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# Trump administration orders halt of NYC toll meant to fight traffic and fund mass transit

By PHILIP MARCELO  
Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — President Donald Trump's administration on Wednesday ordered a halt to New York City's congestion pricing system, which thins traffic and funds mass transit by imposing high tolls on drivers entering some parts of Manhattan.

Launched on Jan. 5, the city's system uses license plate readers to impose a \$9 toll on most passenger cars entering Manhattan neighborhoods south of Central Park. In its early days, transit officials say the toll has brought modest but measurable traffic reductions.

That charge comes on top of what drivers already pay to use bridges and tunnels to get onto the island. Drivers who take a tunnel in from New Jersey during peak commuting hours now pay \$31.81, or a discounted rate of \$22.06 if they are enrolled in the E-ZPass toll collection program.



Devices used for congestion tolling hang above traffic on a Manhattan street in New York, Monday, Jan. 6, 2025.

In a statement, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced the federal government has rescinded its approval of the

program, calling it "slap in the face to working class Americans and small business owners." Duffy said his agency will

work with the state on an "orderly termination of the tolls."

Similar tolling programs intended to force people onto public public transit by making driving cost-prohibitive have long existed in other global cities, including London, Stockholm, Milan and Singapore, but the system had never before been tried in the U.S.

Trump, whose namesake Trump Tower penthouse and other properties are within the congestion zone, had vowed to kill the plan as soon as he took office. He previously characterized it as a massive, regressive tax.

"It will be virtually impossible for New York City to come back as long as the congestion tax is in effect," Trump said in November as New York prepared to implement the plan before he took office.

Revenue from the tolls is intended to raise billions of dollars in revenue for the city's creaky and cash-strapped transit system, which carries some 4 million riders daily.

The tolling system has been divisive.

Transit advocates and en-

vironmentalists have heralded it as an innovative step to reduce air pollution from vehicle exhaust, make streets safer for pedestrians and bikers, while speeding up traffic for vehicles that truly need to be on the road, like delivery trucks and police cars.

But the high tolls are hated by many New Yorkers who own cars, particularly those that live in the suburbs or parts of the city not well-served by the subway system.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, had fought the tolls and court and wrote a letter Trump on Inauguration Day imploring him to kill the program.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul also had misgivings. Last June, she abruptly halted the tolling system's planned launch, citing concerns about its impact on the local economy. The Democrat then revived the toll in November following Trump's election, but reduced the toll for passenger vehicles from \$15 to \$9. Since then, she has lauded it as a win for the city and has discussed the issue multiple times with the president.

The tolling plan was approved by New York lawmakers in 2019, but stalled for years awaiting a required federal environmental review during Trump's first term before being approved by the administration of President Joe Biden. As in other cities, the New York congestion fee varies depending on the time and the size of the vehicle. Trucks and other large automobiles pay a higher rate, and the fee goes drops to \$2.25 for most cars during the quieter overnight hours. The toll survived several lawsuits trying to halt it before its launch, including from the state of New Jersey, unionized teachers in New York City, a trucking industry group and local elected leaders in the Hudson River Valley, Long Island and northern New Jersey. □

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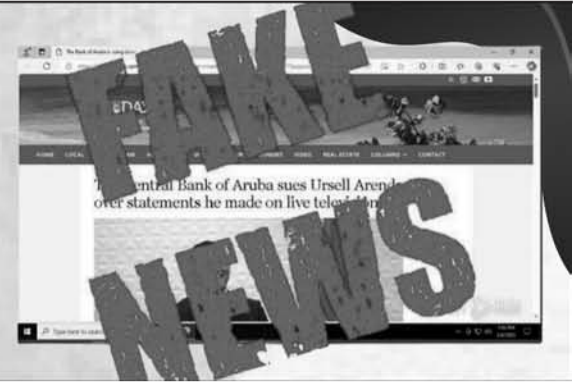
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## Trump administration labels 8 Latin American cartels as 'foreign terrorist organizations'

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and MARIA VERZA

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Trump administration is formally designating eight Latin American crime organizations as "foreign terrorist organizations," upping its pressure on cartels operating in the U.S. and on anyone aiding them.

The move, carrying out a Jan. 20 executive order by President Donald Trump, names Tren de Aragua in Venezuela, MS-13 in El Salvador and six groups based in Mexico. The designation will be published in Thursday's edition of the Federal Register, according to a notice Wednesday.

Trump, a Republican, has made securing the U.S.-Mexico border among his top priorities, vowing to carry out mass deportations, sending active duty troops to the border and reaching deals with some countries to take in more migrants.

The "foreign terrorist orga-



President Donald Trump speaks at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla., Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025.

Associated Press

nization" label is unusual because it deploys a terrorist designation normally reserved for groups like al-Qaida or the Islamic State group that use violence for political ends not for money-focused crime rings

such as the Latin American cartels.

The Trump administration argues that the international connections and operations of the groups including drug trafficking, migrant smuggling and vio-

lent pushes to extend their territory warrant the designation.

Critics of the move call it an unnecessarily broad and harsh one that could damage relations and paralyze trade with Latin America.

Businesses, banks and buyers could fear possible U.S. prosecution if they knowingly or unknowingly have any transactions that touch the world of the cartels.

Such cartels permeate Mexico's economy, dealing not only in drug trafficking and migrant smuggling but in fighting for control of the multibillion-dollar avocado business.

Aid groups say some past U.S. designations of groups as foreign terrorist organizations have threatened overall food imports into countries, for example, by making shipping companies fearful that U.S. prosecutors may accuse them of directly or indirectly supporting the targeted groups.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Wednesday before the designations were published that "if that decree has to do with extraterritorial actions (in Mexico), those we do not accept." □

## Senate confirms Kelly Loeffler, former Georgia senator, to lead Small Business Administration

By MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. Senate on Wednesday confirmed Kelly Loeffler, a Georgia businesswoman and former senator, to lead the Small Business Administration, returning a stalwart supporter of President Donald Trump to Washington.

At SBA, Loeffler will oversee the entity that describes itself as the only Cabinet-level federal agency "fully dedicated to small business" by providing "counseling, capital, and contracting expertise as the nation's only go-to resource and voice for small businesses."

Typically, the agency which was founded in 1953 offers Economic Injury Disaster Loans to help meet working capital needs caused by a disaster, loans that can be

used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other expenses that would have been met if not for the disaster.

The Senate confirmed Loeffler on a 52-46 vote.

Loeffler, who co-chaired Trump's second inaugural committee, served briefly in the U.S. Senate in the final year of the president's first term. Appointing her to the Senate to fill out the term of Johnny Isakson, Georgia GOP Gov. Brian Kemp touted Loeffler as a successor in the Republican's moderate mold.

But facing an immediate reelection campaign in 2020, Loeffler hewed closely to Trump to stave off challengers from her right flank, characterizing herself as "more conservative than Attila the Hun." □



Kelly Loeffler, President Donald Trump's choice to be the administrator of the Small Business Administration, appears before the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee for her confirmation hearing at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

## California judge pulled a gun and shot his wife during an argument, prosecutor says

By AMY TAXIN

Associated Press

**SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP)** — A Southern California judge pulled a loaded gun from his ankle holster and fatally shot his wife during an argument while the couple was watching television, a prosecutor told jurors as the judge's trial got underway Wednesday.

Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Ferguson had been drinking on Aug. 3, 2023, when he argued with his wife, Sheryl, during dinner at a local restaurant and later while watching "Breaking Bad" at home with their adult son, prosecutor Seton Hunt said.

At one point in the evening, Ferguson made a gun hand gesture toward his wife, and she later chided him to point a real gun at her, Hunt said.

Ferguson proceeded to point a gun and pulled the trigger, Hunt said. He was later taken into custody by police and, in comments captured on a video recording, pleaded for a jury to convict him.

"I killed her," Ferguson is heard saying on the recording. "I did it."

Ferguson, 74, has pleaded not guilty, and his lawyer



Investigators remove firearms from Judge Jeffrey Ferguson's residence in Anaheim, Calif., on Aug. 4, 2023.

contends the shooting was an accident.

Wednesday's statements came at the beginning of Ferguson's trial on a murder charge in the shooting death of his wife in a case that has roiled the legal community in Orange County. To avoid a conflict of interest, a Los Angeles County judge is presiding over the case before jurors in the Orange County city of Santa Ana not far from where Ferguson previously heard cases in his courtroom.

Ferguson sat in court as a defendant and wore a gray suit jacket and glasses. His lawyer, Cameron J. Talley, reserved his opening statement for later in the trial, but previously said the shooting was accidental, not murder.

Ferguson and his adult son called 911, and Ferguson texted his court clerk and bailiff saying: "I just lost it. I just shot my wife. I won't be in tomorrow. I will be in custody. I'm so sorry," according to prosecutors' court filings. Authorities said they

later found 47 weapons, including the gun, and more than 26,000 rounds of ammunition at his home.

After the shooting, Ferguson was arrested and initially released on \$1 million bail. He was taken back into custody last year after Judge Eleanor J. Hunter contended that he had lied about drinking alcohol while out on bond, which would violate the terms of his release. Ferguson got out of jail again in October this time on \$2 million bail. Ferguson is an elected

Associated Press

judge in Orange County, but he is not currently hearing cases and his name is no longer listed on the superior court's website. Under the state's constitution, a judge who faces a felony charge can continue to draw a salary but can't hear cases.

Ferguson has been a judge for a decade. He began his legal career in the Orange County district attorney's office in 1983 and went on to work narcotics cases, for which he won various awards, and served as president of the North Orange County Bar Association from 2012 to 2014.

Ferguson was admonished by the Commission on Judicial Performance in 2017 for posting a statement on Facebook about a judicial candidate "with knowing or reckless disregard for the truth of the statement," and for being Facebook friends with attorneys appearing before him in court, according to a copy of the agency's findings.

Ferguson said on his Facebook page that he grew up in a military family and traveled throughout Asia as a child. He attended college and law school in California and married his wife in 1996. □

## Historic ocean liner departs Philadelphia on voyage to become the world's largest artificial reef

By BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI

Associated Press

The historic, aging ocean liner that a Florida county plans to turn into the world's largest artificial reef departed from south Philadelphia's Delaware River waterfront on Wednesday, marking the opening segment of its final voyage.

The SS United States, a 1,000-foot vessel that shattered the transatlantic speed record on its maiden voyage in 1952, is being towed to Mobile, Alabama, for planned prep work before officials eventually sink it off Florida's Gulf Coast.

The move comes about four months after the conservancy that oversees

the ship and its landlord resolved a years-old rent dispute. Officials initially planned to move the ves-

sel last November, but that was delayed due to concerns from the U.S. Coast Guard that the ship wasn't

stable enough to make the trip.

Officials in Okaloosa County on Florida's coastal Panhandle hope it will become a barnacle-encrusted standout among the county's more than 500 artificial reefs and a signature diving attraction that could generate millions of dollars annually in local tourism spending for scuba shops, charter fishing boats and hotels.

Officials have said the deal to buy the ship could eventually cost more than \$10 million. The lengthy process of cleaning, transporting and sinking the vessel is expected to take at least one-and-a-half years.

The SS United States was once considered a beacon of American engineering, doubling as a military vessel that could carry thousands of troops. Its maiden voyage broke the transatlantic speed record in both directions when it reached an average speed of 36 knots, or just over 41 mph (66 kph), The Associated Press reported from aboard the ship.

The ship crossed the Atlantic Ocean in three days, 10 hours and 40 minutes, besting the RMS Queen Mary's time by 10 hours. To this day, the SS United States holds the transatlantic speed record for an ocean liner. □



The SS United States is towed down the Delaware River between Pennsylvania and New Jersey, from Philadelphia, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025.

Associated Press

# Rubio will skip a G20 meeting after calling host South Africa's policies anti-American

By MICHELLE GUMEDE

Associated Press

**JOHANNESBURG (AP)** — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will skip a two-day meeting of foreign ministers from the leading rich and developing nations that starts on Thursday after criticizing host South Africa's policies as anti-American.

Instead, Rubio was headed back to the United States on Wednesday from his first trip to the Middle East as America's chief diplomat after leading a U.S. delegation in talks with Russia in Riyadh over the war in Ukraine.

Rubio spoke with the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the European Union's foreign policy chief to brief them immediately after Tuesday's meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the State Department said.

Top European diplomats, as well as Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi are all expected at the Group of 20 meeting in Johannesburg while the U.S. will be represented by a lower-level delegation.

A G20 meeting would normally be an opportunity for a U.S. secretary of state to push for support on U.S. positions, especially at the start of a new administration.

Analysts say Rubio's ab-



**U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio attends an interview after meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy advisor Yuri Ushakov, U.S. National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, and U.S. Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, at Diriyah Palace, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025.**

sence reflects the Trump administration's indifference to organizations promoting international cooperation, but Rubio has also directly rejected South Africa's priorities for its G20 presidency. The hosts have picked "solidarity, equality, sustainability" as the theme of the G20 this year.

South Africa, the first African nation to hold the group's presidency, says it will try to advance the interests of poor countries, especially

with debt refinancing and helping them mitigate the impacts of climate change, where the developing world is asking rich countries to pay more.

Rubio posted on X this month that he would also not attend the main G20 summit in Johannesburg in November, saying South Africa was using the gathering to promote diversity, equality and inclusion frameworks, "In other words: DEI and climate change." "My job is to advance Amer-

ica's national interests, not waste taxpayer money or coddle anti-Americanism," Rubio wrote.

Rubio's decision to skip the G20 meeting also underscores a major deterioration in U.S. relations with South Africa, one of its key trade partners in Africa.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order earlier this month stopping U.S. aid and assistance to South Africa over a land law that he says discrimi-

nates against some of the country's white minority. The order also called South Africa's foreign policy anti-American and criticized its ongoing case accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza at the United Nations' top court, and what it said was the country's closeness to the Communist Party in China. South Africa is due to hand over the presidency of the G20 to the U.S. at the end of this year, and the two countries are expected to work together under G20 protocols.

South African Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola said on Wednesday that the U.S. would be represented in Johannesburg this week "in one form or shape or another" and stressed that Rubio's decision was "not a complete boycott of South Africa's G20" by the U.S. Analysts in Africa says they still see a way for the G20 to make progress under South Africa's presidency, even with limited U.S. interest. The EU, Russia and China have expressed support for South Africa's G20 leadership.

"No one wants to be on the wrong side of the United States," said Oscar van Heerden, senior researcher at the University of Johannesburg's Centre of African Diplomacy and Leadership. □

Associated Press

## Sinkhole opens up on the main street of an English village

By BRIAN MELLEY

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Residents in an English village were kept out of their homes Wednesday as experts tried to shore up a large sinkhole that swallowed up parts of the main street up to the edge of at least two residential buildings.

Surrey County officials declared a major incident Tuesday after the hole opened up on Godstone High Street in the town about 20 miles (32 kilometers) south of London.

The sinkhole likely was caused by a water main that burst under the road, said Philip Collins, the dep-

uty dean of engineering at Brunel University of London. Residents of about 30 buildings were evacuated Tuesday because of fears the collapse could rupture gas pipes and cause an explosion. Homes in the area lost their water supply for more than a day.

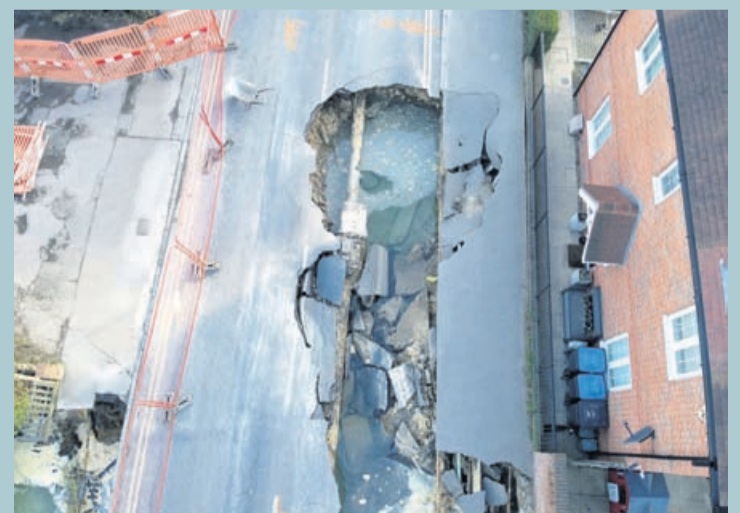
"It's an absolute nightmare. Dreadful," said Tracey Jones, whose daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter were evacuated. Structural experts were trying to figure out how to keep people and property safe and repair the damage, said Carl Bussey, the Surrey County Council assistant director for safer

communities. Collins, who is an expert in geology and geotechnical engineering, said water pressure from the broken main probably washed away soil beneath the road and led to the collapse. He said the soil likely washed into sewers, which could cause other problems.

"One of the contributing factors is the local geology, which is sand, and the former land use which is a sand quarry that was located immediately to the west of the sinkhole," Collins said. "Sand can be strong when compacted as the particles are packed

together, but weak when it becomes wet, and partic-

ularly if there is a lot of water under pressure." □



**In this photo provided by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, a view of a large sinkhole, in Godstone, England.**

Associated Press

## A worried NATO holds large-scale combat drills as the U.S. stance on Europe shifts under Trump

By **STEPHEN McGRATH** and **NICOLAE DUMITRACHE**  
Associated Press

**SMARDAN, Romania (AP)** — NATO members continued their largest combat exercises of 2025 on Wednesday, testing their ability to rapidly deploy large-scale forces on the 32-nation alliance's eastern border as worries grow over its most powerful member, the United States.

The drills in Romania, which borders Ukraine, come as a shaken Europe grapples with a new U.S. course under President Donald Trump. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has demanded that allies dramatically ramp up military spending and said U.S. security priorities lie elsewhere casting doubts on Washington's longstanding security guarantees provided to Europe. Days before the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Steadfast Dart 2025 drills comprise about 10,000 military personnel from nine nations as part of NATO's new Allied Reaction Force. They are taking place over six weeks in Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.

Although the Trump administration has not announced



**Servicemen stand at the end of the Steadfast Dart 2025 exercise, involving some 10,000 troops in three different countries from nine nations and represent the largest NATO operation planned this year, at a training range in Smardan, eastern Romania, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025.**

Associated Press

plans to pull U.S. forces from the region, Hegseth's remark that "European allies must lead from the front" left NATO partners contemplating a potential new reality in which the U.S. is no longer the powerful, nuclear-armed backstop for the continent's security.

Radu Tudor, a defense analyst in Bucharest, said a U.S. rollback of its military presence in Romania would be

"a gift" to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"The whole eastern flank of NATO (would) become weaker in front of Russia's aggressive behavior," he said, adding that it would push Romania to ask NATO allies to contribute troops and weapons to plug the gap left by several thousand American troops.

Adm. Stuart B. Munsch, commander of the Allied

Joint Force Command, said threats to NATO "have become increasingly complex and unpredictable" over the past decade.

"To address this complex security environment, NATO has undergone a significant war-fighting transformation. We have taken our defensive plans from concept to reality," Munsch told reporters at the training base on Wednesday.

"This exercise ... represents the culmination of our efforts and the beginning of our new force that will defend every inch of alliance territory."

European allies have also expressed concern over being sidelined from talks between Washington and Moscow's top diplomats on Tuesday in Saudi Arabia on working towards ending the war in Ukraine.

The fast-moving developments prompted France's president to convene select EU countries and the U.K. for talks this week in Paris.

NATO has bolstered Europe's eastern flank

Wednesday's combat exercises in Romania saw live-fire training and trench warfare drills.

Greek and Spanish marines led exercises last week in Greece, including a mock amphibious assault.

NATO's new Allied Reaction Force, established last July, is designed to deploy at scale within 10 days and combines conventional forces with cyber and space-based technologies.

Britain leads the operation with 2,600 military personnel and 730 vehicles. □

## Pakistan steps up arrests of Afghans without papers. Kabul says it's a move to expel all refugees

By **MUNIR AHMED**  
Associated Press

**ISLAMABAD (AP)** — Au-

thorities have stepped up arrests of Afghan citizens in Pakistan's capital and

a nearby city in an effort that the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad described on Wednesday as a push to force the expulsion of all Afghan refugees from the country. Pakistan's foreign ministry promptly dismissed the allegation, saying that the authorities were only trying to facilitate conditions for the swift return of Afghans to their home country. Pakistan has long threatened to deport Afghans living in the country illegally. Separately, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last month approved a March 31 deadline to deport those awaiting relocation to third countries unless their cases

are swiftly processed by the governments that have agreed to take them, according to a document obtained by The Associated Press. More than 800,000 Afghans have returned home or have been expelled by force from Pakistan since 2023, according to the International Organization for Migration, a U.N. agency that tracks migrations. In a strongly worded statement on Wednesday, the Afghan Embassy which represents the Taliban-run government of Afghanistan criticized "the short timeframe" given by the authorities in Islamabad and "the unilateral nature of Pakistan's decision."

Afghans in Islamabad and the nearby garrison city of Rawalpindi have been subjected to arrests, searches, and orders from police to leave the two cities and relocate to other parts of Pakistan, the embassy said. It further claimed that for all Afghans, "expulsion is imminent" something the embassy said Pakistani authorities had not communicated to Kabul "through any formal correspondence." More than half a million Afghans who fled the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 have been living without papers in Pakistan, thousands of them waiting for resettlement in the United States and elsewhere. □



**Afghan Mohammad Inbrahim, 35, who had worked with the U.S. Army, poses at a beach in Shengjin, northwestern Albania, Monday, Jan. 27, 2025.**

Associated Press

# Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

**ORANJESTAD** - Aruba's City Center Street Car - or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" - is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

## Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!



**(Oranjestad)**—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times in the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserving our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐



Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this

beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.



The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center— it is free for all! ☐

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## Don't miss out on L'Avenue's Early Bird Special!



(Oranjestad)—Up to grab an early dinner after a day of shopping or cruising? Take advantage of L'Avenue's Early Bird Special, and experience their innovative twist of traditional Belgian cuisine!

Located in a cozy nook at The Cove Mall—a short walking distance from the Holiday Inn and Paseo Herencia, this Belgian and French bistro offers a delicious and rich menu available through lunch and dinner from 11am to

10pm. Enjoy your lunch and/or dinner in a cool, air-conditioned interior area of the restaurant, accompanied by the warm lights and chic design that emphasizes the restaurant's laid-back, yet sophisticated ambience.

Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes steak, chicken, fish, and even mussels and rabbit if you're craving a bit more of L'Avenue's exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience!

But that's not all! L'Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of \$29.50 per guest, which includes a selection of their fine in-house wine.

L'Avenue honors and takes pride in serving the traditional Belgian and French flavors, but does not shy away from offering a flexible menu for their guests' needs. That's right, L'Avenue also offers to cater for their guests' dietary restrictions, making sure that each guest gets well taken care of!



### More information

L'Avenue is situated at The Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at +297 6996400, send an e-mail [info@lavenuearuba.com](mailto:info@lavenuearuba.com), or visit their website at [lavenuearuba.com](http://lavenuearuba.com). □



## Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.



The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

### The three levels of honor are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

### The honorees were:

#### Goodwill Ambassadors

Mrs. Rosalyn Berstein/Charnes from Bridgewater New Jersey, United States.  
Ms. Susan Mann from Bridgewater New Jersey,

United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba's people.
- Aruba's weather.
- "I love all the activities"

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □



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**Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished**

**ST. CRUZ** — The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There is numerous wildlife to discover like for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok

takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place

below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

**Bubali Magic**

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shal-



low muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands). (Source: arikok national park)

The aforementioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island.

Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect certain activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □

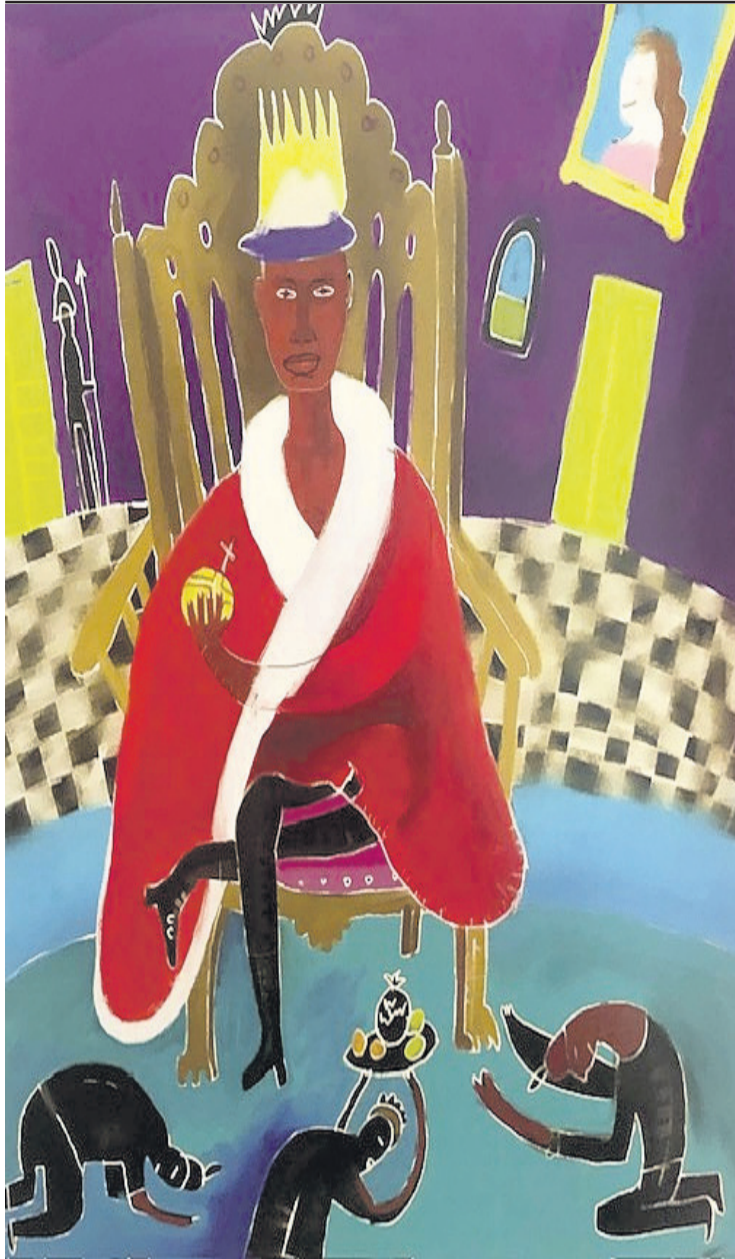


**Feeling parched? Grab a refreshment by the side of the road!**

(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These "coconut stands" can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island, these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin
- Bushiribana Beach (Near the Ling & Song Supermarket)



## The stories of “Compa Nanzi”

**(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.**

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked

back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold. “Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by? “Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder. The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said.

“Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder

opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what, there is so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!”

The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's thrown and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king. □

**Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.**



# Basic driving rules on Aruba: Traffic signs

(Oranjestad)—Safe driving is an important part of any (off) road trip. That is why we want to offer you tips and tricks when it comes to driving on the roads and highways of Aruba. Today, we'll take a look at traffic signs.

### Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum

speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may in-

crease your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily in-

habited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

### Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit [aruba-travelguide.com](http://aruba-travelguide.com) for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba.

Picture credits: [aruba-travelguide.com](http://aruba-travelguide.com)

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bebouwde kom



end bebouwde kom



end priority



end speed limit



intersection priority



priority



speed limit



stop sign



triangle stop sign

**CROSSWORD**

By THOMAS JOSEPH

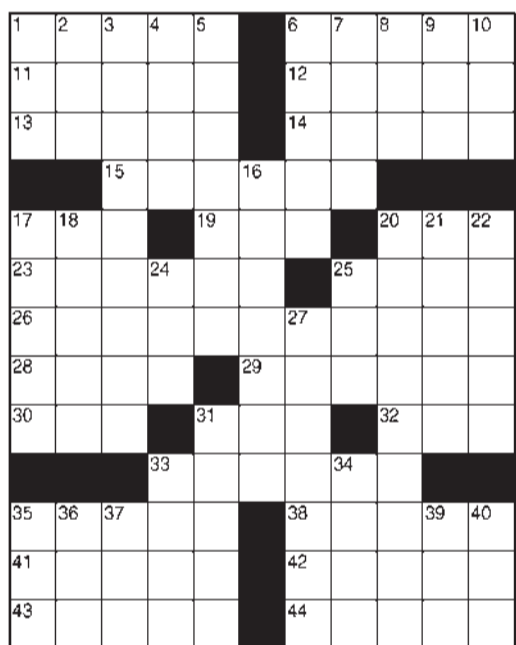


**ACROSS**

- 1 Sized up
- 6 Dominant
- 11 Full of energy
- 12 Plains group
- 13 Women's quarters
- 14 New Hampshire city
- 15 Undermines
- 17 Whale group
- 19 Fresh
- 20 Gum mass
- 23 Language of Qatar
- 25 Falafel holder
- 26 Military targeting
- 28 Bogus
- 29 Flip
- 30 Twisty turn
- 31 Stick out
- 32 Take wing
- 33 Of the lower back
- 35 Like urban areas
- 38 Warning sound
- 41 Next to
- 42 "Taxi" role
- 43 In itself
- 44 Deceived

**DOWN**

- 1 Cheering cry
- 2 In the style of
- 3 Signs of a quick peel-out
- 4 At any time
- 5 Evil
- 6 Crooked
- 7 Isn't truthful
- 8 "The Gold-Bug" writer
- 9 Attila, for one
- 10 Reduce drastically
- 16 Propriety
- 17 Social blunder
- 18 Verdi pieces
- 20 Crime via mail, say
- 21 Coral island
- 22 Move slowly
- 24 Garden visitor
- 25 Score amts.
- 27 Court do-over
- 31 Gavel wielder
- 33 Eye part
- 34 Soothing plant
- 35 Ray-gun sound
- 36 Cry to the torero
- 37 Negative link
- 39 2016 Olympics host
- 40 Fellows



2-22

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

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

2-22

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

UJJPSQ JQ ENKSQ, RV ONP RU  
SYSQ KJ CS IJQKFD JV FRU  
WSUKRPD, IS OXUK VREE JXQ  
FSNQKU IRKF KJESQNPMS.  
— UKNP ESS

**Cryptoquote:** I GOT ALL MY BOYHOOD IN VANILLA WINTER WAVES AROUND THE KITCHEN STOVE. — JACK KEROUAC

**Cruise ship Schedule: February 17 - 23 2025**

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	17	RESILIENT LADY	09.00	23.59	C	1
TUE	18	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	23.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN VIVA	13.00	21.00	I	1
WED	19	ROTTERDAM	08.00	17.00	B	1
		EMERALD PRINCESS	09.00	****	C	1
		CELEBRITY REFLECTION	08.00	21.00	I	1
THU	20	EMERALD PRINCESS - Dept.	****	22.00	C	
SAT	22	OCEANIA SIRENA	11.00	21.00	C	1
SUN	23	EXPLORA II	08.00	21.00	C	1

**Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba**

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

**Supermarket hours**



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

**Electrical power**



**Drinking water**



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

**Safety**



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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**San Nicolas:**

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Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
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Narcotics Anonymous	Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia Relacional	Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes	Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention	Tel. 582 4433
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

# How to set and invest your emergency fund

Christine Benz of Morningstar

Emergency funds are an absolutely crucial aspect of any financial plan, regardless of the life stage or situation.

For people who already have high-interest-rate debt, having an emergency fund can help guard against resorting to additional high-cost financing in a pinch. It also helps you defray unexpected expenses without needing to raid your retirement accounts.

Finally, the big reason to have an emergency fund is to cover your basic costs in case of job loss.

## Step 1: Determine your monthly living expenses

Tally up your essential monthly outlays: housing costs, utilities, food expenses, servicing debt, insurance, and taxes. Don't include nonessential items that you could live without in a pinch.

Multiply your essential living expenses by three months. This is your absolute minimum savings target for your emergency fund.

From there, you can customize your own emergency-fund amount upward. One of the biggest determinants of emergency-fund size is your career path. Contractors or other workers with lumpy income streams should obviously



This Oct. 24, 2016 file photo shows dollar bills in New York.

have bigger cash buffers. Finally, factor in how much flexibility you have to adjust your expenses downward in a pinch. New graduates who could readily relocate or get roommates can get away with a smaller emergency fund. But if you're carrying a mortgage, have two car payments, and have children, your emergency fund should be much larger.

## Step 2: See how much you have right now

Add up the aggregate in-

vestments that you hold in your checking and savings accounts, money market accounts and funds, and certificate of deposit accounts, or CDs. Exclude any assets that you have earmarked for other purposes, such as money that you're saving for a car down payment. Also exclude any cash holdings in your stock or bond mutual funds. This is your current emergency fund.

## Step 3: Set your emergency-fund savings target

Subtract the figure from Step 2 (your current emergency fund) from the figure in Step 1 (your target emergency fund). This is how much you need to save at a bare minimum double this level or more. Setting money aside to hit this savings target should be your main savings priority in the months ahead.

## Step 4: Identify appropriate investments

My advice is to use plain-vanilla cash investments: checking and savings ac-

counts, CDs, and money market accounts. Online savings accounts are often one of the highest-yielding cash options; credit unions also frequently offer decent yields.

As you shop for cash options to populate your emergency fund, remember that not every product type is FDIC-insured. Money market mutual funds, for example, do not qualify for FDIC protection though, in practice, they've been quite safe. And remember that CDs carry penalties if you need to get your money out prematurely.

## Step 5: Find the right receptacle

Finally, being able to access emergency-fund assets in a pinch is crucial. You don't want to have to deal with taxes or penalties. For that reason, it's ideal to maintain your emergency fund outside the confines of your retirement accounts. However, your Roth IRA can help back up your emergency fund, if need be. While it's not ideal to use your retirement savings as a piggy bank, you can tap Roth IRA contributions at any time and for any reason.

If you're a homeowner, it can make sense to augment your emergency fund by setting up a home equity line of credit to use in case of emergency. □

Associated Press

## Apple unveils a souped-up and more expensive version of its lowest priced iPhone



An Apple logo adorns the facade of the downtown Brooklyn Apple store on March 14, 2020, in New York.

Associated Press

By **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**  
AP Technology Writer

Apple has released a sleeker and more expensive version of its lowest priced iPhone in an attempt to widen the audience for a bundle of artificial intelligence technology that the company has been hoping will revive demand for its most profitable product lineup.

The iPhone 16e unveiled Wednesday is the fourth-generation of a model that's sold at a dramatically lower price than the iPhone's standard and premium models. The previous bargain-bin models were called the iPhone SE, with the last version coming out in 2022.

Like the higher-priced iPhone 16 lineup unveiled last September, the iPhone 16e includes the souped-up computer chip needed to process an array of AI features

that automatically summarize text, audio and create on-the-fly emojis while smartening up the device's virtual assistant, Siri. It will also have a more powerful battery and camera. All those upgrades will translate into a higher starting price for an iPhone 16e at \$600, a 40% increase from \$430 for the last iPhone SE. But iPhone 16e will be more affordable than the cheapest standard iPhone 16 at \$800. The new phone will be available in stores Feb. 28, but can be pre-ordered beginning Friday. "We're so excited for iPhone 16e to complete the lineup as a powerful, more affordable option to bring the iPhone experience to even more people," said Kaiann Drance, an Apple vice president in charge of promoting a device lineup that accounts for more than half of the company's revenue. □

## A home game for San Antonio, a homecoming for Kevin Durant when Suns and Spurs meet in Austin

By **TIM REYNOLDS**  
AP Basketball Writer

Kevin Durant went back to the Bay Area last weekend. He's now going back to school.

A nostalgic time for Phoenix's All-Star forward continues Thursday, when Durant and the Suns play San Antonio in Austin, Texas — a home game for the Spurs and a homecoming for Durant, since the game brings him back to where he played his one college season with the Longhorns. "It does mean a lot to me," Durant said. "I'm excited that we get to go back to play a regular-season game there. Austin is a place where I kind of started this journey, and to have so many friends and family that are still there from, what, 16, 17 years ago is pretty sweet. So, I appreciate the NBA for setting this up. This is a unique time."

Durant's lone season in Austin was 2006-07, and he was college basketball's best player that year. He averaged 25.8 points and 11.1 rebounds, finishing the season ranked fourth



Phoenix Suns forward Kevin Durant warms up before the NBA All-Star basketball game Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025, in San Francisco.

Associated Press

nationally in both of those categories on his way to being selected as player of the year by The Associated Press and a number of other outlets. He declared for the draft after that season, went No. 2 overall to Seattle in 2007 and the accolades keep piling up. Du-

rant is the only men's player in USA Basketball history to win four Olympic gold medals, he won two championships with Golden State returning to the Bay this past weekend after being selected as an All-Star for the 15th time and just became the eighth player

in NBA history to eclipse the 30,000-point mark.

"I think it's an awesome opportunity for himself and for the city of Austin to come out and support one of our great players who is still in the prime of his career right now," Texas coach Rodney Terry said. "He's scored

over 30,000 points, he's one of the all-time scorers at the next level, one of the all-time scorers at the collegiate level. But to have an opportunity come back where you played collegiately, to play a professional game against one of the best organizations in all of professional sports in the Spurs, you can't ask for a better scenario."

This is the third consecutive season where the Spurs have played two home games in Austin, about 75 miles northeast of San Antonio. The Spurs see Austin as part of a mega-region that they've been cultivating for years, even stretching into Mexico and this year's home games help break up the annual rodeo road trip. The San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo typically sends the Spurs on the road for much of February, so this year's games in Austin break up that window.

The Spurs also play in Austin on Friday against Detroit. The Suns got to Austin on Tuesday and one of Durant's first stops was the Longhorns' practice. □

## Researchers confirm Hall of Famer Bobby Hull had CTE when he died 2 years ago

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Bobby Hull, the Hall of Fame forward and two-time NHL MVP who helped the Chicago Blackhawks win the Stanley Cup in 1961, had chronic traumatic encephalopathy when he died two years ago, his widow said in a statement released on Wednesday. Researchers at Boston University's CTE Center found that Hull had stage 2 CTE when he died in 2023. He was 84.

Hull struggled with short-term memory loss and impaired judgment over his final decade. He chose to donate his brain after seeing former teammate and fellow Hall of Famer Stan Mikita decline late in his life.

"Seeing the pain and

heartache suffered by his lifetime friend Stan Mikita's family, Bobby felt strongly no other family should have to endure CTE," Deborah Hull, his wife of 39 years, said in a statement. "He insisted on donating his brain, feeling as though it was his duty to help advance research on this agonizing disease."

Nicknamed "The Golden Jet" for his speed and blond hair, Hull was one of the most prolific forwards in NHL history, scoring 610 times over 16 seasons with Chicago, Hartford and Winnipeg. He dazzled generations of Blackhawks fans with his shooting and skating skills and remains the franchise's career leader with 604 goals. Hull also had 303 goals while

playing for the Jets in the World Hockey Association for seven seasons.

"We are grateful to Bobby Hull and all of the NHL players and families who are helping us learn how to prevent, diagnose, and treat CTE," said Dr. Ann McKee, director of the Boston University CTE Center. "We encourage retired players and their families to reach out for help and care if they are concerned about CTE, as we are learning how to effectively treat symptoms, especially in mid-life."

The National Hockey League Players' Association announced in November it was forming an advisory committee to help hockey players better understand CTE and

the damage that concussions can do to the brain. In December, researchers at Boston University published a study of deceased male hockey players that showed 18 of the 19 NHL players examined including Hull, Mikita, Ralph Backstrom, Bob Probert, and Derek Boogaard had CTE.

It also found the odds of developing CTE increased by 34% for each year of hockey played.

A degenerative brain disease, CTE has been identified in athletes and military combat veterans who sustained concussions or repeated blows to the head. □



Hartford Whalers' star Gordie Howe, left, and Bobby Hull, right, have a chat as Hartford Whalers practice before their NHL game with the Washington Capitals, March 8, 1980.

Associated Press

# Players and coaches among those who favor seeing MLS shift to an international calendar

By ANNE M. PETERSON  
AP Soccer Writer

As Major League Soccer readies to open its 30th season, some players and coaches are advocating for a fall-to-spring calendar, a major move that would align the league with its international counterparts.

Such a shift would give MLS a more competitive position for player transfers, while also freeing up players for club duty during the summer, when many major global tournaments take place.

But there are obvious challenges, like the weather during a season that begins in late February and runs through the playoffs to December.

Teams like Minnesota United and the Chicago Fire



Inter Miami head coach Phil Neville, center left, talks to his players during a water break due to heat, in an MLS soccer match against Los Angeles FC, March 12, 2022, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Associated Press

already face downright hostile weather during the winter months.

On Tuesday night, when the Colorado Rapids beat LAFC in a CONCACAF Champions Cup match in Denver, temperatures hovered in the single digits. Frigid temperatures were expected for the Champions Cup match on Wednesday in Kansas between Lionel Messi's Inter Miami and Sporting KC.

"We experienced the game in Chicago last year at the beginning where it was 15-10 degrees cold. But I think once the players got going, you still saw a game with intensity and tempo and, you know, I don't think you see it at the same level in a lot of those summer matchups. I know it's not (popular) across the board, but I like the idea," said FC Cincinnati coach Pat Noonan.

With a warming climate, some of those midsummer games in places like Texas become difficult, too. Last season, a match in Austin was pushed back because of extreme heat.

MLS opens its new season Saturday, and it certainly won't be balmy in those northern states. But the current schedule allows the league to mostly avoid the months when the NFL and the college football post-season rule.

"MLS has done a great job of understanding what the United States is like," Seattle Sounders coach Brian Schmetzer said.

"It's just bigger and it's got more diversity and climate and all of those things. And you have to take all that into consideration, because we won't be able to play in some markets during those winter months."

If MLS aligned with Europe, the season would probably open in mid-August with a break in mid-December before resuming in February. The championship would likely be in May.

Noonan and Houston Dynamo general manager Pat Onstad both said aligning with international leagues would make it easier for teams to bring in top talent. □

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