

## BUSINESS AS USUAL



*As pandemic worsens, most U.S. states resist restrictions*

In this Jan. 11, 2021, file photo, Grace Mathre, server at Longfellow Grill, checks on University of St. Thomas students Lundsey Schulz and Maren Daggett in Minneapolis. Associated Press

**By J. WATSON and T. TANG**  
**Associated Press**  
**PHOENIX (AP)** — As the U.S. goes through the most lethal phase of the coronavirus outbreak yet, governors and local officials in hard-hit parts of the country are showing little willingness to impose any new restrictions on businesses to stop the spread. And unlike in 2020, when the debate over lockdowns often split along party lines, both Democrat-

ic and Republican leaders are signaling their opposition to forced closings and other measures. Some have expressed fear of compounding the heavy economic damage inflicted by the outbreak.. Some see little patience among their constituents for more restrictions 10 months into the crisis. And some seem to be focused more on the rollout of the vaccines that could eventually van-

quish the threat. The most notable change of tune came from New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, who imposed a tough shutdown last spring as the state became the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak. "We simply cannot stay closed until the vaccine hits critical mass. The cost is too high. We will have nothing left to open," Cuomo said this week as confirmed infections in the

state climbed to an average of 16,000 a day and deaths reached about 170 per day. Theaters remain closed and there is no indoor dining in New York City, but Cuomo said Tuesday that if a system of rapid virus tests could be developed, it could allow those things to return more safely. In Arizona, where the pandemic is raging, Republican Gov. Doug Ducey has been steadfast in his oppo-

sition to a statewide mask mandate or the closing of bars, gyms and restaurant dining despite repeated calls from hospital leaders to take such steps. "If we're really all in this together, then we have to appreciate that for many families 'lockdown' doesn't spell inconvenience; it spells catastrophe," Ducey said.

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# As pandemic worsens, most U.S. states resist restrictions

Continued from Front

Governors in other hot spots, including Texas, have expressed similar sentiments, while other states are loosening restrictions even as the U.S. death toll closes in on 380,000 and cases top 22.7 million. Deaths nationwide are running at more than 3,200 a day on average.

Minnesota allowed in-person dining to resume this week, and Michigan is set to do the same Friday. Nevada's rules are set to expire Friday.

Even in states with strict measures in place, such as California, people are flouting the rules. On Monday, as intensive care units in Southern California found themselves jammed with patients, people packed beaches in San Diego to see this week's high surf, many standing less than 6 feet apart with no masks.

Other Americans have ignored the rules as well. U.S. tourists flocked to Mexico's Caribbean coast over Christmas and New Year's, while thousands of University of Alabama football fans crowded into bars Monday night to celebrate the school's national championship. More than 9.3 million Americans have received their first shot of the vaccine, according to



In this Monday, Jan. 11, 2021, file photo, Florence Mullins, 89, sits in a chair as a family member holds her place in a long line to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at Fair Park in Dallas.

Associated Press

the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention, a slow rollout for a campaign that will have to inoculate perhaps 85% percent of the population, or close to 300 million people, to conquer the outbreak.

On Tuesday, the Trump administration announced plans to speed things up by releasing practically twice as much vaccine, instead of holding large quantities in reserve to make sure that people received the required second dose on time. The practice of holding back doses was spurred

by fear of production delays, but officials said they are now confident the supply will be there.

The Trump administration also asked states to immediately start vaccinating other groups lower down the priority scale, including the estimated 54 million Americans 65 and older, as well as younger people with certain health problems. Several states had already begun offering shots to senior citizens over the past few days.

But experts warn that life is unlikely to get back to nor-

mal any time soon. Vaccinating enough Americans to stop the virus could take well into the second half of 2021, by some estimates.

"We're at a really critical point right now," said Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, head of epidemiology at the University of California, San Francisco. "On the one hand, it is clear with vaccines that we have light at the end of the tunnel, but it is also pretty clear it's going to be a pretty long tunnel." California is an outlier, with a strict lockdown in most of the state that has limited

restaurants to takeout and delivery and shuttered hair salons and gyms.

California's COVID-19 death toll reached 30,000 on Monday. Hospitals in Los Angeles are so swamped that patients on gurneys are being treated in gift shops and parking lots. Officials started urging people to wear masks even at home if they go outside regularly and live with someone elderly or otherwise at high risk. Anger over the restrictions has led to a recall movement against Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom that has nearly gathered the 1.5 million signatures needed to put his career to a vote. Some Californians are escaping by heading to neighboring Arizona, where they can eat and drink at bars and restaurants.

Bartender Raul Amaya, who works at Carly's Bistro in Phoenix, said he is grateful for the business since it keeps him employed. Everyone, he said, needs a break. "I think every time there has been a closure in different states, a lot more influx of different people from different states has come in," he said. "The only reason I've noticed it is they want a drink and we have to ask for ID from everybody. So, I was like 'Oh, this is a lot of California or Nevada IDs.'" □

## Top military leaders remind troops of limits of free speech



A member of the military stands guard outside Russell Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, Friday, Jan. 8, 2021, in response to supporters of President Donald Trump who stormed the U.S. Capitol.

Associated Press

By **ROBERT BURNS**  
AP National Security Writer  
WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid

worry about renewed violence on Inauguration Day, the military's top leaders

issued a written reminder to all service members Tuesday that the deadly insurrection at the Capitol last week was an anti-democratic, criminal act, and that the right to free speech gives no one the right to commit violence.

A memo signed by all members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also reminded military members that Joe Biden was duly elected as the next president and will be sworn in to office on Jan. 20. The memo was unusual in that the military leadership, including Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, felt compelled to remind service members that it is wrong to disrupt

the constitutional process. It comes as law enforcement agencies attempt to determine the full extent of criminal activity at the Capitol and to discover the extent of participation by current or past military members.

It has already been established that some military veterans participated in the riots at the Capitol, but the extent of any active-duty involvement has not been established. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, an Iraq war veteran, on Monday wrote to the Defense Department requesting that its criminal investigative organizations cooperate with the FBI and the U.S. Capitol Police in in-

vestigating whether current and retired members of the armed forces were part of a "seditious conspiracy" against the government.

"We witnessed actions inside the Capitol building that were inconsistent with the rule of law," the memo said. "The rights of freedom of speech and assembly do not give anyone the right to resort to violence, sedition and insurrection. "As service members, we must embody the values and ideals of the nation. We support and defend the Constitution. Any act to disrupt the Constitutional process is not only against our traditions, values and oath; it is against the law." □



# Trump Homeland Security chief abruptly quits at tense time

By **BEN FOX**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Donald Trump's acting head of the Department of Homeland Security abruptly resigned Monday, leaving the post ahead of schedule as the nation faces a heightened terrorism threat from extremists seeking to reverse the election. The announcement by acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf was perplexing. It came less than a week after he pledged to remain in office and just 10 days before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden. Wolf cited a legal challenge to his leadership as a reason for his resignation, but that had surfaced months ago.

"For months we have known Chad Wolf has been serving illegally in his position, so the timing of his resignation from the Department today is questionable," said Rep. Bennie Thompson, the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee. "He has chosen to resign during a time of national crisis and when domestic terrorists may be planning additional attacks on our government."

Wolf, who had been serving in an acting capacity since November 2019 and was never confirmed by the Senate, said he was compelled to leave by



In this Sept. 23, 2020, file photo, acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf testifies before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee during his confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington.

"recent events," including court rulings that found he could not legally hold the position. He did not specify the other events or cite other factors.

"These events and concerns increasingly serve to divert attention and resources away from the important work of the Department in this critical time of a transition of power," he said in a written message to DHS employees.

The resignation comes a day before Trump is set to visit the U.S.-Mexico border wall, Trump's signature political project and one

overseen by DHS.

Wolf's departure followed the abrupt resignation of other Cabinet officials angered by Trump's role in encouraging the mob to storm the Capitol on Jan. 6 over his false claims of election fraud.

Wolf condemned the violent attack on the Capitol by Trump supporters, calling it "tragic and sickening." He also said then he would stay on at DHS until the end of the administration to ensure a smooth transition and to help the department stay focused on the threats facing the

nation.

It was unclear what prompted him to change course with the nation braced for the potential for more violence ahead of the Jan. 20 inauguration. The FBI has warned of plans for armed protests at all 50 state capitals and in Washington, D.C. The White House had no immediate comment.

Wolf led DHS as it carried out Trump administration priorities on immigration and law enforcement, prompting criticism that he politicized a department that was created to better protect the nation in the

wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The department was accused during his tenure by a whistleblower of suppressing facts in intelligence reports that Trump might find objectionable, including information about Russian interference in the election and the rising threat posed by white supremacists. Wolf and the department denied the allegations.

The acting secretary defended his tenure in his statement to employees, saying DHS had strengthened border security and successfully launched the cybersecurity agency that helped safeguard the 2020 election.

"I leave knowing that the Department has positioned itself for an orderly and smooth transition to President-elect Biden's DHS team," he wrote. "Welcome them, educate them, and learn from them. They are your leaders for the next four years — a time which undoubtedly will be full of challenges and opportunities to show the American public the value of DHS and why it is worth the investment."

Peter Gaynor, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will serve as acting head of the Department of Homeland Security until the Biden administration takes over. □

**Associated Press**

## IRS gets more relief payments out after delays

By **SARAH SKIDMORE SELL**

**AP Personal Finance Writer**

The IRS said that after initial problems, it is getting more of the second round of relief payments to taxpayers. The government began distributing the payments, worth \$600 per eligible adult and dependent, at the end of December.

However, many people who filed their taxes with an online preparation service initially found that their payment did not make it to them directly. That is because money may have been sent to a temporary bank account established by the tax preparer, which

is no longer active. By law, the financial institution must return payments sent to closed or inactive accounts.

While there is no exact measure of how often this happened, the National Consumer Law Center estimates that up to 20 million Americans may have been impacted by the administrative issue.

A number of tax preparation companies said that they were able to resolve the issues. H&R Block said its customer payments were processed as of last Wednesday, January 6. Aside from special cases,

H&R Block said its customers should have received their payments already. TurboTax said that payments for customers affected by the error were deposited on Friday.

The IRS said Tuesday that it worked over the weekend to help a smaller set of impacted taxpayers and is reissuing payments for eligible taxpayers whose accounts may have been closed. Those reissued payments may come in the form of a direct deposit or by mail — either as a paper check or debit card.

It did not have a measure of how many taxpayers



In this April 23, 2020, file photo, President Donald J. Trump's name is printed on a stimulus check issued by the IRS to help combat the adverse economic effects of the COVID-19 outbreak in San Antonio.

**Associated Press**

are due or have received these reissued payments.

The IRS reiterated that the information taxpay-

ers see online with its Get My Payment tool may not be accurate as they work through the updates. □



# Kansas House Dems move to oust member over issues with women

By **JOHN HANNA and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH**  
**Associated Press**

**TOPEKA, Kan. (AP)** — Kansas legislators on Tuesday began the process to oust a newly elected lawmaker over multiple issues that include the 20-year-old's rhetoric on Twitter and allegations that he harassed and threatened girls and women.

A formal complaint filed in the House by Democratic members about State Rep. Aaron Coleman will kick off a bipartisan investigation, culminating in a recommendation and vote on his future in the Legislature. A two-thirds majority most vote in favor of ousting Coleman, of Kansas City, Kansas, who was sworn in on Monday.

The 20-year-old Coleman could be the first state lawmaker in Kansas ousted from office if the ouster succeeds. The Kansas State Library could find no record of any legislator being expelled, although at least a handful have been removed in other states.

"He is a danger to women," said Minority Leader Tom Sawyer in a statement. "His removal is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of legislators and Capitol staff."

The complaint says another



This Dec. 8, 2020 file photo shows Kansas state Rep. Aaron Coleman, D-Kansas City at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan.

reason to expel Coleman is a now-deleted tweet in which Coleman suggested Gov. Laura Kelly would face an "extremely bloody" primary in 2022 for not being progressive enough.

"People will realize one day when I call a hit out on you it's real," he wrote. He later said he meant to use the phrase "political hit."

Sawyer refused to give Coleman committee assignments or provide him with office space in the Statehouse. He signed onto the complaint with 12 other

Democrats.

Coleman, who was elected as a Democrat, said Tuesday that he's no longer affiliated with the party, which he said has "disenfranchised" his constituents. "I'm focusing on governing," Coleman told The Associated Press, noting that he's already pushing for an increase in the state's minimum wage and will propose a plan for universal state health coverage. House Speaker Ron Ryckman Jr., an Olathe Republican, will wait until

he speaks with Coleman before making any comments, his office said.

Coleman has questioned whether the House has the power to expel him for events that occurred before he took office.

"It's kind of crazy. I have not violated my oath of office. I just took my oath yesterday," he said. "There has been no grounds for removal."

The Kansas Constitution makes each chamber the judge of its elections and "qualifications of its own

members." It says only that, "Each house shall provide for the expulsion or censure of members in appropriate cases."

But the House is likely to have broad latitude. Richard Levy, a constitutional law scholar and University of Kansas law professor, said courts generally treat expulsions as political questions because legislatures have the authority to decide who sits in them and standards for ousting members aren't spelled out in detail.

When someone sued in court in 1878 to remove a House member accused of being "in a state of intoxication produced by strong drink voluntarily taken," the Kansas Supreme Court dismissed the case, saying only the House could decide the issue. In the same year, the court refused to decide whether another House member was improperly seated, saying it was "powerless in the premises."

Last year, the Idaho House expelled a member for the first time in that state's history after he was convicted of conspiring to defraud the U.S. government.

Lawmakers in Louisiana, Nebraska and Oklahoma also resigned in 2017 before being expelled. □

## Sage grouse review done, but scant time for Trump's changes



In this April 20, 2013 file photo, male greater sage grouse perform mating rituals for a female grouse, not pictured, on a lake outside Walden, Colo.

**Associated Press**

By **MATTHEW BROWN**  
**Associated Press**

**BILLINGS, Mont. (AP)** — The Trump administration has completed a review of

plans to ease protections for a struggling bird species in seven states in the U.S. West, but there's little time to put the relaxed rules for

industry into action before President-elect Joe Biden takes office. The ground-dwelling, chicken-sized greater sage grouse has been at the center of a long-running dispute over how much of the American West's expansive public lands should be developed. A federal judge blocked the Trump administration in 2019 from its plans to relax rules on mining, drilling and grazing across millions of acres of land because of potential harm to the sage grouse.

After releasing an environmental study in November aimed at justifying the changes, Bureau of Land Management officials said in a notice Monday that

they stand behind their plans.

But the ruling that blocked the changes is still in place. And with just eight days left before Biden's inauguration, environmentalists said the Trump administration's latest move won't change anything, barring a last-minute reversal by the court.

"It's a nothing burger. It's a parting shot on the way out the door," said Greta Anderson with Western Watershed Project, one of the group's involved in the legal case. "We don't expect the Biden administration to defend these terrible plans."

Sage grouse once numbered in the millions but

have seen their range that stretches across portions of 11 states diminished by oil and gas drilling, wildfires, grazing and other pressures. The Obama administration, with Biden as vice president, adopted restrictions in 2015 meant to protect the best grouse habitat and keep the bird off the threatened and endangered species list.

Trump moved to change those plans in 2017, but the Obama rules were reinstated under a 2019 injunction from U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill in Boise, Idaho. Bureau of Land Management officials did not reply to emailed questions about whether they will ask Winmill to lift the injunction. □



## Irish PM says 'perverse' morality drove unwed mothers' homes

By JILL LAWLESS  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Ireland's prime minister said Tuesday that the country must "face up to the full truth of our past," as a long-awaited report recounted decades of harm done by church-run homes for unmarried women and their babies, where thousands of infants died. Prime Minister Micheal Martin said young women and their children had paid a heavy price for Ireland's "perverse religious morality" in past decades. "We had a completely warped attitude to sexuality and intimacy. Young mothers and their sons and daughters paid a terrible price for that dysfunction," he said.

Martin said he would make a formal apology on behalf of the state in Ireland's parliament on Wednesday.

The final report of an inquiry into the mother-and-baby homes said that 9,000 children died in 18 different mother and baby homes during the 20th century. Fifteen percent of all children in the homes died, almost double the nationwide infant mortality rate, the report said. Major causes included respiratory infections and gastroenteritis, otherwise known as the



In this file photo dated Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, Ireland's Prime Minister Micheal Martin speaks as he arrives at the European Council building in Brussels.

stomach flu. The report said "the very high mortality rates were known to local and national authorities at the time and were recorded in official publications." But, the document went on, "there is no evidence of public concern being expressed about conditions in mother and baby homes or about the appalling mortality among the children born in these homes, even though many of the facts were in the public domain." The inquiry is part of a process of reckoning

in overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Ireland with a history of abuses in church-run institutions, including the shunning and shaming of unwed mothers, many of whom were pressured into giving up babies for adoption.

Church-run homes in Ireland housed orphans, unmarried pregnant women and their babies for most of the 20th century. The institutions have been subject to intense public scrutiny since historian Catherine Corless in 2014 tracked down

death certificates for nearly 800 children who died at the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway in western Ireland — but could only find a burial record for one child.

Investigators later found a mass grave containing remains of babies and young children in an underground sewage structure on the grounds of the home, which was run by an order of Catholic nuns and closed in 1961.

The commission of inquiry

said about 56,000 unmarried mothers and about 57,000 children had lived in the homes it investigated, with the greatest number of admissions in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The last of the homes did not shut until 1998.

"While mother and baby homes were not a peculiarly Irish phenomenon, the proportion of Irish unmarried mothers who were admitted to mother and baby homes or (state-run) county homes in the 20th century was probably the highest in the world," the report said. The commission said that the women's lives "were blighted by pregnancy outside marriage, and the responses of the father of their child, their immediate families and the wider community."

"The vast majority of children in the institutions were 'illegitimate' and, because of this, suffered discrimination for most of their lives," the report added.

The prime minister said the report "presents all of Irish society with profound questions."

"What has been described in this report wasn't imposed on us by any foreign power," he said. "We did this to ourselves, as a society." □

Associated Press

## No choice: Dutch PM extends coronavirus lockdown by 3 weeks

By MIKE CORDER  
Associated Press

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP)** — Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte extended his country's tough five-week lockdown by a further three weeks Tuesday amid concerns that infection rates are not falling quickly enough and fears about the new more transmissible variant first detected in the United Kingdom.

"Almost everybody will understand that there was no other choice because numbers are not falling fast enough and we are now also have to face the threat of the British corona variant," Rutte said, as he said the lockdown will last until Feb. 9.

Under the lockdown, all

schools and nonessential shops are closed, along with public venues such as cinemas, museums and libraries. There also are strict limits on the size of gatherings both indoors and outside.

Rutte said that for the students who are still allowed to attend class — children preparing for their final high school exams and vulnerable children — 1.5-meter social distancing will now apply in schools, where possible.

He added that the government has asked health authorities for advice about whether a curfew would help drive down infection rates, raising the possibility of a curfew — something that the government has

so far avoided during the pandemic — in the future.

"We are in a serious new situation," Rutte said, referring to soaring infections in Britain. Health Minister Hugo de Jonge said that the variant now makes up 2-5% of Dutch infections, but "the expectation is that it will, just as in England, get the upper hand."

Rutte's announcement came hours after the Dutch public health institute announced that the number of new coronavirus infections in the country had fallen for the second week in a row, calling the decrease "the first effect" of the nationwide lockdown that began in mid-December. Confirmed new COVID-19 infections over the last



An employee of the Municipal Health Service GGD prepares a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to be administered to a health care worker at a coronavirus vaccination facility in Houten, central Netherlands, Friday, Jan. 8, 2021.

Associated Press

week fell 12% to 49,398, the institute said, while hospital admissions for people with the coronavirus fell 18% and new COVID-19 pa-

tients in intensive care units declined by 12%.

The overall Dutch death toll from COVID-19 now stands at more than 12,500. □



## Divers recover crashed Indonesian plane's data recorder

By NINIEK KARMINI and  
ANDI JATMIKO  
Associated Press

**JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)** — Indonesian navy divers searching the ocean floor on Tuesday recovered the flight data recorder from a Sriwijaya Air jet that crashed into the Java Sea with 62 people on board. The device is expected to help investigators determine what caused the Boeing 737-500 to nosedive into the ocean in heavy rain shortly after taking off from Jakarta on Saturday. The 26-year-old jet had been out of service for almost nine months because of flight cutbacks caused by the coronavirus pandemic, officials said. It resumed commercial flights last month.

TV stations showed divers on an inflatable raft with a large white container containing the flight data recorder heading to a Jakarta port.

Military chief Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto said the plane's other "black box," the cockpit voice recorder, was likely to be found soon because its beacon was being emitted in the same area.

The devices were buried in seabed mud under tons of sharp objects in the plane's wreckage, navy Chief Adm. Yudo Margono said. He said at least 160 divers were deployed Tuesday in



Members of the National Transportation Safety Committee carry a box containing the flight data recorder from the Sriwijaya Air flight SJ-182 retrieved from the Java Sea where the passenger jet crashed at the Tanjung Priok Port, Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2021.

Associated Press

the search.

More than 3,600 rescue personnel, 13 helicopters, 54 large ships and 20 small boats are searching the area just north of Jakarta where Flight 182 crashed and have found parts of the plane and human remains in the water at a depth of 23 meters (75 feet).

So far, the searchers have sent 74 body bags containing human remains to police identification experts who on Monday said they had identified their first victim, 29-year-old flight attendant Okky Bisma.

His wife, Aldha Refa, who

is also a flight attendant for Sriwijaya Air, shared her grief in a series of posts on social media.

"My husband is a loving, devout and super kind man," she wrote on Instagram. "Heaven is your place, dear ... be peaceful there."

Anguished family members have been providing samples for DNA tests, and the National Police disaster victim identification unit said it has identified three more victims, including the co-pilot.

The chairman of Indonesia's National Transporta-

tion Safety Committee, Soerjanto Tjahjono, ruled out a possible midair breakup after seeing the condition of the wreckage found by searchers.

He said the jet was intact until it struck the water, concentrating the debris field, rather than spreading it out over a large area as would be seen with a mid-air event.

Tjahjono said the plane continued to send altitude data until it descended to 250 feet (75 meters) above the water's surface.

As in many countries, Indonesia's aviation industry has

been badly hit by the pandemic, with travel restrictions and sharp declines in passengers. According to Transportation Ministry data, the jet didn't fly from March 23 to Dec. 19.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration sent an airworthiness directive requiring operators of various Boeing 737 aircraft models, including the 737-500, to carry out engine checks before they can be flown again after being out of service, Director General of Air Transportation Novie Riyanto said in a statement. He said the plane was inspected on Dec. 2, including checks for engine corrosion, and was declared airworthy by the Transportation Ministry on Dec. 14.

The plane made an initial flight without passengers on Dec. 19 and resumed commercial flights on Dec. 22, according to ministry data.

The disaster has reignited concerns about safety in the aviation industry, which grew quickly after the economy was opened following the fall of dictator Suharto in the late 1990s. The United States banned Indonesian carriers from operating in the country in 2007, lifting the action in 2016, citing improvements in compliance with international aviation standards. The European Union lifted a similar ban in 2018. □

## Turkey says its ready to repair frayed ties with Europe

By SUZAN FRASER  
Associated Press

**ANKARA, Turkey (AP)** — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday his country is ready to put its frayed relationship with the European Union "back on track" and called on the 27-nation bloc to display the same determination. In an address to EU nations' ambassadors in Ankara, Erdogan also expressed hope that a recent decision by Turkey and Greece to restart talks aimed at resolving their disputes will "herald a new era," but at the same time called on Greece to avoid

steps which he said were escalating tensions.

Erdogan's address comes as Turkey, a candidate to join the EU, has been striking a more conciliatory tone toward its Western allies, following deep rifts last year that brought Turkish and Greek naval forces shadowing each other in the eastern Mediterranean over conflicting energy prospecting claims. Last year, the leaders of France and Turkey engaged in a series of terse exchange of words due to divergences over the conflicts in Syria and Libya, among other issues. The EU has drawn up

a list of sanctions against Turkey over its exploration of gas reserves in waters claimed by EU members Greece and Cyprus, but has postponed the punitive measures until March.

"We as a nation plan our future together with Europe," Erdogan told the ambassadors. "Regardless of all the double standards and injustice we have faced in this process, we never gave up on our final goal of full membership."

Erdogan said: "We are ready to put our relations back on track and we expect the EU to show the same determination." □



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks to reporters following a Cabinet meeting, in Ankara, Turkey, Monday, Jan. 11, 2021.

Associated Press



## Leading human rights group calls Israel an 'apartheid' state

By JOSEPH KRAUSS

Associated Press

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — A leading Israeli human rights group has begun describing both Israel and its control of the Palestinian territories as a single "apartheid" regime, using an explosive term that the country's leaders and their supporters vehemently reject.

In a report released Tuesday, B'Tselem says that while Palestinians live under different forms of Israeli control in the occupied West Bank, blockaded Gaza, annexed east Jerusalem and within Israel itself, they have fewer rights than Jews in the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

"One of the key points in our analysis is that this is a single geopolitical area ruled by one government," said B'Tselem director Hagai El-Ad. "This is not democracy plus occupation. This is apartheid between the river and the sea." That a respected Israeli organization is adopting a term long seen as taboo even by many critics of Israel points to a broader shift in the debate as its half-century occupation of war-won lands drags on and hopes for a two-state solution fade.

Peter Beinart, a prominent Jewish-American critic of Israel, caused a similar stir last year when he came out in favor of a single binational state with equal rights for Jews and Palestinians. B'Tselem does not take a position on whether there should be one state or two. Israel has long presented itself as a thriving democracy in which Palestinian citizens, who make up about 20% of its population of 9.2 million, have equal rights. Israel seized east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war — lands that are home to nearly 5 million Palestinians and which the Palestinians want for a future state.

Israel withdrew troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005 but imposed a blockade after the militant Hamas group seized power there



In this Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020, file photo, Israeli border police officers and Palestinians clash during a protest against the expansion of Israeli Jewish settlements near the West Bank town of Salfit.

Associated Press

two years later. It considers the West Bank "disputed" territory whose fate should be determined in peace talks. Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1967 in a move not recognized internationally and considers the entire city its unified capital. Most Palestinians in east Jerusalem are Israeli "residents," but not citizens with voting rights.

B'Tselem argues that by dividing up the territories and using different means of control, Israel masks the underlying reality — that roughly 7 million Jews and 7 million Palestinians live under a single system with vastly unequal rights.

"We are not saying that the degree of discrimination that a Palestinian has to endure is the same if one is a citizen of the state of Israel or if one is besieged in Gaza," El-Ad said. "The point is that there isn't a single square inch between the river and the sea in which a Palestinian and a Jew are equal."

Israel's harshest critics have used the term "apartheid" for decades, evoking the system of white rule and racial segregation in South Africa that was brought to an end in 1994. The International Criminal Court defines apartheid as an "institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and

domination by one racial group."

"There is no country in the world that is clearer in its apartheid policies than Israel," said Nabil Shaath, a senior adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. "It is a state based on racist decisions aimed at confiscating land, expelling indigenous people, demolishing homes and establishing settlements."

In recent years, as Israel has further entrenched its rule over the West Bank, Israeli writers, disillusioned former generals and politicians opposed to its right-wing government have increasingly adopted the term.

But until now B'Tselem, which was established in 1989, had only used it in specific contexts.

Israel adamantly rejects the term, saying the restrictions it imposes in Gaza and the West Bank are temporary measures needed for security. Most Palestinians in the West Bank live in areas governed by the Palestinian Authority, but those areas are surrounded by Israeli checkpoints and Israeli soldiers can enter at any time. Israel has full control over 60% of the West Bank.

Itay Milner, a spokesman for Israel's consulate general in New York, dismissed the B'Tselem report as "another tool for them to promote

their political agenda," which he said was based on a "distorted ideological view." He pointed out that Arab citizens of Israel are represented across the government, including the diplomatic corps.

Eugene Kontorovich, director of international law at the Jerusalem-based Kohlet Policy Forum, says the fact that the Palestinians have their own government makes any talk of apartheid "inapplicable," calling the B'Tselem report "shockingly weak, dishonest and misleading."

Palestinian leaders agreed to the current territorial divisions in the Oslo accords in the 1990s, and the Palestinian Authority is recognized as a state by dozens of nations. That, Kontorovich says, is a far cry from the territories designated for Black South Africans under apartheid — known as bantustans — to which many Palestinians compare the areas governed by the PA.

Kontorovich said the use of the word "apartheid" was instead aimed at demonizing Israel in a way that "resonates with racial sensitivities and debates in America and the West."

Alon Pinkas, a former Israeli consul general in New York, rejects the term. "Occupation, yes. Apartheid, abso-

lutely not."

But he acknowledged that critics of Israel who had refrained from using the term, or who had used it and been attacked, "will now conveniently say, 'Hey, you know, Israelis are saying it themselves.'"

Rabbi Rick Jacobs, head of the Union for Reform Judaism, which estimates its reach at more than 1.5 million people in 850 congregations across North America, says the situation in the West Bank and Gaza is a "moral blight" and an "occupation," but not apartheid.

"What goes along with saying that, to many in the international community, is that therefore Israel has no right to exist," he said. "If the accusation is apartheid, that is not simply a strong critique, it's an existential critique."

El-Ad points to two recent developments that altered B'Tselem's thinking.

The first was a contentious law passed in 2018 that defines Israel as the "nation-state of the Jewish people." Critics say it downgraded Israel's Palestinian minority to second-class citizenship and formalized the widespread discrimination they have faced since Israel's founding in 1948. Supporters say it merely recognized Israel's Jewish character and that similar laws can be found in many Western countries.

The second was Israel's announcement in 2019 of its intention to annex up to a third of the occupied West Bank, including all of its Jewish settlements, which are home to nearly 500,000 Israelis. Those plans were put on hold as part a normalization agreement reached with the United Arab Emirates last year, but Israel has said the pause is only temporary.

B'Tselem and other rights groups argue that the boundaries separating Israel and the West Bank vanished long ago — at least for Israeli settlers, who can freely travel back and forth, while their Palestinian neighbors require permits to enter Israel. □



## First buyers of new Commandeurs Ponton Apartments a fact: Intentional living that focuses on what you believe matters



Happy first owners

**ORANJESTAD —** "The philosophy is to get more out of life and live in a great environment that is also sustainable," says Randolph Arends from Aruba Living Today. The property mediator is referring to their newest offering: Commandeurs Ponton Apartments. Construction of the complex has already started and Arends is happy to present to us the first buyers from the Netherlands. Why did they choose for Commandeurs?



Randolph Arends (right) with the first buyer

"The perfect location, the environmental friendliness of the project with solar panels, the community feeling which is especially important when you have a certain age made us decide for Commandeurs. The prospect clearly states that this is the best purchase for starters and people who retire and we cannot agree more on that. On top of that we will be able to enjoy Aruba's famous sunsets," says the owner. They looked for an affordable and small apartment, though very comfortable and convenient and they found it. "We are beyond happy."

The modern designed project shines with happy, bright colors and offers affordable 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom apartments built with high quality European materials. Ocean view, centrally located, a community pool and great value for money. On September 14th 2020, construction started of the first of three buildings. "Now we started the first building with eight 72 m2 (775 sq. ft.) apartments and eight 54 m2 (581 sq. ft.) apartments. Pre-construction prices start at \$ 152,000, but in the course of the building will increase. So get it while you can," Arends hints.

### Unique on the island: Home care offering & permit handling

Arends: "What we see is that Aruba is very popular with the older generation, the pensionaries. Reasons are the stable warm climate, the quiet and long-stretched white-sandy beaches, the location outside of the hurricane belt, the safety of the island, the political stability, the high quality infrastructure and our friendly people. And let us not forget the high quality health care, founded on the system of the Netherlands." Aruba Living Today noticed that this type of buyer also requires assistance in several areas and they decided to take it all out of hands and offer more than the average realtor. "We are unique in this because we have our own certified Dutch nurse (multilingual) available for our home owners meaning there is a 24/7 home care for you standby. The interior design of our apartments will be as convenient as possible and wheelchair friendly with stable doors and wider entrance. We will be offering different packages of home care support and retirement permits. We are evaluating a shuttle service to take people to town and to the beach. Yes, we are here to release you of any hassle and give you back happiness and peace in mind!"

### Details that matter

The development is close to the new Watty Vos Boulevard putting you within five minutes to Eagle Beach (voted as one of the best beaches in the world), the supermarkets and the downtown area. The building will have central air conditioning and the staircase or elevator will take you up to the higher floors which provide a spectacular view to the Caribbean Sea. By owning one of the apartments, you will automatically be a part of the owner's association which together will take care of the community grounds, pool, elevators and solar panels (on the roof and parking lot) to lower the costs of electricity. Arends: "Not too expensive, not too big. A good size apartment for those who strive to live comfortable yet still have the financial space to travel and do other things in life."

A happy, low-stress life provides the space to figure out what matters most and the freedom to focus on these things. Instead of spending your weekends on home maintenance projects or mowing a yard, you can go to the beach and the pool. You can relax more and even nap more (yes!) without thinking about things that need done around the house. Commandeur Ponton Apartments is all about intentional living, a concept that suits Aruba Living Today completely. Arends: "My goal was to do real estate in a different way when I established this company June 1st 2009. Not from the perspective of only selling, but to look for the perfect match between dream house and client. My philosophy is: it will only work when all involved are happy and connected by that personal touch." □

### Aruba Living Today

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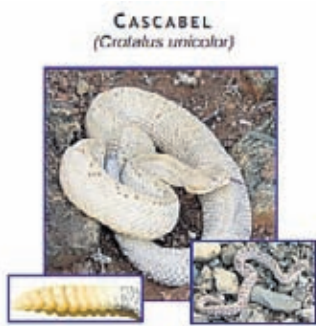
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## Snakes of Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Arikok National Park is home to various unique plant and animal species such as Aruba's rare endemic rattlesnake *Crotalus unicolor*. This rattlesnake is locally known as the 'Cascabel'. But Aruba has two more snake species living on the island: the Santanero and the Boa.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it. Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel

is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

## Santanero

SANTANERO  
(*Leptodeira bakeri*)

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream col-



ored without any markings. This snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans. However, the venom can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.

Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. New-



born Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers

and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly. Boas are a non-native species. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. Source: National Park Aruba. □







**ORANJESTAD** — Replica buildings and chain restaurants we can do everywhere and they are all the same, offering the expected. When visiting a place we'd like to see the real thing. Being in Aruba, the pearl of Caribbean, you can feel the energy of a historic house and at the same time indulge in finger-licking food and signature cocktails. There is a new hot spot: Patio 15. Make sure to go, it's easily accessible and it has secured private parking.

#### Step inside the patio

Taste. Sip. Play. It is their slogan. It is a great description of what happens but there is so much more. First of all you get the friendliest welcome in Aruba here by an icon: one of the last real gentlemen, dressed from head to toe in elegance. Listen to his story of how he came to Aruba. This 80-plus sweet doorman who had been working for over 40 years at a department store on the island. Everybody knows him, you should too!

#### Admire the monument

The yellow color of the sun that is so typical for authentic Aruban houses catches your attention. You are seated in front of an authentic Aruban home which that was built around 1860 and has been transformed in the year 2020 into a unique outdoor restaurant, bar, dancing, and event space: Patio 15. Feel a warm breeze titillating your senses. You are surrounded by night lights and stars and inspired by the hip ambiance while being introduced to Aruba's history at the same time. The patio refers to the outdoor space in front of the house where the family and friends used to gather. Inside antique trinkets take you back to older times against a backdrop of contemporary design. There is a wall that showcases Lps of Aruba's musical heroes.

#### Mindblowing bites

This casual hipster venue offers you the opportunity to taste all kinds of small bites or tapas with a fuse of international favorites and Aruban local dishes. Patio 15 serenades Aruba of yesterday while showing you they are the trendsetters du jour.

What to think of a Keeshi Yena Taco. This is an homage to Aruba's typical cheese/minced meat dish in a taco, Feta Cheese Pizza comes on a watermelon sliced as pizza and with Yerba di Hole on top which is a kind of local basil, the Conch Fritters and the Funchi Fries with delicious Truffle Mayo is a must. Try the scrumptious Escargots & Mushrooms or the Vegan Ceviche, yummy! The Best one: Mini Saco, you got to love this creativity because a 'saco' is a typical local snack where chicken, beef, or ribs and potatoes are fried and served in a bag which is the 'saco'. Patio 15 is still throwing in new offerings to its 37-piece menu so you can try another selection daily. The traditional Spanish tapas will also be there simply because they are to die for. We would say: go ahead, it is a winning game here. And do not forget to take a Key Lime Pie for dessert, it's an everlasting memory.



## New & unique venue in Oranjestad, a must for visitors! Patio 15 connects Aruba's culture with Caribbean food & cocktails delight



Patio 15 Aruba is open Tuesday to Sunday from 5 pm – 11 pm and is located downtown at West Straat 15 Oranjestad, next to the main bus station. Browse on their website [patio15aruba.com](http://patio15aruba.com) or Facebook page Patio 15 Aruba. See you there! □





# Business grows skittish about Trump and GOP after riots

By JOSH BOAK, BRIAN SLO-DYSKO and TOM KRISHER  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Corporate America is quickly distancing itself from President Donald Trump and his Republican allies, with many of the biggest names in business — Goldman Sachs, Coca-Cola, Ford and Comcast — suspending political donations after a Trump-inspired mob ransacked the U.S. Capitol in a deadly and violent spree last Wednesday.

For now, the move is about affirming the rule of law and the clear results of an election that will elevate Democrat Joe Biden to the presidency. But it also signals that companies are growing skittish about lawmakers who backed Trump's false claims of election fraud, possibly depriving Republicans of public backing from business groups who until recently were the heart of the GOP's political brand.

"This is spreading like wildfire," said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a professor at Yale University's management school who consults with CEOs. "The U.S. business community has interests fully in alignment with the American public and not with Trump's autocratic bigoted wing of the GOP."

Yet the pausing of donations announced by many companies — including Marriott, American Express, AT&T, JPMorgan Chase, Dow, American Airlines and others — was unlikely to deliver a serious blow to Republicans in Congress who voted to overturn Biden's win. "These are symbolic pledges," said Sheila Krumholz, executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonpartisan group that traces the role money plays in politics. "This is just one source of revenue and for some it's vanishingly small, particularly in the Senate."

Corporate-sponsored political action committees are limited to donating \$5,000 per candidate each year. In races that often cost incumbents millions of dollars, such contributions ac-



In this Feb. 8, 2019, file photo, the logo for Citigroup appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

count for just a small fraction of the overall fundraising picture.

Take Sen. Josh Hawley. The Missouri Republican has drawn widespread scorn, including from longtime supporters and Senate Republican leadership, for becoming the first senator to announce he would oppose the certification of Biden's victory.

Since 2017, when he launched his Senate bid, only about \$754,000 of the \$11.8 million he raised came from corporate PACs and trade groups. That accounts for about 15% of his total fundraising haul, according to an analysis of campaign finance disclosures.

What's more, Hawley wasn't the biggest spender in his race. Outside conservative groups, including those affiliated with Republican leadership, were the ones who dropped the lion's share of money that helped him oust former Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill. Such groups are largely insulated from the corporate donation pause. Still, greeting card maker Hallmark went a step further than most companies. The Kansas City-based company has asked both Hawley and recently elected Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall to return its contributions because of their votes

opposing Biden's win.

"Hallmark believes the peaceful transition of power is part of the bedrock of our democratic system, and we abhor violence of any kind," Hallmark spokeswoman JiaoJiao Shen said in a statement.

A PAC for the company has donated \$7,000 to Marshall, FEC records show. The company says it has also donated \$5,000 to Hawley. In many cases, though, most companies are only suspending their giving for several months, leaving ample time to ramp up donations before the 2022 elections.

"They are going into hiding until the news cycle moves on," said Erik Gordon, a law and business professor at the University of Michigan. "They will be back with their checkbooks, and politicians who already are gearing up for the 2022 congressional contests are waiting at the back door." Even if Trump sold himself to voters as a billionaire guru with a Midas-like grip on the economy, many business leaders had already quietly backed away from a president who had cracked down on trade, inflamed racism, curtailed immigration and failed to contain a deadly pandemic.

But the rejection accelerated after he egged on a crowd at a Washington

rally and urged them to march on the Capitol on Wednesday.

Since then, technology companies have denied the use of services to Trump's political operation. The payments firm Stripe has stopped processing donations for Trump campaign committees, according to a person familiar with the matter who requested anonymity because the decision hasn't been made public. The move could cut off Trump's fundraising arm from what has been a steady stream of small-dollar donations that are often solicited through emails and text messages. Stripe's decision was first reported by the Wall Street Journal. Shopify, an e-commerce platform for merchants to sell goods, shut down the Trump campaign's merchandise website as well, as other tech companies including Twitter, Facebook and Amazon are putting new restrictions on Trump's movement because of the violence.

Leading business groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce all condemned the insurrection. Yet these same groups also worked in support of Trump's 2017 tax cuts and will face a Biden administration that wants

to increase corporate taxes, a sign that they may not fully align with one political party.

What surprised some ethics watchdogs was how quickly companies reacted by suspending their donations. "It looks like it is sincere for many of the corporations," said Craig Holman, a campaign finance expert with Public Citizen, a liberal consumer advocacy organization. "There was no big public push or pressure to get Marriott and others to announce they would no longer make campaign contributions. They did it on their own — they shocked everyone in the campaign finance community."

The response has not been uniform by corporations. Dow, the chemical company, said it would suspend contributions for the next two years to any member of Congress who objected to the certification of the electoral college. Airbnb said it would also withhold support to those lawmakers. Some companies are trying to avoid politics completely in the aftermath of last week's riots. Citigroup confirmed Sunday that it is pausing all federal political donations for the first three months of the year, including those to Democratic lawmakers.

"We want you to be assured that we will not support candidates who do not respect the rule of law," said a memo from Candi Wolff, Citi's head of global government affairs. She added that once the presidential transition is completed, the country can "hopefully" emerge "from these events stronger and more united." The decision by Citigroup and others to pause all political contributions outraged some Democrats, who said they were being punished for violence that originated with Republicans and left five people dead. "This is not a time to say both sides did it," said New York's Rep. Sean Maloney on MSNBC. "What the hell did the Democrats do this week except stand up for the Constitution and the rule of law?" □

Associated Press



# Right-wing app Parler booted off internet over ties to siege

By **MATT O'BRIEN**  
AP Technology Writer

The conservative-friendly social network Parler was booted off the internet Monday over ties to last week's siege on the U.S. Capitol, but not before digital activists made off with an archive of its posts, including any that might have helped organize or document the riot.

Amazon kicked Parler off its web-hosting service, and the social media app promptly sued to get back online, telling a federal judge that the tech giant had breached its contract and abused its market power. It was a roller coaster of activity for Parler, a 2-year-old magnet for the far right that welcomed a surge of new users. It became the No. 1 free app on iPhones late last week after Facebook, Twitter and other mainstream social media platforms silenced President Donald Trump's accounts over comments that seemed to incite Wednesday's violent insurrection.

The wave of Trump followers flocking to the service was short-lived. Google yanked Parler's smartphone app from its app store Friday for allowing postings that seek "to incite ongoing violence in the U.S." Apple followed suit on Saturday after giving Parler a day to address complaints it was being used to "plan and facilitate yet further illegal and dangerous activities." But the death knell came from Amazon Web Services, the leading provider of cloud computing infrastructure, which informed Parler it would need to look for a new web-hosting service after Sunday.

Parler CEO John Matze decried the punishments as "a



The logo of the social media platform Parler is displayed in Berlin, Jan. 10, 2021.

Associated Press

coordinated attack by the tech giants to kill competition in the marketplace." Parler's lawsuit in a Seattle-based federal court makes the argument that Amazon violated antitrust laws to harm Parler and help Twitter, which also uses Amazon's cloud services. It also alleges Amazon breached its contract by not giving 30 days of notice before terminating Parler's account. Amazon did not return requests for comment about the dispute Monday. Parler attorney David Groesbeck said by email Monday that the company is awaiting a hearing on the lawsuit. But it was admonished later in the day by Judge Barbara Rothstein of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, who wrote that Parler had failed to properly serve court papers to Amazon and ordered it to do so. Matze has signaled there is little chance of getting Parler back online anytime soon after "every vendor, from text message services,

to e-mail providers, to our lawyers all ditched us too on the same day," he told Fox New Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." In a Monday interview with Fox Business, he said the company "may even have to go as far as buying and building our own data centers and buying up our own

servers." Trump may also launch his own platform. But that will not happen overnight, and free speech experts anticipate growing pressure on all social media platforms to curb incendiary speech as Americans take stock of Wednesday's violent takeover of the U.S. Capitol by

a Trump-incited mob. Organizers of pro-Trump forces are already regrouping in other forums, such as the conservative-friendly social media site Gab, as new actions are planned ahead of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. "Gab and Parler are like hastily put together and less easy-to-use versions of Twitter and Facebook," said Graham Brookie, director of the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, which has investigated the online organizing leading up to the Capitol assault. "They've got notoriety as ultimate free speech sites where you can say literally whatever you want even if it's unlawful or egregious." Meanwhile, a group of digital "hactivists" salvaged much of what happened on Parler before it went offline and said they plan to put it into a public archive. One described the operation on Twitter as "a bunch of people running into a burning building trying to grab as many things as we can." □

## China's Geely, Baidu announce electric car ventures



The plug-in hybrid Bingyue ePro from Geely is displayed at the Auto China 2020 show in Beijing on Sunday, Sept. 27, 2020.

Associated Press

**BEIJING (AP)** — Chinese automaker Geely says it will form an electric car venture with tech giant Baidu, adding to a flurry of corporate tie-ups in the industry to share soaring technology development costs. Geely Holding Group, which also has separate electric car brands, said Monday the

venture with Baidu.com Inc. would focus on intelligent and connected vehicles. It gave no details of investment or when products might be released. Global and Chinese automakers have launched partnerships to share the multibillion-dollar costs of developing electric vehicles for China under gov-

ernment pressure to meet sales quotas. China is the world's biggest market for the technology, accounting for about half of global sales. The ruling Communist Party spent billions of dollars on subsidies in an attempt to take an early lead in the industry. It is shifting the burden to manufacturers by requiring them to earn credits from selling electric vehicles or face penalties that have yet to be announced. Privately held Geely, best known abroad as the owner of Sweden's Volvo Cars, is one of China's biggest independent automakers. Its brands include Geely, Lynk & Co., Geometry and Polestar, all of which sell electric vehicles. Geely is the biggest shareholder in Malaysia's Proton and Britain's Lotus. □

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# Amid roiling pandemic, 'The Resident' confronts virus' toll

By **HILARY FOX**  
**Associated Press**

**LONDON (AP)** — The coronavirus pandemic has forced television hospital shows to confront a key question — could the biggest medical crisis in recent decades be ignored in favor of escapism for viewers?

Medical shows have reached different conclusions, but Fox's "The Resident" opted to address the pandemic right away in its fourth season debut Tuesday.

Dr. Daniela Lamas, who works in critical care at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, also writes "The Resident." She said pretending the pandemic never happened was discussed in the summer, but ultimately dismissed.

"The question was, will people have the stomach for this in January? And the answer to that question was, we don't know," she said.

"Whether they do or they don't, we can't in good faith, as a medical show that claims to have some degree of medical veracity, we can't ignore the greatest public health crisis of our time. And we can't expect people to see our characters and believe in them if these fictional health care providers have not experienced what real health care providers have in this fictional world."



**Dr. Daniela Lamas, a writer for the medical television drama "The Resident," poses outside the Brigham and Women's Hospital, Monday, Jan. 11, 2021, in Boston.**

The show, which stars Matt Czuchy, Emily VanCamp and Manish Dayal, takes a thriller perspective on diagnosing medical mysteries and healthcare corruption at Chastain Memorial, a fictional hospital in Atlanta. Other U.S. medical dramas, "The Good Doctor," "Chicago Med" and "Grey's Anatomy," have focused on the pandemic's impact on healthcare workers this season. On "Grey's," main character Meredith Grey is in critical care fighting the virus.

"The goal — and presumably it's one shared by a lot of television shows — which

is, what can we show people that they might not know otherwise?" explains Lamas.

"The Resident," like its contemporaries, includes storylines which highlight the virus' disproportionate impact on communities of color, people who can't afford to isolate and the importance of masks.

"There are issues that that come up in terms of money, in terms of resource, in terms of PPE, that that also fit well in the kind of wheelhouse of our show," said Lamas.

"The Resident" was among the productions that donat-

ed to real healthcare workers the masks that would have been used as to be used as props and continues to use lower grade masks on the program to avoid using up supplies.

They also let go of the drama provided by the last-minute corridor dash for surgical intervention, which often provides an episode's life or death tension.

"People were wondering, can we take somebody for a big surgery? And I mean, sure we could.

But does that reflect the real story? COVID is so much about waiting. It's so much about decisions

around intubation.

It's so much about isolation. And so I think really being willing to tell that story, instead of the big surgery, alarms blaring, recovery story was something that that we had to get into as well."

Unlike "Grey's Anatomy," "The Resident" won't keep the coronavirus front and center after the opening episode, to provide some relief from the present.

"I think 'Grey's' does that through their beach. I think that's their escapism and I like that," said Lamas of the dreamlike sequences experienced by Ellen Pompeo's Meredith during her illness.

"There are COVID stories that we could have for a season beyond. But I think that the need, the desire to give people both the grounding in medical reality and then the escapism, the entertainment and, ultimately, the hope that this isn't forever."

"COVID is always going to be a presence with us throughout the course of season four but we hope it's not something that's going to overwhelm the audience and we can find something that is a balance between the two and something that's cathartic and joyful and hopeful," said Matt Czuchy, who plays Dr. Conrad Hawkins on the show. □



**Director Spike Lee, second right, and his family, from left, son Jackson Lee, wife Tonya Lewis Lee and daughter Satchel Lee, arrive at the 76th annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, Calif.**

**Associated Press**

By **JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr.**  
**AP Entertainment Writer**

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Spike Lee's daughter and son

## Spike Lee's children named Golden Globe ambassadors

have been chosen as the Golden Globe ambassadors to assist with the awards ceremony.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association announced Tuesday morning that Satchel and Jackson Lee will assume the ambassador roles for the 78th annual Golden Globes Awards in February.

Satchel and Jackson are the first siblings of color to hold the position. Jackson is the first Black male ambassador.

"We're proud to carry our father's legacy of storytelling to bring attention to

communities close to our hearts," said Satchel Lee, who was the creative director of DRØME, a queer and intersectional arts and culture magazine.

Satchel chose to partner with Callen-Lorde, an organization that helps with LGBTQIA+ communities in New York City. Jackson is partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters, the volunteer-supported mentoring network.

"As a visionary creative, my dad taught Satchel and me the importance of entertainment as a cultural catalyst of change," he

said.

An ambassador is traditionally the child of a celebrity who assists with award presentations, handing out trophies to winners and escorting them off stage.

Previous ambassadors include Pierce Brosnan's sons Dylan and Paris Brosnan, Idris Elba's daughter Isan Elba and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's daughter Simone Garcia.

The Golden Globes ceremony will be held Feb. 28 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. The show honors achievements in film and television. □



## Perfect Alabama finishes No. 1 in AP Top 25 for 12th time

By RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer  
MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)

— Alabama finished the season No. 1 in the AP Top 25 for the 12th time, extending its record by completing the program's first perfect season since 2009. The Crimson Tide were a unanimous No. 1 in the final poll, getting 61 first-place votes, after beating Ohio State 52-24 in the College Football Playoff championship game Monday night. Alabama was the pre-season No. 3, but when it started playing this strange season amid a pandemic in late September it moved up to No. 2. The Tide jumped to No. 1 in early November and finished as major college football's only undefeated team.

"We set this as a goal, to potentially be the greatest team to ever play," Tide quarterback Mac Jones said. "I think we made a valid statement in winning the national championship tonight."

The Buckeyes were second, followed by Clemson at No. 3. Texas A&M was fourth, finally passing Notre Dame for the Aggies' best finish in the AP poll since they won the national title in 1939.



Alabama head coach Nick Saban and offensive lineman Alex Leatherwood hold the trophy after their win against Ohio State in an NCAA College Football Playoff national championship game, Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2021, in Miami Gardens, Fla. Alabama won 52-24.

Associated Press

The Fighting Irish made the playoff but slipped to No. 5 after losing to Alabama in the semifinals.

For the Crimson Tide, it is the sixth national title under coach Nick Saban in the last 12 seasons. No other team has won more than two during that time. With 12 AP titles overall — Paul "Bear" Bryant was coach for five and Gene Stallings for one — Alabama

has four more than Notre Dame, in second place with eight.

Big 12 champion Oklahoma finished No. 6, Georgia seventh and Cincinnati was eighth.

The Tide, Aggies and Bulldogs give the Southeastern Conference three teams in the top seven. The SEC finished 7-2 in the bowls, counting Alabama's national championship vic-

tory.

Iowa State was No. 9, its best final ranking and only the third time the Cyclones have finished the season ranked. Northwestern finished 10th, the Wildcats' best final showing since they went to the Rose Bowl in 1995 and were eighth in the last poll.

The Big 12 finished with a perfect record in five bowl games. Oklahoma and

Iowa State were joined by No. 19 Texas and No. 20 Oklahoma State in the final rankings from that conference. The ACC's post-season was a dud at 0-6. Clemson, Notre Dame, No. 18 North Carolina and No. 22 Miami gave the ACC four ranked teams.

The odd season in a pandemic put a spotlight on teams outside the Power Five conferences as never before, and the final poll treated the upstarts well.

Cincinnati, the American Athletic Conference champ, was one of eight non-Power Five teams to land in the Top 25.

Independent BYU finished No. 11, the Cougars' best final ranking since they finished the 1995 season fifth.

Sun Belt rivals Coastal Carolina and Louisiana-Lafayette were Nos. 14 and 15, respectively. That conference had never finished with two ranked teams. Liberty, another independent, was 17th.

Rounding out the bottom of the poll were No. 23 Ball State, the Mid-American Conference champ, No. 24 San Jose State, the champ of the Mountain West, and No. 25 Buffalo, another MAC school. □

## Belichick won't get Presidential Medal of Freedom after all

By JIMMY GOLEN

AP Sports Writer

New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick announced Monday night that he will not accept the Presidential Medal of Freedom, saying "remaining true to the people, team and country I love outweigh the benefits of any individual award."

In a delicately worded, one-paragraph statement, the six-time Super Bowl-winning coach did not say explicitly that he had turned down the offer from President Donald Trump, whom he has called a friend. Instead, Belichick explained, "the decision has been made not to move forward with the award" in the wake of last week's deadly siege on the U.S. Capitol.

A White House official said

on Sunday, four days after the riots, that Trump would be awarding Belichick the nation's highest civilian honor — part of a late flurry of presentations that also included golfers Annika Sorenstam, Gary Player and the late Babe Zaharias. Sorenstam and Player accepted their awards in a private ceremony the day after Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Five people died in the mayhem, including U.S. Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick. Belichick was to be honored on Thursday.

"I was flattered ... out of respect for what the honor represents and admiration for prior recipients," the coach said in a statement, which was forwarded to

The Associated Press by the Patriots. "Subsequently, the tragic events of last week occurred and the decision has been made not to move forward with the award. Above all, I am an American citizen with great reverence for our nation's values, freedom and democracy. I know I also represent my family and the New England Patriots team."

Although he describes himself as apolitical, Belichick has waded into politics on occasion. Although Trump said the letter offered "best wishes for great results" on election day and "the opportunity to make America great again," Belichick said it was merely to support a friend.

Belichick also wore an Armenian flag pin to the



In this Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, file photo, New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick yells from the sideline during the second half of an NFL football game against the Los Angeles Rams in Inglewood, Calif.

Associated Press

White House in 2015 when the team celebrated its fourth Super Bowl victory — believed to be a sign of support for the team's director of football, Benji Najararian, who is of Arme-

nian descent. Last month, Belichick called on the U.S. government to take action against Turkey and Azerbaijan for "unprovoked and violent attacks against Armenians." □



# Eagles fire coach Doug Pederson 3 years after Super Bowl win



Philadelphia Eagles head coach Doug Pederson during the game against the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington, Texas, Sunday, Dec. 27, 2020.

By **ROB MAADDI**  
AP Pro Football Writer

**PHILADELPHIA (AP)** — Doug Pederson lost his job less than three years after he led the Philadelphia Eagles to the franchise's only Super Bowl title.

Pederson was 42-37-1 in five seasons. He guided the Eagles to two division championships and three playoff appearances before going 4-11-1 in 2020.

Owner Jeffrey Lurie made the decision after meeting with Pederson last week and again Monday.

"Very few people probably after success deserve to lose their job," Lurie said. "This is much more about the evaluation of whether the Eagles moving forward, our best option is to have a new coach and that's really what it's about. ... He did not deserve to be let go." Pederson had two years remaining on his contract. Lurie said he wouldn't be surprised if another team hired Pederson before the end of the week.

"Although I am disappointed that this chapter of my career has come to an end, I am extremely proud

of what we accomplished together," Pederson said in a statement.

"Through all the ups and downs, one thing remained constant about our team — an unwavering commitment to battle through adversity and to achieve our goals not as individuals, but as a collective unit. There is no better example of that than when we celebrated the first Super Bowl championship in Eagles history together with our city. That is a memory we will all cherish forever."

Pederson's loyalty to his coaching staff and frustration with the front office's interference became a major issue, according to a person familiar with the decision who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the conversations. The person also said Pederson and general manager Howie Roseman weren't on the same page regarding many personnel moves, including draft picks and use of veteran players.

The team's draft failures in recent years from taking

wide receiver J.J. Arcega-Whiteside over DK Metcalf in 2019 to selecting wide-out Jalen Reagor one pick before Justin Jefferson in 2020 contributed to the offense's struggles along with numerous injuries and quarterback Carson Wentz's poor performance.

Ultimately, Lurie chose Roseman over Pederson.

"I have real confidence that our football operations, led by Howie, can not only repeat the performance of 2016 until now, and once again, create a dominant football team that can really maximize every aspect of its potential," Lurie said. Lurie indicated Pederson wasn't on board with rebuilding.

"It's a transition point and we've got to get younger and we have to have a lot more volume of draft picks and we have to accumulate as much talent as we possibly can that is going to work in the long run with a focus on the midterm and the long term and not on how to maximize 2021," Lurie said. "And it's almost not fair to Doug, because his vision has to be: what can I

do to fix this right away and what coaches can I have that can help me get to a smoother 2021?"

Pederson benched Wentz for the final four games after the quarterback had the worst season of his five-year career and started rookie Jalen Hurts. Pederson had said repeatedly he was confident he could fix Wentz and get him back on track. He won't get that chance now.

Wentz's \$128 million, four-year contract kicks in this year and he knows the Eagles control whether to keep him or trade him. Wentz has been taking time away to reflect on his situation before meeting with the team to discuss his future, a person close to the situation told the AP last week. Wentz was frustrated with his season and unhappy that he got benched, but he had no input into Pederson's firing, two people said.

"Carson and Doug got along way better than people think," a teammate told the AP on Monday. "That stuff got exaggerated."

The player spoke on condi-

tion of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss private conversations. Wentz hasn't spoken to reporters since Dec. 6. He didn't immediately return a phone call from the AP on Monday.

Pederson was a starting quarterback in Philadelphia in 1999 and later served as an assistant coach under Andy Reid with the Eagles and Kansas City Chiefs. The Eagles hired him in January 2016 after abruptly firing Chip Kelly a month earlier. Pederson led the Eagles to a Super Bowl victory over New England in just his second season with backup quarterback Nick Foles filling in after Wentz was injured. Pederson and Foles again led the Eagles to a playoff win the following year after Wentz went down late in the season.

"He's a close friend, he's a family friend and Doug is family to me," Lurie said.

Pederson was heavily criticized for his decision to replace Hurts with third-string quarterback Nate Sudfeld in the fourth quarter of a 20-14 loss to Washington in Week 17. Washington's victory cost the New York Giants the NFC East title. The loss gave the Eagles the sixth overall pick in the draft instead of the ninth.

"Nothing to do with it whatsoever," Lurie said when asked if Pederson's decision in that game factored into his dismissal.

Several Eagles showed their support for Pederson on social media after the news broke.

"Doug is a great coach, a great guy, a great man," running back Boston Scott told the AP. "He's the type of guy that will open his house up to you. He's a man of faith and I've always respected that about him. Every Saturday before games, I see him in chapel and that's where I truly believe it starts. I think that he's a true leader. Regardless of what the situation was like this season, he continued to bring energy, continued to bring the juice and he continued to be there for us so I have a lot of respect for him." □

Associated Press