

Groton Daily Independent

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Jail to come down

The Groton City Council held a short meeting Monday night. They decided that the old jail building will come down, accepted a DOT deed and easement from the state for the SD Highway 37 project for \$4,215, accepted the low quote from Krueger Brothers for gravel, and reappointed Tyke Nyberg to the Planning and Zoning Commission for another six year term.

The following positions will be up this year on the city council: Scott Hanlon for mayor, Jay Peterson for a one year term and David Blackmun for a two year term in Ward 1, David McGannon for a two year term in Ward 2 and Burt Glover for a two year term in Ward 3.

Tuesday, January 19

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, tea bun, French fries, carrots and dip, fruit.

Senior Menu: Hot roast beef combination, carrots, Mandarin oranges, peanut butter cookie.

Birthdays: Gail Zeck, Ryder Smith.

10:00am: United Methodist Women's Bible Study

5:15 pm: BBB at Ipswich (C game at 5:15, JV at

6:30, varsity at 8:00)

Wednesday, January 20

State FFA District Officer Training in Pierre

School Breakfast: Cinnamon roll, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, baked beans, broccoli and dip, fruit.

Senior Menu: Swiss steak with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit sauce, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: David Nilsson, Todd Anderson.

7:00am: United Methodist Men's Bible Study

12:00pm: Kiwanis meets at the Community Center

3:45pm: St. John's Lutheran Confirmation

6:45pm: Emmanuel Lutheran League

7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Confirmation

Ready to bring your heart and expertise to a team that feels more like a family? Bring your passion for patient care to the Golden LivingCenter in Groton. The Groton facility is now hiring for CNAs and Nurses. They have new wages with an excellent benefits package. All shifts are open. Join the team today by calling Jessica at 397-2365. The Golden LivingCenter of Groton is looking for you!

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

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Dakota Brush

Brooms, Brushes, Mops, Can Liners, Paper Products.

Get Ready for Spring With
Wash Brushes & Squeegees

397-9337

104 N. Main, Groton



Trista Keith shows off the medals she earned at the Aberdeen Central meet.

Keith excels at gymnastics as a sixth grader

Trista Keith, a sixth grader at Groton Area, is finally getting to fulfill a dream she has had for a very long time. She has been practicing and training in the Sport of Gymnastics since she was 4 years old. She has been training with the coaches from AGA, the Aberdeen Gymnastic Association, for the past 7 years. Her dream to compete has come true this year.

Her parents, Bary and Tricia Keith enrolled her in gymnastics to improve her balance, coordination and agility. Trista fell in love with the sport at her first practice. She was a fast learner and was asked to partake in a year-round gymnastics program offered to a select group of gymnasts. She has trained year-round since then.

This November Trista got the opportunity to try out for the Aberdeen Central Middle School team. The state allows gymnasts from the surrounding area to compete with Aberdeen Central from 6th to 8th grade. After that, the gymnasts will need to open enroll or start teams of their own at their high schools. The tryout for the middle school team was a two day tryout. The girls who make the team have to meet and started practice November 16th. The team practices four days a week from 6-7:30.

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Trista's first meet was a dual in Jamestown on December 22. This meet she placed ninth on vault, fifth on beam, third on bars and floor. She also placed third in the all-around competition. This means you competed on all four apparatus and combine all four scores for a total. The second competition was in Sisseton on January 4 with six area teams competing. Trista placed third on floor, second on beam and vault and first on bars and in the all-around. The last meet held at the Aberdeen Central was a dual with Pierre. Trista placed third and first on floor, vault bars and also in beam the all-round competition. Her last meet was in Pierre on January 18. Trista's goal is to get better with every competition. She has done that so far and hopes to keep the trend going!



Trista performing a back-walkover on a beam.

New South Dakota DI Pins

Destination Imagination of South Dakota has five new pins that students will be introduced too this year.



LATI President's List

The following students have been named to the President's List at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown for the fall semester. They are Skyler Bonn, Samantha Jondahl, Spencer Knecht, Parker Kroll, Braden Miller and Tyler Wagner. Jondahl, Kroll, Miller and Wagner were named to the 4.0 list.

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Today in Weather History

January 19, 1970: Extremely cold air was over the area on this day in weather history in 1970. After an extremely cold night, daytime high temperatures struggled to reach the single digits below zero. Overnight low temperatures across the area were from 25 below to 34 below zero with daytime highs from 3 above at Sisseton to 12 degrees below zero at Pierre. Record low temperatures were set at Wheaton, Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. The temperature fell to 32 degrees below zero at Pierre, 33 degrees below zero at Watertown and Wheaton, and to 34 degrees zero at Kennebec. Aberdeen fell to 35 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, Mobridge fell to 25 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, and Timber Lake fell to 27 degrees below zero.

1810 - The famous "cold day" in New England. Gale force winds wrecked homes, and accompanied a sudden overnight drop in temperature of 50 degrees. Tragedy struck Sanbornton NH where three children froze to death. (David Ludlum)

1883: The steamers of Cimbria and Sultan collided in the North Sea due to heavy fog. This collision resulted in the death of 357 people.

1933 - Giant Forest CA received 60 inches of snow in just 24 hours, a state record, and the second highest 24 hour total of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum)

1961: Eight inches of snow fell and caused crippling traffic jams around the Washington D.C. area on the eve of John Kennedy's inauguration. The president-elect had to cancel dinner plans and, in a struggle to keep other commitments, is reported to have had only 4 hours of sleep. Former President Herbert Hoover was unable to fly into Washington National Airport due to the weather and he had to miss the swearing-in ceremony.

1977 - Snowflakes were observed at Homestead and Miami Beach in extreme southern Florida. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm tracking toward the northeastern U.S. produced up to 14 inches of snow in northern Indiana. Peru IN reported a foot of snow. Six cities in Florida reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 88 degrees at Miami equalled their record for the month of January. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A powerful storm hit the central U.S. producing blizzard conditions in the Central High Plains, and severe thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Snowfall totals ranged up to 36 inches at Wolf Creek Pass CO, with 31 inches at Elsmere NE. Tornadoes claimed five lives in Tennessee, and a tornado at Cullman AL injured 35 persons. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The high temperature for the day at Fairbanks, AK, was a frigid 41 degrees below zero, and the morning low of 24 degrees below zero at Anchorage AK was their coldest reading in fourteen years. (National Weather Summary)





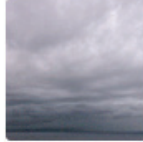


1990 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in eastern Texas and Louisiana. Tornadoes at Garland TX and Apple Springs TX each injured one person. Heavy snow spread from the Southern and Central Rockies into the Great Plains. Storm totals in New Mexico reached 36 inches at Gascon. Totals in the Central Plains ranged up to 15 inches near McCook NE and Garden City KS. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1993: An unusual series of Pacific storm systems tracked across Arizona from January 6th through the 19th, producing heavy and prolonged precipitation across the state. These heavy rains caused the most widespread and severe flooding in Arizona since the turn of the century. The highest flows of record were observed at some streamflow gaging stations in every major river basin in the state. The protracted rainfall over the 2-week period caused multiple flood peaks on most streams and rivers. A large garbage landfill and portions of the new Mill Avenue Bridge that was under construction were washed away by the raging Salt River. The Gillespie Dam west of Phoenix was damaged, as high water spread throughout low-lying areas. One man drowned while trying to cross the Agua Fria River.

1996: January 1996 is known as one of the worst snowmelt floods on record for the Mid-Atlantic. The region saw blizzard conditions on January 6 and 7th, which produced 15 to 24 inches east of I-95, and 2 to 3 feet of snow west of I-95. With tremendous amount of snow on the ground, on January 19th, temperatures soared into the 50s and 60s ahead of an approaching cold front. At 7 am in Washington D.C. was reporting a temperature of 60 degrees with a dew point of 60 degrees, both unusually high for a January morning. The warm temperatures combined with rain to melt much of the snowpack, which was released into the waterways.

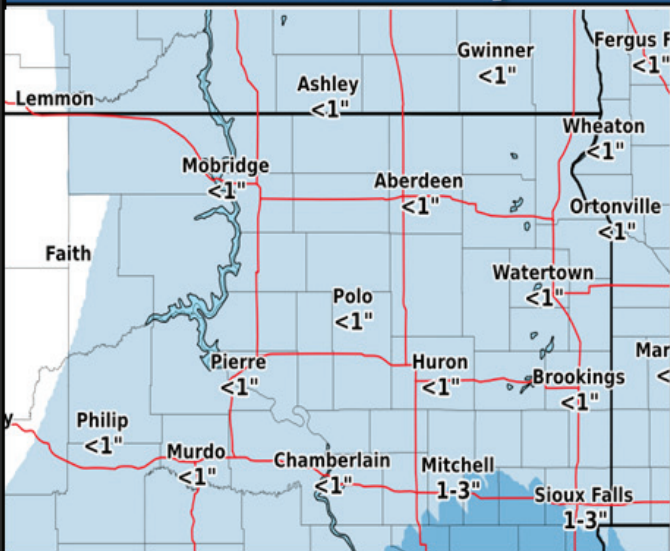
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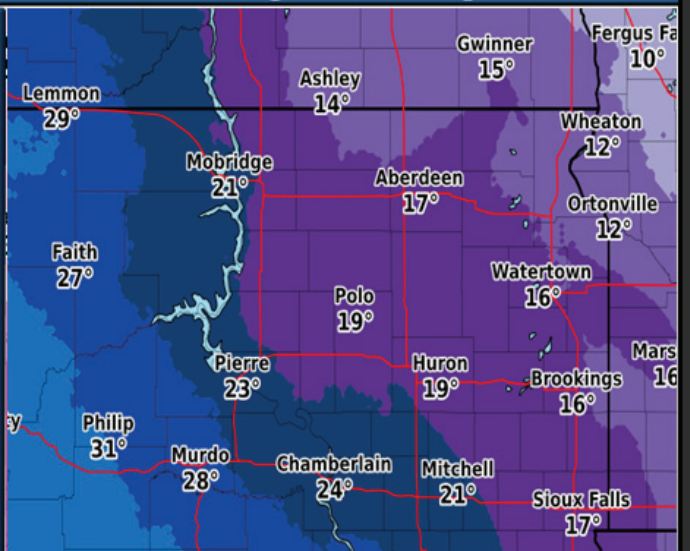
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
 60%						
Snow Likely	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 17 °F	Low: 7 °F	High: 24 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: -1 °F	High: 17 °F

Light Snow with Below Normal Temps Today

Snowfall Today



Highs Today



Generally expect under an inch of snow today.
 Wednesday will feature near normal temperatures
 With highs in the 20s and low 30s.

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

 weather.gov/Aberdeen  National Weather Service Aberdeen  @NWSAberdeen | Updated: 1/19/2016 5:23 AM Central

Published on: 01/19/2016 at 5:26AM

A weak upper level disturbance crossing the region today will bring light snow to most locations. Snowfall amounts under an inch can be expected.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 8.4 at 1:19 PM

Low: 0.1 at 8:01 AM

High Gust: 13 at 8:39 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1921

Record Low: -36° in 1943

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.31

Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.31

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:21 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Tue, Jan 19, 2016, issued 2:45 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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BE THANKFUL!

It was the rush hour in New York. People leaving work were anxious to get home – pushing, shoving, and glaring angrily at those not walking fast enough. The crowd seemed intent on getting where they were going with no one being concerned for the safety of others.

In the midst of it all was one man singing as loudly as he could. Sitting in a wheelchair, he was pushing himself along with his arms, being careful to avoid bumping or running into anyone.

A man, who had been walking alongside him, touched him gently on the arm. "Tell me, sir, you have been making your way through this crowd for quite some time. You have been singing loudly and smiling graciously. You have no legs, you have to push yourself in an old wheelchair, and yet you appear happy and joyful. How do you do it?"

Looking the stranger in the eye, the wheelchair-bound man said, "When I stopped looking at what I had lost, and began looking at what I had left, I realized that I still had my voice and could sing again."

As Christians, we must realize that God will, if we allow Him, bring us His joy even in times of grief, pain and loss.

Prayer: Lord, even in sickness and suffering, may we sense Your peace and presence and give You thanks. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

News from the Associated Press

Stanley County School Board won't consider 5-day school week

FORT PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Stanley County School Board won't consider returning to a conventional five-day school week, after being inundated with calls, emails and letters from opponents of the move.

The board in 2008 voted to go to a four-day school week. Returning to a five-day week was on the agenda for Monday's board meeting that drew more than 200 people, but board President Gary Johnson removed the item from consideration.

Johnson told the Capital Journal that his decision was based on "the overwhelming desire" in the community to leave the school calendar alone.

Parent Shane Kramme says the four-day week is beneficial in part because it allows more time for family and saves gas.

Box Elder 'jail garden' yields 30,000 pounds of produce

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — Officials at the Pennington County Jail say their unique "jail garden" produced nearly 30,000 pounds of fruit and vegetables in 2015.

The garden is a plot of land in Box Elder that's tended to by inmates from the Pennington County Jail.

Officials say about half of the produce was sold at cost to a jail vendor to offset food expenses for inmates. The rest of the food is donated to local charities and Box Elder residents.

Officials say the produce harvested in 2015 was about two times as much as the previous year.

Hundreds gathering in Pierre for 3-day tourism conference

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — About 600 people from across the state and country are gathering in Pierre this week for a conference hosted by the South Dakota Department of Tourism.

The Governor's Conference on Tourism is Tuesday through Thursday at the Ramkota. This year's theme is "Be Monumental." Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen says it speaks to a drive in the tourism industry to continually be thinking big and looking for ways to innovate.

Topics to be covered include customer service training, marketing trends and leadership skills.

SD's Black Hills Corp. buying Arkansas-based SourceGas

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City-based Black Hills Corp. says its utility subsidiary has received approval from the Arkansas Public Service Commission to purchase SourceGas Holdings LLC.

Company officials say Black Hills Utility Holdings and SourceGas filed the joint application with the Arkansas commission on Aug. 10. Black Hills Corp. expects to close the acquisition in the first quarter of 2016. Financial details weren't given.

Black Hills Corp. President and CEO Linn Evans says Arkansas is a new region for the company, and it looks forward to serving and developing new relationships with customers.

Black Hills Corp. serves 792,000 natural gas and electric utility customers in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming. SourceGas is a natural gas utility company serving about 425,000 customers in Arkansas, Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming.

Kids aviation event to be held in Pierre at Discovery Center

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Pierre Elks Lodge Number 1953 is hosting an aviation event for kids at the South Dakota Discovery Center in Pierre.

The free event is on Jan. 27 from 1p.m. until 4 p.m. Organizer Steve Wegman says that day is an early dismissal afternoon at Pierre schools.

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Pilots from the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base are also expected attend to help children build gliders and to answer questions about aviation.

Pierre Civil Air Patrol will also be at the gathering helping kids construct flying machines. Children who want to be guaranteed a glider are encouraged to register at the Discovery Center's Facebook page.

Monday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Bison 61, Timber Lake 58

Chamberlain 67, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 58

Ethan 53, Menno 33

Lennox 66, West Central 51

Omaha Nation, Neb. 74, Flandreau Indian 66

Parkston 54, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 44

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 46, Sioux Falls Lincoln 37

Tea Area 76, Deuel 37

Dakota Valley Conference Tournament

First Round

Arlington 61, Lake Preston 37

Colman-Egan 80, Dell Rapids St. Mary 31

Deubrook 51, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 44

Elkton-Lake Benton 52, Estelline 44

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 57, Marion 43

Ethan 51, Menno 17

Hanson 86, Howard 62

Leola/Frederick 48, Langford 21

McCook Central/Montrose 61, Chester 21

Mitchell Christian 34, Corsica/Stickney 21

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 52, Kimball/White Lake 23

Northwestern 60, Potter County 48

Omaha Nation, Neb. 50, Flandreau Indian 30

Red Cloud 69, Little Wound 63

Tea Area 47, Beresford 39

Viborg-Hurley 43, Freeman 41

Wall 57, Philip 45

Waverly-South Shore 39, Great Plains Lutheran 26

Wilmot 60, Rosholt 40

281 Conference Tournament

Consolation Semifinal

Hitchcock-Tulare 47, Sunshine Bible Academy 23

Iroquois 34, Wessington Springs 29

Semifinal

James Valley Christian 43, Highmore-Harrold 36

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 60, Wolsey-Wessington 28

Max & Erma's closes 13 restaurants in the Midwest

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Restaurant chain Max & Erma's is closing 13 Midwest locations as it streamlines operations and deals with underperforming outlets.

The owner, Nashville, Tennessee-based American Blue Ribbon Holdings, says senior managers went to the restaurants in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana on Monday morning to deliver the news.

The chain's website listed 51 locations in 10 states.

The restaurants serve burgers and beer. The first one opened in 1972 in Columbus, Ohio. The chain filed for bankruptcy protection in 2009. American Blue Ribbon bought it the next year.

The parent company also owns O'Charley's and other casual-dining chains.

Police identify man found dead in Rapid City detox facility

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Police have identified a 46-year-old man who was found dead last week in a detox facility in Rapid City.

The Rapid City Police Department says Andrew Watts of Box Elder was found dead Thursday evening in the safe bed wing at the City-County Alcohol and Drug Program Detox facility.

The investigation into Watts' death has been turned over to the Rapid City Police Department and is ongoing.

Authorities say the beds in the safe bed wing are available to those who need a temporary place to stay in a warm, safe environment, but do not want to utilize the treatment services provided by detox.

Sioux Falls standoff ends peacefully after about 5 hours

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two people are in custody after a five-hour standoff in Sioux Falls.

Authorities say the incident began about 2 a.m. Monday when officers responded to reports of suspicious activity at a building. A woman inside said two people she knew had entered her apartment without her permission and she wanted them removed.

Police say a man inside told them he was armed and refused to leave, as did a woman. The two suspects eventually surrendered without incident and were arrested about 7 a.m. on charges related to unlawful occupancy. The man also had outstanding warrants for assault.

Spearfish Canyon could become South Dakota's next state park

DIRK LAMMERS, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An area of the northern Black Hills that architect Frank Lloyd Wright once called more miraculous than the Grand Canyon may soon become part of South Dakota's next state park.

The Spearfish Canyon Foundation is writing a \$750,000 check to Toronto-based Barrick Gold Corp., covering most of the \$800,000 needed to buy the 72 acres of former Homestake Mine property showcasing picturesque Spearfish Falls. The foundation will eventually hand title to the state of South Dakota, allowing the Game, Fish & Parks Department to repair a washed-out bridge and improve trails to reach the falls, said parks and recreation director Doug Hofer.

Foundation president Susan Johnson said she's ecstatic that the property will soon be in state hands.

"They know how to protect and preserve, and that is the No. 1 reason our foundation wanted to be at the table when the time came to make this land transfer," Johnson said. "We like to say that this area has been loved to death, and this area needs some attention right now."

A far grander plan introduced by Gov. Dennis Daugaard during his State of the State Address this past week calls for taking various state-owned parcels in Spearfish Canyon and swapping others with the federal government to piece together what would become the 1,500-acre Spearfish Canyon State Park.

In 2006, GF&P acquired more than 40 acres from Homestake including Roughlock Falls, and the foundation chipped in \$250,000 for that purchase.

"In between those two parcels is the parcel that we've been authorized to acquire," Hofer said.

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The new piece will give the state about 130 acres in Spearfish Canyon, but much of the surrounding area is owned by the U.S. Forest Service as part of Black Hills National Forest. State officials plan to work with South Dakota's congressional delegation to explore a land trade with the Forest Service. The state would offer some isolated state-owned tracts surrounded by Forest Service land in exchange for about 1,400 acres of Forest Service land in Little Spearfish Canyon so it can create a contiguous park.

The proposal would need federal authorization, so the process could take a year or so, Hofer said.

Daugaard called Spearfish Canyon a "special place," noting his family has visited the area several times.

"I remember riding my bike up Spearfish Canyon, climbing the never ending hill near Cheyenne crossing into Lead-Deadwood and then experiencing the thrill going down the hill at full speed," Daugaard said in his State of the State speech.

Hofer said Spearfish Canyon is a year-round tourist attraction known for its gorgeous falls in the summer, colorful leaves in the fall and snowmobiling in the winter.

"It's one of the most beautiful areas in South Dakota," Hofer said. "And I think the governor is spot on that by giving it state park status it will really open the door to making this more accessible and more inviting to the public."

Johnson said the new land will be in good hands once it's transferred to the state. She saw the immediate improvements that Game, Fish and Parks State made to the Roughlock Falls property, which had become shabby and overrun with junk with an eroded and run-down trail system. It's now a picturesque park, Johnson said, and she expects similar improvements at the Spearfish Falls site.

"It will not be a park that you get in your car and drive through," Johnson said. "This will be a park that you stop your car, you put on your little hiking boots or your tennis shoes and you get out and enjoy the scenery, the streams, the wildlife. It's really an outdoorsman's paradise."

Missouri River power generation below average in 2015

JAMES MacPHERSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Electric power generation from Missouri River dams fell below average in 2015, as water was kept in upstream reservoirs to balance levels in the river system, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps, which manages dams and reservoirs along the 2,341-mile river, said energy production from the six dams in the Dakotas, Montana and Nebraska was 8.5 billion kilowatts of electricity last year, down from 9.6 billion kilowatts in 2014.

The plants have generated an average of 9.3 billion kilowatt hours of electricity since 1967, including a high of 14.6 billion kilowatts in 1997, said Mike Swenson, a corps engineer in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Western Area Power Administration, which buys and sells power from 56 hydropower plants around the nation, says the six Missouri River dams are WAPA's second-largest producer of energy.

Kara Lamb, a WAPA spokeswoman in Lakewood, Colorado, said the shortfall in electricity production from hydropower meant WAPA had to get energy from other, more expensive sources. That will ultimately mean higher costs for ratepayers as those costs are passed on. WAPA spent about \$67.5 million to purchase power in the open market to help make up the shortfall, she said.

Purchasing power to fulfill contracts is not unusual. WAPA has spent more than \$1.5 billion since 2000 to fulfill contracts due to shallow river levels caused by drought. During the driest years in the past decade, power plant output dwindled below 5 billion kilowatt hours in 2007 and 2008, the Corps said.

The Corps is charged with finding a balance between upstream states, which want water held in reservoirs to support fish reproduction and recreation, and downstream states, which want more water released from the dams, mainly to support barge traffic.

Swenson said 2015 was about average for rain and snow runoff in the Missouri River system, though releases were reduced at some upstream reservoirs to bring levels up.

Oahe Dam near Pierre, South Dakota, which holds Lake Oahe in the Dakotas, and Garrison Dam, which creates Lake Sakakawea in western North Dakota, are typically the biggest power producers in the Mis-

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souri River system.

Oahe Dam generated 2.3 billion kilowatt hours last year, below the long-term average of 2.6 billion kilowatt hours. The dam recorded a low of 1.1 billion kilowatt hours in 2007.

Garrison Dam also generated 2.1 billion kilowatt hours of electricity last year, data show. The long-term average at the dam is 2.2 billion kilowatt hours.

The water storage level of the six upstream reservoirs in the Missouri River system is about 56.4 million acre-feet at present, or slightly above the ideal level, Swenson said. An acre-foot is the amount of water covering one acre, a foot deep.

"We essentially have a full reservoir system to start the year," Swenson said.

Based on runoff estimates for 2016, the Corps has forecast 9.6 billion kilowatt hours of electricity this year, or slightly above the long-term average.

Global stocks rally on China economic growth report

YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — European and Asian stocks rallied Tuesday after China's quarterly economic growth met expectations, calming intense jitters about the global outlook that have battered markets since the beginning of the year.

KEEPING SCORE: France's CAC 40 rose 2.5 percent to 4,291.79 and Germany's DAX added 2.1 percent to 9,720.76. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 2.1 percent to 5,901.67. U.S. shares were set for a sharp rise. Dow and S&P 500 futures jumped 1.6 percent. U.S. markets were closed for a public holiday Monday.

CHINA ECONOMY: China's economic growth edged down to 6.8 percent in the final quarter of 2015 as trade and consumer spending weakened. The quarterly growth figure was the weakest in six years and 6.9 percent growth for the full year was the lowest in 25 years. But that was in line with the government's target and close to the median of private forecasts. Some analysts had forecast a much sharper slowdown. Chinese leaders are trying to reduce reliance on trade and investment by nurturing slower, more self-sustaining growth based on domestic consumption and services.

THE QUOTE: China's "official data do not point to a hard landing in the fourth quarter of 2015, but they provide little reason to stop worrying about China's drag on the global economy, either," said Bill Adams, senior international economist at PNC Financial Services Group. "Chinese domestic demand remains weak, held back by three persistent headwinds."

CORPORATE EARNINGS: Fourth quarter earnings were mostly upbeat in the U.S. Bank Morgan Stanley swung back to a profit in the fourth quarter, helped by lower legal costs. Bank of America reported a 10 percent increase in net profit, better than market analysts had expected.

ASIA'S DAY: China's Shanghai Composite surged 3.2 percent to 3,007.74 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 2.1 percent to 19,635.81. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.9 percent to 4,903.10. Japan's Nikkei 225 inched up 0.6 percent to 17,048.37. South Korea's Kospi added 0.6 percent to 1,889.64. Other regional markets also finished higher, gaining in Taiwan, Southeast Asia, India and New Zealand.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude was up 2 percent to \$30.00 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, rose 5 percent to \$30.00 per barrel.

CURRENCIES: The U.S. dollar edged up to 118.00 yen from 117.50 yen on Monday. The euro fell to \$1.0871 from \$1.0885.

Assad's battlefield gains cast cloud on upcoming Syria talks

BRIAN ROHAN, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian peace talks due next week are looking increasingly moot as a string of recent battlefield victories by government troops have bolstered President Bashar Assad's hand and plunged the rebels into disarray.

The government's advances add to the obstacles that have scuttled chances of halting — at least anytime soon — the five-year civil war that has killed a quarter of a million people, displaced half the country and enabled the radical Islamic State group to seize a third of Syria's territory.

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A proxy war on the ground between regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia, disorganization among the rebels after a top commander and several other local leaders were killed, rigid and disparate U.S. and Russian positions regarding Assad's future, and a spat over which groups will be invited to the negotiating table have all added to the conflagration.

"I don't think we should expect any major results," said Fawaz Gerges, professor of Middle Eastern politics at the London School of Economics. "Assad really believes that time is on his side, that he is winning, that the opposition is in tatters."

The Jan. 25 talks in Geneva are meant to start a political process to end the conflict that started in 2011 as a largely peaceful uprising against Assad's rule but escalated into an all-out war after a harsh state crackdown. The plan calls for cease-fires in parallel to the talks, a new constitution and elections in a year and a half.

On Monday, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged countries supporting opposing sides in the Syrian conflict to redouble efforts to reach agreement on a list of opposition groups that are to be invited to the talks.

U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said the United Nations is focusing on starting the talks on Jan. 25, but he said it can't send out invitations until the key countries agree on a list of opposition invitees. He hinted the talks could be delayed, telling reporters they would be notified "as soon as we can" if there is any "slippage" in the date.

The fighting in Syria intensified since Russia intervened militarily with airstrikes last September, ostensibly to target Islamic State militants and other extremists. But the airstrikes helped Assad push back rebels on several fronts and capture dozens of villages in the north and west.

In November, government troops broke a three-year siege of the Kweiras air base in the northern province of Aleppo, and in December they captured another air base, Marj al-Sultan, in an opposition stronghold near the capital, Damascus. Allied fighters from the Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah group, as well as Iranian military advisers and pro-government militias, have helped the army take several areas in and around Latakia province, the heartland of Assad's minority Alawite sect, which dominates the military and government.

The latest victory came last week with the capture of the town of Salma, one of the most significant government advances since the Russian air campaign began. Overlooking the coast, it is only 12 kilometers (seven miles) from the border with Turkey, a key supporter of rebels in the area.

"The Syrian army has shifted from a defensive mode to offense," said Gerges. "Before the Russian intervention the army was bleeding, it was desperately trying to maintain its position, but now it has achieved major tactical gains on many fronts."

This does not bode well for the Geneva talks, as neither side will be interested in making compromises while the front lines are in a state of flux, Gerges added.

Damascus officials have indicated lately that Syria's future will be decided on the battlefield, and have repeatedly said the rebels — whom they refer to as "terrorists" — should not expect to gain anything from the talks that they could not achieve on the ground.

Meanwhile, relations have been deteriorating between the two main players backing opposite sides — Saudi Arabia and Iran. The kingdom's execution earlier this month of a Shiite cleric who had criticized the ruling family brought a wave of recriminations from Tehran. Protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran, prompting Riyadh to cut diplomatic ties.

That escalation has undermined hopes that arose at the United Nations in December, when a resolution established a new "road map" set to begin with the Geneva talks.

The Saudis and the Iranians are already facing off in Yemen, where the kingdom is fighting Shiite rebels who are supported by Tehran. Riyadh is highly skeptical of the nuclear deal with Iran and wary of the billions of dollars that will fill Tehran's coffers now that international sanctions have been lifted.

"The Saudis are in a very confrontational mood, and that's not just with regard to Syria but also in Yemen," said Shadi Hamid, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy.

While Syrian opposition factions outside the country say they hope to see some confidence-building measures by Assad before the Geneva talks, dozens of insurgent groups within Syria said last week they

wouldn't attend at all unless humanitarian access was granted to areas under siege and prisoners were released.

"The regime is trying to achieve as much as possible on the ground before the peace talks, which will be hollow," said Zakaria Ahmad, a spokesman for a moderate rebel faction operating near the Turkish border.

It remains unclear which rebel groups will be invited to join the talks. Russia and Syria want to bar many moderate Islamic groups which are backed by the Saudis, who will insist on giving them a place at the table.

Meanwhile, top international players — the United States and Russia — disagree on the basic issue of whether Assad should be allowed to stay on and run in presidential elections or if he should step down as part of the transition. The Saudis and much of the West are adamant that he should leave, while Iran and Russia say his fate should be decided in elections.

"As long as the basic question of Assad's future is not resolved there will be no elections — it's the central issue," said Rami Khouri of the American University of Beirut's Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs.

China's slowdown challenges government, companies

JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's slowdown is ratcheting up financial stress on companies while the country's leaders scramble to avoid a spike in job losses. Full-year 2015 growth of 6.9 percent was the lowest in 25 years, posing different challenges for investors, companies and the Chinese government.

GOVERNMENT

Chinese leaders want to replace a worn-out economic model with more sustainable growth driven by domestic consumption and services. But growth has tumbled faster than expected, raising the risk of job losses and unrest. Construction and heavy industry, once growth drivers, are cooling. Consumer spending and service industries such as tourism are growing but still small. Communist leaders say they are comfortable with slower growth so long as the economy generates enough jobs. But in a sign of unease, Beijing has cut interest rates six times since November 2014 and launched targeted measures to shore up individual industries. Chinese leaders have promised to make the state-dominated economy more productive but face resistance to cutting back politically favored state industry. Private sector analysts expect growth to slow further this quarter and say Beijing is likely to respond by easing access to credit and stepping up government spending.

INVESTORS

Already jumpy about the global outlook, investors abroad have been rattled by a steady drumbeat of unsettling news out of China: slower growth, a collapse in stock prices, uncertainty over currency policy. Markets flinch at every shudder in China's economy. Volatility in Chinese stock prices triggered repeated sell-offs on Wall Street and other Western stock markets, erasing tens of billions of dollars from share values. Analysts who follow Chinese stocks say prices will lurch up and down for months to come as the market seeks a stable level, which could add to anxiety abroad.

CHINESE COMPANIES

Companies that saw revenue soar over the past decade are struggling with weakening revenue and heavy debt. E-commerce and some other areas are growing strongly. But traditional industries from steel and shipbuilding to export-driven light manufacturing and construction are shrinking and cutting jobs. Companies are struggling to pay debts out of shrinking revenue. Failing companies have been allowed for the first time to default on bonds instead of being bailed out to protect China's fledgling credit market. Authorities say major state-owned enterprises that are politically important will be rescued if necessary. But in December, a small shipyard became the first government company to be declared bankrupt.

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FOREIGN COMPANIES

The slowdown is a challenge to global companies in industries from autos to fast food to luxury goods that are counting on China to drive revenue growth. That adds to hurdles that business groups say include more competitive Chinese rivals and growing official efforts to limit access to promising technology and other markets. And with China serving as the biggest export market for most of its Asian neighbors, the effect extends to businesses in those economies. On Tuesday, Moody's Investors Service said banking giant HSBC Holdings Plc's overall Asian expansion strategy was likely to be hindered by the Chinese slowdown. Asia accounted for 60 percent of HSBC's pre-tax profits in the first nine months of 2015, meaning it faces "considerable downside risk from a material slowdown in China," said Moody's in a report.

COUNTRIES

Economies from Japan to Brazil that have come to rely on China as a key market for goods from iron ore to smartphone components are struggling with slumping demand. "Unease over China rattles manufacturers," said the top headline Tuesday in Japan's leading business newspaper, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun. Falling Chinese demand has allowed prices of oil and other commodities to tumble, putting an end to the boom that pumped money into developing economies from Kazakhstan to Angola. "Weak commodity prices are a boon to those reliant on commodity imports, but put pressure on the balance sheets of commodity exporters — especially emerging markets, some of which including Brazil and Russia are already struggling," said Sarah Bounphrey of research firm Euromonitor International in a report.

Iran's top leader expresses 'pessimism' after nuclear deal

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's top leader has called for vigilance in insuring that world powers meet their commitments under a newly implemented nuclear deal while expressing "pessimism" about U.S. intentions.

In his first public remarks since international sanctions were lifted following a U.N. report that Iran had fully complied in scaling back its nuclear program, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says Tehran should "exercise care the other party implements its commitments."

He added that "expressions by some U.S. politicians in recent days are matter of pessimism," without elaborating.

The remarks, his first since the deal was implemented over the weekend, came in a letter to President Hassan Rouhani published by state media Tuesday.

Khamenei, the country's top decision maker, has praised Iran's negotiators while continuing to express deep mistrust of the United States.

The world's oldest man, a Japanese, dies at age 112

TOKYO (AP) — The world's oldest man, a Japanese, died Tuesday at the age of 112 after suffering chronic heart problems, officials said.

Yasutaro Koide had said his secret to a long life was not to smoke, drink or overdo it.

Koide, who was born on March 13, 1903, died two months short of his 113th birthday.

In the year he was born, the Wright brothers made their historic first flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and a modernizing Japan was embroiled in a dispute with Russia over Manchuria that would erupt into the Russo-Japanese War in early 1904.

Koide (pronounced "Ko-ee-deh") worked as a tailor when he was younger. He was recognized by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest man last August.

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare said he died at a hospital in Nagoya, central Japan, where he had been treated for heart problems.

Japan's oldest man is now Masamitsu Yoshida, a 111-year-old Tokyo native who was born on May 30, 1904. It was not immediately known whether Yoshida is also the world's oldest male.

Japan, a rapidly aging country, has more than 61,000 centenarians, according to the nation's family registration records. Nearly 90 percent are women.

The world's oldest person is an American woman, 116-year-old Susannah Mushatt Jones of Brooklyn,

New York.

China's economic growth wanes to 25-year low in 2015

JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's economy cooled further in the latest quarter, dragging 2015's full-year growth to a quarter-century low and deepening a slowdown that has fueled anxiety over its impact on the global economy.

The world's second-largest economy grew 6.9 percent in 2015, the government said Tuesday, down from 7.3 percent in the previous year. For the October-December quarter, growth inched down to 6.8 percent, the weakest quarterly expansion in six years.

China's growth has fallen steadily over the past five years as the ruling Communist Party tries to steer away from a worn-out model based on investment and trade toward self-sustaining growth driven by domestic consumption and services.

But the unexpectedly sharp decline over the past two years prompted fears of a politically dangerous spike in job losses. The slowdown has rippled around the world, crimping demand for South Korean electronics and Australian iron ore as well as Middle East oil and Brazilian soy.

The Chinese slowdown and a plunge in Shanghai stock prices have prompted concern about a further loss of support from an economy once seen as an engine of global growth. That has depressed international financial markets even as the United States and Europe show signs of improvement.

"Official data do not point to a hard landing in the fourth quarter of 2015, but they provide little reason to stop worrying about China's drag on the global economy, either," said economist Bill Adams of PNC Financial Services Group in a report.

Growth was in line with private sector forecasts and the ruling Communist Party's official target of about 7 percent for the year.

China's Shanghai Composite jumped 3.2 percent and other Asian markets also rose. Investors were relieved that more pessimistic forecasts about fourth quarter growth were wrong and also expect Beijing to continue rolling out stimulus measures to prevent a hard landing.

Beijing responded to ebbing growth by cutting interest rates six times since November, 2014, and launched measures to help exporters and other industries. But economists note China still relies on state-led construction spending and other investment.

Full-year 2015 growth was the lowest since sanctions imposed on Beijing following its crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement caused growth to plummet to 3.8 percent in 1990.

The October-December growth figure was the slowest quarterly expansion since the global financial crisis, when growth slumped to 6.1 percent in the first quarter of 2009.

Compared with the previous quarter, the measurement other major countries use, China's growth slowed to 1.6 percent in the October-December period from the previous quarter's 1.8 percent.

"The international situation remains complex," said Wang Bao'an, commissioner of the National Bureau of Statistics, as a news conference. "Restructuring and upgrading is in an uphill stage. Comprehensively deepening reform is a daunting task."

Growth in investment in factories, housing and other fixed assets, a key economic driver, weakened to 12 percent in 2015, down 2.9 percentage points from the previous year. Retail sales growth cooled to 10.6 percent from 2014's 12 percent.

December exports shrank 1.4 percent from a year earlier, well below the ruling party's target of 6 percent trade growth. For the full year, exports were down 7.6 percent, a blow to industries that employ millions of Chinese workers.

Forecasters see indications retail sales and other activity accelerated toward the end of 2015, suggesting Beijing's efforts to put a floor under the downturn are gaining traction.

"The growth picture remains two-sided. The real estate construction slump and weak exports continued to weigh on activity," said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics in a report.

"Meanwhile, though, consumption continued to expand robustly, supported by solid wage growth," said

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Kuijs. "The robust growth in the consumption and services nexus is key for policymakers. They need it to avoid labor market stress."

Global financial markets were rattled by a plunge in Chinese stock prices in June. Chinese stock markets have little to do with the rest of its state-dominated economy, but investors abroad took the decline as a sign the economy as weaker than thought.

A growing number of private sector analysts question the reliability of China's data, suggesting economic growth is much weaker than reported.

Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said other measures of activity suggested economic growth in the latest quarter was 4.5 percent, though that still would be among the world's strongest.

Spending on online commerce grew by 33.3 percent over 2014, an encouraging sign for official efforts to nurture a consumer economy. Wang said the share of total economic activity accounted for by consumption rose to 56.4 percent. That was up 5 percentage points from 2014.

Forecasters expect economic growth to decline further this year, with the International Monetary Fund targeting a 6.3 percent expansion.

"We still think concerns about China's outlook are overdone and that the recent market volatility has been driven more by sentiment than by economic fundamentals," said Evans-Pritchard in a report. "The short-run outlook is improving."

Cruz joined fight for gun rights as political fortunes rose

MICHAEL BIESECKER, Associated Press

WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz huddled with a borrowed shotgun in a Louisiana duck blind last week, his face smeared with black greasepaint.

He was there to shoot a campaign video with Phil Robertson, the gray-bearded patriarch of reality TV's "Duck Dynasty" clan. The junior U.S. senator from Texas, donning camouflaged overalls, is shown squeezing off a couple of rounds toward the gray sky. It was not immediately clear whether any ducks were harmed during the making of the ad.

Looking into the camera, Robertson says his selection criteria for endorsing a candidate include "would they kill a duck, put 'em in a pot and make 'em a good duck gumbo."

"You're one of us, my man," he then tells Cruz.

Cruz has made the defense of Second Amendment rights a cornerstone of his presidential campaign, touting his past legal work fighting against gun control laws. In his three years in the U.S. Senate, Cruz's voting record has earned an A+ rating from the National Rifle Association. Fiery criticism of President Barack Obama's efforts to tighten background checks for gun purchases is a staple of Cruz stump speeches: The candidate quipped that back in Texas the term "gun control" means that you "hit what you're aiming at."

But records suggest the 45-year-old politician's passion for the issue emerged relatively recently in his life, coinciding with his ascent in Republican circles in Texas.

In an autobiography published last year, Cruz recounts how after he moved to Austin in 2003 to serve as the state's appointed solicitor general, he became concerned about leaving his wife Heidi at home alone while he traveled. The couple had previously lived in Washington, where each had jobs in the administration of President George W. Bush.

"Worried that an intruder might come through the window, I placed a hatchet beneath our bed, and started to tell her to grab the hatchet if anything happened," wrote Cruz. "As I was saying this, it struck me ... this was stupid. Heidi is five-foot-two. The last thing I wanted was for my beautiful, petite wife to be trying to swing a hatchet at a large, menacing robber coming through the window."

The next day, Cruz recounts, he bought her a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum revolver to keep in the bedside table. According to his campaign, Cruz also owns a 12-gauge Beretta Silver Pigeon shotgun for bird hunting, though a spokeswoman declined to disclose when he bought the weapon. The campaign also declined to say whether he holds a permit to carry a concealed firearm.

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According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Cruz purchased his first hunting license there in 2006, when he would have been 35 years old. He then bought licenses in three of the last 10 years — 2008, 2014 and 2015.

Cruz's campaign said he purchased a Louisiana hunting license before the recent video shoot with Robertson, though the state's wildlife department refused last week to confirm that.

Records from Iowa show he also bought licenses in 2013 and 2015 at the Hole N' the Wall Lodge, site of an annual pheasant hunt hosted by home-state U.S. Rep. Steve King, typically attended by aspiring GOP presidential contenders. King has since endorsed Cruz and is now a national co-chairman of his campaign.

At the most recent hunt in Iowa, a smiling Cruz posed for media photos with about two dozen dead fowl while wearing immaculate tan and orange hunting attire, a shotgun resting on his shoulder.

The campaign's website also features a wide array of apparel targeted at hunters, including camouflage T-shirts, safety-orange hats emblazoned with his name, and even "Camo Cruzie" drink holders. Earlier this month, Cruz's campaign raffled off a custom Remington 12-gauge shotgun engraved with his logo.

Questions about whether Cruz is an active sportsman became a campaign issue during his 2012 run for the U.S. Senate in Texas. During a televised debate, Cruz's Democratic opponent questioned whether Cruz owned a gun and twice asked whether he was an avid hunter. Cruz responded that he was a gun owner, but declined to say how often he hunted. When pressed afterward, he said the question was a distraction from the race's real issues.

"He's been pretty forthcoming about saying he enjoys hunting but doesn't get to do it as often as he would like," Cruz campaign spokeswoman Catherine Frazier told The Associated Press. "You don't have to have a hunting license to shoot guns."

She added that Cruz visits shooting ranges pretty often. He held a campaign rally at an Iowa shooting range last month.

"It's no secret that Sen. Cruz has been a passionate defender of the Constitution from a very early age," Frazier said. "He exercises his own right to bear arms regularly and often, and he's very glad to live in a country where he can do that."

In boosting his bona fides as a foot soldier for the Second Amendment, Cruz often cites his role in a 2008 court challenge to the District of Columbia's ban on private possession of most firearms in the nation's capital.

As solicitor general, Cruz helped file a brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Texas and 30 other states in support of Dick Heller, a Washington resident who challenged the city's gun ban. In his book, Cruz details the case at length and slams the Bush administration for arguing in court that reasonable restrictions on gun ownership are constitutional if they protect "important regulatory interests."

"I was dismayed with the Bush administration's attempt to water down the Second Amendment and incensed with D.C.'s attempt to write the Second Amendment entirely out of the Constitution," Cruz recounts. "... Unlike the Bush administration, we did not believe that laws infringing Americans' right to 'keep and bear arms' become constitutional whenever a federal judge finds them 'reasonable.' That's not what the Constitution says; instead, it says 'the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.' In my view, 'shall not be infringed' means exactly that."

In his written argument to the justices, however, Cruz took a more nuanced legal position. Responding to concerns expressed by the government that striking down DC's gun ban could jeopardize other gun control laws across the country, Cruz listed numerous "reasonable regulations" on guns he argued were constitutional, including state prohibitions on felons possessing firearms, as well as bans on owning machine guns and sawed-off shotguns.

In the end, the high court ruled 5-4 to strike down the DC gun ban, upholding the individual constitutional right to own firearms. Though he didn't directly represent Heller, Cruz's involvement in the case helped bring the then-relatively unknown Texas lawyer to the notice of top gun-rights supporters.

"Ted Cruz is one of our nation's leading defenders of the Second Amendment," NRA executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre says in a quote featured on the candidate's website. "For over a decade, Ted has fought tirelessly to defend our constitutional right to keep and bear arms, and his leadership was absolutely critical to our major victories before the U.S. Supreme Court."

China confirms missing Hong Kong publisher in mainland

KELVIN CHAN, Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong authorities say Chinese officials have confirmed the whereabouts of the chief editor of a publisher specializing in books banned in mainland China three weeks after he went missing and have requested a meeting with him.

The disappearances of Lee Bo, a British citizen, and four other men linked to Hong Kong publishing company Mighty Current and its Causeway Bay Bookshop who went missing last year have intensified fears that Beijing is clamping down on the semiautonomous Chinese city's freedom of speech.

Hong Kong police said late Monday that they received notice from Guangdong province's public security department that it "understood that Lee Po is in the mainland," using an alternate spelling.

The circumstances of Lee's case led many to suspect Chinese security agents crossed into Hong Kong to abduct him, in breach of the "one country, two systems" principle Beijing promised to uphold after taking control of the city from Britain in 1997. According to local news reports, he was last seen at his company's warehouse and didn't have his mainland travel permit, but days after he went missing he called his wife to say he was in Shenzhen, next to Hong Kong.

Mighty Current specialized in racy but thinly sourced titles on Chinese political intrigue and scandals and other topics Beijing deemed off limits for mainland Chinese publishers, making them popular with mainland visitors to Hong Kong.

Police said in a brief statement that they wrote to Guangdong officials to request a meeting with Lee and to "further understand the situation of the incident." They said Guangdong officials also forwarded to them a letter from Lee to the Hong Kong government, with handwriting that Lee's wife confirmed was his. Police said the letter was similar to one Hong Kong media reported on Monday, which he purportedly wrote to his wife to tell her he "voluntarily" went to the mainland to assist authorities with an unspecified investigation.

The news came a day after another of the five missing men, Swedish national Gui Minhai, was shown on state TV tearfully confessing that he turned himself in to mainland authorities over a hit and run accident that he was involved in more than a decade ago. The official Xinhua news agency said Gui struck and killed a female college student in 2003, was convicted of drunk driving and given probation but fled the country. Gui, one of Mighty Current's owners, was last seen in Thailand in mid-October.

However, similarities between the statements led some to believe they were coerced.

"We can't rule out that it was made under duress, especially since both Lee Bo and Gui Minhai used very similar language in their communications," said William Nee, Amnesty International's China researcher. He noted that both men asked for privacy, said they didn't want their cases hyped up and stressed they were voluntarily cooperating with investigations.

"This seems to be a way for the government to relieve itself of its obligations to follow due process," Nee said.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2016. There are 347 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 19, 1966, Indira Gandhi was chosen to be prime minister of India by the National Congress party. (Gandhi, a powerful as well as polarizing figure, served as India's prime minister from 1966 to 1977, and again beginning in 1980 until she was assassinated in 1984.)

On this date:

In 1807, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia.

In 1853, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Il Trovatore" premiered in Rome.

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In 1861, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union.

In 1915, Germany carried out its first air raid on Britain during World War I as a pair of Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in England.

In 1937, millionaire Howard Hughes set a transcontinental air record by flying his monoplane from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, in 7 hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

In 1942, during World War II, Japan invaded Burma (Myanmar).

In 1955, a presidential news conference was filmed for television and newsreels for the first time, with the permission of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1960, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America was signed by both countries in Washington, D.C.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon nominated G. Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court; however, the nomination was defeated because of controversy over Carswell's past racial views.

In 1977, in one of his last acts of office, President Gerald R. Ford pardoned Iva Toguri D'Aquino, an American convicted of treason for making wartime broadcasts for Japan.

In 1981, the United States and Iran signed an accord paving the way for the release of 52 Americans held hostage for more than 14 months.

In 1992, German government and Jewish officials dedicated a Holocaust memorial at the villa on the outskirts of Berlin where the notorious Wannsee Conference had taken place.

Ten years ago: Osama bin Laden, in an audiotape that was his first in more than a year, said al-Qaida was preparing for attacks in the United States; at the same time, he offered a "long-term truce" without specifying the conditions. Vice President Dick Cheney defended the administration's domestic surveillance program, calling it an essential tool in monitoring al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. An unmanned NASA spacecraft, New Horizons, blasted off on a 3-billion-mile journey toward Pluto (the spacecraft flew by Pluto in the summer of 2015). A fire at a Massey Energy Co. mine in West Virginia killed two workers. Death claimed soul pioneer Wilson Pickett at age 64 and actor Anthony Franciosa at age 77.

Five years ago: Chinese President Hu Jintao, visiting the White House, declared "a lot still needs to be done" to improve his country's record on human rights; the exchange with President Barack Obama over human rights was balanced by U.S. delight over newly announced Chinese business deals expected to generate about \$45 billion in new export sales for the U.S.

One year ago: As he headed home from a week-long trip to Asia, Pope Francis upheld church teaching banning contraception, but said Catholics didn't have to breed "like rabbits" and should instead practice responsible parenting. The NFL confirmed to The Associated Press a report by WTHR-TV Indianapolis that it was investigating whether the New England Patriots deflated footballs that were used in their AFC championship game victory over the Colts. (After an investigation, Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was suspended for four games of the upcoming regular season for his alleged role in the controversy, but had that sanction overturned by a federal court.)

Today's Birthdays: Former U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar is 96. Actor Fritz Weaver is 90. Actress Tippi Hedren is 86. Former PBS newsman Robert MacNeil is 85. Movie director Richard Lester is 84. Actor-singer Michael Crawford is 74. Actress Shelley Fabares (fab-RAY') is 72. Country singer Dolly Parton is 70. Former ABC newswoman Ann Compton is 69. TV chef Paula Deen is 69. Rock singer Martha Davis is 65. Singer Dewey Bunnell (America) is 64. Actor Desi Arnaz Jr. is 63. Actress Katey Sagal is 62. Comedian Paul Rodriguez is 61. Conductor Sir Simon Rattle is 61. Reggae musician Mickey Virtue (UB40) is 59. Rock musician Jeff Pilson (Foreigner) is 58. Actor Paul McCrane is 55. Actor William Ragsdale is 55. Basketball coach Jeff Van Gundy is 54. International Tennis Hall of Famer Stefan Edberg is 50. Rock singer Whitfield Crane (Ugly Kid Joe) is 48. Singer Trey Lorenz is 47. Actor Shawn Wayans is 45. Rock singer-musician John Wozniak (Marcy Playground) is 45. Actress Drea (DRAY-uh') de Matteo is 44. Comedian-impressionist Frank Caliendo is 42. Actor Drew Powell is 40. Actress Marsha Thomason is 40. Actress Bitsie Tulloch is 35. Actress Jodie Sweetin is 34. Actor Logan Lerman is 24. Olympic gold medal gymnast Shawn Johnson is 24. Rapper Mac Miller is 24.

Thought for Today: "Love without passion is dreary; passion without love is horrific." — Abraham Cowley, English poet (1618-1667).

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