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Sunday, March 20

First Day of Spring!

PALM SUNDAY

Birthdays: Kassidi Stumpf, Dale Busing, Shanda Sundstrom

9:00am: Emmanuel Lutheran SS & Confirmation

9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship with Communion

9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

9:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran fellowship

10:00am: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Pierpont Church

10:00am: St. John's Lutheran School

10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran worship with Communion

11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship

3:30pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Nigeria Circle serves at Golden Living Center

6:30pm: Easter Cantata at C&MA Church

Monday, March 21

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Turkey gravy, mashed potatoes, corn, tea bun, fruit.

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff noodles, mixed vegetables, cake with strawberries, whole wheat bread.

Anniv: Tim & Peggy Fliehs

Birthdays: Cheyenne Leonhardt, Courtney Pray, Duane McDonald, Melissa Raap, Michelle Sundling, Rayce Harder, Taylor Leonhardt, Terri Kjellsen,

6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

7:00pm: City Council meeting at Community Center

7:00pm: National Honor Society Induction

7:30pm: St. John's Lutheran Christian Literature Circle

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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Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



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**Front row left to right: Deb Utecht, LaVonne Helmer, Cheryl Wold
Second row: Brett Merkel, Hayley Merkel, Pam Merkel and Julia Wold
Back row: Bob Utecht, Rich Helmer, Dan Wold**

Long history with NSU Continues

As (Julia) LaVonne Jones Helmer's four children, Deborah, Rich, Pamela, and Cheryl, gathered over Labor Day weekend to move her into assisted living, among her many prized possessions were her four diplomas from Northern State University.

When LaVonne first enrolled in Northern State Teachers College in the 1940s, little did she know that she would have family members attending NSU for decades to come. LaVonne first attended Northern after graduating from Langford High School in 1946. She was a business major and worked at Jackson Hardware in Aberdeen. In 1948 she moved to Arizona for health reasons, but returned once again to South Dakota a year later. She taught in Wetonka 1 year, Draper 2 years and Langford 1 year before getting married. After she married, she lived on a farm by Andover and taught elementary school in Groton beginning in 1963. She earned her two-year elementary education degree in 1963 and her bachelor's in 1967. She eventually returned to NSU to earn her first master's degree in 1976 graduating the same day as her oldest daughter Deborah Helmer Utecht. LaVonne earned a second master's degree in 1983. She also taught briefly at NSU as an adjunct instructor and worked one year as a counselor in Bristol. After retiring from teaching, LaVonne worked as a newspaper writer and also authored two books. LaVonne's four children have all attended NSU at some point.

At NSU, Deborah met her husband Robert Utecht who played basketball for the Wolves. Deborah and Robert graduated in 1976. Deb later earned a MBA from Northern Illinois University. Deb and Bob have two sons, Eric who received his B.A. from Grinnell College in Iowa, and his master's and Ph.D. from Long Island University in New York; and Brad, who received his bachelor's degree from Gustavus Adolphus in Minnesota and his master's degree from the University of Minnesota.

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Rich Helmer attended NSU at one time, but earned two bachelor's degrees from SDSU. Rich and his wife, Dee's, son, Nick, has earned a degree from Aurora College in Illinois and is attending graduate school at DeVry University.

Pamela Helmer Merkel graduated from NSU in 1979. She and her husband, Bruce, have two sons, Lanny and Brett. Lanny earned his bachelor's degree from South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and his master's degree from the University of Texas at Dallas. His wife, Becki Clobes Merkel, received her bachelor's degree from NSU in 1997. Brett received his bachelor's degree from NSU in 2007 while his wife, Hayley Spitzer Merkel, received her bachelor's degree from NSU in 2011.

Cheryl Helmer Wold graduated from NSU in December 1980. Her husband, Daniel Wold received his master's at NSU in 1996. Cheryl received her master's degree from Northern Illinois University and her Ph.D. from the University of North Dakota. Both of their children have attended NSU; Julia who graduated December 5, 2015, and Jordan who took dual credit during his senior year at Aberdeen Central. Jordan is now a freshman at Emerson College in Boston.

LaVonne will be celebrating her 88th birthday on March 24th. She had no idea her love of education would lead her children and grandchildren to earn so many bachelors degrees, Master's degrees and doctorates.

The long streak of LaVonne's family attending NSU may be coming to an end for a while, however, the connection continues for now as daughter, Cheryl, returned to NSU as an Assistant Professor of Special Education in 2013. Maybe her great-grandchildren, Justin Merkel, Lillian Merkel, or Mac Merkel have a future at NSU as well. For the four Helmer children, the history at NSU goes back even further as their paternal grandmother, Mabel Wilmsen Helmer, attended NSU many years ago to become a teacher.

The logo for Golden Living features the word "golden" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font, with the word "living" in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font directly beneath it. A thin, curved orange line sweeps from the bottom left towards the right, ending under the "g" in "living".

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!

Prom *Open House*

Monday, March 21st
3:30pm-7pm

Saturday, March 26th
10am-2pm

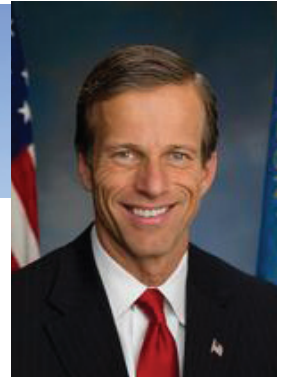
*Designers on hand for specialized ordering

*Choose designs specific for you

*Gems, ribbons, and jewelry



John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



A Basketball State of Mind

Second by second, time ticks off the clock as the senior point guard, knowing his team is about to clinch a spot in the pinnacle of all tournaments – NCAA’s March Madness – dribbles the ball past half court. As the buzzer rings, his teammates rush the court, and the team’s fans leap from their seats to celebrate the victory. A lot of hard work goes into these defining moments – the two-a-day workouts, the early mornings, all of the season’s wins, and even the losses. Every minute is worth it, if you ask these athletes.

Almost every South Dakotan who knows me, even a little, knows how much I love the game of basketball, specifically South Dakota basketball. When people talk about Indiana, Kansas, or other places frequently dubbed “basketball states,” I always make the case that South Dakota belongs in that category too. Take just this year as an example. Both the Jackrabbit men’s and women’s teams punched their tickets to the big dance, and the Coyote women are representing our state in the Women’s National Invitational Tournament. On both the men’s and women’s side, we had a handful of South Dakota teams selected for the NAIA and NCAA Division II tournaments, including Augustana who’s headed to the Elite Eight. I could go on and on – haven’t even mentioned all of our successful high school teams.

Not only do we have talented teams and players, but South Dakota has some of the best fans in the nation. At this year’s Summit League Tournament, I was impressed by the amount of blue and red in the stands supporting our state’s schools. It’s a pretty remarkable feat for a town the size of Sioux Falls to boast some of the top attendance numbers in all of Division I basketball. And no matter how fierce the competition may be, it’s always fun to see rivals in the stands trade stories and friendly banter, all while sharing in the accomplishment of our student athletes, because at its heart, that’s what this is all about.

I can’t help but think the reason we compete well at so many levels, especially on the national stage, is because of the intangible talent our kids possess – the things we in the Dakotas instill in our children at a young age. While we might not always have the height or speed that power-five teams possess, we will always have the hardest-working players on the floor. We have well-disciplined athletes that know the fundamentals. They understand teamwork and how to be humble, yet confident and poised in uniform. They are kids raised on the prairie who know that their effort and diligence will ultimately lead them to success.

To all the South Dakota athletes and fans, congratulations on an excellent season at all levels. Thank you for giving us all a reason to come together as a state to celebrate in your hard work and leadership.

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The Fight Against Meth

On March 6, the United States lost a beloved First Lady.

As partner to the most powerful man in the world, First Lady Nancy Reagan chose to devote her time in the White House to a cause that is as relevant today as it was when she announced it 30 years ago. This, of course, is Mrs. Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign.

Although Mrs. Reagan is no longer with us, we can still honor her by remembering the cause she fought so fiercely to promote. As she said in 1986, "[drug abuse] concerns us all, because of the way it tears at our lives, and because it is aimed at destroying the brightness and life of the sons and daughters of the United States." These words still ring true today – but one drug in particular should concern us all.

Although available during the "Just Say No" campaign, methamphetamine didn't gain popularity until the Reagans were out of office. As reported by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, the U.S. has seen an increase almost every year since the early 1990s. The West Central and Southwest states have been particularly susceptible to the trend, and South Dakota is not immune. Reports show that South Dakota's latest spike in meth use began in 2010 and continues to increase.

Understanding the severity of the problem, the South Dakota Department of Social Services has been working to develop a State Methamphetamine Awareness Campaign to discourage the use of this drug. When I entered office in 2011, there were 128 statewide meth arrests. By 2014, the number of arrests had grown to 271 arrests –nearly a 112 percent increase. About that time, the Public Safety Improvement Act was passed, which increased the number of drug treatment programs to help those who were already users. With expanded drug treatment programs, our next objective must be re-educating South Dakotans, and especially our younger population, about the dangers of meth before they decide to try it.

A major aspect of the campaign will be to demonstrate what meth does to a person's physical and mental health.

Physically, a user will often experience open sores, yellow skin and rotten teeth in a collapsed jaw. Seizures, heart attack and liver failure are also common occurrences in someone who uses meth. Trying meth just once can lead to death.

Mentally, a meth user is susceptible to depression, suicidal thoughts and mental impairment. Meth users will often feel intense anger towards someone, and feel anxious about life. One of the most alarming facts about the drug is how it impacts the brain chemically. Meth is very addictive because the drug causes the brain to release high amounts of dopamine, leading to a rush. The rush can last up to 12 hours before the user experiences a crash. In order to reach that high level of euphoria again, the user must ingest more of the drug. Over time, the drug destroys the brain's dopamine receptors. Without functioning dopamine receptors, a person's ability to feel happy is impaired.

Meth has been robbing South Dakota for decades, and this campaign is merely another step in an ongoing battle to stop the malicious fight. Rolling out next school year, the campaign will educate students and parents alike to take Mrs. Reagan's age-old advice, and just say no. Trying meth even once is not worth it. Losing one's health, mental capabilities, relationships and risking one's life is not worth it.

As Mrs. Reagan told Americans back in the 1980s, "Drugs steal away so much. They take and take, until finally every time a drug goes into a child, something else is forced out – like love and hope and trust and confidence. Drugs take away the dream from every child's heart and replace it with a nightmare

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Mike Kerrigan Benefit

Sunday, March 20, 4 p.m.

Conde Community Center

Taco Feed ~ Silent Auction ~ Free Will Donation
To help defray costs of Mike's medical expenses

Drop donations off at

Harvey's Sinclair, Conde

For more information contact Ron

Worlie at 605/382-7606

City of Columbia has opening for city finance officer and city maintenance worker. Call at 396-2655 apply before April 4th application deadline.

Come and go bridal shower for Sarah Geary, bride-to-be of Sam Thorson, Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m., St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. The couple is registered at Bed Bath and Beyond and at Target.

The Livestream logo features a red stylized 'L' icon to the left of the word 'livestream' in a lowercase, sans-serif font.The Dollar General logo consists of the words 'DOLLAR GENERAL' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within a yellow rounded rectangular background.

Special Exception Hearing
Monday, March 28th, 7 p.m.

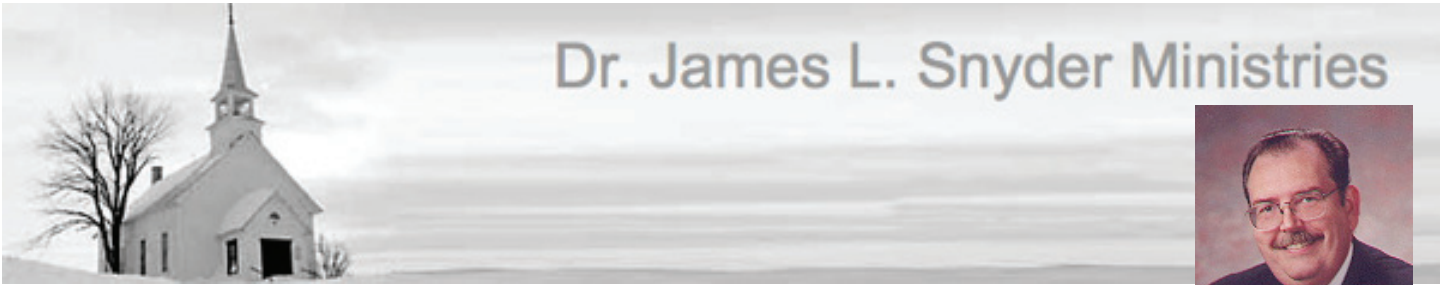
Groton Community Center

If you can't make it to the hearing, watch it live on

gdilive.com

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



It's Good Friday, but Sunday's a comin'

For those who follow the church calendar Good Friday is a special day, one of the high religious days among many Christians. Personally, I think it is a good one to remember and celebrate.

Overall, apart from a few exceptions, I do not like special days. As far as I'm concerned, every day I get up and take nourishment is a special day for me.

Everybody seems to have their own special day and I find it rather difficult to keep up on all of these "special days." If a person would honor and celebrate every "special day" posted on the calendar there would be no days to get any work done whatsoever. And, as luck would have it on my side, I would miss a very special "special day."

I am in favor of setting aside one day a month as the official "special day" of the month in which everything that anybody wants to celebrate during that month could be included. That way we could get the celebrating of special days done and then we can get back to business as usual.

One of the most frightening phrases a husband can hear is, "Do you know what anniversary it is today?"

Every husband has been backed into a corner like this sometime during his marital career. I for one say it is not fair. Because everyone knows special is as special remembers, which puts husbands at a great disadvantage.

It is not that men cannot remember, a man's memory is limited and so he must be very selective. And to be honest about this, anniversaries are simply not on any man's radar.

I learned this very early in my relationship with the young woman who graciously accepted my invitation of matrimony.

We had been dating for around a month and one night when I picked her up to go out, she said something that confused me. "You know this is our first anniversary?"

My confusion lay in the fact that an anniversary had to do with something yearly. I had only known her for several months at the time. I know time gets away with a person, but this was rather ridiculous. In the short time we had known each other, it was impossible for us to have an anniversary of anything.

It was at this point I did something, although innocent enough at the time, that I have regretted the rest of my life. I looked at her and laughed.

That was when I was introduced to the marvelously mysterious world of women-lore. With a woman, anniversaries are not something to laugh about, at least in their presence. An anniversary is something to celebrate whether it makes sense or not.

When I realized how serious the situation was, I wiped that silly grin off my face and inquired as to what anniversary she was referring to.

"Why, don't you know," she said as seriously as I have ever seen her up to that point. "This is the first month anniversary of our going out together."

Now, what do you do on the first month anniversary of going out as a couple? However, the thing that really frightened me was, do we celebrate this every month?

What is the protocol for these monthly anniversaries? How do I keep track of all of this? What gift is appropriate? I was afraid that I would go broke before we got around to getting married.

I would come to discover that these "monthly anniversaries" were to continue until they were superseded

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by a more important anniversary. Of course, her responsibility was to select the anniversary that would trump the monthly anniversaries.

My responsibility? To remember the latest anniversary.

How is a husband to keep track of all of these anniversaries? Once I mistakenly bought a special gift for what I thought was our fifth wedding anniversary. It turned out to be our seventh. Where those two years went, only my wife remembers.

I cannot remember all those anniversaries now, but they went something like this. The anniversary of when we first met. The anniversary of getting her the first Valentines box of candy. The anniversary of sharing our first hot fudge sundae together. The anniversary of giving her an engagement ring.

Looking back over all those years I have a list of my own anniversaries I can never remember celebrating.

For example. The anniversary of when she slammed the car door on my finger. Ha, she probably forgot that one. (I wonder if Hallmark has a card for this?) I still have the gruesome scar on my finger reminding me of that anniversary.

How about the anniversary of the day the diamond fell out of the first engagement ring I gave her? Fortunately, someone had a microscope and we were able, after diligent search, to find the rock.

Then, there is the anniversary of the day she backed into my parked car. Enough said.

As we celebrate Good Friday, a very special day, remember that its goodness comes from the following Sunday when Jesus rose victoriously over sin and the grave.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 KJV).

It is Good Friday, but Resurrection Sunday's a comin'.

Easter Cantata today at C&MA Church

The Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church will be hosting their 2016 Easter Cantata "Because He Lives", a Russell Mauldin musical production, on Palm Sunday evening, March 20th, at 6:30 pm. The public is invited. This passionate celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ features some of the best-loved songs of Contemporary Gospel Christian music. Follow Jesus through the journey to Jerusalem, down the Via Dolorosa to the cross. Then rejoice with heart and soul as with the choir we together celebrate the victorious resurrection of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.

Members of the choir, directed by Carrie Olson, look forward to sharing the anointed music of composers like Bill and Gloria Gaither, Russell Mauldin, and Michael W. Smith. They are Sopranos Darby Duncan, Moira Duncan, JoAnne Ehresmann, Deb Jacobs, Krista and Sierra Tunby, Altos Nancy Cutler, Kayla Castillo, Amy K. Duncan, Jana Duncan, Joyce Grenz, Glenna Remington, Darinda & Shawna Tunby, Tenors Rick Buhler, Bill Duncan, Doug Duncan, and Adam Franken, Baritones Zeke Duncan, Dale Grenz, Lowell Harms, Scott Krueger, Larry Remington, Dawson and Lars Tunby.

A Fellowship time will follow the cantata in the church social hall.

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Today in Weather History

March 20, 1982: A winter storm dropped 10-20 inches of heavy wet snow across the northern two-thirds of South Dakota. Five persons were killed and eight others injured in indirect accidents. Downed power lines caused isolated power outages. A half dozen newborn calves died of exposure near Lemmon in Perkins County. In addition, 5% of the pheasant population in Brown, Edmunds and Faulk Counties were killed. The weight of the snow collapsed a canopy of a grocery store in McLaughlin, Corson County, tearing out part of the brick front and breaking windows in the store.

March 20, 2008: An upper level disturbance coupled with an area of low pressure moving across the Central Plains brought widespread heavy snow from the late afternoon through the early morning hours to north central and northeast South Dakota. Heavy snow of 6 to as much as 18 inches fell across this area resulting in school delays and cancellations along with treacherous travel conditions. Some snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Bowdle, South Shore, and Bradley; 7 inches at Eureka, Chelsea, Bristol, and Pollock; 8 inches near Hosmer, Osaka, and Roscoe; 9 inches at Victor; 10 inches at Westport and Ipswich. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included: 12 inches at Columbia, Milbank, and Waubay; 13 inches at Sisseton and Webster; 14 inches at Big Stone City; 15 inches at Summit; 16 inches at Roy Lake; 18 inches at Wilmot and Pickerel Lake State Park.

1948: The city of Juneau received 31 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for the Alaska capitol. (20th - 21st)








Also on this day, An F3 tornado tracked through Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK just before 10 p.m. destroying 54 aircraft, including 17 transport planes valued at \$500,000 dollars apiece. Total damage amounted to more than \$10 million dollars, a record for the state that stood until the massive tornado outbreak of 5/3/1999. Major Ernest W. Fawbush and Captain Robert C. Miller were ordered to see if operationally forecasting tornadoes was possible. The tornado prompted the first attempt at tornado forecasting. Forecasters at Tinker believed conditions were again favorable for tornadoes, and issued the first recorded tornado forecast. Five days later on 3/25 at 6pm, a forecasted tornado occurred, crossing the prepared base and damage was minimized. Their successful, albeit somewhat lucky forecast paved the way for tornado forecasts to be issued by the U.S. Weather Bureau after a long ban.

1986: Great Britain recorded their highest wind gust ever as the summit of Scotland's Cairngorm Mountains, at 4,085 feet had a gust of 172 mph.

1998: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred over portions of the southeastern United States on this day. Particularly hard hit were rural areas outside of Gainesville, Georgia, where at least 12 people were killed during the early morning hours. The entire outbreak killed 14 people and produced 12 tornadoes across three states with the town of Stoneville, North Carolina being also hard hit by the storms.

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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Slight Chance Rain then Slight Chance Rain/Snow	Breezy. Chance Snow then Chance Rain/Snow
High: 41 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 52 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 52 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 36 °F



Warmer Temperatures on the Way

Follow us on Social Media

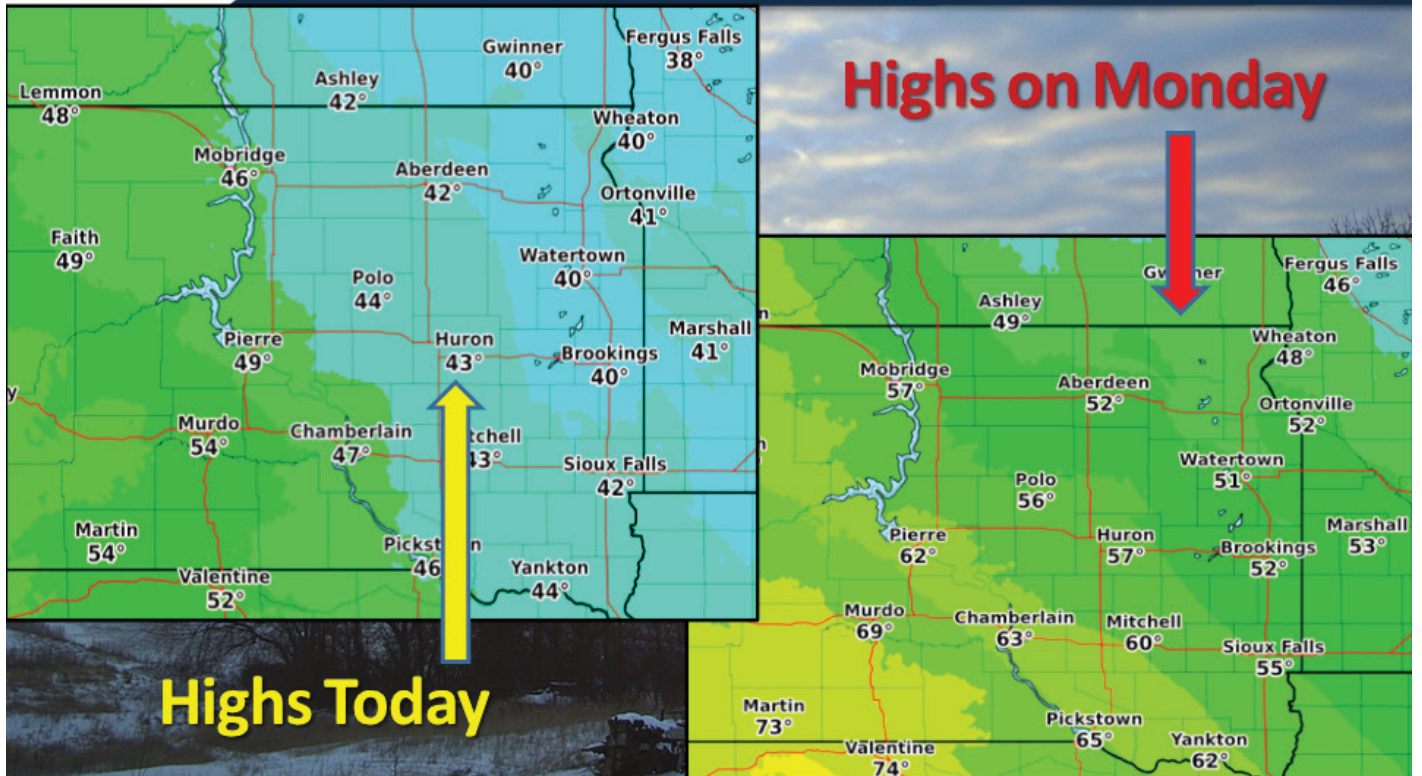
weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen



Published on: 03/20/2016 at 4:46AM

Warmer temperatures on the way. Highs today will range in the 40s for most locations. Warmer temperatures will be felt west of the Missouri River. Highs on Monday will climb into the upper 40s to the mid-60s. Dry conditions can be expected today through Monday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 37.3 at 3:41 PM

Low: 28.4 at 1:09 AM

High Gust: 21 at 5:52 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 76° in 1910

Record Low: -6 in 1965

Average High: 42°F

Average Low: 22°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.67

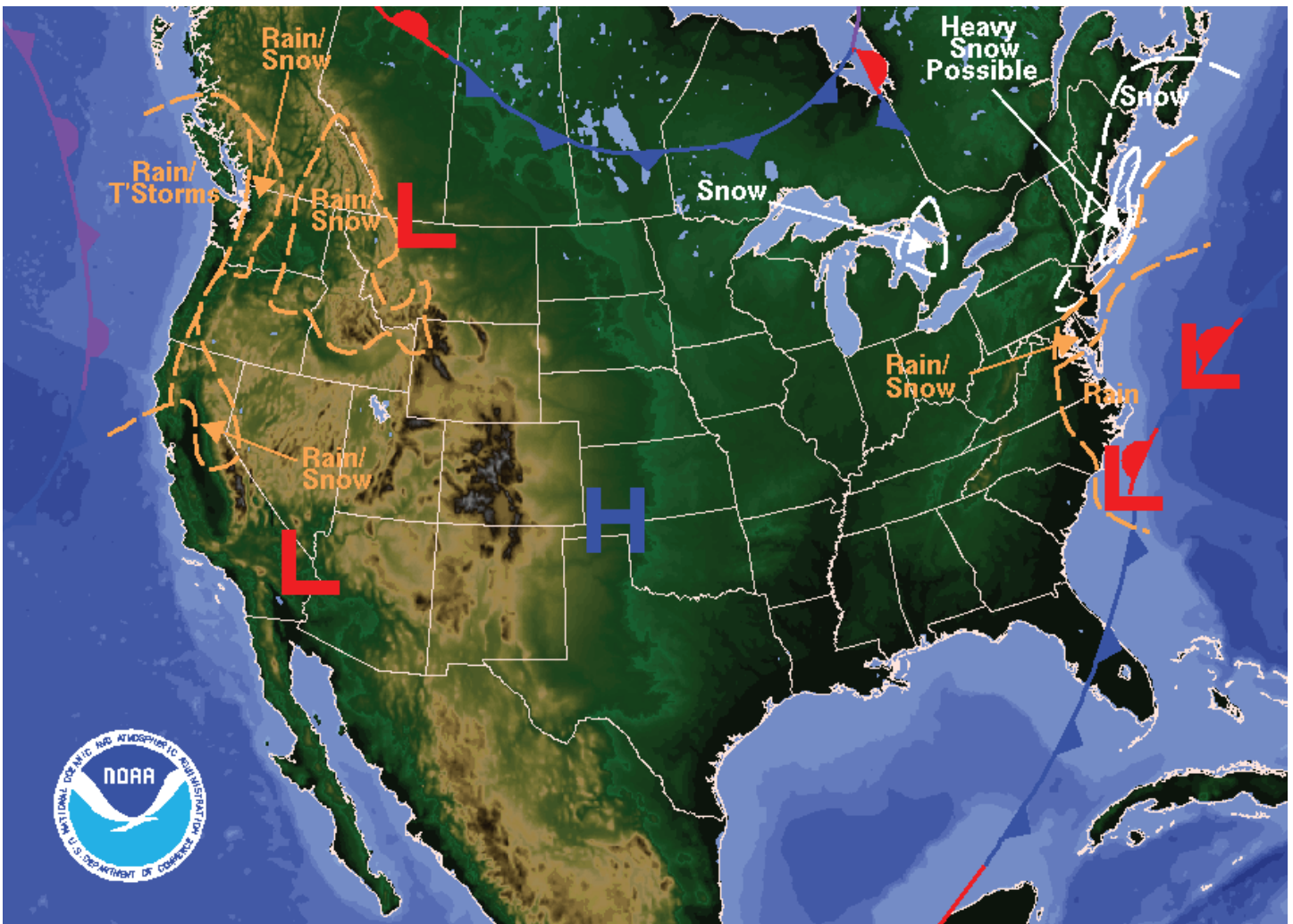
Precip to date in March.: 0.35

Average Precip to date: 1.69

Precip Year to Date: 0.95

Sunset Tonight: 7:46 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sun, Mar 20, 2016, issued 4:54 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Fanning based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



SHOWERS FOR THE GROOM

A young boy asked his father, "Dad, don't they ever give showers for the groom?"

"No, son," he replied. "There will be plenty of showers for him after his bride begins to reign!"

What an introduction to marriage and the family! It would seem as though the father was describing his life and disappointments.

All of us want our homes to be a little bit of heaven on earth. But there will always be the realities of life. Problems invade every home at the worst possible time and with great intensity. But God established the home and He would have it to be a harbor in the time of storms and a refuge in days of distress.

If parents would assume their rightful places and follow the teachings of His Word, how different things would be. If prayer was practiced, Scriptures read and worship at the heart of family life, the storms could be endured and the family strengthened.

If we want our homes to be what God wants them to be, we must pray: "Here's our family, live with us; here's our home, be the Lord of it."

Prayer: Father, living as a family is difficult at times. Help us to realize that in times of stress and strain we need You more than ever: in Your Name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Ephesians 5:20-30 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

No. 12 South Dakota State stuns fifth-seeded Miami 74-71

JANIE McCAULEY, AP Sports Writer

STANFORD, Calif. (AP) — Call it an ugly upset.

South Dakota State coach Aaron Johnston found plenty of positives as his team's stingy defense kept coming, which was a good thing considering all the missed free throws down the stretch and turnovers at all the wrong times.

Macy Miller and Gabby Boever combined for three free throws over the final 35.6 seconds to bail out their teammates' poor shooting late at the line, and No. 12 seed South Dakota State stunned fifth-seeded Miami 74-71 in the first round of the NCAA tournament Saturday.

"We had a bunch of people knocking down shots that were critical for us," Miller said.

Miller finished with 18 points, while Madison Guebert scored 19 points and matched an NCAA program-best with five 3-pointers as the Jackrabbits survived despite their second-half struggles handling the Hurricanes' trapping full-court press and 22 turnovers.

"Nobody knows how difficult that is to make free throws in those situations until you've actually been out there on the court with so much on the line. So much is internal pressure," Johnston said. "There were just too many other good things that happened for me to dwell on some of those things that didn't go our way."

Ellie Thompson hit a key 3-pointer with 3:58 remaining on the way to 14 points and South Dakota State (27-6) advanced to the second round for the first time since 2009, snapping a five-game losing streak in the NCAAs.

Adrienne Motley scored 19 points and freshman Laura Cornelius 18 for Miami (24-9) in her NCAA debut.

The Summit League tournament champion Jackrabbits will face No. 4 seed and host Stanford (25-7), an 85-58 winner against San Francisco late Saturday.

Cornelius made a long jumper — at first counted as a 3 — with 6:03 remaining to pull the 'Canes within 61-55 but was immediately called for a technical foul. Miller made the two free throws before Cornelius answered with another jumper at the 5:39 mark and Motley scored off a turnover moments later with Miami in its trap.

Cornelius drew a charge against Guebert on the other end, then hit a 3-pointer with 4:30 left. But Cornelius was whistled for her own offensive foul with 1:44 to play.

Both coaches knew the teams' contrasting styles would make for an interesting matchup, and both played stingy defense for much of the game.

Miami star Jessica Thomas was held to seven points on 3-for-15 shooting, missing all but one of her six 3-point tries.

Last March, Miami lost on Iowa's home floor with a berth in the Sweet 16 on the line and coach Katie Meier pulled Thomas back onto the Hawkeyes' home court to watch the opponent celebrate. That fueled the Hurricanes to go further this year.

With all but one of his 12 players from Minnesota or South Dakota, 16th-year Jackrabbits coach Aaron Johnston was able to keep his players just poised enough to hold on despite all the mistakes.

South Dakota State showed from the opening tip it could match Miami's hustle and energy on both ends. The Jackrabbits used an 11-1 run in the third to build a 48-40 lead as Miami missed its first 10 shots after halftime.

TOUGH TECHNICAL

Meier said Cornelius' technical was a result of celebrating what the guard from the Netherlands thought was a 3 by pumping her first twice.

"The referee felt it was in his direction," Meier said. "I'll take that technical. I love emotion, so I'll take it. Put it on me. I've got a freshman that's playing in her first NCAAs, she's from another country, she's

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having a blast. So that tech's on me."

TIP-INS

South Dakota State: Boever won her first NCAA game in five tries while Chloe Cornemann had been 0-3 in the NAAs before Saturday. ... The starting lineup used Saturday improved to 24-6. ... The Jackrabbits won their fifth straight game and 18th in 21.

Miami: G Michelle Woods became the first player in program history to play in four NCAA tournaments, tying Maria Brown for third place in total games played with 128. ... Motley's 3 in the opening period moved her into third place on Miami's career scoring list with her 1,407th point. ... Miami's home floor at BankUnited Center is 2,574 miles from Maples, for the longest trip by any women's team in the field this year — the second time in the program's last four NCAA berths the team has traveled cross-country. ... This was the Hurricanes' fifth NAAs in six years after making three in the previous 17.

UP NEXT

South Dakota State: Faces host Stanford on Monday.

Miami: Season's Over.

Warner finishes unbeaten season with state B title

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Tyler Rozell scored 21 points and the Warner Monarchs capped an unbeaten season with a 60-43 win over Irene-Wakonda to capture the South Dakota boys Class B basketball championship.

The Monarchs (26-0) shot 54 percent while holding the Eagles (20-5) to just 21 percent.

Rozell had four of the Monarchs' six 3-pointers. Michael Rogers had 14 points and 11 rebounds and Ethan Westby added 14 points.

Rozell also had six rebounds and five assists.

Warner held Irene-Wakonda to four points in the first quarter and took a 30-19 lead at half. The Eagles shot just 20 percent in the first two quarters.

Trey King scored 14 points and grabbed seven rebounds. He was 7-for-7 from the free throw line.

Tate Gale added 10 points.

Sioux Falls Christian wins state Class A boys championship

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls Christian raced out to a big lead and held on to beat St. Thomas More 56-49 Saturday in the championship game at the South Dakota boys Class A basketball tournament.

The Chargers (22-3) led 18-3 in the first quarter, and despite a slow rally by the Cavaliers (21-5), held on to win it all in their first appearance at state since 2002.

Sioux Falls Christian closed the year with 10 straight wins. It beat the Cavaliers 55-45 earlier this season.

St. Thomas More closed to within five points with 3:26 left but the Chargers pulled away down the stretch.

Chad Barkema led the way with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Keegan Van Egdom added three 3-pointers and 17 points.

The Chargers shot 47 percent and outrebounded the Cavaliers 32-19.

Jake Satter scored a team-high 18 points and Isaac Kortemeyer 11 for St. Thomas More.

Sioux Falls Lincoln defends state AA boys title

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Tommy Jensen scored 17 points as seventh-seeded Sioux Falls Lincoln defended its title with a 53-48 win over top-seeded Sioux Falls Washington Saturday at the South Dakota boys Class AA basketball tournament.

The Patriots (13-13) avenged a nine-point loss to the Warriors (19-5) in the district title game.

Jensen was 6-for-11 from the field and the Patriots shot 49 percent. Carson Coulter added 15 points.

Washington closed within two late but the Patriots put it away at the line where they made 14 of 22 shots.

Logan Uttecht was Washington's only player in double figures with 10 points.

Lincoln took an 18-15 halftime lead despite shooting just 35 percent from the field.

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Aberdeen Central beats SF Washington for 1st state AA title

The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Aberdeen Central used a balanced attack and a late fourth-quarter run to beat Sioux Fall Washington 75-64 Saturday for its first South Dakota girls Class AA basketball title.

Leading by one with 2:58 to play, the Golden Eagles (24-1) went on an 11-1 run to put the game out of reach.

Brianna Kusler was 14-for-14 from the free throw line and finished with 23 points, eight rebounds and five assists. Paiton Burckhardt added 18 points and seven rebounds and Cortez Standing Bear had 12 points and seven assists.

Aberdeen Central was 26-for-31 from the line, while Washington was 8-for-17.

The Warriors (22-3) countered with an offense consisting mostly of Anna Goodhope, who had 28 points. Goodhope had five 3-pointers and made 10 of 20 shots from the floor.

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

State AA Tournament

Seventh Place: Aberdeen Central 87, Rapid City Central 81

Fifth Place: Sioux Falls O'Gorman 52, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 46

Third Place: Rapid City Stevens 51, Pierre 31

First Place: Sioux Falls Lincoln 53, Sioux Falls Washington 48

State A Tournament

Seventh Place: Aberdeen Roncalli 50, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 49

Fifth Place: Sioux Valley 56, Winner 46

Third Place: Dakota Valley 61, Chamberlain 59

First Place: Sioux Falls Christian 56, St. Thomas More 49

State B Tournament

Seventh Place: DeSmet 44, Harding County 40

Fifth Place: Corsica/Stickney 72, White River 57

Third Place: Potter County 63, Chester Area 48

First Place: Warner 60, Irene-Wakonda 43

GIRLS BASKETBALL

State AA Tournament

Seventh Place: Sioux Falls Roosevelt 43, Mitchell 25

Fifth Place: Rapid City Stevens 58, Rapid City Central 57

Third Place: Sioux Falls O'Gorman 51, Harrisburg 39

Championship: Aberdeen Central 75, Sioux Falls Washington 64

Woman injured in Sioux Falls apartment shooting

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say a bullet went through an apartment window, injuring a 47-year-old woman who lived in the residence.

Police say the woman suffered minor injuries in the shooting that occurred about 11:30 p.m. on Friday.

Police say at least two people were seen fleeing the area after the shooting.

Police say the investigation is continuing.

Anyone with information is asked to contact authorities.

Trump's immigration stance resonates at tense rallies

RYANVANVELZER, Associated Press

JACQUES BILLEAUD, Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Donald Trump's campaign in Arizona is centered on his hard line against illegal immigration, a stand that supporters embraced in a series of tense rallies ahead of Tuesday's presidential primary in the border state.

"Illegal immigration is gonna stop," Trump said Saturday night in Tucson. "It's dangerous," he said. "Terrible."

Both in Phoenix and Tucson, Trump was introduced by former Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer, who pushed tough immigration laws in office, and Joe Arpaio, the Maricopa County sheriff who made his name by chasing down people who are in the country illegally. The county includes Phoenix and nearly two-thirds of Arizona's population.

Protesters showed up at every event. In Phoenix, they blocked the main road into his outdoor rally for several hours before it started. In Tucson, they interrupted him and some were tossed from the event.

Trump treated the latest protests with a mix of pacifist rhetoric and a mocking tone. "We love our protesters, don't we?" he asked. As security removed one or more, he said: "We want to do it with love," then added bitingly, "Get 'em outta here."

In Tucson, one protester carried a sign with an image of a Confederate flag over an image of Trump; another wore a Ku Klux Klan-style sheet. A man in the crowd attacked the protester with the Confederate sign, kicking and punching him before being arrested. The protesters were led out by security.

As the rally attendees later streamed out of the Trump rally, protesters hurled two water bottles at them and called them racists.

Arizona Democrats also vote on Tuesday, and contender Bernie Sanders campaigned Saturday at the U.S.-Mexico border in Nogales.

Standing in front of a tall, steel fence that divides the two countries, the Vermont senator promised to keep immigrant families together by taking more steps than President Barack Obama has done to protect many from deportation. Sanders called Arpaio a bully and he bemoaned the "divisive, bigoted and xenophobic comments of people like Donald Trump."

His opponent, front-runner Hillary Clinton, planned rallies in Arizona on Monday.

Tempers flared at Trump's large gathering in Phoenix, but without the violence that marred his event in Chicago a week before.

For hours, about two dozen protesters parked their cars in the middle of the main road to the event, unfurling banners reading "Dump Trump" and "Must Stop Trump," and chanting "Trump is hate." Traffic was backed up for miles, with drivers honking in fury.

The road was eventually cleared and protesters marched down the highway to the rally site, weaving between Trump supporters who booed and jeered them.

Trump supporter Geroy Morgan, 62, made it to the rally but was furious at the demonstrators, some of whom still stood around after the event ended.

"We come here, the silent majority, to express our opinions," Morgan said. "They don't have any permits or rights."

David Nelson, 62, had to walk about four miles to the rally because demonstrators had blocked the road. "You don't see me at Bernie's disrupting their crowd," he said, referring to Sanders. "I give them respect."

Facebook's Zuckerberg meets with China's propaganda chief

LOUISE WATT, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg held a rare meeting with China's propaganda chief, at a time when Chinese authorities are tightening control over their cyberspace.

Liu Yunshan told Zuckerberg in their meeting Saturday that he hopes Facebook can share its experience with Chinese companies to help "Internet development better benefit the people of all countries," China's

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official Xinhua News Agency reported. Zuckerberg was in Beijing to attend an economic forum.

China has called for the creation of a global Internet "governance system" and cooperation between countries to regulate Internet use, stepping up efforts to promote controls that activists complain stifle free expression.

Facebook and other Western social media, including Twitter, are banned in China. Zuckerberg has long been courting China's leaders in a so far futile attempt to access the country with the world's largest number of Internet users — 668 million as of last year.

China has been increasing control over its Internet, dubbed the Great Firewall because it is already heavily censored. Liu, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, the ruling Communist Party's top leadership panel, recently said that all Internet users must not cross the "baseline" when discussing China's governance.

Chinese censors have introduced a slate of new regulations to better enable them to police digital and social media as closely as traditional publications. The country's top Internet regulator has repeatedly warned that an untamed cyberspace would pose a risk to domestic security, and that the government should decide who to allow into "its house."

IS suffers blows in Iraq, Syria but still launches attacks

SUSANNAH GEORGE, Associated Press

BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — After months of losing ground in Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State group is showing signs of wear and tear, and its opponents say they have seen an increase in desertions among the extremists. But the jihadis appear to be lashing back with more terrorist and chemical attacks.

Under a stepped-up campaign of U.S.-led and Russian airstrikes, as well as ground assaults by multiple forces in each country, the jihadis are estimated to have lost about 40 percent of their territory in Iraq and more than 20 percent in Syria. At their highest point in the summer of 2014, the group had overrun nearly a third of each country, declaring a "caliphate" spanning from northwestern Syria to the outskirts of Baghdad.

At that time, the extremists were riding high, known for their courage, experience, readiness to die and brutality. Now, those battling them on the ground say they appear to be flagging.

"What we are witnessing is that Daesh are not as determined as they used to be," Lt. Col. Fares al-Bayoush, commander of a Syrian rebel faction, said, using an Arabic acronym to refer to IS. His 1,300-strong Fursan al-Haq Brigade has been fighting against IS and Syrian government forces for more than a year.

"Now there are members who surrender, there are some who defect. In the past they used to come blow themselves up," he said.

A Palestinian-American member of IS recently gave himself up to Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, but so far, the reports of desertions are mostly anecdotal. Brett McGurk, President Barack Obama's envoy to the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS, said this week at a conference in northern Iraq that IS desertions have increased recently and more are expected, but he did not provide figures.

Clint Watts, a fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said IS is experiencing a phenomenon he's witnessed in other extremist groups that begin to lose territory.

"You've seen more and more reports of defectors just broadly, and you've also seen more reports of internal killings of so-called spies," Watts said. "As they lose ground and retract you start to see these fractures emerge in the organization."

The IS setbacks began over a year ago, when the fighters were forced out of the northern Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani by local Kurdish forces backed by U.S.-led airstrikes.

In December, the predominantly Kurdish U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, under cover of intense coalition airstrikes seized the Tishrin Dam, which supplies much of northern Syria with electricity. In the weeks that followed the forces gained control of more areas.

In all of 2015, the jihadis lost 14 percent of their territory in Syria, according to IHS, an analysis group

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that monitors the conflict. In the past three months, they lost another eight percent, a sign that the erosion is accelerating. The IHS figure roughly matches an estimate of a 20 percent loss given this week by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

In February alone, the SDF said it captured 2,400 square kilometers (927 square miles) consisting of 315 villages including the IS stronghold of Shaddadeh, on the main road linking the Iraqi city of Mosul and the Syrian city of Raqqa, the de facto capital of the "caliphate." SDF spokesman Col. Talal Sillo said the command will meet soon to plan for another offensive in northern Syria.

In Iraq, IS territorial losses have been more gradual. Coalition airstrikes have cleared the way for ground forces to reclaim towns and cities from Sinjar in the country's north to Ramadi in the west. The coalition estimates that between the launch of the air campaign in August 2014 and January 2016, IS has lost between 21,000-24,000 square kilometers (8,100-9,200 square miles), about 40% of the Iraqi territory it once held.

Calls for a stepped-up campaign intensified after IS claimed responsibility for the Nov. 13 Paris attacks that left 130 dead and the Oct. 31 downing of a Russian jetliner from the Egyptian beach resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, which killed all 224 on board.

Deadly attacks in Turkey by IS that killed scores of people also spurred Ankara to tighten its closure of the border, making it difficult for the extremists to cross into Syria.

In an effort to squeeze the group's finances, coalition and Russian warplanes in Syria began increasingly targeting IS oil assets in November. IS has since had to cut salaries and benefits for fighters.

Last week, Iraqi, Syrian and U.S. officials confirmed that prominent IS military leader Omar al-Shishani died of his wounds from a U.S. airstrike in northeastern Syria earlier this month. U.S. special forces also recently captured the head of the IS unit researching chemical weapons in Iraq, and airstrikes have targeted the group's chemical weapons infrastructure.

"As bad things start to happen, the less motivated, less disciplined, less radical elements of the force break and run," U.S. Army Col. Steve Warren said. "We're going to keep seeing this."

The United States estimates that as of last month, IS fields 19,000 to 25,000 fighters in Iraq and Syria — down from an estimated 20,000 to 31,500 — a number that was based on intelligence reports from May to August 2014. A U.S. official said the decrease reflects the combined effects of battlefield deaths, desertions, internal disciplinary actions, recruiting shortfalls and difficulties that foreign fighters face traveling to Syria.

Still, these developments do not necessarily make IS less of a threat.

In both Syria and Iraq, IS has launched some of its deadliest suicide attacks in recent weeks as well as a number of chemical weapons attacks. On Feb. 22, a triple suicide bombing in a Shiite suburb of the Syrian capital killed at least 83 people and wounded more than a hundred. In neighboring Iraq, a suicide truck bombing south of Baghdad killed 61 and wounded 95. In the northern Iraqi town of Taza, an IS chemical weapons attack last week killed one person and wounded more than 600.

IS also launched a coordinated assault on the northern Syrian border town of Tal Abyad and nearby villages. In days of fighting, 47 SDF fighters and 140 militants were killed, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition activist group that tracks all sides of the conflict.

Watts said that if IS can't use battlefield victories to rally its supporters, it will turn to terrorist attacks.

"In terms of being a conventional army that can take territory, they are less dangerous," Watts said. "But if your worry is regional and international terrorism they're going to be more dangerous."

Exiled Tibetans vote for government shunned by China

ASHWINI BHATIA, Associated Press

DHARMSALA, India (AP) — The prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile called Sunday for China to engage in dialogue on autonomy for his people's homeland, as tens of thousands of Tibetans around the world voted for new leaders of a government that Beijing does not recognize.

Buddhist monks in crimson robes lined up along with hundreds of Tibetan men and women in schools, government buildings and the courtyard of the Tsuglakhang Temple in India's northern city of Dharamsala, where the exiled government is based, to cast their votes for prime minister and parliament.

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They started to line up early Sunday, carrying their "Green Books" — passport-size booklets that record their paid taxes and are mandatory for Tibetans to be eligible to vote.

The voters stood patiently, at times for more than an hour, as they waited for their turn to mark their choices on ballot papers printed with the images of the two prime minister candidates. Elderly Tibetans carrying walking sticks and rosaries were assisted by government officials in voting.

The ballot boxes were fashioned out of painted tin boxes with hinged lids. Separate boxes were marked in Tibetan for the election of the prime minister and for parliament.

It was the second election since the Dalai Lama stepped down as head of the government-in-exile in 2011 to focus on his role as the Tibetans' spiritual leader. Some 80,000 voters were registered, and results are expected next month.

Lobsang Sangay, the incumbent prime minister, arrived with his young daughter to cast his vote at a polling booth in a government building.

"The dialogue (with China) will be the main initiative," Lobsang, who is running for re-election against parliamentary speaker Penpa Tsering, told reporters.

"I hope Chinese President Xi Jinping in his second term in 2017 will look at the Tibetan issue and take the initiative" to hold talks with Tibetan exiles, he said.

Lobsang added, however, that the reality on the ground "is repression."

China says Tibet has historically been part of its territory since the mid-13th century, and the Communist Party has governed the Himalayan region since 1951. But many Tibetans say that they were effectively independent for most of their history, and that the Chinese government wants to exploit their resource-rich region while crushing their cultural identity.

The Dalai Lama and his followers have been living in exile in Dharmshala since they fled Tibet after a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule.

China doesn't recognize the Tibetan government-in-exile, and hasn't held any dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama since 2010.

"We never recognize this so-called government-in-exile," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a regular news conference Thursday in Beijing. "We hope that all countries in this world, especially those that want to maintain friendly relations with China, will not provide facilities or venues for any anti-China, separatist activities by the so-called Tibet independence forces."

Both prime minister candidates support the "middle way" approach advocated by the Dalai Lama, which calls for seeking regional autonomy under Chinese rule.

Some Tibetan groups advocate independence for Tibet, since little progress has been made in dialogue with China. But their representatives couldn't win enough support in the first round of voting last year to be in the running for the prime minister's post.

"There has been little discussion about the future of Tibet," said Bhuchung D. Sonam, a Tibetan writer. "For example, how the two candidates would approach the issue of Tibet in terms of talking to China."

Lobsang said he wants India's government to recognize Tibet as a core issue of its policy. New Delhi considers Tibet as part of China, though it is hosting the Tibetan exiles.

He said that Tibet has become more of an issue for India, and mentioned New Delhi's concerns over the falling water levels of the Brahmaputra River, which flows from Tibet into India, as well as plans for a railway link.

"In that sense, I think Tibet is becoming an important issue not just simply for human rights, but also from a geopolitical point of view, an environment point of view and from a climate change point of view," he said.

Exiled Tibetan officials say at least 114 monks and laypeople have set themselves on fire to protest Chinese rule over their homeland in the past five years, with most of them dying. U.S. government-backed Radio Free Asia puts the number of self-immolations at 144 since 2009.

Beijing blames the Dalai Lama and others for inciting the immolations and says it has made vast investments to develop Tibet's economy and improve quality of life.

Home of relative of Palestinian arson victims set ablaze

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian home near the site of an arson attack that killed three Palestinians last year caught fire early Sunday, Israeli and Palestinian officials said, with immediate suspicion falling on Jewish extremists.

Police spokeswoman Luba Samri said an investigation was underway into the fire in the West Bank village of Duma. Palestinian officials say attackers broke the bedroom window of Ibrahim Dawabsheh's home and set the house on fire. Dawabsheh and his wife escaped. He was unharmed but his wife suffered light smoke inhalation.

Dawabsheh, a relative of last year's victims, is a key witness to the attack that killed them and is currently testifying before an Israeli court in the trial of two Jewish extremists.

Last July, suspected Jewish settlers hurled firebombs into a home, killing 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh. His mother, Riham, and father, Saad, later died of their wounds. Ali's 4-year-old brother Ahmad survived.

The deadly July 31 firebombing was condemned across the Israeli political spectrum, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged "zero tolerance" in the fight to bring the assailants to justice. Investigators placed several suspects under "administrative detention," a measure typically reserved for alleged Palestinian militants that allows authorities to hold suspects for months without charge.

But as the investigation dragged on for months, Palestinians complained of a double-standard, where suspected Palestinian militants are quickly rounded up and prosecuted under a military legal system that gives them few rights, while Jewish Israelis are protected by the country's criminal laws.

Amiram Ben-Uliel, a 21-year-old West Bank settler, has been charged with murder. He and other alleged accomplices are part of a movement known as the "hilltop youth," a leaderless group of young people who set up unauthorized outposts, usually clusters of trailers, on West Bank hilltops — land the Palestinians claim for their hoped-for state.

The group has been accused of carrying out so-called "price tag" attacks in which they vandalized Palestinian property, as well as mosques, churches, the offices of dovish Israeli groups and even Israeli military bases to exact a cost for Israeli steps seen as favoring the Palestinians.

Mudslide buries 8 students in northern Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani officials say a mudslide buried eight teenage students returning home after exams in the country's north, which has seen heavy rains in recent days.

The spokesman for the local disaster management authority, Latifur Rehman, said Sunday the incident occurred in Susam village, near the Afghan border, the previous day.

Rehman says the district administration is working with the army, police and paramilitary forces to recover the bodies of the eight students, who are presumed dead. Two bodies have been recovered so far.

More than a week of heavy rain has caused mudslides and the collapse of homes and other structures across northern Pakistan. The disaster management authority says at least 43 people have died in such incidents since March 9.

Russian rescue teams comb debris-laden plane crash site

MOSCOW (AP) — Emergency workers are still combing the debris-laden runway of an airport in southern Russia where a plane carrying 62 people crashed before dawn on Saturday.

FlyDubai's Boeing 737-800 traveling from Dubai nosedived and exploded in a giant fireball after trying to land for a second time in strong winds in the city of Rostov-on-Don. FlyDubai confirmed there were no survivors and said four children were among those killed.

The Rostov-on-Don airport remained closed Sunday morning while rescue workers finished examining the area. Russia's transport minister said he expected the airport to stay closed until early Monday. The explosion left a crater in the airport runway that needs to be repaired.

Russian news agencies say the plane's two black boxes have been recovered and taken to Moscow for examination.

Eyeing new future with US, Cubans await visit by Obama

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

JULIE PACE, Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Eyeing a new future with the U.S., Cubans are preparing their famed capital for a long-awaited visit by President Barack Obama, who will make history when Air Force One touches down in Havana.

Obama's visit to the tiny island nation beginning Sunday will serve as a powerful symbol of the relationship that the U.S. and Cuba are now forging. For Obama, the 2½-day trip offers one of the last, best chances to advance the diplomatic opening with President Raul Castro before Obama leaves office early next year.

Ahead of Obama's arrival, American flags were raised in parts of Havana alongside Cuban flags, an improbable image for those who lived through a half-century in which the U.S. and Cuba were bitter foes. Cubans were hard at work cleaning up Old Havana and giving buildings a fresh coat of paint, as the city buzzed in anticipation of Obama's visit.

Yet while Obama remains a popular figure in Cuba, the jubilation that surged here in the early days of detente has been tempered by the absence of tangible improvement in most people's lives. In a reminder of how tightly Cuban society is still controlled, the Castro government announced a virtual shutdown of Havana during Obama's stay, and few Cubans expected to see him in person.

"I don't think things are going to improve here," said Rosa Lopez, 52-year-old food stand worker. Gesturing at her worn-out sandals and soft drinks for sale, she added, "All this is here, in this country, and the United States is way over there."

Still, the historic significance of Obama's visit was impossible to overlook. Not in nearly 90 years has a sitting American president visited Cuba.

Joined by his wife and daughters, Obama will stroll the streets of Old Havana and meet with Castro in his presidential offices. He'll join baseball-crazed Cubans for a historic game between their beloved national team and Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Rays.

Obama will be closely watched for signs of how aggressively he's pushing Cuba's communist leaders on the very issues that led the U.S. to isolate Cuba for the last half-century: human rights, democracy and economic reform. Though Cuban officials have warned Obama against meddling, the White House insists he'll use his visit to speak directly to Cubans about possibilities for a different future.

To that end, Obama will meet with dissidents critical of Castro's government. Aiming to show that Obama was traveling on his terms, the White House emphasized that Obama — not Cuba's government — was deciding which dissidents would attend.

At home, Obama has faced intense criticism from some Cuban-Americans who see his outreach as a disgraceful embrace of a government whose practices and values betray much of what America stands for. That's increasingly a minority view among both Cuban-Americans and the broader U.S. population.

Ahead of his trip, Obama further lifted restrictions on Cuba, easing travel restrictions for Americans and restoring Cuba's access to the global financial system. Cuba, meanwhile, announced plans to lift a 10 percent conversion fee on U.S. dollars. And on Saturday, U.S. hotel chain Starwood signed a deal to renovate and run three Cuban hotels, returning American hotels to the island more than 50 years after Fidel Castro's socialist revolution.

The White House also released a video of Obama bantering with Cuba's most famous comedian, in a direct appeal to Cuban humor and pop culture. Luis Silva plays the elderly fellow Panfilo in a wildly popular show that often uses biting humor to comment on social reality and the government's shortcomings.

Yet supporters of warmer ties are concerned that as American travel to Cuba increases, the U.S. trade embargo that Congress has refused to lift will force American businesses to cede opportunities to competitors overseas.

"If we don't lift the embargo, we're going to be sleeping in European hotels and eating Chinese food," Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., one of dozens of lawmakers traveling with Obama, said in an interview.

Illustrating the tensions surrounding the visit, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez rebuked Obama ahead of the trip for suggesting that he would use the visit to promote change. Invoking the 1959 revolu-

tion, Rodriguez said Cubans had already “empowered themselves decades ago.”

Two years after taking power in 2008, Raul Castro launched economic and social reforms that appear slow-moving but are lasting and widespread. Hundreds of thousands now work in the private sector and enjoy relaxed limits on cellphones and Internet. Yet the Cuban government has been unyielding on making changes to its single-party political system and to strict limits on media, public speech, assembly and dissent.

While in Havana, Obama will attend a state dinner, honor a Cuban independence hero and meet with local entrepreneurs. His televised speech at the Grand Theater of Havana will lay out a vision of greater freedoms and economic opportunity, White House aides said.

Steps Obama has taken to ease US restrictions on Cuba

The Associated Press

President Barack Obama aims to use his historic trip to Cuba starting Sunday to further his bid to restore ties after a half-century of acrimony. Though his visit will be one of the most visible symbols of the new approach, Obama has been rolling back restrictions on Cuba, punching hole after hole in the U.S. trade embargo.

What the Obama administration has done to increase engagement with Cuba:

- Loosened travel restrictions to allow Americans to go independently on educational, “people-to-people” trips instead of in organized groups. A formal tourism ban remains.
- Eliminated a ban on Cuban financial transactions going through U.S. banks, which effectively had cut off Cuba from the global banking system.
- Allowed Cuban citizens to open U.S. bank accounts and use them to send remittances back home.
- Removed Cuba from the U.S. list of countries with inadequate port security, making it easier for ships to travel between the two countries.
- Approved “general licenses” for U.S. travel to Cuba, meaning Americans traveling for certain authorized reasons don’t have to apply for permission in advance.
- Started restoring direct mail service. The first flight left the U.S. just before Obama’s trip as part of a pilot project.
- Authorized some U.S. cruise lines to sail to Cuba. They’re waiting for Cuban approval.
- Approved the first ferry service between the U.S. and Cuba
- Struck an agreement to restore commercial flights. The Transportation Department will soon award the first flight routes.
- Authorized exports of badly needed goods ranging from construction materials to tractor parts, though no such trade has begun.
- Approved the first U.S. factory in Cuba since the 1959 revolution. The assembly plant will build small tractors.
- Allowed Cuban citizens to start earning salaries in the United States without having to start the immigration process, as long as they don’t pay special taxes in Cuba.
- Reopened the U.S. Embassy in Havana. Cuba also reopened its embassy in Washington.
- Released three Cubans jailed in the U.S. Cuba released American Alan Gross at the same time.
- Sat down with Cuban President Raul Castro in Panama in the first face-to-face meeting between a U.S. and Cuban leader in decades.
- Started high-level exchanges and visits between U.S. and Cuban officials.
- Increased the amount people in the U.S. can send Cubans from \$500 to \$2,000 every three months. Earlier, Obama removed a \$1,200 annual cap on remittances.
- Permitted American travelers to return with up to \$400 of merchandise, including tobacco and alcohol products worth no more than \$100 combined.
- Removed Cuba from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism.
- Authorized the commercial export of some communications and Internet devices including software,

hardware and services.

—Urged Congress repeatedly but unsuccessfully to lift the U.S. trade embargo.

—Allowed unlimited family visits by Cuban-Americans, before the U.S. and Cuba announced plans to normalize relations.

Chinese planner promises foreign companies access to markets

JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's top planner tried to reassure foreign companies they are welcome in its slowing, state-dominated economy in a speech Sunday aimed at dispelling growing anxiety Beijing is squeezing them out of promising industries.

Speaking to an audience that included executives of top global companies at a government-organized conference, Xu Shaoshi pledged to "promote two-way opening up and liberalization."

Xu promised foreign companies equal treatment with local enterprises as Beijing carries out a sweeping overhaul aimed at promoting self-sustaining growth based on domestic consumption and making state companies that dominate a range of industries more competitive and efficient.

"We are ready to share these growth opportunities with you," said Xu, chairman of the Cabinet's National Reform and Development Commission.

The China Development Forum 2016 is being closely watched by global companies because it comes at the start of the ruling Communist Party's latest five-year development plan that runs through 2020. Executives are eager to learn details of how the party might carry out pledges to make the economy more competitive, open more industries to private and possibly foreign competitors and to shrink bloated, money-losing industries including coal, steel and cement.

The guest list for the weekend conference at a government guesthouse in the Chinese capital included executives of U.S., European and Asian banks, manufacturers, Internet and other companies.

The ruling party's plan promises to give the private sector a bigger economic role, but business groups say regulators are trying to shield Chinese rivals from competition or compel foreign companies to hand over technology in exchange for market access.

Business groups say Beijing has yet to carry out most of the reforms promised in a separate 2013 plan that called for giving market forces a "decisive role" in the economy. They point to limits on foreign ownership in an array of industries and say in some areas such as information security technology for banks regulators are reducing or blocking market access.

"The big question is whether foreign companies will be able to access that growth," John Frisbie, president of the U.S.-China Business Council, said in an interview last week.

Companies are getting "mixed signals" from Chinese regulators, said Frisbie. "That uncertainty is weakening business confidence."

Meanwhile, Chinese leaders also are trying to restore faith in their ability as economic managers following a stock market collapse and currency turmoil. Senior officials including Premier Li Keqiang have spent the past month making an unusually prominent series of statements that the economy is on track and trying to dispel fears Beijing might weaken its yuan to boost exports.

On Sunday, Xu announced no new initiatives but promised to make "markets more open, more efficient and more sustainable."

Xu promised to reduce "regional and industrial monopolies," a reference to repeated promises to cut back the dominance of state companies in industries including banking, energy and telecoms that reform advocates complain are a drag on the economy.

Reform advocates complain the ruling party is dragging its feet on carrying out promises to open more industries to private competition. The party has given itself until 2018 to show the first results from its overhaul of state industry but reformers say with growth falling steadily, they need to act faster.

Last year's economic growth fell to a 25-year low of 6.9 percent and forecasters including the International Monetary Fund say it will decline further. This year's official target is 6.5 to 7 percent, but the IMF and others say it is more likely to fall as low as 6.3 percent.

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Beijing wants to promote “new growth drivers” and encourage “mass innovation” in areas such as clean energy, medical technology and artificial intelligence, Xu said. He promised to “lower the threshold” for entrepreneurs to get into promising new fields.

China punishes ‘Ip Man 3’ distributor for box office fraud

LOUISE WATT, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China’s film authorities have suspended the license of a distributor that inflated box office figures for Hong Kong martial arts movie “Ip Man 3,” according to state media.

The third instalment of the franchise starring Donnie Yen opened in mainland China on March 4 and soon attracted allegations of fraud after it reportedly earned more than 500 million yuan (\$77 million) in just four days.

The movie’s distributor, Dayinmu, which is also known as Beijing Max Screen, admitted to having bought 56 million yuan’s (\$9 million’s) worth of tickets, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Saturday.

“The conspirators fabricated more than 7,600 screenings of the film that they claimed generated 32 million yuan (\$5 million) in ticket sales,” Xinhua added. It cited China’s film bureau under the broadcasting regulator.

“These kinds of issues could be considered inevitable in a young industry, but box office fraud has become so serious that it is already harming Chinese cinema,” Zhang Hongsen, head of the film bureau, was quoted as saying.

The bureau ordered the company to suspend distribution for a month while it “rectifies all malpractices” and gave formal warnings to three electronic ticket-selling groups involved in the fraud, as well as 73 cinemas, Xinhua said.

No phone number was listed for Dayinmu, and it had no immediate statement on its official microblog.

Chinese cinemas and distributors have been accused of faking ticket sales in the past, for example by buying up tickets or counting some of the earnings of one film as those of another. While a distributor will have to fork out money to buy thousands of cinema tickets, the bulk-buying may boost the movie’s profile enough to become a talking-point and attract a bigger audience.

The producers of China’s briefly highest-grossing movie, a live action and animated fantasy “Monster Hunt,” admitted last year to buying tickets worth 40 million yuan (\$6 million), which it said was for free screenings for senior citizens and others.

After the release of “Ip Man 3,” which also stars former boxer Mike Tyson, state media reports soon alleged that its distributor had bought discount tickets in bulk from various cinema chains, who then scheduled “ghost screenings” after midnight at expensive rates.

China’s film market has grown fast in recent years to become the world’s second largest, after the United States.

Dozens of cinemas received punishments including warnings, removal of funding and suspensions for box office fraud last year, Xinhua said.

In January, the regulator, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television said it was developing an app to help movie goers report fake tickets as part of a crackdown against box office fraud.

2 migrants found dead on Greek island

PETROS GIANNAKOURIS, Associated Press

MYTILENE, Greece (AP) — Two migrants have been found dead on a boat that arrived on the Greek island of Lesbos, on the first day of the implementation of an agreement between the EU and Turkey on handling the new arrivals.

Medical personnel performed CPR on the two men but failed to revive them.

The overcrowded boat was carrying dozens of migrants from nearby Turkey on Sunday, the first day for

the implementation of the migration agreement between the EU and Turkey. It stipulates how the new arrivals from Turkey will be processed and returned.

Some 2,500 migrants currently on Lesbos and other islands are being taken to mainland Greece where they are placed in shelters before EU-wide relocation.

Affleck says Batman-fan son too young to see new film

LINDSEY BAHR, AP Film Writer

BURBANK, Calif. (AP) — Ben Affleck might be Batman to his 4-year-old fan-boy son, Samuel, but that doesn't mean he'll get to see his dad in action in "Batman v Superman" with the rest of the world when it hits theaters next week.

"Four years old is a little young to see this whole movie," Affleck said in a Friday interview. "I don't want him to have nightmares."

Affleck has often said he partly took on the role for his three kids — his son in particular. And from dressing up as the dark knight for Samuel's themed birthday party to tipping the FedEx delivery guy a few bucks to stage a fake fight just because Samuel believes that he's the Joker, it's a part that hasn't gone away for Affleck when the cameras stop rolling, especially with the starry-eyed youngster around.

Samuel has seen his dad in trailers for the film and whatever footage is available online, though, and, according to Affleck, those two-minute clips are basically "his whole attention span anyway."

Affleck said at the very least, his oldest daughter, Violet, 10, can see the PG-13 rated film. In addition to Violet and Samuel, Affleck and Jennifer Garner also have a 7-year-old daughter, Seraphina. The couple separated last year after 10 years of marriage.

As for Samuel, Affleck said he'll be able to see some of "Batman v Superman" soon, even if it's chopped up.

"I'll have to con one of the editors into giving me a truncated version of the movie without some of the scarier stuff," he said.

Sanders visits US-Mexico border, talks immigration reform

ASTRID GALVAN, Associated Press

NOGALES, Ariz. (AP) — Standing in front of the tall, steel fence that divides the United States and Mexico, presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders on Saturday vowed to keep immigrant families together during a visit to Arizona, which holds its primary next week.

Sanders was accompanied by Santa Cruz County Sheriff Tony Estrada and U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva. He started the day walking along a small street next to the Nogales-Morley Gate Port of Entry, where he spoke with two young immigrants about their struggles to obtain legal status in the United States.

A small group of people who identified themselves as deported U.S. military veterans stood on the Mexican side of the border fence cheering for Sanders. A lone man protested Sanders and followed his group around to several locations.

Standing in front of the fence that divides the two countries, Sanders accused Republican front-runner Donald Trump, who was also campaigning in Arizona Saturday, of using harmful rhetoric.

"I would hope that all of us are rightly appalled by the divisive, bigoted and xenophobic comments of people like Donald Trump," Sanders said.

Sanders vowed to expand two programs spearheaded by President Barack Obama which aim to protect immigrants from deportation. One, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, benefits youths who were brought to the country illegally as children. The other, Deferred Action for Parents of Americans, would benefit parents whose children are U.S. citizens. The latter has not taken effect and is being argued in court.

Sanders said he would fight to keep families together.

"I am shocked by the fear and shocked by the sadness that grips so many of them," Sanders said.

The Vermont senator has focused his campaign almost exclusively on Arizona in the past week as he looks to rebound from his resounding defeat last week to Clinton. He drew a crowd of about 7,000

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people in Tucson and followed that up with a visit to the Navajo Nation in what marks a rare visit by a White House candidate to the nation's largest Indian reservation. His pursuit of the Native American vote included a visit by his wife to a sacred Apache site near the site of a proposed copper mine that Sanders and tribes strenuously oppose.

Late Saturday he held his fourth Arizona rally in the past five days, this time just outside of downtown Phoenix. Sanders is hoping for a win in Tuesday's Arizona primary to propel him through the next month when several states more favorable for him are due to vote. "Please, on Tuesday, make sure that you, your friends, your family come out to vote," he told the crowd. "Let us see Arizona help lead a political revolution."

He has also sought the Latino vote in Arizona, aggressively challenging Arizona's contentious Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who has endorsed Trump, in a speech for his harsh immigration tactics.

"It's easy for bullies like Sheriff Arpaio to pick on people who have no power," Sanders said. "If I am elected president — the president of the United States does have power. So watch out, Joe."

Clinton is making her own last-minute push to win Arizona. Former President Bill Clinton is campaigning for his wife in the state on Sunday, and the former first lady and secretary of state has a rally Monday. She is running ads showing former Rep. Gabby Giffords voice her support for the candidate. She also has the support of most of the Democratic political establishment.

Today in History

The Associated Press

Today is Palm Sunday, March 20, the 80th day of 2016. There are 286 days left in the year. Spring arrives at 12:30 a.m. Eastern time.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 20, 1816, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Martin v. Hunter's Lessee*, unanimously affirmed its right to review state court decisions under the Judiciary Act of 1789.

On this date:

In 1727, physicist, mathematician and astronomer Sir Isaac Newton died in London.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Paris after escaping his exile on Elba, beginning his "Hundred Days" rule.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential novel about slavery, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," was first published in book form after being serialized.

In 1899, Martha M. Place of Brooklyn, New York, became the first woman to be executed in the electric chair as she was put to death at Sing Sing for the murder of her stepdaughter.

In 1922, the decommissioned USS *Jupiter*, converted into the first U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, was recommissioned as the USS *Langley*.

In 1933, the state of Florida electrocuted Giuseppe Zangara for shooting to death Chicago Mayor Anton J. Cermak at a Miami event attended by President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, the presumed target, the previous February.

In 1952, the U.S. Senate ratified, 66-10, the Treaty of Peace with Japan.

In 1969, John Lennon married Yoko Ono in Gibraltar.

In 1976, kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst was convicted of armed robbery for her part in a San Francisco bank holdup carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was sentenced to seven years in prison; she was released after serving 22 months, and was pardoned in 2001 by President Bill Clinton.)

In 1986, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above 1,800 for the first time, at 1,804.24.

In 1995, in Tokyo, 12 people were killed, more than 5,500 others sickened when packages containing the deadly chemical sarin were leaked on five separate subway trains by Aum Shinrikyo (ohm shin-ree-kyoh) cult members.

In 1996, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Erik and Lyle Menendez of first-degree murder in the shotgun

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slayings of their wealthy parents. (They were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

Ten years ago: Beginning the fourth year of an unpopular war, President George W. Bush defended his Iraq record against skeptical questioning at the City Club in Cleveland. Anti-war activists marked the third anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq with a "Bring 'Em Home Now!" concert in New York. Paul Tagliabue announced he would step down as NFL commissioner after 16 years (he was succeeded by Roger Goodell). Japan beat Cuba 10-6 in the title game of the inaugural World Baseball Classic.

Five years ago: As Japanese officials reported progress in their battle to gain control over a leaking, tsunami-stricken nuclear complex, the discovery of more radiation-tainted vegetables and tap water added to public fears about contaminated food and drink. AT&T Inc. said it would buy T-Mobile USA from Deutsche Telekom AG in a cash-and-stock deal valued at \$39 billion (however, AT&T later dropped its bid following fierce government antitrust objections).

One year ago: A jury in Gadsden, Alabama, convicted 49-year-old Joyce Hardin Garrard of capital murder for running to death her 9-year-old granddaughter, Savannah Hardin. (Garrard was sentenced to life in prison without parole; she died in Feb. 2016.) Suicide bombers attacked a pair of mosques in the capital of Yemen, unleashing blasts that killed 137 people. Former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, 84, died in Canberra. Actor Gregory Walcott ("Plan 9 from Outer Space") died in Los Angeles at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Dame Vera Lynn is 99. Producer-director-comedian Carl Reiner is 94. Actor Hal Linden is 85. Former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney (muhl-ROO'-nee) is 77. Country singer Don Edwards is 77. TV producer Paul Junger Witt is 75. Country singer-musician Ranger Doug (Riders in the Sky) is 70. Hockey Hall-of-Famer Bobby Orr is 68. Blues singer-musician Marcia Ball is 67. Actor William Hurt is 66. Rock musician Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake and Palmer) is 66. Rock musician Jimmie Vaughan is 65. Country musician Jimmy Seales (Shenandoah) is 62. Actress Amy Aquino (ah-KEE'-noh) is 59. Movie director Spike Lee is 59. Actress Theresa Russell is 59. Actress Vanessa Bell Calloway is 59. Actress Holly Hunter is 58. Rock musician Slim Jim Phantom (The Stray Cats) is 55. Actress-model-designer Kathy Ireland is 53. Actor David Thewlis is 53. Rock musician Adrian Oxaal (James) is 51. Actress Jessica Lundy is 50. Actress Liza Snyder is 48. Actor Michael Rapaport is 46. Actor Alexander Chaplin is 45. Actress Paula Garcés is 42. Rock singer Chester Bennington (Linkin Park) is 40. Actor Michael Genadry is 38. Actress Bianca Lawson is 37. Rock musician Nick Wheeler (The All-American Rejects) is 34. Actor Michael Cassidy is 33. Actress-singer Christy Carlson Romano is 32. Actress Ruby Rose (TV: "Orange is the New Black") is 30.

Thought for Today: "Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes." — Ralph Waldo Emerson, American writer and poet (1803-1882).

March Mismatch: Gonzaga tops Utah 82-59 to move to Sweet 16

EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

DENVER (AP) — Leave the buzzer-beaters and heart-stoppers to the other guys.

For Gonzaga, these are the March Mismatches.

The Bulldogs, looking like something much different than an 11 seed, rolled over No. 3 Utah on Saturday, 82-59 behind 22 points from Eric McClellan and a 19-point, 10-rebound effort from Domantas Sabonis.

This was a wire-to-wire effort even more impressive than their 16-point win over Seton Hall in the first round.

"We played as good as probably we've played all year, on what is the biggest stage," coach Mark Few said.

Next up for the Zags (28-7), a game against Syracuse or Middle Tennessee in the Midwest Regional.

Kyle Wiltjer had 17 for Gonzaga. He went 3 for 4 from 3-point range, all in the first half, to help the Bulldogs jump to a quick double-digit lead.

This game was billed as a battle of big guys, between the 6-foot-11 Sabonis and Utah's 7-footer, Jakob Poeltl. That fizzled. Poeltl finished with five points and four rebounds. He got in foul trouble early — drawing his first when Sabonis spun to the baseline and left Poeltl grabbing to prevent the dunk.

"He's an incredible player," Poeltl said. "He made some really good plays today. It's his versatility that makes him so tough to guard."

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On Utah's first possession of the second half, Poeltl posted up and tried the hook. Sabonis redirected it and the ball never got to the glass. The son of former NBA star Arvydas Sabonis recorded his 22nd double-double of the season.

"He's a really, really aggressive and tough, tough kid," Few said. "If you haven't faced him or felt him — you know, live — I think there's an adjustment period."

A few minutes after Sabonis denied Poeltl, McClellan converted a steal by Kyle Dranginis into a layup and a three-point play to push Gonzaga's lead to 20.

From there, this was a pick-your-score runaway — the only drama involving when Few would give his eight-man rotation a break and let some of the walk-ons and others get a piece of the action. For the record, that came with 1:39 left, and by then, Gonzaga fans were booking their tickets to Chicago for next Friday's game.

Utah (27-9) walked off wondering what happened. And if that was really an 11 seed they'd just played.

"I know Gonzaga's a really good team. I would never put a number on them," Utes coach Larry Krystkowiak said. "I wouldn't be surprised if they're in the Final Four."

That hardly looked possible back in December — or January or February — with the losses piling up; seven is a lot for this program.

The trials and tribulations were spelled out in detail on a behind-the-scenes documentary airing on HBO: "The March to Madness," that chronicled the season-ending injury to star center Przemek Karnowski, the guards' struggle for consistency and the never-for-sure quest simply to make the tournament for the 18th straight year.

"I don't think any of us can deny there was a little bit of a sense of desperation that we faced," Few said. "We had a talk in the locker room, it was fight or flight, man. It's human nature. We lined up and we all chose to fight."

The fight goes on. It's Gonzaga's second straight Sweet 16 appearance, though not many people saw this one coming.

"I think we'll be in a great situation in Chicago," Few said. "No matter how anybody wants to dress it up, I don't think we should have any expectations on us."

TIP-INS:

Gonzaga: Josh Perkins had 10 for the Zags. ... Gonzaga outrebounded Utah 34-24. ... The Zags shot 8 for 12 from 3-point range in the first half. ... For the second straight time, the Zags were not an underdog in the opening line, despite their No. 11 seed. They were pick'em against Utah and a 1-point favorite against Seton Hall.

Utah: Kyle Kuzma led the Utes with 15 points and Lorenzo Bonam added 12.

NEXT:

Gonzaga: Sweet 16 against Middle Tennessee or Syracuse

Utah: Season over.

Lights out: Cities worldwide mark the 10th annual Earth Hour

NEW YORK (AP) — Cities around the world turned out the lights Saturday evening to mark the 10th annual Earth Hour, a global movement dedicated to protecting the planet and highlighting the effects of climate change.

As night came on, the lights went out in cities from South Korea to the United States in what the World Wildlife Fund describes as a moment of solidarity for climate action. The group sponsors the event and says people in 178 countries and territories had planned to participate.

Lights went out for the hourlong event — from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. local time — in Beijing, Moscow, Beirut, Cairo, Athens, Rome, and Paris. The lights atop the Empire State Building in New York were dimmed, and some billboards in Times Square also went dark.

In Seoul, the glass-covered City Hall was among several public buildings where officials switched off the lights inside and out. Lights illuminating landmarks such as the massive COEX shopping mall, the city's main railway station and several bridges on the Han River were all either turned off or dimmed.

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In Beijing, Chinese actress Li Bingbing showed up at the iconic Temple of Confucius, which was shut dark for an hour while municipal government officials announced that the city's energy conservation slogan would be "Consume less, consume wisely."

The Taipei 101 skyscraper was among the buildings to go dark in Taiwan's capital.

Philippine officials in metropolitan Manila led hundreds of environmental activists, students and movie and TV celebrities in switching off lights at the Quezon Memorial Circle in suburban Quezon city. Amid the darkness, some participants pedaled bamboo bikes attached to small energy generators to power LED lights and illuminate a giant Philippine map to symbolize the country's yearning to shift to renewable energy sources, organizers said.

The first Earth Hour event was held on March 31, 2007, when the WWF conservation group inspired people in Sydney to turn out the lights for an hour. Since then, the WWF-organized event has expanded to thousands of cities and towns around the world and has been held every March.

US hotel company Starwood to run 3 Cuban hotels

MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN, Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Starwood signed a deal on Saturday to renovate and run three Cuban hotels, returning U.S. chains to the island more than 50 years after American hotels were taken over by Fidel Castro's socialist revolution.

All Cuban hotels are state-owned so the deal puts a major U.S. corporation directly in business with the Communist government under a special U.S. license that pushes Washington's legal dismantling of the Cuban trade embargo further than ever before. In a once-unimaginable arrangement, a hotel owned by the tourism arm of the Cuban military will become a Sheraton Four Points.

The deal comes on the eve of President Barack Obama's historic visit to Cuba, which will open a new era between the former Cold War foes that has American travelers and businesses eagerly eyeing opportunities on the island nation 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Florida.

Starwood's chief of Latin America operations, Jorge Giannattasio, said the company will invest millions to renovate and rebrand the Quinta Avenida, Santa Isabel and Inglaterra hotels, train and hire new staff and reopen the hotels by the end of the year. The Quinta Avenida is owned by Gaviota, a military-run tourism conglomerate. The Santa Isabel and Inglaterra, which are run by other state agencies, will be operated as part of Starwood's Luxury Collection brand.

It's unclear, however, how long Starwood can be called an American company. On Friday, Starwood called off a \$12.2 billion buyout agreement with Marriott in favor of an offer from a group of investors led by the Chinese insurance company Anbang.

Cuban hotels are notorious for their ramshackle furnishings and poor service. Giannattasio said the Cuban Starwood hotels would be refitted with everything from new mattress to improved kitchen equipment and safety measures and managed by teams of expatriate Starwood employees.

Cuban law prevents widespread direct hiring of Cuban workers by foreign firms. International companies complain that their inability to directly hire Cuban employees, and if necessary demote or fire underperforming staff, hinders their ability to provide satisfactory customer service.

Giannattasio said he was confident that Starwood would have enough flexibility and control to maintain the company's standards in Cuba, although he declined to comment on details of the firm's arrangement with the Cuban government. Starwood will receive a fee for its branding and management services.

The number of visitors to Cuba surged nearly 20 percent last year, with nearly 80 percent more Americans flying to the island. The surge has overwhelmed Cuba's decrepit tourism infrastructure and left hotels above capacity.

Numbers are expected to rise even more sharply this year with the start of as many as 110 commercial flights a day from the United States, one of dozens of moves the U.S. administration has made to punch holes in the trade embargo as part of a broader normalization of relations with Cuba since Obama and

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Raul Castro declared detente on Dec. 17, 2014.

On Tuesday, the Obama administration removed the last meaningful restrictions on travel to Cuba, announcing that it would allow individuals to visit the island for "people to people" educational trips. While the ban on U.S. tourism technically remains in place, it becomes an honor system that is essentially unenforceable.

Americans will have to keep records for five years about what they did in Cuba, but won't have to submit them unless asked. The Obama administration previously loosened requirements by allowing organized trips without advance U.S. permission and independent travel for specific purposes like religious activities or sports events.

Orange County Register to be sold to Digital First Media

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — Freedom Communications, the bankrupt owner of the Orange County Register and Press-Enterprise of Riverside, has decided to sell to Digital First Media after a judge blocked a higher bid by the owner of the Los Angeles Times, a Freedom attorney said Saturday.

Freedom will ask a federal bankruptcy judge on Monday to confirm and approve the sale to Digital First, which owns the Los Angeles Daily News and eight other daily papers in the greater Los Angeles area. The deal will close by March 31, Freedom attorney William Lobel said in an email.

Digital First was the runner-up bidder for Freedom at \$45.5 million.

The prospective takeover of the Freedom properties is Digital First's second major move in California in the last three weeks. The Denver-based company earlier announced it would consolidate six daily newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area into two, one serving Oakland and the East Bay and the other Silicon Valley. In the East Bay, The Contra Costa Times, Oakland Tribune, The Daily Review and The Argus will become the new East Bay Times. The San Jose Mercury News and the San Mateo County Times will become the Mercury News.

Saturday's move caps a whirlwind of last-minute legal scrabbling to decide the fate of Freedom, which found itself mired in debt after being purchased by Aaron Kushner in 2012. He made counterintuitive moves, doubling down on print production in a digital age and adding about 175 new reporters and editors.

Tribune Publishing's \$56 million bid emerged as the winning offer at an auction that concluded early Thursday. Barely 24 hours later, the U.S. Justice Department filed an antitrust lawsuit. The government said if the deal went through Southern California consumers and advertisers would be harmed because Tribune would have a virtual monopoly by owning the four largest papers in four counties. In addition to the Los Angeles Times, Tribune owns The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Late Friday, U.S. District Judge Andre Birotte Jr. issued a temporary restraining order halting the deal. Tribune had warned in court filings that such an order would doom the merger.

The bankruptcy has to close by March 31, when temporary private financing keeping the Freedom newspapers afloat will dry up.

In its Friday objections to the restraining order, Tribune complained that the government was relying on "severely outdated" notions of the media market in the era of digital publication.

A Tribune spokeswoman said the company was reviewing its options following the restraining order and declined to comment further on Saturday.

In issuing the order, Birotte said that many online websites don't produce original content, but "primarily post links to stories on the websites of other content generators —including local newspapers like the Register or the Press-Enterprise."

Had the Tribune sale gone ahead, the company would have controlled 98 percent of daily English-language newspaper sales in Orange County and 81 percent in Riverside County, the Justice Department estimated. The four papers Tribune would have controlled have nearly 1,000 journalists covering an area that stretches from Los Angeles to the Mexican border. It's a region of 18 million people.

Freedom Communications filed for bankruptcy protection in November. It followed a series of layoffs and buyouts after an aggressive expansion that included starting daily papers in Los Angeles and Long Beach

and buying the Press-Enterprise for \$27 million. Both new papers went under.
The Associated Press is among the creditors in Freedom's bankruptcy proceedings.

3 foreigners among 5 killed in Istanbul suicide bomb attack

DOMINIQUE SOGUEL, Associated Press

SUZAN FRASER, Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — A suicide attack on Istanbul's main pedestrian shopping street Saturday killed five people, including two dual nationality Israeli-Americans and one Iranian citizen, and wounded several dozen others, in the sixth suicide bombing in Turkey in the past year.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu issued a statement saying there were several foreigners among the victims.

"Turkey has always said that terrorism has no religion, no language and no race and that terrorism has to be condemned no matter who the perpetrators are," he said. "This sad event has shown once again how right our position is."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but suspicion fell on the Islamic State group and on Kurdish militants who have claimed two recent attacks in the capital, Ankara. DNA samples were taken from family members of two possible Islamic State militants who could be the bomber, the private Turkish Dogan news agency reported.

The explosion ripped through Istiklal Street, a popular destination for tourists and locals in a central neighborhood that is home to cafes, restaurants, foreign consulates and a government office. Istanbul Governor Vasip Sahin said there were five fatalities and that investigations were still under way. An interior ministry official said the death toll included the suicide bomber.

Police swiftly sealed off the area as ambulances and a forensic team rushed to the scene after the bombing about 11 a.m. Normally packed cafes were either closed or virtually empty, with business owners making frantic calls to loved ones to assure them of their safety. Rattled tourists wondered where to go.

"It was one loud explosion," said Muhammed Fatur, a Syrian who works at a butcher shop near the scene of the explosion. "Police came to the scene and sealed off the area." The site remained off limits until shortly after sundown when tentative pedestrians and shopkeepers returned to inspect the damage.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that at least two of the victims were Israelis. An Israeli diplomat in Istanbul said the two also held American citizenship.

"We can sadly confirm that two Israeli civilians were killed and we might have a third fatality," he said.

Israel was cooperating with other intelligence agencies to determine whether the attack was directed at Israelis specifically. Two planes were being sent to Istanbul to evacuate others wounded in the blast.

The majority of the Israelis caught up in the attack were on a culinary tour of the city, officials said. The group had just eaten breakfast nearby when the blast ripped through the street. Israeli media named one of the victims as 60-year-old Simha Damari, a mother of four and said her husband was also wounded in the attack.

Ned Price, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, confirmed that two American citizens were among those killed in the Istanbul attack. Their identities were not released.

A group of Iranian tourists were also among the victims. Alireza Razmkhah, 45, was killed and his wife, Azan, and baby, Diana, were wounded, according to IRNA, the official Iranian news agency. An elderly woman was also wounded in the attack, but was in stable condition, the agency reported.

The attack coincided with a visit to Turkey by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. He condemned the "inhumane" act and offered his condolences to Turkey.

Turkey's health minister, Mehmet Muezzinoglu, said the 36 people wounded in the attack included six Israelis, two Irish citizens and one person each from Iceland, Germany, Dubai and Iran. Istanbul's governor later raised the number of injured to 39 and said 24 of them were foreigners, without providing a breakdown by nationalities.

The governor would not confirm media reports that the suicide bomber may have been an Islamic State

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militant. He said, "The inspection is continuing in a detailed way. It is too early to say anything."

Turkey was already on edge following two recent suicide car bomb attacks in the capital, Ankara, which were claimed by a Kurdish militant group that is an off-shoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. The most recent bombing attack, on March 13, targeted bus stops on Ankara's busiest street, killing 37 people including two bombers.

British singer Skin wrote on Facebook that the blast went off near her Istanbul hotel and that buildings "shook like paper." She also expressed solidarity with the "innocent people and their families caught in this evil situation."

Turkey has had heightened security in Ankara and Istanbul in the run-up to the Kurdish spring festival of Newroz on March 21, which Kurds in Turkey traditionally use to assert their ethnic identity and demand greater rights.

NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg condemned the attack in Istanbul, describing it as "yet another terrorist outrage targeting innocent civilians and our ally Turkey."

In his statement, the White House National Security Council spokesman condemned the "heinous attack" and said the United States remains steadfast in support of Turkey, its NATO ally and partner.

"These repeated acts of terrorism in Turkey must come to an end," Price said. "We are in close touch with Turkish authorities and reaffirm our commitment to work together with Turkey to confront the evil of terrorism."

The Irish foreign and trade minister, Charlie Flanagan, expressed "horror and sadness" at the attack and confirmed that a number of Irish citizens were among the injured.

Video posted on social media apparently capturing the aftermath of the blast showed several motionless bodies lined up at the foot of shuttered shops as a second ambulance arrives at the scene. Footage filmed by a witness showed a severed male head resting next to the street's tramway tracks a few feet away from the bodies.

On Thursday, Germany had closed its embassy in Ankara, the German school in Ankara and the consulate in Istanbul, which is in the same neighborhood as the blast, following a security warning. Twelve German tourists were killed in a January suicide attack in a historic district of Istanbul.

Saturday's explosion marks the sixth suicide attack in the country since July. The previous five attacks, which have killed more than 200 people, were either blamed on the Islamic State group by Turkish authorities or claimed by an off-shoot of the PKK..

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy in southeast Turkey for three decades in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people. A two-and-a-half year peace process between the government and the PKK broke down in July, reviving the conflict.

Turkey, which is a partner in the U.S.-led war against the Islamic State, has also been drawn deeper into the Syrian conflict and forced to absorb 2.7 million Syrian refugees. Last August, Turkey began allowing U.S. fighter jets to launch airstrikes from Incirlik air base in southern Turkey.

Prosecutor: Suspect backed out of being Paris suicide bomber

RAF CASERT, Associated Press

JOHN-THOR-DAHLBURG, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — After a bullet in the leg ended his four-month flight from the law, Salah Abdeslam started a legal fight Saturday against his extradition from Belgium to France, where the president and the families of 130 victims want the top suspect in the Paris attacks to stand trial.

In Paris, prosecutor Francois Molins said during an interrogation session on Saturday that Abdeslam told Belgian officials that he had "wanted to blow himself up at the Stade de France" on Nov. 13 but that he backed out at the last minute. Molins did not say what caused the 26-year-old purportedly to change his mind.

Abdeslam was shot Friday along with a suspected accomplice when they were captured by Belgian police during a massive anti-terror raid in Brussels. He was found at an apartment a mere 500 meters (yards)

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from his parents' home, where he grew up.

On Saturday, he was discharged from the St. Pierre hospital in Brussels, questioned by authorities lying down because of his gunshot wound, and then officially charged with "participation in terrorist murder" in the Nov. 13 Paris attacks. France quickly issued a new European arrest warrant with more charges to speed up his extradition to a June 18 deadline.

French President Francois Hollande made it clear he wanted Abdeslam back in Paris, the city he fled after the November carnage. The suspect's Belgian lawyer made it clear he would fight extradition.

Lawyer Sven Mary said since there was a criminal investigation in Brussels, "we don't need him in France. We need him in Belgium." He said any hasty extradition would be motivated by a sense of guilt since the attacks were prepared and coordinated in Belgium and several attackers came from Brussels.

"Perhaps we should tone down our groveling to compensate for the sense of guilt we feel toward France," Mary said after he and Abdeslam met with a Belgian investigating magistrate.

Abdeslam's capture in the Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek after four months on the run brought relief to people who have seen his "wanted" poster all over the two European countries for months.

Hollande warned that more arrests will come as authorities try to dismantle a network involved in the attacks that they now say is much larger than originally suspected. The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for the Paris carnage.

French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve called Abdeslam's arrest a "major blow" to the Islamic State group in Europe, but warned that the threat of new attacks remains "extremely high."

Belgium's prime minister also said "the fight is not over."

Molins, the Paris prosecutor, said Abdeslam is suspected not only of being a "key actor in the action" last November in the French capital but also of the logistical planning for the deadly attacks. He said French authorities suspect him of bringing numerous "terrorists" to Europe in the months leading up to the attacks and conducting multiples trips around Europe.

Often using false identities, Abdeslam rented cars starting last July, Molins said, travelling north from Greece and Italy, hitting Hungary in August, Austria in September, and Germany and the Netherlands in October.

Investigators believe Abdeslam drove a car carrying gunmen who took part in the Nov. 13 shootings, rented rooms for them and shopped for detonators. Most of the Paris attackers died on the night of the attacks, including Abdeslam's brother Brahim, who blew himself up.

Abdeslam will appear before a pretrial court on Wednesday, which will decide whether he stays in jail for up to another month.

"If he starts talking, then I presume it will mean he stays longer in Belgium," Belgian federal prosecutor Eric Van der Sypt told The Associated Press.

A 2002 agreement among European Union nations speeds up the extradition process — and for especially grave crimes such as terrorist acts the procedure goes even faster.

"Firstly, the legality of the arrest warrant, the European arrest warrant, has to be checked carefully," said Mary, the defense lawyer.

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel told a news conference that his government has no "political objections" to handing Abdeslam over to the French, but wants to fully respect Belgian judicial procedures.

Belgian prosecutors said they were not sure of the identity of the presumed accomplice arrested with Abdeslam and also charged with "terrorist murder." They said he is believed to have used fake Syrian and Belgian documents in two different names.

Meanwhile, two others detained with Abdeslam were released on Saturday, while a third was charged with belonging to a terror group and hiding criminals.

Two other people believed linked to the Paris attacks are still being sought, including fellow Molenbeek resident Mohamed Abrini and a man known under the alias of Soufiane Kayal.

Samia Maktouf, a French lawyer for several survivors and relatives of Paris attack victims, urged Abdeslam's immediate extradition.

"Apart from his (medical) condition, I don't see what might delay his extradition," she told the AP. After the bloodbath, Abdeslam evaded a huge French dragnet to return to Brussels. He was believed to have slipped through police fingers multiple times despite an international manhunt. At one point, Belgian authorities locked down their capital for several days in November but failed to find him.

Europe's No. 1 fugitive managed to elude capture for months

MIKE CORDER, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — As the net closed in around Salah Abdeslam, Europe's No. 1 fugitive was holed up in an apartment in the place he knows best, a Brussels neighborhood favored by several of the Paris attackers.

Abdeslam's four months on the run ended Friday when he was shot in the leg and dragged away in a white hoodie during a massive police operation in the Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek.

Authorities now need to piece together how the man who was at the Nov. 13 attacks that killed 130 people in Paris managed to evade authorities for so long. It appears, during the final stages at the very least, Abdeslam was hiding only 500 meters (yards) from his parents' home, the place where he grew up.

On Molenbeek's central square, a worker at a store selling Islamic headscarves and copies of the Quran said Saturday that Abdeslam's strategy of hiding in his old neighborhood was all the residents could talk about.

"For four months, he basically disappeared into thin air. And now we learn he was right here," marveled the worker, who identified himself only as Pharred, saying he was fearful of talking about a police operation.

It remains unclear exactly where Abdeslam spent his days while on the run and how he evaded police for so long. Four other suspects were detained in Friday's raid, including three members of a family that sheltered him.

On Saturday, Belgian authorities charged Abdeslam and an alleged accomplice with "participation in terrorist murder." A third person detained Friday was charged with being in a terrorist group and hiding criminals, while two others who had been detained were released.

The Belgian government said it realizes that support for Abdeslam may have been more widespread than initially thought.

"I always said that at the beginning we thought it was several individuals. Today we have to recognize that the number of people who support him is higher," said Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon. "That doesn't mean that the entire community supports him. But the support is a lot higher than I had estimated at the beginning."

The 26-year-old is suspected of being the logistics man for the gang of Islamic extremists who went on a rampage in Paris on Nov. 13, killing 130 people. Abdeslam is thought to have rented rooms, shopped for detonators and driven at least one of the killers from Brussels to Paris.

His lawyer, Sven Mary, told the Associated Press that Abdeslam "doesn't deny he was in Paris."

In Paris, prosecutor Francois Molins told reporters that, during an interrogation session on Saturday, Abdeslam told Belgian officials that he had "wanted to blow himself up at the Stade de France" on Nov. 13 but that he backed out at the last minute. Molins did not say what caused the 26-year-old to purportedly change his mind.

Possibly Abdeslam's closest brush with police came in the immediate aftermath of the Nov. 13 attacks, when he and contacts from Brussels were stopped at a French police checkpoint but let through. Since then, he has been only seen on wanted posters.

It would not have been hard for him to disappear in Molenbeek's densely populated warren of narrow, cobbled streets and crumbling apartment blocks, where people with a Moroccan background form the vast majority of the population.

"Probably he had contacts with other men to help him," Molenbeek Mayor Françoise Schepmans told The Associated Press. "But we have to wait. What's important now is that Salah Abdeslam has been arrested."

Abdeslam is expected to be extradited to France after questioning in Belgium. But his lawyer, Sven Mary, told reporters Saturday that his client will fight extradition efforts, speaking after he and Abdeslam met

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with a Belgian investigating magistrate.

France quickly issued a new European arrest warrant with more charges to speed up his extradition to a June 18 deadline.

Meanwhile, Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel warned that "the fight is not over" and his government announced the nation's terrorism alert level would remain unchanged at 3 on a 4-point scale.

After the hours-long police raid on Friday, life sought to recapture a semblance of normality in Molenbeek on Saturday.

A mother wearing a dark headscarf with a son in pink soccer cleats picked their way along the sidewalk past camera crews staked out in front of the house where Abdeslam was arrested. Its ground-floor windows were boarded up. A man in a nearby cafe drank coffee and read a French-language newspaper with the front-page headline: "Salah arrested. Mission accomplished."

Some neighbors were clearly shaken at the fact that the young man with French nationality but close ties to Molenbeek had been living in their midst despite the huge police manhunt.

"He was next to us, next to our kids. The most-wanted man was next to us day and night," said Lamia, a 29-year-old mother of two young girls, who also declined to give her family name. She said she regularly visits her grandmother, who lives on a street near Abdeslam's final bolt hole.

"When things blew up, it was shaking at our place. We were crying, the children were crying. Honestly, it's a shock. He was two blocks away," she said.