



On the road again: Travelers emerge in time for Thanksgiving

By DAVID KOENIG
AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Determined to reclaim Thanksgiving traditions that were put on pause last year by the pandemic, millions of Americans will be loading up their cars or piling onto planes to gather again with friends and family.

The number of air travelers this week is expected to approach or even exceed pre-pandemic levels, and auto club AAA predicts that 48.3 million people will travel at least 50 miles from home over the holiday period, an increase of nearly 4 million over last year despite sharply higher gasoline prices.

Many feel emboldened by the fact that nearly 200 million Americans are now

fully vaccinated. But it also means brushing aside concerns about a resurgent virus at a time when the U.S. is now averaging nearly 100,000 new infections a day and hospitals in Michigan, Minnesota, Colorado and Arizona are seeing alarming increases in patients.

The seven-day daily average of new reported cases up nearly 30% in the last two weeks through Tuesday, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says unvaccinated people should not travel, although it is unclear whether that recommendation is having any effect.

Continued on next page



Travelers queue up at the south security checkpoint as traffic increases with the approach of the Thanksgiving Day holiday Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021, at Denver International Airport in Denver.

Associated Press

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Continued from Front

More than 2.2 million travelers streamed through airport checkpoints last Friday, the busiest day since the pandemic devastated travel early last year. From Friday through Tuesday, the number of people flying in the U.S. was more than double the same days last year and less than 9% lower than the same days in 2019. At Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, Christian Titus was heading to visit extended family in Canada. Titus says he's spent much of the pandemic inside but is willing to risk flying on a crowded airplane because he misses being around his family. He got a booster shot to increase his protection.

"My mental health does better by being around my family during these times," he said. "Yeah, it's dangerous. But you love these people, so you do what you can to stay safe around them."

Meka Starling and her husband were excited for many members of their extended family to meet their 2-year-old son, Kaiden, for the first time at a big Thanksgiving gathering in Linden, New Jersey.

"We've put pictures on Facebook so a lot of them have seen pictures of him, but to get to actually touch him and talk to him, I'm excited about it," said Starling, 44, of West Point, Mississippi. For their part, airlines are hoping to avoid a repeat of the massive flight cancellations — more than 2,300 apiece — that dogged Southwest and American Airlines at different times last month.

The breakdowns started with bad weather in one part of the country and spun out of control. In the past, airlines had enough pilots, flight attendants and other workers to recover from many disruptions with-



Motorists move slow on Pena Boulevard as traffic increases with the approach of the Thanksgiving Day holiday Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021, at Denver International Airport in Denver.

Associated Press

in a day or two. They are finding it harder to bounce back now, however, because they are stretched thin after pushing thousands of employees to quit when travel collapsed last year.

American, Southwest, Delta and United have all been hiring lately, which gives the airlines and industry observers hope that flights will stay on track this week.

"The airlines are prepared for the holidays," said Helene Becker, an airlines analyst for financial-services firm Cowen. "They cut back the number of flights, the industry has enough pilots, they are putting more flight attendants through their (training) academies, and they are paying flight attendants a premium — what I'm going to call hazardous-duty pay — to encourage people not to blow off work."

The airlines have little margin for error right now.

American expected to fill more than 90% of its seats with paying customers on Tuesday. That's a throwback to holiday travel before the pandemic.

"There is not a lot of room to put people on another flight if something goes wrong," said Dennis Tajer, a pilot for the airline and a spokesman for the American pilots' union.

By midday Wednesday on the East Coast, airlines in the U.S. had canceled about 70 flights, an unusually low number, according to FlightAware. The Federal Aviation Administration reported very few airports affected by significant delays.

Casey Murray, president of the pilots' union at Southwest, said things seemed to be going reasonably well by late morning on Wednesday. He said he had not received any reports of major incidents involving unruly passengers for several days.

"I don't think anything is going to make video, which is good," Murray said. "That's just another layer of stress, complexity and fatigue on top of everything else that is going on."

At Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix, hundreds of travelers waited in security lines snaking around in a half-dozen loops. The terminals were packed with people, and with seats all taken, travelers sat in floors as they waited for their flights. There were also long lines for food at a time when some Phoenix airport workers are on strike in a dispute over wages and benefits.

At the Denver airport, Rasheeda Golden arrived from Houston with her boyfriend and his sister on their way to a snowmobiling excursion over Thanksgiving. "It's exciting to be traveling now, especially with things opening back up, some sense of normalcy going on. I welcome it," she said.

Golden added that she's not worried about flying, but she remains cautious when she is in "a cluster of too many people."

"As long as we have our masks on, I've done my part," she said. "The rest is to enjoy my vacation."

For holiday travelers going by car, the biggest pain is likely to be higher prices at the pump. The nationwide average for gasoline on Tuesday was \$3.40 a gallon, according to AAA, up more than 60% from last Thanksgiving.

Those prices could be one of several factors that will discourage some holiday travelers. In a survey conducted by Gasbuddy, which tracks pump prices, about half of the app users who responded said high prices will affect their travel plans this week. About two in five said they aren't making as many trips for a variety of reasons.

President Joe Biden on Tuesday ordered 50 million barrels of oil released from America's strategic reserve to help bring down energy costs, in coordination with other major energy consuming nations. The U.S. action is aimed at global energy markets, but also at helping Americans coping with higher inflation and rising prices ahead of Thanksgiving and winter holiday travel.

The price at the pump was a bit of a shock to Tye Reedy, who flew into California from Tennessee and borrowed his friend's truck for some sightseeing. Gas was running \$5 a gallon at the Chevron in Alameda, and it cost \$100 to fill up the truck. "We did not travel last year because of COVID restrictions and all," Reedy said. "But you know, we're confident enough ... with the vaccine and where things are now with the virus that, you know, we felt comfortable traveling." □

White House: 92% of fed workers under mandate are vaccinated

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration's vaccine mandate for millions of federal workers seems to be working, with no apparent disruption to law enforcement, intelligence-gathering or holiday travel. On Tuesday, one day after the deadline for compliance, 92% of the 3.5 million federal workers covered by Biden's mandate reported to the government that they are at least partially vaccinated, according to White House officials.

The highest number of partial vaccinations by Tuesday was at the Agency for International Development, which had 97.8%, followed closely by the Department of Health and Human Services at 96.4% and State Department at 96.1%, according to data provided by the White House Wednesday.

Law enforcement agencies do lag behind in vaccines, with the Justice Department at 89.8%. The Department of Veterans Affairs is at 87.8% of partial vaccinations, though the



President Joe Biden speaks about COVID-19 vaccinations after touring a Clayco Corporation construction site for a Microsoft data center in Elk Grove Village, Ill., on Oct. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

Defense Department was 93.4% and the Homeland Security Department was 88.9%. The government office with the lowest number of partially vaccinated employees was the Agriculture Department, at 86.1%.

But overall, 96.5% of federal employees have been deemed in compliance with the policy, which also

includes medical or religious exemptions that are still being evaluated. The rest are considered out of compliance, but officials emphasized that "it's not a cliff," and that workers will receive counseling to get vaccinated or file for an exemption. Only then would termination be considered. "We know vaccine require-

ments work," said White House assistant press secretary Kevin Munoz. "We hope that our implementation sends the clear message to businesses to move forward with similar measures that will protect their workforce, protect their customers, and protect our communities."

White House officials said

the data was just a snapshot and the numbers would continue to rise in the days and weeks ahead. As they work through additional vaccines and exceptions, there will be no disruptions to government services, the officials said. Since instituting the initial vaccine-or-test mandate this summer and then the more-restrictive requirement without a test-out option this fall, the White House has believed the federal government could serve as a model for the rest of the nation's employers for how vaccinations could help shepherd a quicker return to the normal.

White House officials say the most important lesson for businesses from the federal experience is that once they take the first step toward requirements, their workers will follow.

The numbers from the Internal Revenue Service show how a mandate can drive up the vaccination rate. About 25% of the agency's workforce first got a shot after Biden announced the mandate in September; now, 98% are in compliance. □

Interior Department approves 2nd large US offshore wind farm

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT

Associated Press

The Biden administration approved an offshore wind farm off the coast of Rhode Island on Wednesday as part of a plan to deploy 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030.

The U.S. Department of the Interior announced it approved the construction and operations of the South Fork Wind project, the department's second approval of a commercial-scale, offshore wind energy project in the United States. Last week, the department marked the groundbreaking off the coast of Massachusetts for the first commercial-scale offshore wind project.

Seven major offshore wind farms would be developed on the east and west coasts of the U.S. and in the Gulf of Mexico under a plan announced last month

by the Biden administration to build infrastructure, create jobs and address global warming. Deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy would generate enough electricity to power more than 10 million homes.

The South Fork Wind project will be located about 19 miles (30 kilometers) southeast of Block Island, Rhode Island, and 35 miles (56 kilometers) east of Montauk Point, New York. It's expected to provide roughly 130 megawatts, enough power for about 70,000 homes.

The first U.S. offshore wind farm opened off Block Island in 2016. But at five turbines, it's not commercial-scale.

Orsted, the Danish energy company, acquired the developer, Rhode Island-based Deepwater Wind, and now operates that wind farm.

Orsted is developing the South Fork Wind project with utility Eversource. The Interior Department approved up to 12 turbines. Rhode Island coastal regulators gave the project critical approval this spring over the objections of the fishing industry and some environmentalists.

Commercial fishing businesses have said planned offshore wind projects off the East Coast would make it difficult to harvest valuable seafood species such as scallops and lobsters. Some conservation groups fear that big turbines will kill birds.

The project off the coast of Massachusetts, Vineyard Wind 1, is expected to produce about 800 megawatts, enough power for more than 400,000 homes. The first steps of construction will include laying down two transmission ca-



Two of the offshore wind turbines have been constructed off the coast of Virginia Beach, Va., Monday, June 29, 2020.

Associated Press

bles that will connect the wind farm to the mainland. The administration expects to review at least 16 construction and operations plans for commercial offshore wind energy facilities by 2025.

"We have no time to waste in cultivating and investing in a clean energy econo-

my that can sustain us for generations," Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said in a statement. "Just one year ago, there were no large-scale offshore wind projects approved in the federal waters of the United States. Today there are two, with several more on the horizon." □

All 3 men charged in Arbery's death convicted of murder

By **RUSS BYNUM**

Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) —

Jurors on Wednesday convicted the three white men charged in the death of Ahmaud Arbery, the Black man who was chased and fatally shot while running through their neighborhood in an attack that became part of the larger national reckoning on racial injustice.

The jury deliberated for about 10 hours before convicting Greg McMichael, son Travis McMichael and neighbor William "Roddie" Bryan, who all face minimum sentences of life in prison. It is up to the judge to decide whether that comes with or without the possibility of parole.

Travis McMichael stood for the verdict, his lawyer's arm around his shoulder. At one point, McMichael lowered his head to his chest. After the verdicts were read, as he stood to leave, he mouthed "love you" to his mother, who was in the courtroom.

Greg McMichael hung his head when the judge read his first guilty verdict. Robbie Bryan bit his lip.

Moments after the verdicts were announced, Arbery's



This photo combo shows, from left, Travis McMichael, William "Roddie" Bryan, and Gregory McMichael during their trial at the Glynn County Courthouse in Brunswick, Ga.

Associated Press

father, Marcus Arbery Sr., was seen crying and hugging supporters outside the courtroom.

"He didn't do nothing," the father said, "but run and dream."

Ben Crump, attorney for Arbery's father, spoke outside the courthouse, saying repeatedly, "The spirit of Ahmaud defeated the lynch mob."

Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones, thanked the crowd gathered for the verdict and said she did not think she would see this day.

"It's been a long fight. It's been a hard fight. But God is good," she said. Of her

son, she said, "He will now rest in peace."

The McMichaels grabbed guns and jumped in a pickup truck to pursue the 25-year-old after seeing him running outside the Georgia port city of Brunswick in February 2020. Bryan joined the pursuit in his own pickup and recorded cellphone video of Travis McMichael fatally shooting Arbery.

The father and son told police they suspected Arbery was a fleeing burglar. But the prosecution argued that the men provoked the fatal confrontation and that there was no evidence Arbery had commit-

ted crimes in the neighborhood.

"We commend the courage and bravery of this jury to say that what happened on Feb. 23, 2020, to Ahmaud Arbery — the hunting and killing of Ahmaud Arbery — it was not only morally wrong but legally wrong, and we are thankful for that," said Latonia Hines, Cobb County executive assistant district attorney. Prosecutor Linda Dunikoski added: "The jury system works in this country, and when you present the truth to people and they see it, they will do the right thing." Travis McMichaels' attorneys said both he and his

father feel that they did the right thing, and that they believed the video would help their case. But they also said the McMichaels regret that Arbery got killed.

"I can tell you honestly, these men are sorry for what happened to Ahmaud Arbery," attorney Jason Sheffield said. "They are sorry he's dead. They are sorry for the tragedy that happened because of the choices they made to go out there and try to stop him."

They planned to appeal.

Bryan's attorney, Kevin Gough, said his team was "disappointed with the verdict, but we respect it." He planned to file new legal motions after Thanksgiving. Superior Court Judge Timothy Walmsley did not immediately schedule a sentencing date, saying that he wanted to give both sides time to prepare.

Though prosecutors did not argue that racism motivated the killing, federal authorities have charged them with hate crimes, alleging that they chased and killed Arbery because he was Black. That case is scheduled to go to trial in February. □

South Dakota Supreme Court rules against pot legalization



A cannabis plant that is close to harvest grows in a grow room at the Greenleaf Medical Cannabis facility in Richmond, Va., Thursday, June 17, 2021.

Associated Press

By **STEPHEN GROVES** **Associated Press**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) —

The South Dakota Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld a lower court's ruling that nullified a voter-passed amendment to

the state constitution that would have legalized recreational marijuana use.

Gov. Kristi Noem instigated the legal fight to strike down the amendment passed by voters in November. Though the Republican

governor opposed marijuana legalization as a social ill, her administration's arguments in court centered on technical violations to the state constitution.

The high court sided with those arguments in a 4-1 decision, ruling that the measure — Amendment A — would have violated the state's requirement that constitutional amendments deal with just one subject.

"It is clear that Amendment A contains provisions embracing at least three separate subjects, each with distinct objects or purposes," Chief Justice Steven Jensen wrote in the majority opinion, which found recreational marijuana, medical marijuana and hemp each to be separate issues.

About 54% of voters approved the constitutional

amendment last year. But Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Rick Miller sued on Noem's behalf. Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom also joined the lawsuit. The high court ruled that the law enforcement officers did not have standing to sue, but because Noem ordered Miller's suit, they treated it as if Noem brought the lawsuit herself. Noem praised the decision, and noted that it would not change how she implements a separate, voter-passed law that legalizes medical marijuana. That law has already taken effect.

"South Dakota is a place where the rule of law and our Constitution matter, and that's what today's decision is about," she said in a statement. "We do

things right — and how we do things — matters just as much as what we are doing."

The state Supreme Court's decision upheld a circuit judge's ruling in February. Advocates for pot legalization appealed, arguing that the Supreme Court should dismiss the legal challenge because it overturned the will of voters and dampened their future ability to enact laws through the ballot box.

Matthew Schweich, the campaign director for South Dakotans for Better Marijuana Laws, called the ruling "extremely flawed" and reliant on "a disrespectful assumption that South Dakota voters were intellectually incapable of understanding the initiative." □

Sweden's first female prime minister quits hours later

By JAN M. OLSEN

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark

(AP) — Hours after being tapped as Sweden's prime minister, Magdalena Andersson resigned Wednesday after suffering a budget defeat in parliament and coalition partner the Greens left the two-party minority government.

"For me, it is about respect, but I also do not want to lead a government where there may be grounds to question its legitimacy," Andersson told a news conference.

Andersson has informed parliamentary Speaker Andreas Norlen that she is still interested in leading a Social Democratic one-party government.

She said that "a coalition government should resign if a party chooses to leave the government. Despite the fact that the parliamentary situation is unchanged, it needs to be tried again." The speaker of Sweden's 349-seat parliament Andreas Norlen said he had received Andersson's resignation and will contact the



Sweden's Minister of Finance Magdalena Andersson gestures, after being elected to party chairman of the Social Democratic Party at the Social Democratic Party congress in Gothenburg, Sweden, Thursday, Nov. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

party leaders "to discuss the situation," the Swedish news agency TT said. On Thursday, he will announce the road ahead.

The government's own budget proposal was rejected in favor of one presented by the opposition that includes the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats. Sweden's third-largest party is rooted in a neo-

Nazi movement.

"Now the government has voted for a budget that has been negotiated by a right-wing extremist party," Green Party spokesperson Per Bolund said. "That is something we deeply regret."

Earlier in the day, Andersson said she could "govern the country with the opposition's budget."

"We have a united party behind us saying we can not sit in government that implements a policy (the Sweden Democrats) negotiated. We must look our voters in the eye and feel pride," said Marta Stenevi, the Greens' other spokesperson as the party chose to resign from the government.

The party said it is prepared

to stand behind Andersson in a new vote to tap a prime minister. It was unclear what the dramatic development would lead to.

The approved budget was based on the government's own proposal but of the 74 billion kronor (\$8.2 billion) that the government wanted to spend on reforms, just over 20 billion kronor (\$2.2 billion) will be redistributed next year, Swedish broadcaster SVT said. The approved budget aims at reducing taxes, increased salaries for police officers and more money to different sectors of Sweden's judiciary system.

Andersson's appointment as prime minister had marked a milestone for Sweden, viewed for decades as one of Europe's most progressive countries when it comes to gender relations, but which had yet to have a woman in the top political post.

Andersson had been tapped to replace Stefan Lofven as party leader and prime minister, roles he relinquished earlier this year. □

Interpol adopts resolution to fight online child abuse

ISTANBUL (AP) — Interpol member countries are calling on nations to urge local online end-to-end encryption providers "to take responsibility" and design products with the aim of protecting children against abuse, the international policing body said Wednesday.

A resolution adopted at Interpol's annual General Assembly in Istanbul also calls for member countries to approve laws enabling local law enforcement to prevent and respond to online child sexual abuse cases using the technology. The resolution was adopted on the second day of the three-day meeting, according to an Interpol statement.

"Through the resolution, member countries expressed their concern at the increased use of end-to-end encryption to con-

ceal illicit online crimes against children such as grooming, live streaming of sexual abuse and the distribution of child sexual abuse material," Interpol said.

The resolution was overwhelmingly endorsed by delegates, the statement said. About 470 police chiefs, ministers and other representatives from more than 160 countries are attending the meeting.

The statement quoted Interpol Secretary General Juergen Stock as saying: "This issue is often presented as a zero-sum game, privacy versus child protection, but both can be protected." "With safety by design, service providers can meet privacy obligations and also ensure that new technologies do not come at the cost of child safety," Stock said.

Interpol said the end-to-

end encryption technology prevents service providers "from detecting child sexual abuse and from complying with lawful requests by law enforcement seeking to investigate cases, arrest offenders and remove child victims from harm." The policing body is scheduled on Thursday to hold a closely-watched election for a new leadership.

The international policing body's first-ever Chinese president, Meng Hongwei, vanished midway through his four-year term on a return trip to China in 2018. It subsequently emerged that he had been detained, accused of bribery and other alleged crimes. Interpol then announced that Meng had resigned from the presidency.

A vice president, Kim Jong Yan from South Korea, was elected as a replacement to serve out the rest of



Interpol Secretary General Juergen Stock talks to journalists during a news conference on the first day of the Interpol annual assembly in Istanbul, Turkey, Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021.

Associated Press

Meng's term.

The vote is also the subject of controversy because representatives from China and the United Arab Emirates are bidding for top posts. Critics contend that if these candidates win, their countries would use Interpol's global reach to apprehend exiled dissidents

and even political opponents at home, instead of hunting down drug smugglers, human traffickers, war crimes suspects and alleged extremists.

Human rights groups have also accused the candidate from the UAE of involvement in torture and arbitrary detentions. □

EU urged not to forget Belarus as bloc prepares sanctions

By **LORNE COOK**
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya appealed Wednesday to the European Union not to forget the plight of ordinary citizens and political prisoners in the former Soviet country. Tsikhanouskaya's plea came as the EU prepares new sanctions in response to a security crisis at its borders blamed on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Tsikhanouskaya told EU lawmakers that "882 of my fellow citizens have been recognized to be in prison for exercising basic political rights people in the rest of Europe take for granted." She urged the 27-country bloc not to recognize Lukashenko or his government, and to boost support to ordinary citizens. "It is getting late. Since August 2020, there have been ample gestures and expressions of solidarity. Belarusians were praised for reigniting their faith in democracy and human dignity," she said. "Is it not the turn of Europeans to demonstrate their commitment to those values with action?" Her remarks come as the



Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya arrives with European Parliament President David Sassoli before addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

EU prepares to unveil a new raft of sanctions against Belarus — its fifth package of travel bans and asset freezes — targeting Lukashenko and his associates, government members, security forces, court officials and other authorities. This time, though, the measures will also hit air carriers and travel groups accused by the EU of helping to bring migrants to Belarus with the

aim of helping them cross into Europe, chiefly through Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, according to a draft text seen by The Associated Press. The EU says Lukashenko is carrying out a "hybrid attack" using migrants to destabilize the bloc in revenge for sanctions targeting him over a contested election last year that gave Belarus' hardline leader a sixth term

in office and the security crackdown on peaceful protestors that followed. With that in mind, the EU is targeting Belarus airlines Belavia. "Migrants wishing to cross the Union's external border have been flying to Minsk on board flights operated by Belavia from a number of Middle Eastern countries, in particular Lebanon, UAE (United Arab Emirates) and

Turkey," the document said. Cham Wing Airlines, which operates flights from Syria to Belarus, is also in the EU's sights. It stands accused of ramping up flights from Damascus to Minsk over the summer and setting up new offices in the Belarus capital to better organize the shuttles. Also on the list is state tourism company Tsentrkurort, which the EU claims helped at least 51 Iraqis obtain visas to Belarus and organized bus transport for them to the borders. The Hotel Minsk company and Hotel Planeta, which are linked to the Belarus President Property Management Directorate, are accused of lodging migrants aiming to reach the border. The EU will also take aim at VIP Grub, a passport and visa service based in Istanbul, Turkey. The draft sanctions listing says the company "organizes trips to Belarus with the explicit intention of facilitating migration to the EU. VIP Grub actively advertises migration to the EU." The sanctions are set to be approved in coming days. "Sanctions do work," Tsikhanouskaya said. □

Japan, Vietnam express serious concern about South China Sea



Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, left, and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pose for photographers ahead of a meeting at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan, on Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

By **MARI YAMAGUCHI**
TOKYO (AP) — The leaders of Japan and Vietnam expressed serious concern on Wednesday about the situation in the South China

Sea and any unilateral actions aimed at altering the status quo, and agreed to work together to sustain free and open sea lanes as tensions escalate in the re-

gion amid China's rise. Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh is the first foreign leader to visit Japan for talks with new Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who took office in October. Kishida told Chinh in his opening remarks that "Vietnam is an important partner who holds a key to achieving 'a free and open Indo-Pacific,'" a vision aimed at countering China's increasingly assertive territorial claims in the disputed region. He did not mention China by name. The two leaders "expressed serious concerns about the situation in the South China Sea and any unilateral attempts to change the status quo and increase tensions," they said in a joint statement, without naming any country.

They reaffirmed the importance of sustaining peace, security, safety, freedom of navigation and overflights above the South China Sea, and the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, according to the statement, released by Japan's Foreign Ministry. China, which claims most of the South China Sea as well as Japanese-held islands in the East China Sea, says it has the right to defend its sovereignty, security and development interests. Japanese officials say Chinese vessels routinely violate Japanese territorial waters near the East China Sea islands, sometimes threatening fishing boats. The two countries on Wednesday also confirmed a range of partnerships in

areas such as COVID-19, infrastructure and climate change. Japan will also support a strengthening of Vietnam's maritime law enforcement capabilities by accelerating aid for construction of patrol vessels. On Tuesday, Japan and Vietnam signed a cybersecurity agreement. In September, the two countries struck a deal allowing Japan to provide defense equipment and technology to Vietnam. Details of the transfer of specific equipment, possibly naval vessels, are still being discussed. Vietnam is the 11th nation with which Japan has signed a defense equipment and technology transfer deal as Tokyo seeks to support its own struggling defense industry. □

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Ethiopian leader called war 'epitome of hell.' Now he's back

By CARA ANNA
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is already a veteran at surprising the world in just three years in power. He's done it again this week by announcing that, after a year of waging war, he will lead it from the battlefield.

Abiy's rule has been short in the vast sweep of Ethiopian history, but he has spent almost all his life preparing for it. Told as a child by his mother that she believed he would lead Ethiopia, he now speaks of martyrdom, if needed, to hold the nation together.

Abiy rocketed to office out of seemingly nowhere in 2018 with vows of dramatic reforms to a long-repressive national government. He also announced he would make peace with neighboring Eritrea after years of bitter conflict. For that, the youthful prime minister was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.



Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, right, and First Lady Zinash Tayachew, left, attend his inauguration ceremony after he was sworn in for a second five-year term, in the capital Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Monday, Oct. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

Then, less than a year later, Abiy announced his military was at war with the leaders of Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, who had dominated the previous national government but

quickly found friction with the prime minister. Political differences turned to gunfire in November 2020.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed since then, and close to half a

million people inside Tigray now face the world's worst famine crisis in a decade, one that the United States has called "entirely man-made."

The 45-year-old Abiy has

now plunged into the fight, arriving at the battlefield on Tuesday, a government spokesman said.

The prime minister is no stranger to war. As a teenager, he joined fighters who eventually overthrew the country's Marxist Derg regime, then signed up for the new government's military. He took part in Ethiopia's war against Eritrea as a radio operator, serving at the border in Tigray, and later became a lieutenant colonel.

Now roles are dramatically reversed. The Tigray fighters Abiy once called friends are now the enemy, and the Eritrean soldiers he once fought have been allowed to join the war as Ethiopia's allies.

Years after his career turned from the military to politics, Abiy faces a battlefield challenge he has never faced before: Commanding an army.

But the prime minister is known as a man with a sense of destiny. □

Israel to give Gaza Christians permits for Christmas holiday

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli authorities on Wednesday said they would permit 500 members of the Gaza Strip's tiny Christian community to enter Israel and the occupied West Bank to celebrate Christmas.

Israel has in the past allowed Gazans to exit the blockaded territory for Christmas, though the practice was frozen last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Movement out of Gaza also has been restricted since an 11-day war last May between Israel and the territory's Hamas rulers. In recent months, however, Israel has begun to ease

some of the restrictions, granting several thousand Gazans permits to work inside Israel as part of quiet, Egyptian attempts to broker a long-term cease-fire. COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, announced the permits allowing people to visit relatives and holy sites in Israel and the West Bank. It said it was also increasing access to Jerusalem for Christians in the occupied West Bank and allowing some 200 Gazan Christians to travel through Israel to Jordan for journeys abroad.

Bethlehem, revered by Christians as the birthplace

of Christ, is in the West Bank. The town is heavily dependent on tourism, but officials fear there will be few visitors this year due to the lingering effects of the pandemic.

About 1,000 Christians live in Gaza, a tiny fraction of the territory's 2 million people. Most are Greek Orthodox, with Catholics making up about a quarter of the small community.

The ruling Islamic militant Hamas movement considers the Christians a protected minority. There had been a few attacks targeting Christians by Islamic zealots in the early years of Hamas' takeover, but the Is-



Palestinian Christians attend a Christmas tree lighting celebration in Gaza City, Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2019.

Associated Press

lamic movement has since worked to ensure such attacks don't happen.

Israel and Egypt have maintained a tight block-

ade over Gaza since Hamas took control of the territory in 2007. Residents require permits to leave the territory. □

Today We Say Thank You



ORANJESTAD – Thanksgiving Day is an annual national holiday in the United States and Canada celebrating the harvest and other blessings of the past year. Americans generally believe that their Thanksgiving is modeled on a 1621 harvest feast shared by the English colonists (Pilgrims) of Plymouth and the Wampanoag people.

Thanksgiving 2021 is on Thursday November 25th, the day before Black Friday. Thanksgiving Day traditionally kicks off the 'holiday season' in the United States. The day was set in stone by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939 and approved by Congress in 1941. FDR changed it from

Abraham Lincoln's designation as the last Thursday in November (because there are sometimes five Thursdays in the month). The American holiday is particularly rich in legend and symbolism, and the traditional fare of the Thanksgiving meal typically includes turkey, bread stuffing, potatoes, cranberries, and pumpkin pie. With respect to vehicular travel, the holiday is often the busiest of the year, as family members gather with one another.

Many Americans think of it as just as important as Christmas. In fact, more people in the US celebrate Thanksgiving than they do Christmas. Thanksgiving Day is a secular holiday in a

country that officially separates church and state so this probably makes sense. Thanksgiving can be traced back to 1621 where refugees from England, known as Pilgrims, invited the local Native Americans to a harvest feast after they experienced a successful season of produce growth. But it wasn't just the economic drive that allowed the Pilgrims to prosper. It was their devotion to God and His laws. And that's what Thanksgiving is really all about. The Pilgrims recognized that everything we have is a gift from God – even our sorrows. Their Thanksgiving tradition was established to honor God and thank Him for His blessings and His grace.

For many 2021 has not been an easy year, but despite all struggles and hardships we managed to survive and therefore we are thankful. Thankful for the family we have, thankful for our job, thankful for the blessings we receive each day and Thankful for our health and welfare.



Happy Thanksgiving to all of you! ☐

The Hill family honored by the Aruba Tourism Authority



EAGLE BEACH - Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as a Distinguished Visitor of Aruba and Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. The Distinguished visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were father **Mr. David Hill** and mother **Mrs. Tara Hill** as Goodwill

Ambassadors, together with their teenager son Colin Hill, honored as a Distinguished Visitor of Aruba.

This lovely family is from New Jersey and stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, and Aruba's warm and friendly people whom have become like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Aruba Beach Club presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. ☐

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Tips for an unforgettable vacation in Aruba!

ORANJESTAD — We know how stressful preparing for a trip can be, that's why we've put together a list of tips for you to take away some of that stress. We want to help make your vacation unforgettable!

Clothes

The weather in Aruba can be pretty hot, so take clothes with you that are not too warm. Keep in mind that there is always a steady breeze in Aruba, making the warm weather bearable. Of course, don't forget your swimwear. At night, the temperature more or less stays the same. For cooler evenings you might want to pack a light sweater, just in case. There is no need to pack your rain jacket. Rain generally passes by relatively quickly; the sun will soon make its appearance again!

Language

Even though the main language in Aruba is Papiamentu, most people can speak and understand Dutch and English too. Many people also speak and understand Spanish.

Money

The currency in Aruba is the florin (Awg. or Afl.), but US dollars are accepted everywhere. You can withdraw both florins and US dollars from several ATMs (not all) if you want to keep using US dollars. Most places, like shops and hotels, grant a rate of exchange ranging from Awg. 1.75 to Awg. 1.80 per US dollar.

Getting around

Taxi: A great way to get around is to call a taxi. In Aruba, it's not usual to hail a cab off the street, you will find a taxi parked at most resorts or tourist area. The prices are fixed prices regulated by the government of Aruba. You pay for the cab, not the amount of people.

Car rental: Renting a car is also a safe and easy way to get around on the island. There are dozens of car rentals with good qual-

ity cars.

Bike rental: Renting a bike is a bit more dangerous. Since there are no biking lanes, it is harder to get around. You have to ride on the same road as cars do, which can be tricky sometimes.

Tipping

In Aruba it's not mandatory to tip, but it's your choice if you do so. However, some restaurants and bars add service charge to your bill. Usually, this adds up to about 10 to 15 percent on food and beverages. If you really like the service, you can still tip, of course!

Chargers

You also want to make sure you can charge your phone, camera or laptop.

If you're from the USA or Canada, you don't have to worry. Aruba adopted the voltage standard of 110V, the same as in the USA and Canada. However, if you're not from the USA or Canada, you might want to check if your devices need 220V or 110V, then you may need a converter. You can buy these in your home country or in Aruba at hardware stores or supermarkets.

No need to buy water

The tap water in Aruba is of high quality and perfectly safe to drink.

Emergencies

Let's hope it's not necessary, but it's good to know. In case of an emergency, you can call 911 for an am-



bulance or the fire department and for the police, you can call 100.

Keep in mind to wash your hands frequently, wear

your face mask at all times, avoid crowded areas, practice social distance and adhere to all rules and protocols. Have a fun and unforgettable vacation! □

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COVID-19 Testing Near You

NOORD — Urgent Care Aruba, the number one Urgent Care on the island, together with Medlab Laboratory Aruba, an accredited ISO 15189 laboratory, would like to welcome you to the island of Aruba.

Either you are a first-timer or a repeat visitor. During your stay, you will probably explore the island, eat great food, go snorkeling, eat a picnic by the beach, go to different beaches, you name it. Vacation time is YOUR time, and you deserve it.

With multiple established testing centers on the island to accommodate your testing needs. Whether you're traveling to the U.S. (Read U.S. entry requirements: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html>) or you are traveling to another country requesting a PCR or Antigen test result.



Find a testing location near you at participating hotels for a convenient and professional testing experience. Are you not staying at a resort? Find other established testing center possibilities.

Request Domicile Service for easy

testing for large groups staying at an Airbnb or Condominium. An additional charge of \$50 per group.

Scan QR-Code and find locations and opening hours at: www.covidaruba.com.

Note: It is required for guests to bring their passports to the appointment. The use of a face mask is mandatory.

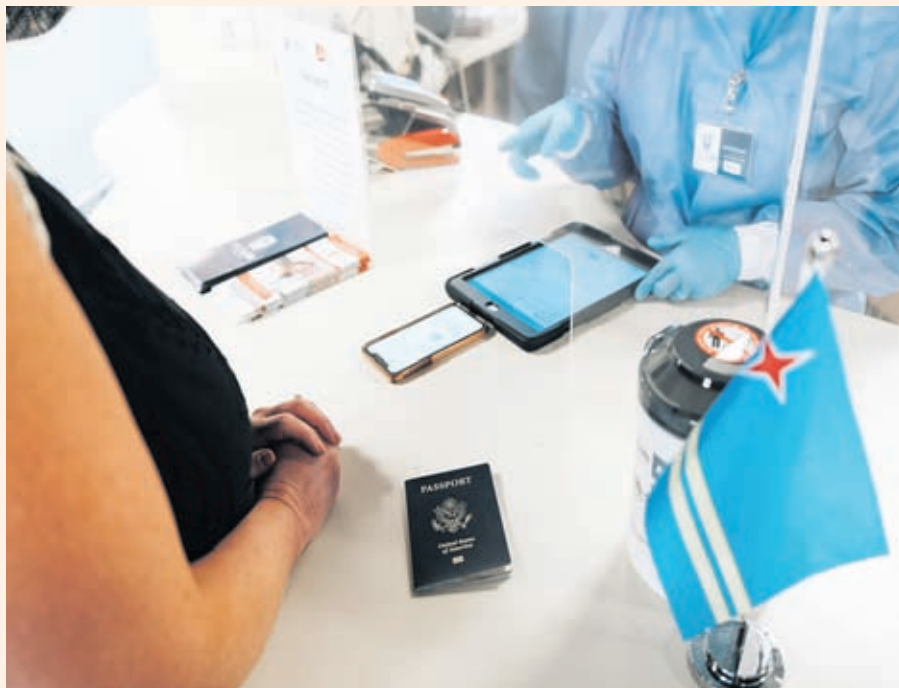
Location list:

1. Noord Medical Center – For all outbound/ departing passengers
2. Urgent Care Aruba – For all outbound/ departing passengers
3. COVID Test Center Benu Oliva Superfood Plaza – For all outbound/ departing passengers
4. Medlab Shaba – For all outbound/ departing passengers
5. Medlab Centro Medico San Nicolaas – For all outbound/ departing passengers
6. Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino – For guests stay-

ing at the resort

7. Marriott's Aruba Surf Club – For guests staying at the resort
8. Holiday Inn Resort Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
9. Playa Linda Beach Resort Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
10. RIU Palace Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
11. Hotel RIU Palace Antillas – For guests staying at the resort
12. Eagle Aruba Resort & Casino – For guests staying at the resort
13. Costa Linda Beach Resort – For guests staying at the resort
14. Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort – For guests staying at the resort
15. Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa – For guests staying at the resort
16. Casa del Mar Beach Resort & Aruba Beach Club – For guests staying at the resorts
17. Caribbean Palm Village Resort – For guests staying at the resort

For more information, visit www.covidaruba.com, email covid@lab.aw, Invoice request Shakira. philips@lab.aw, Noord Medical Center Noord 63 +297 586 1600, WhatsApp Customer Care +297 699 5551. ☐



Censo2020 - Who are our children?

ORANJESTAD - During the Census 2020, a total of 22.830 children between the ages 0 and 17 were registered, of which 51 % were boys.

In comparison with the Census 2010, the number of children 17 years and younger has seen a decline of 11%.

In October 2020, those younger than 17 years comprise 21% of the population in Aruba. That means that 1 out of 5 persons in Aruba is younger than 17 years of age. The Census 2010 indicated a representation of 25% of the population of this age group.

85% of the individuals in this age group were born in Aruba, and 84% have Dutch Nationality. In comparison with Census 2010, this percentage is almost similar. In 2010, 86% of the individuals in this age group were born in Aruba, and

88% had a Dutch Nationality. In 2020, those in this group that were not born in Aruba came from 51 different countries.

During the Censo2020, the children were present in one-third of homes in Aruba. In 35% of homes, there is at least one child under the age of 17. Most of these children live with a married couple with children, a total of 44%. 19% lived with a non-married couple with children, 30% lived with a single mother, 3% lived with a single father, and 3% lived alone.

In 2020, 81% of homes had at least 1 child or teenager between 0-17 years living in a house, while 16% lived in an apartment, and 3% lived in another kind of home. In 76% of the homes with children, the parents owned the house.

Children younger than 17 years live all around in Aruba.

Census2020 indicates that 24% of the young age group lives in Oranjestad East and West, followed by Noord and Tanki Leendert with 23%. However, 23% of the youth live in Paradera and Santa Cruz, followed by Noord, Tanki Leendert, and Savaneta where 22% of the residents were between the ages 0 and 17.

87,5% of the group of 0 to 17 years of age are going to a child daycare, school, or higher education. The majority of 51,2% were attending an elementary school. Children within the mandatory education age group that were not attending a school were primarily due to a physical or mental health issue.

As of October 2020, 98% of the children in the age group of 0-17 years were in good health, 2% had health issues, and 1,6% had one or more limitations. ☐

Millennial Money: It's OK to not buy stuff on Black Friday

By **LAURA MCMULLEN** of **NerdWallet**

It's that time of year when retailers seem to join forces to plant a message in shoppers' minds: "Buy Stuff on Black Friday, or You Are a Fool."

They transmit this message in loud TV commercials, targeted social media ads and promotional emails you don't remember subscribing to.

But you are no fool. And you — not retailers — get to decide what to buy and when.

IT'S EASY TO OVERSPEND DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Feeling compelled to spend money right now is normal. Who doesn't want to be like the advertisements' grinning models, with an armful of gifts?

"This time of year, there is a lot of pressure to consume happiness — to show your love through products," says Christine Whelan, a clinical professor in the department of consumer science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Retailers want you to fold under that pressure. They make most of their money around this time, Whelan says, during their "end-of-year push to sell products." You may face other pressures, too. "This year we have almost a perfect storm when it comes to spending," she says. "We



Shoppers wear protective face masks as they look for Black Friday deals at the Ellenton Premium Outlet stores Friday, Nov. 27, 2020, in Ellenton, Fla.

Associated Press

have fears of scarcity, we have inflation, and we have this yearning to celebrate in a more normal way than we did last year."

As that storm brews, toss in feelings of guilt. That's a common emotion around the holidays and can lead to overspending, says Alex Melkumian, a licensed marriage and family therapist and founder of the Financial Psychology Center in Los Angeles.

Say that, once again, you can't gather with family, or you can't afford those gifts your kid wants.

Or maybe you don't feel guilty so much — just bad for any number of reasons related or not to the pandemic and loaded holiday season. It can be easy to spend emotionally, rather than logically, in hopes of feeling better.

Often, Melkumian says: "Instead of feeling uncomfortable, we'd rather just patch it up with a Band-Aid of buying a little something for ourselves."

MAKE A PLAN AND SET RULES

So, for various reasons, you may be primed to overshop

on Black Friday. With that in mind, try to remember that "bargain hunting" can often lead to buying more stuff than you need, says Ryan Sterling, founder of Future You Wealth, a New York-based investment firm. He's also the author of "You're Making Other People Rich: Save, Invest, and Spend with Intention." Plus, the fact that your favorite store is promoting 40% off doesn't change the amount in your bank account.

So aim to shop with intention, rather than in response

to promotions.

Whelan recommends reviewing your finances to determine how much you can spend on holiday shopping. Create a list of gift recipients, too. With this information, you'll get an idea of how much to spend on each person. (And if you plan to buy yourself something, add your name to the list.)

As you're planning, set a few rules. Otherwise, it's too easy to spot something you want and impulsively buy it. You already have one rule to guide you: Stick to the list. Yes, you may see the perfect item on sale for your aunt. But if she isn't on your list, or if she is and you already bought her something, move along.

Rules that add "speed bumps" between shopping impulses and reactions are also helpful, Sterling says. For example, maybe you step away from potential purchases for at least an hour, if not a day, before deciding whether or not to buy.

Without giving yourself boundaries, you may do exactly what retailers want — see their product and impulsively buy it. They certainly don't want you to pause first.

GIVE OTHER TYPES OF GIFTS

As you take control of your spending, rethink gift-giving. □

Dollar Tree makes it official: Items will now cost \$1.25

NEW YORK (AP) — Faced with the rising cost of goods and freight, discount retail chain Dollar Tree said Tuesday it will be raising its prices to \$1.25 for the majority of its products.

Dollar Tree said the reason for raising its prices to \$1.25 was not due to "short-term or transitory market conditions" and said the price increases were permanent. The higher prices will also allow the company to cope with high merchandise cost increases as well as higher operating costs, such as wages, it said.

"(Dollar Tree) believes this is the appropriate time to shift away from the con-

straints of the \$1.00 price point in order to continue offering extreme value to customers," the company said in a statement.

Dollar Tree was one of the last true "dollar stores" after most of its competition had moved away from that price point.

The company, which is based in Chesapeake, Virginia, said in September it was testing the higher prices at select stores. On Tuesday, it said it will introduce the new price point in more than 2,000 additional Dollar Tree stores in December and complete the rollout to all its stores by early next year. The company

has about 8,000 Dollar Tree stores.

CEO Michael Witynski said he expects the Dollar Tree customers to remain loyal. Its shoppers "believe that at \$1.25, it's still going to be an undeniable value because of what they're seeing out in the marketplace," Witynski said on a call with industry analysts. "And they know that Dollar Tree hasn't raised its price in 35 years, so they're giving us credit."

The company's stock rose 9.2% on Tuesday following the announcement, which was paired with the company's quarterly earnings. Analysts at Citigroup called the earnings "disappoint-



Dollar Tree store logos indicating that everything in the store is for \$1 are promoted on a storefront window on Feb. 25, 2021, in Jackson, Miss.

Associated Press

ing" but said investors are looking past earnings to

the company finally raising prices. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 Hick
1 Gullet 45 Lively
5 Velvety dance
flower 46 Night fliers

10 Detested

12 Like
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13 Pueblo
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14 Water
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18 Temple
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20 Tennis
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21 Sacred
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23 Hamilton's
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29 Fill
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31 Pitching
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32 Bed item

36 Steals

39 Stunned
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40 Rap sheet
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41 Showy
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43 Bias

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1 Victor

2 Circle
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3 Island ring

4 Fly

5 Become
catcher

6 Overly
tiresome

7 Fertilizer
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8 Flood-
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9 Toadies

11 Leaves

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Yesterday's answer

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18			19				20	
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43				44				
45					46			

11-25

AXYDLBAAXR
IS LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

11-25

CRYPTOQUOTE

U Z R Y X D Z I I Q Z X J K E
U L U B T S Z T I P E U P X O Z B Q K E
Q Y U Q K Q Z I Y Z B D K G T K E Q Y U
W G P L U B X U . — X Q . Q Y U B U X U
K E I P X P U W M

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: OBSESSED BY A FAIRY TALE, WE SPEND OUR LIVES SEARCHING FOR A MAGIC DOOR AND A LOST KINGDOM OF PEACE. — EUGENE O'NEILL

Mouthguard sensors help provide research on player safety



An engineer demonstrates on a player's mouth mold where the sensor will fit once installed into the mouthguard in Charlottesville, Va., Aug. 17, 2021.

Associated Press

By STEVE MEGARGEE

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The mouthguards that some college football players are wearing this season have a dual purpose.

Not only does the equipment provide the obvious protection for teeth and jaws, it also includes sensors collecting data to help research the best way to prevent serious head injuries.

Ten NFL teams already had been using these sensors for the last few years. This season, college players at Alabama, North Carolina, Washington and Wisconsin also have utilized these custom-made mouthguards.

While helmet sensors already had been used for many years to study the impact of blows to the head, experts believe the mouthguard sensors add a new perspective.

"We wanted to get inside the helmet and closer to the target of interest," NFL chief medical officer Allen Sills said. "That's where the mouthguard seemed to be a natural choice because it's closest to the brain and allows us to see what the body is actually feeling."

Jennifer Langton, the NFL's

senior vice president of health and safety innovation, said the league was seeking to partner with research schools with strong football programs. Players from each school could volunteer to use the mouthguards that included the sensors.

Officials at the respective schools said about 35 players were using the mouthguard sensors at Washington and 20 at Alabama. Jason Mihalik, a professor in North Carolina's department of exercise and sport science, said about 40 of the Tar Heels have used the sensors and that 30 are actively wearing them at any given time.

"We really wanted to start with a manageable number that we could effectively do, and then continue to grow if we're getting valuable data and there's still an interest in continuing," said Lizzie Elder, a program director and associate professor for Alabama's athletic training program.

Wisconsin didn't disclose how many players were using the mouthguard sensors. Daniel Cobian, a professor of orthopedics and

rehabilitation for Wisconsin's school of medicine and public health, said the sensors went to linemen and tight ends. Cobian said he believes those positions were the focus at the other schools as well.

"We know that linemen sustain not just the potential magnitude but a high volume of head impacts because they play in close contact with other players," Cobian said.

School and league officials credited the designers of the sensors for finding a way to produce the technology on such a small piece of equipment without making it significantly larger or more cumbersome. They say that the mouthguards with the sensors don't look much different from those without them.

Elder said Alabama's specially designed mouthguards even include the Alabama logo.

"It's not like it's a bigger mouthguard, or it's bulkier or more uncomfortable," Mihalik said. "They're pretty much the same form."

Wisconsin nose tackle Keanu Benton says he started wearing the mouthguards with sensors because he wanted to help provide feedback for the researchers. Benton said the mouthguards initially seemed a little big to him but that he quickly adapted.

"It feels just the same now," Benton said.

The mouthguards with the sensors are so similar to a typical mouthguard that school officials occasionally have to remind players to be careful with them.

"We've noticed players are pretty hard on their mouthguards," said Kimberly Harmon, a professor of family medicine and orthopedics and sports medicine at Washington's school of medicine. "They stick them in helmets. They chew on them. They don't really mind wearing the mouthguards at all, but we had to educate them a little bit on being nice to their mouthguards." □

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U.S. abortions may be inching up after decades of decline

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. abortions appear to be inching up after a long decline, though officials are cautious about calling it an upward trend because a government report issued Wednesday is incomplete. National abortion figures in 2017 reached their lowest level since the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortions. But the next two years, there were small increases in the abortion rate and numbers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. They rose 1% in 2018. The next year, the numbers increased 2% and the rate per 1,000 women of child-bearing age rose 1%. □

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Helen Mirren makes regal bow as Harry Potter quiz show host

By LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Helen Mirren is oddly absent from the Harry Potter film franchise that proved close to a full-employment act for Britain's acting greats. But she's found her own path into its magical world. Dame Helen, as the Oscar, Emmy and Tony-winning actor is properly addressed, makes her debut as a quiz host with "Harry Potter: Hogwarts Tournament of Houses." The weekly, four-part series begins 8 p.m. EST Sunday on TBS and Cartoon Network.

In episode one, contestants representing the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff houses field trivia questions about J.K. Rowling's novels-turned-films in a bid to claim a championship trophy and prizes.

Mirren left the cramming to the players and is unworried about being a novice game show emcee.

"I can certainly play a strict host," she said, drolly.

Mirren's willingness to take on something different shouldn't raise eyebrows. She's celebrated for her regal roles — including "The Queen," "Elizabeth I" and "Catherine the Great" — but also counts the Fast & the Furious movie franchise among her varied credits. Her return to a comic book-



This image released by Turner Entertainment shows Helen Mirren hosting the quiz show "Harry Potter: Hogwarts Tournament of Houses."

Associated Press

based project is upcoming: She plays a mythological goddess in "Shazam! Fury of the Gods." Mirren's baptism in the genre came with the film "Red" and its sequel.

In an interview with The Associated Press, she discussed her admiration of the Potter canon, making a TV fashion statement, and female bonding on the set of the DC Comics-based film. Remarks have been edited for length and clarity.

AP: You've had an eclectic acting career, and now you're adding your first

game show to the resume.

MIRREN: Absolutely, which is why I signed up for it. I'm always up for a bit of an adventure. Also, of course, it's a wonderful subject and at a great moment, the 20th anniversary (of "The Sorcerer's Stone," the first Potter film). And the very fact I was never in any Harry Potter movies — much to my chagrin, I might add. It was a great way to be able to participate in the whole extraordinary phenomena that is Harry Potter.

AP: Are you a fan of the stories?

MIRREN: What I remember very clearly was when the whole world of Harry Potter started rising. The most magical thing is the way the books were passed from hand to hand amongst kids, and adults sort of didn't know anything about it. It wasn't like it was published with great fanfare. A lot of the people who'll be competing (on the show), they will be in their 20s, 30s, 40s, but they will have past experience with Harry Potter as a kid.

AP: Have you watched any TV competition shows for

tips or sought advice on hosting?

MIRREN: I thought I'd just play it by ear and be as natural as I could. I'm personally very excited about it, so hopefully I'll communicate that. I'll be probably as nervous as the contestants themselves, and I'll try to hide that.

AP: You aren't playing a role with the costume dictated by your character, but was there a certain look you wanted as a host?

MIRREN: That's an interesting question. The set, as you will see, it's so extraordinary, it's a beautiful, beautiful Harry Potter world that they've constructed. So I did want what I wore to reflect a slight costuming feel. And in a way, I'm playing a kind of a character. So, yes, I wanted it to be a sense of costume and presentation. It's got a slight sense of vintage about it, and a sense of belonging in that world.

AP: In the sequel to "Shazam!" you play Hespera, daughter of Atlas. Is she a hero or villain?

MIRREN: I'm not going to tell you the answer to that. You're going to have to ascertain for yourself. I'm a member of three goddesses: Lucy Liu as Kalypso and the third goddess played by Rachel Zegler, who will be a huge star in a very short space of time. □

NFL defensive great Michael Strahan to be next space tourist



This Jan. 19, 2020 file photo shows Michael Strahan before the NFL NFC Championship football game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Green Bay Packers in Santa Clara, Calif.

Associated Press

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN

AP Business Writer

"Good Morning America"

co-host Michael Strahan is going to space next month.

Strahan, who turned 50 on Sunday, will join Laura Shepard Churchley, the eldest daughter of astronaut Alan Shepard, on the Dec. 9 mission aboard the New Shepard, a spacecraft named after her father and the first American in space.

The Blue Origin flight, the company headed by Jeff Bezos, will also carry four paying customers and will be the third by the New Shepard craft this year to shuttle humans to space. Blue Origin has not disclosed the ticket price for paying customers.

The 10-minute flight, five minutes less than Alan Shepard's 1961 Mercury

flight, will launch from West Texas carrying six people, two more than the previous two flights this year with humans aboard.

Similar to previous jaunts, Strahan's flight is likely to include about three minutes of weightlessness and a view of the curvature of the Earth. Passengers are subjected to nearly 6 G's, or six times the force of Earth's gravity, as the capsule descends. Strahan, who played for 15 years in the National Football League with the New York Giants, reported on the first Blue Origin flight for "Good Morning America."

"I want to go to space," Strahan told "GMA." "I think

being there at the first launch, it really was mind-blowing."

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Star Trek star William Shatner flew to space on separate New Shepard flights this year. Shatner became the oldest person in space, eclipsing the previous record — set by a passenger on Bezos' flight in July — by eight years.

Virgin Galactic's Richard Branson went into space in his own rocket ship in July, followed by Bezos nine days later on Blue Origin's first flight with a crew. Elon Musk's SpaceX made its first private voyage in mid-September, though without Musk on board. □

NFL teams on Thanksgiving schedule all coming off loss

By **JOSH DUBOW**
AP Pro Football Writer

Maybe the NFL teams set to play on Thanksgiving got caught looking ahead to the holiday extravaganza. All six squads playing on Thursday lost in their lead-up to the Thanksgiving game, marking the first time since 2001 that every team playing on the holiday dropped its previous contest.

Back then there were only two Thanksgiving games, with Detroit hosting Green Bay and Dallas hosting Denver.

This year there are six teams — Detroit, Chicago, Las Vegas, Dallas, New Orleans and Buffalo — looking to get rid of the bad taste of a loss so they can enjoy their holiday. Four of those are on winless stretches of at least three games.

Detroit (0-9-1) hosts Chicago (3-7) in the first game, a matchup between a winless team and one on a five-game losing streak. The Bears and Lions are familiar Thanksgiving foes, with this being their 19th meeting, two shy of the record held by Detroit and Green Bay. That game will be followed by the slumping Raiders



Cincinnati Bengals defensive end Sam Hubbard (94) recovers a fumble by Las Vegas Raiders quarterback Derek Carr (4) during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

ers (5-5), who have lost three straight, visiting the Cowboys (7-3), who have dropped two of three.

The nightcap features another team on a three-game skid, with New Orleans (5-5) hosting Buffalo (6-4).

The final two games on Thanksgiving are part of a record nine this week between teams that don't have a losing record, the

most in NFL history in Week 12 or later.

ROAD WARRIORS

The Arizona Cardinals have become the NFL's road warriors.

The Cardinals have won all six road games this season, with each victory coming by at least 10 points. The last team to do that was the Cowboys in 1968, when they won all seven road games they played that

season by double digits.

Arizona is off this week but can match the mark the following week at Chicago.

PLAYING FROM AHEAD

The Minnesota Vikings have had a knack for playing with the lead.

The Vikings are the 20th team in the Super Bowl era to lead each of their first 10 games by at least seven points. Despite having that kind of cushion each

game, Minnesota is still only 5-5 on the season.

The other 19 teams to do it combined for an .816 winning percentage, with only the 2015 Giants, the 1987 Dolphins and 1967 Giants failing to post a winning record. Those three teams were also 5-5.

Minnesota can become the 17th team to do it in the first 11 games this week against San Francisco.

TD CLUB

Jonathan Taylor and Austin Ekeler had days to remember on Sunday.

Taylor scored five touchdowns for the Colts, while Ekeler got into the end zone four times for the Chargers, marking the seventh time since 1950 that multiple players scored at least four TDs on the same day. The last time it happened was Nov. 18, 2007, when Randy Moss and Terrell Owens did it.

Taylor is on an eight-game streak of games with at least 100 yards from scrimmage and a TD run, matching a single-season record set by LaDainian Tomlinson in 2006. Lydell Mitchell also had an eight-game streak over two seasons from 1975-76. □

Resilient Cardinals regain No. 1 spot in AP Pro32 poll

By **SIMMI BUTTAR**
AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The resilient Arizona Cardinals have done it again.

For the second time in three games, the Cardinals earned a road win despite playing without starting quarterback Kyler Murray and star wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins as Colt McCoy led the way to a 23-13 victory over the Seattle Seahawks.

And now the Cardinals go into their bye week back on top of the latest AP Pro 32 poll.

The Cardinals received 11 of the 12 first-place votes for 383 points in balloting Tuesday by media members who regularly cover the NFL. They last were No. 1 in the poll after Week 9.

"(They) won twice on the road without Murray," Fox

Sports' John Czarnecki said. "Defense remains solid."

The Green Bay Packers slipped a spot No. 2 after losing 34-31 at the Minnesota Vikings on a field goal as time expired.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers climbed three spots to No. 3 as they found their form with a 30-10 rout of the New York Giants on Monday night.

Another team that seems to have overcome recent struggles, the Kansas City Chiefs, jumped six spots to No. 4 as they head into their bye week. The Chiefs beat Dallas, which was previously ranked third.

The Tennessee Titans, who received the remaining first-place vote, dropped three places to No. 5 after a turnover-filled loss to the Houston Texans.

Much to the chagrin of

many fans across the league, the New England Patriots are back in first place in the AFC East and playing their best as the season hits the second half. The Patriots gained two places to No. 6 and they host the Titans on Sunday in a game that could have a big impact on the playoff race in the AFC.

Baltimore moved up two places to No. 7 after rallying past the Chicago Bears 16-13. Similar to the Cardinals, the Ravens also relied on a backup QB to get a road win as Tyler Huntley led a last-minute five-play, 72-yard drive for the winning touchdown with Lamar Jackson ill.

Dallas fell five spots to No. 8 after losing to the Chiefs and will look to regain its winning ways when the Cowboys host Las Vegas



Arizona Cardinals running back Eno Benjamin (26) dives for the end zone against the Seattle Seahawks during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021, in Seattle.

Associated Press

on Thanksgiving Day.

The Los Angeles Rams slipped two spots to No. 9 despite being on a bye last week. The Rams will try to end their two-game slide as they head to Green Bay on Sunday.

"A defense with three perennial Pro Bowl players — DT Aaron Donald, OLB Von Miller and CB Jalen Ramsey — shouldn't be wallowing outside the NFL's top 10," said Rick Gosselin of Talk of Fame Network. □



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