THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOW JONES | News Corp * * * * * FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2025 ~ VOL. CCLXXXV NO. 48 WSJ.com ★★★★ $5.00

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What's News

Business & Finance

◆ **Amazon's cloud**-computing business unveiled its first quantum-computing chip, which it said was a step in the development of useful, reliable quantum computers. **B1**

◆ **Microsoft called on** the Trump administration to overhaul a system of curbs on the sale of cutting-edge U.S. artificial-intelligence chips to friendly nations. **B1**

◆ **U.S. stocks fell** as investors tried to digest Trump's new tariff threats and federal spending cuts. The S&P 500, Nasdaq and Dow slid 1.6%, 2.8% and 0.5%, respectively. **B1**

◆ **A gauge of the** number of homes going under contract in the U.S. fell to its lowest level on record in January amid high prices and mortgage rates. **A2**

◆ **Meta apologized for** what it said was an error that led to graphic and violent videos flooding the feeds of a vast number of Instagram users, including minors. **B1**

◆ **NFL teams gathered** detailed consumer data, including geolocation, without clear disclosures and opt-outs, failing to meet standards set by the Digital Advertising Alliance. **B1**

◆ **HP said it would lay off** up to 2,000 more employees as part of a cost-cutting plan, bringing the total number of job reductions to as many as 9,000. **B4**

◆ **The Agnelli family's** holding company said it would sell part of its stake in Ferrari to raise billions of dollars to pursue an acquisition and buy back shares. **B3**

◆ **7-Eleven owner's** founding family failed to get financing for a proposed management buyout that could have deterred a foreign takeover attempt. **B2**

World-Wide

◆ **Trump struck a more** supportive tone on Ukraine during his meetings with U.K. Prime Minister Starmer, but stopped short of promising the security guarantees for Kyiv that European allies want. **A1, A6**

◆ **The U.S. intends next** week to impose an additional 10% tariff on China and proceed with 25% tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico, Trump said. **A1**

◆ **Mexico extradited to** the U.S. Rafael Caro Quintero, a drug boss wanted for the 1985 killing of a DEA agent, delivering on a long-standing U.S. demand. **A3**

◆ **Trump administration** officials moved to drop a CFPB lawsuit that accused Capital One of misleading customers over the interest rates on their savings accounts. **A4**

◆ **Andrew Tate**, under investigation for human trafficking in Romania, arrived in the U.S. after a Trump official discussed the case with Bucharest. **A5**

◆ **Imprisoned Kurdish** militant leader Abdullah Öcalan urged his followers to disarm after decades of violence that destabilized Turkey and the wider Middle East. **A6**

◆ **Three Austrian** mainstream parties said they would form a government, elbowing aside a far-right group that doubled its share of the vote in an election five months earlier. **A8**

◆ **An illness linked** to bats has killed scores of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with nearly half dying within 48 hours of showing symptoms. **A8**

◆ **Died: Gene Hackman**, 95, storied American actor. **A3, A10**

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As Measles Spreads, Vaccination Push Is On

ANNIE RICE/REUTERS

OUCH: Devonay Pena comforts her daughter, Jaqi Herrera, after the 13-month-old received her first dose of the MMR vaccine Thursday in Lubbock, Texas. A measles outbreak in West Texas has sickened scores of people and one child has died.

Trump Softens His Tone on Kyiv But Won't Give Security Pledge

President, meeting U.K.'s leader, says he has confidence in Russia making peace

By Alexander Ward, Natalie Andrews and Siobhan Hughes

WASHINGTON—President Trump struck a more supportive tone on Ukraine during his meetings with U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday, but stopped short of promising the security guarantees for Kyiv that European allies want.

Starmer raised a plan to send European peacekeepers to Ukraine, seeking a U.S. military "backstop" of air defenses and intelligence support. Trump repeatedly said he would only consider those options after a cease-fire is reached between Moscow and Kyiv, an agreement he said he expects President Vladimir Putin of Russia to honor.

"I have confidence, if we make a deal, it's going to hold," he said in the Oval Office, adding that his approach would be "trust and verify."

Trump also tempered some of his harshest criticisms of Ukraine. Asked if he still thought President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine was a "dictator," Trump said: "Did I say that? I can't believe I said that." He also vowed to help Kyiv reclaim as much seized territory from Russia as possible.

That could lower the tensions ahead of a high-stakes meeting with Zelensky on Friday, the fourth European leader in a week to meet with Trump about trans-Atlantic security and Russia's invasion. "We're going to get along really well. I have a lot of respect for him," Trump said of Zelensky.

If Starmer failed to rope the U.S. into a peacekeeping

Please turn to page A6

◆ Ukraine rattled as U.S. eyes 2022 plan.................. A6

Ill-Prepared North Korean Soldiers Describe Chaos Before Ukraine Capture

By Matthew Luxmoore in Kyiv, Ukraine, and Dasl Yoon in Seoul

Two North Korean soldiers captured by Ukraine knew nothing about the war they were sent to fight. They were handed Kalashnikov rifles and told they would be facing off against South Koreans who were aiding Ukraine.

Days later, they were fighting Ukrainians on the front lines in Russia's Kursk region, they said.

They were instructed to evade capture at all costs—by blowing themselves up if they had to. That message was reinforced by North Korean secret police who conducted ideological sessions on the ground in Russia, stressing that surrender was tantamount to treason.

The indoctrination didn't stop even under Ukrainian artillery fire. Military commanders read a letter from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which some soldiers were told to transcribe by hand. "I really miss you comrades," Kim said in the New Year's greeting.

In interviews, the two North Koreans captured by Ukraine offered the most detailed pictures yet of how young soldiers dispatched by Kim's regime to aid Russia are experiencing the war. The Wall Street Journal was the first Western outlet to speak with the men, who are being held at a facility in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

Their accounts of the arc of their lives—from leaving home as militarized teenagers steeped in Kim's personality cult to be-

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Nvidia Adapted Its Chips To Keep AI Lead

By Asa Fitch

Nvidia faced a growing threat early last year: The artificial-intelligence world was shifting in a way that invited competition.

As millions of people started using AI tools, operating the underlying models to respond to their many queries became more important than the computing-intensive work of training them—which propelled Nvidia to the top of the AI boom. Many expected that shift could give competitors, including Advanced Micro Devices, an opening to pry away market share.

But Nvidia was already preparing to adapt and stay at the forefront of the AI race despite the shift away from creating models and toward operating

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◆ Heard on the Street: Nvidia has more road to run.....B10

Hackman's Death Probed

20TH CENTURY FOX/EVERETT COLLECTION

SCREEN LEGEND: Two-time Oscar winner Gene Hackman, 95, shown in 1971's 'The French Connection,' and his wife, Betsy Arakawa, 64, were found dead in a New Mexico home. **A3, A10**

Becoming a Beer Sommelier Is Tough. Explaining It Is Harder.

* * *

Exclusive club of Master Cicerones finds title comes with perks and questions

By Kristina Peterson and Laura Cooper

Jason Pratt was working in a grad school laboratory doing microbiology research at Michigan State University when he decided to leave academia for beer.

His parents were surprised. Although the post at Miller Brewing in Milwaukee involved science, his primary qualification when it came to beer was knowing where to find the cheapest pitcher.

Now Pratt is part of one of

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The 'Spy Sheikh' Taking the AI World by Storm

Abu Dhabi royal has more than $1.5 trillion to spend and he's in a hurry

By Eliot Brown and Berber Jin

The Abu Dhabi royal sometimes called "the spy sheikh" is accustomed to using his vast wealth to master his many obsessions, which have ranged over the years from martial arts to chess to videogames.

Now Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates' national security adviser and brother of the president, is deploying a similar playbook at a much grander scale. He wants to muscle his tiny emirate to the front of the race to develop and control AI systems that could transform the global economy.

The world is taking notice. The CEOs of Apple, Microsoft and BlackRock have all paid homage at his elaborate Persian Gulf royal compound in recent months. On a fall trip to the U.S., he grappled with fellow Brazilian jujitsu devotee Mark Zuckerberg, and donned a sweatshirt and jeans for a visit with Elon Musk at Tesla's Texas factory.

All of this is possible in part because the 56-year-old Tahnoon controls more money than almost anyone on the planet, as the chairman of two Abu Dhabi wealth funds with an estimated $1.4 trillion in assets and the steward of an enormous personal fortune.

A new artificial intelligence fund he leads, MGX, is set to be infused with more than $50 billion from his wealth and other Abu Dhabi sources, according to people familiar with the fund. Billions of dollars more are set to be spent on AI by Group

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U.S. Vows To Raise Tariffs On Three Countries

Trump plans higher levies on China and ending a reprieve for Canada, Mexico

By Gavin Bade and Lingling Wei

WASHINGTON—The U.S. plans next week to impose an additional 10% tariff on imports from China over its role in the fentanyl trade and move forward with 25% tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico, President Trump said Thursday, setting up a pivotal week for his protectionist trade agenda.

The China move, slated to take effect Tuesday along with the Canada and Mexico actions, doubles up on the previous 10% additional tariff Trump placed on Chinese products this month.

In a post Thursday on his Truth Social platform, Trump reinforced his threat to impose 25% tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico. Later in the Oval Office, he said the U.S.'s neighbors hadn't done enough to curb drug smuggling to win another delay for those duties.

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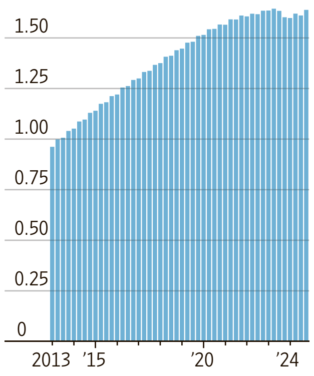
◆ Trump's tariff threats hit S&P 500, Nasdaq............... B1

Student Debt Pain Grows

Borrowers who haven't yet resumed their student-loan payments are taking hits as their credit scores suffer. **A3**

Federal student-loan debt

$1.75 trillion



Note: Quarterly data
Source: Education Department

U.S. NEWS

U.S. WATCH


COLLIN LEIBY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Collin Leiby found Freddy in a coal pit in Pottsville, Pa. The puppy's disappearance sparked a massive community search.

PENNSYLVANIA

Hiker Finds Puppy Missing for Week

A Pennsylvania hiker had followed his dog off a mountain trail this week when he glanced toward a deep coal pit below and saw a tail move near a pile of rocks.

Collin Leiby, an avid hiker and wedding photographer, locked eyes with the animal and knew it was Freddy, a 6-month-old golden retriever whose disappearance had sparked a weeklong search in Pottsville, a community in eastern Pennsylvania's historic coal country. Leiby had been on alert for the missing dog and finally found him Monday, about 10 feet down the coal pit, too weary to make his way out.

Pam and Joe Palko had pulled out all the stops since Freddy went missing on Feb. 17. They chased tips. They organized volunteers to distribute fliers in schools, churches and across town in Pottsville. They even hired a company that uses search dogs to track missing pets, and another that flew thermal drones overhead.

—Associated Press

PENTAGON

Trans Troops Face Removal

The military services have 30 days to figure out how they will seek out and identify transgender service members to remove them from the force—a daunting task that may end up relying on troops self-reporting or tattling on their colleagues.

A memo sent to Defense Department leaders on Thursday—after the Pentagon filed it as part of a response to a lawsuit—orders the services to set up procedures to identify troops diagnosed with or being treated for gender dysphoria by March 26. They will then have 30 days to begin removing those troops from service.

The order expands on the executive order signed by President Trump during his early days in office setting out steps toward banning transgender individuals from serving in the military. The directive has been challenged in court. An initial but incomplete count of transgender troops easily identifiable through medical records is in the hundreds, U.S. officials said.

—Associated Press

NEW ENGLAND

Ocean Temperature Lower Last Year

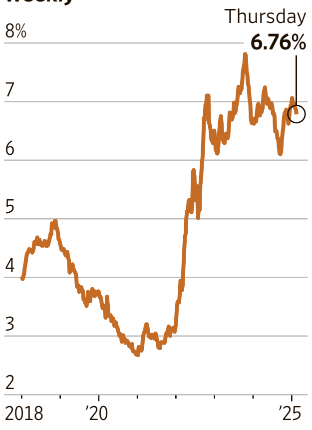
The waters off New England had another warm year but didn't heat up as fast as earlier this decade, bucking a trend of higher warming worldwide, said scientists who study the Atlantic Ocean near Maine.

The Gulf of Maine, which touches three New England states and Canada, emerged as a test case for climate change about a decade ago because it is warming much faster than most of the world's oceans. The gulf is home to some of the country's most valuable seafood species.

The gulf's annual sea surface temperature last year was 51.5 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland. That was more than 0.88 F above the long-term average from 1991 to 2020, the institute said in a report released this month. Although last year was the gulf's 12th warmest year on record, it was down from the fifth warmest a year earlier, it said.

—Associated Press

30-year fixed rate mortgage, weekly



Source: Freddie Mac

Pending U.S. Home Sales Hit New Low In January

By Ed Frankl

A monthly gauge of the number of homes going under contract in the U.S. fell to its lowest level on record in January amid high prices and mortgage rates.

According to a report from the National Association of Realtors, released Thursday, the pending home sales index, a leading indicator of house sales based on contract signings, declined 4.6% to a low of 70.6 in January.

Economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had expected sales to fall just 1%. The index remains well below 100, which represents the level of contract activity in 2001.

"It's evident that elevated home prices and higher mortgage rates strained affordability," said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun. However, it was unclear if the coldest January in 25 years meant fewer buyers were in the market, and if so there could be greater sales activity in the coming months, he noted.

Compared with a year earlier, pending home sales were 5.2% lower.

Sales fell most on month in the South, followed by the Midwest and West regions. They rose slightly in the Northeast.

U.S. existing home sales slumped 4.9% in January as elevated prices and mortgage rates put off buyers, the NAR said last week.


PATRICK T. FALLON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

President Trump plans to use higher tariffs on goods from China, Mexico and Canada to try to force those countries to curb drug smuggling into the U.S.

Trade Fight Expands on Three Fronts

Continued from Page One

The administration had postponed the Canada and Mexico tariffs for 30 days at the beginning of February to allow for negotiations.

"The drugs continue to pour into our country, killing hundreds of thousands of people," said Trump, a Republican, after being asked about whether he had seen progress. "The families are destroyed after that happens."

The announcement came a day after Trump appeared to hint that the Canada and Mexico tariffs could be delayed again, saying that they were scheduled for April 2. The administration backed off those comments at the time, and on Thursday a White House official said that "as of now, the decision has been made" to impose the tariffs, though talks are ongoing.

Trump's initial tariff threats set off a flurry of negotiations on how to avoid the duties, with Mexico committing troops to the U.S. border to curb migration and Canada setting up a fentanyl task force.

President Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico said Thursday, referring to Trump's comments: "As you know, he has his way of communicating, but as usual, we have a cool head and optimism that we can reach an agreement."

Mexican authorities extradited to the U.S. drug boss Rafael Caro Quintero, who is wanted for the 1985 killing of a Drug Enforcement Administration agent, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada said on Thursday that less than 1% of the fentanyl smuggled into the U.S. comes from Canada.

"Canada is not the source of problems for the United States," he said. "If on Tuesday there are unjustified tariffs brought in on Canada, we will have an immediate and strong response."

China responded to the first round of U.S. tariffs with retaliatory duties of its own and is likely to do so again when new U.S. duties are imposed.

While the National Security Council is in contact with major foreign partners such as China, intensive negotiations haven't been conducted on how to avoid the tariffs, an administration official said, and reductions in tariffs would hinge on Trump seeing fewer fentanyl overdose deaths in the U.S.

"It's 10 plus 10," Trump said in the Oval Office, referring to his China tariffs.

Mexican cartels making bootleg fentanyl, often with China-sourced precursor chemicals, are the major source of the opioid that has caused a U.S. public-health crisis.

Evidence suggests that the deadly drug also is increasingly manufactured and exported from Canada, though numbers remain small compared with Mexico.

The most recent federal data show fatal overdoses killing about 240 people every day. At the same time, the numbers are declining quickly.

Preliminary data show about 86,900 fatal overdoses in the 12 months ended last September, down 24% from the prior 12-month period. The driver of the decline is a roughly 31% decline in deaths linked to synthetic opioids, the drug class that largely includes fentanyl.

U.S. overdose deaths have largely gone in one direction—up—for decades, and a decline of this size is unprecedented.

Beijing so far hasn't made an offer to the Trump administration that shows a stepped-up commitment to reducing China's exports of chemicals used to make fentanyl, according to people close to Beijing's decision-making. The people said the lack of an offer from China on fentanyl was a reason that no direct conversation had yet taken place between Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Liu Pengyu, the spokesman at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, defended China's record in fighting drug-trafficking.

Unlike Canadian and Mexican leaders, Xi has shown little interest in focusing solely on a deal about fentanyl, the people said. Rather, he aims to negotiate a broader agreement with Trump that could define the tone of bilateral relations.

In a bid to prepare for trade talks with the Trump administration, the Journal reported early this month, Beijing has been trying to put together an initial proposal that involves reinstating a trade agreement signed with the first Trump administration in early 2020, a renewed pledge not to devalue the yuan to help its exporters, and an offer to make more investments in the U.S.

But Xi has yet to make that offer, the people said. For now, Beijing thinks it can handle the 10% additional tariffs. The levies have raised the average duty rate on Chinese imports to 24.5% from about 14.5% as of 2023, according to Gavekal Dragonomics, an economic-consulting firm.

Chinese companies already have proven adept at avoiding U.S. tariffs by rerouting their products through other countries.

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CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

A photo caption with a Page One article on Wednesday about a Ukrainian-U.S. minerals deal incorrectly identified an excavator as a bucket-wheel excavator.

In some editions Thursday, a U.S. News article about possible tariffs on goods from the European Union incorrectly identified Sen. Bill Hagerty (R., Tenn.) as from Louisiana.

Readers can alert The Wall Street Journal to any errors in news articles by emailing **wsjcontact@wsj.com** or by calling 888-410-2667.

FAA Will Hire More Air-Traffic Controllers

By Andrew Tangel

OKLAHOMA CITY—U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said the federal government would take steps to hire more air-traffic controllers and spend billions of dollars to upgrade the nation's aviation system.

As part of plans to increase staffing, Duffy said the Federal Aviation Administration would boost pay for students at its air-traffic control academy in Oklahoma City by 30% to \$22.84 an hour in the coming days.

Duffy said Thursday the FAA would streamline hiring and shave more than four months from the process of training new controllers. "We have to pay young people more to stay in the academy," Duffy said.

The secretary touted what graduates can earn: an average of \$160,000. Pay varies by location, and the FAA said the figure didn't include overtime.

Airline executives and controller-union officials praised Duffy's plan. "This is a critical initial step to making our aviation system even safer," American Airlines Chief Executive Robert Isom said.

Duffy said he would ask Congress to fund upgrades to the technology underpinning the nation's air-traffic control system, pointing to its reliance on decades-old copper wire, floppy disks and phone jacks.

Mexico Extradites Killer of DEA Agent

Drug lord wanted in 1985 incident is one of 29 imprisoned people sent to U.S.

By Santiago Pérez
And José de Córdoba

MEXICO CITY—Mexican authorities extradited to the U.S. drug boss Rafael Caro Quintero, who is wanted for the 1985 killing of a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent, delivering on a long-standing demand by the U.S. amid rising pressure from the Trump administration.

Caro Quintero faces charges in the kidnapping, torture and killing of DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, a crime that roiled relations between the U.S. and Mexico in the 1980s. His extradition comes as President Trump threatened to impose 25% tariffs on Mexico's exports to the U.S. if the government of President Claudia Sheinbaum didn't boost efforts to fight U.S.-bound fentanyl, which kills tens of thousands of Americans each year. Several members of her cabinet are in Washington this week to discuss bilateral cooperation and make the case that Mexico shouldn't be punished with tariffs.

Mexico's government said Caro Quintero was part of a group of 29 imprisoned Mexicans accused of crimes in the U.S. who were extradited on Thursday. Two leaders of the violent Zetas cartel, notorious for carrying out massacres in Mexico, were also extradited.

"This action is part of bilateral reciprocity and coordination and cooperation efforts," the Mexican government said in a statement.

While Mexico has extradited numerous people to face charges in the U.S. over the past decade, this extradition was unprecedented because of its size, observers said. In recent years, many U.S. extradition requests of high-profile drug kingpins faced long delays in Mexican tribunals.

"We will prosecute these criminals to the fullest extent of the law in honor of the brave law enforcement agents who have dedicated their careers—and in some cases, given their lives—to protect innocent people from the scourge of violent cartels," U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said.

Authorities have arrested more than 700 people since early February, when Sheinbaum agreed to deploy 10,000 National Guard troops to boost security and combat fentanyl trafficking along the U.S.-Mexico border. Authorities have also seized close to 12 tons of illegal narcotics across the country, including cocaine, methamphetamine and fentanyl.

Several senior Sinaloa cartel members have been captured in recent days. One of them was extradited on Thursday. José Ángel Canobbio, known as "El Güerito," was indicted in federal court in Chicago last year. He is considered to be a top adviser and the security chief for Iván Archivaldo Guzmán, the leader of the "Chapitos," one of the two most important factions of the Sinaloa cartel.

Those who were extradited include leaders of cartels designated foreign terrorist organizations last week by the Trump administration.

Caro Quintero has long been seen as one the founders of Mexico's international drug-smuggling industry that began purchasing cocaine from Colombian gangs in the 1980s. Mexican organized crime groups then became a top smuggler and distributor of narcotics with a solid foothold in the U.S., Mexico and the rest of Latin America.

Caro Quintero was convicted in Mexico of the 1985 Camarena murder and sentenced to 40 years in prison. The Camarena case had led the U.S. to briefly close the border with Mexico.

DEA Acting Administrator Derek Maltz said Caro Quintero had spent four decades atop the agency's most wanted fugitives list. "Today we can proudly say he has arrived in the United States where justice will be served," he said.

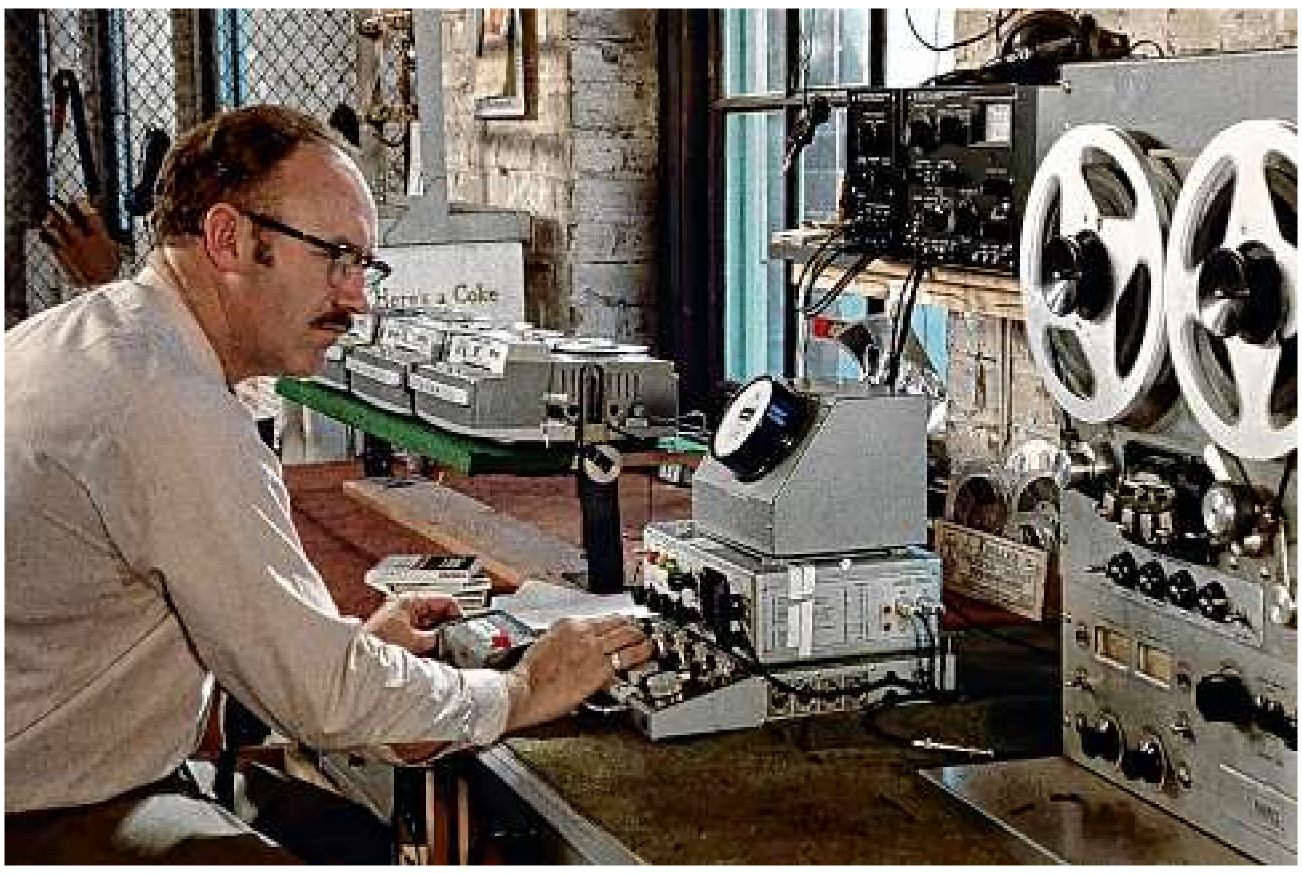
In 2013, a Mexican appeals court ordered the release of Caro Quintero on grounds that his case should have been heard by a state court rather than a federal court. Mexico's federal government then issued a warrant for his arrest, which Caro Quintero evaded for nearly a decade until early 2022, when he was recaptured by an elite unit of Mexico's navy.

His extradition "represents a blow for the Caborca cartel," which Caro Quintero helped create and has expanded in the border state of Sonora as the once-dominant Sinaloa cartel was rocked by turf wars, said Alberto Islas, a Mexican security consultant.

Mexico's security ministry said Thursday that the 29 people had been held in different prisons throughout Mexico and were wanted for their links to criminal organizations and drug trafficking, among other crimes.

Caro Quintero was indicted in 2020 in New York on charges of smuggling tons of heroin, meth, marijuana and cocaine into the U.S. from Mexico and Colombia. U.S. prosecutors accused him and other leaders of his organization of using hit men to carry out murders, kidnappings and acts of torture.

Actor Hackman And His Wife Are Found Dead



FROM TOP: EVERETT COLLECTION; MARK J. TERRILL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gene Hackman, above, in 'The Conversation,' and below with his wife, pianist Betsy Arakawa, at the Golden Globes in 2003.

By Ellen Gamerman
And Alyssa Lukpat

Gene Hackman, a two-time Oscar winner whose storied acting career included "The French Connection" and "Unforgiven," and his wife were found dead at a home in Santa Fe, N.M., authorities said.

Hackman was 95 years old, and his wife, classical pianist Betsy Arakawa, was 64, according to the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office. Authorities haven't said how the couple died, and while they didn't suspect foul play, they have deemed the deaths "suspicious enough in nature" to warrant an investigation.

The couple was found Wednesday afternoon at an address on a road where Arakawa owns a home, according to property records.

Hackman was known as an actor's actor, sought out by movie stars and top directors who craved the experience of working with him. With a roughed-up face that defied Hollywood glamour, he helped carve a path for unconventional leading men who in another era might have been pigeonholed as side characters.

> Stars and top directors craved the experience of working with the Oscar winner.

His signature role was that of Jimmy "Popeye" Doyle, the brutish narcotics police officer in the 1971 thriller "The French Connection." Director William Friedkin recalled Hackman's reluctance to dive into the character's violence and racism. "I knew I had to get him angry," the filmmaker said at a 2016 event with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Friedkin said instead of yelling "cut" he would try to get into his star's head. "I would say, 'Pal, you better get a day job, you better look for something else, because this isn't working.' " Hackman went on to win a best actor Oscar.

He sometimes spoke about his father's abandoning his family when Hackman was 13 years old. Driving away, he gave his son a casual wave while the boy played in the street. He instantly knew his dad wasn't coming back. "Maybe that's why I became an actor," Hackman told Vanity Fair in 2004. "I doubt I would have become so sensitive to human behavior if that hadn't happened to me as a child—if I hadn't realized how much one small gesture can mean."

Recounting the story in 2001 on the TV show "Inside the Actors Studio," an otherwise restrained Hackman paused to fight back tears. "It's only been 65 years or so," he said.

Hackman might never have made "Bonnie and Clyde" had he not just been quickly fired from "The Graduate," where he had been cast as Mr. Robinson. Warren Beatty, the star of 1967's "Bonnie and Clyde" who had worked with Hackman on the film "Lilith" several years earlier, helped him land the role of Clyde's brother Buck Barrow.

"There was a little two-minute scene that he had with me," Beatty said of "Lilith" in a 2001 Los Angeles Times interview. "It's difficult to define that thing that makes acting fun. I felt with him it was just more fun, so that when I did 'Bonnie and Clyde,' I wanted Gene to be in it."

Hackman once said that just before Buck's death scene, director Arthur Penn whispered a single phrase in his ear: "A bull in a bull ring, wounded." The image held. Hackman was nominated for a supporting actor Oscar.

Other Oscar nominations came in 1971, for his performance as a man living in the shadow of his aging parent in "I Never Sang for My Father," and in 1989 for his portrayal of an FBI agent investigating the disappearance of civil-rights activists in "Mississippi Burning." He won a best supporting actor Oscar for his chilling turn as the sheriff Little Bill Daggett in Clint Eastwood's "Unforgiven."

Hackman's other roles have ranged from a priest in "The Poseidon Adventure" to a blind man in "Young Frankenstein" to a surveillance expert in Francis Ford Coppola's "The Conversation." He also played Lex Luthor in the Superman movies, a high-school basketball coach in "Hoosiers," a cheesy movie producer in "Get Shorty" and the estranged father of quirky geniuses in "The Royal Tenenbaums."

Gene Allen Hackman was born in San Bernardino, Calif., on Jan. 30, 1930. He grew up in Danville, Ill., a blue-collar town, where his family lived with his grandmother. Hackman's father, who the actor said would sometimes dole out physical punishment in a little cardboard hideaway the boy made for himself in the basement of their home, operated the printing press for a local paper. When Hackman's Canadian-born mother, a waitress, took him to the movies to see his favorite actors—including James Cagney and Errol Flynn—he was transported. She told him maybe one day he would appear on the big screen. She died in a house fire in 1962, two years before his first significant movie role.

At 16, Hackman lied about his age and joined the Marines, serving in China while his friends were juniors in high school. After the military, he worked a series of odd jobs, including as a furniture mover and doorman in New York City. In 1956, already in his late 20s and married, he moved to California to take acting classes at the Pasadena Playhouse.

At 6-foot-2 and feeling like a "big lummox kind of person" with the face of "your everyday mine worker"—as he once told Vanity Fair—he didn't fit in with actors he called "walking surfboards." He befriended another actor there, an awkward 19-year-old outsider named Dustin Hoffman. The two sometimes banged bongos on the roof of the theater. Their peers voted them "Least Likely to Succeed."

After leaving movies in 2004 with the comedy "Welcome to Mooseport," in which he played a retired U.S. president, Hackman devoted time to writing novels. He married Arakawa in 1991. He is survived by three children with his first wife, Faye Maltese.

◆ Appreciation: Hackman's unsentimental grit A10

Student Borrowers Are Hit by Steep Declines in Credit Scores

Americans with student loans are waking up to the reality that skipping payments comes with consequences again.

By Oyin Adedoyin, Angel Au-Yeung and Matt Grossman

The pandemic-era relief on federal student loans ended in October, starting the 90-day clock people have to make payments before their credit scores take a hit. That time is up, and borrowers are feeling the pain.

Shiloh Garcia was notified by her bank this month that her credit score had dropped to 620 from 720. She discovered she was more than 90 days delinquent on payments for her $16,000 in student loans, which she had thought were still suspended. Her mortgage broker estimated the lower score would add $400 to the monthly payment for the new home she wanted to buy.

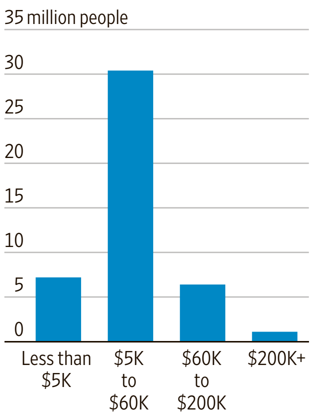
"I'm devastated," said Garcia, a 39-year-old nurse in Modesto, Calif. "It's like having your whole life put in limbo over a simple mistake."

About 43% of borrowers who owe payments on federal student loans haven't resumed making them, according to an analysis of government data by VantageScore, a credit-score provider. That puts more than nine million people at risk of a serious credit-score drop.

The setbacks could have ripple effects, putting homeownership or a new car further out of reach for late-payers.

Borrowers cite a mix of reasons for not resuming payments, including confusion over their loan status and inadequate communication from loan servicers. Some say bill reminders were sent to outdated home or email addresses from when the Covid-19 pandemic started.

How much do borrowers owe?



Note: As of 2024's fourth quarter
Source: Education Department

Ben Kiser, a spokesman for loan servicer **Nelnet**, acknowledged the concerns from some borrowers about communication. But he said in a written statement that "like any credit card, auto loan, mortgage loan, or consumer loan it is ultimately the borrower's responsibility to ensure their loan servicer has accurate contact information."

The student-loan saga began in 2020, when the pandemic hit and the government paused payments on federal loans.

The reprieve looked as if it would become permanent in 2022, when the Biden administration tried to cancel loans for a swath of borrowers. The Supreme Court tossed that decision a year later, putting payments back on track to resume. That was set to happen in September 2023, but the administration decided to give borrowers another year before reporting delinquencies to credit bureaus. The Education Department and loan servicers reached out to borrowers with emails and texts in 2023 before payments were required again, according to a Government Accountability Office report.

Jack Matthews is among those who noticed this month that his credit score took a hit, falling to 620 from 784.

Matthews, 28, said his loan servicer had been contacting an old email and home address for his parents. It is possible he ignored calls from the company, Nelnet, if he didn't recognize the number, Matthews said. He added that he didn't get any voice mails or text messages from the loan servicer.

As a result of his lower score, his mortgage lender said he would now need a cosigner for the new home in Colorado he had been planning to buy.

"I had the whole down payment ready," Matthews said. "I don't have anyone to cosign and who knows how long it will take to get that score back up."

Garcia, the California nurse, said she didn't resume making payments because she had applied for a program that lowers payments based on income. The program, SAVE, was created under the Biden administration and is being challenged in courts. Meanwhile, payments in the program were suspended.

After seeing her credit score hit, Garcia called Nelnet. The loan servicer eventually told her it had no record of her SAVE application.

Garcia plans to file a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

USAID Staffers Bid Farewell

WASHINGTON—U.S. Agency for International Development workers, some in tears, carted away belongings from a final visit to their now-closed headquarters on Thursday as the Trump administration's rapid-fire dismantling of the congressionally authorized agency moved into its final stages.

Notices are going out to terminate over 90% of USAID's contracts for humanitarian and development work around the world, and the Supreme Court has temporarily blocked a judge's order requiring the administration to release billions of dollars in foreign aid.

“We're just here to say thank you for your service. We appreciate everything you've done and all the sacrifices you've made in service to your country,” said Randy Chester, right, vice president of the American Foreign Service Association.

“Heartbreaking,” 25-year-old Juliane Alfen said.

—*Associated Press*

NATHAN HOWARD/REUTERS

Patel Has Whirlwind Start as FBI Director

By Sadie Gurman
And Aruna Viswanatha

WILL OLIVER/PRESS POOL

Kash Patel being sworn in as FBI director this month. He has promised radical change at the agency.

WASHINGTON—FBI officials from regional field offices gathered on a video call this week to hear from their new director, Kash Patel, who rattled off so many changes that employees couldn't tell if he was serious about all of them.

He was planning to reorganize the Federal Bureau of Investigation with a regional command structure, raise fitness requirements for special agents and arrange a partnership between the FBI and the UFC cage-fighting league run by a close friend of President Trump's, people familiar with the meeting said.

He said he didn't like meetings, that the weekly videoconference might turn into a monthly one, and at one point he stepped out to take another phone call, the people said.

Patel, a prosecutor-turned-political operative, has promised radical change at the agency, including plans to shift part of the focus from national-security work and foreign threats toward fighting violent crime across the U.S. and other Trump priorities.

His first week at the bureau has laid bare the extent to which his tenure could upend the tradition-bound agency and transform its culture, according to interviews with a dozen current and former FBI officials.

Soon after arriving, Patel cleared out all civil-service staff in the leadership suites and replaced them with political associates; ordered 1,500 employees relocated out of Washington without money in place to pay for the move; and broke a promise he made to agents to appoint a deputy from their ranks.

He also got a second job running another law-enforcement agency, an unusual arrangement given that being FBI director is seen as one of the toughest jobs in government.

Patel's partisan background as a surrogate for Trump during the 2024 election campaign and open criticism of the agency set him apart from previous FBI directors. Patel and the president share the view that the FBI must be purged of what they perceive as bias against Trump and other conservatives. His ascendance to the job after officials from Trump's first administration found him unqualified and untrustworthy is a remarkable one.

“Man, this is effing crazy,” Patel, whose family hails from India, said last week at a White House ceremony where he was sworn in for his 10-year term.

He took the oath on the Hindu holy book the Bhagavad Gita, held by Attorney General Pam Bondi, as relatives and fellow Trump officials looked on. After his confirmation, supporters of Patel shared a Bollywood dance video with Patel's face superimposed into it celebrating victory over opponents.

A spokeswoman for Patel, Erica Knight, said Patel was “focused on strengthening the FBI, prioritizing national security, and putting agents where they're needed most—real leadership means making tough changes, not protecting the status quo.”

Knight declined to answer specific questions, but added: “Internal inaccurate leaks only hurt the mission of the force.”

Last Friday, his first day on the job, Patel ordered officials to relocate 1,500 employees from Washington to cities with high crime rates including Minneapolis, Detroit and Cleveland. Another FBI official piped in with a harsh reality, according to people familiar with the exchange: The restructuring could cost $100 million, with each move estimated at up to $100,000, and the bureau didn't have the funds to cover it. Patel was unmoved. Figure out how to do it anyway, and fast, he told them.

Current and former agents have said they support sending more personnel to field offices, but some said they were put off by what they saw as Patel's insensitivity to the personal challenges and costs agents would face if forced to leave quickly.

Patel had been relying on a small committee of outside advisers, some of them former senior FBI officials, but at least two have left, concerned about the direction of some of the early moves, people familiar with the group said.

On Sunday, Trump named conservative commentator and fellow FBI critic Dan Bongino as Patel's deputy. Patel had told an FBI agents group that he would stick with tradition and pick a career agent for the No. 2 role.

Several other senior FBI officials put in for their retirement upon hearing of the pick.

The next day, Patel was sworn in as acting director of a different law enforcement agency with more than 5,000 employees—the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Justice Department officials haven't publicly explained how he plans to oversee both agencies simultaneously.

Patel also appears to be bringing many stylistic changes to the job.

He told officials he planned to spend a lot of time in Las Vegas, where he was living last year. He ordered new decor for his Washington office and asked for his personal trainer to be cleared to enter the building for his workouts.

Past directors rarely attended Washington social events—to avoid being alone with a lawmaker or chief executive who might make an uncomfortable request—and cultivated an office dress code of suits and ties. Patel has been spotted around Washington, including a party at the British ambassador's residence on Wednesday. He also showed up to the regional meeting without a jacket. “I'm not planning on wearing a suit, and I don't expect you to wear one,” he said.

CFPB Aims To Drop Capital One Lawsuit

By Dylan Tokar

Trump administration officials are moving to drop a government watchdog's lawsuit that accused **Capital One Financial** of misleading customers over the interest rates on their savings accounts.

A notice of voluntary dismissal was filed in federal court in Virginia, where the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau brought its case in January. Mark Paoletta, chief legal officer for the CFPB, also moved to dismiss other enforcement actions, including the agency's lawsuits against real-estate company Rocket Homes and a student-loan servicer based in Pennsylvania.

The future of the CFPB and its pending actions against banks have been in doubt since its acting director instituted a work freeze, laid off employees and closed the headquarters in Washington. Lawyers for the Trump administration this week said Russell Vought, the agency's acting director, was moving to cancel leases for the agency's offices and four regional offices.

President Trump's nominee to lead the CFPB, Jonathan McKernan, maintained Thursday that he would ensure the agency continues to enforce consumer financial-protection laws at a Senate Banking Committee hearing. Democrats questioned his statements in light of the legal dismissals.

“At the moment that we're sitting here talking about you taking on this responsibility, Russell Vought and others are dismissing lawsuits that you just told me you were going to have the opportunity to review,” said Sen. Tina Smith (D., Minn.).

“This makes me question who's really going to be in charge of the CFPB,” Smith said.

During the Biden administration, former CFPB Director Rohit Chopra pursued an aggressive line of enforcement against financial institutions, as well as new regulations that were challenged by the industry. The standing of some of Biden-era actions depends on whether the agency decides to defend them in court.

The Capital One suit related to changes the bank made during a period of low interest rates.

The bank in 2019 introduced a savings account called 360 Performance Savings, while keeping existing customers in older accounts with a similar name. When the Federal Reserve raised interest rates, Capital One only raised rates on new accounts. The CFPB's lawsuit said Capital One customers thought they were getting the higher rate that was being advertised. It said millions of customers lost out on $2 billion in interest payments.

“We welcome the CFPB's decision to dismiss this action, which we strongly disputed,” a Capital One spokesman said.

A spokesman for Rocket Homes called the CFPB's case a “misrepresentation of the facts” in a statement. “We are proud to put this matter behind us,” he said.

How Nvidia Prepared For AI Shift

Continued from Page One

them, a process known in the industry as “inference.”

Its latest AI chips, called Blackwell, are larger in size, have more computer memory and use less-precise numbers in AI computations. They can be linked together in large numbers with superfast networking, which Dylan Patel, the founder of industry research firm SemiAnalysis, said led to “breakthrough gains” in inference. “Nvidia's performance gains for Blackwell are much larger in inference than they are in training,” he said.

Nvidia's quarterly earnings report on Wednesday partly reflected its success in adapting to the industry's shift. It included sales and profit that exceeded analysts' expectations, coupled with an optimistic forecast for the company's current quarter.

Despite the strong results, Nvidia shares fell 8.5% to $120.15 on Thursday, its largest post-earnings percentage drop since November 2018. Investors got cold feet as analysts pointed to narrower profit margins in the quarter and concerns about chip sales in China.

Inference has become a growing focus as AI evolves toward so-called reasoning models, where a digital brain thinks through answers to users' queries step by step. That process can require a hundred times more computing power, Chief Executive Jensen Huang said on a call with analysts Wednesday.

“The vast majority of our compute today is actually inference, and Blackwell takes all of that to a new level,” he said. “We designed Blackwell with the idea of reasoning models in mind.”

Colette Kress, Nvidia's chief financial officer, added that many early deployments of the company's Blackwell chips were earmarked for inference work. That pattern was a first for a new generation of the company's chips, she said.

Among the companies pursuing reasoning models are OpenAI, Google and the Chinese AI upstart DeepSeek.

The emergence in January of DeepSeek, which said it built sophisticated AI models that required fewer Nvidia chips, touched off the first significant scare for Nvidia since the AI boom began.

Inference is a growing focus as AI shifts to reasoning models.

Huang brushed off that threat on Wednesday, describing DeepSeek's advances as “an excellent innovation” that AI developers everywhere were taking inspiration from.

In the past, Huang suggested inference and training will converge as AI more closely aligns with how humans operate. People don't absorb new information and reference it separately, he said at Stanford University last year. “You're learning and inferencing all the time,” he said.

Nvidia faces strong competition in inference, industry insiders said.

While Nvidia's advances in hardware and investments in its AI software have kept customers around, a variety of new chips from startups and more established chip makers mean it won't be easy for Nvidia to maintain its top position.

Robert Wachen, a co-founder of AI chip startup Etched, which aims to compete with Nvidia in inference by making purpose-built chips, said there was already serious adoption and consideration of alternatives. He said Nvidia's chips were fundamentally limited by their origins as graphics-processing units adapted for AI instead of custom-made for the moment. “Sharpening the Swiss Army knife only gets you so far,” Wachen said. “You have to build specialized hardware if you want to get maximal performance. You're hitting a wall here.”

A number of startups have begun making inroads among large AI customers. Cerebras, a startup that designs the largest chips ever produced, said this month that it was working with the French AI developer Mistral on the world's fastest AI chatbot. Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco is working closely with AI-chip startups Groq and SambaNova Systems to set up large computing facilities for inference.

Nvidia's more-established competitors have efforts of their own, including Advanced Micro Devices, whose AI chips are largely aimed at the inference market. And all of the largest tech companies are developing their own AI inference chips.

Jim Piazza, an executive at information-technology management company Ensono who worked on computing infrastructure at Meta Platforms, said Nvidia might need to take further steps to address the competition in inference by developing chips specifically for it.

“I have to imagine Nvidia is going to drop some kind of inference powerhouse sooner rather than later because I think they will get eclipsed in that market,” Piazza said.

Huang is already thinking through a future that involves a lot more computing power—Nvidia's, he hopes.

Reasoning models, he said Wednesday, could eventually require thousands or millions of times more computing power than their predecessors. “This is just the beginning,” he said.

House Votes Become Tricky For Democrats

Injuries, age weigh on party attendance as tiny GOP majority puts bills in doubt

By Xavier Martinez

WASHINGTON—Rep. Nancy Pelosi shuffled into the House chamber leaning on what appeared to be a hiking pole. Rep. Brittany Pettersen brought her new baby snuggled in her arms. Rep. Kevin Mullin rushed back from a hospital on the West Coast, his wife administering intravenous antibiotics throughout the long flight.

All of these recently sidelined Democrats made it to the Capitol on Tuesday night to vote "no" on Republicans' budget measure, hoping their opposition would be enough to sink it. And for a moment, it looked like it might.

Democrats can make life uncomfortable for Republicans because of the GOP's razor-thin House majority and constant infighting. But only if they show up. Democrats typically miss more votes than Republicans do, a Wall Street Journal analysis shows, often giving the GOP extra padding on the most contentious measures.

Ahead of Tuesday's showdown, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.) said passing the GOP budget blueprint would be difficult, given his slim margin and the near-certainty that no Democrat would support it. "This is a prayer request," Johnson said. "Just pray this through for us because it is very high stakes."

The GOP has a 218-215 advantage in the House, meaning the party can afford no more than one "no" vote if all Democrats are present and oppose a bill.

Several Republicans were on the fence, but the party was anticipating some breathing room, because of Democrats' spotty recent attendance record. On previous contentious votes, including the Laken Riley immigration bill and a ban on transgender athletes in women's sports, absences by Democrats far outpaced those of Republicans, helping the GOP expand its winning margins.

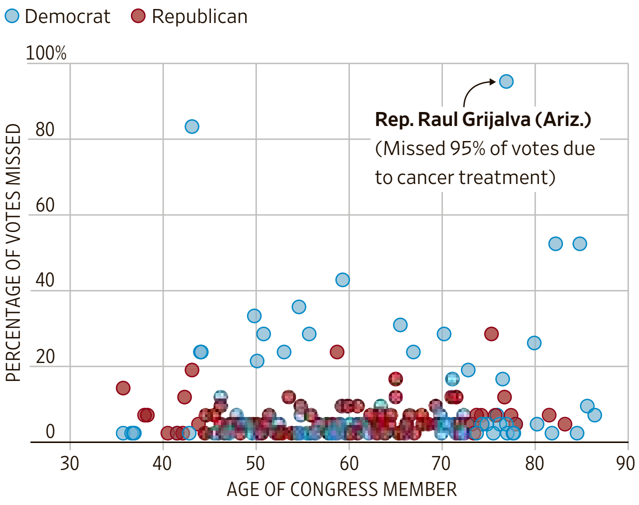
As GOP leaders worked to get the handful of holdouts in line, several Democrats in particular were seen as possible no-shows. Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, 77, who has been undergoing treatment for cancer, hadn't voted since Jan. 3. Mullin, the 54-year-old California congressman, had missed votes after he was hospitalized for complications following a January knee surgery. Florida Rep. Frederica Wilson, 82, hadn't voted in nearly a month. Pettersen of Colorado, 43, had just given birth.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D., N.Y.) told Democratic lawmakers in a letter Monday morning that "it's imperative that we are present with maximum attendance," given the expected closeness of the budget vote. Democrats say that party leaders regularly issue attendance reminders and in certain cases speak one-on-one about the importance of showing up.

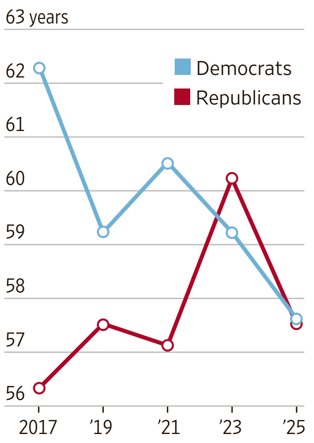
The push seemed to work. Pettersen arrived at the Capitol with her three-week-old son. Mullin used a walker to get to the House floor. Wilson, who hadn't voted since Jan. 23, also showed up. She didn't respond to questions about her absences. Only Grijalva, who has been undergoing treatment for cancer, was unable to cast a vote.

Clerks tallied votes for House speaker on the first day of the new Congress in early January at the Capitol.

House members who have missed at least one vote*



Median age of voting House members†



*From the start of the 119th Congress to Feb. 23. †Includes members sworn in on the first day of each Congress. Members whose ages were unable to be confirmed are not included.

Source: U.S. House of Representatives

For a moment, it looked like the Democrats might have mustered enough opposition to defeat the measure. Republicans, who were uncertain about their head count, skipped over the expected budget vote to another bill. But minutes later, they put the budget proposal on the floor, and it was adopted 217-215. All Republicans were in attendance, and just one, Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky, sided with Democrats in voting no.

The voting pattern could continue to play out this year. While lawmakers regularly miss votes because of travel delays and one-off conflicts, more disruptive are long-term absences due to age, health issues and other circumstances. Attendance will remain an issue as Republicans take the framework they adopted Tuesday and work to pass President Trump's plan for border security, tax relief and spending later this year.

The Journal analysis of House voting records shows how much weaker Democrats' attendance has been compared with Republicans'. Democrats accounted for 17 of the 20 chronic vote-missers, defined as members who missed at least 20% of the votes cast from the session's start on Jan. 3 through Feb. 23. Older House members have missed votes at higher rates than their younger counterparts, and older Democrats have missed more votes than older Republicans.

The median age of House Democrats and Republicans is almost identical, according to congressional biographical data, but Democrats account for 16 of the 20 oldest members in the House.

Age and generational power has been a running theme in Democratic politics. Former Speaker Pelosi left leadership after the 2022 election and passed the torch to Jeffries. Pelosi, 84, fell and broke her hip in December while in Luxembourg with a congressional delegation. She has missed about half of all votes so far this Congress.

Jerrold Nadler, 77, who entered the House chamber in a wheelchair during Tuesday's votes—he tore a muscle—campaigned last year to retain his position as the highest-ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee. But the New York lawmaker dropped out of the race after he was challenged by 62-year-old Jamie Raskin of Maryland.

Nadler has had near-perfect attendance this year, missing one vote in January.

Tate Arrives From Romania, Site of His Trafficking Probe

By Max Colchester And Tali Arbel

Social-media influencer Andrew Tate, under investigation for human trafficking and other criminal charges in Romania, left Bucharest on a private jet to the U.S. alongside his brother, shortly after a senior Trump official discussed the case with Romanian officials.

Andrew and Tristan Tate, who have U.S. and U.K. citizenship, have been barred from leaving Romania since 2022, when they were put under investigation. On Thursday, Romania's special prosecutor's office said that it gave the brothers permission to travel but that they were still under investigation and would be expected to return to the country at a later date.

Romanian authorities accuse the brothers of exploiting women via an adult content business that allegedly operated as a criminal enterprise. The brothers deny the charges.

The Tate brothers landed in Florida on Thursday, where Gov. Ron DeSantis expressed surprise at their arrival. "Florida is not a place where you're welcome with that type of conduct in the air," DeSantis said. "We were not notified. I found out through the media that this was something that was happening."

The governor, a Republican, said the federal government had jurisdiction over their entry, but Florida's attorney general was "looking at what state hooks and jurisdiction we may have to be able to deal with this."

The state will "conduct a preliminary inquiry into these individuals," Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier said in a post on X.

Tate, who has over 10 million followers on X, has built a loyal following by promoting a hypermasculine lifestyle, built around fast cars and women, while vocally rejecting feminism. The former kick-boxer supported President Trump during the election campaign,

Andrew Tate spoke with the media as he and his brother Tristan arrived in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Thursday.

and the brothers' case has been championed by several right-wing commentators.

"This is a democratic society," Andrew Tate said, standing outside Fort Lauderdale airport. "It is meant to be innocent until proven guilty."

Joseph McBride, a lawyer for the brothers, said they planned to go to Romania at the end of March to meet with the prosecutor before returning to the U.S. He said they felt secure in the U.S. because Donald Trump was president. When asked about the Tates' arrival on Thursday, President Trump said during a meeting in the Oval Office that "I know nothing about that."

McBride added that DeSantis's statements about the Tate brothers were "defamatory and wrong" and the governor should retract them. "Any illegal search or seizure of Andrew or Tristan will result in our filing a lawsuit," McBride said.

Earlier this month, Romanian Foreign Minister Emil Hurezeanu said that he met with U.S. special envoy Richard Grenell in Munich and that Grenell expressed an interest in the Tates' case. "In no way did I perceive what he said as a form of pressure," Hurezeanu told Euronews Romania.

Tate first gained fame in 2016, when he was kicked out of a British reality-TV show over a video that showed him repeatedly hitting a woman with a belt and threatening her. Over the ensuing years, he styled himself as a self-help guru for young men while criticizing a Western culture that denigrated what he called the traditional role of men in society. After starting a webcam business in the U.K., he moved to Romania.

Romanian prosecutors alleged seven female victims were befriended by Tate's gang and promised romantic relationships, enticed to come to Romania and then sexually exploited, part of what it called the gang's "lover boy" ploy. The prosecutor's office said that to control the women they lured to Romania, the group would put them under constant surveillance and use physical threats and violence to get them to perform pornographic online videos.

In December, the brothers won a legal victory when a Romanian appeals court ruled that the case against the brothers couldn't proceed to trial, saying it found flaws in the indictment, including that the charges against Tate weren't properly explained to one of the alleged victims.

The case against the brothers wasn't dropped, however. Romanian authorities in August said they were investigating the brothers over new accusations of human trafficking and money laundering and the trafficking of minors. The brothers deny the accusations.

Leader Urges Kurds to Disarm

Path is uncertain to ending the deadly conflict that has destabilized Mideast

By Jared Malsin And Elvan Kivilcim

YASIN AKGUL/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

People hold a photograph of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Diyarbakir, Turkey.

ISTANBUL—An imprisoned Kurdish militant leader urged his followers on Thursday to give up their weapons, opening an opportunity to defuse a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people in recent decades, and destabilized Turkey and the wider Middle East.

Abdullah Öcalan, who is in his mid-70s, is the leader and founder of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK. He also called for the group to disband and for its allied factions to disarm after some 40 years of violence.

"All groups must lay down their arms and the PKK must dissolve itself," Öcalan wrote in a statement composed in the island prison off the coast of Istanbul where he has been held since 1999, when he was captured in Kenya by Turkish intelligence officers. He called on his movement to use democratic means to achieve their aims.

The statement follows months of negotiations and was read on his behalf at a news conference in Istanbul, after pro-Kurdish officials brought it from the prison. The message could have far-reaching consequences for Turkey, Syria and the broader region.

The PKK, designated as a terrorist group by Turkey and the U.S., has fought a slow-burning war with the Turkish state, including gun and bomb attacks and years of guerrilla warfare, since the 1980s. The group initially fought for an independent Kurdish state and later demanded more rights for Kurds, a broad ethnic group of tens of millions of people spread across Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. The PKK has affiliates in all four countries.

In Turkey, an end to the conflict could resolve a top security threat and help settle one of the nation's most important political questions after decades in which millions of Kurds have demanded recognition. Öcalan's statement is likely to strengthen President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who could claim the call to disarm as a domestic victory that boosts Turkey's security.

Öcalan's move comes after more than a year of conflict that altered the balance of power in the wider Middle East, including Israel's war with Hamas militants in Gaza and Iranian-allied militias across the region. The weakening of Iran contributed to the fall of the Assad regime in Syria in 2024, further realigning the region and removing a key Turkish opponent.

A resolution to the conflict with PKK could help remove an irritant from Turkey's relationship with the U.S., which has been strained by an American military partnership with some Kurdish fighters in the battle against Islamic State extremists.

"We believe it will help bring peace to this troubled region," said Brian Hughes, National Security Council spokesman.

In Syria, Öcalan's call, if implemented, could help the country's fragile transition away from autocratic rule. Kurdish-led Syrian militias allied with the PKK are among the main obstacles to the new government in Damascus consolidating power after rebels ousted Bashar al-Assad, ending some 14 years of rebellion and war in December. The militias control a swath of northeastern Syria where some of them are backed by U.S. troops and air power.

The path to resolving the conflict remains uncertain, with no clear plan for a peace process and thousands of PKK-affiliated fighters spread across the region. Much will depend on how Erdogan and the Turkish government choose to respond to Öcalan's message and whether Kurdish militants comply with the call to disarm.

Thousands of battle-hardened Kurdish fighters would have to be demobilized. Key leaders of PKK affiliates, including a political party linked to the group in Syria, recently have said they would comply with Öcalan's message. It is also not clear what, if anything, Turkey has offered in return for the PKK laying down their arms. The Turkish government could free Öcalan or other Kurdish leaders from prison as a part of a possible future deal, some analysts say.

The president's office didn't respond to a request for comment.

The conflict also has been a source of friction between Ankara and Washington for a decade, since the Obama administration partnered with some Syrian Kurdish militants in the war against Islamic State.

Washington in recent years has said it makes a distinction between the PKK and members of its Syrian branch that have worked with the U.S. military.

The leader of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, Gen. Mazloum Abdi, on Thursday said Öcalan's call for disarmament didn't apply to his organization, though he said he welcomed the call for initiative for a peace process with Turkey.

Some Kurdish citizens said they felt deflated because the statement lacked specifics about how the conflict would be resolved.

Ukraine Rattled as U.S. Eyes 2022 Plan

By Yaroslav Trofimov And Michael R. Gordon

A suggestion by the Trump administration's top negotiator that a Ukraine peace deal would be based on talks conducted in Istanbul nearly three years ago has buoyed Russian officials and spooked Ukraine and its backers.

To Kyiv, recent remarks by Steve Witkoff appeared to embrace the Kremlin's key, and incorrect, talking point over the past three years: That Ukraine and Russia were about to strike a peace deal in Istanbul and that Kyiv walked away under pressure the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded that any future peace talks be based on a return to the Istanbul parameters, which in Moscow's interpretation foresee a sharp cut in Ukraine's military, a ban on foreign weapons and troops, and a Russian veto on Western security assistance in case of renewed conflict. Ukraine refuses to return to that draft, which was never completed or approved by President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Negotiator's comment seen as an embrace of Kremlin talking points.

"I think we will be using that framework as a guidepost to get a peace deal done," Witkoff said on CNN about the Istanbul talks, which were held in March 2022.

Witkoff's comments weren't intended to be an endorsement of the Russian view that Ukraine should be largely demilitarized or that Russia should have a veto over foreign military support for Kyiv or security assurances for Ukraine, said a person familiar with his thinking. His view is that the two parties were close to a deal in Istanbul and that the Trump administration didn't need to reinvent the wheel, the person said. The U.S. approach should be to take the framework from that 2022 negotiating effort and adapt it to the current circumstances, the person said.

Witkoff also didn't intend his comments to be an endorsement of capping the Ukrainian military at a low level of troops, the person said. The U.S. believes Ukraine needs security safeguards, the person said, adding that the Trump administration and its interlocutors would have conversations about what that means and which nations could provide them.

The White House's National Security Council didn't reply to questions about what Witkoff meant by a return to the Istanbul framework.

The Witkoff comments came ahead of an expected meeting between President Trump and Zelensky over a deal to give the U.S. rights to Kyiv's mineral resources.

The Istanbul talks were convened as Russian tanks were on the Kyiv ring road, a culmination of negotiations that began shortly after the Feb. 24, 2022, Russian invasion. They reflected the battlefield situation when Ukraine's statehood was on the verge of collapse, and Russia was dictating terms for a surrender.

Russian troops, however, were defeated around Kyiv and the rest of northern Ukraine as negotiators gathered in Istanbul. Ukraine has since reclaimed additional areas of the Kharkiv and Kherson regions.

Even after hostilities end, Ukraine will maintain armed forces at the maximal size that is required to deter another Russian invasion, Zelensky said.

KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer and President Trump met Thursday at the White House.

Trump Eases Criticism Of Kyiv

Continued from Page One

mission for Ukraine, he did succeed in improving the dour mood between Washington and European capitals over differing views on ending the war in Ukraine.

"You're trying to find a divide between us that doesn't exist," he said at a postmeeting news conference, in response to questions about Trump's stances on the war and general foreign policy. "We're the closest of nations, and we had very good discussions today."

Trump also suggested the U.S. and U.K. are on the verge of a trade deal. "I think we'll have two deals," Trump said. "I think we'll have a deal on ending the war, and I think we're going to end up with a great trade deal with you, and it's an honor to be with you." Asked whether Starmer tried to convince him to spare the U.K. from tariffs, Trump replied: "He tried, he was working hard."

As a sign of the partnership's strength, Starmer presented Trump with a letter from King Charles III inviting him for a state visit. Trump accepted.

Earlier on Thursday, U.S. officials said it was premature to decide on the U.S. role in any peacekeeping force until an agreement halting the fighting between Ukraine and Russia is reached.

After attempts by President Andrzej Duda of Poland and President Emmanuel Macron of France, Starmer sought U.S. air support and other military assistance for 30,000 European troops who could deploy to Ukraine as peacekeepers.

Trump, speaking at a Cabinet meeting Wednesday, said his goal was to stop the fighting in Ukraine before seriously considering any U.S. backing for Europeans who will serve as a deterrent against Russian attacks against the European peacekeeping force.

"Peacekeeping is very easy. It's making the deal that's very tough," Trump, a Republican, said. "Let me make peace first."

Trump said Thursday he considered U.S. involvement in extracting rare earth minerals from Ukraine, part of a proposed mineral rights deal, as a possible "backstop," falling short of European requests for U.S. security assistance to the proposed peacekeepers.

"It's like a huge economic development project, so it'll be good for both countries," Trump said during the news conference. "We'll be digging—dig, dig, digging." Trump, however, didn't address questions about the expected agreement's specifics or how it would recoup the billions of dollars in military and economic aid given to Ukraine over the last three years of war.

Zelensky, angling to keep the U.S. interested in protecting his country, agreed to sign a deal giving U.S. companies access to Ukraine's rare earth materials.

A senior U.S. official said Thursday that the deal with Ukraine does not include any specific promises to fund future fighting nor did it commit to putting any U.S. personnel in the region.

British officials said Starmer, who met with Trump in September before the U.S. election and has had phone conversations with him since, believes winning him over is critical.

A U.K. official acknowledged that the defense of Europe and Ukraine would depend in part on the U.S. and its willingness to backstop the deterrents they put in place.

Two weeks ago, during a meeting with allies in Brussels, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth vowed that "there will not be U.S. troops deployed to Ukraine."

The next day, Vice President JD Vance contradicted that promise in an interview with The Wall Street Journal, leaving the possibility of U.S. forces operating in Ukraine on the table. The only thing he ruled out was Ukraine joining NATO.

Pair Fought For Russia In Ukraine

Continued from Page One
ing flung into the vicious fight for Russian territory—offer a rare insight into the secretive world of North Korea and its armed forces, the regime's paramount institution.

They also shed light on Russia's deepening ties with the reclusive dictatorship that has supplied it with missiles and around half the artillery shells Moscow is using on the front lines, Ukraine said. The involvement of North Korean soldiers reflects how the war, now entering its fourth year, has taken on a global dimension, even as the Trump administration has moved to end Russia's isolation and push for a quick peace deal to end it.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said on Sunday that 4,000 North Koreans had been killed or wounded in the war and that Pyongyang had recently dispatched up to 2,000 more troops to make up for the losses. Neither Russia nor North Korea has confirmed these troops' involvement.

The soldiers who spoke to the Journal are the only two North Koreans who have been captured alive, Ukraine said.

The two men arrived in Russia last fall together with some 12,000 North Korean troops tasked with helping Moscow retake territory occupied by Ukraine in Russia's Kursk region. Used in infantry attacks and largely unsupported by armored vehicles or artillery, hundreds of North Koreans with no combat experience were cut down as they trekked across barren fields on deadly missions set by the Russians.

The two captured soldiers—21-year-old Paek and 26-year-old Ri—are now undergoing treatment for injuries and giving testimony to officials. Paek is mostly bedridden, wounded in both legs. Ri is nursing a badly injured arm, and struggled to speak after a Ukrainian bullet tore through his arm and part of his jaw before his capture in January.

Paek's deployment to Russia came with no warning. He was trained to follow orders without asking questions. He was drafted at the age of 17 into the special forces of the Reconnaissance General Bureau, which trains for raids and sabotage operations in South Korea. North Korea has mandatory military conscription for men, which lasts for a decade.

Paek, a rifleman, recalls regular defense training and deployments to other regions where help with major building projects was needed. The day he went off for military service in May 2021 was the last time he saw or heard from his parents, he said.

In November, he was taken by train to Russia's Far East, where he said he was issued a Russian army uniform and a Russian military ID. Unfamiliar with the Cyrillic alphabet, he was unable to recognize the name. "I didn't know I was going to Russia," he said. "I realized it only when I arrived."

Paek, injured, thought of suicide in line with North Korean protocol.

He received body armor and an assault rifle and began training. The drills were similar to those he had done in North Korea, but there was one key difference: Drones were involved. The Russian instructors, aided by Korean translators, explained to Paek and his comrades how the killing machines used by Moscow's forces worked.

After a multiday journey by plane, train and bus to Kursk, Paek arrived near Russia's border with Ukraine and was posted immediately to a network of bunkers not far from the front line. It was at this point that it dawned on him that he was at war.

Ri, a sniper in the Reconnaissance Bureau, said he was motivated to fight by claims from his North Korean superiors that South Korean troops were fighting with the Ukrainians. In October, he boarded a Russian naval vessel for Vladivostok, hoping for a "real battlefield experience," he said.

Once in Kursk, Ri was told he was taking part in a battle to liberate the Russian region from occupying Ukrainian forces. "I fought as if Russia were my motherland," he said. "I don't know why, but I had no fear."

In early January, Paek was assigned to a 10-man unit of North Koreans sent to block a strategic road. They advanced on foot toward the road, moving obstacles onto it to prevent vehicles from passing.

The men came under heavy artillery and drone fire. Paek saw a number of his comrades killed. Thrown to the ground and suddenly unable to move his legs, he realized that shrapnel had lodged in them. He thought of committing suicide in line with North Korean military protocol.

He lost consciousness. Then he lay on the frigid forest floor for five days, losing blood. By the time enemy soldiers found him on Jan. 9, he had been on the front lines for only a week.

The men who took him captive were Ukrainian special forces dispatched with the express purpose of taking him alive. The Ukrainian troops said in an interview that the North Korean brandished a grenade as they approached, threatening to blow himself up.

They calmed Paek down, fed him, and gave him first aid. Gangrene in his feet was so severe that he later had several toes amputated, Ukrainian officials said. Other than the Russians he saw from afar in Kursk, the special forces were the first foreigners he had met.

"I thought foreigners would be very different from us North Koreans. Maybe even weird," he said. "Having seen them here, I see there's nothing different between them and us. They're all good people."

Ri was captured the same day. He said he was the only survivor of a three-man squad sent to assault Ukrainian positions. The bodies of at least five North Koreans lay near him in the forest, he said, where he was found in critical condition after being shot in the arm and jaw.

Paek and Ri acknowledged that returning to North Korea as former POWs could be dangerous. Last year, the Kim regime labeled South Korea its principal enemy and declared it would no longer seek reunification. But most North Korean escapees still choose to resettle in the South, for which their defection is of enormous strategic and symbolic value.

"At the end of the day, we are one nation, one people," Paek said.

SASHA MASLOV FOR WSJ (2)

North Koreans Ri, above, and Paek faced heavy artillery and drone fire in Kursk before being wounded and captured.

WORLD NEWS

Israel Missed Signs in Plain Sight

A military probe reviewed battles, decisions before Oct. 7, 2023, attack

By Dov Lieber

TEL AVIV—The first Israeli military commission into the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks found that military officials were blindsided by the Hamas-led assault after badly misinterpreting the militant group's intentions and vastly underestimating its capabilities—right up to the attack.

Signs of an impending assault were everywhere. But even preparations by Hamas as blatant as militants activating Israeli sim cards and moving forces to designated gathering points on Oct. 6, 2023, weren't treated with urgency by Israeli officials, the report concluded.

Those officials believed Hamas was either doing a military exercise, preparing to defend from an attack by Israel, or readying small pinpoint cross-border raids. The indicators were reminiscent of events over the previous year, strengthening the misconception among military officials that nothing was unusual.

The findings, the result of the highest-level probe into the worst attack on Israel in the country's history, shed new light on the scale of Israeli intelligence failures and scope of Hamas's planning.

The details likely will prompt further reckoning in Israel, where no politician and only a handful of military figures have resigned over the failings, though the report doesn't apportion blame.

Focus was on north

Hours before the attack, senior military officials were up late into the night discussing suspicious behavior by Hamas. Israeli military chief of staff Herzi Halevi told his deputies to gather more information for a briefing the next day. No one thought time was a critical factor, Israeli officials said.

However, Israel's top general in its north was summoned late that night to army headquarters in Tel Aviv. Israel's military was preoccupied by a potential attack in its north by Hezbollah militants from Lebanon, making Gaza a blind spot that became an easy target for Hamas.


TSAFRIR ABAYOV/ASSOCIATED PRESS

An Israeli soldier stands by the bodies of Israelis killed during the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack.

Hamas took advantage on Oct. 7, storming the border on the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah when fewer troops posted along the border.

Overwhelming attack

In gaming out an assault from Gaza, Israel's military planners assumed a worst-case scenario in which Hamas tried to breach four to eight points along the border, the report found. In fact, the militants attacked nearly 60.

Hamas's first target was the Israeli base responsible for the area around the Gaza Strip, where it killed the top commanders and wiped out Israel's area intelligence capabilities. The strike left Israel blind for three hours as the broader operation unfolded and allowed waves of militants to cross the fence into Israel unopposed.

Militants had free rein to attack military bases, kill civilians at a desert rave and in agricultural communities. In total, 1,200 security personnel and civilians were killed that day and 251 people were taken hostage. It would take 5½ hours to get reinforcements to the area and three days to fully repel the attackers.

Israel had regular soldiers in intelligence and observers in the field who warned Hamas was planning an attack. But that information wasn't enough to dissuade senior intelligence officials from the overall assessment that Hamas didn't want a war.

Missed signals

Even after discovering in 2022 a Hamas plan to attack southern Israel, the country's officials determined the document, called Operation Jericho Wall, was more an aspiration than an actual assault manual.

The theoretical plan for an attack on southern Israel was approved by Hamas in 2019, and got operational approval in August 2021. By April 2022, Hamas was considering dates for the attack, which was only known to a select few, but for which thousands of operatives had trained for years.

The origins of the Oct. 7 attack stretch back to 2016, with the rise of the group's now-deceased leader Yahya Sinwar through the leadership ranks, the investigation said.

Israel had believed Hamas was focused on building a state in Gaza and trying to take control of the West Bank, before any major confrontation. That was true, the Israeli officials said, until Sinwar took control and reoriented the group toward a direct attack on Israel. But Israeli intelligence missed the strategic shift, the probe said.

Hamas launched the October 2023 attack, its own officials have said, after seeing the internal upheaval in Israel caused by a controversial plan to overhaul the judiciary.

As the assault neared its crescendo, Mohammad Deif, the group's military chief, called on all Gazans to grab any weapon and storm Israel. Thousands of civilians rushed across the border, looting and engaging in violence.

By noon on Oct. 7, 2023, there were 5,600 militants and civilians from Gaza inside Israel. Israel only had hundreds of soldiers defending the border that morning.

Fighting blind

Starting at 6:29 a.m., as Hamas fired rockets, 1,500 fighters invaded.

"We are at war," Israeli brigade commander Asaf Hamami said over the radio at 6:45 a.m.

The first hours of the attack were the most damaging and deadly for Israel because it had no eyes on the ground after its chain of command was destroyed. Some soldiers and commanders drove themselves to southern Israel after seeing reports on social media about the attack but large-scale reinforcements took hours.

"The big challenge in those critical hours was to understand what was going on," said a second senior military official.

Israel had one or two drones in the air but lacked the forces on the ground. The military said friendly fire incidents were limited but wouldn't elaborate.

Israel hoodwinked

Hamas deceived Israel into thinking its priority was economic concessions to strengthen its rule over Gaza, the Israeli military officials said.

Hamas sat out fighting between Israel and another smaller militant group in Gaza following its 2021 battle with Israel. That led Israeli officials to assume Hamas had been deterred.

Crucially, Israel misjudged how much Hamas thought Iran, Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, Palestinians in the West Bank and Israel's own Palestinian citizens would join the battle. Hamas ultimately never received the full backing from any of these groups, though Hezbollah launched rockets across Israel's border, creating a two-front war that divided Israel's forces.

Israeli intelligence lacked any real internal criticism of its thinking, an official said. In recent decades, military intelligence strayed from the key mission of providing an early warning and became deeply involved in providing tactical intelligence for Israel's wider military operations.

"The specific intelligence details that popped up during that night [of Oct. 6, 2023] weren't strong enough to break a yearslong conception," the official said.

Upshot for Israel

The report recommends Israel establish an intelligence unit whose sole purpose is to evaluate warning signals, significantly increase the size of the military and beef up border defenses.

Austrian Coalition Excludes Far Right

By Bertrand Benoit

BERLIN—In the latest sign of the political center's pushing back in Europe, three Austrian mainstream parties on Thursday said they would form a government, elbowing aside the far-right group that had won the country's election.

Earlier in the week, Germany's center-right Christian Democratic Union said it would seek a coalition with its smaller center-left rival, after an election in which the far right doubled its share of the vote.

The two events could mark the start of resistance to U.S. pressure on European mainstream parties to share power with far-right groups whose agendas more closely match the Trump administration's.

Politicians and analysts in Germany have billed the German coalition negotiations as the last chance for the political center to reverse a populist trend that has turned the Alternative for Germany from a fringe group with connections with neo-Nazis into the country's second-largest political force. The group, created in 2013, now holds a quarter of seats in Parliament and will lead the opposition to the government.

On Thursday, almost five months after Austria's election, the center-right People's Party, or ÖVP, center-left Social Democratic Party and pro-business Neos party said they had agreed to form a government.

"Behind us are what were perhaps the most difficult government negotiations in the history of our country," said Christian Stocker, ÖVP head and designated chancellor.

Their program includes measures right-wing populists have called for, such as cutting welfare payments to asylum seekers, abolishing family reunification for refugees and barring Islamic headscarves for girls under 14. The parties also said they would freeze rents for a year and combat excessive government spending.

Bat-Linked Disease Kills Scores in Congo

By Nicholas Bariyo

KAMPALA, Uganda—A fast-spreading mystery illness linked to bats has killed scores of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with nearly half dying within 48 hours of showing symptoms, the World Health Organization said on Thursday.

The disease, which causes uncontrolled bleeding, vomiting, diarrhea and other symptoms of hemorrhagic fever, had infected 1,096 people and killed 60 as of Feb. 23, the WHO said.

The disease was discovered in three children in the remote Équateur Province, in January. The children vomited blood, suffered nosebleeds and died within two days.

A few weeks later, a second and larger outbreak was recorded 100 miles away in the village of Bomate, where hundreds of people are ill. Some 141 fell sick with the illness in a single week, the WHO said.

"This could be a new virus that has never been discovered," said Matteo Bassetti, professor of infectious diseases at Italy's University of Genoa.

The WHO and the Congolese are still figuring out how the disease is transmitted.

The outbreak comes as President Trump rapidly reverses the U.S. policy of leading global health and relief work. He announced on his first day back in office that the U.S. would withdraw from the WHO, and his administration had frozen foreign aid during a 90-day review and ordered thousands of U.S. government aid workers overseas to return home.

The administration announced a waiver for lifesaving aid, but stop-work orders remain in place for agencies operating with American funding. Humanitarian groups in Congo, where more than 26 million people rely on emergency aid, are running out of food and medicine.

The WHO warned that the yet-to-be-identified illness poses a "significant public health threat."

Congo, a vast country that stretches across the waistline of Africa, already was struggling to respond to various emergencies, including the recent seizure of key eastern cities by Rwandan-backed rebels.

Congo "is facing many concurrent crises and outbreaks, putting a further strain on the health sector," the WHO's Africa office said.

> The WHO warned the illness poses a 'significant public health threat.'

Test samples shipped to a laboratory in Kinshasa, the country's capital, have ruled out Ebola and Marburg viruses, which also cause deadly bleeding. Some samples tested positive for malaria, suggesting more questions about the outbreak in a region that straddles the Congo River, near the border with the Republic of Congo.

While researchers are still rushing to identify the illness, the link to bats has raised concerns that more diseases are spreading from animals to humans. Much of Congo is heavily forested, and villagers regularly eat wild animals.

Congo also is battling an outbreak of Mpox, registering more than 55,000 cases and 1,200 deaths since the beginning of 2024.

From 2018 to 2020, Congo experienced the world's second-deadliest Ebola outbreak, which infected more than 3,400 people and killed 2,280.

WORLD WATCH


NELSON ALMEIDA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

CUB SCOUT: Accompanied by her Russian mother, Aurora, polar-bear cub Nur—born on Nov. 17 in a first for Latin America—made her public debut at Brazil's São Paulo Aquarium on Thursday as part of the International Polar Bear Day celebrations.

THAILAND

Dozens of Uyghurs Sent Back to China

Authorities on Thursday deported dozens of Uyghur men to China, despite public objections and weeks of U.S. diplomacy. The men had been in Thai detention for more than a decade after fleeing China's Xinjiang region, where the predominantly Muslim Uyghur minority faces persecution.

China said 40 immigrants had been repatriated "to combat illegal immigration and other cross-border crimes." The Thai foreign ministry didn't respond to a request for comment.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio last month suggested that U.S. ties with Bangkok would serve to protect the men. Thailand is one of America's oldest allies in Asia, but its economy is deeply dependent on China.

—Austin Ramzy

GERMANY

Munich Airport Hit By Two-Day Strike

Airlines canceled about 80% of flights to and from Munich Airport, Germany's second-biggest, the airport operator said, and further cancellations weren't ruled out, after workers began a two-day strike Thursday.

The union called the "warning strike," a tactic often used in Germany, on Monday as it seeks to step up pressure in talks on wages and working conditions for public-sector employees. The industrial action is set to end at midnight on Friday.

Public-sector workers also walked out in other locations. Those included some workers at Hamburg Airport, though the airport said the only flights canceled were those to and from Munich, German news agency dpa reported.

—Associated Press

DUBAI

Pyongyang Blamed In Big Crypto Theft

The FBI has accused North Korean-linked hackers in the theft earlier this month of some $1.5 billion in Ethereum, one of the most popular cryptocurrencies, from Dubai-based crypto exchange Bybit. The U.S. identifies the hackers by the names TraderTraitor and the Lazarus Group.

North Korean state media hasn't acknowledged either the theft or the FBI accusation. Pyongyang's mission to the United Nations in Geneva didn't respond to a request for comment from the Associated Press.

Bybit has said a routine transfer of Ethereum was "manipulated" by an attacker. The blockchain analytics firm Certik has described it as the largest breach in the history of blockchain transactions.

—Associated Press

FRANCE

Paris Is Pursuing Ukrainian Minerals

Like the U.S., France is seeking access to Ukraine's critical minerals, with talks under way for months, French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu told broadcaster France Info on Thursday.

"I have defense industries that will need access to a certain number of raw materials in the years to come," he said, not specifying which minerals France is seeking. Ukraine has been offering to supply the U.S. with rare-earth elements critical for various technologies.

Lecornu said France could possibly purchase the minerals and isn't seeking access as a way to recoup the billions of dollars in aid that Paris has supplied to Ukraine.

"We are not looking for payback," he said.

—Associated Press

The Sheikh Obsessed With AI

Continued from Page One
42, a company he controls.

Tahnoon's entities are part of the more than $70 billion the U.A.E. pledged to invest in France and Italy earlier this month. Last month, MGX was one of the few names mentioned backing Stargate, a $100 billion data center project announced at the White House to be led by SoftBank and OpenAI. It also has written big checks for OpenAI, Musk's XAI and Amazon-backed Anthropic.

Even in an AI world awash in funds, Tahnoon stands out. While many are plunging tens of billions of dollars into concentrated areas—SoftBank is making a huge bet on OpenAI and the tech giants are heaving money at data centers—Tahnoon is planning to spread more money broadly around the fledgling sector than almost anyone else.

Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan meets in Dubai with Bill Gates, top. Jeffrey Ding, bottom left, caught Tahnoon's attention with a book on AI. Right, news of AI breakthroughs by China's DeepSeek sent stocks plummeting in January.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: UAE PRESIDENTIAL COURT/REUTERS; YUKI IWAMURA/BLOOMBERG NEWS; RON SACHS/CNP/ZUMA PRESS

Risky time

It is a risky time to be splashing so much cash on AI.

The low-cost AI model from China's DeepSeek has abruptly shaken assumptions on the need for heavy investment. Valuations across tech have skyrocketed, and even optimistic venture capitalists often acknowledge the market is in a searing frenzy. Leading AI companies expect to lose billions of dollars for years to come, while pledges of future profitability rest on hazy assumptions of a tidal wave of demand.

Many see parallels to the late-stage dot-com bubble, when the cash-splashers of the era plunged tens of billions of dollars into building out fiber-optic cable networks based on projections that internet growth would be even more rapid than it was. A glut of fiber and enormous losses followed.

Tahnoon isn't deterred.

His strategy is to use his cash and influence not only to enable the U.A.E. and Abu Dhabi to profit from the rise of AI, but to make the U.A.E. a global hub for the technology. Seeing enormous global demand for years to come, his vision is that chip plants, data centers and local AI companies will build a post-oil economic future for the tiny-but-powerful emirate a 90 minute drive from Dubai—and for the country overall.

Ornate palace

From his ornate palace in Abu Dhabi, Tahnoon personally tracks the progress of global large language models on a dashboard his researchers built for him on his phone and computer. He urges subordinates at the giant network of companies he owns to rapidly incorporate AI.

Tahnoon has "the capital to invest in what is a very capital-intensive endeavor," said Brad Smith, the president of Microsoft, who has worked extensively with the sheikh.

During one meeting with Tahnoon, he and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella mentioned a book by George Washington University professor Jeffrey Ding that suggests AI could be the base of coming global economic growth.

The sheikh scribbled it down on his notepad, and soon after, Ding was eating lunch in his Washington, D.C., office when a representative from the U.A.E. embassy knocked on his door and said, "I cannot find your book in any bookstore. Can I get two copies?" Smith recalled.

Tahnoon grew up in the shadow of his brother Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the longtime crown prince who was named president of the U.A.E. in 2022.

While his brother rubbed shoulders with foreign leaders and crafted plans to remake Abu Dhabi's economy, Tahnoon honed extracurricular activities.

He became so hooked on competing with his brothers in "Age of Empires," a video-game where players develop hunter gatherers into powerful civilizations, that he hired an employee from the company that makes the game to coach him on tactics, former employees said.

He turned a palace within his royal compound into a gym. He funds one of the world's top cycling teams—UAE Team Emirates—and he rides on an island near the presidential palace he ringed with cycling paths. He liked super-light Colnago bikes so much that he instructed one of his companies to buy the Italian firm that makes them.

Tahnoon has poured money into building up Brazilian jiu jitsu and other forms of grappling around the globe. A black belt, he started a well-funded championship tournament that has "become the Olympics of our sport," said Bobby Razak, a filmmaker who is making a documentary on Tahnoon and the event.

"He's definitely one of the Founding Fathers of mixed martial arts," he said, a sport that "would not be where it was today" without Tahnoon.

The interest in AI has roots in the early 2000s, when he was so intrigued by computer-aided chess that he hired a sizable team of engineers to make him a program named Hydra that could compete with the world's best players. Erdogan Günes, a computer chess specialist for opening moves, said he often talked by phone for two or more hours a day with the sheikh as they monitored Hydra's games.

In late 2017, Tahnoon's interest increased after he learned that Google's AI program AlphaZero had beaten the world's best computer chess program after needing just four hours to learn the rules. It was far more powerful than Hydra ever was—opening his eyes to the power of AI, he told associates.

The following year, he tapped Peng Xiao, the former chief technology officer at software-turned-Bitcoin firm MicroStrategy, to start G42, a company devoted to applications of AI.

At the time, Abu Dhabi's wealth and economic strategy were largely under the control of Tahnoon's brother, Mohamed. As de facto leader of the country, he pushed to siphon off part of the emirate's oil wealth and put it into investments and economic development, building the wealth fund bounty Tahnoon would later inherit.

Mohamed had long viewed the tech sector as a big piece of that puzzle, and in 2017 made a push into AI, launching a national strategy for the technology to make the U.A.E. "the world leader in AI" by 2031. (It was later changed to "a" world leader).

After Mohamed became the UAE's president, there was speculation that Tahnoon would be named crown prince. Instead, Mohamed gave the role to his own son and awarded Tahnoon an apparent consolation prize: oversight of two sovereign funds, enthroning him as the main custodian of Abu Dhabi's wealth.

KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES

U.S. President Joe Biden and U.A.E. President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met last year in Washington.

Taken with his own business empire—a sprawling collection of real estate, maritime, banking and food assets, many with government ties—that gave Tahnoon control over more than $1.5 trillion as of last year, according to data firm Global SWF.

Western business leaders were enamored.

Microsoft's Smith first met Tahnoon in March 2023 on a business trip to Abu Dhabi, where they struck up a conversation about AI and energy. Tahnoon has also developed a rapport with OpenAI's Sam Altman. Early last year, the two men discussed a since-abandoned plan to finance a global network of chip factories to be built by TSMC.

BlackRock CEO Larry Fink says he frequently visits the U.A.E. and talks to Tahnoon about technology, health, longevity—another obsession of the sheikh's—and AI.

'Unique advantage'

Abu Dhabi "has a position of influence way beyond the size of the population," said Fink, whose firm is partnering with a Tahnoon-led entity to invest in AI infrastructure. "He believes they have a unique advantage in AI."

After the AI frenzy took off in 2023, Tahnoon's ambitions ran into thorny geopolitics.

As national security adviser, he has long attracted criticism for overseeing the UAE's vast spying operation. Due to an eye condition, he is almost always photographed indoors in sunglasses, adding to his aura of intrigue.

Security analysts have warned G42 subsidiaries have been involved in surveillance of Emirati residents and dissidents.

The ties of both Tahnoon and the U.A.E. to China have frustrated U.S. national security hawks. Tahnoon's CEO of G42, Xiao, was previously a Chinese citizen, and the company relied on Chinese-made equipment from Huawei routers and owned stakes in Chinese startups.

So when Tahnoon wanted G42 to buy cutting-edge U.S. AI tech, members of the Biden administration told him in a 2023 Washington, D.C., visit they wanted the investment, but he couldn't straddle both sides of the China-U.S. divide.

"You have to choose," Gina Raimondo, the former Secretary of Commerce said she told the sheikh in a blunt message. "This is a one-strike-and-you're-out kind of policy."

Picking the U.S.

The U.A.E. has long seen itself as something of a Switzerland—a trusted point of trade for East and West—and choosing sides on AI would risk damaging relations with China. But the allure of the U.S. lead on AI was too much to ignore.

Tahnoon picked the U.S.

Huawei routers were ripped out of G42's offices and Western equipment put in its place, while Tahnoon and his aides continued negotiating with the administration on details.

To enable a deal, the administration paired Tahnoon's company with Microsoft. G42 agreed to use Microsoft's cloud for AI work and also to comply with U.S. export restrictions as a part of the deal, and Microsoft invested $1.5 billion in G42, joining its board of directors.

The country has ambitions to host massive data centers that run Western large language models. Semiconductor manufacturing could follow, as government officials have had discussions with TSMC and Samsung about building chip fabrication plants in Abu Dhabi, people familiar with the discussions said.

"We definitely would like the U.S. government to give us more green lights," Xiao said, adding U.S. companies are ready to do deals with G42.

Practical obstacles

Many practical obstacles beckon. There's no obvious link between building data centers—scant generators of employment, often located in remote locations—and sparking a rush of AI software jobs nearby.

Abu Dhabi also faces geopolitical challenges similar to the Microsoft deal. The U.A.E. would need U.S. clearance to buy far more chips—as well as for chip building equipment if it wants to host semiconductor fabrication plants.

The Trump administration hasn't yet weighed in on the topic, but Ahmed Yahia, MGX's CEO, said the company plans to spend 70% to 80% of its money in the U.S.

Meanwhile, Tahnoon is sowing seeds with those in the president's orbit. MGX took part in a $6 billion fundraise by xAI late last year.

Tahnoon's asset manager Lunate recently participated in a $1.5 billion additional investment in Affinity, the investment fund run by President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, whom Tahnoon met in the first Trump administration.

Speaking to a podcast in December, Kushner recalled a 2018 meeting when he was visiting the region. Tahnoon told him, "Jared, I'm not meeting with you unless you spend two hours after with me to talk about AI."

Beer Pros Pore Over Questions

Continued from Page One
the most exclusive clubs in the world. He is one of 28 Master Cicerones, the highest certification among beer experts. They're similar to wine sommeliers, except few people know they exist or what they do.

"People don't know there is a certification for beer," said Andrew Van Til, 47 years old, who became the first Master Cicerone in 2009. "So we have a little bit of a chip on our shoulder."

Rich Higgins, 46, a Master Cicerone and a wine sommelier, said the two camps share a deep, geeky devotion to their beverages. But some brew experts are "kind of bruised because they love beer and beer can't get the respect they think it deserves," in part because wine is more expensive. Other beer aficionados embrace it as an affordable luxury, he said. "It's essential to always remind people that beer is fun."

Master Cicerones have highly trained palates honed through years of yes, drinking beer, but also sniffing spices, and even trying to guess jelly bean flavors. "There's only so much beer you can drink and be productive," Pratt said.

The Master Cicerone exam, administered by an independent group, marks the highest of four certification levels and involves 16 essays, eight blind beer-tasting panels and 12 oral exams over two days.

The test, given once a year, covers brewing, serving, tasting and pairing beer with food, among other topics. It costs $1,095 to take, with a discount for repeats.

Studying typically takes years. Of the 28 Master Cicerones, all but a handful had to take the final more than once, said Dan Imdieke, 46, who since last year has run the program with Pratt, 45. The word "cicerone" refers to a knowledgeable guide, which they try to be for beer drinkers, Imdieke said, "meeting someone wherever they are at in their beer journey."

Cicerones describe their jobs as different from sommeliers swanning around Michelin-starred restaurants. They often work inside beer companies, developing brews and assessing when they are ready, and assisting with design and operations. They are frequently tapped for beer-education events and to judge competitions.

Neil Witte, 53, the sixth person to become a Master Cicerone, consults for breweries and the Beer Institute, a trade association. He also conducts tasting dinners, pairing beers with strawberries, cheese curds and chocolate, among other comestibles. "When you put it in front of them, they're like, 'yeah, I don't know about this,'" he said. "And then they eat the food, and they drink the beer, and they're like, 'Wow, OK, I get it.'"

Preparing for the exam can be so intense that, as in law school, test takers form study groups. "It's kind of a lonely process because of the degree of kind of obsession it takes," said Imdieke, who recalled going to a Starbucks at 5:30 a.m. every day on a trip to Hawaii to cram for two hours before his family woke up. "I wasn't going to let Hawaii stop me from studying," he said.

"It's all-consuming," Shelley Smith, a Master Cicerone who works at Boston Beer brewing Samuel Adams and other beer, said of the preparation. "It's really the only way you can do it."

The tight knit-group of Master Cicerones has a group chat where they ask each other questions. The arduous certification process has sparked friendships.

Averie Swanson met her husband and business partner, Pat Fahey, when he was an employee of the board that administers the exam and she was first attempting the test.

They started dating, and he subsequently had to recuse himself from proctoring her future tests. In 2018, Swanson became the 17th Master Cicerone in the world and the third woman. The couple is now building a craft brewery in Santa Fe, N.M., named "Keeping Together."

Even experts sometimes need a break from beer. At the end of the grueling Master Cicerone test, participants take a shot of Malört, a wormwood-based liqueur.

For Swanson and her husband, relaxing often involves a glass of wine. "Beer is worth, which, it's still a lot of fun, but we honestly don't drink that much at home," she said.

ARTS IN REVIEW

FILM REVIEW | KYLE SMITH

Claustrophobic Cinema

Divers race against time to rescue their trapped coworkers

Departing his lovely home in Scotland for a deep-sea diving expedition, a young man tells his fiancée not to worry: It's just like going into outer space, except in the opposite direction. Not unreasonably, she asks: Is that supposed to reassure me?

Unlike the audience, young Chris (Finn Cole) and his betrothed, Morag (Bobby Rainsbury), do not know they are characters in a movie, and so cannot hear the doomy sounds of onrushing disaster in the subaquatic thriller "Last Breath." There wouldn't be a movie if everything were about to go perfectly for Chris, and when we hear that it's the last mission for a retiring colleague, Duncan (Woody Harrelson), the potential for a serious mishap hits approximately 100%. True to its lovers' discussion, the film is much like an outer-space adventure, one in particular: "Apollo 13."

Chris, his fellow diver Dave (Simu Liu), and Duncan, who is to supervise their operations from a diving bell, head out on a ship from Aberdeen into the North Sea to perform maintenance on an undersea line. Sealing themselves in a submarine-like tube that subjects them to 10 atmospheres of pressure, they prepare for a walk on the sea floor, some 300 feet below the waves. This being a notoriously grumpy body of water, 20-foot swells bedevil the ship as it tries to maintain its position over the target, and when some systems go offline the divers' problems are just beginning.

Based on the 2019 documentary of the same name, "Last Breath" intently, gravely evokes the details of one of the most dangerous trades on earth. Every valve, dial, tube and air hose looks like it carries the potential for catastrophic failure in the eyes of the director, Alex Parkinson, who also co-wrote the script, having written and co-directed the earlier nonfiction film. Ships and diving bells are extraordinarily sophisticated technological marvels, but as Mr. Parkinson illustrates with supreme suspense, all of it is ultimately at the mercy of the fickle and feral sea. Moreover, there is a particular cinematic challenge layered atop the natural one: So stygian is the darkness underwater, and such is the nature of the diving helmet, that it's difficult to capture either what is happening or the expressions of the actors. Most of the acting burden therefore falls on Mr. Harrelson, exhorting his divers (without a helmet) from the relative safety of the bell, and to Mark Bonnar and Cliff Curtis as the dive supervisor and ship's captain who try to manage a chaotic situation from the bridge against a ticking clock.

When one man gets his "umbilical"—his oxygen line—stuck, and consequently gets separated from the other diver, an onscreen countdown clock appears: His reserve system grants him only 10 minutes of breathing time as storms force the ship some 600 feet away. Mr. Parkinson does a superb job of showing us just how dark it is underneath, so inky that even with a light you might not be able to see something a few yards in front of you. As the situation becomes ever more agonizing, seemingly going well past the point of survivability, every technical challenge becomes the center of its own suspenseful minidrama.

Yet "Last Breath," which runs a compact 91 minutes, doesn't feel like a finished film: The dialogue is strictly functional, and there is so little time for establishing character that none of the three principals really makes an impression. This is especially true of Mr. Liu, whose Dave is so cold and even condescending toward his new partner, Chris, that he is begging for an arc of redemption, but it never comes. Mr. Harrelson, who brings so much zingy energy and intelligence to virtually every role he takes, does somewhat better, even though he gets only a few lines to build his back story. To have such a talented actor in the cast and give him so little to do feels like dereliction of duty.

As for Chris, an everyman rather than a hero whose misadventures are the heart of the story, Mr. Cole simply seems too small and recessive for the part, which demands someone with the world-class charisma Tom Hanks displayed in "Apollo 13." That film took its time establishing the culture from which the endangered astronauts came and gave us ample reason to love them; "Last Breath" feels, by contrast, rushed. Mr. Parkinson should have put as much care into personalities as he did into their harrowing environment. In short, these characters don't get enough room to breathe.

Finn Cole, Woody Harrelson and Simu Liu in 'Last Breath,' which is based on a true story.

FOCUS FEATURES

APPRECIATION

Gene Hackman's Unsentimental Grit

By Kyle Smith

The term "character actor" is a puzzler. Don't all actors play characters? For decades, the label was applied to performers who weren't beautiful enough to play leads. In "Bonnie and Clyde," Warren Beatty was a leading man; the fellow who played his brother, Buck Barrow, was a character actor: Gene Hackman.

Mr. Hackman, who was found dead Wednesday in his home in Santa Fe, N.M., at age 95, gave such a crackling, vivid performance that he and others who would previously have been dismissed as character actors—his one-time classmate Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino—joined the front rank of a new generation of leading men in visceral, punchy movies like 1971's "The French Connection," in which Mr. Hackman's blistering performance as the cynical but obsessively dedicated NYPD detective Popeye Doyle won him an Oscar.

Mr. Hackman—balding, gruff, pugnacious, not infrequently angry, occasionally snakishly charming, with a surprisingly effective if rarely deployed smile—was among the handful of actors upon whom 1970s cinema was built. As befitting a man who in real life had lied about his age to join the Marine Corps at 16, he personified unsentimental grit. For boomers whose taste for bleak and rough-edged cinema started to take over the Hollywood studios starting around 1967, his rise was perfectly timed. After building a reputation on the New York stage, he received an Oscar nomination for "Bonnie and Clyde," and earned another three years later as a sensitive son dealing with his father's impending death in "I Never Sang for My Father." Mr. Hackman was now cemented as an unlikely star.

The star pushed boundaries and created new kinds of characters.

He proved a successor to James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart, with the critical difference that, in accordance with the new preference for all things dark and menacing, his characters often faced failure. "The French Connection," a manhunt set against a brutally realistic depiction of a collapsing New York, ended with Popeye's target—"Frog One"—still at large. And in a follow-up that was at least as powerful, 1975's "The French Connection II," Doyle was not only captured but shot up with drugs and forced to undergo heroin withdrawal. In 1974's "The Conversation," a groundbreaking Francis Ford Coppola drama about wiretapping, corruption and the elusiveness of truth, Mr. Hackman hogtied his energies to play a meek, withdrawn, painfully shy man as convincingly as he played Popeye Doyle. Largely ignored by audiences, and overshadowed by Mr. Coppola's "The Godfather Part II" the same year (not to mention another 1974 hit, "Young Frankenstein," in which an uncharacteristically wacky Mr. Hackman was hilarious as a blind hermit), "The Conversation" would later join the pantheon of momentous 1970s cinema. Mr. Hackman would essentially reprise his character for a flashier thriller, the 1998 Will Smith man-on-the-run tale "Enemy of the State," which was prescient about the potential for technology to keep tabs on us all.

Mr. Hackman's work, such as the 1975 noir "Night Moves" and the 1973 road movie with Mr. Pacino, "Scarecrow," found him stubbornly fighting a deeply troubled culture while doing his best to maintain a shred of dignity. Even in the 1972 blockbuster "The Poseidon Adventure," he portrayed a rugged minister forced into an impossible situation at the climax, hanging by a valve wheel that he used his last reserves of strength to painfully turn. Dooming himself in the act, he cleared a passage for others but was left with no option but to plunge to his death, using his final words to scream at God: "We've come all this way, no thanks to you. . . . We didn't ask you to fight for us, but dammit, don't fight against us."

In another huge hit of the period, his impish Lex Luthor was like a spoof of a sleazy politician that played perfectly off the utter sincerity of Christopher Reeve's Superman. Yet he could be lovable, too; equaled perhaps only by Burgess Meredith's Mickey in "Rocky," he created one of the most revered of all the sports-movie coaches in 1986's "Hoosiers." With his caustic voice—he could tear into the air like a police siren—he was seemingly an urban figure, but he made a delightful, and unexpected, move into westerns, winning an Oscar for playing a typically cantankerous sheriff in Clint Eastwood's "Unforgiven."

Citing heart problems, Mr. Hackman retired unexpectedly in 2004, leaving 2001's Wes Anderson dramedy "The Royal Tenenbaums" as one of his final roles. It was an especially poignant one, built around the decline and demise of his character, a woefully bad father whose blunders leave his children warped and depressed. Yet such was Mr. Hackman's charm that, by the time his character was laid to rest under a fictitious gravestone ("died tragically rescuing his family from the wreckage of a destroyed sinking battleship"), he had turned an aggressively eccentric figure in a severely whimsical movie into a proxy for every failed dad whose children nevertheless can't conceive of existence without him. Mr. Hackman's importance to his profession was similar: Looking back, it's hard to imagine the movies without him.

Mr. Smith is the Journal's film critic.

The actor in 'The French Connection'; he was found dead in his home on Wednesday.

MOVIESTORE/SHUTTERSTOCK

THEATER REVIEW | CHARLES ISHERWOOD

A Two-Actor Play of Quiet Power

Samuel D. Hunter's 'Grangeville' is a moving drama about estranged half-brothers who reconnect

Paul Sparks and Brian J. Smith in 'Grangeville,' at the Signature Theatre.

New York

Samuel D. Hunter has quietly established himself as one of the finest American playwrights working today. Quietly, because none of his plays has been seen on Broadway, despite being widely produced regionally and off-Broadway. Also because he is a rigorously—and rewardingly—economical dramatist. Consider his past three works: "A Case for the Existence of God," "Little Bear Ridge Road," and now "Grangeville" at the Signature Theatre. In each Mr. Hunter deploys just two actors, on minimalist sets. Each runs roughly 90 minutes—shorter than the first act of many a Broadway musical.

Yet with his small toolbox Mr. Hunter builds wide worlds of beautiful emotional breadth and depth, in plays that measure down to the millimeter the distance between human beings: how it can grow to an echoing vastness, how it can collapse to the point of invisibility.

"Grangeville," directed by Jack Serio and starring Paul Sparks and Brian J. Smith as two long-estranged brothers, marks a departure—at least geographically. Mr. Hunter's previous plays were set in Idaho, where he was born. Here, while Mr. Sparks's Jerry still lives in the Idaho town of the title, where the brothers—half-brothers, technically, who had different fathers—grew up in disorderly poverty, Mr. Smith's Arnold, who is 10 years younger, in his early 40s, has long since left Grangeville behind. He has put as much distance, physical and emotional, as he can between himself and his troubled upbringing. An artist, Arnold moved to the Netherlands some years before, where he lives with his Dutch husband, Bram.

The occasion for the sudden end of Arnold and Jerry's lack of communication is their mother's hospitalization after a stroke. Jerry is flummoxed by the paperwork involved ("I'm dumb"), and calls Arnold for help. He calls repeatedly, despite Arnold's irritation ("I don't know why we have to do this over the phone," he barks) and his resistance to Jerry's tentative attempts to move the discussion onto more general, more personal territory ("Let's please not make this more complicated than it needs to be," Arnold barks again when Jerry shyly says, "It's good to hear your voice").

As the play unfolds—on a set by the collective called dots that consists of a dark wall, the door to the trailer where Jerry recently moved in to help out the brothers' mother, and a pair of benches—we learn through phone and video calls the reasons that Arnold cut his mother and brother out of his life. Arnold was a sensitive kid, neglected by his alcoholic parents and physically abused by Jerry.

But while it seems Arnold has moved beyond the past, as well as away from any reminders of it, and the hapless, feckless Jerry has remained rooted in a place of disappointment (his wife has recently announced she wants a divorce), Mr. Hunter subtly establishes that their fortunes are somewhat seesawing. Jerry has matured and is sincerely trying to come to terms with his mistakes, while Arnold, despite living in another cultural universe, is still the unhappy boy shackled to the past.

Tellingly, when he asks to see one of Arnold's artworks, Jerry offers, sheepishly, the observation that the painting is "really unsettled"—which is more astute than he or Arnold realizes. The overriding theme of "Grangeville" is the difficulty, and the necessity, of attempting to heal old wounds and traumas—both ours and those of the people in our lives, even if, as Arnold repeatedly says, he would prefer Jerry and their mother to be out of his.

As always with Mr. Hunter's dramas, the playwright relies on the talents of his actors and his director to break open the immense wealth of feeling and tangled personal history gently embedded in his seemingly mundane dialogue. Perhaps because of this generosity, his writing invariably brings out the best in his collaborators.

Brendan Fraser, who won an Oscar for his performance in the movie of Mr. Hunter's play "The Whale," was initially cast as Jerry but dropped out due to a scheduling conflict. With all respect for Mr. Fraser, it would be impossible for an actor to give a performance superior to Mr. Sparks's. He brings endless nuances to Jerry's life-battered but open spirit. Jerry attempts to atone for, or at least explain, his earlier brutal treatment of Arnold; sensing he was gay, he wanted to "toughen him up"—a sadly misguided but sincere attempt to help.

And Mr. Sparks finds wonderful humor in Jerry's self-deprecation. When Arnold asks if adultery was a cause of his failing marriage, Jerry wanly jokes: "We're not that interesting." All but shellacked in quiet despair, Mr. Sparks's Jerry nevertheless exudes an affecting gentleness—he's devoted to his mother, despite her flaws—and an equally moving yearning to reconcile with his brother.

The economy of the playwright's works contrasts with their emotional fullness.

Mr. Smith is likewise excellent as Arnold, whose seething antagonism at being drawn back into the painful past indicates how deeply it has scarred him. We also come to understand how his inability to come to terms with it has tainted his life—and even endangered his relationship with Bram, who wants to reassess their marriage.

Unusually, "Grangeville" contains a brief passage of physical violence—virtually unheard-of in Mr. Hunter's largely soft-spoken plays. But even this startling moment is deeply rooted in all that has come before. Mr. Hunter is the rare dramatist who seems incapable of writing a scene, or even a single line of dialogue, that doesn't ring powerfully and often painfully true.

Grangeville
Signature Theatre, 480 West 42nd St., New York, $69-$164, 212-244-7529, closes March 23

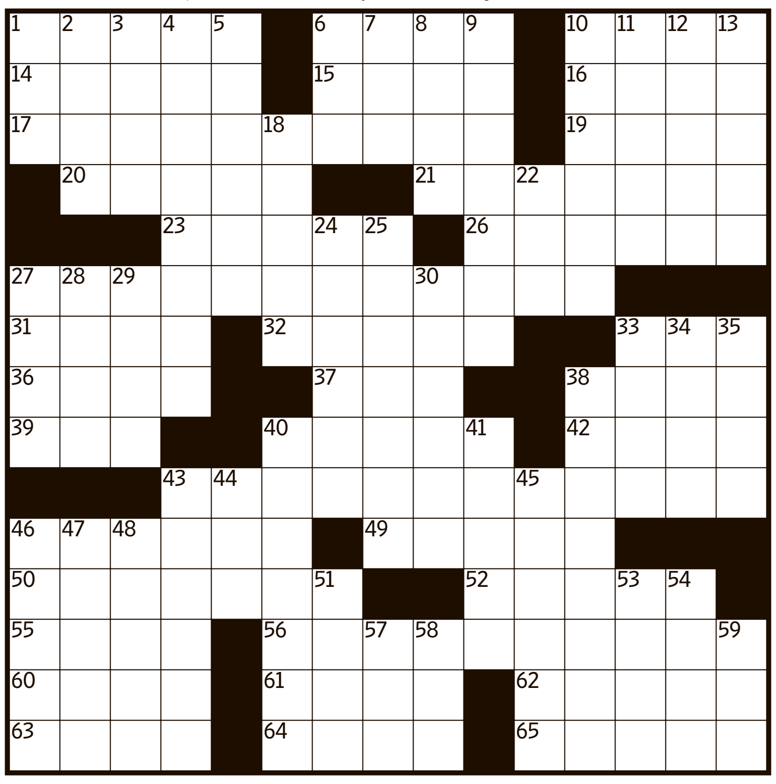
Mr. Isherwood is the Journal's theater critic.

EMILIO MADRID (3)

The characters are brought together after their mother has a stroke.

The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shenk

PUZZLE CONTEST



END PRODUCTS | By Mike Shenk

The answer to this week's contest crossword is **a four-letter word.**

Across

1 Swinton of "Asteroid City"
6 Clock feature
10 Pour out plentifully
14 Female friends, in France
15 "Picnic" playwright
16 Like five-star hotels
17 Act prematurely
19 Is decisive
20 Cathedral feature
21 Antivirus app since 1999
23 Nail polish applications
26 Vision-based
27 Thrashes severely
31 One of a car pair
32 Spitball sound
33 Waits in a recording studio
36 Risked a ticket
37 Stole stuff
38 Breezy farewell
39 Beantown team
40 Ashtray accumulation
42 Way to go
43 It's estimated to be a foot in the next 25 years
46 Investing goal
49 More ominous
50 When steel forging began
52 Uncle's relative?
55 Oxford academics
56 1972's "Fist of Fury," e.g.
60 Trim
61 Sweet creation of 1912
62 Plane figure
63 Vacation goal
64 Japanese zither
65 Does a checkout chore

Down

1 Hindi word for "crown"
2 Shock jock legend
3 Like overcooked pasta
4 Shown
5 Daikin Park team
6 Lose power
7 Gerund ender
8 Contents of un lago
9 Allow to use
10 "Wait for me!"
11 Like chrysalises
12 Additional
13 River through Bremen
18 Race rounds
22 Knee injury site, often
24 Ready to overflow
25 Had a major reaction?
27 Popular game fish
28 Trade show
29 Slugger Rodriguez
30 "Jason Lives," in the "Friday the 13th" franchise
33 Leave the gate
34 "Safety hoist" inventor
35 Winner's check?
38 Super
40 Site of the Wat Phra Kaew Buddhist temple
41 Letter addition
43 Western sight
44 Pitching stat
45 Boosts
46 Contract addition
47 Undermine
48 Salad bar tool
51 Monaco money
53 TV handyman Bob
54 North Carolina university
57 Invoice line
58 Tar or sap, e.g.
59 High pts.

Previous Puzzle's Solution

S	A	L	E	M		N	A	S	H		A	M	I	D
K	N	U	T	E		O	A	H	U		L	O	S	E
I	N	C	A	N		K	N	I	T	S	K	U	L	L
M	A	I	L		S	I	D	E		P	A	N	E	L
P	L	A	I	D	G	A	M	S		A	L	T	O	S
			B	U	T				S	N	I	F	F	
A	R	T	I	E		S	E	A	R		S	U	M	S
D	U	H		L	I	T	B	R	I	T		J	A	R
D	R	E	W		L	U	B	E		R	H	I	N	O
	A	T	A	L	L				P	I	E			
A	L	I	V	E		L	A	M	B	B	R	A	N	D
N	A	T	E	S		A	L	A	S		M	O	O	R
G	R	A	S	S	K	N	O	T		P	A	R	S	E
L	E	N	A		A	C	N	E		A	N	T	I	C
E	A	S	T		L	E	E	S		R	O	A	R	K

▶ Email your answer—in the subject line—to **crosswordcontest@wsj.com** by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time Sunday, March 2. A solver selected at random will win a WSJ mug. Last week's winner: Blair Seelinger, Wake Forest, NC. Complete contest rules at **WSJ.com/Puzzles**. (No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. U.S. residents 18 and over only.)

SPORTS

JASON GAY

75 Seasons of Army Hockey With the Rileys

A member of the Riley family has coached the Black Knights since the 1950-51 season

When Army hockey hits the ice next week for its conference playoffs, a silver-haired man with a familiar last name will be calling shots behind the bench: Brian Riley, the head hockey coach at West Point for 21 seasons.

And the third consecutive Riley to hold the head coach position since the 1950-51 academic year.

It's one of the most impressive, underrecognized dynasties in college sports: A member of the Riley family has coached Army Black Knights hockey for the past 75 seasons.

First was the late patriarch Jack Riley, a legend of the sport, who became Army's head coach on a one-year handshake and wound up staying 36 seasons.

Jack was a hockey titan who starred at Dartmouth, served as a Navy pilot, made the 1948 U.S. Olympic team, and later coached the U.S. Olympic Team to gold at the 1960 Winter Games in Squaw Valley—the original "Miracle on Ice," as the old hockey heads know.

"A fiery guy, and I mean that in the best sense possible," said friend Bill Cleary, a member of that 1960 Olympic team who went on to coach Harvard.

Jack was succeeded in 1986 by his son Rob, who coached 18 more seasons at West Point. Rob Riley was then followed by brother Brian, who stepped up from assistant to head coach for the 2004-05 campaign.

Now the Riley head coaching era is ending. At the season's finish, Brian Riley is retiring. His successor is Zach McKelvie, a former Black Knights player and current associate head coach who will be the first non-Riley in three quarters of a century to helm the program.

Or maybe not.

"I did tell him, we're going to have to change your name to 'Zach McKelvie Riley,'" Brian Riley told me.

He was kidding. I think.

For Brian, Army hockey has been a life's calling. West Point is where he grew up, along with siblings Rob, Jay, Mark and Mary Beth, hockey players all.

He has endless memories of a hockey childhood, skating the frigid Smith Rink until his Dad's team practiced. Back then, facilities were spartan, but there was a sizable home ice advantage—Smith Rink was enormous, stretching an exhausting 233 feet, Brian said. (NHL rinks are 200 feet long.)

Visiting teams got tired just looking at it.

"It went on *forever*," Brian said.

Jack Riley's success also loomed large.

When Brian had buddies over, he'd go up to father's and his mother Maureen's room, fish around a T-shirt drawer, and grab Dad's 1960 gold medal to show off.

"Every time I did that, I'd [think], *'Why does Dad stay at West Point?'*" Brian recalled. "He could be coaching in the NHL. He could be coaching any big time hockey school—but he's staying at West Point."

"As a kid, you don't understand," he continued. "Now that I've sat in his chair: I understand."

Brian called coaching at the U.S. Military Academy the "most rewarding and humbling" job in sports.

"What makes our players special is what they're willing to do for their country," Riley said. "They want to be part of something bigger than themselves."

Rob Riley, who served as head coach from 1986 until 2004, echoed his brother's admiration of the cadets.

"It's such a challenging grind—the academic piece, and you throw in the military piece," Rob said. "It's amazing what they do in 24 hours…you can't understand until you see it."

Army coach Brian Riley, above, is set to retire at the end of the season. Left, Jack Riley after the 1960 Olympics.

MIKE BUSCHER/ASSOCIATED PRESS; ASSOCIATED PRESS

Current Black Knights captain Michael Sacco, a senior set to graduate as an infantry officer—on Wednesday he learned he will be heading off to Fort Carson in Colorado—said he and his teammates consider hockey practice "the best part of our day."

"You go through physical curriculum, academic curriculum, military curriculum," he said. "For me, I'm always waiting for 3 p.m. I can get on the bus, go up to the rink, see 26 of my best friends, and play the sport I love."

I asked Sacco how he'd describe the Army hockey style under Brian Riley.

"Toughness," he said.

McKelvie, the coach in waiting, described it as "rugged."

"We want a team that is able to wear teams down through physicality and competitiveness," he said.

No one, I'm told, was more competitive than Jack Riley, who remained that way long into retirement, Brian said.

"He'd come up to me at a game and say, "Brian, guess how many cars passed me on the way from Cape Cod to West Point?" he said, imitating his father, who died in 2016 at age 95. "'Not one!'"

"There's a passion inside the entire family, and it grows exponentially when they're in the rink," said Pierre McGuire, the longtime NHL executive and analyst and Riley family friend.

"Continuity is hard," McGuire continued. "How unusual is it to see a family legacy extend for three quarters of a century? I can't think of anything like it."

Army held an appreciation night for Brian and his family at West Point on Feb 22. It was punctuated by a 3-2 overtime win over American International College.

This has been a stirring send-off season. The Black Knights went unbeaten in the season series with archrival Air Force. There's more action left—an upcoming American Hockey Association quarterfinal starting March 7 against Niagara, with an automatic NCAA tournament bid to the conference winner.

There *will* be a Riley on staff next season, too. As has been the case for the past couple of years, one of the Black Knights assistants will be Brian's son, a former college hockey star and developing coach himself.

His name is Jack Riley.

You can't keep a good hockey family away from the ice.

Commanders Improve On and Off the Field

After an upturn in fortunes this past season, the team fared well in poll of NFL players

By Andrew Beaton

FOR YEARS, WASHINGTON wasn't just a wretched NFL team that didn't come close to sniffing a Super Bowl. Somehow, the franchise was even more miserable off the field.

There was the controversy over the team name, a series of scandals under former owner Dan Snyder and facilities that had become dilapidated, all of which contributed to players grading Washington as the worst club to play for in the entire league for two straight years.

But this season, the Commanders have engineered a pair of turnarounds. First, led by rookie quarterback Jayden Daniels, they made a surprise run to the NFC Championship. Now, even more stunningly, it turns out players actually enjoy playing for them again.

In the third annual survey conducted by the NFL Players Association, Washington ranked 11th out of 32 teams after finishing dead last in the first two editions. Players pointed to the hiring of Dan Quinn, who rated No. 1 among all head coaches, as one of the keys behind the turnaround. Other improvements included the food program and new owner Josh Harris's willingness to invest in the facilities and improve the culture.

The survey reflects how the superstars of the NFL players have many of the same gripes about their working conditions as those of us who are holding down a desk job. The difference is that their offices happen to be NFL stadiums.

And while the Commanders improved across the board in 2024, one of the curious parts of the union's annual survey is that there is no correlation between a team's performance in the standings and the grades it receives as a place of work. This year's two Super Bowl teams, the champion Philadelphia Eagles (22nd) and runner-up Kansas City Chiefs (26th), both finished in the bottom half of the league.

"This is about their experience at work, and it's not what happens on the field," said former offensive lineman JC Tretter, the NFLPA's chief strategy officer. "There is no connection to those things."

For the second consecutive season, the Dolphins and Minnesota Vikings topped the survey, with Miami the only team to receive an "A" or better in each of the 11 categories, which range from the treatment of families to the training staff to the quality of travel accommodations.

Commanders owner Josh Harris, right, has improved the team's culture.

STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Arizona Cardinals, meanwhile, took over in last place, with players describing the facility as outmoded while also giving poor marks to the food they're served. The team noted in a statement that it has plans for a state-of the art facility that it hopes to complete in 2027.

"Our goal is to provide the best possible environment, facilities and resources and to give our team the greatest opportunity to succeed," the Cardinals said. "We are working hard to achieve that."

Past editions of the survey were marked by horror stories such as malfunctioning toilets, showers that didn't work, and a rat infestation. But this year, Washington's improvement was part of a broader theme of positive change that union officials saw as welcome response to their feedback. Overall, there was a 41% increase in grades of A- or above, with the Los Angeles Chargers (30th to 5th) and Atlanta Falcons (25th to 3rd) also making notable year-over-year jumps.

The same couldn't be said for the team that has long wrestled with Washington for the title of the NFL's most hapless franchise: the New York Jets.

Their ranking fell from 21st to 29th in the survey, and while other teams were praised for addressing player concerns from previous years, Jets players felt the opposite—that management responded by making their working conditions worse.

Players thought the team cut the food budget and gave Woody Johnson an "F," the lowest grade among team owners.

After a season that saw the Jets' playoff hopes with crash to a 5-12 finish, Johnson himself acknowledged that he has to "look in the mirror" and "be a better owner." That rings especially true after the team stood out last year for reasons that had nothing to do with their on-field flameout.

Union officials said most team owners used last year's feedback as an impetus to make changes in the right direction—and the Jets were the lone exception.

OPINION

Why Dems Are in the Wilderness

POTOMAC WATCH
By Kimberley A. Strassel

Donald Trump's shock troops are bro fist-bumping, having used their online influence to browbeat GOP senators into confirming most of the president's nominees. They might be careful of the political conformity they wish for.

Democrats are wandering somewhere between the desert and the wilderness. Their Trump thumping left them without power, a leader or a message, and their current, near total irrelevance is one result. Mr. Trump blazes his way through Washington while Democrats—a day late, and two topics short—stage stand-ins outside the Treasury building, Chuck Schumer shout-gasping "We will win!"

Win what? The Democratic Party can't effectively oppose Mr. Trump's worldview if it doesn't formulate a coherent one of its own. Many Democrats rolled out of the election acknowledging the urgent need for a change in direction—for moderation, an end to cultural radicalism, a reconnect with working-class Americans. They immediately crashed into the left-wing base, threatening political death to heretics. Even if the party had the spine to push back, who exactly on the Democratic bench even remembers how to be a moderate?

What looks like a rapid collapse was years in the making. The left's takeover of the Democratic Party began with the rise of Barack Obama and it steadily eradicated dissenting voices. Nancy Pelosi's "majority makers"—the Blue Dogs and moderates who won her the speakership in 2006—were made to support unpopular legislation and paid for it in lost elections. Progressives targeted and polarized other holdouts, picked them off in primaries, or drove them to resignation. It was Saul Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals."

The Squad's wild proposals for the Green New Deal, open borders, Medicare for all—a program of socialism that traditional Democrats initially rejected—is now mainstream thinking, the policy litmus test for party entry. Who even remembers the politics of Sens. Mark Pryor, Evan Bayh and Mary Landrieu, much less those of John Breaux, Sam Nunn and Fritz Hollings? Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema tried imposing a smidgen of fiscal sanity and energy reality on Joe Biden's agenda. Their reward was to be hounded in their homes, chased into bathrooms by activists, and discouraged from seeking re-election.

The problem isn't so much that Democrats won't embrace moderation as they no longer know how. Today's Democratic "moderate" is a lawmaker who ventures the occasional criticism of Hamas or of men in women's sports while hurrying to flag his support for gun control, climate absolutism, racial "equity" and the "human rights" of government-provided health, housing, education and daycare. To agree with Bernie Sanders only 95% of the time is, in today's Democratic Party, iconoclastic.

A few Democrats are feeling their way toward a new model of economic populism, deep-sixing the wokeism, carving out sensible positions here and there on the border or Israel while doubling down on redistributive goodies for the working class. The most prominent example is Pennsylvania's Sen. John Fetterman. This isn't being met with open arms. At a recent anti-Trump protest, Pennsylvanians lumped Mr. Fetterman into their tirade, while Fetterman staffers keep resigning in protest. One recent ex-employee derided him as "a useful idiot for Republicans."

Republicans shouldn't get smug. They're repeating the other party's mistakes.

If Democrats didn't already know the progressive agenda was a political loser (and Kamala Harris's campaign subterfuge proves they did), they do now. What to do with an ash heap of a political platform, one nonetheless rigidly enforced by liberal shock troops, and no charismatic figure with the spine or know-how to lead a change of direction? Engage muscle memory and do the easy: fight, fight, fight. Thus the bizarre sight of Democrats rallying fervently in favor of government waste, fraud and inefficiency. Expect this to continue.

This could be the MAGA future. The GOP is a party of many factions, and their policy disagreements frequently produce stalemates and governing heartache. Influential Trump supporters are honing their own methods for stamping out even mild disagreement with the president's approach: rally online supporters to pile on, label the target a member of the "uniparty" or the "establishment," threaten a primary. This exact playbook was exercised numerous times over the past few weeks of nomination votes. "Rules for Radicals."

It's a recipe for intellectual stagnation. It's a departure from the modern conservative movement, which has been defined by its innovative ideas, from school choice to civil-service reform. It sits unnaturally in a movement that has long prized individualism and entrepreneurship and condemned the left's collectivism. It mistakes the goal of party unity (the act of members compromising on strongly held positions for a legislative victory) with the tyranny of party conformity (think like we do, or get the boot).

And look how it worked out for Democrats.

Write to kim@wsj.com.

Fyodor Dostoevsky's Struggle With Faith

HOUSES OF WORSHIP
By Gary Saul Morson

As Fyodor Dostoevsky was taken to Siberia as a political prisoner in 1850, Natalya Fonvizina gave him a copy of the New Testament, the only book prisoners were allowed to have. It sustained him in adversity and led him to faith. Five years later, when Fonvizina was deeply depressed, Dostoevsky consoled her in what is doubtless the best-known letter in Russian literature.

Recalling his own days of despair, Dostoevsky explained that "at such moments one thirsts for faith like 'parched grass,' and one finds it at last because the truth becomes evident in unhappiness." The faith Dostoevsky found resembled not an unshakable conviction but a struggle with doubt. "I will tell you that I am a child of this century, a child of disbelief and doubt," he wrote. "I am that today and (I know) will remain so until the grave."

Since the rise of modern science, educated people have often found it difficult to believe with calm certainty the ideal of their medieval predecessors. Like Dostoevsky, they experience a painful internal conflict. "How much terrible torture this thirst for faith has cost me even now, which is all the stronger in my soul the more arguments I find against it," Dostoevsky wrote.

Readers of "The Brothers Karamazov" will recognize this same tortured struggle in its intellectual hero, Ivan. As a student of natural science, Ivan accepts that amoral natural laws govern everything and that good and evil are social conventions. But he can't relinquish a belief in transcendent, absolute morality. His whole being tells him that not all standards are mere conventions; some things, such as child abuse, are plainly wrong. Ivan is torn by this contradiction. Dostoevsky's spokesman, Father Zosima, assures Ivan that even if he never finds faith, he will never give up searching for it. "That is the peculiarity of your heart," Zosima instructs, "but thank the Creator who has given you a lofty heart capable of such suffering . . . [and] of seeking for higher things, for our dwelling is in the heavens."

To be sure, Dostoevsky writes to Fonvizina, God sometimes sends blissful moments when "I love and feel loved by others." Then he affirms his own "credo": Nothing is "more beautiful, profound, sympathetic . . . and more perfect than Christ." Whether or not Christ existed, his image is an unsurpassable ideal, a picture of the best possible moral being.

Dostoevsky continues: "If someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth, and that in reality the truth were outside Christ, I should still prefer to remain with Christ rather than with the truth." How can one believe in what one knows to be untrue? In the Gospel of Mark, the father who implores Jesus to cure his afflicted child exclaims: "Oh Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief." That Dostoevsky writes "even if" someone were to prove that the truth excludes Christ already indicates that he, like Ivan, will never be content with the complacent nihilism of other intellectuals.

This peculiar kind of faith, which consists partly of doubt, has become Dostoevsky's trademark and explains why he has brought so many people to God. It is hard to imagine educated Westerners converted by Dante or Milton, for whom God's existence was a simple fact. Dostoevsky's idea that the essence of faith lies in the process of searching for it speaks to those who are also children of "disbelief and doubt."

The Russian novelist accepted the idea that belief includes doubt and embraces wonder.

Dostoevsky's focus on process rather than goal shaped his view of human life. The utopian socialists of his day presumed that if you gave people everything so that they had nothing to strive for, they would be happy. Dostoevsky believed the opposite. People would instead soon see that "they had no more life left, no freedom of spirit . . . no personality. . . . They would see that their human image had disappeared." They would recognize "that there is no happiness in inactivity, that the mind which does not labor will wither, that it is not possible to love one's neighbor without sacrificing to him of one's own labor." In short, Dostoevsky concluded: "Happiness lies not in happiness but only in the attempt to achieve it." So does faith.

Variations on this theme appear in several of his novels. In "The Idiot," Ippolit declares that "Columbus was not happy when he had discovered America, but when he was discovering it. . . . It's life that matters, nothing but life—the process of discovering, the everlasting and perpetual process, not the discovery itself." But that is absurd, the unnamed hero of "Notes From Underground" comments. After all, once one knows he doesn't really want the goal, how can he strive for it? For the underground man, "there seems to be a kind of pun in it all."

Tolstoy once criticized Dostoevsky as "all struggle," but it is that characteristic that explains why his ideas resonate with so many. Those who can't view life with fashionable complacency, who understand that uncertainty can be a blessing and that no scientific discovery will ever reveal life's meaning, find inspiration in Dostoevsky's supremely paradoxical idea that true faith includes doubt and embraces wonder.

Mr. Morson is a professor of Slavic languages and literatures at Northwestern University.

Rubio Can Unhijack 'Human Rights'

By Robert P. George

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has taken swift action against woke Biden-era policies. Passports now list a holder's sex, not "gender," and there's no "X" option; and U.S. embassies are forbidden to display "pride" flags or any other banners than the Stars and Stripes.

These efforts are important and commendable. But Mr. Rubio can do more. He can reinstitute the State Department's efforts during the first Trump administration to restore the original understanding of human rights. Over the past 30 years, the definition of human rights has been reworked by progressives to promote socially liberal causes and woke dogma.

Human rights have long been a driving moral force in America's foreign policy. Ronald Reagan made the case against Soviet expansionism and oppression in the language of human rights. The rights to life, religious freedom, freedom of expression, and due process of law are all rooted, as Martin Luther King Jr. observed, in natural law and enshrined in our nation's founding documents. An understanding of rights as deriving from the inherent and equal dignity of every person echoes the American Founders' prophetic proclamation "that all men are created equal" and "endowed by their Creator" with "unalienable rights."

The Founders' definition of the term is ripe for revival.

During the Obama and Biden administrations, the State Department reconceived human rights to advance left-wing causes, from castigating countries like Poland for laws that uphold the sanctity of human life in all stages and imposing conditions to funneling foreign aid on behalf of gay rights and transgender ideology.

This reconception of human rights spurred Secretary Mike Pompeo to establish the Commission on Unalienable Rights in 2019, under the chairmanship of Harvard legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon. In its report, the commission outlined the historical Western conception of rights and recommended that the U.S. be "cautious" about "expanding" it.

The effort to stifle "legitimate debate by recasting contestable policy preferences as fixed and unquestionable human rights imperatives," the commission's report noted, "promotes intolerance, impedes reconciliation, devalues core rights, and denies rights in the name of rights."

In his recent speech at the Munich Security Conference, Vice President JD Vance expressed the U.S. government's concerns about violations of human rights—especially freedom of speech and religion—not only in Russia and China, but even in democracies like Germany, Sweden and the U.K. In bluntly condemning the policing of speech in Germany and thought in the U.K., where people have been arrested for praying silently, Mr. Vance sent a message that protection and promotion of human rights is in the U.S. national interest.

Mr. Rubio ought to revive the report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights and use it as a guidance document to reform human-rights policy. Americans deserve a State Department that defends rights that accord with the constitutional order that our Founders established.

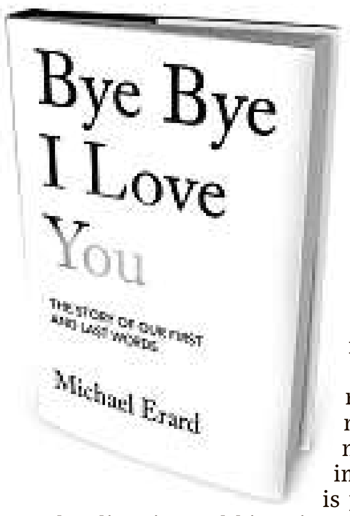
Mr. George is a professor of jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton.

BOOKSHELF | By Brandy Schillace

First Words and Final Moments

Bye Bye I Love You: The Story Of Our First and Last Words
By Michael Erard
MIT, 344 pages, $32.95

Olga Janáčková did not have long to live as she lay still upon the sofa, her hair in waves surrounding a "wide, gentle face." The 21-year-old had contracted typhoid and come home to die, watched over by her father, the Czech composer Leoš Janáček. For hours that February in 1903 Janáček waited at his daughter's side, making notes of her "speech melodies"—her words but also her sighs, her intonation, the music of her final moments ("I am dying, I am dying"). He also captured her feverish deliriums: "that was some walk we took!" and "there are just angels there." These were among the last words Janáčková spoke, but they weren't the final sounds she uttered.



With an ear for every exhalation, her father marked down single syllables, such as "kuk," "tak" and "jeje," along with the sound of her sighs, "a-ja." Nonsense, maybe. Or perhaps a different kind of sense, akin to that made by preverbal children trying to communicate using a meaning all their own.

Care for the dying resembles nothing so much as care for the newly born. This deep, immeasurable connection is precisely what Michael Erard, a linguist and historian, most wants to explore. "With our earliest utterances," he writes, "we announce ourselves" and are recognized "as persons ready to participate in social life." With our last sounds, we carve out a space for leaving it. "Bye Bye I Love You" follows both of these journeys, searching for what these words—and our desperate need to hear them—reveal about their meaning, our mortality and the ephemerality of being human.

In the West, we hang our own myths upon our babies' first words, imbuing them with meaning that is supposed to tell us something about the child's burgeoning personality. In American English, the most common first words are "mommy," "daddy," "ball," "bye," "Hi" and "No." But there are similarities between languages, too. When a child says "mommy," it feels like a deep connection. Yet these are words likely spoken around the baby with high regularity. "Interactions with parents and caregivers are important to babies," Mr. Erard explains. They will use the words for things that most intimately relate to themselves, things that are a part of their new world.

First words are also a matter of interpretation. Babies speak protophones first—sounds that aren't quite words but that we might read as the "runway of his creative experimentation." Mr. Erard provides one such example using his own child's first words, "round round," uttered while peering at a ceiling fan. As a father, the author found himself trying to plot a future personality based on these words: Perhaps the child would like a ball; perhaps he will enjoy sports. The words had meaning for the speaker as much as the listener, an identifiable subtext: "I am he who notices fast-moving round things." I speak, therefore I am.

The first half of "Bye Bye I Love You" provides this linguistic geography, but the heart of the book is in the country beyond, where there are no maps. Death comes. When it arrives, via age and illness, when the mind and body give way to encroaching entropy, last words carry deep and abiding meanings. And yet, most dying people are, in their last moments, silent. Reliable databases of last words do not exist. Collections of famous last words are rarely bedside recordings; more likely they are highly curated and probably mythologized. In the "ordinary language of ordinary dying," deep philosophical utterance is rare. "It seems cruel to dangle such a prospect in front of people," Mr. Erard writes. "After all, rainbows don't happen every time it rains."

As we enter and leave the world, the task of communication looms large. Simple sounds and gestures can take on great importance.

Dying is not only the stopping of heartbeats and the cessation of breath; it happens incrementally all over. The brain and its gifts are not exempt. As hypoxia sets in, there isn't enough oxygen to feed the brain. Thoughts cloud, grow confused, collide. Words fail. There are stories unnumbered where loved ones are left in silence, watching their beloved struggle and fail to communicate. We pine for those precious last things to be said. We want assurances that we are heard and understood, too. We want those last moments to be ones of linguistic connection, a memento mori we can keep. But should we? Have we, in our focus on words as the mark of being and becoming, missed something more important?

In Papua New Guinea, aging people are described as becoming children again. They lose mobility, they make less sense, they end as nonverbal *zik mandion*—"unripe" or a "not yet ready child." And here, the first part of Mr. Erard's study returns with great poignancy. In the unripe utterance of babies, we can still find connection. The body language, the look, the touch, the flutter of lashes. "The final utterance, in whatever mode it appears"—whether the squeeze of the fingers, or perhaps a letting go of them—can smooth the path to dying. What matters is that we are open to that moment, ready to receive what the dying can give, even in silence. There doesn't need to be a word for everything.

Ms. Schillace, the editor in chief of the journal Medical Humanities, is the host of the online "Peculiar Book Club" podcast and the author of "Death's Summer Coat."

Coming in BOOKS this weekend

Meghan Cox Gurdon on the best 20 children's books of the last 20 years • Silicon Valley and the future of the West • Catholic confession in America • Merle Oberon's life on screen • How to manage our emotions • & more

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

A Mineral Deal Ukraine Can't Refuse

Volodymyr Zelensky visits the White House on Friday to nail down a mineral rights deal between the U.S. and Ukraine, and it's an offer the Ukrainian President couldn't refuse. But regardless of President Trump's bullying demands, the deal gives the U.S. a stake in Ukraine's future.

The agreement gives the U.S. a stake in the country's peaceful future.

Ukraine is in many ways an underdeveloped country, and that includes its natural resources. The country has Europe's largest supply of uranium, second-largest supply of natural gas, and substantial reserves of lithium and other rare-earth minerals. These resources are valued at about $1 trillion, and about a third are in Russian-occupied territory in eastern Ukraine.

Mr. Trump wants a share of those resources as repayment for the aid the U.S. has provided Kyiv during the war. This is the transactional way Mr. Trump views the world and it smacks of reparations, but Mr. Zelensky had little choice other than to oblige if he wants to secure a credible "peace" with Russia. Mr. Zelensky was at least able to negotiate better terms than Mr. Trump first demanded.

Under the final deal, Ukraine will pay half of all revenue from developing these resources to an investment fund jointly owned with the U.S. The agreement says contributions will be invested "to promote the safety, security and prosperity of Ukraine." The details will be worked out between the economic ministries, and Ukraine's Parliament will have to ratify it.

The war has caused enormous destruction in Ukraine, which will need hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild. Foreign taxpayers can't be expected to cover this cost, and Ukraine will need private investment. Other investors might be more inclined to help Ukraine rebuild if the U.S. is involved.

The deal won't apply to resources that have already been developed and contribute to Ukraine's budget. That's important because Ukraine uses domestic revenue to fund its military, including soldier pay and weapons. Russia wants a peace deal that limits Ukraine's military.

The mineral deal includes no U.S. security guarantees but says the U.S. "supports Ukraine's efforts to obtain security guarantees needed to establish lasting peace." It's hard to know what that unspecific promise means, but in Mr. Trump's mind it probably means Europeans help first.

Mr. Trump continues to peddle falsehoods about how much aid the U.S. and Europe have provided Ukraine. He claims the U.S. is "in for $350 billion" in Ukraine. But through December the real U.S. total was nearly $120 billion in military, financial and humanitarian support.

He says Europe has given much less than the U.S., but it has spent or promised $137 billion, according to Europe's authoritative Kiel Institute. The U.S. has provided more arms because it has more, but Europe has provided more aid overall.

By the way, Mr. Trump on Thursday walked back his claim last week that Mr. Zelensky is a "dictator." Press question: "Do you still think Zelensky is a dictator?"

Mr. Trump: "Did I say that? I can't believe I said that. Next question."

That welcome, if head-spinning, reversal is more proof that what matters isn't what Mr. Trump says but what he does. That is especially true as the war negotiations begin in earnest between the U.S. and Russia. French and British leaders traveled to Washington this week to lobby Mr. Trump to provide a U.S. backstop for any European troops that deploy to Ukraine after a deal is struck.

If the mineral deal makes Mr. Trump more inclined to provide that guarantee, so much the better for Ukraine, Europe and the U.S.

'Crush Zionism' on Your Own Time

Remember when Sen. Chuck Schumer was revealed to have told the president of Columbia University not to worry about Congressional oversight because "universities' political problems are really only among Republicans"? Well, Republicans are now in power in Washington. Will colleges adapt?

Columbia's anti-Israel student coalition announced Sunday that two student activists have been expelled by Barnard College, which is closely affiliated with Columbia across the street. The two seniors disrupted a class to shout Hamas propaganda, so Barnard kicked them out and told them don't come back. Imagine that.

But on Wednesday masked anti-Israel activists stormed a Barnard building to demand the expulsions be reversed. Barnard says a staff member was physically assaulted and sent to the hospital by the rioters, but it allowed them to camp out for hours, vandalize walls and shout support for Hamas "resistance." Instead of removing them, Barnard canceled classes.

At one point Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine boasted, "Dean Leslie Grinage of @BarnardCollege just asked for our permission to use the bathroom. Guess who has the upper hand now?" They refused to take off masks and dispersed only after being assured they wouldn't face disciplinary consequences.

Here's what they were rallying to defend: On Jan. 21, four masked students banging on drums entered a History of Modern Israel class. They held up a picture of Hamas terrorists pointing guns with the caption "The Enemy Will Not See Tomorrow," along with the inverted red triangle Hamas uses to mark targets in its videos. The students recited droning slogans and handed out leaflets reading "Crush Zionism," with a boot stomping on a star of David. Prof. Avi Shilon, a top scholar visiting from Israel, tried to reason with the four wannabe Hamasniks in Arabic but they didn't speak any.

The two Barnard students were expelled and a third from Columbia is suspended pending an investigation. The fourth hasn't been identified; masks can provide impunity.

Barnard's first statement after the expulsion explained, "When rules are broken, when there is no remorse, no reflection, and no willingness to change, we must act." We hope Barnard rediscovers its backbone and punishes the rioters.

Colleges allowed hard-left and Islamic bullies to break the rules last year. Typically they got off scot-free or were put on probation. Some received suspensions that, with faculty help, were reduced to a requirement to take a joke course on lawful protest.

The likes of Sen. Schumer were never going to hold schools accountable. Now, colleges that let activists get away with intimidating Jews—even if they hide behind the word "Zionist"—risk federal investigation for failing to uphold Jewish students' civil rights. As the lawyer Alyza Lewin asks, "Would university administrators permit student clubs to demand that Catholics disavow the Vatican or that Muslims shed their connection to Mecca in order to be accepted?"

Another route is to investigate discrimination against Israeli students on the basis of their national origin. That, too, violates Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. There are plenty of options when the party in power doesn't consider antisemitism to be somebody else's issue.

A Total Subsidy That Needs DOGE

Hard to believe, but the U.S. Export-Import Bank may underwrite a foreign-backed liquefied natural gas export project in Africa that would compete with American fuel shipments. Talk about an agency in need of the DOGE treatment.

Why should U.S. taxpayers underwrite a foreign LNG project?

The ExIm Bank's putative purpose is to finance purchases of U.S. exports and make American products more globally competitive. In practice, the agency finances investments by big businesses that primarily benefit foreign companies and governments, much like the U.S. Agency for International Development.

France's TotalEnergies' Mozambique LNG export project is an example. Mozambique boasts large natural gas reserves off its coasts, but the East African country suffers from conflict and instability, which has spooked private investors. Total wants the U.S. and other governments to finance its $20 billion LNG project to reduce its risk.

The ExIm Bank approved a $4.7 billion loan for the project in 2020 on the rationale that China and Russia might otherwise finance the deal. But this justification strays from the agency's stated mission.

Attacks by Islamic militants in the region prompted TotalEnergies to pause the project in 2021. Biden officials never finalized funding, but TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanne recently said he expects the Trump team to do so soon. "Security has improved, but it will never be perfect," he noted. Not perfect? Islamic State militants are rampaging across the region.

Why should U.S. taxpayers underwrite a risky foreign project that competes with American businesses that don't need or receive government support? The Mozambique project would be capable of exporting 13 million tons a year (MTPA). The U.S. currently can export 140 MTPA with another 86 under construction, plus 89 under regulatory review.

Earlier this month TotalEnergies said it planned to boost investments in U.S. LNG. Great. Europe and Japan could use all the U.S. LNG exports they can get as they try to wean themselves off Russian gas without damaging their economies with high energy prices. France increased imports of Russian LNG by 81% last year, despite the war in Ukraine.

Unlike other Western energy giants, TotalEnergies didn't withdraw from Russia after the Ukraine invasion. It still owns large stakes in three major Russian LNG export projects. TotalEnergies last year also signed "a strategic cooperation agreement to deepen their collaboration" with state-owned China Petroleum and Chemical Cooperation.

TotalEnergies seems to be leveraging its partnerships with Russia and China to argue that the U.S. should finance its Mozambique project to counter those U.S. adversaries in Africa. The Biden ExIm leaders invoked a similar rationale to approve a $1.6 billion loan guarantee for a solar and battery storage project in Angola, among other wasteful projects.

If Republicans in Congress let ExIm's authorization lapse next year, they could claim victory for shutting down at least one agency. Meantime, the Trump Administration can order the agency to freeze new deals to avoid throwing good taxpayer money after bad.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Two Views on the 'Myth of the Trade Deficit'

In their Feb. 21 op-ed "Trump's Myth of the Trade Deficit," Phil Gramm and Donald Boudreaux correctly note that when American demand for investment exceeds domestic savings, trade deficits create American jobs by funding otherwise unfunded domestic investment with offshore savings. But that hasn't been the case for decades. Risk-averse offshore savings proffered at near-zero interest rates didn't fund increased business investment. They funded a one-time increase in subprime consumption before the financial crisis and an enormous deficit-financed increase in handouts after the financial crisis.

We borrowed and gave away goods made by offshore workers who would have been unemployed when their savings exceeded investment. Even if we had insisted that Americans work to pay back their borrowed income, it wouldn't have increased employment. It would have re-employed workers who lost their jobs when we bought goods made by offshore workers who lent us their savings rather than buying our goods—an identity that's hard to recognize when lower wages equilibrate employment.

Ed Conard
American Enterprise Institute
New York

Messrs. Gramm and Boudreaux do an excellent job of explaining the necessity of trade deficits when the U.S. has a net inflow of foreign investment, a capital account surplus. Too often, people view this accounting identity as bookkeeping mumbo jumbo. The case of the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tenn., can help illustrate the tangible reality of this link.

In 2008 Volkswagen announced its plan to spend about a billion dollars to build a factory in Chattanooga. The plant was built by American workers using American materials on American soil. German ownership of the facility only makes sense if Americans received goods and services of equal value in exchange. That is, to get the money, Volkswagen had to sell a billion dollars of goods directly to Americans, or indirectly by selling to others who sell to Americans, which deducts a billion dollars from the trade account. Were this not the case, we would have given away a billion-dollar factory.

Ironically, had the factory been built on barges in the Tennessee River and shipped overseas, along with the jobs it created in Chattanooga, it would have counted as an export and been cheered by those who view trade surpluses as economic gains.

David W. Kreutzer
Falls Church, Va.

Remember Putin's Long and Bloody Résumé

Your editorial Feb. 20 "Trump Tilts Toward a Ukraine Sellout" notes that President Trump has been feuding with President Zelensky over the war between Russia and Ukraine. Mr. Trump has evidently become buddies with Vladimir Putin and claims, for instance, that Mr. Zelensky is a dictator because there hasn't been an election since the war began. Never mind that under Ukrainian law elections are suspended during wartime.

In making such statements this way, the president forgets or ignores a long list of horrors that have flowed from the only true authoritarian in the conflict. Here are a few:

The assassinations of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny; Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner mercenary group, who died in a suspicious helicopter crash; Sergei Yushenkov, leader of the anti-Kremlin party Liberal Russia who was shot in front of his Moscow home; the journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was assassinated in her apartment building for exposing rights abuses in Chechnya; Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned in London after accusing the Russian Federal Security Bureau of trying to murder the oligarch Boris Berezovsky; Natalya Estemirova, noted human-rights activist who was abducted near her home and found with bullet holes in her head and chest after she began investigating kidnappings and murder in Chechnya; Sergei Magnitsky, the whistle-blowing lawyer who had implicated Russian officials in a tax fraud and later died in jail; and Boris Nemtsov, shot dead on a bridge near the Kremlin for protesting against Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Mr. Trump says that his Russian counterpart wants peace. The free world, and the families of those he has slain, await the evidence.

Harvey A. Silverglate
Cambridge, Mass.

Reciprocal Tariffs Only Cause Reciprocal Pain

Douglas A. Irwin writes powerfully about the problems of outsourcing our trade policy to other countries ("'Reciprocal' Tariffs Make No Sense," op-ed, Feb. 14). By promising to reciprocate others' tariffs, we are promising to reciprocate their foolishness.

It's time to end the failed experiment with tariffs, especially against larger economies, like China. Mr. Trump's own Council of Economic Advisers confirmed the policy's failure in 2019. Writing of the administration's attempts, the group stated: "Rather than changing its practices, China announced retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods," as did Canada, the European Union, Mexico, Russia and Turkey. President Biden's trade representative in 2024 reported that China "persisted and even [became] more aggressive" in response to U.S. levies.

The president has adopted tariffs as a hammer but not all of our problems are nails. Such blunt instruments ultimately fail to accomplish their aims. Rather than seek to punish or threaten other countries into changing their trade policies, Mr. Trump should take a page out of "The Art of the Deal" and find win-win propositions that reduce barriers to trade, not erect new ones. Doing so would enrich the lives of all Americans, boost domestic manufacturing and lower prices for domestic producers and consumers—exactly the goals Mr. Trump promised on the campaign trail.

David Hebert
American Inst. for Economic Research
Grand Rapids, Mich.

How DOGE Could Wield AI Against Waste in Healthcare

Your Feb. 11 editorial "The Federal Spending Boom Rolls On" states that the Department of Government Efficiency is only nibbling at the edges of Washington's spending problem so long as it takes Medicare and Medicaid off the reform list. There's a way to solve this problem. Elon Musk's employees doubtless have the know-how to develop the DOGE Smart Payment System, powered by artificial intelligence, to screen claims for Medicare and Medicaid and weed out questionable ones before they are paid.

The goal would be to reduce fraud, waste and abuse, which is estimated to be a significant percentage of the $1.5 trillion CMS budget. The DOGE system could be trained using the gigantic database of claims that have been paid and denied. Think about it: A 5% reduction would generate billions in savings each year. Repeat offenders would be held accountable, limiting future abuse in a virtuous cycle.

Hank Werronen
Washington

Rauch Responds to Criticism

While, like any author, I welcome attention from the estimable Wall Street Journal, neither the headline nor the text of Barton Swaim's review accurately represents my work ("It's All the Evangelicals' Fault . . . Again," Houses of Worship, Feb. 21). My book is framed as an apology to Christians for my own misguided celebration of secularization, and it ends with a plea to fellow secular liberals to recognize and support, rather than neglect or dismiss, Christianity's important role in our country's political and cultural health.

Mr. Swaim correctly notes that I join with many Christians in criticizing white evangelicals' choice to put power ahead of principle. For one such criticism, see Matthew 4:10. But readers will find my book to be more balanced than his portrayal.

Jonathan Rauch
Washington

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Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"This isn't what I intended when I started Casual Fridays."

OPINION

Following the Money, AP Moves Left

By Ira Stoll

At the end of a recently published Associated Press investigation into American tech companies "that have supported Israel's wars" came a disclosure: "The Associated Press receives financial assistance from the Omidyar Network."

The language indicates a shift at the media outlet, whose special White House access President Trump recently withdrew. The news-gathering cooperative was once funded largely by dues from member newspapers. Now it increasingly relies on handouts from left-leaning charities. Yet it insists its journalism is "independent" and "nonpartisan."

Bloomberg estimates eBay founder Pierre Omidyar's fortune at $12.5 billion. Federal election records show he gave $1 million in March 2024 to the ACLU Voter Education Fund and $450,000 in 2016 to political-action committees opposing the Trump-Pence ticket.

The nonprofit media outlet takes handouts from the Omidyar Network and other ideological charities.

Previous media spending by Mr. Omidyar, his wife and their network has supported stridently far-left and anti-Israel outlets, including the Intercept, which recently launched as an independent nonprofit, and In These Times. The Intercept has questioned the reporting of the New York Times on Hamas's systematic sexual assault of Israelis. It also suggested that the Times is biased in favor of Israel because the current Times executive editor's late father was active in a pro-Israel press-watchdog group. In These Times devotes an entire section to "Palestine" alongside "politics" and "opinion." It cheers boycotts of Israel and smears the Jewish state's war of self-defense as a "genocidal onslaught."

The Omidyar Network's grant to the AP is ostensibly to expand coverage of artificial intelligence, but somehow the funds paid for reporters to scrutinize Microsoft's and Google's use by the Israeli government. The AP had a hard-earned reputation for nonpartisanship. It's sad to see that reputation rented to Omidyar and ruined for what appears to be a quarter-million-dollar grant.

That sum is a small share of the AP's total foundation action. The AP's 2023 annual report boasts of "81 grants totaling $60.9 million." Other money comes from groups with agendas. The KR Foundation, a Denmark-based organization that backs "a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels," is an AP funder. So is the Hewlett Foundation, which was a force behind Joe Biden's inflationary spending policies. Hewlett has spent more than $2 million backing AP coverage.

A spokeswoman for AP told me that "each foundation goes through a thorough standards review to ensure its commitment to editorial independence" and that "AP retains complete editorial control over its journalism." She said omitting Omidyar from a public list of AP's funders was an "oversight" and will be corrected. The Omidyar Network didn't reply to my questions.

One journalistic project unlikely to be funded by big foundations: energetic investigative coverage of the charities themselves—their out-of-touch politicized groupthink, extravagantly compensated executives and counterproductive spending.

Meanwhile, if Mr. Trump's rollback of AP's special access makes readers more skeptical, that may be healthy. For-profits can make the idealistic, evidence-based case that good journalism is good business. Perhaps in nonprofit journalism, both parties to the transaction will realize that when a news organization starts selling its reputation, its value diminishes. In any case, readers will figure it out.

Mr. Stoll writes at TheEditors.com.

Do National Parks Need the Feds?

By Robert Showah

At Yosemite National Park, one person is responsible for rescuing visitors from locked bathrooms: a federally employed locksmith. When he was fired recently in President Trump's bureaucratic purge, park rangers could do little but protest by scaling El Capitan with an upside-down American flag. The absurdity of having access to basic facilities hinge on one man reflects a deeper dysfunction that goes beyond Mr. Trump's scattershot effort.

After the outcry, the Trump administration reversed some firings, and the National Park Service said it would hire several thousand seasonal workers—presumably a locksmith or two among them. The National Park Service's operations are a vivid microcosm of a broader discussion about the federal government's purview in the modern age.

The National Park Service was established in 1916 to manage and protect national parks, ensuring the preservation of natural and cultural resources amid growing tourism, industrial expansion and threats from unregulated development. The national parks themselves came before that, beginning with Yellowstone in 1872. At the time, there were few legal safeguards for conservation, leading to concerns about deforestation, excessive grazing of livestock, commercial development and unregulated tourism spoiling these scenic treasures. Over the next four decades, environmental activists succeeded in getting national parks federalized.

That was more than 100 years ago—long before Washington had anywhere near as much on its plate as it does today. Yet many elected officials speak of protecting public lands as though the only thing standing in the way of Yosemite turning into an exploited quarry is its designation as federal public land. The reality is quite the opposite.

Since the National Park Service was established, California has passed laws that protect Yosemite from environmental and commercial harm. The California Environmental Quality Act mandates environmental reviews for developments near the park, while the California Endangered Species Act protects vulnerable species like the California condor.


BRITTANY COLT.

An upside-down American flag hangs on El Capitan in Yosemite.

If Yosemite became a California state park tomorrow, would it turn into a strip mall?

Air-quality standards through the California Air Resources Board help keep Yosemite's air clean. The Forest Practice Act regulates logging to prevent habitat destruction, and Proposition 65 protects water quality by limiting toxic chemical releases. All these laws, alongside existing federal protections, help preserve Yosemite.

Technology has revolutionized environmental management, allowing local agencies to oversee natural resources without heavy federal involvement. Satellite monitoring and remote sensing provide real-time data on land conditions, while data analytics help optimize tourism through timed entries, online reservations and crowd monitoring. Meanwhile, state park systems, private conservation initiatives and nonprofit organizations already manage vast landscapes, proving that effective land stewardship doesn't depend on federal oversight.

Yet the bureaucracy remains. Why? Because it follows the Lindy effect: The longer it's been established, the longer it endures and—in the case of federal power—expands beyond its original purpose long after its necessity has faded. Returning federal public lands to state and local control isn't only about parks. It's about preventing many policy matters from being needlessly subjected to the micromanagement and twisted incentives of federal politicking.

In 2017, Mr. Trump reduced the size of the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah. The year before, President Obama, under the Antiquities Act, had designated those 1.3 million acres—larger than some national parks—a national monument. Both Mr. Obama's and Mr. Trump's decrees divided locals and stoked fears that sacred sites would be exploited for mining.

Before legal challenges brought by Native American tribes and environmentalists could make it to court, Joe Biden was inaugurated and restored the Obama boundaries, prompting lawsuits from Utah officials. With Mr. Trump back in office, affected communities are likely in for more political whiplash. But Mr. Trump's actions didn't relinquish the area to an unregulated Wild West. Then and now, the Bureau of Land Management has overseen the area, along with the 65% of Utah's area that is designated federal public land. It isn't hard to see why Utahns are angry.

Political observers too often operate on the false premise that withdrawing the feds necessarily means that no constituencies, institutions or incentives will arise to deliver what is good for the people. That doesn't mean federal power has no role—but that it should serve as a facilitator of localism, supporting pluralism rather than undermining it in the name of some nebulous "unity."

If Yosemite became a California state park tomorrow, would it suddenly become a strip mall? Of course not. Federal control persists not because it's necessary, but because it's the status quo—an assumption rarely challenged despite changing realities. As environmental protections, technology and governance structures progress, so should the approach to public lands. If Congress had the backbone, it could strike a deal that ensures joint local control between state officials and indigenous groups.

For many Washington technocrats accustomed to an antiquated governing philosophy of reflexive federalization from the steam engine era, that's an uncomfortable conversation. When it comes to the long-term risks of power consolidation, they will continue to miss the forest for the trees.

Mr. Showah writes That Patchwork, a Substack newsletter.

How MAGA Bungled the German Election

POLITICAL ECONOMICS

By Joseph C. Sternberg

Germany's election on Sunday produced a lot of losers, and two of the bigger ones aren't even German: Elon Musk and JD Vance. They can't say they weren't warned.

To recap: German voters have swung toward the right in frustration over out-of-control immigration and economic malaise. The biggest winner was Friedrich Merz, leader of the center-right Christian Democrats Union, whose 28.6% vote share—including that of the CDU's Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union—will make him the next chancellor. The biggest losers were parties of the center-left, the Social Democrats (a humiliating 16.4%) and the Greens (11.6%).

Then there's the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD. In many ways, this party had a very good election. Its 20.8% vote share doubles the tally from the 2021 election, despite (not, as some worry, because of) some of its leaders' persistent flirtations with Nazi rhetoric.

Still, some caveats attach. The party's final vote count was noticeably short of the 22% to 23% support it enjoyed in many opinion polls at times in 2023 and 2024. In parliamentary coalition building, a few points is a big deal. The party is a significant force, but it hasn't yet shaken off the question of whether there's a ceiling to its support.

The AfD's underperformance is all the more noticeable because fate seemed to arrange current events in the party's favor. Its signature issue is hostility to migration. The last month of the campaign was dominated by news of two terrible crimes allegedly committed by migrants who ought to have been deported months, or years, earlier. And still the AfD managed not to achieve even the 22% support many polls predicted right before the election.

This is where Messrs. Musk and Vance come in—or rather, don't. In the last two months, these tribunes of Donald Trump and Make America Great Again national conservatism threw their weight behind the AfD.

Mr. Musk opined that only this party could "save" Germany, and introduced party leader Alice Weidel to the Anglosphere via a one-hour interview in English on his X platform. Mr. Vance met Ms. Weidel during a trip to Munich a little more than a week before the election—a much-publicized conference—and then in a speech warned Germany against erecting political "firewalls."

Mr. Vance's comment was a direct jab at mainstream German politicians' refusal to contemplate coalitions with the AfD, a stricture born of the AfD's refusal to purge apparent Nazi sympathizers from its leadership ranks.

Embarrassingly for the two Americans, these interventions appear to have had zero effect on German voters. The AfD's slight rise in opinion polls after Mr. Musk started stomping around the china shop in January looks like a mere continuation of a gradual polling improvement that had been already under way for some time. And it may have been an illusion, given that the party fell short on election day.

One explanation for MAGA's lack of influence on the election outcome may be Germans' suspicion that Messrs. Musk and Vance simply didn't know what they were talking about.

For instance, there are good reasons for that firewall Mr. Vance decried. Among the AfD's most prominent politicians is Björn Höcke, the party's leader in the state of Thuringia, who's been convicted twice of

A center-right chancellor should be good news for the GOP. Musk and Vance shouldn't have meddled.

using a Nazi slogan—"Alles für Deutschland," the motto of Hitler's Brownshirts—in campaign rallies. (Mr. Höcke, a former history teacher, has appealed the convictions and said he hadn't known the phrase's historical associations.) Ms. Weidel said during the campaign she regretted trying to expel him from the party in 2017, and now he may be trying to seed his loyalists among the AfD's parliamentary caucus, the Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper reported this week.

The MAGA case for the AfD seemed to be that America's mainstream media launched a deceptive resistance against Mr. Trump and therefore negative reporting elsewhere about parties of the right must be equally false. But this effort to graft U.S. political and culture wars onto Germany—with its own history and present concerns—proved baffling or off-putting rather than compelling to many Germans.

The trouble is that more is at stake than embarrassment for a couple foolish American politicos. This ill-fated foray into German politics could have negative consequences for American interests.

The most serious is the possibility Messrs. Musk and Vance alienated Mr. Merz. Europe's largest economy has just elected one of the more pro-U.S. politicians within the country's most pro-U.S. party. But widespread irritation at MAGA's pro-AfD turn, plus Mr. Trump's recent erratic approach to the Ukraine war, seems to have pushed a politician who once led Atlantic Brücke—a political networking organization that's exactly what the name implies—to now speak of the need for German "independence" from Washington.

MAGA promises a realism-based approach to foreign policy. What Messrs. Musk and Vance delivered in Germany is almost exactly the opposite: a headlong rush into the politics of a country they apparently don't understand, in an effort to project America's particular set of cultural and political neuroses onto the rest of the world, and with ill effects for America. Next time perhaps they'll want to stick to "America first."

Congress Can Easily Green-Light DOGE

By Jed Rubenfeld

The firestorm over President Trump's alleged executive overreach—and most of the court cases challenging it—could be largely extinguished if a single sentence were added to the soon-to-be-passed reconciliation bill: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for fiscal years 2025-26 the president is hereby authorized and directed to identify and eliminate at least $500 billion of waste, fraud and abuse in federal spending by auditing expenditures, discharging employees or officers, canceling grants and reducing or eliminating agencies and departments."

Most of the challenges to Mr. Trump's executive orders and the actions of the Department of Government Efficiency don't involve constitutional rights. Instead, the plaintiffs claim that Mr. Trump is violating statutes or exercising authority Congress hasn't granted him. That's the core claim behind the court cases attacking Mr. Trump's firings, grant freezes, dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development, decision to give Elon Musk access to agency data and so on. (His executive order on birthright citizenship does involve an alleged violation of constitutional rights.) Such claims would be made moot if Congress gave the president express power to take these actions.

The reason Mr. Trump's Republican allies in Congress haven't already done so is the Senate filibuster. Despite taking control of the White House, the Senate and the House, Republicans are still powerless to enact

A simple sentence in the reconciliation bill would resolve legal concerns.

most of their legislative agenda because they don't have the 60 Senate votes needed to overcome a filibuster. But the Senate can't filibuster a reconciliation bill. Reconciliation is virtually the only opportunity for congressional Republicans to enact a law with a simple majority in the House and Senate.

The catch is that a federal statute and Senate traditions limit what can go into a reconciliation bill. In general, reconciliation can be used only for measures directed at federal revenue and expenditures—but not those that affect Social Security. There's a good argument that my proposed provision would satisfy these restrictions because it's directed at reducing expenditures, but Senate Democrats would surely object.

Here's where things get interesting. In the event of an objection, the nonpartisan Senate parliamentarian determines whether a provision in a reconciliation bill is "in order." But the parliamentarian's determination is only advisory. The real power lies with the Senate's presiding officer, who can ignore the parliamentarian. The Senate's presiding officer happens to be the vice president.

In other words, JD Vance would have the ultimate authority to decide if the provision on waste, fraud and abuse could stay in the reconciliation bill. The Senate can overrule the vice president, but it would require a three-fifths vote.

Majority Leader John Thune warned Republicans in January to respect the parliamentarian's determinations. The last vice president to ignore the parliamentarian was Nelson Rockefeller in 1975. But this administration doesn't seem likely to feel constrained by unwritten senatorial norms that stand in the way of Congress's majority will.

Mr. Rubenfeld is a Yale law professor.

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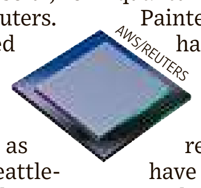
Amazon Unveils Quantum Chip

By Belle Lin

Amazon.com's cloud-computing business on Thursday unveiled its first quantum computing chip, which it says marks an important step in the development of useful, reliable quantum computers.

The chip, dubbed Ocelot, can lower the costs of reducing quantum computing errors by as much as 90%, the Seattle-based tech giant said.



AWS/REUTERS

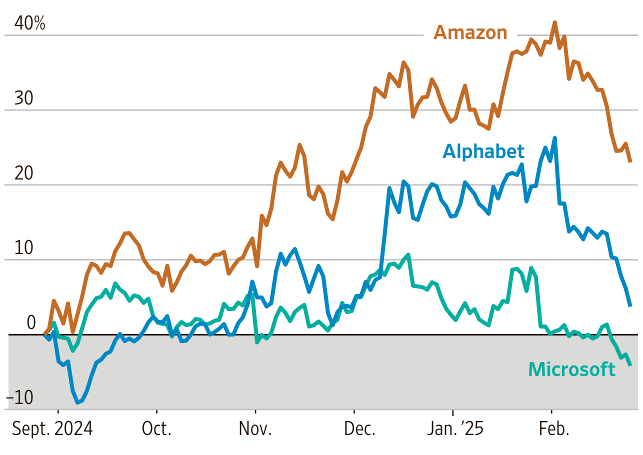
Amazon's Ocelot chip

The race to build a practical quantum computer has been heating up among startups and the world's biggest tech companies. Amazon Web Services' announcement comes just a week after **Microsoft** claimed a quantum-computing breakthrough by creating a new state of matter. **Alphabet**'s Google in December said it developed a new chip, called Willow, that it said marks an advance in solving quantum's error-correction issues.

Amazon's Ocelot chip is a prototype, not a "full-blown quantum system," said Oskar Painter, head of quantum hardware for AWS. "It's designed to test our ability to perform quantum error correction, and once we have that building block, then we can scale it up to a much larger size."

One of quantum computing's biggest challenges is that qubits, the basic units of quantum computation, generate errors as they tackle problems, with the errors increasing as quantum systems get bigger. Qubits are fragile and susceptible to "noise," essentially small disturbances in the environment like heat and vibrations, which force them out of their quantum state. Quantum error correction is used to help fix the problems created from that noise.

Share-price performance, past six months



Source: FactSet

Quantum computers can crunch numbers in a fundamentally different way from traditional computers and can do certain computations orders of magnitude faster. They can be useful in areas including drug discovery, data encryption and cybersecurity.

While some companies have been working on building practical quantum computers for decades, the technology is still at least a decade away from commercial use, according to Painter. Other companies and industry experts say it is just a few years away.

Amazon, Microsoft and Google are all trying to solve the challenge of quantum error correction, though Google's work in developing superconducting quantum circuits is most similar to Amazon's, according to Painter. Results of Amazon's work were published in Nature, a leading scientific journal, on Wednesday.

Amazon formally kicked off its efforts to build a quantum

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Tariff Threats Hit S&P, Nasdaq

By Heather Gillers And Angus Berwick

Fresh tariff threats and a tech selloff dragged stocks lower, with the S&P 500 surrendering the last of its gains for the year.

A reported uptick in jobless claims Thursday followed disappointing home-sales data. Investors, meanwhile, tried to digest the Trump administration's plans on tariffs and federal spending cuts.

The technology-heavy Nasdaq Composite fell 2.8%, or 530.84 points, to close at 18544.42, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.5%, or 193.62 points, to 43239.5. The S&P 500 dropped 1.6%, or 94.49 points, to 5861.57, pushing its total return for the year into negative territory.

"What the market hates is surprises," said Michael Antonelli, managing director at Baird. "We're in this world

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Microsoft Asks That AI Limits Be Eased

By Amrith Ramkumar And Tom Dotan

Microsoft is pushing the Trump administration to loosen and simplify a new system that would restrict the sales of cutting-edge U.S. artificial-intelligence chips to much of the world.

In a blog post Thursday, Microsoft called for Trump's team to ease the limits on chips that can be used in data centers for training AI models so they no longer apply to a group of U.S.-friendly nations including India, Switzerland and Israel.

Those countries are in the second tier of a three-tier system that underpins the export controls.

Microsoft says the unintended consequence of the proposed system would be that countries facing limited U.S. chip supply would turn to China to get the tech infrastructure they need.

China is using the proposed rule to argue to other countries that it would be a better long-term partner for AI infrastructure than the U.S., Microsoft President Brad Smith said in an interview.

"Their message is these countries can't rely on the U.S., but China is willing to provide what they need," he said. "That is not good for American business or American foreign policy."

DeepSeek, the Chinese company that took many U.S. lawmakers and companies by sur-

Please turn to page B2

Higher Coffee Prices Are Coming, Smucker Says

RICHARD B. LEVINE/ZUMA PRESS

In January, Arabica coffee prices hit a record after President Trump threatened 25% tariffs and sanctions on Colombia.

Your morning cup of joe isn't getting any cheaper.

J.M. Smucker, which sells the Dunkin', Folgers and Café Bustelo brands, said it would continue raising prices on coffee to offset its own higher costs.

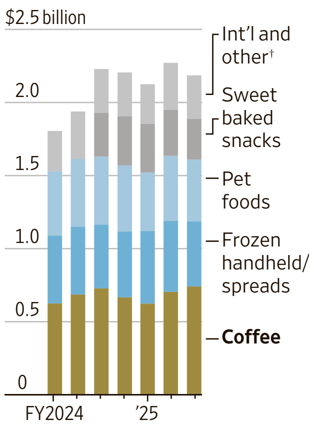
Smucker raised prices for some coffee products last June, and then again in October, reflecting record green-coffee costs. The Orrville, Ohio-based company said Thursday that it expects to lift prices further, likely in the first half of its next fiscal year.

Higher prices helped boost sales for Smucker's retail coffee business in its latest quarter, Smucker said.

Coffee prices have soared as poor weather in major growing regions has disrupted production. In January, Arabica coffee hit an record after President Trump threatened 25% tariffs and economic sanctions on Colombia, a major exporter, before backing down.

Arabica coffee futures price past year

J.M. Smucker revenue by segment*



*Latest fiscal quarter ended Jan. 31. †Other includes sales to schools, offices, restaurants and others
Sources: FactSet (prices); S&P Capital IQ, the company (revenue)

Sales of at-home coffee jumped during the pandemic, when millions of Americans began working from home. More recently, shoppers have been looking for deals as grocery bills continue to increase.

Chief Executive Mark Smucker said at-home coffee drinking remains strong, and the company's products are affordable compared with coffee shops or energy drinks: "A brewed cup of coffee, even a K-Cup, is a fraction of the cost."

He said the coffee industry has made progress helping smallholder farmers improve their crops, and with breeding programs focused on creating coffee plants that are more resistant to climate change.

"The commodity is cyclical," the CEO said. "Over time the commodity will moderate."

—Jesse Newman

Meta Apologizes For Violent Instagram Video Feeds

By Meghan Bobrowsky And Jeff Horwitz

Meta Platforms apologized Wednesday night for what it said was an "error" that led to graphic and violent videos flooding the feeds of a vast number of Instagram users, including minors.

The videos, which were recommended on some users' Reels tab, included people who appeared to have been shot to death and run over by vehicles.

Some of the recommended videos had "sensitive content" warnings on them while others didn't.

A Wall Street Journal reporter's account featured scores of videos of people being shot, mangled by machinery and ejected from theme-park rides, often back to back. The videos originated on pages that the reporter didn't follow with names such as "BlackPeopleBeingHurt," "ShockingTragedies" and "PeopleDyingHub."

View counts on some of

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INSIDE

YUKI IWAMURA/BLOOMBERG NEWS

AUTOS

The holding company behind Italy's Agnelli family plans to cut its stake in Ferrari. **B3**

PATRICK T. FALLON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

HEARD ON THE STREET

Nvidia is far from running out of road. **B10**

NFL Teams Gathered Consumer Data Without Standard Notice, Opt-Outs

By Patrick Coffee

A combination of websites and apps for all 32 teams in the National Football League collected detailed data from consumers without directly informing them that their data could be used for targeted advertising or providing them with clear ways to opt out, according to a report from the Digital Advertising Accountability Program, an industry watchdog.

Information collected by third-party ad-tech vendors included online behavioral data and geolocation data, which may be used by advertisers or other parties to determine the exact locations and movements of an individual's phone or other mobile device.

The lack of disclosures and opt-outs didn't meet standards set by the Digital Advertising Alliance, a data privacy-focused nonprofit consisting of various ad-industry trade groups, the report said.

Skirmishes over consumer data and privacy have become a common feature of the online economy, where information that can help advertisers better target consumers is prized. A patchwork of state laws has attempted to rein in the use of these data, but businesses' self-regulation programs are often the closest thing to a national code.

The report's author, also known as the DAAP, is part of BBB National Programs, a business association that encourages adherence to self-regulatory principles such as those of the DAA.

The advertising alliance acknowledges that the NFL is now compliant.

The NFL worked with the DAAP for more than a year before the report's release to update its global privacy policy and ensure that all affiliated properties comply with the program's data-privacy principles, the report said.

"We are committed to providing a seamless user experience for our fans, as well as safeguarding their information," the NFL said in a statement that was included in the report. The statement also thanked the DAAP for acknowledging that the NFL is now compliant.

The league's collection of geolocation data made the omission of clear disclosures and opt-out prompts particularly significant, because location is very closely tied to a single individual, said Divya Sridhar, vice president of global privacy division and privacy initiatives operations at BBB National Programs.

Companies should make withdrawing from data collection as easy as consenting, she said.

"Since this is sensitive data, consumers have to be able to opt in with that clear, meaningful and prominent disclosure," said Sridhar. "They have to know when they're consenting, what they're consenting about and exactly what that means with regard to how their data is being used for interest-based advertising."

STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH/AP

NFL team websites and apps attract significant traffic.

In early 2023, for example, the Cleveland Browns' app called on consumers to enable location services to "get access to FirstEnergy Stadium features, receive in-stadium notifications and unlock content and promotions based on your location." But it didn't warn customers that their geolocation data might then be shared with advertisers. The app has now been updated to include such language, according to the report.

Other teams' apps told users that their data may be collected by advertisers but didn't explicitly seek consent. The apps now include such prompts.

NFL team websites and apps attract a significant amount of traffic. Approximately 1.2 million people visited the San Francisco 49ers website across desktop and mobile in January, the last month that the team played a game, according to

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INDEX TO BUSINESSES

These indexes cite notable references to most parent companies and businesspeople in today's edition. Articles on regional page inserts aren't cited in these indexes.

INDEX TO PEOPLE

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Amazon Unveils New Chip

Continued from page B1
computer about five years ago with the creation of a quantum lab on the California Institute of Technology's campus in Pasadena, Calif.

That decision was made to purposefully straddle the lines between academia and industry, Painter said. Since the lab's founding, the team—which is also located in San Francisco, Boston and New York—has grown to more than 100, he said.

Amazon has created a new approach for quantum error correction, said Paul Smith-Goodson, a quantum-computing analyst at technology research firm Moor Insights & Strategy. And though it entered the quantum race later, it could still catch up to competitors if its method proves out, he said.

Still, there is a fair amount of skepticism that should be applied to any quantum development, said Heather West, an analyst focused on quantum computing at research firm International Data Corp.

NOAH BERGER/AMAZON WEB SERVICES/AP

Amazon Web Services, or AWS, is where the technology company houses its cloud-computing operations.

"I would categorize this as much more of an advancement and less of a breakthrough," West said, referring to Amazon's Ocelot chip. The company's approach also isn't completely novel, West said, because others have already demonstrated the usefulness of superconducting qubits designed to be more resistant to certain types of errors.

"There's not at this point a known solution to how we're going to reduce these errors in quantum systems," she added.

For Amazon, the launch of its first quantum chip is part of an effort to get businesses on board with quantum computing. Last year, the company launched a quantum-computing advisory program that aims to prepare customers for society's shift toward the technology. In 2019, it announced a cloud-based service called Amazon Braket, which lets businesses develop and test quantum algorithms in simulations.

Amazon's next quantum update is likely a few years away as it continues building up what Ocelot is capable of, Painter said.

Software Firm Autodesk To Cut 9% of Workforce

By Paul Ziobro

Autodesk said it would eliminate about 9% of its workforce, part of a global restructuring plan at the software company.

The layoffs are expected to hit about 1,350 employees, the company said Thursday, and the company will also reduce its office footprint. It will incur total restructuring charges between $135 million and $140 million, it said.

Chief Executive Andrew Anagnost said the company is reallocating resources toward critical business areas, such as artificial intelligence, and optimizing its go-to-market approach to better serve customers. The San Francisco company disclosed the plan as it reported another double-digit quarter of revenue growth.

Autodesk reported earnings of $303 million, or $1.40 a share, compared with $282 million, or $1.31 a share, a year ago. Adjusted earnings came in at $2.29 a share. Analysts polled by FactSet $2.14 a share. Revenue rose 12%, to $1.64 billion.

Microsoft's AI-Chip Lobbying

Continued from page B1
prise when it recently released an advanced AI model, is one of seven Chinese startups Microsoft views as having strong potential, Smith said.

Microsoft's giant global business depends on an open flow of products and services. It has data centers and customers around the world.

The previous administration proposed the chip-control rules in the final days of Joe Biden's presidency to limit China's AI capabilities. Trump's team is now reviewing them and considering feedback from industry groups before deciding how to move forward.

The request from Microsoft highlights the challenge Trump faces trying to enact pro-business policies while also looking tough on China.

> The company seeks changes to curbs on chips for some markets.

In the previous administration, national-security officials became frustrated that those sympathetic to businesses' selling abroad often delayed or watered down their actions.

Trump administration officials are weighing steps to strengthen the restrictions while simplifying the export-control rules, according to people familiar with the matter.

Smith said Microsoft is in favor of some aspects of the rules, such as some of the export-licensing requirements and the system's third tier of countries that would be fully locked out of AI chips—including China, Iran and North Korea.

Tech companies are increasing their lobbying efforts in the new administration after many executives donated to Trump's inauguration and visited him at his Mar-a-Lago


JOSE SENA GOULAO/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Microsoft's Brad Smith says the rules would help China.

club in Florida.

Microsoft has been quieter than many of its peers, though Chief Executive Satya Nadella did visit Trump at Mar-a-Lago.

Another company that has been vocal about export controls is **Nvidia**. The AI chip giant has called the proposed rules "sweeping overreach."

7-Eleven Owner's Founding Family Fails to Prevent Foreign Takeover

By Kosaku Narioka And Adriano Marchese

A son of the founder of the Japanese retail giant behind the 7-Eleven convenience-store chain failed to secure financing for a proposed management buyout that could have staved off a takeover attempt by the Canadian owner of Circle K.

Faced with declining profit, **Seven & i Holdings** is now under increasing pressure to restructure and seek growth on its own, or else it could be acquired by Canada's **Alimentation Couche-Tard**.

The 7-Eleven owner said Thursday that there is no actionable proposal from the founding family to consider since the family has been unable to get the financing.

That caused shares to plunge 12%, erasing all the gains made since November, when the company said it had received a buyout proposal from Junro Ito, a top Seven & i executive. He is the second son of Masatoshi Ito, the revered founder who, from a single outlet in Japan, built the business empire behind one of the world's biggest and best-known convenience-store brands.

An acquisition by Couche-Tard is unlikely to be straightforward given the antitrust and

FRANCK ROBICHON/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

A 7-Eleven store in Tokyo.

national-security issues involved.

The 7-Eleven owner said Thursday a potential takeover by the Canadian owner of Circle K would likely face serious U.S. antitrust challenges. Seven & i said a special committee is engaging with Couche-Tard to determine whether a proposal that addresses the antitrust issues can be made.

A Couche-Tard spokesperson said the company remains committed to a deal that benefits customers, employees, franchisees and shareholders. "We look forward to working constructively with Seven & i to reach a friendly agreement," the company spokesperson said.

In September, the Japanese government classified Seven & i as a company that engages in businesses critical to national security. Seven & i said Thursday that it will continue to assess a full range of strategic alternatives, including the proposal from Couche-Tard, and remains committed to exploring all opportunities to unlock value for shareholders.

The 7-Eleven owner in September rejected an initial $39 billion buyout bid from Couche-Tard, saying the proposal underestimated the company's value. Couche-Tard later raised its offer to about $47 billion. Thursday's slump reduced the market cap to about ¥5.5 trillion, equivalent to nearly $37 billion.

Japanese trading house Itochu, which was considering participating in the management buyout at the request of the founding family, said Thursday that it decided not to join the effort.

Seven & i has said it would consider strategic initiatives to unlock the potential value of its North American convenience-store business. It plans to bring in partners for its business of supermarkets, specialty stores and other operations and spin off and list the holding company.

Meta Says Sorry Over Violence

Continued from page B1
the promoted videos suggested that Instagram's recommendations had massively boosted their viewership, often exceeding that of the accounts' other posts by millions of views.

"We have fixed an error that caused some users to see content in their Instagram Reels feed that should not have been recommended," an Instagram spokesman said. "We apologize for the mistake."

The spokesman declined to comment on the scale of the issue.

Despite that assurance, videos of shootings and accidents dominated a Journal reporter's Reels feed late Wednesday night, some appearing next to advertisements for law firms, massage studios and e-commerce retailer **Temu**.

The spokesman also said the torrent of videos were unrelated to the company's decision to adjust its content moderation policies to avoid governing content in a way that censored speech. Instead, Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg said the company would focus on "high-severity" violations.

The company also said it planned to disable proactive scanning for a swath of prohibited content, refraining from using AI to remove or demote posts unless human users officially reported the content as objectionable. The company didn't respond to a question about whether that system remains in place for content categories such as violence and gore.

Meta removed more than 10 million pieces of violent and graphic content from Instagram in the July to September reporting period, according to its transparency reports. Nearly 99% of that content was proactively found and taken down by Meta before users reported it.

Italy's Agnelli Family To Cut Ferrari Stake

Holding company says sale will raise funds for a sizable new acquisition

By Mauro Orru And Sarah Sloat

The holding company of Italy's powerful Agnelli family is selling part of its stake in **Ferrari** in a bid to raise billions of dollars to pursue a sizable acquisition and launch a share-buyback program.

Exor said late Wednesday that it planned to sell a stake of about 4% in the Italian luxury sports-car maker for roughly 3 billion euros, equivalent to $3.15 billion.

The company said it had already priced an accelerated bookbuild offering of roughly 7 million common shares which it expects to settle on March 3.

It commands a 24.9% stake and 36.7% of voting rights in Ferrari, making it the carmaker's single largest shareholder.

The sale will trim its stake and take its voting rights to about 30%, but Exor said it remained fully committed as a long-term shareholder of the company.

Exor has a long history of investing in companies that the Agnelli family sees as promising.

It also wields prominent stakes in Jeep maker carmaker Stellantis, Dutch health-technology company Royal Philips and machinery maker CNH Industrial.

The company said the Ferrari stake sale would help reduce concentration within its portfolio and raise funds to pursue a sizable new acquisition as well as a share buyback program of 1 billion euros.

YUKI IWAMURA/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Ferrari on Thursday said it had agreed to buy back shares valued at $314.6 million from Exor.

Exor shares were up slightly in European trading, while Ferrari stock was down nearly 8%.

Ferrari said on Thursday that it had agreed to buy back shares valued at $314.6 million from Exor in a transaction that would be financed by cash on hand.

The carmaker said the transaction was part of the multiyear share-buyback program of about €2 billion announced at its 2022 capital markets day.

Rolls-Royce Shares Jump on Dividend, Raised Outlook

By Dominic Chopping

Rolls-Royce shares surged Thursday after the company resumed shareholder payouts, raised midterm guidance and launched a buyback of £1 billion or $1.27 billion.

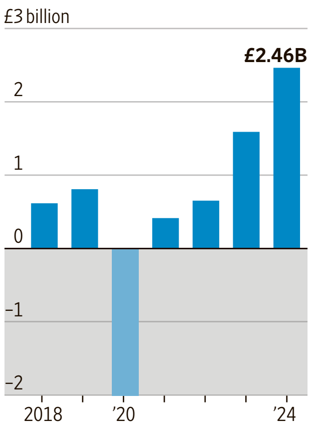
Shares advanced 100.60 pence, or 16%, at 731.60 pence in European trading.

The U.K. engineering-and-defense company resumed dividend payments after a five-year break, as previously guided, declaring a payout of 6 pence for 2024—its first since January 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic forced it to implement measures to preserve cash.

Since taking charge two years ago, Chief Executive Tufan Erginbilgic has worked to tighten focus, prioritize core activities and drive efficiencies. After initially calling the company "a burning platform," he has overseen an increase of more than sevenfold in the share price.

The engine maker also has benefited from a rebound in commercial flights since the end of the pandemic.

Rolls-Royce underlying operating profit/loss



Note: £1=$1.27
Sources: the company

NADJA WOHLLEBEN/REUTERS

Rolls-Royce resumed paying dividends after a five-year break..

"Strong 2024 results build on our progress last year, as we transform Rolls-Royce into a high-performing, competitive, resilient, and growing business," Erginbilgic said in a statement.

"All core divisions delivered significantly improved performance, despite a supply chain environment that remains challenging."

Rolls-Royce—which sells and maintains civil aircraft engines, produces engines for military aircraft and vessels and powers the U.K.'s nuclear submarine fleet—reported full-year earnings that significantly beat expectations.

The civil aerospace business was the key driver: Engine deliveries increased 16% while revenue from its engine servicing business increased 28% due to continued growth in air travel and as tight aircraft capacity means engines are flying for longer, generating stronger servicing demand. Renegotiated long-term service contracts also helped, it said.

The company also manufactures small modular reactors. After being named preferred supplier to build reactors by the Czech Republic, it is on a Swedish shortlist to potentially build a fleet of nuclear plants and has moved into the third and final step of a U.K. assessment process.

"We are well-placed to become a market leader in SMRs, where we see a significant value creation opportunity," the company said.

Rolls-Royce expects to deliver 2025 underlying operating profit—a key metric for the group that strips out exceptional items—of between £2.7 billion and £2.9 billion. That would see the company beat its previous midterm target two years earlier than planned.

In new midterm targets, the company now expects £3.6 billion to £3.9 billion of underlying operating profit with an operating margin of 15% to 17% by 2028. Free cash flow is seen at £4.2 billion to £4.5 billion and return on capital at 18% to 21%.

Previous midterm targets that ran to 2027 had targeted underlying operating profit of £2.5 billion to £2.8 billion pounds, an operating margin of 13% to 15%, free cash flow of £2.8 billion to £3.1 billion and a return on capital of 16% to 18%.

Richard Hunter, head of markets at interactive investor, said the company's unexpected announcement of a share buyback has lighted a fire under the shares.

"The burning platform has long been extinguished, propelling Rolls-Royce to a group which is now firing on all cylinders."

The company said underlying operating profit in 2024 was £2.46 billion, up from £1.59 billion and ahead of the company's guided range of between £2.1 billion and £2.3 billion. Revenue on an underlying basis rose to £17.85 billion from £15.41 billion.

Google Tweak Stings Product-Review Sites

New search rules threaten business models, bruise outside writers

By Alexandra Bruell

Google changed its rules around how product-review sites appear in its search engine. In the process, it devastated a once-lucrative corner of the news media world.

Sites including CNN Underscored and Forbes Vetted offer tips on everything from mattresses and knife sets to savings accounts, making money when users click on links and buy products.

They depend on Google to drive much of their traffic, and therefore revenue. But over the past year, Google created stricter rules that dinged certain sites that farm out articles to freelancers, among other things.

The goal, Google has said, was to give users higher-quality search results. The outcome was a crisis for some sites. Traffic for Forbes Advisor, a personal-finance recommendation site, fell 83% in January from the same month the year before, according to data firm Similarweb. CNN Underscored and Buy Side from WSJ, which is operated by Wall Street Journal parent Dow Jones, were both down by more than 25% in that period.

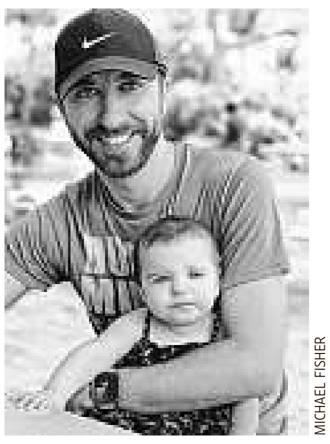
Time magazine's Time Stamped and the Associated Press's AP Buyline, powered by Taboola Turnkey Commerce, ended their efforts in recent months. Taboola closed the commerce operation.

Publishers' relationships with Google have long been fraught with challenges. They scramble when Google tweaks its algorithms, updating website designs or crafting headlines to notch higher in search rankings. The latest changes are among the most dramatic, say executives.

"Google is gatekeeping the revenue models publishers use to stay in business," Jeff Li, a general manager for digital at Time who recently left the company, said in a November LinkedIn post.

Google launched its "site reputation abuse" policy early last year and updated its language in November to specify that its spam policy prohibits certain content "created by a separate entity" from appearing in its search pages, even with a publisher's oversight.


HOLLY JOHNSON


MICHAEL FISHER

Freelance writers such as Holly Johnson and Christian de Looper are struggling to adapt.

By its definition, separate entities can include freelancers and content from services and people not employed directly by the host site.

Google says that affiliate content and freelancers aren't, on their own, violations of its policy, and that it is targeting content explicitly designed to get clicks by piggybacking on publishers' brands.

A Google spokesman said that sort of abuse "leads to a bad search experience for people and an uneven playing field for content creators."

About a week before Black Friday, leaders at Forbes Vetted couldn't find their content on Google's search engine. They determined that Google had flagged the site for running afoul of its guidelines, but weren't sure which specific rules they violated, according to people close to Forbes.

The Forbes leaders had a hunch the foul was related to its use of freelancers. In December, Forbes Vetted told freelancers it was cutting ties.

Christian de Looper, who has been writing about consumer technology for more than a decade, was one such freelancer. He said he understands that Google is trying to ensure users see high-quality content. "But I don't really see why who wrote it, in terms of their employment status, has anything to do with it," he added. De Looper, who is 31 years old, said he lost upward of 25% of his income as work with affiliate sites disappeared.

Since eliminating freelancer contributions, Forbes Vetted content began appearing back in Google's search engine.

"Forbes continues to partner closely with Google to ensure we're better serving our audiences," a Forbes spokeswoman said.

The Google spokesman said the company has a careful review and appeals process for site owners, including notifying them and providing details about which pages are affected and why. Publishing executives say the appeals process is murky.

After its content was removed from Google search in November, Buy Side from WSJ changed its arrangement with third-party firm Credible, which was creating content for the site, according to a person familiar with the situation. The site is now publishing pieces from one full-time writer and considering hiring more full-time staff, this person said.

CNN Underscored, which worked with Marketplace for a portion of its content, found many of its articles were also delisted from Google late last year. The company ended the relationship with Marketplace, removed freelancer-written posts from Google search and stopped its work with many freelancers.

"Most of the publications just said this business model is not viable now," said Holly Johnson, who has been writing about personal finance for 15 years, including for CNN Underscored. "If you don't show up in Google search, you might as well not exist."

Blue Origin to Fly Bezos Partner, Celebrities


CHIP SOMODEVILLA/REUTERS


MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS

Jeff Bezos is taking more celebrities—as well as his partner—to the great beyond.

Bezos' Blue Origin said its next space-tourism trip will include pop star Katy Perry, above right, and Gayle King, the broadcast journalist, right. Also joining the crew: Lauren Sánchez, Bezos' partner, above. Sánchez put the group together for the mission, according to Blue Origin. Former NASA scientist Aisha Bowe, Kerianne Flynn, who worked in fashion, and research scientist Amanda Nguyen will be on the flight.

Bezos' company described the all-female crew as the first in decades, saying there hadn't been one since a Russian cosmonaut's solo spaceflight in the early 1960s.

Blue Origin has been flying people on short trips to space since 2021, when Bezos and three others flew on its New Shepard vehicle. The trips to space with New Shepard send passengers on board more than 62 miles above Earth in a capsule, where they experience a few minutes of floating and take in views of the planet.

The company has taken other high-profile people on the trips, including Star Trek actor William Shatner.

Blue Origin on Tuesday said it completed its 10th human mission with New Shepard.

—Micah Maidenberg


JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES

HP to Eliminate Up To 2,000 More Jobs

By Connor Hart

HP Inc. said it would lay off up to 2,000 more employees as part of a continuing cost-cutting plan, bringing the total number of job cuts under the restructuring to as many as 9,000.

The computer and printer maker on Thursday said it would save an additional $300 million by the end of its fiscal 2025, which ends in October. It expects to incur about $150 million in additional restructuring and other charges in connection with the cuts, primarily due to cash labor costs.

9,000
Total number of layoffs as a result of restructuring at HP Inc.

The layoffs will vary by country, based on local legal requirements and consultations with employee works councils and other employee representatives, HP said. The company employed approximately 58,000 workers across 59 countries, according to its most recent annual filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Dubbed "Future Now" and first announced in November 2022, HP's cost-cutting plan initially called for workforce cuts of about 7,000 employees. The company said at that time that it expected to incur approximately $1 billion in restructuring charges.

Following the new round of layoffs, the company now expects to realize approximately $1.9 billion in savings under the plan. Total restructuring and other charges are expected to be around $1.2 billion.

The details of the layoffs came shortly after HP reported higher revenue for its fiscal first quarter, boosted by what Chief Executive Enrique Lores said was strong demand for its new technologies, which is sparking an upgrade cycle for personal computers.

The Palo Alto, Calif., company posted a profit of $565 million, or 59 cents a share, for its three-months ended Jan. 31, compared with $622 million, or 62 cents a share, a year earlier. Revenue increased 2.4% to $13.5 billion.

HHS Review Hits Moderna

Moderna shares fell 7.4% in Thursday trading, closing at $31.09, after reports that federal health officials are reevaluating the company's $590 million contract to help develop a bird-flu vaccine.

Moderna was awarded the contract from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in January during the Biden administration's efforts to accelerate development of its mRNA-based vaccine, and as part of an effort to address growing concerns of a bird flu pandemic in humans.

The Trump administration is currently reviewing the contract, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Bloomberg first reported the news.

A bird-flu outbreak has plagued American farmers, infecting commercial and backyard poultry that has contributed to sky-high egg prices and dozens of people getting sick.

Moderna didn't comment on the matter.

—Jared S. Hopkins

NFL Took User Data Improperly

Continued from page B1

market intelligence firm Similarweb.

The team's iOS and Android apps also had 3,200 daily active users last month, Similarweb said.

The report leaves several questions unanswered, such as for how long the NFL teams collected the consumer data, how much data the teams accumulated in total and how widely it was shared across the NFL's network of teams and third-party vendors, according to Heidi Saas, an attorney specializing in data privacy and related technologies who reviewed the report.

It is also unclear whether ad-tech vendors will delete any data they have already collected from consumers who now decide to opt out, Saas said.

The NFL, speaking for itself as well as its individual teams, declined to comment beyond its statement in the report.

Despite more state-level lawsuits and fines stemming from data-privacy violations, the primary risk for large and influential organizations such as the NFL still concerns damage to brand perception and reputation, according to Brandi M. Bennett, a data privacy and security attorney whose past clients have included NFL franchises.

WPP Misses Forecasts As China Proves a Drag

By Adrià Calatayud

WPP shares fell sharply after the company posted a steeper-than-expected drop in its top-line figure for the fourth quarter, hit by headwinds in China and North America, and forecast little improvement this year.

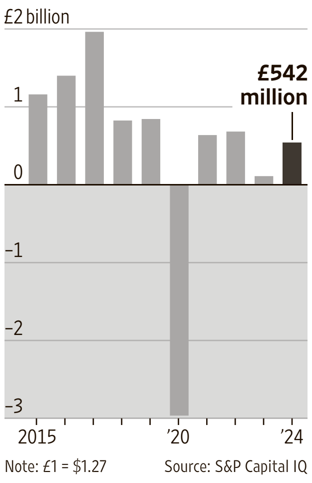
The London-based advertising group said Thursday that revenue less pass-through costs fell 2.3% on a like-for-like basis in the fourth quarter, weaker than the 0.2% decline that consensus estimates compiled by Vuma pointed to. Like-for-like revenue less pass-through costs, a closely watched measure of top-line performance, strips out expenses billed to clients, currency movements and the effects of acquisitions and business sales.

Weakness in project-based work made last year and last quarter tougher, but the company's performance should pick up over the course of this year, WPP Chief Executive Mark Read said.

Its shares fell 16% in London, to levels last seen in late 2020.

For 2025, the owner of agencies including GroupM, VML and Ogilvy expects like-for-like revenue less pass-through costs to range from a flat performance to a 2% decline. Analysts had forecast a 1.8% rise, according to the same consensus.

WPP annual net profit/loss



Note: £1 = $1.27 Source: S&P Capital IQ

Analysts attribute WPP's underperformance relative to some peers to its greater reliance on tech and China. WPP said revenue from tech companies stabilized in the second half, with growth in North America in the final quarter after a period in which clients sought to rein in spending.

"Having had a challenging 18 months, I think that is positive," Read said.

But China continued to weigh on results, with quarterly like-for-like revenue less pass-through costs down 21%.

MARKETS DIGEST

EQUITIES

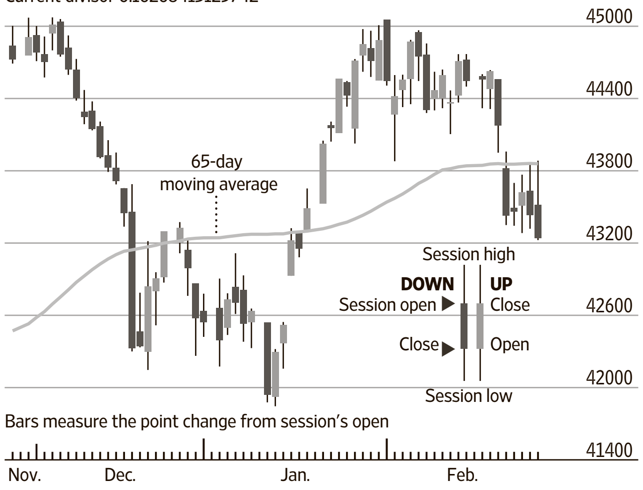
Dow Jones Industrial Average

43239.50 ▼193.62, or 0.45%

High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

	Last	Year ago
Trailing P/E ratio	25.91	27.13
P/E estimate *	20.42	18.62
Dividend yield	1.87	1.83
All-time high	45014.04, 12/04/24	

Current divisor 0.16268413125742

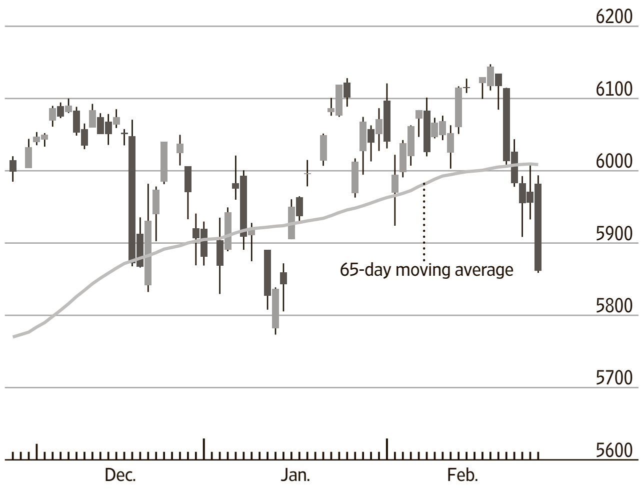


S&P 500 Index

5861.57 ▼94.49, or 1.59%

High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

	Last	Year ago
Trailing P/E ratio *	25.82	22.85
P/E estimate *	22.57	21.25
Dividend yield *	1.25	1.49
All-time high	6144.15, 02/19/25	

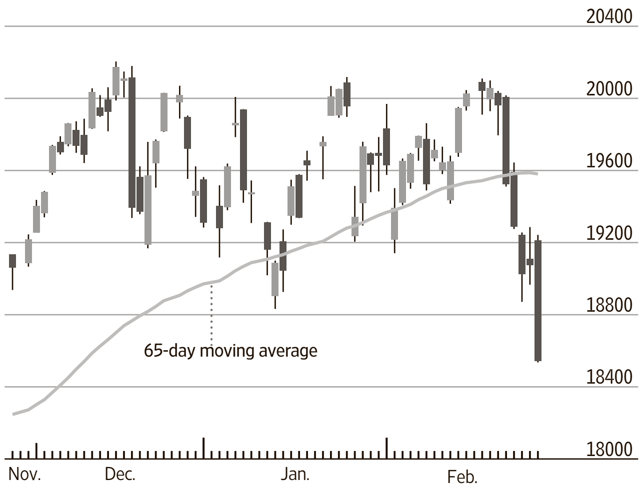


Nasdaq Composite Index

18544.42 ▼530.84, or 2.78%

High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

	Last	Year ago
Trailing P/E ratio *†	34.12	34.12
P/E estimate *†	28.05	30.65
Dividend yield *†	0.71	0.81
All-time high:	20173.89, 12/16/24	



*Weekly P/E data based on as-reported earnings from Birinyi Associates Inc.; †Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg	YTD % chg	3-yr. ann. % chg
Dow Jones										
Industrial Average	43884.19	43224.53	43239.50	-193.62	-0.45	45014.04	37735.11	10.9	1.6	8.3
Transportation Avg	15962.02	15737.69	15762.80	-98.27	-0.62	17754.38	14781.56	-0.5	-0.8	1.2
Utility Average	1014.38	989.95	990.42	-24.97	-2.46	1079.88	833.04	17.8	0.8	1.8
Total Stock Market	59317.90	58019.57	58037.14	-926.30	-1.57	61024.05	49376.46	14.2	-0.6	9.2
Barron's 400	1255.17	1234.91	1235.14	-16.16	-1.29	1356.99	1092.05	10.2	-1.3	6.8
Nasdaq Stock Market										
Nasdaq Composite	19242.69	18535.22	18544.42	-530.84	-2.78	20173.89	15282.01	15.2	-4.0	10.6
Nasdaq-100	21323.91	20540.68	20550.95	-581.97	-2.75	22175.60	17037.65	13.9	-2.2	13.1
S&P										
500 Index	5993.69	5858.78	5861.57	-94.49	-1.59	6144.15	4967.23	15.0	-0.3	10.2
MidCap 400	3113.48	3063.76	3064.91	-36.78	-1.19	3390.26	2825.94	6.0	-1.8	4.8
SmallCap 600	1373.52	1351.55	1351.80	-19.88	-1.45	1544.66	1241.62	3.6	-4.0	1.0
Other Indexes										
Russell 2000	2177.79	2139.41	2139.66	-34.51	-1.59	2442.03	1942.96	4.1	-4.1	1.6
NYSE Composite	20042.99	19803.33	19808.15	-124.70	-0.63	20272.04	17388.09	12.5	3.7	6.4
Value Line	607.82	598.93	598.93	-8.84	-1.45	656.04	568.94	0.6	-2.0	-1.7
NYSE Arca Biotech	6144.33	6014.31	6015.84	-76.90	-1.26	6318.63	4861.76	16.0	4.7	6.5
NYSE Arca Pharma	1030.59	1020.87	1023.10	-1.37	-0.13	1140.17	912.71	1.9	9.5	8.9
KBW Bank	134.88	132.20	132.61	0.02	0.01	140.59	96.38	37.1	4.0	-0.8
PHLX§ Gold/Silver	158.88	154.34	154.46	-6.03	-3.76	175.74	105.37	46.6	12.6	2.6
PHLX§ Oil Service	70.13	68.86	68.88	-0.31	-0.45	95.25	68.88	-13.8	-5.1	0.6
PHLX§ Semiconductor	5041.15	4684.78	4686.75	-304.07	-6.09	5904.54	4306.87	-0.8	-5.9	10.7
Cboe Volatility	21.47	17.67	21.13	2.03	10.63	38.57	11.86	57.7	21.8	-8.5

§Nasdaq PHLX

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Late Trading

Most-active and biggest movers among NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE Amer. and Nasdaq issues from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. ET as reported by electronic trading services, securities dealers and regional exchanges. Minimum share price of $2 and minimum after-hours volume of 50,000 shares.

Most-active issues in late trading

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	After Hours Last	Net chg	% chg	High	Low
NVIDIA	NVDA	18,650.3	120.94	0.79	0.66	190.91	97.21
SPDR S&P 500 ETF Trust	SPY	12,354.9	585.45	0.40	0.07	586.10	549.66
SoundHound AI	SOUN	9,804.6	10.12	0.91	9.88	10.79	9.19
iSh 20+ Year Treasury Bd	TLT	7,820.3	91.52	0.21	0.23	91.60	85.78
ProShares Ultra QQQ	QLD	6,650.5	102.49	0.35	0.34	103.02	101.91
Super Micro Computer	SMCI	6,219.9	43.29	0.34	0.79	43.64	42.81
Arcadium Lithium	ALTM	5,956.8	5.84	0.01	0.17	5.84	5.83
iQIYI ADR	IQ	5,389.3	2.11	-0.06	-2.74	2.18	2.10

Percentage gainers...

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	% chg	High	Low
PepGen	PEPG	3,930.9	2.86	0.43	17.69	3.10	2.45
Progyny	PGNY	179.4	26.75	3.87	16.91	29.00	22.88
Elastic	ESTC	345.4	118.09	16.81	16.60	121.00	101.28
SoundHound AI	SOUN	9,804.6	10.12	0.91	9.88	10.79	9.19
Bloom Energy	BE	515.5	25.25	2.21	9.59	27.30	23.04

...And losers

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	% chg	High	Low
Iovance Biotherapeutics	IOVA	3,070.0	4.00	-1.26	-23.96	5.49	3.98
Archer Aviation	ACHR	4,680.1	6.06	-1.86	-23.48	8.17	5.90
dLocal	DLO	1,090.7	11.30	-2.45	-17.82	13.75	10.55
DoubleVerify	DV	161.6	18.39	-3.34	-15.37	21.73	18.00
Binah Capital Group	BCG	437.6	2.44	-0.43	-14.98	2.92	2.30

Trading Diary

Volume, Advancers, Decliners

	NYSE	NYSE Amer.
Total volume*	1,089,181,593	13,986,929
Adv. volume*	366,702,082	1,410,815
Decl. volume*	715,193,384	11,933,055
Issues traded	2,838	295
Advances	894	70
Declines	1,864	215
Unchanged	80	10
New highs	38	3
New lows	132	1
Closing Arms†	1.01	1.28
Block trades*	5,819	160

	Nasdaq	NYSE Arca
Total volume*	7,700,291,581	351,396,952
Adv. volume*	2,242,892,806	89,108,320
Decl. volume*	5,406,969,779	258,731,544
Issues traded	4,578	2,137
Advances	1,208	317
Declines	3,231	1,789
Unchanged	139	31
New highs	61	13
New lows	312	76
Closing Arms†	0.90	0.50
Block trades*	37,899	1,777

* Primary market NYSE, NYSE American NYSE Arca only.
†(TRIN) A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand; above 1 indicates selling pressure.

International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Latest Net chg	Latest % chg	YTD % chg
World	MSCI ACWI	857.26	−11.85	−1.36	1.9
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	346.79	−3.27	−0.93	6.4
	MSCI World	3767.35	−53.69	−1.41	1.6
	MSCI Emerging Markets	1124.03	−11.38	−1.00	4.5
Americas	MSCI AC Americas	2207.18	−35.32	−1.58	−0.2
Canada	S&P/TSX Comp	25128.24	−200.12	−0.79	1.6
Latin Amer.	MSCI EM Latin America	2016.95	−21.45	−1.05	8.9
Brazil	Bovespa	124798.96	30.25	0.02	3.8
Chile	S&P IPSA	3964.98	22.41	0.57	9.7
Mexico	S&P/BMV IPC	52607.61	−689.10	−1.29	6.2
EMEA	STOXX Europe 600	557.11	−2.56	−0.46	9.7
Eurozone	Euro STOXX	560.51	−4.93	−0.87	10.9
Belgium	Bel-20	4447.31	−28.75	−0.64	4.3
Denmark	OMX Copenhagen 20	2172.04	−10.08	−0.46	3.3
France	CAC 40	8102.52	−41.40	−0.51	9.8
Germany	DAX	22550.89	−243.22	−1.07	13.3
Israel	Tel Aviv	2469.61	−2.36	−0.10	3.1
Italy	FTSE MIB	38622.84	−601.87	−1.53	13.0
Netherlands	AEX	925.91	−6.18	−0.66	5.4
Norway	Oslo Bors All-Share	1710.45	−8.37	−0.49	4.0
South Africa	FTSE/JSE All-Share	87325.35	−996.41	−1.13	3.8
Spain	IBEX 35	13270.60	−61.40	−0.46	14.5
Sweden	OMX Stockholm	1038.18	−9.91	−0.95	8.8
Switzerland	Swiss Market	12958.34	−84.17	−0.65	11.7
Turkey	BIST 100	9741.07	167.86	1.75	−0.9
U.K.	FTSE 100	8756.21	24.75	0.28	7.1
U.K.	FTSE 250	20414.73	−181.17	−0.88	−1.0
Asia-Pacific	MSCI AC Asia Pacific	188.07	−0.87	−0.46	3.5
Australia	S&P/ASX 200	8268.20	27.52	0.33	1.3
China	Shanghai Composite	3388.06	7.85	0.23	1.1
Hong Kong	Hang Seng	23718.29	−69.64	−0.29	18.2
India	BSE Sensex	74612.43	10.31	0.01	−4.5
Japan	NIKKEI 225	38256.17	113.80	0.30	−4.1
Singapore	Straits Times	3921.19	13.14	0.34	3.5
South Korea	KOSPI	2621.75	−19.34	−0.73	9.3
Taiwan	TAIEX	23053.18	−349.37	−1.49	0.1
Thailand	SET	1215.73	−15.41	−1.25	−13.2

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Percentage Gainers...

Company	Symbol	Latest Session Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	Low	% chg
Red Robin Gourmet Burgers	RRGB	6.08	1.56	34.51	9.20	2.97	-18.7
iBio	IBIO	5.05	1.29	34.31	5.20	1.05	300.8
Montrose Environmental	MEG	23.13	5.69	32.63	49.97	15.21	-44.1
Xunlei ADR	XNET	3.76	0.86	29.66	4.81	1.45	153.0
Global Star Acqn Cl A	GLST	7.75	1.76	29.46	20.89	5.00	-27.2
Root Cl A	ROOT	123.95	25.24	25.57	141.23	27.24	286.0
LZ Technology Holdings	LZMH	5.00	1.00	25.00	7.24	4.00	...
Aurora Mobile ADR	JG	12.55	2.48	24.63	20.94	2.36	316.9
AtlasClear Holdings	ATCH	3.48	0.66	23.40	118.79	1.73	-96.8
Rapid Micro Biosystems	RPID	3.31	0.60	22.14	4.04	0.58	200.9
Marqeta	MQ	4.25	0.74	21.08	6.98	3.37	-34.9
Aris Water Solutions	ARIS	30.98	5.32	20.73	32.00	10.56	157.3
Stoneridge	SRI	5.07	0.87	20.71	18.57	4.11	-71.1
SuRo Capital	SSSS	6.56	1.09	19.93	6.83	3.52	52.6
Oatly Group ADR	OTLY	9.61	1.53	18.94	26.80	6.00	-56.7

Percentage Losers

Company	Symbol	Latest Session Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	Low	% chg
Ibotta	IBTA	34.01	-29.08	-46.09	117.59	33.53	...
Digimarc	DMRC	15.39	-11.65	-43.08	48.32	15.26	-56.1
ARKO	ARKO	4.52	-2.74	-37.74	7.84	4.09	-30.8
GCL Global Holdings	GCL	1.85	-1.06	-36.43	15.55	1.81	-82.9
Tandem Diabetes Care	TNDM	21.75	-11.84	-35.25	53.69	21.43	-18.3
PicoCELA ADR	PCLA	5.63	-2.75	-32.82	9.80	2.21	...
Defiance Dly Target 2X Lg	SMCX	58.08	-27.46	-32.10	412.20	16.80	...
GrShr 2x Long SMCI Daily	SMCL	21.44	-10.09	-32.00	54.67	9.50	...
Siyata Mobile	SYTA	2.98	-1.19	-28.54	885.58	2.82	-99.5
Mullen Automotive	MULN	2.96	-1.08	-26.73	47100.00	2.29	-99.9
CAMP4 Therapeutics	CAMP	3.75	-1.36	-26.61	12.30	3.50	...
CTRL Group	MCTR	4.90	-1.64	-25.08	12.00	3.76	...
TransCode Therapeutics	RNAZ	2.52	-0.83	-24.78	66.33	2.47	-89.2
AAON	AAON	78.64	-23.38	-22.92	144.07	70.28	-6.4
Unusual Machines	UMAC	6.87	-1.97	-22.29	23.62	0.98	141.9

Most Active Stocks

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	% chg from 65-day avg	Latest Session Close	% chg	52-Week High	Low
NVIDIA	NVDA	437,667	79.9	120.15	-8.48	153.13	75.61
Quoin Pharm ADR	QNRX	161,067	4648.4	0.36	15.40	6.18	0.28
Urgent.ly	ULY	153,991	51171.4	0.67	60.50	3.45	0.41
Direxion TSLA Bull 2X	TSLL	144,428	112.8	12.47	-6.17	41.50	4.94
Direxion Dly SCOND 3 BL	SOXL	142,222	93.0	21.75	-17.27	70.08	21.73
NIO ADR	NIO	133,722	169.7	4.79	1.48	7.71	3.61
Interactive Strength	TRNR	126,552	2761.9	1.53	22.40	2428.00	0.86
Lucid Group	LCID	124,245	39.5	2.23	-1.11	4.43	1.93
Super Micro Computer	SMCI	120,214	50.7	42.95	-15.97	122.90	17.25
ProShares UltraPro QQQ	TQQQ	102,020	119.0	71.64	-8.29	93.79	48.80

* Volumes of 100,000 shares or more are rounded to the nearest thousand

Volume Movers

Ranked by change from 65-day average*

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	% chg from 65-day avg	Latest Session Close	% chg	52-Week High	Low
iSh US Thematic Rotation	THRO	9,803	144398	33.28	-1.80	35.42	27.48
iSh JPX-Nikkei 400	JPXN	624	9497	72.99	-0.54	78.24	64.09
AllianzIM US LC Bf10 Jul	JULT	286	5584	39.52	-1.15	40.73	34.76
BondBloxx Bbg 10Y US Trea	XTEN	3,862	5500	46.38	-0.19	50.05	43.92
iSh ESG Adv MSCI EAFE	DMXF	1,696	4231	68.03	-2.13	73.20	63.32
iShares S&P 100 ETF	OEF	7,256	3299	285.09	-1.93	300.35	233.95
iSh 10-20Y Treasury Bond	TLH	27,472	2643	103.64	-0.30	111.83	96.95
iSh ESG 1-5Y USD Cp Bd	SUSB	2,863	2023	24.93	-0.04	25.20	24.17
iShares S&P 500 Value ETF	IVE	12,352	1952	194.58	-0.47	206.63	176.09
Melar Acquisition I Cl A	MACI	583	1929	10.19	0.10	10.22	9.95

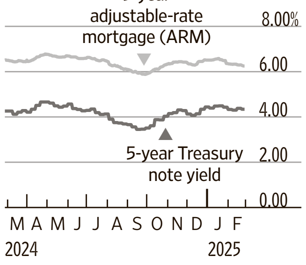
* Common stocks priced at $2 a share or more with an average volume over 65 trading days of at least 5,000 shares †Has traded fewer than 65 days

CREDIT MARKETS

Consumer Rates and Returns to Investor

U.S. consumer rates

A consumer rate against its benchmark over the past year



Selected rates

Five-year ARM, Rate

Bankrate.com avg†:	**6.25%**
Chemung Canal Trust Company	**5.50%**
Elmira, NY	607-737-3711
Florence Savings Bank	**5.50%**
Florence, MA	800-644-8261
The Torrington Savings Bank	**5.63%**
Torrington, CT	860-496-2152
Grow Financial FCU	**5.75%**
Hillsborough, FL	800-839-6328
Star One Credit Union	**6.00%**
Sunnyvale, CA	408-742-2801

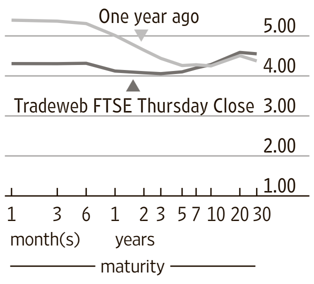
Interest rate	Yield/Rate (%) Last	Week ago	52-Week Range (%) Low	High	3-yr chg (pct pts)
Federal-funds rate target	4.25-4.50	4.25-4.50	4.25	5.50	4.25
Prime rate*	7.50	7.50	7.50	8.50	4.25
SOFR	4.33	4.35	4.27	5.40	4.28
Money market, annual yield	0.41	0.42	0.40	0.51	0.34
Five-year CD, annual yield	2.85	2.85	2.80	2.89	2.42
30-year mortgage, fixed†	7.04	7.20	6.69	7.72	2.81
15-year mortgage, fixed†	6.46	6.60	6.02	7.11	3.01
Jumbo mortgages, $806,500-plus†	7.09	7.22	6.78	7.79	2.85
Five-year adj mortgage (ARM)†	6.25	6.29	5.88	6.78	3.32
New-car loan, 48-month	7.45	7.45	7.18	7.94	3.90

Bankrate.com rates based on survey of over 4,800 online banks. *Base rate posted by 70% of the nation's largest banks.† Excludes closing costs.

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data; Bankrate.com

Treasury yield curve

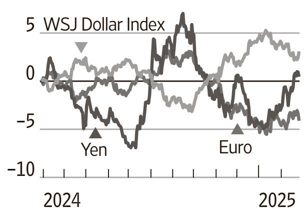
Yield to maturity of current bills, notes and bonds



Sources: Tradeweb FTSE U.S. Treasury Close; Tullett Prebon; Dow Jones Market Data

Forex Race

Yen, euro vs. dollar; dollar vs. major U.S. trading partners



Corporate Borrowing Rates and Yields

Bond total return index	Close	Yield (%) Last	Week ago	52-Week High	52-Week Low	Total Return (%) 52-wk	3-yr
U.S. Treasury, Bloomberg	2241.230	4.210	4.430	4.880	3.630	4.950	−1.044
U.S. Treasury Long, Bloomberg	3180.310	4.600	4.800	5.050	3.990	3.526	−8.301
Aggregate, Bloomberg	2140.160	4.640	4.850	5.310	4.100	5.822	−0.308
Fixed-Rate MBS, Bloomberg	2120.090	4.920	5.130	5.570	4.340	6.669	−0.265
High Yield 100, ICE BofA	3871.587	6.404	6.482	7.871	6.208	9.246	4.952
Muni Master, ICE BofA	601.585	3.309	3.406	3.760	3.074	2.615	1.009
EMBI Global, J.P. Morgan	921.852	7.324	7.454	8.073	7.084	9.181	2.449

Sources: J.P. Morgan; Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices; ICE Data Services

CURRENCIES & COMMODITIES

Currencies

U.S.-dollar foreign-exchange rates in late New York trading

Country/currency	Thurs in US$	Thurs per US$	US$ vs, YTD chg (%)
Americas			
Argentina peso	.0009	1062.0154	3.0
Brazil real	.1712	5.8416	-5.5
Canada dollar	.6927	1.4436	0.4
Chile peso	.001050	952.74	-4.2
Colombia peso	.000242	4132.25	-6.2
Ecuador US dollar	1	1	unch
Mexico peso	.0488	20.4897	-1.6
Uruguay peso	.02355	42.4600	-2.8
Asia-Pacific			
Australia dollar	.6235	1.6038	-0.8
China yuan	.1372	7.2862	-0.2
Hong Kong dollar	.1286	7.7778	0.1
India rupee	.01145	87.334	2.1
Indonesia rupiah	.0000604	16561	1.8
Japan yen	.006675	149.82	-4.7
Kazakhstan tenge	.002001	499.72	-4.8
Macau pataca	.1247	8.0170	0.2
Malaysia ringgit	.2250	4.4445	-0.6
New Zealand dollar	.5632	1.7756	-0.7
Pakistan rupee	.00358	279.650	0.5
Philippines peso	.0172	58.005	-0.1
Singapore dollar	.7416	1.3484	-1.2
South Korea won	.0006892	1450.86	-1.9
Sri Lanka rupee	.0033876	295.19	0.7
Taiwan dollar	.03035	32.947	0.4
Thailand baht	.02935	34.070	-0.8
Vietnam dong	.00003916	25535	0.2
Europe			
Czech Rep. koruna	.04160	24.037	-1.3
Denmark krone	.1394	7.1727	-0.4
Euro area euro	1.0399	.9617	-0.4
Hungary forint	.002595	385.32	-3.1
Iceland krona	.007156	139.74	0.5
Norway krone	.0889	11.2480	-1.2
Poland zloty	.2497	4.0043	-3.1
Sweden krona	.0930	10.7556	-2.8
Switzerland franc	1.1114	.8998	-0.8
Turkey lira	.0274	36.4402	3.1
Ukraine hryvnia	.0241	41.5500	-1.2
UK pound	1.2600	.7937	-0.7
Middle East/Africa			
Bahrain dinar	2.6536	.3769	-0.1
Egypt pound	.0197	50.6528	-0.4
Israel shekel	.2795	3.5781	-1.7
Kuwait dinar	3.2409	.3086	0.1
Oman sul rial	2.5974	.3850	...
Qatar rial	.2745	3.643	-0.1
Saudi Arabia riyal	.2666	3.7506	-0.2
South Africa rand	.0542	18.4628	-2.2

	Close	Net Chg	% Chg	YTD % Chg
WSJ Dollar Index	101.47	0.67	0.67	-1.25

Sources: Tullett Prebon, Dow Jones Market Data

Commodities

	Close	Thursday Net chg	% Chg	52-Week High	Low	% Chg	YTD % chg
DJ Commodity	1061.90	-0.29	-0.03	1095.84	942.52	11.96	3.86
FTSE/CC CRB Index	306.03	0.85	0.28	316.63	265.48	11.25	3.14
Crude oil, $ per barrel	70.35	1.73	2.52	86.91	65.75	-10.11	-1.91
Natural gas, $/MMBtu	3.934	-0.025	-0.63	4.280	1.575	111.51	8.29
Gold, $ per troy oz.	2883.20	-34.60	-1.19	2947.90	2045.70	40.94	9.66

COMMODITIES

wsj.com/market-data/commodities

Futures Contracts

Metal & Petroleum Futures

	Open	High	Contract hi lo	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Copper-High (CMX)-25,000 lbs.; $ per lb.							
March	4.5375	4.6230		4.5040	**4.5800**	0.0400	9,099
May	4.5835	4.6685		4.5490	**4.6185**	0.0320	122,084
Gold (CMX)-100 troy oz.; $ per troy oz.							
March	2918.50	2922.80		2870.40	**2883.20**	–34.60	12,069
April	2931.40	2935.80		2879.00	**2895.90**	–34.70	370,604
May	2937.30	2942.40	▲	2893.90	**2909.70**	–35.20	185
June	2959.70	2963.20		2907.00	**2923.90**	–35.00	83,985
July	2959.00	2959.00	▲	2921.00	**2936.60**	–35.10	22
Aug	2986.10	2987.40		2932.70	**2949.60**	–35.10	24,837
Palladium (NYM) - 50 troy oz.; $ per troy oz.							
March	923.50	925.00	▼	899.00	**901.30**	–21.60	467
June	927.50	931.00	▼	910.00	**915.30**	–13.60	18,320
Platinum (NYM)-50 troy oz.; $ per troy oz.							
March	962.70	962.70		953.60	**951.90**	–18.60	388
April	975.60	982.70		951.80	**957.70**	–18.90	71,491
Silver (CMX)-5,000 troy oz.; $ per troy oz.							
March	32.235	32.290		31.470	**31.801**	–0.471	21,874
May	32.535	32.595		31.765	**32.110**	–0.465	113,624
Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM)-1,000 bbls.; $ per bbl.							
April	68.82	70.54		68.61	**70.35**	1.73	305,639
May	68.49	70.13		68.32	**69.95**	1.65	182,420
June	68.13	69.69		67.99	**69.50**	1.55	190,184
Sept	66.92	68.20		66.72	**67.99**	1.29	103,440
Dec	65.83	66.96		65.70	**66.71**	1.10	185,913
June'26	64.74	65.62		64.57	**65.33**	0.87	97,515
NY Harbor ULSD (NYM)-42,000 gal.; $ per gal.							
March	2.3480	2.3981		2.3392	**2.3959**	.0516	12,318
April	2.2962	2.3496		2.2875	**2.3481**	.0561	101,429
Gasoline-NY RBOB (NYM)-42,000 gal.; $ per gal.							
March	1.9464	2.0020		1.9394	**1.9966**	.0477	12,948
April	2.1949	2.2448		2.1896	**2.2418**	.0496	120,000
Natural Gas (NYM)-10,000 MMBtu.; $ per MMBtu.							
April	3.966	4.065		3.878	**3.934**	–.025	220,352
May	4.030	4.118		3.944	**3.984**	–.035	218,392
July	4.333	4.410		4.259	**4.293**	–.035	101,329
Sept	4.359	4.429		4.286	**4.313**	–.039	102,585
Oct	4.393	4.465		4.323	**4.349**	–.038	128,030
Jan'26	5.132	5.201		5.078	**5.096**	–.035	124,038

Agriculture Futures

	Open	High	Contract hi lo	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Corn (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.							
March	478.25	481.25		463.75	**464.75**	–13.50	46,457
May	493.50	496.25		480.00	**481.00**	–12.50	823,658
Oats (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.							
March	362.00	363.75		354.50	**360.25**	–2.00	64
May	370.50	374.50		364.25	**372.75**	.25	3,152
Soybeans (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.							
March	1024.00	1034.00		1021.00	**1022.75**	–1.75	25,092
May	1041.25	1051.25		1035.00	**1037.25**	–4.00	373,502
Soybean Meal (CBT)-100 tons; $ per ton.							
March	293.20	295.60		290.70	**290.90**	–2.50	12,497
May	302.50	305.00		299.60	**300.20**	–2.30	249,970
Soybean Oil (CBT)-60,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
March	44.95	45.65		44.58	**44.75**	–.22	8,343
May	45.59	46.23		45.20	**45.35**	–.24	241,045
Rough Rice (CBT)-2,000 cwt.; $ per cwt.							
March	13.31	13.31	▼	13.19	**13.28**	.06	1,408
May	13.61	13.65		13.53	**13.62**	.04	10,174
Wheat (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.							
March	566.00	566.50		544.00	**546.75**	–19.25	6,999
May	579.25	580.25		560.00	**562.50**	–17.25	217,657
Wheat (KC)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.							
March	582.50	590.50		566.25	**571.25**	–13.75	4,402
May	598.00	599.50		579.50	**585.25**	–13.25	118,942
Cattle-Feeder (CME)-50,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
March	274.650	277.250		274.350	**276.450**	2.075	16,131
April	273.575	276.200		273.500	**275.550**	2.025	25,843
Cattle-Live (CME)-40,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
Feb	198.825	199.725		198.825	**199.400**	.575	753
April	194.750	196.400		194.450	**196.125**	1.500	149,142
Hogs-Lean (CME)-40,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
April	87.200	87.275	▼	84.300	**84.375**	–3.925	107,481
June	100.000	100.175	▼	97.425	**97.600**	–3.275	60,352
Lumber (CME)-27,500 bd. ft., $ per 1,000 bd. ft.							
March	627.50	634.50		616.00	**630.50**	5.00	2,104
May	656.50	667.00		651.50	**662.00**	5.50	3,386
Milk (CME)-200,000 lbs., cents per lb.							
Feb	20.22	20.22		20.20	**20.21**	.01	3,668
March	19.00	19.12		18.82	**19.00**	.18	5,098
Cocoa (ICE-US)-10 metric tons; $ per ton.							
March	8,863	8,863		8,836	**9,130**	30	444
May	9,216	9,338		8,907	**9,255**	25	48,866
Coffee (ICE-US)-37,500 lbs.; cents per lb.							
March	378.00	378.00		377.80	**378.75**	–.70	323
May	371.60	382.65		369.05	**373.60**	–1.60	81,284
Sugar-World (ICE-US)-112,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
March	20.75	20.85		19.61	**19.69**	–.95	48,483
May	19.60	19.71		18.78	**18.89**	–.70	369,696
Sugar-Domestic (ICE-US)-112,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
May	36.99	36.99		36.99	**36.99**	–1.01	1,063
Sept	37.39	37.39		37.39	**37.39**	–.66	1,829
Cotton (ICE-US)-50,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
March	65.20	65.20		65.20	**65.20**	–.17	193
May	66.90	67.35		66.55	**66.60**	–.27	148,375
Orange Juice (ICE-US)-15,000 lbs.; cents per lb.							
March	299.55	299.55	▼	284.95	**293.30**	–3.55	267
May	301.25	302.35	▼	286.90	**294.80**	–4.85	7,896

Interest Rate Futures

	Open	High	Contract hi lo	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Ultra Treasury Bonds (CBT) - $100,000; pts 32nds of 100%							
March	124-120	124-150		123-090	**123-170**	–31.0	54,987
June	124-090	124-100		123-050	**123-130**	–31.0	1,735,746
Treasury Bonds (CBT)-$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%							
March	118-070	118-100		117-140	**117-230**	–18.0	330,672
June	117-300	117-300		117-060	**117-160**	–18.0	1,694,389
Treasury Notes (CBT)-$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%							
March	110-245	110-275		110-135	**110-195**	–7.5	200,869
June	110-255	110-265		110-140	**110-205**	–8.0	4,750,947
5 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)-$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%							
March	107-155	107-170		107-087	**107-135**	–3.2	382,518
June	107-210	107-230		107-137	**107-192**	–3.2	5,942,119
2 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)-$200,000; pts 32nds of 100%							
March	103-029	103-037		103-002	**103-020**	–1.0	184,392
June	103-107	103-122		103-079	**103-102**	–.8	3,792,749
30 Day Federal Funds (CBT)-$5,000,000; 100 - daily avg.							
Feb	95.6700	95.6725	▼	95.6700	**95.6700**		505,965
May	95.7300	95.7350		95.7200	**95.7300**		364,508
Three-Month SOFR (CME)-$1,000,000; 100 - daily avg.							
Dec	95.6350	95.6375	▼	95.6350	**95.6350**	–.0025	1,032,162
March'25	95.7000	95.7025		95.6925	**95.6975**	–.0050	1,278,706

Currency Futures

	Open	High	Contract hi lo	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Japanese Yen (CME)-¥12,500,000; $ per 100¥							
March	.6726	.6735		.6671	**.6685**	–.0049	291,178
June	.6800	.6804		.6741	**.6754**	–.0050	34,967
Canadian Dollar (CME)-CAD 100,000; $ per CAD							
March	.6978	.6988		.6926	**.6930**	–.0053	306,310
June	.7010	.7016		.6956	**.6960**	–.0052	9,409
British Pound (CME)-£62,500; $ per £							
March	1.2675	1.2689		1.2597	**1.2608**	–.0076	193,146
June	1.2651	1.2686		1.2597	**1.2606**	–.0077	8,234
Swiss Franc (CME)-CHF 125,000; $ per CHF							
March	1.1202	1.1207		1.1124	**1.1136**	–.0077	96,028
June	1.1323	1.1331		1.1245	**1.1255**	–.0077	410
Australian Dollar (CME)-AUD 100,000; $ per AUD							
March	.6309	.6315		.6233	**.6244**	–.0065	181,330
June	.6313	.6319		.6238	**.6249**	–.0065	2,746
Mexican Peso (CME)-MXN 500,000; $ per MXN							
March	.04884	.04902		.04855	**.04873**	–.00008	148,299
June	.04821	.04841		.04797	**.04813**	–.00008	1,292
Euro (CME)-€125,000; $ per €							
March	1.0495	1.0505		1.0405	**1.0413**	–.0089	616,551
June	1.0552	1.0552		1.0458	**1.0466**	–.0088	34,615

Index Futures

	Open	High	Contract hi lo	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Mini DJ Industrial Average (CBT)-$5 x index							
March	43484	43949		43277	**43297**	–209	76,084
June	43828	44317		43649	**43667**	–209	1,858
Mini S&P 500 (CME)-$50 x index							
March	5980.00	6014.50		5873.00	**5876.25**	–94.50	2,079,208
June	6040.75	6071.00		5929.00	**5932.00**	–95.25	36,433
Mini S&P Midcap 400 (CME)-$100 x index							
March	3114.20	3132.00	▼	3066.10	**3068.40**	–39.40	41,824
June	3128.00	3149.70	▼	3097.30	**3093.00**	–37.90	1
Mini Nasdaq 100 (CME)-$20 x index							
March	21249.00	21386.50	▼	20583.25	**20605.75**	–581.25	279,875
June	21506.25	21618.25	▼	20810.25	**20833.50**	–584.25	4,931
Mini Russell 2000 (CME)-$50 x index							
March	2183.10	2200.60	▼	2143.30	**2144.50**	–33.70	421,762
June	2205.10	2218.80	▼	2162.30	**2163.60**	–33.90	3,915
Sept	2202.00	2223.70	▼	2202.00	**2182.70**	–34.70	12
Mini Russell 1000 (CME)-$50 x index							
March	3227.00	3284.50		3214.90	**3215.40**	–50.60	6,127
U.S. Dollar Index (ICE-US)-$1,000 x index							
March	106.51	107.24		106.35	**107.18**	.85	36,590
June	106.10	106.85		106.10	**106.79**	.84	1,419

Source: FactSet

Cash Prices | wsj.com/market-data/commodities

Thursday, February 27, 2025

These prices reflect buying and selling of a variety of actual or "physical" commodities in the marketplace—separate from the futures price on an exchange, which reflects what the commodity might be worth in future months.

	Thursday
Energy	
Coal,C.Aplc.,12500Btu,1.2SO2-r,w	**76.000**
Coal,PwdrRvrBsn,8800Btu,0.8SO2-r,w	**14.200**
Metals	
Gold, per troy oz	
Engelhard industrial	**2873.00**
Handy & Harman base	**2880.80**
Handy & Harman fabricated	**3197.69**
LBMA Gold Price AM	***2913.55**
LBMA Gold Price PM	***2901.00**
Krugerrand,wholesale-e	**2994.65**
Maple Leaf-e	**3023.44**
American Eagle-e	**3023.44**
Mexican peso-e	**3479.78**
Austria crown-e	**2825.46**
Austria phil-e	**3023.44**
Silver, troy oz.	
Engelhard industrial	**31.5000**
Handy & Harman base	**31.4350**
Handy & Harman fabricated	**39.2940**
LBMA spot price	***£25.0700**
(U.S.$ equivalent)	***31.7150**
Coins,wholesale $1,000 face-a	**24004**
Other metals	
LBMA Platinum Price PM	***971.0**
LBMA Palladium Price PM	***929.0**
Platinum,Engelhard industrial	**962.0**
Palladium,Engelhard industrial	**930.0**
Aluminum, LME, $ per metric ton	***2670.5**
Copper,Comex spot	**4.5800**
Iron Ore, 62% Fe CFR China-s	***106.9**
Steel, HRC USA, FOB Midwest Mill-s	***870.0**
Battery/EV metals	
BMI Lithium Carbonate, EXW China, =99.5%-v,w	**10525**
BMI Lithium Hydroxide, EXW China, =56.5% -v,w	**9625**
BMI Cobalt sulphate, EXW China, >20.5% -v,w	**3588**
BMI Nickel Sulphate, EXW China, >22%-v,k	**3538**
BMI Flake Graphite, FOB China, -100 Mesh, 94-95% -v,m	**435**
Fibers and Textiles	
Burlap,10-oz,40-inch NY yd-n,w	**0.8700**
Cotton,1 1/16 std lw-mdMphs-u	**0.6460**
Cotlook 'A' Index-t	***78.00**
Hides,hvy native steers piece fob-u	**n.a.**
Wool,64s,staple,Terr del-u,w	**n.a.**
Grains and Feeds	
Bran,wheat middlings, KC-u,w	**100**
Corn,No. 2 yellow,Cent IL-bp,u	**4.3700**
Corn gluten feed,Midwest-u,w	**126.2**
Corn gluten meal,Midwest-u,w	**439.1**
Cottonseed meal-u,w	**n.a.**
Hominy feed,Cent IL-u,w	**116**
Meat-bonemeal,50% pro Mnpls-u,w	**275**
Oats,No.2 milling,Mnpls-u	**4.1025**
Rice, Long Grain Milled, No. 2 AR-u,w	**35.25**
Sorghum,(Milo) No.2 Gulf-u	**n.a.**
SoybeanMeal,Cent IL,rail,ton48%-u,w	**301.80**
Soybeans,No.1 yllw IL-bp,u	**9.8800**
Wheat,Spring14%-pro Mnpls-u	**7.8475**
Wheat,No.2 soft red,St.Louis-u	**5.5263**
Wheat - Hard - KC (USDA) $ per bu-u	**5.9125**
Wheat,No.1soft white,Portld,OR-u	**6.0750**
Food	
Beef,carcass equiv. index	
choice 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u	**299.26**
select 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u	**287.23**
Broilers, National comp wtd. avg.-u,w	**1.2555**
Butter,AA Chicago-d	**2.3450**
Cheddar cheese,bbl,Chicago-d	**180.50**
Cheddar cheese,blk,Chicago-d	**187.00**
Milk,Nonfat dry,Chicago lb.-d	**120.00**
Coffee,Brazilian,Comp-y	**3.8056**
Coffee,Colombian, NY-y	**3.9205**
Eggs,large white,Chicago-u,w	**8.2950**
Flour,hard winter KC-p	**15.95**
Hams,17-20 lbs,Mid-US fob-u	**n.a.**
Hogs,Iowa-So. Minnesota-u	**87.10**
Pork bellies,12-14 lb MidUS-u	**1.6881**
Pork loins,13-19 lb MidUS-u	**1.0138**
Steers,Tex.-Okla. Choice-u	**197.00**
Steers,feeder,Okla. City-u,w	**333.13**
Fats and Oils	
Degummed corn oil, crude wtd. avg.-u,w	**n.a.**
Grease,choice white,Chicago-h	**0.5100**
Lard,Chicago-u	**n.a.**
Soybean oil,crude;Centl IL-u,w	**0.4556**
Tallow,bleach;Chicago-h	**0.5400**
Tallow,edible,Chicago-u	**n.a.**

KEY TO CODES: A=ask; B=bid; BP=country elevator bids to producers; C=corrected; D=CME; E=Manfra,Tordella & Brookes; H=American Commodities Brokerage Co; K=bi-weekly; M=monthly; N=nominal; n.a.=not quoted or not available; P=Sosland Publishing; R=SNL Energy; S=Platts-TSI; T=Cotlook Limited; U=USDA; V=Benchmark Mineral Intelligence; W=weekly; Y=International Coffee Organization; Z=not quoted. *Data as of 2/26

Source: Dow Jones Market Data

Exchange-Traded Portfolios | wsj.com/market-data/mutualfunds-etfs

Largest 100 exchange-traded funds. Preliminary close data as of 4:30 p.m. ET

Thursday, February 27, 2025

ETF	Symbol	Closing Price	Chg (%)	YTD (%)
CommSvsSPDR	**XLC**	100.53	**–0.97**	3.8
CnsmrDiscSel	**XLY**	212.43	**–1.44**	–5.3
DimenUSCoreEq2	**DFAC**	34.51	**–1.37**	–0.2
EnSelSectorSPDR	**XLE**	89.61	**0.54**	4.6
FidWiseBTC	**FBTC**	72.75	**–1.18**	–10.8
FinSelSectorSPDR	**XLF**	51.13	**0.55**	5.8
GrayscaleBitcoin	**GBTC**	65.95	**–1.14**	–10.9
HealthCrSelSect	**XLV**	147.22	**–0.41**	7.0
IndSelSectorSPDR	**XLI**	134.53	**–0.35**	2.1
InvscNasd100	**QQQM**	206.05	**–2.75**	–2.1
InvscQQQI	**QQQ**	500.27	**–2.78**	–2.1
InvscS&P500EW	**RSP**	178.20	**–0.87**	1.7
iShBitcoin	**IBIT**	47.35	**–1.27**	–10.7
iShCoreDivGrowth	**DGRO**	63.34	**–0.41**	3.3
iShCoreMSCIEAFE	**IEFA**	75.44	**–1.09**	7.3
iShCoreMSCIEM	**IEMG**	54.15	**–1.97**	3.7
iShCoreMSCITotInt	**IXUS**	69.81	**–1.40**	5.5
iShCoreS&P500	**IVV**	587.78	**–1.59**	–0.2
iShCoreS&P MC	**IJH**	61.25	**–1.23**	–1.7
iShCoreS&P SC	**IJR**	110.84	**–1.41**	–3.8
iShCoreS&PTotUS	**ITOT**	128.03	**–1.56**	–0.5
iShCoreS&PUSGrw	**IUSG**	136.43	**–2.37**	–2.1
iShCoreS&PUSVal	**IUSV**	94.38	**–0.45**	1.9
iShCoreTotUSDBd	**IUSB**	46.04	**–0.15**	1.9
iShCoreUSAggBd	**AGG**	98.81	**–0.15**	2.0
iShEdgeMSCIMinUSA	**USMV**	93.31	**–0.07**	5.1
iShEdgeMSCIUSAQual	**QUAL**	178.94	**–1.43**	0.5
iShGoldTr	**IAU**	54.20	**–1.53**	9.5
iShiBoxx$IGCpBd	**LQD**	109.13	**–0.42**	2.1
iShMBS	**MBB**	93.67	**–0.14**	2.2
iShMSCI EAFE	**EFA**	81.41	**–1.13**	7.7
iShMSCIEAFEValue	**EFV**	57.37	**–0.81**	9.3
iShNatlMuniBd	**MUB**	107.41	**–0.18**	0.8
iSh1-5YIGCpBd	**IGSB**	52.24	**...**	1.0
iSh1-3YTreaBd	**SHY**	82.47	**0.04**	0.6
iShRussMC	**IWR**	88.42	**–1.11**	0.0
iShRuss1000	**IWB**	321.39	**–1.53**	–0.2
iShRuss1000Grw	**IWF**	387.60	**–2.65**	–3.5
iShRuss1000Val	**IWD**	191.79	**–0.32**	3.6
iShRuss2000	**IWM**	212.39	**–1.53**	–3.9
iShS&P500Grw	**IVW**	99.34	**–2.62**	–2.2
iShS&P500Value	**IVE**	194.58	**–0.47**	1.9
iShSelectDiv	**DVY**	136.43	**–0.34**	3.9
iSh7-10YTreaBd	**IEF**	94.80	**–0.12**	2.5
iSh20+YTreaBd	**TLT**	91.31	**–0.71**	4.6
iShUSTech	**IYW**	152.18	**–3.64**	–4.6
iShUSTreasuryBd	**GOVT**	22.89	**–0.11**	–0.4
iSh0-3MTreaBd	**SGOV**	100.63	**0.03**	0.3
JPMNasdEqPrem	**JEPQ**	55.13	**–2.51**	–2.2
JPM EqPrem	**JEPI**	58.69	**–0.68**	2.0
JPM UltShIncm	**JPST**	50.60	**...**	0.5
PacerUSCashCows	**COWZ**	56.96	**–0.94**	0.8
ProShUltPrQQQ	**TQQQ**	71.64	**–8.29**	–9.5
SPDRBbg1-3MTB	**BIL**	91.70	**0.01**	0.3
SPDR DJIA Tr	**DIA**	432.35	**–0.46**	1.6
SPDR Gold	**GLD**	264.93	**–1.52**	9.4
SPDRPtfDevxUS	**SPDW**	36.42	**–1.17**	6.7
SPDRS&P500Value	**SPYV**	52.16	**–0.46**	2.0
SPDRPtfS&P500	**SPLG**	68.83	**–1.56**	–0.2
SPDRS&P500Growth	**SPYG**	86.03	**–2.58**	–2.1
SPDR S&P 500	**SPY**	585.05	**–1.60**	–0.2
SchwabIntEquity	**SCHF**	19.78	**–1.20**	6.9
SchwabUS BrdMkt	**SCHB**	22.58	**–1.66**	–0.5
SchwabUS Div	**SCHD**	28.17	**0.07**	3.1
SchwabUS LC	**SCHX**	23.13	**–1.62**	–0.2
SchwabUS LC Grw	**SCHG**	26.81	**–2.51**	–3.8
SPDR S&PMdCpTr	**MDY**	559.66	**–1.27**	–1.7
SPDR S&P Div	**SDY**	136.47	**–0.21**	3.3
TechSelectSector	**XLK**	222.59	**–3.64**	–4.3
VanEckSemicon	**SMH**	228.79	**–6.16**	–5.5
VangdSC Val	**VBR**	195.87	**–1.05**	–1.2
VangdExtMkt	**VXF**	185.38	**–1.50**	–2.4
VangdSC Grwth	**VBK**	270.48	**–1.96**	–3.4
VangdDivApp	**VIG**	200.35	**–0.61**	2.3
VangdFTSEAWxUS	**VEU**	60.76	**–1.33**	5.8
VangdFTSEDevMk	**VEA**	51.03	**–1.18**	6.7
VangdFTSE EM	**VWO**	45.30	**–1.76**	2.9
VangdGrowth	**VUG**	398.60	**–2.51**	–2.9
VangdHiDiv	**VYM**	132.18	**–0.55**	3.6
VangdInfoTech	**VGT**	588.97	**–3.52**	–5.3
VangdIntermBd	**BIV**	76.26	**–0.10**	2.0
VangdIntrCorpBd	**VCIT**	81.75	**–0.20**	1.8
VangdIntermTrea	**VGIT**	59.03	**–0.02**	1.8
VangdLC	**VV**	269.05	**–1.65**	–0.2
VangdMegaGrwth	**MGK**	332.44	**–2.66**	–3.2
VangdMC	**VO**	266.79	**–0.99**	1.0
VangdRealEst	**VNQ**	93.11	**0.40**	4.5
VangdRuss1000Grw	**VONG**	99.83	**–2.61**	–3.4
VangdS&P500ETF	**VOO**	537.97	**–1.61**	–0.2
VangdST Bond	**BSV**	77.95	**...**	0.9
VangdSTCpBd	**VCSH**	78.77	**–0.01**	1.0
VangdShortTrea	**VGSH**	58.53	**0.02**	0.6
VangdSC	**VB**	235.23	**–1.42**	–2.1
VangdTaxExemptBd	**VTEB**	50.52	**–0.18**	0.8
VangdTotalBd	**BND**	73.35	**–0.12**	2.0
VangdTotIntlBd	**BNDX**	49.33	**–0.10**	0.6
VangdTotIntlStk	**VXUS**	62.22	**–1.33**	5.6
VangdTotalStk	**VTI**	288.51	**–1.55**	–0.4
VangdTotWrldStk	**VT**	119.52	**–1.51**	1.7
VangdValue	**VTV**	175.68	**–0.34**	3.8

Borrowing Benchmarks | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Money Rates

February 27, 2025

Key annual interest rates paid to borrow or lend money in U.S. and international markets. Rates below are a guide to general levels but don't always represent actual transactions.

Inflation

	Jan. Index level	Chg From (%) Dec. '24	Jan. '24
U.S. consumer price index			
All items	**317.671**	0.65	3.0
Core	**323.842**	0.57	3.3

International rates

	Latest	Week ago	52-Week High	Low
Prime rates				
U.S.	**7.50**	7.50	8.50	7.50
Canada	**5.20**	5.20	7.20	5.20
Japan	**1.625**	1.625	1.625	1.475
Policy Rates				
Euro zone	**2.90**	2.90	4.50	2.90
Switzerland	**1.00**	1.00	2.25	1.00
Britain	**4.50**	4.50	5.25	4.50
Australia	**4.10**	4.10	4.35	4.10
Overnight repurchase				
U.S.	**4.38**	4.37	5.45	4.00

U.S. government rates

	Latest	Week ago	52-WEEK High	Low
Discount				
	4.50	4.50	5.50	4.50
Federal funds				
Effective rate	**4.3400**	4.3300	5.3400	4.3300
High	**4.4700**	4.5500	5.6500	4.4700
Low	**4.3200**	4.3200	5.3300	4.3000
Bid	**4.3200**	4.3200	5.3300	4.3200
Offer	**4.3500**	4.3300	5.3600	4.3300
Treasury bill auction				
4 weeks	**4.235**	4.245	5.285	4.230
13 weeks	**4.195**	4.225	5.255	4.195
26 weeks	**4.180**	4.220	5.170	4.110

Other short-term rates

	Latest	Week ago	52-Week high	low
Call money				
	6.25	6.25	7.25	6.25
Commercial paper (AA financial)				
90 days	**4.32**	4.31	5.37	4.26
Secured Overnight Financing Rate				
	4.33	4.35	5.40	4.27

	Latest	Value Traded	52-Week High	Low
DTCC GCF Repo Index				
Treasury	**4.386**	55.200	5.471	4.286
MBS	**4.409**	63.988	5.526	4.294

Weekly survey

	Latest	Week ago	Year ago
Freddie Mac			
30-year fixed	**6.76**	6.85	6.94
15-year fixed	**5.94**	6.04	6.26

Notes on data:

U.S. prime rate is the base rate on corporate loans posted by at least 70% of the 10 largest U.S. banks, and is effective December 19, 2024. **Other prime rates** aren't directly comparable; lending practices vary widely by location; **Discount rate** is effective December 19, 2024. **Secured Overnight Financing Rate** is as of February 26, 2025. **DTCC GCF Repo Index** is Depository Trust & Clearing Corp.'s weighted average for overnight trades in applicable CUSIPs. Value traded is in billions of U.S. dollars. **Federal-funds rates** are Tullett Prebon rates as of 5:30 p.m. ET.

Sources: Federal Reserve; Bureau of Labor Statistics; DTCC; FactSet; Tullett Prebon Information, Ltd.

Bonds | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Tracking Bond Benchmarks

Return on investment and spreads over Treasurys and/or yields paid to investors compared with 52-week highs and lows for different types of bonds

Total return close	YTD total return (%)	Index	Yield (%) Latest	Low	High
Broad Market Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices					
2140.16	2.3	U.S. Aggregate	**4.640**	4.100	5.310
U.S. Corporate Indexes Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices					
3264.97	2.3	U.S. Corporate	**5.120**	4.640	5.750
3181.33	1.8	Intermediate	**4.880**	4.400	5.670
4274.88	3.3	Long term	**5.610**	5.070	6.010
618.82	2.3	Double-A-rated	**4.810**	4.260	5.330
890.29	2.3	Triple-B-rated	**5.300**	4.850	5.950
High Yield Bonds ICE BofA					
580.44	2.0	High Yield Constrained	**7.087**	6.975	8.322
601.16	1.9	Triple-C-rated	**11.122**	11.050	13.872
3871.59	2.2	High Yield 100	**6.404**	6.208	7.871
506.95	2.0	Global High Yield Constrained	**6.824**	6.808	8.112
381.94	1.6	Europe High Yield Constrained	**5.219**	5.219	6.710
U.S Agency Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices					
1870.73	1.6	U.S Agency	**4.400**	3.960	5.190
1656.80	1.4	10-20 years	**4.350**	3.920	5.190
3552.61	3.9	20-plus years	**4.840**	4.240	5.300
2861.18	2.2	Yankee	**4.900**	4.380	5.580
Mortgage-Backed Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices					
2120.09	2.6	Mortgage-Backed	**4.920**	4.340	5.570
2088.18	2.6	Ginnie Mae (GNMA)	**4.920**	4.460	5.580
1250.27	2.6	Fannie mae (FNMA)	**4.920**	4.310	5.580
1927.91	2.7	Freddie Mac (FHLMC)	**4.790**	4.150	5.510
601.59	1.2	Muni Master	**3.309**	3.074	3.760
425.20	1.6	7-12 year	**3.063**	2.837	3.557
487.12	1.3	12-22 year	**3.721**	3.469	4.032
462.35	0.8	22-plus year	**4.284**	3.959	4.533
Global Government J.P. Morgan†					
550.51	1.1	Global Government	**3.480**	3.010	3.740
843.42	1.8	Canada	**2.960**	2.910	3.870
364.24	0.4	EMU§	**3.004**	2.726	3.365
660.77	0.8	France	**3.150**	2.870	3.460
470.16	-0.002	Germany	**2.440**	2.080	2.770
266.05	-1.5	Japan	**1.730**	1.100	1.750
513.51	0.01	Netherlands	**2.640**	2.290	2.980
791.49	1.2	U.K.	**4.730**	4.030	5.070
921.85	2.7	Emerging Markets**	**7.324**	7.084	8.073

*Constrained indexes limit individual issuer concentrations to 2%; the High Yield 100 are the 100 largest bonds † In local currency § Euro-zone bonds

** EMBI Global Index

Sources: ICE Data Services; Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices; J.P.Morgan

Global Government Bonds: Mapping Yields

Yields and spreads over or under U.S. Treasurys on benchmark two-year and 10-year government bonds in selected other countries; arrows indicate whether the yield rose(▲) or fell (▼) in the latest session

Coupon (%)	Country/ Maturity, in years	Yield (%) Latest(●)	Previous	Month ago	Year ago	Spread Under/Over U.S. Treasurys, in basis points Latest	Prev	Year ago
4.125	**U.S.** 2	**4.079** ▲	4.071	4.193	4.712			
4.625	10	**4.284** ▲	4.248	4.529	4.314			
4.750	**Australia** 2	**3.790** ▼	3.801	3.920	3.828	**-29.6**	-28.1	**-85.9**
3.500	10	**4.349** ▼	4.373	4.489	4.143	**6.2**	11.0	**-15.8**
2.500	**France** 2	**2.161** ▼	2.183	2.414	2.936	**-192.5**	-189.9	**-175.1**
3.000	10	**3.107** ▼	3.120	3.277	2.940	**-118**	-114.3	**-136.1**
2.200	**Germany** 2	**2.045** ▼	2.074	2.245	2.954	**-204.1**	-200.8	**-173.3**
2.500	10	**2.420** ▼	2.436	2.535	2.467	**-186.7**	-182.7	**-183.4**
2.950	**Italy** 2	**2.319** ▼	2.356	2.577	3.436	**-176.7**	-172.6	**-125.1**
3.650	10	**3.546** ▼	3.548	3.631	3.906	**-74.1**	-71.5	**-39.5**
0.700	**Japan** 2	**0.818** ▲	0.791	0.697	0.169	**-326.8**	-329.1	**-451.9**
1.200	10	**1.396** ▲	1.367	1.220	0.695	**-289.1**	-289.6	**-360.6**
2.500	**Spain** 2	**2.241** ▼	2.268	2.502	3.103	**-184.5**	-181.4	**-158.4**
3.450	10	**3.055** ▲	3.052	3.168	3.343	**-123**	-121.1	**-95.9**
4.125	**U.K.** 2	**4.174** ▼	4.184	4.291	4.647	**8.8**	10.2	**-4.0**
4.250	10	**4.514** ▲	4.506	4.591	4.132	**22.7**	24.3	**-16.9**

Source: Tullett Prebon, Tradeweb FTSE U.S. Treasury Close

Corporate Debt

Prices of firms' bonds reflect factors including investors' economic, sectoral and company-specific expectations

Investment-grade spreads that tightened the most...

Issuer	Symbol	Coupon (%)	Yield (%)	Maturity	Spread*, in basis points Current	One-day change	Last week
Medtronic	**MDT**	5.550	**5.30**	March 15, '40	**101**	–8	n.a.
Mitsubishi UFJ Financial	...	2.048	**4.82**	July 17, '30	**70**	–7	70
Toyota Motor Credit	...	2.150	**4.56**	Feb. 13, '30	**44**	–7	45
Discovery Communications	...	6.350	**6.76**	June 1, '40	**247**	–6	246
America Movil	...	6.125	**5.56**	March 30, '40	**128**	–4	128
Mutual of Omaha Cos. Global Funding	...	5.350	**4.76**	April 9, '27	**66**	–4	n.a.
Shell Finance US	...	4.125	**4.95**	May 11, '35	**66**	–4	60
Banco Santander	...	5.439	**5.01**	July 15, '31	**90**	–4	84

...And spreads that widened the most

Issuer	Symbol	Coupon (%)	Yield (%)	Maturity	Current	One-day change	Last week
Mutual of Omaha Cos. Global Funding*	...	4.750	**4.86**	Oct. 15, '29	**74**	12	72
Citigroup	**C**	4.750	**5.77**	May 18, '46	**118**	6	108
Goldman Sachs	**GS**	6.750	**5.71**	Oct. 1, '37	**141**	6	131
Toyota Motor Credit	...	5.350	**5.09**	Jan. 9, '35	**81**	6	68
Burlington Northern Santa Fe	...	6.150	**5.09**	May 1, '37	**81**	5	n.a.
John Deere Capital	...	4.400	**4.70**	Sept. 8, '31	**61**	5	52
HP	**HPQ**	6.000	**5.76**	Sept. 15, '41	**117**	5	n.a.
International Business Machines	**IBM**	4.150	**5.40**	May 15, '39	**111**	5	n.a.

High-yield issues with the biggest price increases...

Issuer	Symbol	Coupon (%)	Yield (%)	Maturity	Bond Price as % of face value Current	One-day change	Last week
Walgreen	...	4.400	**7.22**	Sept. 15, '42	**72.219**	2.71	n.a.
Lumen Technologies	**LUMN**	7.650	**9.45**	March 15, '42	**84.875**	1.88	83.030
Nissan Motor Acceptance	...	5.300	**5.35**	Sept. 13, '27	**99.875**	1.11	n.a.
Hughes Satellite Systems	...	5.250	**10.47**	Aug. 1, '26	**93.250**	0.88	92.000
Efesto Bidco	...	7.500	**7.65**	Feb. 15, '32	**99.250**	0.50	98.827
Teva Pharmaceutical Finance	...	6.150	**5.96**	Feb. 1, '36	**101.527**	0.50	100.750
Bausch Health	...	11.000	**10.78**	Sept. 30, '28	**100.625**	0.38	98.000
ZF North America Capital	...	4.750	**4.68**	April 29, '25	**100.000**	0.13	99.875

...And with the biggest price decreases

Issuer	Symbol	Coupon (%)	Yield (%)	Maturity	Current	One-day change	Last week
Lumen Technologies	**LUMN**	7.600	**9.81**	Sept. 15, '39	**83.030**	–1.47	n.a.
Transocean	**RIG**	7.500	**10.15**	April 15, '31	**88.099**	–1.44	92.000
Bath & Body Works	**BBWI**	6.875	**6.38**	Nov. 1, '35	**103.809**	–0.81	104.000
DISH DBS	...	5.125	**15.91**	June 1, '29	**67.500**	–0.50	64.625
Paramount Global	**PARA**	6.875	**6.29**	April 30, '36	**104.649**	–0.39	n.a.
Navient	**NAVI**	5.625	**7.38**	Aug. 1, '33	**89.131**	–0.37	88.750
Topaz Solar Farms	...	5.750	**6.12**	Sept. 30, '39	**96.500**	–0.35	97.496

*Estimated spread over 2-year, 3-year, 5-year, 10-year or 30-year hot-run Treasury; 100 basis points=one percentage pt.; change in spread shown is for Z-spread.
Note: Data are for the most active issue of bonds with maturities of two years or more

Source: MarketAxess

BIGGEST 1,000 STOCKS

How to Read the Stock Tables

The following explanations apply to NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market listed securities. Prices are consolidated from trades reported by various market centers, including securities exchanges, Finra, electronic communications networks and other broker-dealers. The list comprises the 1,000 largest companies based on market capitalization.

Underlined quotations are those stocks with large changes in volume compared with the issue's average trading volume.

Boldfaced quotations highlight those issues whose price changed by 5% or more if their previous closing price was $2 or higher.

Footnotes:
▲-New 52-week high; ▼-New 52-week low; **dd**-Indicates loss in the most recent four quarters.

Stock tables reflect composite regular trading as of 4 p.m. ET and changes in the official closing prices from 4 p.m. ET the previous day.

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg
A B C			
AAON	**AAON**	**78.64**	**-23.38**
AECOM	ACM	97.26	-1.13
Aflac	AFL	107.43	1.62
AGNC Invt	AGNC	10.42	-0.09
Ansys	ANSS	330.37	-1.95
AxaltaCoating	AXTA	35.81	-0.87
AxonEnterprise	**AXON**	**525.44**	**-46.96**
BCE	BCE	23.39	0.03
BHP Group	BHP	49.36	-0.86
BJ'sWholesale	BJ	99.81	-0.51
BP	BP	33.12	0.44
BWX Tech	BWXT	102.13	-4.51
BXP	BXP	70.04	0.05
Centene	CNC	58.19	1.29
CenterPointEner	CNP	33.74	-0.30
CentraisElBras	EBR	6.40	-0.06
CharlesRiverLabs	CRL	164.88	-3.08
ChartIndustries	GTLS	182.25	-3.67
CharterComms	CHTR	359.04	5.56
CheckPoint	CHKP	216.69	-4.23
Chemed	**CHE**	**586.12**	**40.33**
AsteraLabs	ALAB	75.75	-7.25
AstraZeneca	AZN	75.65	0.13
Atlassian	TEAM	278.48	-10.28
AtmosEnergy	ATO	149.64	-0.35
AuroraInnov	AUR	7.00	-0.02
Autodesk	ADSK	282.35	-3.32
ADP	ADP	311.30	-0.08
AutoZone	AZO	3444.69	51.72
Avalonbay	AVB	223.02	1.44
▼ Avantor	AVTR	16.49	-0.73
AveryDennison	AVY	185.49	-0.26
Carnival	CUK	21.22	-0.56
CarpenterTech	CRS	198.51	-0.67
CarrierGlobal	CARR	64.08	-2.02
Carvana	CVNA	223.21	-9.42
CaseysGenStores	CASY	409.09	-6.91
Caterpillar	CAT	340.00	-2.58
Celestica	CLS	107.87	-3.81
Cemex	CX	6.29	-0.17
Cencora	COR	249.01	-1.64
▼ CenovusEnergy	CVE	13.75	-0.17
DollarTree	DLTR	73.16	-0.98
DominionEner	D	56.48	-0.63
Domino's	DPZ	482.28	3.17
▼ Donaldson	DCI	67.59	-1.66
DoorDash	DASH	195.84	-2.76
Dover	DOV	196.51	-1.17
Dow	DOW	38.43	-0.42
Doximity	DOCS	69.45	-3.45
▼ DrReddy'sLab	RDY	12.95	-0.09
DraftKings	DKNG	42.74	-0.62
▼ NICE	NICE	142.99	-1.90
NIO	NIO	4.79	0.07
▲ **NRG Energy**	**NRG**	**105.11**	**-8.22**
NVR	NVR	7181.95	-27.72
NXP Semicon	**NXPI**	**216.87**	**-12.51**
Nasdaq	NDAQ	80.80	0.76
Natera	NTRA	156.61	-3.95
NationalGrid	NGG	61.47	-1.09
▲ NatWest	NWG	12.14	0.10
Nebius	**NBIS**	**32.05**	**-3.93**
Procter&Gamble	PG	171.97	0.67
Progressive	PGR	278.77	5.34
Prologis	PLD	122.77	0.61
PrudentialFinl	PRU	112.75	0.83
Prudential	PUK	18.31	-0.14
PublicServiceEnt	PEG	80.70	-2.23
PublicStorage	PSA	305.70	1.40
PulteGroup	PHM	102.92	-1.53
PureStorage	**PSTG**	**53.20**	**-9.24**
▼ Qiagen	QGEN	38.40	-0.75
Snap-On	SNA	336.92	-2.14
Snowflake	SNOW	173.69	7.50
SOQUIMICH	SQM	40.00	0.35
SoFiTech	SOFI	14.07	-0.40
Solventum	SOLV	83.44	-0.60
Somnigroup	SGI	62.94	-1.63
Sony	SONY	25.03	-0.43
SouthState	SSB	99.28	-0.35
Southern	SO	88.29	-0.46
SoCopper	SCCO	90.49	-2.76
Trip.com	TCOM	57.20	-1.41
TruistFinl	TFC	45.71	0.37
Twilio	TWLO	117.24	-1.98
TylerTech	TYL	605.41	-11.06
TysonFoods	TSN	60.99	0.69
UBS Group	UBS	33.85	-0.38
UDR	UDR	44.34	0.62
U-Haul	UHAL	69.22	-1.17
U-Haul N	UHAL/B	62.16	-1.09
UL Solutions	ULS	53.04	-0.38
Yum!Brands	YUM	153.71	2.21
YumChina	YUMC	50.20	1.21
ZTO Express	ZTO	19.67	0.14
ZebraTech	ZBRA	311.00	-8.48
Zillow C	Z	76.32	-2.01
Zillow A	ZG	73.86	-1.84
ZimmerBiomet	ZBH	104.05	-0.87
Zoetis	ZTS	164.98	-0.01
ZoomComms	ZM	72.88	-1.27
Zscaler	ZS	192.03	-3.79

Dividend Changes

KEY: A: annual; M: monthly; Q: quarterly; r: revised; SA: semiannual; S2:1: stock split and ratio; SO: spin-off.

Company	Symbol	Yld %	Amount New/Old	Frq	Payable / Record
Increased					
Allstate	ALL	1.9	1.00 /.92	Q	Apr01 /Mar10
AMERISAFE	AMSF	2.9	.39 /.37	Q	Mar21 /Mar07
Bentley Systems	BSY	0.6	.07 /.06	Q	Mar27 /Mar19
DT Midstream	DTM	3.2	.82 /.735	Q	Apr15 /Mar17
eBay	EBAY	1.7	.29 /.27	Q	Mar28 /Mar14
EPR Properties	EPR	6.8	.295 /.285	M	Apr15 /Mar31
Sitio Royalties	STR	7.7	.41 /.28	Q	Mar28 /Mar14
Turning Point Brands	TPB	0.4	.075 /.07	Q	Apr11 /Mar21
Verisk Analytics	VRSK	0.6	.45 /.39	Q	Mar31 /Mar14
Xcel Energy	XEL	3.1	.57 /.5475	Q	Apr20 /Mar14
Reduced					
Bloomin' Brands	BLMN	6.1	.15 /.24	Q	Mar26 /Mar11
Foreign					
AerCap Holdings	AER	1.0	.27	Q	Apr03 /Mar12
Consolidated Water	CWCO	1.6	.11	Q	Apr30 /Apr01
Dole	DOLE	2.2	.08	Q	Apr03 /Mar20
Golden Ocean Group	GOGL	10.6	.15	Q	Mar21 /Mar11
ICL Group	ICL	3.1	.0403	Q	Mar25 /Mar12
Ituran Location & Ctrl	ITRN	3.9	.50	Q	Apr03 /Mar20
Lloyds Banking Group ADR	LYG	4.0	.1035	SA	May30 /Apr11
Smith & Nephew ADR	SNN	2.5	.447	SA	May28 /Mar28
Vinci Partners	VINP	7.1	.15	Q	Mar27 /Mar13

Note: Dividend yields as of 3:30 p.m. ET

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

New Highs and Lows

The following explanations apply to the New York Stock Exchange, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market stocks that hit a new 52-week intraday high or low in the latest session. **% CHG**-Daily percentage change from the previous trading session.

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Stock	Sym	52-Wk Hi/Lo	% Chg
Highs			
AAMissionAcqnA	AAM	10.20	...
ADT	ADT	8.33	7.8
Adtran	ADTN	12.44	-0.4
AGNC InvtPfdF	AGNCP	25.29	-0.1
ASPACIIIAcqnRt	ASPCR	0.20	38.5
AXIS Capital	AXS	96.80	2.5
AbbottLabs	ABT	136.99	-0.1
AimeiHlthTechRt	AFJKR	0.39	1.6
Dynamix	DYNXU	10.02	...
DynamixWt	DYNXW	0.35	-10.7
ECARX Wt	ECXWW	0.09	11.3
EPR Prop	EPR	53.59	1.6
EPR PropPfdC	EPRpC	23.92	1.1
ESGL	ESGL	3.00	31.0
ESGL Wt	ESGLW	0.05	0.7
EchoStar	SATS	31.02	4.8
Ecolab	ECL	269.23	0.3
Embraer	ERJ	48.40	10.7
Evergy	EVRG	69.90	-0.8
Exelixis	EXEL	38.43	0.3
Exelon	EXC	44.32	-0.6
FirstIndRlty	FR	57.43	0.3
FlagstarFinlPfdA	FLGpA	23.15	0.2
GSRIIIAcqn	GSRTU	10.23	...
Gallagher	AJG	334.69	1.5
GeneDxWt	WGSWW	0.34	-0.4
GenerationInWt	GIPRW	0.90	3.0
GileadSciences	GILD	112.57	1.4
GlobalStarRt	GLSTR	0.25	5.7
GoHealth	GOCO	21.00	-14.4
HSBC	HSBC	58.43	-0.1
HealthInTechA	HIT	7.30	0.3
HennessyCapVIIRt	HVIIR	0.24	...
HowmetAeroPfd	HWMp	71.59	-0.1
PermRock	PRT	4.63	2.1
PitneyBowes	PBI	11.01	-0.8
Porch Group	PRCH	7.19	1.5
PriviaHealth	PRVA	26.04	5.8
RithmAcqn	RAC.U	10.05	0.5
RithmCapital	RITM	12.18	0.2
SIMAcqnIWt	SIMAW	0.16	3.6
SIMAcqnIA	SIMA	10.19	0.5
SKGrowthOpps	SKGRU	14.00	-7.0
Starbucks	SBUX	115.70	1.3
TexasCommBcshs	TCBS	16.50	-2.4
TranslationalDevWt	TDACW	0.22	43.3
TruBridge	TBRG	31.40	2.7
UnumGroup	UNM	83.96	5.7
Ventas	VTR	68.99	0.6
VeriSign	VRSN	239.95	-0.9
VeronaPharma	VRNA	69.80	5.7
Visa	V	360.31	1.5
W.P.Carey	WPC	64.68	-0.2
WebusIntl	WETO	4.28	-10.0
WillisTowers	WTW	339.12	-0.3
XPeng	XPEV	22.80	1.2
Xunlei	XNET	4.81	29.7
Lows			
AmericanWoodmark	AMWD	60.98	-13.0
AmkorTech	AMKR	20.95	-5.2
Annexon	ANNX	2.49	-3.8
ApogeeEnt	APOG	46.76	-0.7
ApogeeTherap	APGE	30.47	-1.8
ApplMaterials	AMAT	156.38	-7.0
ArcBest	ARCB	78.65	-2.0
ArcusBiosci	RCUS	9.86	-2.6
ArdmoreShipping	ASC	9.11	-5.0
AresCommRealEst	ACRE	4.76	-1.4
ArgoBlockchain	ARBK	0.41	-3.4
Armlogi	BTOC	1.99	-14.2
AspiraWomen's	AWH	0.16	-24.8
Atkore	ATKR	62.24	-1.6
AtlasLithium	ATLX	5.01	-4.7
Expion360	XPON	1.07	-9.1
FGMergerII	FGMCU	9.78	0.1
Fathom	FTHM	0.95	2.0
Ferroglobe	GSM	3.44	-4.4
IntelligentGrp	INTJ	0.72	-5.6
iSpecimen	ISPC	1.55	-12.0
IvanhoeElectric	IE	5.56	-4.4
J.Jill	JILL	23.39	-4.2
Momentus	MNTS	2.77	-8.1
Monro	MNRO	17.65	-4.2
NICE	NICE	142.77	-1.3
NIP	NIPG	2.32	-1.3
RPC	RES	5.48	0.9
Rapid7	RPD	29.11	-2.9
RapportTherap	RAPP	10.52	-2.7
Raytech	RAY	0.96	-11.9
TandemDiabetes	TNDM	21.43	-35.2
TangoTherap	TNGX	2.17	-6.4
Tantech	TANH	2.62	-7.3
Teleflex	TFX	135.95	-21.7

Mutual Funds

Data provided by LSEG

Top 250 mutual-funds listings for Nasdaq-published share classes by net assets.

e-Ex-distribution. **f**-Previous day's quotation. **g**-Footnotes x and s apply. **j**-Footnotes e and s apply. **k**-Recalculated by LSEG, using updated data. **p**-Distribution costs apply, 12b-1. **r**-Redemption charge may apply. **s**-Stock split or dividend. **t**-Footnotes p and r apply. **v**-Footnotes x and e apply. **x**-Ex-dividend. **z**-Footnote x, e and s apply. **NA**-Not available due to incomplete price, performance or cost data. **NE**-Not released by LSEG; data under review. **NN**-Fund not tracked. **NS**-Fund didn't exist at start of period.

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Fund	NAV	Net Chg	YTD %Ret
AB Funds			
MuniIncmShares	11.30	-0.01	1.9
AB Funds - ADV			
LgCpGrAdv	106.64	-3.01	-2.5
TxExA	12.49	...	1.3
WshA	63.25	-0.67	2.7
Artisan Funds			
IntlVal Inst	NA	...	NA
EmMktCorEq	23.66	-0.35	1.6
IntlCoreEq	16.34	-0.17	6.0
IntSmCo	20.20	-0.23	4.1
IntSmVa	23.38	-0.23	6.6

FRIDAY'S EVENTS:
PCE data for January is due at 8:30 a.m. The personal-consumption-expenditures price index is the Fed's favored measure of inflation.

EARNINGS EXPECTED:
Alpha Metallurgical Resources
Apellis Pharmaceuticals

AUCTION RESULTS

Here are the results of Thursday's Treasury auctions. All bids are awarded at a single price at the market-clearing yield. Rates are determined by the difference between that price and the face value.

FOUR-WEEK BILLS

Applications	$247,970,311,400
Accepted bids	$80,264,851,400
" noncompetitively	$6,563,283,200
" foreign noncompetitively	$0
Auction price (rate)	99.670611 (4.235%)
Coupon equivalent	4.308%
Bids at clearing yield accepted	9.80%
Cusip number	912797NT0

The bills, dated March 4, 2025, mature on April 1, 2025.

EIGHT-WEEK BILLS

Applications	$224,059,436,000
Accepted bids	$75,248,314,000
" noncompetitively	$1,391,750,700
" foreign noncompetitively	$0
Auction price (rate)	99.341222 (4.235%)
Coupon equivalent	4.322%
Bids at clearing yield accepted	36.20%
Cusip number	912797PB7

The bills, dated March 4, 2025, mature on April 29, 2025.

Orange Juice Futures Are Getting Squeezed

Hedge funds are hitting the exits of the orange-juice trade, sending futures prices for the breakfast staple tumbling 46% from December's record high.

Frozen concentrate orange juice futures were one of the hottest trades of the past three years, taking off in 2022 over worries about the dwindling Florida crop. Hedge funds and other money managers piled in, helping to lift futures from their typical range between $1 and $2 a pound to nearly $5.50. Now, the funds and money managers are bailing out.

This year, managed money—as opposed to orange growers and juice makers who trade futures to lock in prices—built up a near record bet that prices would keep rising, according to Commodity Futures Trading Commission data.

The futures contracts these speculators held amounted to a roughly $260 million wager on higher prices, said Dave Whitcomb, who runs Peak Trading Research. "They didn't get the move higher they wanted and have been liquidating, accelerating prices lower," he said.

Futures settled Thursday at $2.948 a pound.

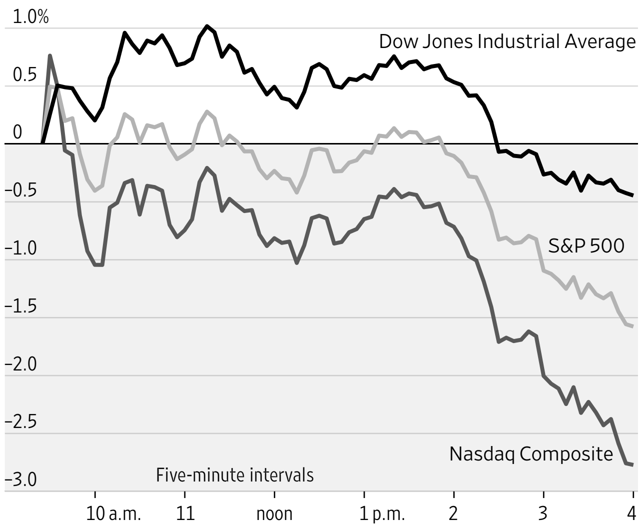
—Ryan Dezember

Frozen concentrate orange-juice futures price

Source: FactSet

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Index performance on Thursday



Source: FactSet

Nasdaq, S&P Fall Sharply

Continued from page B1

where we get daily surprises."

Trump said late Wednesday he was considering 25% tariffs on imports from the European Union, targeting cars and other goods. He said much-heralded measures against Mexico and Canada were coming. Then, in a social-media post Thursday, he reiterated that tariffs on Canada and Mexico would start Tuesday and said another 10% levy on China would begin the same day.

THURSDAY'S MARKETS

The peso fell 0.3% against the U.S. dollar while the Canadian dollar fell 0.7%.

Nvidia reported on Wednesday a 78% rise in sales for the past quarter, to $39.3 billion, and it forecast about $43 billion for its current quarter, beating analyst expectations. Shares initially ticked up Thursday but then fell 8.5%, the company's worst post-earnings percentage decline since 2018.

Analysts blamed narrower profit margins and worries about Nvidia's sales in China. Jay Hatfield, chief executive at Infrastructure Capital Advisors, said, "With Nvidia, if it doesn't really blow it out, it tends to drift down."

Elsewhere:

◆ **European stocks fell, with auto shares among notable losers.**

◆ **The 10-year Treasury yield closed at 4.284%. On Wednesday, yields settled below 4.25%, logging a six-session downward streak.**

◆ **The 2-year Treasury yield closed at 4.079%, up from 4.071% Wednesday.**

◆ **Bitcoin traded around $83,000.**

Monitor Named in TD Bank Launder Pact

By Mengqi Sun

Consulting firm Guidepost Solutions was selected as the independent monitor to oversee Toronto-Dominion Bank's remediation efforts after the Canadian bank pleaded guilty in October to charges that it failed to build proper anti-money-laundering systems.

The Justice Department and the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network jointly picked Guidepost as the outside monitor, TD's U.S. head said during the bank's earnings call on Thursday.

TD agreed to retain an outside third party to closely supervise the bank's remediation of its anti-money-laundering compliance program as part of its settlement with U.S. regulators and prosecutors over charges it failed to properly monitor money laundering by drug cartels and other criminal groups. TD agreed to pay more than $3 billion in penalties and accepted limits on its growth in the U.S. to resolve the investigation. The Justice Department requires a monitor for three years while FinCEN requires a monitor in place for four years.

The bank's primary U.S. regulator, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, said TD processed hundreds of millions of dollars in transactions that clearly indicated highly suspicious activity. A FinCEN spokeswoman confirmed the selection. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, which prosecuted the case, declined to comment.

Leo Salom, the bank's U.S. head, said the bank has hired additional AML specialists to its compliance team and made technological changes to help detect potential suspicious activities.

STOCK SPOTLIGHT

Rolls-Royce
The engine maker's stock soared 16% to a record close after the British company said it would hit its midterm cash and profit targets two years ahead of schedule, boosted by strong demand for travel.

Snowflake
The software company reported a big jump in quarterly revenue late Wednesday, but a wider loss than a year earlier. Shares rose 4.5%.

eBay
The online marketplace's revenue forecast was less than analysts expected, and its quarterly profit fell. Shares fell 8.2%.

Warner Bros. Discovery
The company reported a larger-than-expected quarterly loss, but said it expected strong subscriber growth throughout 2025. Shares gained 4.8%.

WPP
The U.K. advertising group posted a steeper-than-expected drop in revenue and projected little improvement this year. Shares plummeted 16% in London.

Salesforce
The software company's profit rose last quarter, but its revenue outlook missed expectations. Shares dropped 4%.

Stellantis
President Trump's European Union tariff threats knocked down shares in auto manufacturers in the region. U.S.-listed shares of Jeep maker Stellantis declined 5.5%.

Tesla
The electric-vehicle maker's shares fell 3%. The stock has fallen for several days, knocked by trade tensions and weakening sales data from Europe.

Norwegian Cruise Line
Shares in the cruise operator decreased 5.3% after the company's 2025 financial guidance lagged behind Wall Street analysts' expectations.

Goldman Sachs Backs Off Its DEI Targets

By Candice Choi

Goldman Sachs Group is no longer spelling out its diversity hiring targets.

The bank's annual report no longer lays out the progress it has made on hiring women, Black, Hispanic, Asian and LGBTQ+ professionals.

Those numbers had been listed in its previous annual report, which also had spelled out the bank's "aspirational goals" for 2025, but didn't appear in the latest report, released Thursday.

The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this month that big banks were watering down their public language around DEI efforts, and that more changes would be disclosed in annual reports and other public filings.

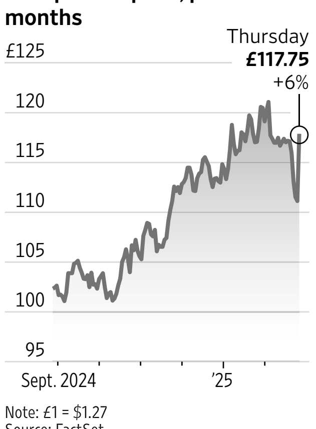
On Thursday, Goldman Chief Executive David Solomon said the bank made adjustments to reflect legal developments in the U.S., but stood by its commitment to a diverse workforce.

"We strongly believe that merit and diversity are not mutually exclusive. Our people are a powerful example of that and that's why we will continue to focus on the importance of attracting and retaining diverse, exceptional talent," the statement said.

Goldman earlier this month said it was ending its requirement that companies in the U.S. and Western Europe have diverse boards for it to take them public. The company cited legal developments related to board-diversity requirements for the decision.

LSEG Shares Rise on $634 Million Buyback

London Stock Exchange Group share price, past six months



Note: £1 = $1.27
Source: FactSet

By Najat Kantouar

London Stock Exchange Group's shares rose after the company launched a share buyback of £500 million, or $633.8 million, supported by sustained growth across all its key segments.

Shares climbed 6% in Thursday's trading.

The stock-exchange and financial-information company said pretax profit rose to £1.26 billion last year from £1.195 billion in 2023. This missed forecasts of £2.18 billion, based on estimates from two analysts taken from FactSet.

Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization—a metric that strips out exceptional and other one-off items—increased 9.8% to £4.15 billion, with the corresponding margin rising to 48.8% from 47.2%. A company-compiled consensus had adjusted Ebitda at £4.11 billion.

The group's total income excluding recoveries rose to £8.49 billion from £8.01 billion, ahead of a company-compiled consensus of £8.47 billion. Within this, data and analytics income grew 4.5% and capital-markets income increased 18%. Meanwhile, post-trade income was up 2.4%.

Recoveries mainly relate to fees for third-party content, such as exchange data, that is distributed directly to customers.

The board declared a total dividend of 130 pence a share, up from 115 pence a share a year earlier.

"We have been a driving force behind reforms that secure London's position as a leading global venue for capital raising," Chief Executive Officer David Schwimmer said. "We also reached an important milestone in our partnership with **Microsoft**, with the first products now generally available for customers, and a strong pipeline for 2025."

For 2025, LSEG expects organic constant currency growth in total income excluding recoveries of 6.5% to 7.5%. It also forecasts its constant currency Ebitda margin to rise by half a percentage point to a full percentage point and free cash flow of at least £2.4 billion.

It said the buyback should be completed by July of this year.

Exchange Operator HKEX's Earnings Hit Highs

By Kimberley Kao

Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing's net profit and revenue jumped to quarterly records as improved market sentiment boosted trading and listing activity in the Asian financial hub, boding well for the exchange operator's prospects in 2025.

The stock-exchange operator said on Thursday that net profit reached a fourth-quarter high of 3.78 billion Hong Kong dollars, equivalent to US$486.2 million, climbing around 46% from a year earlier. Revenue and other income increased 31% to HK$6.38 billion—a new quarterly record—as trading and clearing fees rose across the cash, derivatives and commodities markets, the company said.

Both measures were slightly ahead of consensus estimates in a Visible Alpha poll, with analysts expecting net profit of HK$3.71 billion and revenue of HK$6.32 billion.

HKEX witnessed stronger trading volumes during the quarter, with the headline average daily turnover doubling to HK$186.9 billion.

The robust results capped a year of improved fundraising and trading activity, marking the exchange operator's profit comeback after a weak showing in 2023. Hong Kong has been making efforts to get more companies to list in the city over the past year, including optimizing listing procedures, lowering transaction costs to bolster its securities market and adopting new measures aimed at greater capital-market cooperation with mainland Chinese companies to boost dual listings.

"Looking to 2025, ongoing geopolitical and macroeconomic developments will likely continue impacting global markets," HKEX Chief Executive Bonnie Y Chan said.

"However, there are also encouraging signs of economic revitalization, with stimulative policies in mainland China and interest-rate cuts in other major markets providing renewed vibrancy to Hong Kong's fundraising and secondary markets," she said.

On Wednesday, Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan said funds raised from new listings in the city rose nearly 90% to HK$88 billion last year, ranking it fourth globally. More than 100 new IPO applications are being processed by HKEX, he said.

Increased investor interest has also spurred a revival in Hong Kong's and China's stock markets this year, fueled by a surge in sentiment toward Chinese tech shares after homegrown startup DeepSeek renewed confidence in China's AI technology.

31%
Increase in the company's revenue and other income for the quarter

"Since the beginning of this year, trading has been even more active, with average daily turnover exceeding HK$200 billion recently, up by more than 50% over last year's average. Total market capitalization reached HK$40 trillion," he said.

The Hang Seng Tech Index, which tracks the 30 largest technology companies listed in the city, this week hit its highest level since December 2021, gaining more than 30% this year. The benchmark Hang Seng Index has risen nearly 20% and is also at a multiyear high.

Shares of HKEX have climbed about 24% in 2025, closing at HK$365 on Thursday.

DBS Group Research said in a note that improving risk appetite will likely continue in the near term, "supported by recent rerating of tech stocks and a more supportive policy tone from the Chinese government toward the private economy."

Citi Research raised the target price on HKEX's stock to HK$410 from HK$370 after the results as it lifted its average daily turnover forecasts for 2025 and 2026 on the sentiment recovery. Trading activity so far this year remains well ahead of consensus estimates, analyst Michael Zhang said in a note. However, he identified three downside risks to the share price: easing trading volume, new-listing halts and rising geopolitical tensions.

In Wednesday's presentation of the Hong Kong budget for the next fiscal year, Financial Secretary Chan said HKEX will step up its promotion in Southeast Asia and the Middle East and seek areas of cooperation, including the listing of exchange-traded funds to "promote two-way capital flows."

In the middle-to-long term, the new listing overhauls mentioned in the budget, such as improvements to the vetting process and optimizing listing thresholds, could help attract more initial public offerings to Hong Kong, analysts at DBS said. If the IPO applications translate into successful listings, "they could inject more liquidity and trading momentum into the market," they said.

HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

ABBIE PARR/AP

The chip maker's revenue projection of $43 billion for the April quarter exceeded Wall Street's forecast.

Nvidia Has Plenty More Road to Run

Blackwell chip is off to strong start; hit to profit margins should be short-lived

The hardest thing about being **Nvidia** these days is living up to the recent past.

Nvidia's fiscal fourth-quarter report late Wednesday continued the AI titan's string of impressive results.

Blowout spending on generative artificial intelligence continues to drive the company once primarily known for its PC gaming chips.

Nvidia's latest AI chip family, called Blackwell, racked up $11 billion in sales in its first quarter of shipping in volume, far ahead of the $3.5 billion analysts expected, according to consensus estimates from Visible Alpha.

Nvidia's total company revenue of $39.3 billion in the quarter ended Jan. 26 was up 78% from the same period last year. That blows away the growth being reported by Nvidia's trillion-dollar tech peers. **Apple**, **Microsoft**, **Amazon.com**, **Meta Platforms** and Google parent **Alphabet** averaged 11.8% revenue growth in their December quarters.

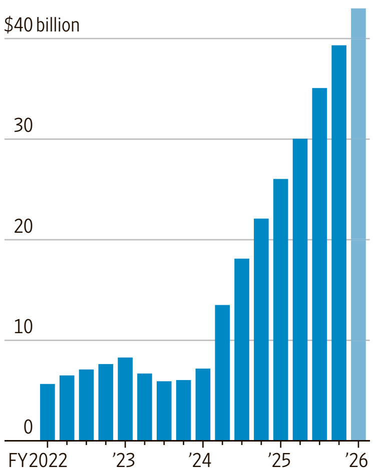
Nvidia's revenue projection of $43 billion for the April quarter also exceeded Wall Street's forecast—abating some fears that the transition to the Blackwell lineup would cause a short-term hiccup in sales.

The strong numbers didn't help Nvidia's stock price much, though. Shares slid more than 8% on Thursday amid a broad market selloff sparked by renewed worries about tariffs. Revenue beat Wall Street's consensus by about $1.2 billion, which is actually the smallest margin since Nvidia's AI business started booming in early 2023.

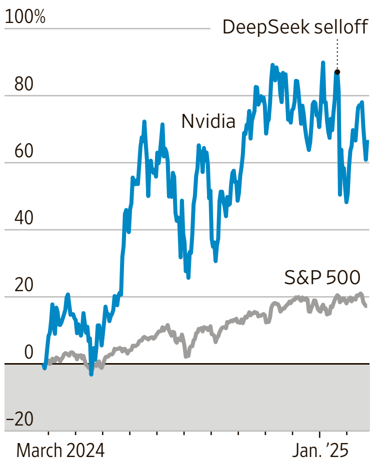
The company also confirmed that its Blackwell line will cause a small hit to the company's gross margin for much of this year.

Investors shouldn't fret over the latter. Even gross margins in the low-70% range that Nvidia said to expect early in the new fiscal year would be well above that commanded by most other chip companies; the 30 companies on the PHLX Semiconductor Index averaged 51.5% gross margins over the past year, according to data from S&P Global Market Intelligence. But Nvidia's gross margin reached 79% a year ago, when its quarterly sales were tripling. The company's new normal of high double-digit growth rates and rising costs to get a highly complex product line out the door suffers mainly by comparison.

Nvidia's quarterly revenue*



Share-price and index performance, past 12 months



*Fiscal year ends in January. First quarter of FY26 is a projection.

Sources: the company (revenue); FactSet (performance)

Even more challenging is the rising suspicion among some that AI is a bubble about to pop in spectacular dot-com fashion. Nvidia and other prominent AI names saw their stocks melt down last month after claims from a Chinese AI startup called DeepSeek raised questions about the computing costs really needed to train advanced AI models.

More recently, reports that companies like Microsoft might be trimming back their data-center expansions have raised fresh worries about the state of AI demand. Nvidia's stock price fell for six straight days prior to Wednesday and is still down 18% from last month's DeepSeek panic, based on Thursday's closing price. The S&P 500 is down 4.2% in that time.

The massive piles of cash that tech giants plan to pour into capital spending on AI this year should ease some of those fears. Beyond that, Nvidia will need to show how it can keep building on the strong lead it already has. That will be the major theme of the company's GTC conference next month, which is expected to highlight new products coming after this year's Blackwell family.

The bar is high; Nvidia is now a $3 trillion company that depends on the spending of other big companies wanting an edge in AI. But with those companies unwilling to tap the brakes, Nvidia's race still has some legs left.

—Dan Gallagher

PayPal Needs Help From Consumers

In the crowded digital-payments business, the company's biggest edge is its huge user base

Make new friends, but keep the old. **PayPal** is striking a lot of new partnerships in the payments and commerce business these days. But its original cohort is still the most important: consumers.

The digital-payments business has gotten a lot harder in recent years. What might have been a steady, yearslong shift to e-commerce for traditional businesses like restaurants or grocery stores happened in a flash during the pandemic. So did a change in consumers' payment habits, like tapping to pay with digital wallets via their phones.

All that pulled forward a surge in growth—but the letdown has been harsh, especially as digital-payment technologies have gotten increasingly commoditized and fiercely competitive with the rise of players such as **Apple**.

The journey of PayPal's stock since the pandemic has been extreme. Its shares started 2020 at roughly $110. They touched a record of $310 in July 2021. On Thursday, they closed at $70.73.

$70.73

PayPal's Thursday closing stock price, down from a 2021 peak of $310

In response to competitive pressure, payments players have sought to diversify their strategies to offer total packages to their customers. For PayPal, some of that has come on the side of its business serving merchants. These moves will help it fill out the tool kit for competing with just about anyone. By expanding a partnership with **Verifone**, a maker of physical point-of-sale devices, it can better provide "omnichannel" services to big merchants online and in-stores. By partnering with **JPMorgan Chase**'s payments business, PayPal can offer its speedy new checkout experience to more merchants globally.

PayPal regained some momentum in profitability and user growth last year, which helped power a roughly 18% share-price gain over the past 12 months. But the reaction to its investor day on Tuesday was muted, with shares down about 6% since Monday. Its shares are off about 17% so far this year. That might be because the market is keenly focused on the other side of PayPal's business, which touches individuals directly. The not-so-secret weapon for PayPal is its consumer base.

Analysts have been laser-focused on the company's so-called branded checkout volume. That is generally when someone uses a PayPal button or app to buy something. The focus is often on whether this business is growing faster than e-commerce overall, as an indicator of its market share gains.

The company said its aim is to accelerate branded checkout total payment volume growth to between 8% and 10% annually by 2027. That would be a big jump from 2024's 6% currency-neutral growth rate.

For PayPal to win with merchants behind the scenes, its best argument would be to show them that it can continue to deliver its loyal users to be their customers, better than rivals such as Apple, **Klarna**, **Affirm** and others.

"We are the only ones with a two-sided ecosystem, with access to merchants at scale, with access to 80 million-plus shopper profiles, and access to hundreds of millions of consumers on an open, agnostic platform, to be able to deliver that next version of commerce," Chief Executive Alex Chriss told analysts on Tuesday.

One thing PayPal aims to do is better capitalize on Venmo, including the "Pay with Venmo" service, setting a revenue aim of over $2 billion for Venmo by 2027. Venmo has been a huge brand and customer-acquisition asset for PayPal, as the product's name became a verb and a ubiquitous peer-to-peer payment method. But the company has long worked to fully monetize its apparent potential with add-on products. Notably, Venmo recently became a way to pay for **JetBlue** flights, a way for a Venmo transaction to generate a merchant fee for PayPal.

In addition, PayPal's new Fastlane product can help customers speed past guest checkout, a major way for PayPal to gain overall market share. Then there are personalized incentive offers. "We are going to turbocharge rewards and purchasing power like never before," Diego Scotti, general manager of PayPal's Consumer Group, told analysts on Tuesday.

The company's recent ad campaign, featuring star Will Ferrell, shows him buying things from clothing to coffee in stores. "I want to pay with you everywhere," he sings.

But do consumers really want to pay with PayPal everywhere? This is what the market needs to hear more about. PayPal has traveled down many product paths before—QR codes, coupons, even contemplating a tie-up with **Pinterest**. Investors may be wary of rekindling their friendship with PayPal before it definitively shows it has improved its old-school habits.

—Telis Demos

RICCARDO MILANI/HANS LUCAS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PayPal regained some momentum in profitability and user growth last year.

Root Shows Why It's a Good Time to Be an Auto Insurer

Root share price, past six months

Source: FactSet

It's a tough time to be buying car insurance. It's a good time to be selling it.

Upstart technology-focused auto insurer Root shows why.

The company reported a dramatic improvement in results, turning its 2023 net loss of roughly $150 million into a $31 million net profit last year. Its shares were up 26% on Thursday, following its Wednesday post-market, earnings release.

A sharp turnaround in underwriting performance drove Root's improvement. Insurers track this performance by what is known as their combined ratio. This is the percentage of written premium that is consumed by losses and expenses. Root's gross combined ratio went from 116% in 2023—that is, losses and expenses outpacing premiums—to 95% in 2024.

That was helped by a sharp reduction in Root's reinsurance costs. Primary insurers that write policies for consumers in turn buy insurance for themselves, known as reinsurance.

In 2020, when Root went public, investors hoped upstart "insuretech" companies would be able to grow market share and work on underwriting techniques driven by data about drivers' habits by using reinsurance to protect themselves from losses.

That was costly during the pandemic when auto insurers' loss costs surged. Reinsurance costs leapt, too.

Now, loss costs like repairs and auto parts are stabilizing while insurers were able to dramatically increase rates the past few years. Other auto insurers, such as Allstate, have posted stronger results, despite a jump in catastrophe costs and related disruptions in the market.

Root reduced its use of reinsurance in 2024, lowering its cession rate—or how much of its premiums are then shared with reinsurers—from 27% in 2023 to 11%. It was 6% in the fourth quarter. For context, Root's cession rate in 2022 was 55%.

This means the company will be more exposed to its underwriting results. But it greatly reduces the expense portion of its combined ratio.

Root's share price has more than quadrupled in the past 12 months. As ever, insurance policies are like seeds: They are planted today, but you don't know what you'll be eating until next season

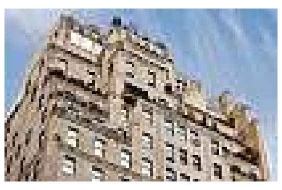
—Telis Demos

Mega Mega-Rich
The rise of the superbillionaire. **M7**

MANSION

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

$45 Million
Ken Griffin buys Julia Koch's NYC penthouse at 740 Park Ave. **M2**



$1.9 MILLION
Assessed value of a Sheep Pond Road house when it sold for **$200,000** last year. In January, days after this photo was taken, it was condemned and demolished.

The Race to Save Nantucket Homes From the Ocean

Erosion is eating away at the Massachusetts island's south shore. Houses are demolished, moved or sold for pennies on the dollar.

In 2010, Gene and Roslyn Ratner's summer home was lost to the waves.

By E.B. Solomont

On a frigid December morning, emergency work crews arrived at Sheep Pond Road on Nantucket at daybreak with an urgent mission: Stop a wood-shingle beach house from tumbling into the ocean.

The land around the meandering road on the Massachusetts island's south shore has ceded about 10 feet a year to the water for decades, claiming roughly half a dozen homes since the early 2000s. Now, erosion threatened to take another.

Contractor Rob Andersen said his crew worked quickly, trying to beat a storm that was forecast to roll in that evening, bringing 35 to 60 mile-an-hour wind gusts. By nightfall, workers excavated below the house—precariously perched on a bluff besieged by crashing waves—and slid steel beams underneath the 1,300-square-foot, three-bedroom structure. Later, they jacked it up and rolled it back about 200 feet from the water's edge.

Over the past few years, homeowners on Sheep Pond Road have faced a series of increasingly critical decisions over how to protect their idyllic beach enclave from erosion. Since 2020, three houses on Sheep Pond have been condemned and demolished as the water has crept closer. Others have been moved back out of harm's way or sold at fire-sale prices.

The experience on Sheep Pond Road is a microcosm of Nantucket and other coastal communities where homeowners and local governments are wrestling with the emotional and financial implications of climate change.

The progression of erosion can be unpredictable. The island has weathered a series of bad storms over the past few years that have taken out bigger chunks of the beach, lending urgency to the issue of what can be done—and who should pay for it.

"What's happening on Sheep Pond is no different than what's been happening forever—it's just that the houses are running out of room now," said Gary Winn of Maury People Sotheby's International Realty, who has been selling real estate on Nantucket for more than 40 years.

Nantucket, in recent years, has tried to take a more proactive approach. Nearly 2,400 buildings on the island are at risk of flood and erosion-related damage by 2070, which could amount to $3.4 billion in damages, according

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$3.4 BILLION
Nantucket estimated erosion and flood damages by 2070

At least seven houses have been demolished since 2014, including the longtime summer home of George and Marie Frazza, which was condemned and torn down in October 2023.

FROM TOP: TUCKER FINERTY FOR WSJ; MATTHEW J. LEE/THE BOSTON GLOBE/GETTY IMAGES; KIT NOBLE (2); ZACK DEZON FOR WSJ (GRIFFIN)

PRIVATE PROPERTIES

Ken Griffin Buys Julia Koch's Unit at Posh New York Co-op

UPDATE

SOLD
$45 MILLION
8,500 sq. ft., 5 bedrooms

2004 purchase price: $17 million

Billionaire hedge funder Ken Griffin has long been known as one of residential real estate's biggest whales, presiding over a personal property empire estimated to be worth billions. Now, he's added yet another trophy to his real-estate holdings: a duplex at New York's most storied cooperative, 740 Park Avenue.

Griffin is the buyer behind the $45 million purchase of a unit at the building from Julia Koch, widow of billionaire industrialist David Koch, according to people familiar with the situation. The Kochs paid about $17 million for the prewar unit in 2004, property records show. David died in 2019 at 79. Julia, who had been spending more time at her homes in Southampton and Palm Beach, started shopping the five-bedroom residence near the beginning of 2022 for $60 million or more. It was formally listed for $48 million in 2023.

The Citadel founder already owns a Manhattan apartment a few blocks away at 220 Central Park South, which is widely considered the city's best condo building. He paid $238 million for an apartment there in 2019. By comparison, 740 Park is seen as the city's top co-op building. Developed around 1930 by James T. Lee, the grandfather of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, it has drawn bold-faced names including the Kochs, Ronald Lauder and former Treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Over the years, Griffin has developed a reputation for buying the most expensive property in the world's priciest buildings and neighborhoods, often breaking price records in the process.

He owns a $122 million London mansion near Buckingham Palace, a Hamptons compound he bought from Calvin Klein for $84.45 million, a roughly $107 million compound in Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhood and a huge swath of land in Palm Beach, Fla., where he has spent more than $450 million.

The listing agents of the 740 Park unit were Leighton Candler, Bradley Comisar and Jennifer Reardon of Corcoran.

—*Katherine Clarke*

Under Armour CEO Lists Horse Farm

FOR SALE
$22 MILLION
400 acres, 6-bedroom house

Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank is asking $22 million for his equestrian property outside Baltimore.

Once owned by the Vanderbilt family, the roughly 400-acre farm is located in rural Reisterstown, about 20 miles northwest of Baltimore, where the athletic-apparel company is based. Known as Sagamore Farm, it has a six-bedroom, roughly 16,000-square-foot main house as well as horse training and breeding facilities, according to listing agent Denie Dulin of Compass.

Plank bought the property around 2007. He declined to say how much he paid for the property, but said he spent more than $22 million on the land and renovations.

Plank, who lives about 10 miles away, used the farm as a guesthouse, a horse-training facility and a retreat center for employees, he said. He had hoped to use the property to raise horses to compete in Triple Crown races, he said, but he closed the farm's horse racing operations in 2021 because of the time commitment required.

Plank, who has been CEO of Under Armour off and on since he founded the company in 1996, started quietly shopping Sagamore Farm off-market last year.

After buying the property, Plank added a conference room to the circa-1990s main house, said Dulin, and commissioned a mural of Native Dancer, the Vanderbilts' famous racehorse. He also reoriented the house with a front porch.

Plank renovated two barns and added a third barn, with a combined capacity of over 200 horses, said Dulin.

Plank sold a Georgetown mansion for $17.25 million in 2020.

—*Sarah Paynter*

FROM TOP: ZACK DEZON FOR WSJ; SCOTT MCINTYRE FOR WSJ (GRIFFIN); MATT RYBCZYNSKI

Miami Beach Estate Gets Major Price Tag

In Miami Beach, Fla., a waterfront estate asking $88 million has elements inspired by Manhattan's Guggenheim Museum.

Located on La Gorce Island, the estate known as "Okto" is owned by the Kollmann family, wealthy Germans who own a conglomerate of textile companies. The family's patriarch, Günter Kollmann, was a professional basketball player in Germany, according to their family foundation's website. The Kollmanns bought the roughly 1.1-acre property for $15.7 million in 2010 from the property's developer, Todd Michael Glaser, according to property records.

The main residence is about 16,770 square feet, and nine bedrooms are split between the main house, a separate guesthouse and staff quarters, said listing agent Nelson Gonzalez of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices EWM Realty. The property has about 260 feet of water frontage, with two docks, a 100-foot pool and a man-made strip of sandy beach between the house and sea wall, he said.

The Kollmanns declined to comment. They live primarily in Europe but have used the property as a vacation home over the years, enjoying boating and cheering on the Miami Heat basketball team, according to Barry Lapides, an attorney for the family. In general, they like to maintain a low profile.

"They value their privacy," he said.

The house has a sculptural staircase and round skylight inspired by the Guggenheim, Gonzalez said. Other elements of the property have a tropical aesthetic, such as ipe wood and a coral keystone roof deck. The living room is 100 feet long. There is also a separate five-car garage with staff quarters.

FOR SALE
$88 MILLION
2 docks, pool, private beach

The Kollmanns have made updates to the property over the years, replacing the floors, installing a new roof and upgrading the landscaping, Gonzalez said. They briefly listed the house for $38 million in 2020, thinking they would not be able to use it because of the pandemic. "They quickly changed their mind when they saw Florida was open for business," he said.

The Kollmanns, who have homes in Germany, the South of France and elsewhere in Europe, have decided to sell the Miami Beach home because they are not using it as much as they used to, Gonzalez said. They also feel it is a good time to sell, given the strong dollar and massive price appreciation of Miami real estate since Covid, he said.

—E.B. Solomont

LUXHUNTERS PRODUCTIONS (2)

Bing Crosby's Family Puts His Longtime Home on the Market

When the famed crooner Bing Crosby and his second wife, actress Kathryn Grant, started their family in the late 1950s, they were eager to keep their children out of the Hollywood spotlight. The pair decamped from Los Angeles to California's San Mateo County, about 18 miles south of San Francisco, where they eventually bought a grand, French chateau-style home to raise their three children. Sitting on over 5 acres, the ornate circa-1920s home fulfilled Kathryn's "childhood fantasies," she wrote in her autobiography.

The Hillsborough estate has been in the family ever since, according to the late singer's son Harry Crosby, 66. Kathryn continued living there after Bing's death in 1977, and his former office is still decorated with golf trophies and his Oscar for the 1944 film "Going My Way," which sits on the mantel, his son said.

Now, following Kathryn's death in 2024, the 11-bedroom residence is going on the market for the first time in roughly six decades. The asking price is $40 million, a potentially record-setting number for Hillsborough, said listing agent Jennifer Gilson of Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty.

With frescoes, ornate fireplaces and hand-carved woodwork, the roughly 14,000-square-foot home is rare for the area both in scale and opulence, Gilson said. A smoking room has a built-in bar. A library with a large fireplace and built-in bookcases is decorated with paintings of desert landscapes, reflecting Bing's love of the western U.S., Harry said. In the dining room, there is a Venetian-glass chandelier and hand-painted rose detailing on the walls. A separate wing contains staff housing.

FOR SALE
$40 MILLION
14,000 sq. ft.,
11 bedrooms

The house was commissioned around 1929 by local businessman Lindsay Howard as a wedding gift for his wife, Gilson said. To design the house, Lindsay hired architects Ernest Weihe and John Bakewell Jr., who is known for his work on San Francisco City Hall.

Lindsay was the son of horse racing entrepreneur Charles Howard, who owned the legendary horse Seabiscuit. Bing, a horse-racing enthusiast, knew the Howard family and became familiar with the property through them, his son said. In the early 1960s, he purchased the estate as a gift for Kathryn. The Crosbys moved into the house with Harry and his siblings Nathaniel and Mary Frances.

The Crosbys made significant changes to the property, said Harry, who works in finance in New York. It once had a pool, but they had it filled in for the safety of the children. They added a large, 17th-century wooden staircase banister and antique wood paneling, much of which came from the collection of publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst, a longtime friend of Bing's. Hearst had procured the materials from estates in Europe and brought them over by the boatload to be used in Hearst Castle in San Simeon, and had plenty left over in storage, Harry said.

Wood paneling came from the collection of William Randolph Hearst.

The Crosby children benefited from having a normal childhood away from Hollywood and attending local schools, Harry said. Bing loved the area and frequently golfed at the Burlingame Country Club, sometimes driving further to Pebble Beach and playing at Cypress Point Club.

Harry said one of the family's favorite spots was in the living room around the grand piano, which was once featured in the movie "High Society." Harry and his siblings all took lessons on the piano, and during the holiday season, the family gathered around it to sing Christmas carols; one of Bing's most famous songs was "White Christmas."

The Crosby children grew up with labradors, said Harry, and there were always dogs running around the property. The family's staff included butler Alan Fisher, who worked for the British royal family before joining the Crosbys. Afterward, he returned to the U.K. to work for Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

Bing owned a number of homes over the years, including properties in Palm Springs and Palm Desert as well as a ranch near Elko, Nev. In addition to his three children with Kathryn, he had four sons with his first wife, Dixie Lee.

Harry said selling the property after his mother's death was an "inevitable decision," since he and his siblings are spread across the country. "It's difficult to turn the page emotionally, but all good things come to an end," he said.

While the affluent Hillsborough area is known for its multimillion-dollar estates, no sale has come close to the $40 million asking price of the Crosby estate. The current $30 million record for the area was set in 2021 by the sale of a house then owned by billionaire Elon Musk, Gilson said.

—*Katherine Clarke*

FROM TOP: CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; JASON WELLS (3)


#Dadication
ACF
National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse
ad COUNCIL
fatherhood.gov

Nantucket Erosion

Continued from page M1

to Nantucket's Coastal Resilience Plan. Adopted in 2021, the plan outlines nearly $1 billion worth of projects to safeguard public infrastructure over the next few years. Taxpayer funds, state funding and grants will help cover the costs.

Some Sheep Pond homeowners want more.

Real-estate developer James Caulfield, who bought a pair of houses on Sheep Pond for $2.125 million in 2020, said he grew up going to the Jersey Shore, where there are jetties and sand-replenishment projects. He said he doesn't understand why the same can't be done in Nantucket, or why the town can't work out a land swap with residents to give them more options. "At some point, if they're OK letting it go, that whole area is going to be done," he said.

Sheep Pond Road is a narrow, sand-and-gravel road that zigzags along Nantucket's south shore, a stone's throw from the main island's western tip. The area near Madaket Beach is known as rustic and remote, with lively surf and magical sunsets. Unlike areas with waterfront mansions, Sheep Pond Road has about a dozen more modest homes on a roughly mile-long stretch.

Although erosion has long been an issue—in 2010, summer residents Gene and Roslyn Ratner's house collapsed into the ocean—real-estate values shot up during Covid. Homes that previously sold for a few hundred thousand dollars began trading for several million.

The spike took some real-estate agents by surprise. "It was like, 'Whoa, wait, erosion is a factor here,' " said Amber Cantella of Great Point Properties.

To a handful of buyers, a vacation home in the area was a risk worth taking. "We love the island," said James Caulfield. He and his wife, Jessica Caulfield, had been visiting Nantucket for years with their children before buying a place on Sheep Pond Road. Their property has two houses, one of which they rent out for $30,000 to $40,000 a week in the summer.

They hired a surveyor to assess the property before they bought it and were comfortable knowing the two homes are set back about 300 to 400 feet from the water. "I know at some point I'm going to have to pick up one of the houses and move it back," he said. "We went into this investment knowing it may not be there forever."

The south shore of Nantucket has some of the highest erosion rates in the state, said Sarah Oktay, former executive director of the University of Massachusetts-Boston Nantucket Field Station, a marine lab and research facility. Fifty years ago, she said, the land in front of Sheep Pond Road extended out another half-mile or so.

2,373 BUILDINGS on Nantucket at risk of flood and erosion damage by 2070

Above, a portion of Sheep Pond Road has been compromised by erosion. Left, a house was condemned a day before it was to be sold at auction in December. It was put on steel beams and rolled about 200 feet back from the water's edge.

FROM TOP: TUCKER FINERTY FOR WSJ; ROB ANDERSEN

Veteran real-estate agents said anyone buying a beach house has to go in with their eyes open.

"I don't give my opinion on erosion. I don't. Because sand comes and goes," said real-estate agent John Arena of William Raveis Nantucket, who has lived and worked in Nantucket for more than 15 years. He said erosion tends to be episodic—meaning there can be years where not an inch erodes and then one storm can take off 40 feet from the beach. "People have got to make that assessment on their own," he said.

Telecommunications executive James Maloney, 57, said he and his wife, Amy Cutler, 56, bought a four-bedroom house on Sheep Pond Road for $2.3 million in 2022. They were reassured by the distance between the house and ocean, and the fact that there was room to move back if needed. Maloney said he

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Continued from page M5

has insurance on the property, but it doesn't cover erosion. Instead of stressing, the couple decided to enjoy what they have.

"You're sitting there looking at the open ocean," said Maloney, whose kids surf in front of their house. "I go sit on the beach, and if I see someone on the beach in a day, it's a surprise."

Located about 30 miles south of Cape Cod, Nantucket has grappled with erosion for decades.

In the 1990s, residents of Siasconset, on the eastern end of Nantucket, formed a nonprofit, funded by locals, that installed sand-filled geotubes to absorb the force of waves along Sankaty Bluff and Baxter Road. But the project, which cost more than $15 million, sparked controversy over the private group's use of the public beach, and whether the barriers caused damage to nearby unprotected areas.

In recent years, the town moved away from just reacting to coastal risk and adopted a proactive approach with its Coastal Resilience Plan. It currently allocates $1 million a year to such planning, said Nantucket's town manager, C. Elizabeth Gibson.

James Caulfield paid $2.125 million for two houses. The one above rents for up to $40,000 a week. Residents in Siasconset installed geotubes in 2014 to help prevent erosion.

FROM TOP: GREAT POINT PROPERTIES; KIT NOBLE

She and other local officials, however, say there is also a level of responsibility among homeowners. "This is private property and, unfortunately, there's nature at work here," she said.

In 2003, five homeowners on Sheep Pond Road sued the town and county for negligence after officials failed to maintain a 100-foot stretch of the public road before it collapsed, blocking access to their homes. Five years later, a jury sided with homeowners and told the town to rebuild the road.

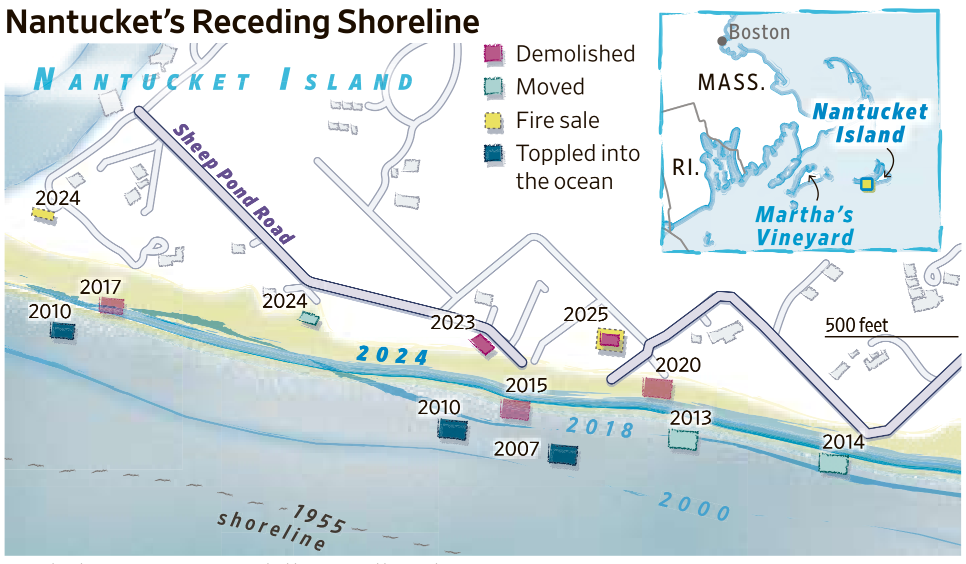
A few years ago, portions of the new road began to crumble. This time, the town hopes to relocate it.

Massachusetts law prohibits permanent structures like sea walls, riprap and breakwaters, said Arthur Gasbarro, a civil engineer and land surveyor. He installed "soft" erosion-control designs—like coconut fiber log arrays with plantings—in Nantucket Harbor.

But, in recent years, Nantucket's Conservation Commission has been conservative about what projects it permits, in part to ensure properties aren't protected at the expense of others. That's left Sheep Pond residents in a bind, said Glenn Wood, who represented the residents in the 2003 lawsuit. "Without any really good option, the only option is retreat," he said.

Even if Sheep Pond residents manage to install erosion control, it is unlikely they could prevent the inevitable, said Gasbarro. Plus, the town is also dealing with erosion near the island's ferry terminal, an airport runway and a wastewater treatment plant. "Our society can't function without a wastewater treatment plant," he said.

Nantucket's Receding Shoreline



Note: Shorelines are approximate, as are building sizes and historic locations.
Sources: Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (historic shorelines); Google Earth (2024 shoreline); town of Nantucket
CAMILLE BRESSANGE/WSJ

> 'We went into this investment knowing it may not be there forever.'
> —James Caulfield, Sheep Pond homeowner since 2020

Over the past decade, at least seven houses on Sheep Pond Road have been demolished. After a series of storms, a summer home owned by New Yorkers George and Marie Frazza was condemned and demolished in October 2023. Then in February 2024, a house on Sheep Pond that was once listed for $2.2 million sold for $600,000.

Four months later, longtime owners Jane Carlin and Benjamin Gifford were trying to donate their house, assessed at $1.9 million. Their neighbor, Don Vaccaro, co-founder of TicketNetwork, offered to buy it for $200,000. Vaccaro told the Nantucket Current at the time that it might not last six months, but that he would try to extend its life.

By January, the house was condemned and had to be demolished.

A Boston real-estate developer who purchased a pair of houses on Sheep Pond for $3.9 million in 2022 is grappling with fallout from the investment. After developer Brett Fodiman defaulted on a $2.925 million mortgage, the homes were set to be auctioned in December. Then, one of the houses was condemned. Rob Andersen and his crew were called to move it. The company Fodiman used to buy the property has since filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

James Maloney listed his home for $3.5 million in 2023, a couple of months after his neighbors, the Frazzas, had to tear down their home. He said erosion had nothing to do with the decision. He and his wife purchased a home in Marblehead, another coastal town, and decided to give up Nantucket. They have since dropped the asking price to $2.395 million.

Entertainment executive Michael Burns listed a two-bedroom cottage in the summer of 2024 for $850,000. Burns, vice chairman of film studio Lionsgate, also owns a larger home on the adjacent lot. The smaller property was in contract twice before he took it off the market in January.

"Everyone wants to know how long the house will be there, and it's an impossible question to answer," said listing agent Penny Dey of Atlantic East Nantucket Real Estate, who disclosed the area's erosion issues in marketing materials. "It's a question of tolerance, isn't it?"

THE MARKET

Meet the Superbillionaires

The world's ultrarich are growing in number, and changing real-estate and wealth as we know it

By Katherine Clarke

In 1987, Forbes published its first billionaires list, featuring 140 individuals whose combined wealth totaled $295 billion. At the time, the richest person in the world was Japan's Yoshiaki Tsutsumi, a real-estate tycoon worth $20 billion.

Today, the world's richest person, Elon Musk, is worth $419.4 billion, roughly 21 times as much as Tsutsumi at his peak and more than two million times as much as the median net worth of an American household, according to exclusive data from global wealth intelligence firm Altrata.

As the ranks of global billionaires have swelled in recent years, a new category of ultrarich has emerged—the superbillionaire. Musk is one of just 24 people worldwide who qualify for that distinction, defined as individuals worth $50 billion or more.

As of early February, those superbillionaires' fortunes accounted for more than 16% of all billionaire wealth, a dramatic increase from 4% in 2014, according to Altrata. Their combined net worth totaled $3.3 trillion, equivalent to the nominal GDP of France. Of the 24 people, 16 qualified as centi-billionaires, meaning they have a net worth of at least $100 billion.

The rise of the superbillionaire has coincided with a significant leap in luxury markets across the world, including real estate, as these individuals cobble together massive portfolios of luxury homes.

Experts say the data shows how the ranks of the ultrarich have begun to pull away from the merely wealthy, and how a subset has been propelled to new heights.


The 24 superbillionaires are comprised in large part of entrepreneurs who made their money in tech and include, clockwise from top left, Michael Bloomberg, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates.


Since 2023, Bezos has spent $234 million assembling three properties on Miami's Indian Creek Island. Below, in Lake Tahoe, Zuckerberg spent $59 million in 2018 cobbling together two private estates.

"Billionaires have always obviously controlled significant amounts of wealth, but now you're talking about differences in the billionaire population themselves," said Maya Imberg, head of thought leadership and analytics at Altrata, who has been researching the superbillionaire set. "It's quite staggering just how much the net worths of some of these people have grown."

In major luxury real-estate markets like New York, Miami, Palm Beach, Fla., Los Angeles and Aspen, Colo., new supertall towers and spec mansions have popped up geared specifically to the billionaire set, and there has been an explosion of nine-figure home sales across the country.

Each of the superbillionaires on Altrata's list has direct personal residential real-estate holdings of at least $100 million, and often far more, according to the company. Imberg said that number is likely to be a significant underestimate in some cases because real estate can often be held in a partner's name or owned by one of these billionaires' companies or holding companies.

The superbillionaire population is made up in large part by entrepreneurs who made their money in the tech sector, or whose industry was catapulted to new levels by technological advances. Of the top 10 rich-

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FROM TOP: DEBORAH ACOSTA/WSJ; JASON HENRY FOR WSJ; KAGAN MCLEOD (ILLUSTRATION)

The Retailers

Clockwise from top left: Alice Walton, James Walton, Samuel Robson Walton, Bernard Arnault, Francoise Bettencourt Meyers and Amancio Ortega

Continued from page M7

est individuals on the list, six fall into that category. Of the total 24 superbillionaires, only three were female. Only seven were based outside the U.S.

The rise of the superbillionaire marks a transformation in the composition of the world's ultrawealthy, experts said. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the richest men were industrialists: John D. Rockefeller built Standard Oil into a monopoly, Andrew Carnegie dominated the steel industry, and Cornelius Vanderbilt amassed a fortune through railroads. Their wealth, while vast, was spread across industries that defined an era of physical infrastructure and manufacturing. Through Standard Oil, Rockefeller became the world's first confirmed billionaire in 1916. During that period, a company's value accounted for physical assets like property and machinery, more so than the types of intellectual property and promise of future scale and earnings that push up values today.

$100 MILLION
Minimum worth of personal real estate each superbillionaire holds

Today's tech billionaires make up a significant portion of the superbillionaire pool. Their wealth is linked almost entirely to the stock prices and therefore future cash flows of the companies they started. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg and Nvidia's Jensen Huang have all recently seen their fortunes fluctuate by tens of billions in a single year, depending on investor sentiment. The scale of their wealth is unparalleled—but so is its volatility.

Unlike past generations, where fortunes were built over decades, today's tech-driven economy has also enabled founders to amass enormous sums in a matter of just a few years.

"We have had huge technological change the last 40 years, and that has allowed some of these businesses to scale, and created a huge amount of shareholder value," said Steven Kaplan, a professor at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business who studies finance and inequality. "Walmart is an example, Amazon is another. These are businesses that couldn't have scaled to this level without technology."

Above, Buffett paid $31,500 in 1958 to buy the Omaha, Neb., house where he still lives. Right, Bloomberg has a Beaux-Arts townhouse on New York's Upper East Side.

The current makeup of the superbillionaire population also shows a shift from the world's richest people inheriting their wealth to a rise in self-made billionaires. "The great American fortunes of today are new money, not old," said a 2024 report by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, which noted the absence of names like Astor, Carnegie, Mellon, Rockefeller and Vanderbilt on lists like the Forbes 400.

"Of the approximately 97 still-living billionaires on the 2005 Forbes 400 list who inherited fortunes, less than half are still on the list today.... The minority of heirs and heiresses who remain on the list today were three times more likely to have fallen in the Forbes rankings than to have risen," the report said.

Those shifts can be traced to the 1980s and 90s. That's due to vast advancements in technology during that period and, with that, a rise in the globalized nature of business.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, a professor at Columbia University, said he attributes some of the rise of the super wealthy to the inability of antitrust laws to contend with monopoly power in the tech sector.

"We have antitrust laws that were well adapted to Standard Oil but that don't work well in the tech sphere," he said. "Monopoly power has given rise to the potential of enormous amounts of wealth."

He also pointed to how today's superbillionaires have become masters at tax avoidance and adept at taking advantage of weaknesses in corporate governance laws to extract "obscene amounts of money" in salary and bonuses.

"These guys have, both at the corporate level and at the individual level, been even better at avoiding taxes than in making good products," Stiglitz said. "The level of taxes they pay as a share of their profits should be an embarrassment to them." The 24 superbillionares declined to comment or didn't respond to requests for comment.

Estimations of billionaire net worth are by nature an inexact science. While it's simple to calculate the value of publicly traded corporate stock, it's much trickier to reach an estimate of value for a privately held company. Imberg said Altrata's findings can vary from rankings in Forbes and the Bloomberg Billionaires' Index because of factors like methodology and the daily fluctuations of stock prices.

The explosion of billionaire net worth comes at a time of growing economic disparity in the U.S. In 2024, the top 1% of American households held $49.2 trillion in wealth, or about 30% of the country's total wealth, according to federal data. In the late 1980s, the top 1% held 23%.

The rise of the superbillionaire raises fundamental questions about the future of wealth distribution and economic power in the U.S. and globally. Economists and politicians remain split over the importance of allowing billionaire wealth to remain uncapped as a means to encourage innovation, or whether society can function equitably when so much capital is concentrated in the hands of so few.

The Industrialists

Clockwise from top left: Gautam Adani, Mukesh Ambani, Prajogo Pangestu, Julia Koch and Bill Koch

Inarguably, the concentration of wealth among a small number of tech entrepreneurs gives these individuals unprecedented influence over policy, media and society. Musk controls SpaceX, Tesla, and X, influencing everything from space exploration to online discourse, as well as more recently having the ear of President Trump. Bezos owns the Washington Post. Zuckerberg heads Instagram, Facebook and Threads, platforms used by billions. These superbillionaires operate in a largely deregulated digital landscape where oversight is limited.

Kaplan, a self-described optimist, said he sees the same advances in tech and globalization that fueled the rise of the superbillionaire as being a net positive for society, though in the U.S. they have hurt the manufacturing sectors that used to be an economic driver for the middle class.

Luigi Zingales, an economics professor and host of the podcast "Capitalisn't," said he sees the rise of the superbillionaire class as a symptom of the failure of capitalism in the U.S.

"A good capitalist system is a system that doesn't reward exactly anybody too much, because it remains competitive, and every new innovation is quickly copied," he said.

Zingales blamed the U.S. legal system for allowing tech companies to protect their trade secrets and innovations to the point where competition is impossible. "I'm the first one to say we need incentives for people to innovate. However, that somebody is reaping such large rewards suggests that the incentives are too much that we could have gotten the same outcome with much less," he said.

Stiglitz also cautioned that wealth inequality can eventually translate to political inequality, which in turn compounds wealth inequality. "These guys live in a totally different world from ordinary Americans. So they don't have to deal with public schools, public hospitals and they don't rely on health insurance in the way that ordinary Americans do," he said. "That kind of deep divide is polarizing and I think it undermines the kind of solidarity that is important for the functioning of a society."

Where to next? It's plausible that we could see the world's first trillionaire in the next few decades. "One would probably have said no in the past, but anything's possible these days," Imberg said.

The World's Superbillionaires

A ranking of those whose net worth is above $50 billion

NAME	ESTIMATED WORTH IN BILLIONS	KEY BUSINESS
1. Elon Musk	$419.4	Tesla
2. Jeff Bezos	$263.8	Amazon
3. Bernard Arnault	$238.9	LVMH
4. Larry Ellison	$237	Oracle
5. Mark Zuckerberg	$220.8	Meta
6. Sergey Brin	$160.5	Alphabet
7. Steven Ballmer	$157.4	Microsoft
8. Warren Buffett	$154.2	Berkshire Hathaway
9. James Walton	$117.5	Walmart
10. Samuel Robson Walton	$114.4	Walmart
11. Amancio Ortega	$113	Inditex
12. Alice Walton	$110.2	Walmart
13. Jensen Huang	$108.4	Nvidia
14. Bill Gates	$106	Microsoft
15. Michael Bloomberg	$103.4	Bloomberg
16. Larry Page	$100.9	Alphabet
17. Mukesh Ambani	$90.6	Reliance Industries
18. Charles Koch	$67.4	Koch
19. Julia Koch	$65.1	Koch
20. Francoise Bettencourt Meyers	$61.9	L'Oreal
21. Gautam Adani	$60.6	Adani Group
22. Michael Dell	$59.8	Dell Tech.
23. Zhong Shanshan	$57.7	Nongfu Spring
24. Prajogo Pangestu	$55.4	Barito Pacific

Source: Altrata, as of Feb. 4, 2025

Clockwise from left: Zhong Shanshan, Warren Buffett and Michael Bloomberg

The Tech Execs

Clockwise from top left: Jensen Huang, Michael Dell, Mark Zuckerberg, Sergey Brin, Larry Ellison, Elon Musk, Steve Ballmer, Jeff Bezos, Larry Page and Bill Gates

FROM LEFT: MARIA JULIE BORER FOR WSJ; DANIELLA ZALCMAN FOR WSJ; KAGAN MCLEOD (ILLUSTRATIONS, 4)

INSIDE STORY

Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater Is Leaking

Work is underway to make the architect's most famous home watertight

By Fred A. Bernstein

Director Justin Gunther continues to raise funds for the renovation project that had the house looking a bit forlorn in January.

FROM TOP: LAURA PETRILLA FOR WSJ (2); CHRISTOPHER LITTLE/WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVANCY

For a tall person, visiting Fallingwater—Frank Lloyd Wright's most famous house—can be a little scary. Wright made the "parapet walls"—the low barriers around the house's many balconies—much shorter than the 42 inches required by contemporary building codes.

Wright, at just 5 feet 7 inches tall, was unconcerned. But I'm 6 foot 2 inches. The parapet wall on the house's upper terrace—which is only 26 inches high—stops right above my knees. Under the terrace is a waterfall that feeds a stream approximately 50 feet below, depending on which part of its rocky surface you measure from.

No wonder I feel queasy as I approach one of the low parapet walls. It doesn't help that, with snow on the ground during my January visit, I feel like I might slip. And a slip here could lead to a plunge.

Luckily, nobody is known to have fallen in the 90 years since the house was built, according to Justin Gunther, Fallingwater's executive director since 2018. But there are other things to worry about. The house has leaked in dozens of places over the years, and Gunther is in the midst of the latest effort to make it watertight, a job expected to cost $7 million. That's about 40 times the cost of building the house in the 1930s.

Clearly, keeping Fallingwater dry—a process that could be called stallingwater—is a challenge. During my visit, the house was enveloped in scaffolding, which was going to allow workers to complete the waterproofing job by April. Then, in early February, the scaffolding contractor, Brand-Safway Industries of Pittsburgh, became concerned about the force of the water hitting the base of the scaffolding, which is right in the path of the waterfall.

Work on that part of the scaffolding was halted while the company strengthened the structure. That, Gunther says, caused unexpected delays. A spokesman for BrandSafway declined to comment on Fallingwater. After deliberation, Gunther decided to cancel the tours scheduled for March that were to include access to the platforms—putting visitors in hard hats farther out over the waterfall than any other members of the public, ever.

In December, before Fallingwater closed for an annual 10-week winter break, some visitors were disappointed to see the scaffolding, which made the house almost unrecognizable. But others were fascinated by the work in progress. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, which owns the house, witnessed that fascination during another spate of repairs 25 years ago, which, not coincidentally, was the last time I visited the house, in a rural area about 50 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.

According to Gunther, tickets to the tours that included scaffold access were selling quickly (at $89 per person) before he had to change the agenda. Visitors will still be able to see repair work in progress throughout the house. Completed in 1937 and voted the country's most significant building by the American Institute of Architects in 1991, Fallingwater attracted more than 143,000 visitors in 2024, Gunther says.

It also attracts a lot of water. Rain and melting snow have been finding their way into walls that, although they appear to be solid stone, are really hollow masonry tubes. When the house was built, their cavities were filled with sandstone left over from construction. But that rubble has been settling for 90 years, leaving room for water to collect before dripping into the house, where it threatens to damage interior finishes, furniture and artworks.

In Gunther's opinion, the leaks aren't evidence of Wright's incompetence, but of his daring. "He was pushing conventional notions of building to achieve something truly extraordinary, and he used the best technologies at his disposal," Gunther says. "So I wouldn't say anything was a mistake. Instead, the house's design presented inherently challenging features to waterproof, such as flagstone terraces that serve as roofs for interior spaces below."

But Fallingwater's preservation architect, Pamela Jerome, of New York's Architectural Preservation Studio, says that Wright could have called for copper flashing where roofs or terraces intersect walls. The

Please turn to page M10

Left, wooden platforms along the house's south side will let workers repair the cantilevered 'shelf' above. Enclosures, above, are heated to keep workers comfortable and building materials at a constant temperature, at center.

Continued from page M9

flashing would have kept water from penetrating the walls. But Wright didn't like seeing a few inches of exposed copper at the base of each protected wall, so he avoided flashing, Jerome says. She says a lack of flashing is a problem at Wright's Guggenheim Museum, in Manhattan, where she has also been involved in preservation efforts.

At Fallingwater, the main solution devised by Jerome and others is to pump liquid grout into the hollow walls. The liquid grout, in this case a proprietary mix from Maryland-based Masonry Solutions International, was tried—successfully—on the separate guesthouse before work began on the main house. Walls are first scanned with ground penetrating radar to identify voids. The compound is then injected through tiny holes drilled around those voids. When the compound hardens, and the holes in the masonry are filled, it should be nearly impossible for water to collect inside the walls.

Other repairs this year include repointing masonry, recaulking windows and doors, and replacing waterproof membranes on roofs. In addition, the kind of flashing Wright disliked is being installed in as many places as possible.

"Yes, we are overruling Frank Lloyd Wright," Jerome says. "But we are mostly using lead instead of copper because its gray color doesn't stand out as much against Wright's stonework." She adds, "My goal is to enhance the exterior envelope's performance, and that is a very difficult thing to do with Wright's architecture because of its inherent design defects. So we design discreet interventions that make the exterior work better at shedding water and snow."

"It's a huge undertaking," Gunther says.

Still, the repairs aren't as dramatic as those made around the turn of the century. Back then, engineers determined that several of the decks projecting out over the waterfall were drooping. The corner of one terrace was an incredible 7 inches below where it had been when the house was built.

All reinforced concrete members bend a bit, the engineer Robert Silman explained at the time. There is an initial droop, often pronounced, on the day the concrete is poured, and a slower bending that occurs mainly in the building's first year

But some of the surfaces at Fallingwater never stopped bending, Silman said in 1999. The problem was that Wright had used less rebar—steel bars that strengthen concrete. To solve the problem 65 years later, engineers drilled holes through the concrete structure, then inserted steel cables through the holes. The cables were then tightened, essentially pulling the concrete up into position, a process known as post-tensioning.

Gunther says the post-tensioning, carried out under Fallingwater's previous director, Lynda Waggoner, has performed well. But efforts back then to waterproof the house were less successful. "During the first restoration, we repointed the stonework and applied water repellent to the exterior, curing 59 of 60 chronic leaks in the main house and guesthouse," says Jerome.

However, much of the water repellent was removed as the stone was cleaned over the last quarter century. As a result, many of the leaks came back, says the engineer, who has been working on Fallingwater on and off since 1992.

Gunther was hoping to begin the waterproofing job in 2019, he says. "At the time, we thought it would cost around $3 million. Then the pandemic hit, and we had to put a lot of things on hold." When the pandemic ended, "The bids jumped to about $6 million. Now we're closer to $7 million." Gunther was able to get about half the $6 million from the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He raised the other half privately. But now, Gunther says, "We're about $1 million short." He is working to close that gap.

It may not be the last time he has to raise money to keep Fallingwater dry. Jerome says she expects the liquid grout to last for at least 25 years. But water also gets in through cracks in concrete surfaces caused, in part, she says, by Wright's decision to include smooth river stones in the mix.

In Jerome's 44-year career, she has devoted more time to Fallingwater than to any other project. "We're doing the best we can. But it's possible that there will always be some leaks."

As for Fallingwater being scary: Jerome, at 5 foot 4 inches tall, regularly examines buildings as tall as 50 stories from hanging scaffolds. "I don't find the parapets at Fallingwater problematic."

LAURA PETRILLA FOR WSJ (3)

PRIVATE PROPERTIES

Waterfront Home On Lake Tahoe Aims for a Record


The house was built in the 1980s.
VISTA ESTATE VISUALS

A waterfront Lake Tahoe home with its own small golf course could set a Nevada record.

The roughly 5.5-acre Glenbrook property is asking $65 million, making it the most expensive home for sale on the lake. If it fetches its asking price, it would top the current state record, which was set by a $62 million Lake Tahoe sale in Incline Village last year, according to Zillow.

The seller is Rachelle Prim, a retired physician and widow of Wayne Prim, who was a lawyer, venture capitalist, developer and avid golfer.

The Prims, who were married in 2019, used the Tahoe home as their primary residence, according to Rachelle. Wayne died in 2024 at the age of 97.

When Wayne bought the property in the late 1980s, it had a one-bedroom, circa-1940s home on it, she said. He renovated the roughly 900-square-foot house and converted it into a guesthouse, then built the current four-bedroom main house, completing both projects in 1989. The roughly 8,200-square-foot, single-story main house is designed so that nearly every room has a lake view, Rachelle said. The fireplaces are made of uncut stone and the main living room has a 20-foot-tall ceiling.

FOR SALE
$65 MILLION
golf area, tennis court

The property has private coves with calmer waters for swimming, as well as a hot tub overlooking the lake. A shared pier is accessible from a neighboring property.

The golf course on the estate has three putting greens and six tee boxes, including one where players hit golf balls over the swimming pool. Wayne loved tennis, Rachelle said, and the estate has a professional-size tennis court that can also be used for pickleball. There is also a volleyball court, according to listing agent Jean Merkelbach with Engel & Völkers.

Wayne co-founded the San Francisco law firm Howard and Prim in the 1950s. He was also active in venture capital and real-estate development, Rachelle said.

Wayne was a major donor to Sierra Nevada University—now the Wayne L. Prim Campus at the University of Nevada, Reno at Lake Tahoe—as well as the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno. He frequently hosted charity events and tennis tournaments at the Glenbrook home, according to Rachelle.

Lake Tahoe is home to Nevada's priciest real estate, according to Merkelbach, and Glenbrook is popular for its proximity to ski resorts, golf courses and dining.

—Libertina Brandt

▶ See more photos of notable homes at **WSJ.com/RealEstate.**

HOUSE CALL | HELEN MIRREN

Overcoming Shyness And Meeting the Queen

It wasn't until her 30s that the '1923' actress got over her fear of performing in front of others

Growing up, I didn't like to perform or be looked at. Attention brought on embarrassment, and acting in school plays was about disappearing rather than standing out. I didn't get over this completely until my 30s.

Into my teens, performing allowed me to be behind a fortress. In character, I was able to transform into someone who was more glamorous, more fascinating, more dramatic and especially more articulate, since actors have the words of fine writers.

Now, of course, I realize that as an actor, you are actually being yourself, with the freedom to shape how you're perceived as a character.

My parents didn't have much money, but they weren't in debt. Our first house was in Westcliff-on-Sea, along England's southeastern coast. We didn't have a fridge or central heating. When I was 9, we moved into a terraced Edwardian house in Leigh-on-Sea. It was a bit of a squish for five, but it was a very happy home.

My father, Basil, was born into Russian nobility but relocated to London with his family after the Russian Revolution of 1917. He was a London cabbie and then a driving examiner. He was smart, gentle and funny, and I don't ever recall him raising his voice.

My mother, Kitty, was the 13th of 14 kids in a working-class family. She was smart, though without much education, and she was a brilliant seamstress. She never neglected us, but I sensed she didn't love being a mother.

I was the middle child. Kate is two years older, and Peter is three years younger. Kate and I were brought up to be financially self-sufficient, without any pressure to marry.

When I was 6, I played the Virgin Mary in elementary school. There were no lines, and it's one of my favorite roles to this day.

At 13, I auditioned for the Royal Ballet School, performing in front of men for the first time. The rejection was mortifying.

At St Bernard's Convent Grammar School, the principal, Mother Mary Mildred, gave me profound advice: "Beware of fear." I took it as "Be fearless," but now I think she meant fight off fear that causes you to make bad decisions or to take paths that paralyze you.

My high school English teacher urged me to apply to the National Youth Theatre in London, and I was accepted. By then, I was passionate about Shakespeare.

I was set on acting school, but our local council didn't offer arts grants. I attended the New College of Speech and Drama, a teachers school, and continued with the National Youth Theatre. I put the teaching diploma in my closet and never looked at it again.

In 1965, I was cast as Cleopatra in Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra." It was a perfect role to overcome my shyness. In 1968, I joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, a huge deal.

That year, I was cast to co-star with James Mason in my first major British film, "Age of Consent." There was a very tasteful nude scene. Mason's character is an artist who falls in love with me and paints me on a sparsely populated island on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Nude scenes are profoundly uncomfortable, especially at age 22. Mason was a gentleman, and director Michael Powell made the scene feel natural. My shyness was slipping away.

Probably my most visible screen projects were TV's "Prime Suspect," from 1991 to 2006, and "The Queen" in 2006.

Today, I live with my husband, director Taylor Hackford, in Lake Tahoe, Nev. We moved into our lovely Japanese contemporary home about five years ago. We also have homes in Italy's Puglia region and in east London.

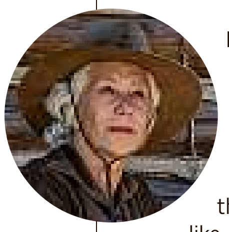
I still have my mother's Singer treadle sewing machine in London. For me, it represents a generation of British women who were courageous and stoic. It's a symbol of survival.

—As told to Marc Myers

Helen Mirren, 79, is an award-winning English actress known for her roles in the film "The Queen," Broadway's "The Audience" and TV's "Prime Suspect" and "Elizabeth I." She stars in season 2 of "1923" on Paramount+.

HELEN'S BAG

"1923"? ▼ In the "Yellowstone" prequel, I play Cara Dutton, the family matriarch and an Irish immigrant.



Running lines? I carry scripts everywhere in my bag. The supermarket is a nice distraction while I learn them. I mumble away like a mad person.

Queen Elizabeth? The only time she mentioned "The Queen" was when she invited me to tea in 2018 at the Royal Ascot racecourse. I was seated between a Sheikh and Prince Philip.

And? I was already a Dame by then. She said to the Sheikh, "This is Dame Helen. She played me in the film." He looked utterly confused.

Helen Mirren at the Golden Globes in 2024. Far left, Mirren on the right at age 6 with her father, Basil, and brother, Peter, in England in 1952.

FROM LEFT: HELEN MIRREN (FAMILY PHOTO); PARAMOUNT+; DAN DOPERALSKI/GETTY IMAGES