaches of this right, namely colonialism and apartheid," al-Maliki continued. "Yet for decades, the Palestinian people have been denied this right and have endured both colonialism and apartheid."

The Palestinians argue that Israel, by annexing large swaths of occupied land, has violated the prohibi-

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tion on territorial conquest and the Palestinians' right to self-determination, and has imposed a system of racial discrimination and apartheid.

"This occupation is annexation and supremacist in nature," al-Maliki said and appealed to the court to uphold the Palestinian right to self-determination and declare "that the Israeli occupation is illegal and must end immediately, totally and unconditionally."

After the Palestinians' address, an unprecedented 51 countries and three international organizations will speak. Israel is not scheduled to speak during the hearings, but could submit a written statement.

Yuval Shany, a law professor at Hebrew University and senior fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute, said Israel will likely justify the ongoing occupation on security grounds, especially in the absence of a peace deal.

It is likely to point to the Oct. 7 attack in which Hamas-led militants from Gaza killed 1,200 people across southern Israel and dragged 250 hostages back to the territory.

However, Palestinians and leading rights groups argue that the occupation goes far beyond defensive measures. They say it has morphed into an apartheid system, bolstered by settlement building on occupied lands, that gives Palestinians second-class status and is designed to maintain Jewish hegemony from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel rejects any accusation of apartheid.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek all three areas for an independent state. Israel considers the West Bank to be disputed territory, whose future should be decided in negotiations.

It has built 146 settlements across the West Bank, according to watchdog group Peace Now, many of which resemble fully developed suburbs and small towns. The settlements are home to more than 500,000 Jewish settlers, while around 3 million Palestinians live in the territory.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem and considers the entire city to be its capital. An additional 200,000 Israelis live in settlements built in east Jerusalem that Israel considers to be neighborhoods of its capital. Palestinian residents of the city face systematic discrimination, making it difficult for them to build new homes or expand existing ones.

Israel withdrew all of its soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005, but continued to control the territory's airspace, coastline and population registry. Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on Gaza when the Palestinian militant Hamas group seized power there in 2007.

The international community overwhelmingly considers the settlements to be illegal. Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem, home to the city's most sensitive holy sites, is not internationally recognized.

It's not the first time the court has been asked to give an advisory opinion on Israeli policies.

In 2004, it said a separation barrier Israel built through east Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank was "contrary to international law." It also called on Israel to immediately halt construction. Israel has ignored the ruling.

Also, late last month, the court ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in its campaign in Gaza. The order came at a preliminary stage of a case filed by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide, a charge that Israel denied.

South Africa's governing party, the African National Congress, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank to the apartheid regime of white minority rule in South Africa, which restricted most Black people to "homelands" before ending in 1994.

Tribal violence in Papua New Guinea kills 26 combatants and an unconfirmed number of bystanders

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — At least 26 combatants and an unconfirmed number of bystanders were killed in a gunbattle between warring tribes in Papua New Guinea, police said Monday.

A tribe, their allies and mercenaries were on their way to attack a neighboring tribe when they were ambushed Sunday in Enga province in the South Pacific nation's remote highlands, Royal Papua New Guinea

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Constabulary Acting Superintendent George Kakas said.

Police Commissioner David Manning later described the clash as a "gunbattle between warring tribes." An unconfirmed number of villagers also were killed. Police reinforcements were sent to the scene of the battle, Manning said.

"At this point, it's not clear exactly how far we have moved into the conflict there," Manning told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "But the intent is to regain control or have a significant presence in that conflict area and then work ... our way through our procedures in dealing with this type of incident."

Kakas initially said 53 combatants had died. But security forces later revised the death toll down to 26.

Bodies were collected from the battlefield, roads and the riverside, then loaded onto police trucks and taken to the hospital. Authorities were still counting "those who were shot, injured and ran off into the bushes," Kakas said.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said he had "great concern" about the violence in Enga and urged the warring tribes to lay down their weapons.

"If there are community disputes, there are ways to deal with the community disputes," Marape said.

"Lay down your arms. A lot of disputes will be resolved. One killing or two killings doesn't solve the problem. It contributes towards more problems," he added.

John Luther, a leader of Akom village whose warriors were among those ambushed, talked down the prospect of an escalation of the violence in retaliation for the deaths.

"We've lost a lot of lives. I don't feel we should be able to retaliate. We're already weak in numbers," Luther told the AP.

"I don't think I would allow my people to go fighting again," Luther added.

The villagers were ambushed from a school building while on a mission to avenge the death of a woman killed in a neighboring allied village, he said.

Luther also accused the military of aiding and arming his enemies in the ambush. He had been told the death toll was 44.

But Papua New Guinea government lawyer Oliver Nobetau said he expects more lives will be lost in retaliatory violence.

"There's a big concern that this will continue on. Revenge killings tend to be a normal thing that happens," said Nobetau, who is on temporary assignment to the Sydney-based international policy think tank Lowy Institute.

He said although tribal violence is common, it has never happened on this scale and that police have limited resources to cope.

"Tribal violence is something that is prevalent and the government with its limited resources will try to deploy the police wherever they can to try to curb the security issues," he said.

Papua New Guinea is a diverse nation of 10 million mostly subsistence farmers speaking 800 languages. Internal security has become an increasing challenge for its government as China, the United States and Australia seek closer security ties to the country in a strategically important part of the South Pacific.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government was ready to assist Papua New Guinea, which is Australia's nearest neighbor and the largest single recipient of Australian foreign aid.

"That is very disturbing the news that has come out of Papua New Guinea," Albanese said before the death toll was revised down.

Tribal violence in the Enga region has intensified since elections in 2022 that maintained Prime Minister James Marape's administration. Elections and accompanying allegations of cheating and process anomalies have always triggered violence throughout the country.

Enga Gov. Peter Ipatas said there were warnings that tribal fighting was about to erupt.

"From a provincial perspective, we knew this fight was going to be on and we (alerted) the security forces last week to make sure they took appropriate action to ensure this didn't occur," Ipatas said.

Scores of people have died in tribal fighting in the Enga region in the past year.

Port Moresby's Post-Courier newspaper has reported that high-powered firearms used in the recent

fighting made it risky for police to enter the battlefields.

Police said they were assisted by the military in protecting the general public and government property.

Russia says it has crushed the last pocket of resistance in Avdiivka to complete the city's capture

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces have completed their takeover of Avdiivka by eliminating the last pocket of resistance at the eastern Ukraine city's huge coke plant, the Russian military said Monday, after the sheer weight of its troop numbers and greater firepower drove out Kyiv's forces.

Moscow officials announced Saturday said they had taken control of Avdiivka. Ukrainian forces confirmed pulling out of the bombed-out city in what amounted to a triumph for the Kremlin even though the four-month battle was costly.

The victory was a morale boost for Russia, days ahead of the two-year anniversary of its full-scale invasion of its neighbor on Feb. 24 2022. For Ukraine, the loss underscored its reliance on the supply of Western weapons and ammunition, as hold-ups have left it short of provisions and handicapped in the fight.

However, some Western military analysts believe that Ukraine could counter Russia's attempt to build up on its Avdiivka success by trying to erect new defense lines in that immediate area and deploying fresh units to hold back Kremlin's forces.

Even so, the threat of ammunition shortages hangs over Ukraine's military, with Russia aiming to exploit the moment as the United States struggles to get political agreement for more aid and Europe strives to increase production.

"Delays in Western security assistance to Ukraine are likely helping Russia launch opportunistic offensive operations along several sectors of the front line in order to place pressure on Ukrainian forces along multiple axes," the Institute for the Study of War said in an assessment late Sunday.

Apart from Avdiivka, Russia is pushing harder in the northeastern Kharkiv region and in southern Zaporizhia, the Washington-based think tank said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country "is "doing everything possible and impossible" to defeat Russia.

"Ukrainians have fought heroically before but for the first time in its history Ukraine has achieved such global solidarity and support," Zelenskyy said in his daily video address on Sunday evening.

Analysis: A key withdrawal shows Ukraine doesn't have enough artillery to fight Russia

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Dwindling ammunition threatens Ukraine's hold on the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line under withering assault by Russian artillery. Defensive lines are in jeopardy.

Ukrainian forces withdrew from the city of Avdiivka in the Donetsk region on Saturday after daily Russian onslaughts from three directions for the last four months.

Avdiivka was a stronghold for Ukrainian positions deeper inside the country, away from Russia. A frontline city ever since Russia first invaded Ukraine in 2014, the fortified settlement with a maze of trenches and tunnels served to protect important — less strengthened — logistical hubs further west.

Its seizure boosts Russian morale and confirms that the Kremlin's troops are now setting the pace in the fight, to the dismay of Ukrainian forces who have managed only incremental gains since their counteroffensive last year.

CONGRESSIONAL INACTION

The Biden administration linked the loss of Avdiivka to Congressional inaction on \$60 billion in military aid for Ukraine.

President Joe Biden said he told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a Saturday phone call after Ukraine announced it was withdrawing troops from Avdiivka that he remained confident that the U.S.

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funding would eventually come through. But, when reporters asked if he was confident a deal could be struck before Ukraine loses more territory, Biden responded: "I'm not."

DWINDLING SUPPLIES

The Associated Press interviewed over a dozen commanders, including heads of artillery units, in the war's most intense combat zones in the weeks ahead of Avdiivka's fall. They said shortages, which have always plagued Ukrainian forces since the full-scale invasion, grew acute last autumn.

Dwindling supplies of Western-supplied long-range artillery in particular means Ukrainian forces are inhibited from striking high-value targets deep behind Russian lines, where heavy equipment and personnel are accumulated.

For weeks, Ukrainian forces across the frontline have complained about critical shortages in ammunition, with some artillery batteries fighting with only 10 percent of supply they need. Desperate to economize shells, military leaders ordered units to fire at only precise targets. But commanders on the ground say this is barely enough to restrain their better supplied enemy. Concerns are growing that without military aid the fall of Avdiivka may be repeated in other parts of the frontline.

A VICTORY FOR MOSCOW

The withdrawal of Ukrainian soldiers from the heavily fortified town handed Russia its biggest victory since the battle of Bakhmut last year. It will allow the Kremlin's troops to push their offensive further west, deeper into Ukrainian-held territory over less-fortified areas. Pokrovsk, a railway junction further east, could be the next Russian objective, military bloggers said.

Russian military officials and war bloggers said that the capture of Avdiivka reduced the threat to the Russian-held city of Donetsk.

ECONOMIZING SHELLS

"Currently the ammunition deficit is quite serious. We are constantly promised that more is coming, but we don't see it coming," said Khorobryi, commander of an artillery battery. Their battery has only 5-10% of ammunition needed, he said.

That, he said, robs forces of their ability to effectively attack and regain territories. Even worse, Ukraine loses fighters because it cannot give infantry covering infantry fire.

He, like other officers interviewed for this story, spoke on condition that only their first names be used for security reasons.

"We have nothing to fight with, we have nothing to cover our frontlines," said Valerie, who commands a howitzer unit that uses NATO-standard 155 mm rounds. To repel a Russian attack, he said they needed 100-120 shells per unit per day. Today, they have a tenth of that, he said.

RUSSIA CHANGES TACTICS

Ukrainian soldiers positioned in Avdiivka said that before the fall of the city Russia had switched tactics to capitalize on dire ammunition shortages.

Instead of sending columns of armed vehicles, Moscow's forces began dispatching waves of smaller infantry groups to engage Ukrainian forces in close quarters. It meant Ukrainian forces had to expel "five times" more ammunition to keep them at bay.

"The enemy also understands and feels our capabilities, and with that, they manage to succeed," said Chaklun, a soldier in the 110th Brigade.

A FRAGILE NORTH

Concerns abound about how the ammunition shortage will impact Ukrainian forces in other sectors of the frontline. The Kupiansk line, in Ukraine's northeast, is fragile. Russia has been intensifying attacks in the direction for months in a bid to recapture the important logistics hub it had lost in the fall of 2022.

Yuri, the commander of the 44th Brigade in Kupiansk, said his aerial reconnaissance units spot many long-range targets, including Russian mortars and grenade launchers, but because they don't have enough ammunition they can't hit them.

Instead, he has no choice but to watch how his enemy accumulates reserves at a distance.

Oleksandr, the commander of a battalion of the 32nd Brigade in Kupiansk said he had just enough shells - for now.

"But it depends on the intensity from the Russian side. If they increase it, it won't be enough to hold this line," he said.

Houthi rebels' attack severely damages a Belize-flagged ship in key strait leading to the Red Sea

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels that damaged a Belize-flagged ship traveling through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden has forced the crew to abandon the ship, authorities said Monday.

The Iran-backed Houthis also claimed they shot down an American MQ-9 Reaper drone, something not immediately acknowledged by U.S. forces in the region. However, the Houthis have downed U.S. drones before.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military said it was conducting new airstrikes targeting the rebels, including one that targeted the first Houthi underwater drone seen since they began launching attacks on international shipping in November.

The ship targeted in the Houthi attack on Sunday reported sustaining damage after "an explosion in close proximity to the vessel," the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center reported.

"Military authorities report crew have abandoned the vessel," the UKMTO said. "Vessel at anchor and all crew are safe."

Houthi Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree issued a statement claiming the attack, saying the vessel was "now at risk of potentially sinking."

"The ship suffered catastrophic damages and came to a complete halt," Saree said. "During the operation, we made sure that the ship's crew exited safely."

The private security firm Ambrey reported the British-registered, Lebanese-operated cargo ship had been on its way to Bulgaria after leaving Khorfakkan in the United Arab Emirates.

Ship-tracking data from MarineTraffic.com analyzed by The Associated Press identified the vessel targeted as the Rubymar. Its Beirut-based manager could not be immediately reached for comment. The Houthis later also identified the ship as the Rubymar.

Ambrey described the ship as being partially laden with cargo, but it wasn't immediately clear what it had been carrying. The ship had turned off its Automatic Identification System tracker while in the Persian Gulf early this month.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters over Israel's war targeting Hamas in the Gaza Strip. They have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for trade among Asia, the Mideast and Europe. Those vessels have included at least one with cargo for Iran, its main benefactor.

In a separate attack, Saree also claimed that Houthi forces shot down an MQ-9 drone near Yemen's port city of Hodeida on the Red Sea. He offered no evidence for the claim.

The Houthi "air defenses were able to shoot down an American plane — MQ-9 — with a suitable missile while it was carrying out hostile missions against our country on behalf of the Zionist entity," Saree said.

The U.S. military did not immediately confirm the loss of any drones in the region. However, the Houthis have surface-to-air missile systems capable of shooting down high-flying American drones. In November, the Pentagon acknowledged the loss of an MQ-9, shot down by the rebels over the Red Sea.

Since Yemen's Houthi rebels seized the country's north and its capital of Sanaa in 2014, the U.S. military has lost four drones to shootdowns by the rebels — in 2017, 2019 and this year.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military's Central Command reported it carried out five airstrikes targeting Houthi military equipment. Those strikes targeted mobile anti-ship cruise missiles, an explosive-carrying drone boat and an "unmanned underwater vessel," Central Command said.

"This is the first observed Houthi employment of a UUV since attacks began in Oct. 23," Central Command said.

New York Archdiocese denounces transgender activist's funeral, holds Mass of Reparation

By BRIAN P. D. HANNON Associated Press

The funeral of a renowned transgender activist in a New York cathedral elicited a denunciation of the event by a senior church official, who called the mass a scandal within one of the preeminent houses of worship in U.S. Catholicism.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York condemned the funeral of Cecilia Gentili, which was held in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan and drew a large audience on Thursday.

Gentili was known as a leading advocate for other transgender people, as well as sex workers and people with HIV. A post on her Instagram account announced her death on Feb. 6 at age 52.

In a written statement released Saturday, the Rev. Enrique Salvo, pastor of Saint Patrick's, thanked people he said had informed the church that they "share our outrage over the scandalous behavior" at the funeral.

"The Cathedral only knew that family and friends were requesting a funeral Mass for a Catholic, and had no idea our welcome and prayer would be degraded in such a sacrilegious and deceptive way," Salvo said in the statement.

The cathedral held a Mass of Reparation following the funeral at the direction of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, Salvo said.

"That such a scandal occurred at 'America's Parish Church' makes it worse; that it took place as Lent was beginning, the annual forty-day struggle with the forces of sin and darkness, is a potent reminder of how much we need the prayer, reparation, repentance, grace, and mercy to which this holy season invites us," he said.

A former sex worker who suffered addiction and was jailed at Rikers Island, she became a transgender health program coordinator, a nonprofit policy director for an established gay men's health organization, GMHC, and a lobbyist for health equality and anti-discrimination legislation, among other advocacy work.

Gentili founded the COIN Clinic, short for Cecilia's Occupational Inclusion Network, a free health program for sex workers through the Callen-Lorde community health organization in New York.

"New York's LGBTQ+ community has lost a champion in trans icon Cecilia Gentili," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul posted on X, formerly Twitter, following Gentili's death.

Gentili acted in the FX television series "Pose," about the underground ballroom dance scene in the 1980s and 1990s. She also performed two one-woman stage shows.

"I am an atheist, but I am always asking God for things," Gentili said in "Red Ink," her autobiographical show touching on topics including her childhood in Argentina and lack of religious faith.

St. Patrick's Cathedral, a Manhattan architectural and tourist landmark, has been the site of funerals for numerous prominent New Yorkers including Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Babe Ruth and emergency responders who died in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack.

Videos of Gentili's funeral mass show an estimated audience of more than 1,000 celebrants, including transgender people and other friends and supporters chanting her name, applauding, singing and offering praise of her stature as a leading light of the city's LGBTQ+ community.

"Except on Easter Sunday we don't really have a crowd that is this well turned out," said Father Edward Dougherty, who presided over the mass.

Conservative group CatholicVote condemned fellow "Pose" actor Billy Porter, whose singing performance during the funeral was characterized by the group as a mockery of the "Our Father" prayer. "This is just unbelievable and sick," CatholicVote said on X.

In a statement before the song, Porter called Gentili a leader among "an entire community of people who transformed my life forever."

"Grief is singular, it's individual. Please know that however you grieve is what's right," Porter said. "There's no right or wrong way to grieve. But just make sure that you do, you allow yourself to do that, so that we can get to the other side of something that feels a little bit like grace."

The Russian opposition just lost its brightest star. What does it do now?

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Alexei Navalny was asked four years ago what he'd tell Russians if he were killed for challenging President Vladimir Putin.

"You're not allowed to give up," he told a documentary maker. "If they decide to kill me, it means we are incredibly strong and we need to use this power."

Russia's prison agency announced Friday that Navalny had died in the Arctic penal colony where he was serving a 19-year sentence on charges of extremism. His death sparked accusations around the world that he had been killed.

WHAT DOES THE OPPOSITION DO NOW?

Kremlin political critics, turncoat spies and investigative journalists have been killed or assaulted in a variety of ways. The Russian opposition has lost its brightest star with Navalny's sudden death in a prison colony. Now the question on everyone's mind: What does it do now?

Most of Russia's opposition is either dead, scattered abroad in exile or in prison at home. Remaining opposition groups and key political figures have different visions about what Russia should become, and who should lead it. There is not even an anti-war candidate on the ballot to give Putin a token challenge in next month's election for a sixth term.

THE END OF DISSENT?

With Navalny's elimination from the picture, many are wondering if this is the end of political dissent in Russia.

"Alexei Navalny was a very bright and charismatic leader. He had the talent to ignite people, to convince them of the need for change," said Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a former tycoon who spent a decade in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging Putin's rule in the early 2000s.

"This is a very difficult loss for the Russian opposition," he told The Associated Press after his death.

Graeme Robertson, a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and author of a book about Putin and contemporary Russian politics, says the biggest problem that has plagued the Russian opposition "is that it has been unable to break out from small liberal circles to attract support from the broader population."

Khodorkovsky, who lives in London, is one of several Russian opposition politicians trying to build a coalition with grassroots anti-war groups across the world and exiled Russian opposition figures. They include Russian chess legend Garry Kasparov, Mikhail Kasyanov, a former Russian prime minister and Vladimir Kara-Murza Jr. who is currently serving a 25-year prison sentence in Russia for treason after criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine.

But Navalny's team, and the Anti-Corruption Foundation he founded, are not a part of it.

"We constantly tell the guys from the Anti-Corruption Foundation ... that it would be great if we all met not only in front of television cameras, but sat down at the table," Khodorkovsky said in another interview before Navalny's death, referring to a television debate in January hosted by the independent Russian TV channel Dozhd.

While Navalny was the first leader to build a national Russian opposition, there were other opposition factions who didn't like him or his organization.

Before his death, there were public and heated disagreements on social media between members of his team and other politicians about how they could challenge Putin in March's upcoming election.

PUTIN CONSOLIDATES POWER

Meanwhile, the Russian leader has continued to consolidate his grip on power, cracking down on dissent at home, imprisoning critics of the war in Ukraine, and silencing independent media.

Squabbling among the opposition, "doesn't help," said Nigel Gould-Davies, a former British ambassador to Belarus and senior fellow for Russia & Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in

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London. But, even if the opposition were united, he questioned whether "given the instruments of coercion, repression and intimidation available to the Russian state, what difference, at least in the short term, would that make?"

THREE DECADES OF PUTIN

Putin is eyeing at least another six years in the Kremlin, which means he could effectively rule Russia for almost three decades.

Russia's remaining opposition leaders and activists, largely outside the country, are now grappling with the question of how to mount an effective challenge to the Kremlin. That would mean breaking through state propaganda to reach Russians inside the country and offer them an alternative to the Kremlin's vision of the future.

It is a difficult task, one which even Navalny struggled with after he returned to Moscow in February 2021 to face certain arrest after recuperating in Germany from a nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin.

Shortly after his return while he was in jail, his team released a social media investigation into corruption that was viewed millions of times. It provoked a series of anti-graft protests across Russia but the police brutally cracked down and detained thousands of people.

While Navalny's team continued to publish successful investigative reports, they ultimately suspended the protests and said they would switch to different tactics.

Although Navalny had his finger on the pulse, and his team succeeded in widely publicizing the investigation, the anti-corruption message ultimately failed to produce political change inside Russia, Robertson said, because most Russians "know their country is badly governed and that their elite is corrupt, but they don't see it being any other way."

In the three years since Navalny was jailed, Russian authorities have introduced more laws tightening freedom of speech and jailing critics, often ordinary people, sometimes for decades.

Khodorkovsky said the response to Navalny's "murder" should be to join forces and continue work started before Navalny's death, trying to convince ordinary Russians to protest in any way they can during March's presidential election.

He called on Russians to protest by writing Navalny's name on the ballot paper during the election. The Russian Anti-War Committee, backed by Khodorkovsky and other politicians, is also asking Russians to attend "Noon against Putin," an idea which was supported by Navalny in early February, which suggests using the pretext of the vote as an opportunity to gather and protest at 12 p.m. on 17 March.

OPPOSITION IN EXILE

In the meantime, the Russian opposition faces a future largely in exile without one of its brightest leaders.

It will be incredibly difficult, but Russia's exiled politicians say they are determined that the hope of democracy in their country does not die along with Navalny.

"Putin," Khodorkovsky said, "must understand that he can kill his political opponent, but not the very idea of a democratic opposition."

Minnesota community mourns 2 officers, 1 firefighter killed at the scene of a domestic call

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

BURNSVILLE, Minn. (AP) — A suburban Minneapolis community was in mourning on Monday after authorities said two police officers and a firefighter were killed by a heavily armed man who shot at them from inside a home that was filled with children.

The shooting on Sunday in a tree-lined neighborhood of Burnsville, Minnesota, left a third officer wounded. The suspect, who officials said had multiple guns and large amounts of ammunition, also died.

Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Superintendent Drew Evans said there was an exchange of gunfire, and authorities were still piecing together details of what he described as a "terrible day."

The firefighter, who also works as a paramedic, was shot while providing aid to an injured officer, Evans

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said. He told reporters the paramedic was a part of a SWAT team that had been called to a domestic situation at the home.

Inside, an armed man had barricaded himself with his family, including seven children ranging in age from 2 to 15, Evans said.

He said negotiations lasted for hours before the suspect opened fire. He wasn't specific on the exact amount of time, but the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association said the standoff lasted four hours before a SWAT team entered the home.

Evans said the suspect had several guns and large amounts of ammunition and shot at the police officers from multiple positions within the home, including the upper and lower floors. Evans said at least one officer was shot inside the home.

"We still don't know the exact exchange of gunfire that occurred," Evans said. "Certainly several officers did return fire."

He said that around 8 a.m. the suspect was found dead and the family and children were released from the home. None of them were hurt.

City officials identified the slain officers as Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, both 27. Adam Finseth, 40, a firefighter and paramedic for the city since 2019, also was killed.

Elmstrand, a member of the department's mobile command staff, joined the department in 2017. Ruge was hired in 2020 and was part of the department's crisis negotiations team and was a physical evidence officer.

Another police officer, Sgt. Adam Medlicott, was injured and being treated at a hospital with what are believed to be non-life-threatening injuries, the city said.

As the bodies of the dead left a hospital, officers saluted, before they were taken in a convoy to the medical examiner's office. Medical staff watched in scrubs.

"We're hurting," said Police Chief Tanya Schwartz. "Today, three members of our team made the ultimate sacrifice for this community. They are heroes."

Neighbors were startled awake by loud pops about an hour before sunrise.

Alicia McCullum said she and her family dropped to the floor, uncertain whether the noise was gunshots. She and her husband peered out of their sunroom and saw squad cars and a phalanx of police officers.

"I didn't think it was a gunshot at first, but then we opened the windows and we saw police everywhere and police hiding in our neighbors' yards," said McCullum, who lives two houses down from the source of the commotion.

"Then there were three more gunshots," she said. "It was like a bunch of fireworks." That's when she and her husband and two children sought safety in a bathroom and dropped to the floor. They prayed.

McCullum said she was relieved to see a woman and children escorted out of their home. "We're so thankful for those police officers that risked their lives to save those kids," McCullum said. "And my heart goes out to that mother."

Fire Chief BJ Jungmann said the community was grieving and asked for privacy for the families. None of the relatives of the officers or the firefighter immediately returned phone messages from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Evans said the medical examiner would identify the suspect and said autopsies were planned for Monday. There was no indication the home had been a source of troubles in the past.

"There have not been many calls for service at all," Evans said.

As the investigation unfolded, the neighborhood was ringed with police cars to keep reporters and the public away. A police armored vehicle had bullet damage to its windshield, and Evans confirmed it sustained the damage in the gunfight.

Police scanner recordings on Broadcastify.com capture a rattled man saying, "I need any ambulance," as he struggled to catch his breath. Someone later could be heard talking about three being loaded into ambulances, uttering the word "critical."

As news spread, other law enforcement agencies immediately began posting messages of condolence on

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social media, including images of badges with blue bars through them. It is a mark of solidarity in mourning. "In times like these, it is essential to come together as a community and support one another through the uncertainty and grief," said Marty Kelly, the sheriff in neighboring Goodhue County.

Flags also were lowered to half-staff, with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz urging those who walked past them to take a moment and think about the first responders who lost their lives.

"Minnesota mourns with you," he said. "The state stands ready to assist in any way possible."

Hundreds of people gathered in front of Burnsville City Hall on Sunday night for a candlelit vigil to remember the victims. Several uniformed officers from other departments also attended.

A fire truck and police car were in front of the building. The police vehicle had bouquets of flowers on the hood and handwritten signs tucked under the windshield wipers, one of which read: "We are praying for you." Those gathered joined together in prayer and sang "Amazing Grace."

"Right now is a time to grieve, to come together and grieve our community's loss, and to support the families," said U.S. Rep. Angie Craig.

"I can't imagine the pain that you're all going through," Craig continued, "but what I can say is that to all our officers out there, the paramedics, our firefighters, thank you for what you do." The crowd applauded.

"It's an important community," said area resident Kris Martin, "and we feel very saddened by what happened."

Burnsville, a city of around 64,000, is located about 15 miles (24 kilometers) south of downtown Minneapolis.

Who are other Russian dissidents besides the late Alexei Navalny?

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

The sudden death of Russian President Vladimir Putin's most formidable antagonist has left an open wound in Russia's political opposition.

Alexei Navalny, 47, was the Kremlin's best-known critic at home and abroad. Before he died in a penal colony Friday, the anti-corruption crusader, protest organizer and politician with an arch sense of humor became the subject of an award-winning documentary. His channels on YouTube had millions of subscribers.

Navalny also was the first opposition leader in Russia to receive a lengthy prison sentence in recent years. There would be others, heralding a crackdown on dissent that became more punishing with the invasion of Ukraine. In the three years since Navalny lost his freedom, multiple prominent dissidents were imprisoned, while others fled Russia under pressure.

Many of them nevertheless persisted in challenging Putin — organizing abroad, pushing for sanctions on Russia, supporting like-minded Russians in exile or continuing to speak out from behind bars.

These are some of the key remaining figures:

NAVALNY'S CORE TEAM

Colleagues at the Anti-Corruption Foundation, which Navalny founded in 2011 to expose political corruption, and his other close associates often had to work without him. Even before he was imprisoned in January 2021, Navalny was subject to regular arrests and long jail stints. In 2020, he was poisoned with a nerve agent, spent 18 days in a coma and recuperated in Germany for weeks. His prison term included more than 300 days in isolation, with communication possible but difficult from a punishment cell.

His closest associates — top strategist Leonid Volkov, head of investigations Maria Pevchikh, foundation director Ivan Zhdanov and spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh — also faced unrelenting pressure and prosecution in Russia. In recent years, all left the country and worked from abroad, providing political commentary and the foundation's signature YouTube exposes of political corruption.

They kept pushing for Navalny's release from prison, organized protests and mounted a campaign to undermine Putin's image in Russia ahead of a presidential election he is almost certain to win next month.

"Alexei was awesome," Volkov wrote Sunday on X, formerly Twitter. "He was a natural politician, very talented, very efficient. And from himself and from everyone around him, he demanded one thing: not to throw in the towel, not to give up, not to despair. ... This is what he wants from us now. His life's work

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must prevail.”

MIKHAIL KHODORKOVSKY

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, 60, is a former tycoon turned Russian opposition figure in exile. Khodorkovsky spent a decade in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging Putin’s rule in the early 2000s. He was released in 2013, shortly before Russia hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics in the Black Sea resort of Sochi. A surprise pardon from Putin on the eve of the Olympics was widely seen as an effort by the Kremlin to improve Russia’s image in the West.

Khodorkovsky was flown to Germany and later settled in London. From exile, he launched Open Russia, an opposition group that ran its own news outlet, supported candidates in various elections, provided legal aid to defendants facing politically motivated prosecutions and had an educational platform.

Open Russia and its activists the country faced constant pressure from the authorities; some were prosecuted in Russia, and one of its leaders, Andrei Pivovarov, is currently serving a four-year prison term.

The group eventually shut down, but Khodorkovsky continued his vocal criticism of the Kremlin. After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago this week, he and other prominent Putin critics, including chess legend Garry Kasparov and former lawmaker Dmitry Gudkov, formed the Antiwar Committee, a broad opposition alliance that opposes the invasion and seeks to undermine Putin.

VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA

Once a journalist and now a prominent opposition politician, Vladimir Kara-Murza, 42, received the longest single sentence handed to a Kremlin critic in Putin’s Russia — 25 years on charges of treason. He is serving the sentence in a Siberian penal colony and has been repeatedly placed in solitary confinement.

Kara-Murza was an associate of Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, another fierce Putin critic who was assassinated near the Kremlin in 2015. A few years before that, Kara-Murza and Nemtsov lobbied for passage of the Magnitsky Act in the U.S. The law was a response to the prison death of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who had exposed a tax fraud scheme. It authorized Washington to impose sanctions on Russians deemed to be human rights violators.

Kara-Murza survived what he believes were attempts to poison him in 2015 and 2017 but kept returning to Russia despite concerns that it might be unsafe for him to do so. Since his April 2022 arrest, he has continued to speak out against Putin and the war in Ukraine in multiple opinion columns and letters written from behind bars. His wife, Yevgenia, has also actively campaigned to secure freedom for him and other jailed Kremlin critics.

ILYA YASHIN

Ilya Yashin, 40, refused to leave Russia despite the unprecedented pressure authorities applied to stifle dissent. He said that getting out of the country would undermine his value as a politician.

Yashin, an uncompromising member of a Moscow municipal council, was a vocal ally of Navalny’s. He eventually was arrested in June 2022 and later sentenced to 8 1/2 years in prison for “spreading false information” about the Russian military, a criminal offense since March 2022.

The harsh sentence didn’t silence his sharp criticism of the Kremlin. Yashin’s associates regularly update his social media pages with messages he relays from prison. His YouTube channel has over 1.5 million subscribers. In a prison interview with The Associated Press in September 2022, Yashin urged ordinary Russians to help spread the word, too.

“Demand for an alternative point of view has appeared in society,” Yashin told the AP in written answers from behind bars.

California again braces for flooding as another wet winter storm hits the state

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The latest in a series of wet winter storms gained strength in California early Monday, with forecasters warning of possible flooding, hail, strong winds and even brief tornadoes as the system moves south over the next few days.

Gusts topped 30 mph (48 kph) in Oakland and San Jose as a mild cold front late Saturday gave way to a more powerful storm on Sunday, said meteorologist Brayden Murdock with the National Weather Service office in San Francisco.

"The winds are here and getting stronger, and the rains will follow quickly," he said Sunday afternoon.

California's central coast is at risk of "significant flooding," with up to 5 inches (12 cm) of rain predicted for many areas, according to the weather service. Isolated rain totals of 10 inches (25 cm) are possible in the Santa Lucia and Santa Ynez mountain ranges as the storm heads toward greater Los Angeles.

Thunderstorms in valleys around the state capital on Monday could bring "brief tornadoes, large amounts of small hail, heavy rain, lightning, and gusty winds," the weather service office in Sacramento warned on X, formerly Twitter.

The latest storm is expected to move through quicker than the devastating atmospheric river that parked itself over Southern California earlier this month, turning roads into rivers, causing hundreds of landslides and killing at least nine people.

"It's not the ideal setup for an atmospheric river, but it does have some of the characteristics," including a band of subtropical moisture bringing up the rear of the storm, Murdock said. "Otherwise it's just a cold front."

But it's a cold front strong enough to cause problems including flash flooding and power outages, forecasters said. Flood watches and warnings were issued in coastal and mountain areas up and down the state.

Rainfall will be widespread even in the mountains, but several feet of snow is possible at elevations above about 6,800 feet (2,070 meters) across the Sierra Nevada, the weather service said. Motorists are urged to avoid mountain routes.

"Consider completing Sierra travel during the day Sunday, or rescheduling to later next week," said the weather service office in Reno, Nevada. The office issued a backcountry avalanche watch for the greater Lake Tahoe area and the eastern Sierra in Inyo and Mono counties.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services activated its operations center Saturday and positioned personnel and equipment in areas most at risk.

US rivalry with China expands to biotech.

Lawmakers see a failure to compete and want to act

By DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. lawmakers are raising alarms about what they see as America's failure to compete with China in biotechnology, warning of the risks to U.S. national security and commercial interests. But as the two countries' rivalry expands into the biotech industry, some say that shutting out Chinese companies would only hurt the U.S.

Biotechnology promises to revolutionize everyday life, with scientists and researchers using it to make rapid advances in medical treatment, genetic engineering in agriculture and novel biomaterials. Because of its potential, it has caught the attention of both the Chinese and U.S. governments.

Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate to bar "foreign adversary biotech companies of concern" from doing business with federally funded medical providers. The bills name four Chinese-owned companies.

The Chinese Embassy said those behind the bills have an "ideological bias" and seek to suppress Chinese companies "under false pretexts." It demanded that Chinese companies be given "open, just, and

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non-discriminatory treatment.”

The debate over biotechnology is taking place as the Biden administration tries to stabilize the volatile U.S.-China relationship, which has been battered by a range of issues, including a trade war, the COVID-19 pandemic, cybersecurity and militarization in the South China Sea.

Critics of the legislation warn that restrictions on Chinese companies would impede advances that could bring a greater good.

“In biotech, one cannot maintain competitiveness by walling off others,” said Abigail Coplin, an assistant professor at Vassar College who specializes in China’s biotech industry. She said she was worried that U.S. policymakers would get too obsessed with the technology’s military applications at the cost of hindering efforts to cure disease and feed the world’s population.

In a letter to senators sponsoring the bill, Rachel King, chief executive officer of the trade association Biotechnology Innovation Organization, said the legislation would “do untold damage to the drug development supply chain both for treatments currently approved and on market as well as for development pipelines decades in the making.”

But supporters say the legislation is crucial to protecting U.S. interests.

The National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology, a group created by the U.S. Senate to review the industry, said the bill would help secure the data of the federal government and of American citizens and it would discourage unfair competition from Chinese companies.

The commission warned that advancement in biotechnology can result not only in economic benefits but also rapid changes in military capabilities and tactics.

Much is at stake, said Rep. Mike Gallagher, chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party. Gallagher, a Wisconsin Republican, introduced the House version of the bill and last week led a congressional delegation to Boston to meet with biotech executives.

“It’s not just a supply chain battle or a national security battle or an economic security battle; I would submit it’s a moral and ethical battle,” Gallagher said. “Just as the sector advances at a really astronomic pace, the country who wins the race will set the ethical standards around how these technologies are used.”

He argues that the U.S. must “set the rules of the road” and if not, “we’re going to live in a less free, less moral world as a result.”

Both the United States and China, the world’s two largest economies, have identified biotech as a critical national interest.

The Biden administration has put forward a “whole-of-government approach” to advance biotechnology and biomanufacturing that is important for health, climate change, energy, food security, agriculture and supply chain resilience. A stated goal is to maintain U.S. technological leadership and economic competitiveness.

The Chinese government has plans to develop a “national strategic technology force” in biotech, which would be tasked with making breakthroughs and helping China achieve “technological independence,” primarily from the U.S.

“Both the Chinese government and the Americans have identified biotech as an area important for investment, a sector that presents an opportunity to grow their economy,” said Tom Bollyky, the Bloomberg chair in global health at the Council on Foreign Relations. He said any restrictive U.S. measures should be tailored to address military concerns and concerns about genomic data security.

“Naturally there’s going to be competition, but what’s challenging in biotech is that we are talking about human health,” Bollyky said.

Ray Yip, who founded the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention office in China, also worries that the rivalry will slow medical advancements.

The benefit of coming up with better diagnostics and therapy is beyond any individual country, Yip said, “and will not overshadow the capacity or prestige of the other country.”

What concerns Anna Puglisi, a senior fellow at Georgetown University’s Center for Security and Emerging Technology, is Beijing’s lack of transparency and its unfair market practices. “Competition is one thing. Unfair competition is another thing,” she said.

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Puglisi described BGI, a major Chinese biotech company identified in both the House and Senate bills, as “a national champion” that is subsidized and given favored treatment by the state in a system that “blurs private and public as well as civilian and military.”

“This system creates market distortions and undermines the global norms of science by using researchers and academic and commercial entities to further the goals of the state,” Puglisi said.

BGI, which has stressed its private ownership, offers genetic testing kits and a popular prenatal screening test to detect Down syndrome and other conditions. U.S. lawmakers say they are concerned such data could end up in the hands of the Chinese government.

The Defense Department has listed BGI as a Chinese military company, and the Commerce Department has blacklisted it on human rights grounds, citing a risk that BGI technology might have contributed to surveillance. BGI has rejected the allegations.

In raising its concerns about BGI, the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology says the company is required to share data with the Chinese government, has partnered with the Chinese military, and has received considerable Chinese state funding and support.

State subsidies have allowed BGI to offer genomic sequencing services at a highly competitive price that is attractive to U.S. researchers, according to the commission. The genomic data, once in the hands of the Chinese government, “represents a strategic asset that has privacy, security, economic, and ethical implications,” it said.

BGI could not immediately be reached for comment.

Also named in the bills is WuXi AppTec, a Chinese pharmaceutical and medical device company. The legislation states that the company presents a national security threat because of its ties to the Chinese military and its involvement in a Chinese plan to develop technologies for both civilian and military use.

WuXi AppTec said in a statement that it abides by the laws in the countries where it operates and does not pose a security risk to any country. “In fact, we serve as a valued contributor to the global pharmaceutical and life sciences industries,” the company said in a statement.

French mayors face violence and intimidation from xenophobic far-right groups

By ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

SAINT-BREVIN-LES-PINS, France (AP) — The mayor of a small resort town on the Atlantic coast of France resigned, closed his medical practice and moved away after his house and two cars were set on fire. The arson followed months of death threats over plans to relocate a refugee center near a school.

More than 150 miles (240 kilometers) to the north, trouble visited another mayor when he decided to take in a handful of refugee families. The aim was to fill job vacancies in the village; instead, he received a torrent of abuse. One threat read: “I hope, Mr. Mayor, that your wife will be raped, your daughter will be raped, and your grandchildren sodomized.”

These were not isolated incidents.

Mayors, normally among the most appreciated elected officials in France, are under attack as never before. Opposition to immigration is a driving force, led by small extreme-right groups that are often backed by national politicians.

While other European countries including Germany, Sweden, Italy and Spain have seen protests over similar issues, the backlash against mayors is especially jarring in France. The French have traditionally revered state institutions. A small-town mayor embodies the values of the French Republic, harking back to the revolution of 1789.

The tactics used against French mayors in recent years go beyond the usual street protests and angry public meetings. They include violence and disinformation — and local demonstrations are often amplified by outside agitators.

In France, like elsewhere in Europe, national identity has become a war cry for far-right political groups. They promote the idea that foreigners are stealing the riches of the nation through state handouts and

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that they will ultimately upend France's traditional way of life.

France's internal security agency, the DGSI, is increasingly worried about fringe movements and their potential for violence, both on the far right and the far left.

Far right groups became more active after deadly attacks by Islamic extremists in 2015-2016. One of their goals is to "precipitate a clash" over those viewed as outsiders, then-DGSI chief Nicolas Lerner said in a rare interview with *Le Monde* last year.

"The normalization of a recourse to violence, and the temptation to want to impose ideas through fear or intimidation, is a grave danger to our democracies," he said.

The violent views of the radical right in the U.S. have spread to Europe and been amplified through social media, said Lerner.

Topics debated by political parties, like migration, tend to "channel energy," he said.

FAR RIGHT ON THE RISE

The French far right first made its mark in 1984, when the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen won 10 seats in the European Parliament. But the nation gasped when Le Pen, a Holocaust denier, reached a runoff in the 2002 presidential election against the incumbent, Jacques Chirac.

Parties on the left and right combined to keep Le Pen from power then. But today the party of his daughter, Marine, has 88 deputies in Parliament. She plans to make her fourth bid for the presidency in 2027, after twice reaching the runoff against President Emmanuel Macron.

A new party, Reconquête (Reconquest), has staked out a position even further to the right, calling for zero immigration. Its vice president, Marion Maréchal, Marine Le Pen's niece, is the lead candidate in elections for the European Parliament in June.

Reconquête's ambitions go further than just a protest movement, said Jean-Yves Camus, a leading expert on the far right.

"Beyond those anti-migrant demonstrations there is a real political project, which is confronting the state," he said. While there is no tradition of suspicion of a "deep state" in France, Reconquête's founder, Eric Zemmour, has emulated former U.S. President Donald Trump, taking aim at elites and predicting the collapse of French society.

Zemmour, a French nationalist, has no personal connection to extremist groups, Camus said. "But he says, 'If these people want to join me and my party, they can be useful.'"

Reconquête is also leading a campaign against the educational system with an agenda to end what it calls the "great indoctrination." It runs a pressure group, called Vigilant Parents, that tries to keep schools from teaching about topics it deems inappropriate, such as LGBTQ rights, and encourages people to snitch on teachers who do.

Many on the far right, including Zemmour, subscribe to the "great replacement" theory, the false claim that native populations of Western countries are being overrun by non-white immigrants, notably Muslims, who will one day erase Christian civilization and its values.

This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series covering threats to democracy in Europe.

TROUBLE IN CALLAC

The far right claimed victory in January 2023, when Mayor Jean-Yves Rolland of Callac gave up his plan to house seven to 10 refugee families in his town in Brittany, in northwest France. His goal had been to help fill local jobs and inject dynamism into the isolated enclave with a shrinking population.

For months, demonstrators from near and far, some from Reconquête, converged on the village of 2,200 people.

"They were clearly threatening democracy," Rolland said, dumping a pile of written threats on his desk in the town hall. One referred to migrants as "Dealers, Rapists, Aggressors" who should be "returned to Africa." Another showed a patron saint of France, the Archangel Michael, trampling on a Quran and chas-

ing Islam's Prophet Mohammed out of France with a pitchfork.

The use of disinformation, including "troll factories" that generate swarms of emails targeting an individual, is a hallmark of extreme-right groups.

Rolland said he received hundreds of angry emails that mysteriously passed through the Czech Republic. Some carried spurious contact details, complicating investigators' efforts to locate the senders, he said.

"In the end, those contesting came from outside ... terrible extremist groups," Rolland said.

MAYOR'S HOUSE ON FIRE

Mayor Yannick Morez of Saint-Brevin-les-Pins was awakened in the night on March 22 of last year to find flames lapping at the front of his home while his family slept. His cars were completely destroyed by fire.

Asylum seekers had been in the town since 2016, but a plan to house them near a school triggered protests that children would be at risk. As in Callac, some of the demonstrators were local, but out-of-towners seized on the opportunity to promote their anti-migrant cause, whether in person or via online campaigning.

Morez resigned and moved away, but his successor as mayor, Dorothee Pacaud stood firm, and the relocation project went ahead. Months later, the town remains tense; it went into full lockdown for a low-key immigration conference last fall.

"An elected official, a mayor, a deputy mayor, that represents democracy. To use methods like that, what happened in Callac, it's unacceptable," Pacaud said.

French mayors faced another brief challenge last year: Six nights of nationwide rioting over the police killing of a 17-year-old with North African roots. Unusually, the unrest stretched beyond metropolitan areas and reached provincial towns too, super-charged by messages shared by teenagers on TikTok. A mass police deployment brought the violence to a halt.

But the campaigns are continuing, and have touched other towns, too. And another source of tension is brewing. In recent weeks, French farmers have mounted protests across the country, demanding better pay and less red tape, especially from the EU.

The farmers are the embodiment of "la France profonde," the very essence of what makes France French, that the far right claims to represent. Activists are seizing the opportunity. Small groups of extremists, some members sporting brass knuckles, showed up at one farmers' demonstration last month in the southern city of Montpellier.

With elections for the European Parliament coming up in June, the protests are an opportunity for the far right to sow discontent with mainstream politics — and a warning of the possibility of more disruption to come.

Points records fall at the All-Star Game, with the East beating the West 211-186

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The NBA wanted more competition. It got more points instead — more than ever before.

And once again, the All-Star Game was all offense.

All-Star MVP Damian Lillard of the Milwaukee Bucks scored 39 points and the Eastern Conference beat the Western Conference 211-186 on Sunday night, with the winners putting up the most points in the game's 73-year history. The previous mark: 196 by the West in 2016.

"We had fun," East captain Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Bucks said.

It was a flurry of records: The total points of 397 smashed the record of 374 set in 2017, while the East made 42 3-pointers to break the mark of 35 set by Team LeBron in 2019. The sides combined for 193 points in the first half to break the any-half record of 191 set last year, and the East tied an any-half record by scoring 104 by intermission.

Jaylen Brown of the Boston Celtics had 36 and Tyrese Haliburton from the hometown Indiana Pacers finished with 32 for the East, while Antetokounmpo had 23 and Jayson Tatum finished with 20.

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"To be able to have this kind of accomplishment, it's special," Lillard said.

Perhaps unnoticed: Karl-Anthony Towns of the Minnesota Timberwolves scored 50 points for the West in just 28 minutes. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander of the Oklahoma City Thunder scored 31 points for the West.

"The shot-making from the East was incredible," West forward Kevin Durant said. "Hard to play defense when somebody's shooting 30-, 40-footers over you."

The West scored a ton of points, too: At 186, it had the fourth-most by any team in All-Star history. And obviously, the most ever in a loss.

Among the other records:

— The East tried 97 3-pointers; the previous record was 90 by Team LeBron in 2019.

— The teams combined for 66 3s made and 168 3s attempted (previous records were 62 and 167 in 2019).

— The teams combined for 163 field goals made and 289 attempted (previous records were 162 in 2017 and 286 in 2016).

"Obviously, it wasn't high intensity, at all," Haliburton said.

Lillard made some history, too. He defended his 3-point shootout title on Saturday night — then won MVP on Sunday night. The only other player to win a Saturday event and All-Star MVP in the same weekend was Michael Jordan in 1988, when he won the dunk contest as well as the MVP trophy.

"Dame put on a show," Tatum said, "and I was happy for him."

The highlights were from everywhere. Lillard pulled up from halfcourt in the third quarter — swish. Luka Doncic tried a shot from about 70 feet late in the first half; it hit near the top of the backboard. Towns even threw an alley-oop to Stephen Curry; the Warriors star is much more of a shooter than a dunker, so he simply laid it in instead.

The only drama in the fourth was about the record — and really, that wasn't in doubt. The East had 160 points through three quarters, only needing 37 more to set the team All-Star record.

Brown's 3-pointer with 1:54 left broke the mark, giving the East 197. Haliburton made the shot that sent a scoreboard to the 200-point mark for the first time in any sort of official NBA history, connecting from deep with 1:27 left.

Lillard said the East wanted the record.

"Everybody was asking what the record was," Lillard said. "We found out and went after it."

And Lillard ended it in style — a 44-footer to close the scoring. He made 11 3-pointers on the night, with the official distance of those recorded at 347 feet. A typical NBA 3-pointer is 24 or 25 feet; Lillard averaged 31 1/2 feet on his 3s Sunday night.

Durant said he was watching Lillard on the West bench while sitting with the Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard. "We were in awe," Durant said.

Defense was optional, sometimes accidental. There were 14 steals, most of those coming off wayward passes. And there were even three blocked shots.

Otherwise, it was shooting practice. And the tone was set quickly — Haliburton had five 3-pointers in a wild span of just 1:32 in the first quarter, helping the East take a 53-47 lead after the opening 12 minutes.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and other league executives were seeking a more competitive All-Star Game after last season's 184-175 matchup was widely panned — and television ratings plummeted.

Even Hall of Famer Larry Bird, honored Sunday at the NBA Legends Brunch, said was hoping the message from the league resonated and players took the All-Star Game a little more seriously.

"I know what this league's all about and I'm very proud of it," Bird said. "I'm proud of today's players. I like the game they play. ... I think it's very important when you have the best players in the world together, you've got to compete and you've got to play hard and you've got to show the fans how good they really are."

They might not have competed the way Bird wanted — but they showed the fans plenty about how good they are.

It had a big-game, Finals-type atmosphere — but obviously, nothing near a playoff feel. Donovan Mitchell threw a 50-foot inbounds pass underhand, Bam Adebayo inbounded a ball off Nikola Jokic's backside before dribbling downcourt and making a 3, and Devin Booker went through pregame with a hat on backwards.

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Fun was had, and LeBron James — in his 20th All-Star Game, extending his record — said there was one big takeaway.

“The good thing that came out of tonight is none of the players were injured,” James said. “Everybody came out unscathed.”

Except the scoreboard, perhaps.

UP NEXT

The 74th NBA All-Star Game is scheduled for Feb. 16, 2025, at Chase Center in San Francisco, the home of the Golden State Warriors. It'll be the first time for the game in the Bay Area since 2000.

Tens of thousands rail against Mexico's president and ruling party in 'march for democracy'

By AMARANTA MARENTES Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Tens of thousands of demonstrators cloaked in pink marched through cities in Mexico and abroad on Sunday in what they called a “march for democracy” targeting the country's ruling party in advance of the country's June 2 elections.

The demonstrations called by Mexico's opposition parties advocated for free and fair elections in the Latin American nation and railed against corruption the same day presidential front-runner Claudia Sheinbaum registered as a candidate for ruling party Morena. Approximately 90,000 people turned out to rail against the leader, according to government figures.

Sheinbaum is largely seen as a continuation candidate of Mexico's popular populist leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador. He's adored by many voters who say he bucked the country's elite parties from power in 2018 and represents the working class.

But the 70-year-old president has also been accused of making moves that endanger the country's democracy. Last year, the leader slashed funding for the country's electoral agency, the National Electoral Institute, and weakened oversight of campaign spending, something INE's head said could “wind up poisoning democracy itself.” The agency's color, pink, has been used as a symbol by demonstrators.

López Obrador has also attacked journalists in hours-long press briefings, has frequently attacked Mexico's judiciary and claimed judges are part of a conservative conspiracy against his administration.

In Mexico City on Sunday, thousands of people dressed in pink flocked to the city's main plaza roaring “get López out.” Others carried signs reading “the power of the people is greater than the people in power.”

Gabriela Ozuna, 61, said she and her family came from Baja California state, and were participating in the march not just to support democratic institution, but also to protest attacks on candidates by drug cartels, especially in local elections.

“We know our democracy is in danger. What we want to do is defend it and keep defending it,” Ozuna said.

Among the opposition organizations marching were National Civic Front, Yes for Mexico, Citizen Power, Civil Society Mexico, UNE Mexico and United for Mexico.

“Democracy doesn't solve lack of water, it doesn't solve hunger, it doesn't solve a lot of things. But without democracy you can't solve anything,” said Enrique de la Madrid Cordero, a prominent politician from the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, in a video posted to social media calling for people to join the protests.

The PRI held uninterrupted power in Mexico for more than 70 years.

Marches were organized in a hundred cities across the country, and in other cities in the United States and Spain.

Still, the president remains highly popular and opinion polls indicate his ally Sheinbaum appears set to coast easily into the presidency.

López Obrador repeatedly dismissed the protests, telling reporters Friday that his critics don't care about democracy and are organizing the march to return the corrupt to power.

Following the massive demonstration, the leader continued to rail on critics, and said there would be no electoral fraud in the election and that he had not intervened in democratic processes.

"It's their democracy ... the democracy of the corrupt. What we want is there to be democracy of the people. We don't want power without the people. They're the one's that establish an anti-democracy with electoral fraud," López Obrador.

2 officers, 1 first responder killed at the scene of a domestic call in Minnesota; suspect dead

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

BURNSVILLE, Minn. (AP) — A man armed with multiple guns and large amounts of ammunition shot at police officers from inside a suburban Minneapolis home that was filled with children on Sunday, killing two officers and a firefighter who was providing medical aid to one of the wounded, authorities said.

A third officer was wounded in the shooting in a tree-lined neighborhood of two-story homes in Burnsville, Minnesota. The suspect in the shooting also died, officials said.

Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Superintendent Drew Evans said there was an exchange of gunfire, and authorities were still piecing together details of what he described as a "terrible day."

The firefighter, who also works as a paramedic, was shot while providing aid to an injured officer, Evans said. He told reporters the paramedic was a part of a SWAT team that had been called to a domestic situation at the home.

Inside, an armed man had barricaded himself with his family, including seven children ranging in age from 2 to 15, Evans said.

He said negotiations lasted for hours before the suspect opened fire. He wasn't specific on the exact amount of time, but the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association said the standoff lasted four hours before a SWAT team entered the home.

Evans said the suspect had several guns and large amounts of ammunition and shot at the police officers from multiple positions within the home, including the upper and lower floors. Evans said at least one officer was shot inside the home.

"We still don't know the exact exchange of gunfire that occurred," Evans said. "Certainly several officers did return fire."

He said that around 8 a.m. the suspect was found dead and the family and children were released from the home. None of them were hurt.

City officials identified the slain officers as Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, both 27. Adam Finseth, 40, a firefighter and paramedic for the city since 2019, also was killed.

Elmstrand, a member of the department's mobile command staff, joined the department in 2017. Ruge was hired in 2020 and was part of the department's crisis negotiations team and was a physical evidence officer.

Another police officer, Sgt. Adam Medlicott, was injured and being treated at a hospital with what are believed to be non-life-threatening injuries, the city said.

As the bodies of the dead left a hospital, officers saluted, before they were taken in a convoy to the medical examiner's office. Medical staff watched in scrubs.

"We're hurting," said Police Chief Tanya Schwartz. "Today, three members of our team made the ultimate sacrifice for this community. They are heroes."

Neighbors were startled awake by loud pops about an hour before sunrise.

Alicia McCullum said she and her family dropped to the floor, uncertain whether the noise was gunshots. She and her husband peered out of their sunroom and saw squad cars and a phalanx of police officers.

"I didn't think it was a gunshot at first, but then we opened the windows and we saw police everywhere and police hiding in our neighbors' yards," said McCullum, who lives two houses down from the source of the commotion.

"Then there were three more gunshots," she said. "It was like a bunch of fireworks." That's when she

and her husband and two children sought safety in a bathroom and dropped to the floor. They prayed. McCullum said she was relieved to see a woman and children escorted out of their home. "We're so thankful for those police officers that risked their lives to save those kids," McCullum said. "And my heart goes out to that mother."

Fire Chief BJ Jungmann said the community was grieving and asked for privacy for the families. None of the relatives of the officers or the firefighter immediately returned phone messages from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Evans said the medical examiner would identify the suspect and said autopsies were planned for Monday. There was no indication the home had been a source of troubles in the past.

"There have not been many calls for service at all," Evans said.

As the investigation unfolded, the neighborhood was ringed with police cars to keep reporters and the public away. A police armored vehicle had bullet damage to its windshield, and Evans confirmed it sustained the damage in the gunfight.

Police scanner recordings on Broadcastify.com capture a rattled man saying, "I need any ambulance," as he struggled to catch his breath. Someone later could be heard talking about three being loaded into ambulances, uttering the word "critical."

As news spread, other law enforcement agencies immediately began posting messages of condolence on social media, including images of badges with blue bars through them. It is a mark of solidarity in mourning.

"In times like these, it is essential to come together as a community and support one another through the uncertainty and grief," said Marty Kelly, the sheriff in neighboring Goodhue County.

Flags also were lowered to half-staff, with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz urging urged those who walked past them to take a moment and think about the first responders who lost their lives.

"Minnesota mourns with you," he said. "The state stands ready to assist in any way possible."

Hundreds of people gathered in front of Burnsville City Hall on Sunday night for a candlelit vigil to remember the victims. Several uniformed officers from other departments also attended, included many from St. Paul.

A fire truck and police car were in front of the building. The police vehicle had bouquets of flowers on the hood and handwritten signs tucked under the windshield wipers, one of which read: "We are praying for you." Those gathered joined together in prayer and sang "Amazing Grace."

"Right now is a time to grieve, to come together and grieve our community's loss, and to support the families," said U.S. Rep. Angie Craig.

"I can't imagine the pain that you're all going through," Craig continued, "but what I can say is that to all our officers out there, the paramedics, our firefighters, thank you for what you do." The crowd applauded.

"It's an important community," said area resident Kris Martin, "and we feel very saddened by what happened."

Burnsville, a city of around 64,000, is located about 15 miles (24 kilometers) south of downtown Minneapolis.

Panarin rallies Rangers to 6-5 win over Islanders in outdoor game at MetLife Stadium

By VIN A. CHERWOO AP Sports Writer

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — After falling behind by three goals early in the second period, the New York Rangers kept their composure, kept up the pressure and got a big comeback win to remain perfect in outdoor games.

Artemi Panarin scored 10 seconds into overtime and the Rangers beat the crosstown-rival Islanders 6-5 in a Stadium Series game at MetLife Stadium on Sunday.

"Just sticking with what we know," Rangers captain Jacob Trouba said. "The whole group came together and everyone kind of stuck with it and got the result we wanted. It's a pretty cool memory."

Panarin knocked in the puck off Islanders defenseman Noah Dobson and goalie Ilya Sorokin and the

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puck trickled across the goal line after Dobson knocked the right side of the goal loose. The goal was confirmed after a review.

"I was flooded with emotions," Panarin said. "I had to hold back tears. It was so much of a spectacle."

Vincent Trocheck had two goals and an assist, and Erik Gustafsson, Chris Kreider and Mika Zibanejad also scored for the Rangers, who won their season-high seventh straight and improved to 5-0 outdoors. Panarin, Alexis Lafreniere and Adam Fox each had two assists, and Igor Shesterkin finished with 36 saves.

"To win the way we did was incredible," Zibanejad said. "There's no better way to finish it off."

Rangers coach Peter Laviolette was behind the bench for his fifth outdoor game, tying Joel Quenneville for the most in NHL history, and got his first win in the open air.

"These games that take place are special, I've been fortunate enough to be a part of them," Laviolette said. "There have been some good ones but this one has to be up there, near the top of the list."

Brock Nelson had a goal and an assist, and Bo Horvat, Mathew Barzal, Anders Lee and Alexander Romanov also scored for the Islanders, who fell to 0-1-1 in outdoor games — with both losses coming against the Rangers. Dobson had three assists to top 50 for the season and Sorokin had 32 saves.

The Islanders pulled four points behind Detroit for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference.

The second game in two days at the home of the NFL's Jets and Giants drew 79,690 — the third biggest crowd for an NHL outdoor game and a little more than 9,000 higher than the attendance of the Devils' 6-3 win over the Flyers here the previous night.

Islanders coach Patrick Roy fell to 3-3-3 since replacing the fired Lane Lambert on Jan. 20, and dropped his outdoor record to 0-1-1.

Rangers players arrived at the stadium wearing NYPD and FDNY hockey jerseys, while the Islanders rode in on fire trucks and were dressed in suits and ties. The start of the game was then delayed about 45 minutes to allow for the shining sun to move off the ice, and the temperature at puck drop at 3:48 p.m. was a windy 39 degrees.

After the Rangers pulled within one in the second period, Romanov pushed the Islanders' lead back up to 5-3 at 1:53 of the third. It was his sixth of the season.

Rangers defenseman Ryan Lindgren was down on the ice and slow to get up after he was hit in the face by Romanov's stick after he passed the puck out of the corner shortly before the goal. Lindgren headed to the Rangers' dressing room due to a cut on his face.

The Rangers then had a 4-on-3 power play with just under six minutes to go, and Laviolette pulled Shesterkin for a two-man advantage. With the Rangers on a 6-on-4 advantage, Kreider deflected Panarin's shot past Sorokin with 4:08 left to pull the Rangers within one with his 28th.

The Rangers were on another power play and pulled Shesterkin for the two-man advantage again and Zibanejad tied it 5-5 with a sharp-angle goal from the left circle with 1:29 remaining. It was Zibanejad's 18th and the Rangers' third power-play goal of the day.

"We just got to get a (penalty) kill," Lee said. "Our killers did a great job on that 4-on-3, we come out of the box and they were able to get one at the end of that. We found ourselves in the box and weren't able to get the kill tonight."

Lee extended the Islanders' lead to 4-1 with a power-play goal at 1:03 of the second as he deflected Pierre Engvall's shot from the right point through his legs and past Shesterkin. It was his 14th.

After Lee was sent off for slashing, Trocheck deflected Panarin's shot from the slot for his 17th at 5:36 to get the Rangers within two.

Trocheck then pulled the Rangers to 4-3 from the left side with 1:36 remaining in the middle period.

Gustafsson got the Rangers on the scoreboard 1:28 into the game on the team's first shot on goal. It was his fifth.

Rangers 21-year-old rookie forward Matt Rempe, the first player to make his NHL debut in an outdoor game, then dropped his gloves and exchanged punches with the Islanders' Matt Martin before the ensuing faceoff.

The Islanders then scored three times in 3:14 span to take the lead.

UP NEXT

Rangers: Host Dallas on Tuesday night before returning to New Jersey to face the Devils on Thursday night.

Islanders: At Pittsburgh on Tuesday night to open a two-game road trip.

UN Security Council to vote Tuesday on resolution demanding Gaza ceasefire, US vows to use its veto

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote Tuesday on an Arab-backed resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, which the United States announced it will veto.

Algeria, the Arab representative on the council, put the draft resolution in a final form that can be voted on. Council diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly, said the vote will take place Tuesday morning.

In addition to a ceasefire, the final Algerian draft, obtained by The Associated Press, reiterates council demands that Israel and Hamas "scrupulously comply" with international law especially the protection of civilians, and rejects the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians.

The draft also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas during their surprise Oct. 7 attacks in southern Israel. Some 1,200 people were killed and about 250 taken captive, with over 100 still believed to be held in Gaza.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said in a statement that the United States has been working on a hostage deal for months that would bring at least a six-week period of calm "from which we could then take the time and the steps to build a more enduring peace."

She said U.S. President Joe Biden has had multiple calls over the last week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the leaders of Egypt and Qatar to push the deal forward.

"Though gaps remain, the key elements are on the table" and it remains the best opportunity to reunite hostages with their families and enable a prolonged pause in fighting which would allow lifesaving aid to get to Palestinian civilians who desperately need it, Thomas-Greenfield said. Qatar said Saturday the talks "have not been progressing as expected."

By contrast, the Arab-backed resolution wouldn't achieve those outcomes, "and indeed, may run counter to them," she said. "For that reason, the United States does not support action on this draft resolution. Should it come up for a vote as drafted, it will not be adopted."

The 22 Arab countries at the United Nations have been demanding a ceasefire for months as Israel's military offensive in response to the Hamas attacks has intensified, with the number of Palestinians killed surpassing 28,000, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The Arab Group chair this month, Tunisia's U.N. Ambassador Tarek Ladeb, told U.N. reporters last Wednesday that some 1.5 million Palestinians who sought safety in Gaza's southern city of Rafah face a "catastrophic scenario" if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu goes ahead with a potential evacuation of civilians and military offensive in the area bordering Egypt.

Netanyahu ordered the military to come up with a plan for Rafah's evacuation, but Israel hasn't announced a timeline.

The Algeria draft resolution also expresses "grave concern over the dire and urgently deteriorating humanitarian situation" in Gaza and reiterates the council's call for unhindered humanitarian access throughout the territory, where U.N. officials say a quarter of the 2.3 million population are facing starvation.

The Security Council has adopted two resolutions on Gaza, with the U.S., Israel's closest ally, abstaining on both.

Its first resolution on Nov. 15 called for "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses" in Gaza to address the escalating crisis for Palestinian civilians during Israel's aerial and ground attacks.

On Dec. 22, the council adopted a watered-down resolution calling for immediately speeding aid deliveries to hungry and desperate civilians in Gaza, but without the original plea for an "urgent suspension of

hostilities" between Israel and Hamas.

It did call for "creating the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities." The steps are not defined, but diplomats said it was the council's first reference to stopping fighting.

Illegally adopted during Chile's dictatorship, they're now reuniting with biological families

By PATRICIA LUNA Associated Press

SANTIAGO (AP) — Romina Cortés couldn't pronounce her sister's last name. She didn't know what she smells like, what her favorite food is, or what she likes to do in her free time.

Cortés, 43, waited impatiently Sunday at the airport in Santiago, Chile, where she would soon meet her sister, Maria, whose existence Cortés learned of just a month ago.

That's because Cortés' sister, María Hastings, was one of thousands of Chilean children trafficked or illegally put up for adoption over the last 60 years or so, most during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet from 1973-1990.

"I am overwhelmed, so happy to meet my biological family," Hastings said as soon as she stepped off the plane from Tampa, Florida. "I'm going to reconnect with them, learn who they really are and let them know who I am."

The illegal adoptions — 20,000 of which are being investigated by Chilean justice officials and other social groups — extend back to the 1960s. Largely poor, young and indigenous women in vulnerable situations were either forced to give up their children or were told they died shortly after childbirth.

Now, families like the Cortés' are finally reuniting after decades.

Cortés' mother, a woman from the countryside, came to work in the city "without knowing how to read or write." Without any support, her mom ended up on the street and was coerced into putting her baby up for adoption after she was born in 1987.

"They forced her to sign a document that she didn't know what it was, since she was illiterate," Cortés said. "For some reason, because of the pain she was carrying she didn't tell me before."

But last month, to the hairstylist's surprise, she added a sister and a nephew to her life. "When I saw her on Zoom I said, 'She looks like me. She has my same eyes and my same nose,'" said Cortés.

Eyes fixed on the terminal doors Sunday, Cortés felt a rollercoaster of emotions. Eager to hug her sister, she said she is trying to learn English to better communicate with her, but that all she knows how to say is "yes."

Hastings was told as a child that she was adopted, but a few months ago discovered she was part of a child abduction network with branches around the world, including the United States, France, the Netherlands and Sweden.

On Sunday she wrapped her arms around five members of her new family, among them her crying mother, who preferred to remain anonymous but said she knew this day would come.

Hastings said she is learning Spanish to connect with a part of herself that remained dormant all this time.

Hastings said she didn't initially want to search for her family until she read a news article about the trafficked children, which led her to connect with Connecting Roots.

It's one of several organizations that bring together children illegally trafficked from Chile, especially those in the U.S.

The trafficking network was vast, including foster homes, hospitals, hotels, social workers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, judges, and diplomats "who participated in this criminal enterprise under the protection of the State," said Juan Luis Insulza, the vice president of Connecting Roots.

Foreigners received or marketed the trafficked infants, the organization said. In most cases the adoptive families were also deceived about the illegal origin of the babies.

Ben Frutcher was one of seven people on the flight to Chile on Sunday, excited to connect with his seven siblings and 14 nieces and nephews. He came with his adoptive father, who had encouraged him to search for his birth family.

"I'm going to need a lot more memory with all these new names," he joked as his family hugged and cried, wrapping him in a Chilean flag.

From the moment he first saw a photo of the family, Frutcher could see their shared features, noting everyone says he looks like his biological father. His mother died 23 years ago, plagued with the grief of never knowing her son.

He said he plans to travel to his family's central Chilean town of Chillán.

The family searched intensively for Frutcher for more than 33 years since the start of social media, said Vladimir Figueroa, 39, one of Frutcher's eight siblings. But they found no trace of him because they searched under his Chilean name. Their brother's absence hung over their home.

Connecting Roots was born when firefighter Tyler Graf met his Chilean friend Insulza during training in Houston. Graf knew he was adopted and his family was from Chile, but only began to investigate with the help of Insulza, who began to look for Graf's family in Chile.

Years later, they learned that Graf's biological mother was told that her son was stillborn at the hospital. The truth "was much more sinister than we had been told," Graf said, saying the official version was that his mother's family was too poor to support him.

Soon, scores of new cases popped up and fellow firefighters and others helped facilitate DNA tests and more information. The organization has raised funds to help connect 36 families to date.

Graf said that while the organization tries to offer emotional support, "nothing can prepare you" for a moment as powerful as walking through this door and having that family embrace you.

Houston megachurch holds healing and thanksgiving service a week after deadly shooting

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's Houston megachurch held a special service Sunday dedicated to healing and thanksgiving a week after a woman opened fire in one of its hallways before being gunned down by security officers.

Osteen's Lakewood Church has not had services since the Feb. 11 shooting that sent worshippers scrambling for safety. On Sunday, Osteen, his wife Victoria Osteen and members of the church staff who lead Lakewood's Spanish ministry sat in chairs on the stage and spoke about the shooting, how it has impacted Lakewood's community and how the church was moving forward.

Osteen told parishioners it has been a difficult time with "a lot of trauma."

"You just got to know Lakewood is strong and it keeps getting stronger," he said. "Fear is not going to win. Faith is going to win. We are going to move forward."

Church leaders thanked the security staff and others who responded during the shooting and protected parishioners. Osteen invited Houston Mayor John Whitmire and police Chief Troy Finner to the stage and thanked them for their help after the tragedy. Attendees gave officers and security staff a standing ovation.

"After the tragedy of last week, (God) had a purpose in bringing us together to show how united our city is," Whitmire said during a fiery and emotional speech.

As Osteen and others spoke, people in the audience could be heard saying, "Amen" and "Thank you, God."

"What today is about is reclaiming what is ours, reclaiming the space that God has provided for all of us" Victoria Osteen said.

Officers from various law enforcement agencies, including Houston Police, walked the hallways during and between services Sunday.

Church spokesperson Don Iloff said 40 to 50 uniformed and plainclothes officers typically work every church service. He said he did not immediately know if that number was higher Sunday.

Police say Genesse Moreno, 36, entered the church between Sunday services with her 7-year-old son and began firing an AR-style rifle. Moreno did not reach the main sanctuary and was killed after exchanging gunfire with two off-duty officers. Two people were wounded in the shooting, including Moreno's son, who was shot in the head and remained hospitalized.

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Osteen, who wiped away tears as he spoke, said he was praying for the boy.

Moreno "came to do a lot of harm, but by the grace of God, we are all here," Osteen said. "Lord, I know she was troubled in her mind."

Jocelyn Edwards, 39, who attended one of the two Sunday morning services, said she felt it was important to be there and support Lakewood.

"This is not the end," said Edwards, who has attended Lakewood since 2015. "We are not broken. We are going to move forward."

Beth Mast, 50, was also at Lakewood on Sunday with her husband, two daughters and three sons. The family lives in Crockett, Texas, and every week makes the 1½ hour trip to Houston to attend services. She has been a member of Lakewood for the past four years.

"We come every Sunday, and the enemy is not going to stop us," Mast said. "Fear is not going to have any power over us just because of a bad incident."

Vera Andronenkova, 54, and her godson Richard Fijas, 33, who both live in Chicago and usually watch services online, said the shooting was a sign that they needed to finally come to Houston and visit the church.

"A lot of people, they asked us, 'Aren't you guys afraid to go?' We did not let that fear stop us," Fijas said. "We felt like this was the week to come."

Finner told reporters after the service that investigators were still trying to determine Moreno's motive and learn more about how she obtained the AR-style rifle she used.

Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg, who was also at the service, said investigators "are leaning toward her being more mentally ill and this being a situation of a lone wolf."

Moreno's former mother-in-law, Walli Carranza, told The Associated Press that Moreno had long struggled with mental illness. Carranza said she believed systemic failures and lax gun laws ultimately led to the shooting.

She also said she tried to alert authorities and others about Moreno's mental health struggles, and that in 2020 and 2021, her attorney sent emails to Lakewood Church asking for assistance.

Church officials had not found records of the emails, but they were still looking, Iloff said. Records show Moreno "sporadically" attended services at Lakewood for a couple of years, but there were no records of her being at the church after 2022, Iloff said last week.

Texas lacks a so-called "red flag" law, which generally allows law enforcement or family members to ask a judge to order the seizure or surrender of guns from someone who is deemed dangerous, often because of mental health concerns or threats of violence.

Osteen, 60, preaches to about 45,000 people a week at the church located in a former basketball arena, and he is known to millions more through his televised sermons. Lakewood is the third-largest megachurch in the U.S., according to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

Israel vows to 'finish the job' in Gaza as War Cabinet member threatens a Ramadan deadline for Rafah

By WAFAA SHURAFU, KAREEM CHEHAYEB and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday brushed off growing calls to halt the military offensive in Gaza, vowing to "finish the job" as a member of his War Cabinet threatened to invade the southern city of Rafah if remaining Israeli hostages are not freed by the upcoming Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Israel's government has not publicly discussed a timeline for a ground offensive on Rafah, where more than half the enclave's 2.3 million Palestinians have sought refuge. Retired general Benny Gantz, part of Netanyahu's three-member War Cabinet, represents an influential voice but not the final word on what might lie ahead.

"If by Ramadan our hostages are not home, the fighting will continue to the Rafah area," Gantz told a conference of Jewish American leaders. Ramadan, expected to begin March 10, is historically a tense time

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in the region.

As cease-fire negotiations struggle after signs of progress in recent weeks, Netanyahu has called demands by Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group "delusional."

The United States, Israel's top ally, says it still hopes to broker a cease-fire and hostage-release agreement, and envisions a wider resolution of the war sparked by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel.

The U.S. also says it will veto another draft U.N. resolution calling for a cease-fire, with its U.N. ambassador warning against measures that could jeopardize "the opportunity for an enduring resolution of hostilities."

But Netanyahu opposes Palestinian statehood, which the U.S. calls a key element in a broader vision for normalization of relations between Israel and regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia. His Cabinet adopted a declaration Sunday saying Israel "categorically rejects international edicts on a permanent arrangement with the Palestinians" and opposes any unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state.

The international community overwhelmingly supports an independent Palestinian state as part of a future peace agreement. Netanyahu's government is filled with hard-liners who oppose Palestinian independence.

Netanyahu wants Israel to achieve "total victory" over Hamas. In response to international concern over a Rafah offensive, he has said Palestinian civilians will be evacuated. Where they will go in largely devastated Gaza is not clear.

The suggested timing for the offensive came as the World Health Organization chief said southern Gaza's main medical center, Nasser Hospital, "is not functional anymore" after Israeli forces raided it in Khan Younis last week.

Israeli strikes across Gaza continued, killing at least 18 people overnight into Sunday, according to medics and witnesses. A strike in Rafah killed six people, including a woman and three children, and another killed five in Khan Younis, the main target of the southern Gaza offensive in recent weeks. Associated Press journalists saw the bodies.

"All those who were martyred were those whom the Jews asked to move to safe places," said a bystander after the Rafah strike, Ahmad Abu Rezeq.

In Gaza City, which suffered widespread destruction early in the war, an airstrike flattened a home, killing seven people, including three women, according to relative Sayed al-Afifi.

Israel's military rarely comments on individual strikes and blames civilian casualties on Hamas because the militants operate in dense residential areas.

UN SAYS RAIDED HOSPITAL NO LONGER FUNCTIONS

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said a WHO team was not allowed to enter Nasser Hospital on Friday or Saturday. In a post on X, he said about 200 patients remain, including 20 who need urgent referrals elsewhere.

Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant said at least 200 militants surrendered at the hospital. He also claimed that Hamas in Khan Younis is defeated, and that Hamas is largely leaderless in Gaza. He gave no evidence to support the claims.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 70 medical personnel were among those arrested, along with patients, leaving 150 patients without medical care. It said Israel refused to allow patients, including newborns, to be evacuated to other hospitals.

The military says it is looking for the remains of hostages inside Nasser Hospital and does not target doctors or patients.

The Oct. 7 attack killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostage. Militants still hold around 130 hostages, a fourth of them believed to be dead. Most of the others were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

The war has killed at least 28,985 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. On Sunday it said 127 bodies were brought to hospitals in the past 24 hours.

Around 80% of Gaza's population have been displaced, and a quarter face starvation. Wael Abu Omar, a spokesman for the Palestinian Crossings Authority, said 123 aid trucks entered Gaza through Israel's Kerem Shalom border crossing Sunday and four trucks of cooking gas entered through the Rafah crossing

with Egypt. That's well below the 500 trucks entering daily before the war.

In the occupied West Bank, a shootout erupted when Israeli forces went to arrest an armed suspect in the town of Tulkarem. The military said the suspect was killed, and a member of Israel's paramilitary Border Police was severely wounded. It described the target of the raid as a senior militant. The Palestinian Health Ministry said two Palestinians were killed.

The war in Gaza has threatened to ignite wider conflict in the region. The U.S. Central Command said it conducted five self-defense strikes Saturday against cruise missiles and drones in area of Yemen controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebel group.

US OPPOSES A NEW CEASE-FIRE RESOLUTION

Algeria, the Arab representative on the U.N. Security Council, has circulated a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza, and rejecting the forced displacement of Palestinians.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the draft "will not be adopted" and runs counter to Washington's efforts to end the fighting. The U.S. vetoed previous resolutions that had wide international support.

The U.S., Qatar and Egypt have spent weeks trying to broker a cease-fire and hostage release, but Qatar said Saturday the talks "have not been progressing as expected."

Hamas has said it will not release all remaining hostages without Israel ending the war and withdrawing from Gaza. It also demands the release of hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including top militants.

Over 300 detained in Russia as country mourns the death of Alexei Navalny, Putin's fiercest foe

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

Over 300 people were detained in Russia while paying tribute to opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died at a remote Arctic penal colony, a prominent rights group reported Sunday.

The sudden death of Navalny, 47, was a crushing blow to many Russians, who had pinned their hopes for the future on President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe. Navalny remained vocal in his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin even after surviving a nerve agent poisoning and receiving multiple prison terms.

The news reverberated across the globe, with many world leaders blaming the death on Putin and his government. In an exchange with reporters shortly after leaving a Saturday church service, President Joe Biden reiterated his stance that Putin was ultimately to blame for Navalny's death. "The fact of the matter is, Putin is responsible. Whether he ordered it, he's responsible for the circumstance," Biden said. "It's a reflection of who he is. It cannot be tolerated."

Other politicians took a more cautious stance. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said Sunday that he wouldn't "jump to conclusions" over Navalny's death. "If the death is under suspicion, we must first carry out an investigation to find out what the citizen (Navalny) died of," Lula said in a press conference after returning from an African Union summit in Ethiopia on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, published a picture of the couple on Instagram Sunday in her first social media post since her husband's death. The caption read simply: "I love you."

Hundreds of people in dozens of Russian cities streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repression with flowers and candles on Friday and Saturday to pay tribute to the politician. In 39 cities, police detained 366 people by Sunday evening, according to the OVD-Info rights group that tracks political arrests and provides legal aid. Earlier in the weekend, the group reported 401 detentions in two days, but later updated the number and said that their count "may change both up and down over the next few days" as information is being verified.

More than 200 arrests were made in St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, the group said. By Sunday evening, court officials in St. Petersburg reported rulings ordering 154 of those detained to serve from one to 14 days in jail.

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Among those detained there was Grigory Mikhnov-Voitenko, a priest of the Apostolic Orthodox Church — a religious group independent of the Russian Orthodox Church — who announced plans on social media to hold a memorial service for Navalny and was arrested on Saturday morning outside his home. He was charged with organizing a rally and placed in a holding cell in a police precinct, but was later hospitalized with a stroke, OVD-Info reported.

Memorial events also took place in cities across the world.

In Berlin, members of the Russian activist group Pussy Riot held a demonstration outside of the Russian Embassy, holding banners that read “murderers” in English and Russian.

The group, which included Pussy Riot members Nadya Tolokonnikova and Lusya Shtein, as well as long-time Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol and former Russian state media journalist Marina Ovsyannikova, planned to march with the banner to the city’s Brandenburg Gate but were ultimately stopped by police.

Tolokonnikova told The Associated Press after the demonstration that such actions were meant to show “that we exist.”

“We show ourselves to each other and support each other, and show with this action that Russia still has a future, and the idea of a ‘beautiful Russia of the future’ hasn’t died,” she said, using a term Navalny has famously coined. “Right now (some are) saying that hope died together with Navalny. But it seems to me that with (the death of) Navalny it wasn’t the hope that died, but rather responsibility was born.”

Dozens of people in Romania’s capital of Bucharest also gathered outside the Russian Embassy on Sunday to pay tribute to the opposition leader.

Many lit candles and placed flowers next to a memorial portrait of Navalny, while several people brandished placards that read: “You don’t win free elections by murdering the opposition.”

In Finland, a group of Russian residents gathered signatures for a petition proposing a name change for a park adjacent to the Russian Embassy in the capital, Helsinki, to Navalny Park in honor of the deceased opposition figure.

The news of Navalny’s death came a month before a presidential election in Russia that is widely expected to give Putin another six years in power.

Questions about the cause of death lingered, and it remained unclear when the authorities would release Navalny’s body. More than 29,000 people have submitted requests to the Russian government asking for the politician’s remains to be handed over to his relatives, OVD-Info said Sunday.

Navalny’s team said Saturday that the politician was “murdered” and accused the authorities of deliberately stalling the release of the body. Navalny’s mother and lawyers received contradictory information from various institutions they visited in their quest to retrieve the body.

“Everything there is covered with cameras in the colony. Every step he took was filmed from all angles all these years. Each employee has a video recorder. In two days, there has been not a single video leaked or published. There is no room for uncertainty here,” Navalny’s closest ally and strategist, Leonid Volkov, said Sunday.

Russia’s Federal Penitentiary Service reported that Navalny felt sick after a walk Friday and became unconscious at the penal colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. An ambulance arrived, but he couldn’t be revived, the service said, adding that the cause of death is still “being established.”

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He received three prison terms since his arrest, on a number of charges he has rejected as politically motivated.

After the last verdict that handed him a 19-year term, Navalny said he understood he was “serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime.”

Hours after Navalny’s death was reported, his widow made a dramatic appearance at the Munich Security Conference.

Navalnaya said she was unsure if she could believe the news from official Russian sources, “but if this is true, I want Putin and everyone around Putin, Putin’s friends, his government to know that they will bear responsibility for what they did to our country, to my family and to my husband.” ____ Associated

Press writers Katie Marie Davies in Manchester, England; Aamer Madhani, in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; Stephen McGrath in Bucharest, Romania; and Jari Tanner, in Helsinki, Finland, contributed to this report.

Israel's Netanyahu slams Brazilian president's comparison of Gaza war to the Holocaust

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL (AP) — Israel on Sunday condemned Brazil's president for comparing the war in Gaza to the Holocaust, accusing him of being antisemitic and trivializing the Nazi genocide of European Jews during World War II.

The outcry further strained relations between the countries, which have deteriorated since President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva returned to office last year. Lula has portrayed himself as a leader of the "Global South," a loosely defined group of developing countries.

Speaking to reporters at the African Union summit in Ethiopia, Lula said that "what is happening in the Gaza Strip and to the Palestinian people hasn't been seen in any other moment in history. Actually, it did when Hitler decided to kill the Jews."

Such comments strike a raw nerve in Israel, a country established as a haven for Jews in the wake of the Holocaust. Israel rejects any comparisons of its conduct in the war in Gaza to the Holocaust.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Lula's comments "trivialized the Holocaust" and "crossed a red line." He also accused Lula of being a "virulent anti-Semite."

Foreign Minister Israel Katz wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that he had summoned Brazil's ambassador in Israel for a reprimand. Katz called Lula's comments "shameful and serious."

Lula's comments came after leaders at the AU summit on Saturday condemned Israel's offensive in Gaza and called for its immediate end.

The war was triggered by an Oct. 7 attack by Hamas militants, who stormed into southern Israel and killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostage. Militants still hold around 130 hostages, a fourth of them believed to be dead. Most of the others were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

The war has killed at least 28,985 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. Around 80% of Gaza's population have been driven from their homes, and a quarter face starvation.

The heavy death toll and widespread damage have led to mounting criticism of Israel and growing calls for a cease-fire.

Lula has previously said Israel is carrying out a genocide in Gaza and has supported South Africa's case accusing Israel of genocide at the U.N.'s International Court of Justice. His comment Sunday was the first time he directly compared Israel's actions to the Holocaust.

In January, during a meeting with the Palestinian ambassador, Lula condemned Hamas' attack on Oct. 7, but said there was no justification for the indiscriminate killing of civilians and pushed for a cease-fire.

How Ziggy Marley helped bring the authenticity to 'Bob Marley: One Love'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

People had been coming to Ziggy Marley and his family for years with ideas about how to turn reggae icon Bob Marley's life into a movie. But it never felt quite right, until a few years ago when they decided to be the instigators.

"It was just a feeling," Ziggy Marley said of getting his father's life on screen in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "We explored it without knowing that we definitely wanted to do it because we needed to make sure that the people we did it with was the right people. People who respected what we wanted to do, the culture, the authenticity that we wanted."

This time, he said, they found the right partners. But it was a gamble for everyone: For Paramount Pic-

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tures and the other producers, wanting to do right by Bob Marley's story, his music and his message and worried what would happen if they didn't; For Kingsley Ben-Adir stepping into the shoes of an icon; For the family and friends who mined their memories for the more intimate story; And for a director, Reinaldo Marcus Green, who had to bring it all together and make it sing.

Early signs suggest that for moviegoing audiences, it worked. "Bob Marley: One Love" has only been in theaters for a few days, but it is already making waves at the box office. On its first day alone, it made \$14 million in North America, a record for a midweek Valentine's Day debut. As of Sunday it had already made an estimated \$80 million globally. Though critics have been mixed, ticket buyers responded with enthusiasm giving the \$70 million film the highest marks in exit polls.

"It's such a rewarding validation of the thing that we set out to do," said Mike Ireland, the co-president of Paramount Motion Picture Group. "The audience is the ultimate arbiter of every movie and everything you put into the world. And to have them respond in that way? It's just fantastic."

The film focuses in on a specific period in Bob Marley's life, from 1976 to 1978. During that time of political turmoil in Jamaica, the reggae legend survived an assassination attempt, produced his seminal album "Exodus" in an 18-month exile in London, was diagnosed with cancer and returned to Jamaica to reunite with his family and stage the famous "One Love" concert.

"I'm a movie guy," multi-Grammy winner Ziggy Marley said. "My selfish goal was to have a movie that had entertainment and action. I said to them, 'I don't want a boring movie.' And this period of time was the most active and entertaining."

The story and script were derived from stories from Ziggy Marley and the legend's widow, Rita Marley, played in the film by Lashana Lynch, and others who knew him well. They shot on location in the U.K. and Jamaica, where they worked with locals in front of and behind the camera, where many had personal or at least second-hand ties to Bob Marley.

For Green, one of the biggest challenges of a film like "One Love" was getting the patois language right and making it feel real without watering it down. They were, he said, essentially making a foreign language movie but without subtitles. It's just one of the crucial ways that their largely Jamaican cast and crew added texture and legitimacy to everything.

"We cast, I would say, 98% Jamaicans," Green said. "We have real musicians as well. It creates that authentic feeling. It doesn't feel like you're watching actors trying to play music. You have real music by real musicians."

The studio and production companies leaned heavily on the local government and film commission for help filming in Trench Town and re-creating Bob Marley's home exactly as it was.

"You have to get the people of Jamaica's blessings first for something like this, you know?" Ziggy Marley said. "We couldn't do it without Jamaica."

And all hope they helped to contribute to Jamaica's filmmaking infrastructure. It's hardly a surprise that the film now holds the record for Jamaica's biggest opening day ever, surpassing "Black Panther."

On everyone's mind was getting Bob Marley right — starting with the music that most audiences will come in knowing and expecting certain things from, and trickling down to the private and internal life of a larger-than-life figure. Ben-Adir learned to sing and play guitar, which he did during filming under Ziggy Marley's guidance — who wanted an artistic interpretation and not an exact copy. The final film blends Ben-Adir's voice with archival recordings.

"Kingsley did a good job," Ziggy Marley said. "He did the work. He really studied."

Sometimes when families and estates are involved in the biopic process, the life can get watered down and sanitized. But Ziggy Marley and his family went in clear-eyed about wanting to show a real person, flaws and all. And who better to steer the process and the large-scale re-creations of famous concerts than someone who also is an acclaimed musician in his own right?

Ziggy Marley hopes that the film makes "people feel like they are part of the family, part of the crew, part of the band," he said. "You are inside now. You're not a fan on the outside."

But mostly, he said, it's about the message.

"We're shedding a light on the idea of unity for humanity, of one love for people," he said. "That is what we are most proud of, that we are serving a purpose."

Trump VP contender Tim Scott doesn't want to talk about vice president's role in certifying election

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. (AP) — Sen. Tim Scott, a potential running mate if Donald Trump becomes the Republican presidential nominee, is treading carefully on questions about whether he would have certified the 2020 election had he been vice president at that time.

On Jan. 6, 2021, about two months after Trump lost the White House, then-Vice President Mike Pence defied his boss and refused to use his largely ceremonial role in overseeing the election certification process to block Democrat Joe Biden's victory. Pence went forward with ratification of the Electoral College even after a violent mob of Trump supporters, some of whom chanted "Hang Mike Pence," swarmed the U.S. Capitol, interrupting the congressional proceedings and forcing Pence, his family and staff into hiding in the complex.

Scott, a Trump rival in the 2024 race who dropped out and later endorsed the former president, declined to say in two Sunday news show interviews whether he would have acted differently as vice president.

"I'm not going to answer hypothetical questions, No. 1," said Scott, R-S.C. He added: "You're asking a hypothetical question that you know can never happen again."

Scott voted in favor of certifying the 2020 results when the Senate got back to work after the siege. He also said during a presidential debate last year that Pence did the right thing when he certified the election.

The issue of certification is beginning to emerge again among Republicans. Two other potential Trump vice president contenders, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio and Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, said this month they would not have allowed 2020 election results to be certified on Jan. 6 had they been in Pence's position.

Scott sidestepped questions Sunday about how he saw the vice president's role in the certification process.

"The one thing we know about the future is that the former president, fortunately, he'll be successful in 2024, he won't be facing that situation again," Scott said. "So what we should focus on is what will cause the former president, President Trump, to be the next president of the United States."

Congress passed legislation in 2022 changing the law that governs the certification of a presidential contest, with the aim of avoiding a repeat of Trump's effort to reverse his 2020 loss. The legislation, in part, makes clear that the vice president's responsibilities in the certification process are merely ceremonial and that the vice president has no say in determining who actually won the election.

Trump is facing felony charges for working to overturn the results of the 2020 election in the run-up to the Capitol riot. He was impeached after Jan. 6 on a charge of inciting an insurrection, but was acquitted by the Senate the next month, after leaving office.

Scott appeared on CNN's "State of the Union" and CBS' "Face the Nation."

A year after Jimmy Carter entered hospice care, advocates hope his endurance drives awareness

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Since Jimmy Carter entered hospice care at his home in south Georgia one year ago, the former U.S. president has celebrated his 99th birthday, enjoyed tributes to his legacy and lost his wife of 77 years.

Rosalynn Carter, who died in November, about six months after the Carter family disclosed her dementia diagnosis, lived only a few days under hospice supervision, with her frail husband at her bedside.

Experts on end-of-life care say the Carters' different paths show the range of an oft-misunderstood service. Those advocates commend the Carter family for demonstrating the realities of aging, dementia

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and death. They express hope that the attention spurs more Americans to seek out services intended to help patients and families in the latter stages of life.

"It's been massive to have the Carters be so public," said Angela Novas, chief medical officer for the Hospice Foundation of America, based in Washington. "It has shed hospice in a new light, and it's raised questions" for people to learn more.

The Carter family released a statement ahead of Sunday, the one-year anniversary of their announcement that the 39th president would forgo future hospital stays and enter end-of-life care at home in Plains.

"President Carter continues to be at home with his family," the statement said. "The family is pleased that his decision last year to enter hospice care has sparked so many family discussions across the country on an important subject."

To be clear, the family has not confirmed whether Jimmy Carter remains in hospice care or has been discharged, as sometimes happens when even a frail patient's health stabilizes.

Here is a look at hospice and the Carters' circumstances:

HOSPICE SERVES EVERYONE, EVEN THE RICH AND POWERFUL

Mollie Gurian is vice president of Leading Age, a national network of more than 5,000 nonprofit elder-care agencies. She described hospice as "holistic care ... for someone who is trying to live the end of their life as fully as possible" but no longer seeks a cure for a terminal condition.

Hospice offers multiple practitioners for each patient: nurses, physicians and social-service professionals like chaplains and secular grief counselors. Home hospice features in-home visits but not round-the-clock or even full-shift care.

Initial eligibility requires a physician's certification of a terminal condition, with the expectation that a person will not live longer than six months; there are also disease-specific parameters.

For-profit businesses or nonprofit agencies typically provide the care and employ the providers. Medicare pays those agencies a per-day rate for each patient. There are four levels of care and daily rates. The concept was developed after World War II and has been part of the Medicare program since the early 1980s. Private insurance plans also typically cover hospice.

In 2021, 1.7 million Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in hospice at a taxpayer cost of \$23.1 billion, according to the federal Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). Almost half of Medicare patients who died that year did so under hospice care.

HOSPICE IS MORE THAN THE 'MORPHINE MYTH'

Hospice can elicit images of "someone doped up and bedridden," but it is not "just providing enough morphine to make it through the end," Gurian said.

Indeed, patients give up curative treatments and many medicines. Cancer patients no longer receive radiation or chemotherapy. Those with late-stage Alzheimer's, Parkinson's or another degenerative neurological disease typically ditch cholesterol and blood-pressure medication — and eventually drugs that regulate their acute condition.

But Novas and Gurian said treatment is case-by-case. Some agencies might allow someone with end-stage kidney disease to get dialysis or take regulatory medication. They simply have to absorb the cost, because Medicare almost certainly does not pay separately for those treatments.

Further, hospice does not necessarily mean forgoing treatments for certain complications that threaten comfort: antibiotics for a urinary tract infection or infected bed sores, for example. That said, patients or families may forgo such treatments, especially in cases of end-stage neurological disease.

Chip Carter, one of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter's four children, confirmed to The Washington Post that his mother was suffering from a severe urinary tract infection at the time of her hospice admission and death. In those cases, Novas explained, patients are administered pain management drugs.

JIMMY CARTER'S ENDURANCE IS NOT UNUSUAL

In 2021, the average stay of hospice patients who died was 92 days, MedPAC calculated. The median was 17 days — about two weeks longer than the time between when the Carters' announced the former first lady had entered hospice and when she died.

About 10% of enrollees who die in hospice care stayed more than 264 days. Extended cases drive a

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majority of costs. In 2021, \$13.6 billion of the overall \$23 billion paid was for stays exceeding 180 days before death. Of that, \$5 billion was for stays longer than a year.

Patients are sometimes discharged from hospice if their condition stabilizes, especially if they have reached the six-month mark in the program. In 2021, 17.2% of the patients were discharged. The MedPAC report to Congress noted that for-profit agencies have higher average length of stays than nonprofits and added that living patients' discharge rates raise questions about admission standards.

Novas offered explanations. She said hospice has seen an uptick in patients with dementia, conditions in which "a patient can wax and wane for months or even years." Another factor — one she said could explain Jimmy Carter's endurance — is sheer grit.

"We cannot measure the human spirit," she said. With many conditions, "somebody who wants to be here is going to stick around for a while."

ADVOCATES WANT CHANGES AND EXPANSION

Medicare does not include a long-term care insurance provision, something that Leading Age and other advocates argue the U.S. needs, especially as the Baby Boomer generation ages.

That kind of care, she said, would help patients and families absorb significant burdens of care that hospitals do not provide and that hospice does not cover — or at least should not cover. A long-term care benefit, for example, could become a more common route of insured care in some dementia cases.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress in recent sessions to create a long-term care plan under Medicare. But it is politically difficult, if not impossible, because it calls for an increase in payroll taxes to finance a new benefit.

Separately, Gurian said Leading Age would like Congress to increase hospice payments structures so more agencies might admit patients and still cover certain treatments they now typically forgo. For example, she said some cancer patients could ratchet down cancer treatments as part of pain management rather than give up treatment altogether and advance more rapidly to heavy drugs like morphine that eliminate quality of life.

JIMMY CARTER STILL OFFERING LESSONS

Gurian said the U.S. health care system and American society too often see just two choices for someone with a grave diagnosis: "fighting" or "giving up."

"Hospice is not giving up," she said, even if it means "accepting our mortality."

Novas said Jimmy Carter has proven those distinctions with his public announcements and, in November, his determination to attend Rosalynn Carter's funeral, physically diminished, reclined in a wheelchair, his legs covered in a blanket.

"That was such an important moment," Novas said, for the world to "see what 99 looks like," even for a former president. "He still has lessons for us. I think, on some level, he must be aware of what he's doing. ... Hospice is just a partner in that journey. But it's his journey."

GOP candidates elevate anti-transgender messaging as a rallying call to Christian conservatives

By JAMES POLLARD Associated Press/Report for America

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Thousands of people in one of South Carolina's most conservative counties roared when Donald Trump promised to cut federal funding on "Day 1" for schools pushing what he called "transgender insanity" onto children.

"And I can't even believe I have to say it, but I do have to say it," Trump told the crowd this month. "I will keep men out of women's sports."

The former president has repeatedly mocked transgender people during his campaign, using language about gender identity that LGBTQ+ advocates say is wrong and harmful. Others in the GOP field have attacked transgender participation in athletics and proposed nationwide bans on affirming care for transgender minors.

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Transgender-related issues have become perhaps the biggest rallying call to Christian conservatives, more than abortion rights or same-sex marriage. That shift worries advocates who note transgender people are already disproportionately prone to stress, depression and suicidal behavior when forced to live as the sex they were assigned at birth.

"Republicans might be overplaying their hand as a political matter. As an ethical matter, I think it's gross," said Tim Miller, a former Republican political operative who worked as communications director for former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's 2016 presidential campaign.

The Alliance for Full Acceptance's executive director, Chase Glenn, a transgender man, called it "dehumanizing" to have his existence politicized.

"It's really disgusting that these politicians think they can use trans people, and more specifically trans youth, as a political tool to win points," he said.

Many Republicans have been angered by how gender is sometimes discussed, part of a broader backlash against what conservatives see as a liberal tide in classrooms. Several people interviewed at a recent Trump rally argued children were being wrongly confronted with issues of gender identity.

"We shouldn't have to think about it," said Cheryl Savage, 59, of Conway. "We need to take care of our kids, right from schools, all the way up."

GOP-controlled state legislatures have recently moved to dictate many facets of transgender life. At least 22 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for minors. Bills governing school pronoun usage, sports team membership and bathroom access are back this year, as are efforts to restrict drag performances.

In South Carolina, one of the few Southern states without such health restrictions, the Republican-led Senate is considering a House-passed bill to ban gender-affirming care for minors. Opponents stretched the light pink, baby blue and white stripes of the transgender flag across the Statehouse steps this year to protest the measure.

Both Trump and Nikki Haley, his last major rival heading into South Carolina's Republican primary this coming Saturday, have leaned into anti-transgender rhetoric.

Haley, a former South Carolina governor and Trump's U.N. ambassador, frequently emphasizes to the "girl dads" in her home-state crowds that they cannot raise "strong women" if there are "biological boys playing in girls sports." She has described the idea of "biological boys playing in girls sports" as the "women's issue of our time."

Trump, at an October event in Iowa, said transgender athletes were "very demeaning to women." He went on to pantomime a young weightlifter struggling to heave heavy barbells as easily as her competitors "who transitioned." He often repeats the act at rallies, sometimes adding that his wife, former first lady Melania Trump, tells him his impression isn't presidential.

Research into the fairness of transgender-inclusive competitions is lacking. Virtually nonexistent are studies determining whether transgender athletes hold clear advantages over cisgender participants.

Trump has promised to pursue a range of other anti-transgender policies if he wins a second White House term. Proposals include banning federal money for any hospital that provides gender-affirming care to minors, ordering federal agencies to end any programs that promote sex or gender transition, and pushing Congress to ban chemical or surgical intervention for minors.

That's despite endorsements from major medical groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, of transgender youth care as safe when administered properly.

Transgender people make up 5 of every 1,000 adults and 14 of every 1,000 youth age 13 to 17 in the United States, according to a June 2022 report from a UCLA Law think tank that researches public policy around sexual orientation and gender identity.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has repeatedly delayed a new Title IX rule that would prohibit federally funded colleges from adopting "one-size-fits-all" policies categorically banning transgender student-athletes from playing on teams consistent with their gender identity. Such restrictions are in effect in about 20 states.

Data from Republican elections this year and interviews with Republican voters indicate the issue reso-

nates with many in the GOP.

According to AP VoteCast, about three-quarters of Iowa Republican caucus participants said their local public K-8 schools are teaching "too much" about either gender identity or sexual orientation. In New Hampshire, 7 in 10 Republican primary voters said "too much" is being taught about gender identity in local elementary and middle schools.

Chad Connelly, the Republican National Committee's former director of faith engagement who now runs an organization that politically mobilizes evangelical pastors, said many congregations are motivated by issues such as banning gender-affirming care for minors.

"Most pastors I know ... they're vehemently opposed," he said. "They don't believe it's health care to let 8- and 10-year-olds make decisions about permanently altering stuff that shouldn't be altered."

Guidelines from leading authorities on gender-affirming medical care say surgery generally should be reserved for adults, with exceptions for older teenagers who meet certain criteria. Other treatments such as puberty blockers are not considered irreversible.

Tim Carter, 55, who described himself as Christian and runs an addiction recovery business, attended Trump's recent rally in Conway. He and others said they agreed with Trump on banning transgender women from joining women's sports — an opinion shaped in part by their faith.

Followers of Christ "love all people," Carter said, but there are "some things you just can't go over on."

"When you start bringing that to our children in schools, you've crossed the line," he said. "We need to raise our children, not others."

Transgender access to sports, bathrooms and health care became the new keystone issue for the religious right after the U.S. Supreme Court approved same-sex marriage, said Jami Taylor, a University of Toledo professor of political science who researches policies related to LGBTQ+ rights.

The high court also overturned a federally guaranteed right to abortion two years ago, delivering a long-sought victory for conservatives but opening a wedge that Democrats have successfully centered in campaigns since. Republicans have been divided on whether to push for a national abortion ban, with Trump declining to publicly endorse the idea.

Between 2015 and 2020, party identification and religious attendance became much more predictive of someone's opinions on transgender-related issues, according to research from Taylor and her colleagues. They found that those who frequently go to religious services and align with Republicans are less likely to support inclusive restroom access.

"You don't want to talk about abortion right now if you're a Republican," Taylor said. "But you can get away with it more with trans (issues) and you're throwing a bone to the same people."

Mas Kono, a 60-year-old political agnostic, said the Republican messaging on transgender issues does not resonate with him at all. In the presidential contest, he reluctantly leans Biden but remains open to supporting Haley, whose rally he attended recently in Daniel Island, South Carolina.

Kono is most concerned about the economy, national security and democracy. While Republican lawmakers in his state are moving to restrict transgender youth's health care access, he described the topic as an "anecdotal" issue that "sells bumper stickers."

"You might as well say, 'Ban calculus in kindergarten,'" Kono said.

Rain pushes Daytona 500 to Monday in first outright postponement since 2012

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — NASCAR has postponed the season-opening Daytona 500 until Monday because of two days of rain at Daytona International Speedway.

The race had been scheduled for Sunday afternoon, although the weather forecast put that in doubt all week. The final practice for drivers was canceled Saturday, as was the Xfinity Series race.

The Xfinity Series race is now scheduled to be held Monday morning, hours ahead of the 4 p.m. start for the Daytona 500.

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Joey Logano is set to start from the pole for Team Penske.

The last time the Daytona 500 was postponed a full day was in 2012. NASCAR completed 20 laps in 2020 before rain halted activity, and the race resumed the next day.

In making the early call Sunday, NASCAR prevented fans from sitting in the rain awaiting a decision on whether the race would proceed. It continued a willingness NASCAR exhibited earlier this month when it moved the exhibition Clash at the Coliseum up a full day on little notice because of poor weather headed toward Los Angeles.

Spire Motorsports driver Zane Smith offered on social media to mingle with fans Sunday.

"Hate the rain won today but going to try to make the most of it and meet some of you guys," Smith tweeted. "Let me know your camp spot and I will try to come find you! Might be able to drag a few other drivers along too."

Added Spire teammate Carson Hocevar: "Unfortunate cards we have been dealt as a sport, but probably the right call. Feel bad for the fans that saved up for this trip and now can't stay."

Despite the postponement, NASCAR and Daytona continued many of the prerace activities, including celebrity visits from singer and Trackhouse Racing co-owner Pitbull and actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

Pitbull's prerace concert was scrapped. He already agreed to return next year and perform then. Johnson is the race's grand marshal, tasked with delivering the command for drivers to start their engines.

"Everything happens for a reason," said Madison Marsh, the reigning Miss America who was scheduled to drive the pace car and lead the field to the green flag. "Although I would have loved, obviously, to get to drive the pace car, there have been so many other parts of this weekend that have been fantastic.

"Just getting to be a part of that, I'm never going to regret coming here. ... Obviously would have liked to drive, but everything is going to work out the way it's supposed to."

Republican opponent of US aid to Ukraine brings his case to an international conference

MUNICH (AP) — A Republican opponent of new U.S. funding for Ukraine argued at an international security conference Sunday that the package stuck in Congress wouldn't "fundamentally change the reality" on the ground and that Russia has an incentive to negotiate peace.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and others have advocated passage of the \$60 billion in aid at the Munich Security Conference, which coincided with Ukraine withdrawing troops from the eastern city of Avdiivka after months of intense combat.

But Sen. JD Vance, an Ohio Republican and ally of Donald Trump, said "the problem in Ukraine ... is that there's no clear end point" and that the U.S. doesn't make enough weapons to support wars in eastern Europe, the Middle East and "potentially a contingency in East Asia."

House Speaker Mike Johnson insists he won't be "rushed" into approving the \$95.3 billion foreign aid package from the Senate that includes the help for Ukraine, despite overwhelming support from most Democrats and almost half the Republicans.

If the package goes through, "that is not going to fundamentally change the reality on the battlefield," Vance argued, pointing to limited American manufacturing capacity.

"Can we send the level of weaponry we've sent for the last 18 months?" he asked. "We simply cannot. No matter how many checks the U.S. Congress writes, we are limited there."

"I think what's reasonable to accomplish is some negotiated peace," he said, arguing that Russia, Ukraine, Europe and the U.S. all have an incentive to come to the table now and that the two-year-old war will at some point end in a negotiated peace.

Ricarda Lang, a co-leader of one of Germany's governing parties, the Greens, responded that Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown repeatedly "that he has no interest in peace at the moment."

Halting weapons supplies to Ukraine now would mean that "either you are prolonging the war or you give up Ukraine and Putin wins," she said.

If Putin wins, "he, but also other forces like China, are going to learn that it's possible to just change

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borders and that NATO is not going to hold it against us," Lang added. That would lead to "a world with less security, and ... a world with less freedom for the EU but also for the U.S."

Vance was part of a large group of U.S. lawmakers who attended the Munich conference. Several of his Senate colleagues met Zelenskyy on Saturday, but Vance did not join them.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Ben Cardin, a Maryland Democrat, posted on social network X after the meeting that Zelenskyy came to the conference "laser focused with a strong message for America: Ukraine needs your support & we'll use it well."

Republican senators have been deeply divided on Ukraine.

Today in History: February 19

Franklin Roosevelt paves way for internment of Japanese

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Feb. 19, the 50th day of 2024. There are 316 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 19, 1942, during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which paved the way for the relocation and internment of people of Japanese ancestry, including U.S.-born citizens.

On this date:

In 1473, astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus was born in Torun, Poland.

In 1807, former Vice President Aaron Burr, accused of treason, was arrested in the Mississippi Territory, in present-day Alabama. (Burr was acquitted at trial.)

In 1878, Thomas Edison received a U.S. patent for "an improvement in phonograph or speaking machines."

In 1945, Operation Detachment began during World War II as some 30,000 U.S. Marines began landing on Iwo Jima, where they commenced a successful month-long battle to seize control of the island from Japanese forces.

In 1959, an agreement was signed by Britain, Turkey and Greece granting Cyprus its independence.

In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford, calling the issuing of the internment order for people of Japanese ancestry in 1942 "a sad day in American history," signed a proclamation formally confirming its termination.

In 1985, the British soap opera "EastEnders" debuted on BBC Television.

In 1986, the U.S. Senate approved, 83-11, the Genocide Convention, an international treaty outlawing "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," nearly 37 years after the pact was first submitted for ratification.

In 1997, Deng Xiaoping (dung shah-oh-ping), the last of China's major Communist revolutionaries, died at age 92.

In 2003, an Iranian military plane carrying 275 members of the elite Revolutionary Guards crashed in southeastern Iran, killing all on board.

In 2008, an ailing Fidel Castro resigned the Cuban presidency after nearly a half-century in power; his brother Raul was later named to succeed him.

In 2012, 44 were killed in a prison riot in Apodaca, northern Mexico.

In 2017, Three former elite U.S. gymnasts, including 2000 Olympian Jamie Dantzscher, appeared on CBS' "60 Minutes" to say they were sexually abused by Dr. Larry Nassar, a volunteer team physician for USA Gymnastics.

In 2019, President Donald Trump directed the Pentagon to develop plans for a new Space Force within the Air Force, accepting less than the full-fledged department he had wanted.

In 2023, Richard Belzer, the longtime stand-up comedian who became one of TV's most indelible detectives as John Munch in "Homicide: Life on the Street" and "Law & Order: SVU," died at age 78.

Today's birthdays: Singer Smokey Robinson is 84. Former Sony Corp. Chairman Howard Stringer is 82. Singer Lou Christie is 81. Rock musician Tony Iommi (Black Sabbath, Heaven and Hell) is 76. Actor Ste-

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phen Nichols is 73. Author Amy Tan is 72. Actor Jeff Daniels is 69. Rock singer-musician Dave Wakeling is 68. Talk show host Lorianne Crook is 67. Actor Ray Winstone is 67. Actor Leslie David Baker is 66. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell is 65. Britain's Prince Andrew is 64. Tennis Hall of Famer Hana Mandlikova is 62. Singer Seal is 61. Actor Jessica Tuck is 61. Rock musician Jon Fishman (Phish) is 59. Actor Justine Bateman is 58. Actor Benicio Del Toro is 57. Actor Bellamy Young is 54. Rock musician Daniel Adair is 49. Pop singer-actor Haylie Duff is 39. Actor Arielle Kebbel is 39. Christian rock musician Seth Morrison (Skillet) is 36. Actor Luke Pasqualino is 34. Actor Victoria Justice is 31. Actor David Mazouz (TV: "Gotham") is 23. Actor Millie Bobby Brown is 20.