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Bus Driver Needed

The Groton Area School District has an opening for a morning bus route driver for the 2016-17 school year. Interested persons should contact Superintendent Joe Schwan at 397-2351.

Manager Wanted

Part Time Apartment Manager wanted. Responsible for showing apartments, handing out applications, overseeing maintenance and other duties as needed. Up to \$25 per hour. Previous sale experience a plus. Send email of interest to Grotnmnger@gmail.com

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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Thursday, July 28

Full Circle Golf Tourney at Olive Grove
Senior Menu: Lasagna rotini, tossed salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, oatmeal spice cookie, whole wheat bread.

Anniv: Bob & Carolyn Snyder
Birthdays: Craig Weber • Blake Ronning • Jasmine Schaller • Julianna Kosel

Friday, July 29

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle casserole, beets, Swedish apple pie square, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Amber Falk Odde • Jarod Fliehs • Mike Imre • Desiree Giedt • Brenda Waage

Saturday, July 30

Birthdays: Christopher Sippel • Brandyn Anderson • Carlyle Mortenson • Krista Tunby • Gloria Leidholt • Trista Jean Keith • Travis McKiver
4:30pm: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

Sunday, July 31

Birthdays: Amanda Swenson • Lynette Furman • Keith Baker
9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass
9:00am: St. John's Lutheran worship
10:00am: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Pierpont Church
11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship

Apts for Rent

1 bedroom and HUGE 2 bedroom, 2 bath apartments available NOW! All utilities included except A/C, 1 bedroom \$504 and HUGE 2 bedroom 2 bath \$674 Please call or text 239-849-7674



Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling

New & Cleaning of
Stockdams with our
60' reach trackhoe

605/395-6531

GROW South Dakota Names "Picturing South Dakota" Facebook Photo Contest Winners

GROW South Dakota, the statewide community development nonprofit, has announced the winners of its "Picturing South Dakota" photo contest, which invited South Dakotans to submit a photo of their favorite place in the state. Christine Feltes of Yankton won with a photo she called "Beautiful Clouds over Yankton's Two Bridges." As the winner, the Yankton Homeless Shelter, the organization she chose, will receive a \$50 Pay-It-Forward donation from GROW SD.

About her winning entry, Christine said, "I took the photo one evening as I was out for an evening stroll. The cloud formations that evening were beautiful and very unique. I was struck by the lighting of the scene. I love the two bridges of Yankton, the old Meridian Bridge, now a walking bridge, and the new Discovery Bridge. I feel that both are symbolic of Yankton, historic, yet looking to the future. They span the Missouri River and connect South Dakota to Nebraska."

The first runner up in the contest was Josh Wagner of Roslyn, who submitted a unique photo taken from his back yard. Testing his kayak out for the first time in the season in the slough behind his house, he took a photo. "The reflection was so perfect," he said. "What is submitted is the picture rotated 180 degrees. The faded reflection at top starts to look like stars in the sky, but in actuality, is the water coming into clearer focus. I captured this photo with my iPhone."

Picturing South Dakota ran from July 15 through July 25. The photos with the most "likes" were considered contest finalists. The winning photos, as well as all submissions, can be found at GROW SD's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/GROWSouthDakota

As the winner, Christine participates in GROW SD's Pay-It-Forward program. In celebration of its 50th anniversary of helping communities, GROW SD has provided each staff member and board member \$50 to donate to a community organization.

GROW SD also encourages South Dakotans to complete its Needs Assessment Survey, which asks questions about our communities. The agency uses the information from the survey in planning its programming. The survey can be found at www.growsd.org/survey.



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 **MIRACLE TREAT DAY**

**IT'S
BACK**

**#MIRACLE
TREAT DAY**
THURSDAY JULY 28TH
DATE VALID IN US ONLY.

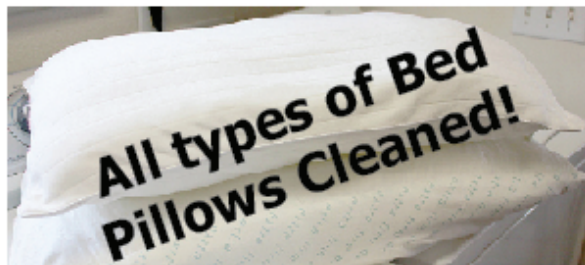
Miracle Treat Day is today! So remember to stop by the Groton Dairy Queen today and buy your favorite *Blizzard*® Treat. \$1 or more from every *Blizzard* Treat will be donated to Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®.



DQ Grill & Chill Restaurant
11 E Hwy 12
Groton

Pillow Cleaning Day

Friday, July 29, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 1006 N 2nd St,



~ Feather ~ Foam
~ Fiberfilled ~ etc.

- » Contents removed from old ticking (old material)
- » Cleaned
- » Sanitized
- » Deodorized
- » Choice of new ticking (new outside material)

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golden
living

We now accept



for out patient therapy.

1106 N 2nd St., Groton
605/397-2365

Britton Grain Terminal

Open House and Ribbon Cutting

Monday, August 1st, 2016 ~ 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



Located 1 mile south of Britton, SD on SD Highway 27

This recently completed facility has a licensed capacity of 4.5 million bushels of upright storage. In total, the new facility will be capable of receiving grain at 60,000 bushels per hour and loading 120-car shuttle trains at 80,000 bushels per hour.

**Governor Dennis Daugaard is scheduled
to attend the ribbon cutting!**

Tours and lunch will begin at Noon.



Britton Grain Terminal
11081 SD Highway 27
Britton, SD 57430
605-448-2261

**Everyone is welcome to
come and tour the new
facility!**

www.wdcoop.com

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Try a little
TENDERNESS



— and save 75% on world-famous Omaha Steaks —



The Family Gourmet Buffet

- 2 (5 oz.) Filet Mignons
- 2 (5 oz.) Top Sirloins
- 2 (4 oz.) Boneless Pork Chops
- 2 Boneless Chicken Breasts (.5 lb. pkg.)
- 4 (3 oz.) Kielbasa Sausages
- 2 (4.5 oz.) Stuffed Sole with Scallops & Crabmeat
- 12 oz. pkg. All-Beef Meatballs
- 4 (3 oz.) Potatoes au Gratin
- 4 (4 oz.) Caramel Apple Tartlets
- Omaha Steaks Seasoning Packet
- 46191FJT

Reg. \$200.90 | Now Only **\$49⁹⁹**

PLUS, 4
Omaha Steaks
Burgers

FREE!



Limit 2 pkgs. at this price. Your 4 free burgers will be sent to each shipping address that includes the Family Gourmet Buffet 46191. Limit of 1 free box of 4 (4 oz.) Omaha Steaks Burgers per shipment. Standard S&H will be added per address. Not valid with other offers. Expires 11/30/16. All product, prices and sales are subject to Omaha Steaks, Inc. Terms of Use and Pricing Policy. Visit omahasteaks.com/terms-of-useOSI
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1-800-795-0946 ask for 46191FJT
www.OmahaSteaks.com/great86

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Today in Weather History

July 28, 1986: Very intense thunderstorms developed in South Dakota and Nebraska and moved into Iowa. The first of these storms produced a tornado that crossed into Iowa south of Sioux City and slammed into a coal-burning power plant. This tornado caused between 25 and 50 million dollars damage to the plant. The tornado continued across farmland, then damaged a store and flattened a motel in Sloan before lifting up.

1819 - A small but intense hurricane passed over Bay Saint Louis, MS. The hurricane was considered the worst in fifty years. Few houses were left standing either at Bay Saint Louis or at Pass Christian, and much of the Mississippi coast was desolate following the storm. A U.S. cutter was lost along with its thirty-nine crew members. The storm struck the same area that was hit 150 years later by Hurricane Camille. (David Ludlum)

1930 - The temperature at Greensburg, KY, soared to 114 degrees to set a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1934 - The temperature at Grofino, ID, climbed to 118 degrees to establish a record for Idaho. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - A severe storm with hail up to an inch and a half in diameter broke windows, ruined roofs, and stripped trees of leaves near Benson, AZ. The temperature dropped to 37 degrees, as hail was three to four inches deep, with drifts 46 inches high. (The Weather Channel)

1976: At 3:42 a.m., an earthquake measuring between 7.8 and 8.2 magnitude on the Richter scale flattens Tangshan, a Chinese industrial city with a population of about one million people. An estimated 242,000 people in Tangshan and surrounding areas were killed, making the earthquake one of the deadliest in recorded history, surpassed only by the 300,000 who died in the Calcutta earthquake in 1737, and the 830,000 thought to have perished in China's Shaanxi province in 1556.

1986 - Severe thunderstorms moving out of South Dakota across Iowa produce high winds which derailed eighteen piggyback trailer cars of a westbound freight train near Boone, IA. Sixteen of the cars fell 187 feet into the Des Moines River. The thunderstorms also spawned a number of tornadoes, including one which caused twenty-five to fifty million dollars damage at Sloan, near Sioux City, IA. (Storm Data)








1987 - Thunderstorms in Nevada produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Searchlight, reducing visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Thunderstorms in Montana drenched Lonesome Lake with 3.78 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms drenched Wilmington, NC, with 3.33 inches of rain, bringing their monthly total 14.46 inches. Seven cities in Michigan and Minnesota reported record high temperatures for the date. Marquette, MI, hit 99 degrees, and the record high of 94 degrees at Flint MI was their tenth of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Massachusetts. Early evening thunderstorms over Florida produced wind gusts to 68 mph at Fort Myers, and evening thunderstorms in South Dakota produced nearly two inches of rain in twenty minutes at Pierpoint. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Slight Chance T-storms then Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny	Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny
High: 77 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 86 °F

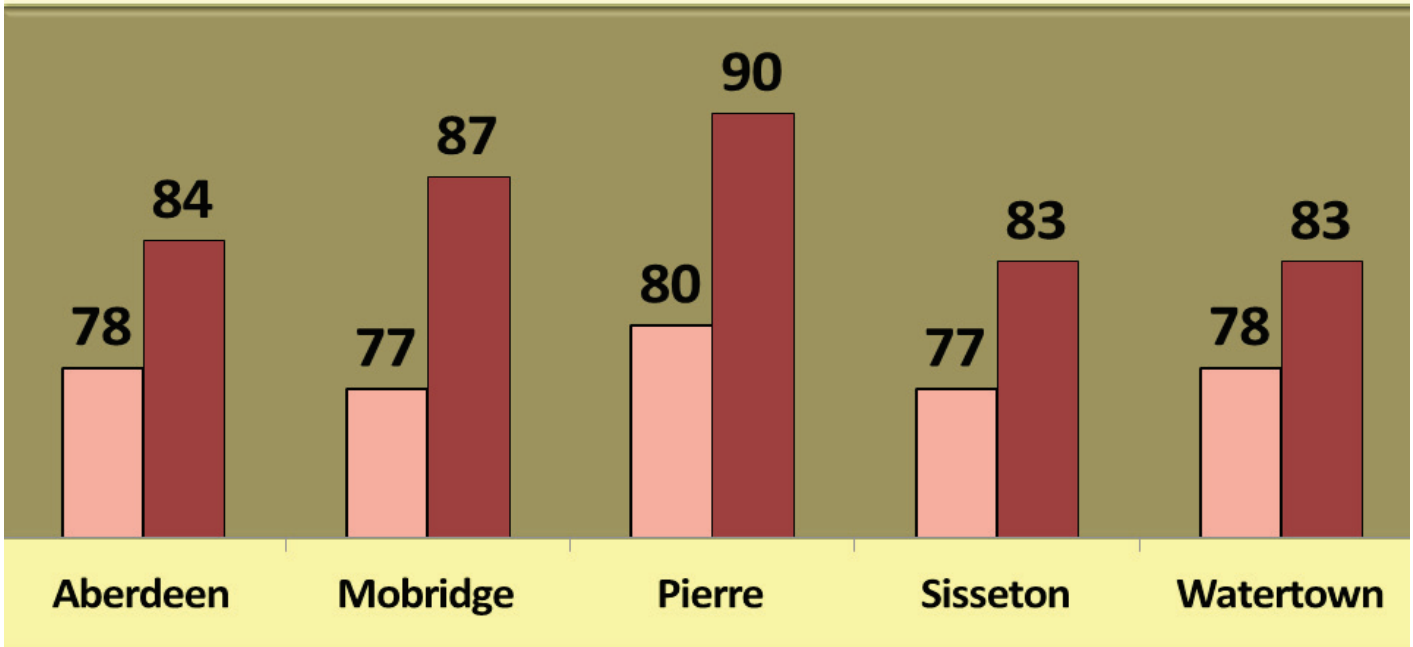


Below Normal Temperatures Today

Chance of thunderstorms, mainly west of the Missouri River

□ Forecast High Temperature

■ Normal High Temperature



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 7/28/2016 4:20 AM CDT

weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Published on: 07/28/2016 at 4:36AM

Expect below normal temperatures this afternoon, on the order of 5 to 10 degrees below normal for this time of year. Highs will top out in the mid 70s to around 80 degrees from central South Dakota to west central Minnesota. A series of upper level disturbances will keep a chance of showers and thunderstorms going mainly west of the Missouri River today.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 79.5

Low Outside Temp: 64.8

High Gust: 18

Precip: Trace

Today's Info

Record High: 109° in 1975

Record Low: 40 in 2013

Average High: 84°F

Average Low: 59°F

Average Precip in July: 2.77

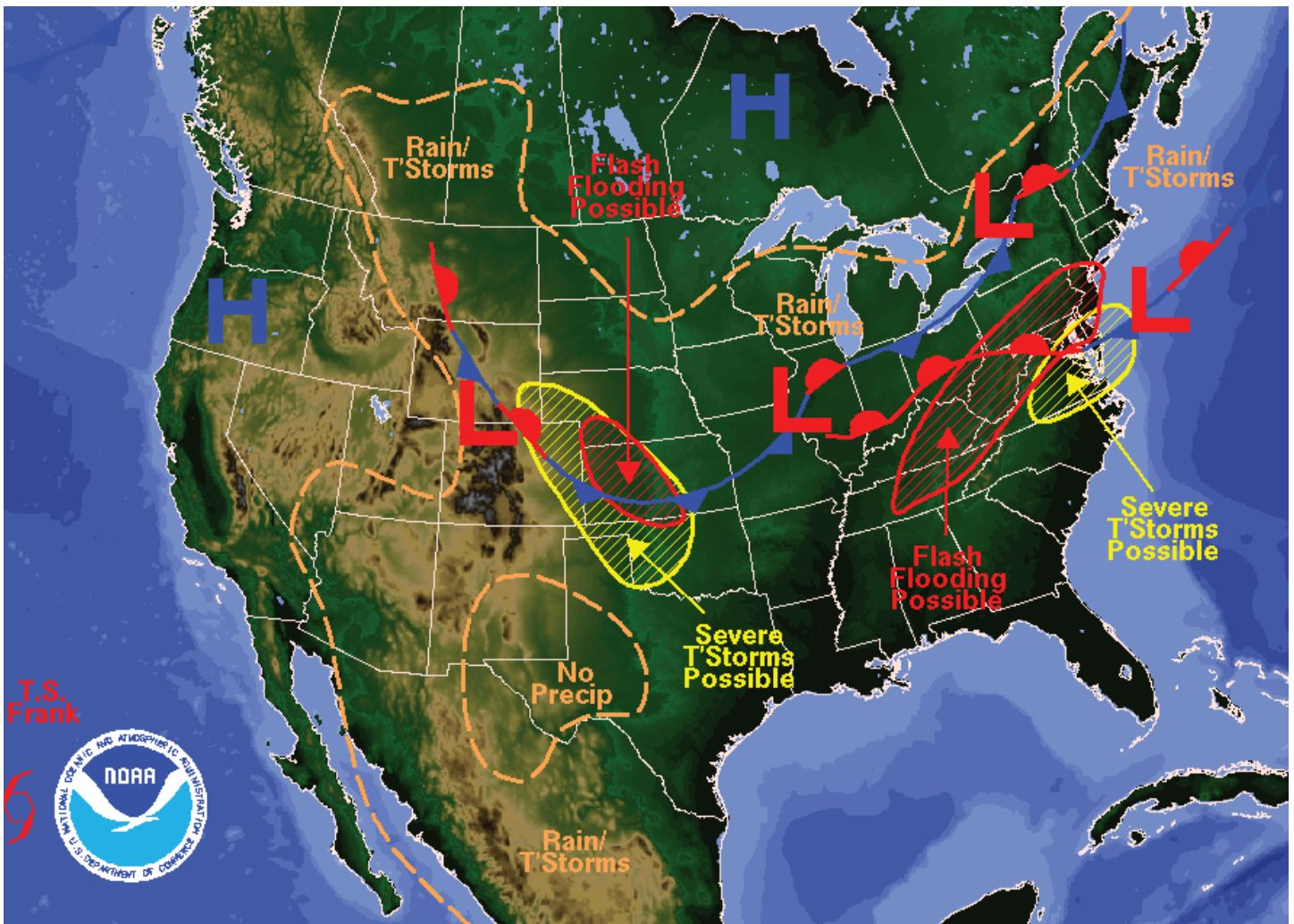
Precip to date in July: 3.92

Average Precip to date: 13.61

Precip Year to Date: 10.58

Sunset Tonight: 9:05 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:14 a.m.



T.S.
Frank



Weather Forecast for Thu, Jul 28, 2016, issued 4:41 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



WHAT IS CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT?

A young man stopped by my office to inform me that he had been called of God to become a minister of the Gospel. It thrilled me! After praying together he said, "I'm going to the Chapel and I'm going to pray all day - maybe through the night as well - and worship God."

"Great," I replied. "If you need help, come get me."

"Oh no," he replied, "I want to be alone with God and speak only with Him. You see, I have this tablet with me and I'm going to write down on every page the things I'm going to do for God. Then I'm going to sign it."

"It would be better," I said, "if you signed each page at the bottom and then asked God to fill in the pages with the things He wants you to do for Him."

God has a perfect plan for each of us. It is a plan that He has designed and will be revealed to us plainly as we surrender our lives to Him. As we willingly become available to Him, He will transform us to become individuals with transformed minds - minds that are sensitive and open to the direction of His Spirit and lives that live to honor and obey Him.

God only wants what is best for us but we cannot know His best until we are willing to sacrifice ourselves to Him. We know that we are "willing sacrifices" when we sign the page and allow Him to fill in the details. Then we will know what "His good, pleasing and perfect will" is for us.

Prayer: Oh Lord, it is so difficult to realize how easy it is to do what we want to do and consider it as Your will for our lives. May we learn to give You "blank pages." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

News from the Associated Press

Lake Norden serving as South Dakota's capital for a day

LAKE NORDEN, S.D. (AP) — Lake Norden has the distinction of serving as the honorary South Dakota capital for a day.

The event is set for Thursday. Gov. Dennis Daugaard's office says activities will include a community social gathering.

Activities also include a Main Street walk and tours around town. Leaders are expected to discuss the needs of the city with Daugaard at a lunch.

Lake Norden Mayor Jason Aho has said it's good to bring the governor into the community to offer residents and businesses an opportunity to discuss important issues.

Forest Service: Closure order for Crow Peak area lifted

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — The U.S. Forest Service says a closure order for the Crow Peak area has been lifted and a wildfire on the peak west of Spearfish is fully controlled.

The agency said Wednesday that visitors can now use the Crow Peak hiking trail.

The blaze sparked by lightning on June 24 torched more than 2,700 acres, or about 4 square miles. The area has been closed for safety.

The fire was fully contained July 4. It's now controlled, which means the lines are expected to hold for the foreseeable future, though pockets of fuel inside the fire perimeter will keep smoldering.

Northern Hills District Ranger Rhonda O'Byrne says people should stay on the hiking trail.

Crow Peak is a key landmark in the Northern Black Hills.

Sioux Falls mayor advances building after council rejection

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Mayor Mike Huether is pushing aside the wishes of the Sioux Falls City Council to advance a proposed \$25 million city office building downtown.

Huether said Wednesday that he vetoed a measure to pull funding for the 79,000-square-foot, three-story government office building.

Huether says the need is real, the project makes sense financially and the time is right.

His administration has maintained that more space is needed for city workers, and that a new building would be more economical than renovating an existing building.

The Argus Leader reports that the city council recently voted to repeal the measure that allowed borrowing to pay for the building. The council can override Huether's decision, but project opponents expect the mayor's veto to stand because of the required vote threshold.

Authorities seize pounds of heroin, methamphetamine

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Attorney General Marty Jackley says authorities have seized about 2 pounds of heroin and roughly 5 pounds of methamphetamine.

Jackley said Wednesday that authorities seized the black tar heroin July 11 from a 19-year-old man living in the Brookings area.

Subsequent investigation led authorities to seize the crystal meth July 13 in Brookings. Jackley says charges are pending.

He says the estimated street value of the drugs is more than \$500,000.

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The joint law enforcement operation was conducted by the Brookings Police Department, the Brookings County Sheriff's Office, the Watertown Police Department, and the state Division of Criminal Investigation.

IHS awards \$700K contract aimed at improving patient care

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Indian Health Service has awarded a one-year, \$700,000 contract to an independent expert to help federal government-operated medical facilities improve patient care and safety.

The IHS says the contract with The Joint Commission for accreditation services will help test the readiness of IHS hospitals for compliance surveys conducted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Officials say the training and education will benefit IHS facilities in the Dakotas, Arizona, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

The IHS says it's also responding to requirements of agreements with CMS for the Rosebud and Pine Ridge hospitals in South Dakota. Recent issues at those hospitals have highlighted poor health care services at government-run facilities caring for Native Americans across the country.

Police ID shooter in Rapid City incident, release details

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a Box Elder man who died in a Rapid City shooting that left another man critically injured, and released more details of the incident that's believed to have been fueled by illegal drugs.

Anthony Valandra, 42, shot another man inside an apartment Monday night with a semi-automatic pistol. A private security guard outside the building shot him in the leg then Valandra shot himself in the head, police said.

Valandra died at a hospital from the head wound, and his death has been ruled a suicide. The man police say he shot was hospitalized in critical condition. Authorities did not immediately identify him.

Police said security guard Trevor Lockrem, 34, of Rapid City, acted in self-defense after Valandra fired multiple times at him and a bystander but missed.

"We've got bullets flying all over the place in this case," Capt. James Johns said. "We are extremely thankful no one else in this densely populated complex was hurt as a result of this very dangerous incident."

Lockrem declined comment to the Rapid City Journal.

Police said they found items in the apartment related to methamphetamine, and that both Valandra and the shooting victim have a criminal history involving drugs.

"Once again, the drug underworld has put our neighborhoods and our families at risk of significant violence," Johns said.

Apartment complex resident Bernadine Red Bear told the Journal that she wasn't really surprised by the incident.

"It could happen anywhere, the world we live in today," she said.

The Latest: Kaine mocks Trump for being not "well informed"

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Latest on the Democratic National Convention and 2016 presidential campaign. (all times EDT):

7:30 a.m.

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Tim Kaine is mocking Donald Trump for being ignorant of "basic civics" and wrongly saying Kaine was a terrible governor of New Jersey.

Hillary Clinton's running mate was governor of Virginia — not New Jersey — and now represents the commonwealth in the U.S. Senate.

Kaine ladled on the sarcasm Thursday, suggesting that "you've got to give a guy a break who's only been in politics for the last month or two and not that well informed."

More seriously, Kaine said the presidential race is an "existential choice for the country" over questions like bringing back torture and "punishing people because of their religion."

Trump has suggested reviving waterboarding against captured extremists and imposing a temporary ban on foreign Muslims entering the U.S.

Kaine was interviewed on ABC News' "Good Morning America."

6:10 a.m.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump is dismissing heavy Democratic criticism as "mostly false stuff."

Trump tells Fox News Channel in an interview broadcast Thursday that "I guess I take it a little bit personally, but you can't let it get you down."

The billionaire real estate mogul was interviewed following a campaign appearance Wednesday evening in Scranton, Pennsylvania. At an earlier campaign appearance, he encouraged Russia to find and make public missing emails deleted by his presidential opponent, Hillary Clinton. This led to a fiery debate over hacking and his urging of a foreign government to meddle in American politics.

In the Fox interview he seemed to back away somewhat on saying he thought Russia was behind the hack of the Democratic National Committee emails, saying "who knows who it is." He called Russian President Vladimir Putin "a better leader" than President Barack Obama because "Obama is not a good leader. He's doing a better job than Obama."

3:20 a.m.

Hillary Clinton has the stage.

Stepping out of the shadows of presidents past, the former first lady, senator and vanquished-candidate-turned-secretary-of-state appeared unannounced on the platform at her nominating convention, pointed a finger at President Barack Obama and gave him a hug.

Clinton had just been anointed the inheritor of Obama's legacy with his vigorous endorsement speech, the candidate who could realize the "promise of this great nation."

"She's been there for us, even if we haven't always noticed," Obama said Wednesday, imploring the country to elect the woman he defeated eight years ago.

Summoning his most famous line from that campaign, Obama said: "If you're serious about our democracy, you can't afford to stay home just because she might not align with you on every issue. You've got to get in the arena with her, because democracy isn't a spectator sport. America isn't about 'Yes he will.' It's about 'Yes we can.'"

Clinton delivers her acceptance speech to Democratic National Convention delegates Thursday night.

Analysis: Obama hopes Clinton can fix what he could not

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Eight years ago, Barack Obama cast himself as the rare candidate who could transcend the polarizing "politics of the past" and bridge divides that had left Washington barely functioning for years. Ultimately, the gulf was too wide — if anything, the political climate in the United

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States worsened.

So, standing before the last, biggest audience he has left, Obama on Wednesday found a successor to carry forward the hopes and aspirations that once rallied millions to his side.

"It can be frustrating, this business of democracy. Trust me, I know," Obama told an adoring audience as he extolled Hillary Clinton for president. "Hillary knows, too."

While Obama gushed over his former rival and possible successor, his own credentials to make that argument seemed weakened by the long list of goals he tried unsuccessfully to fulfill. The mere fact that the country is considering electing Donald Trump — Obama's opposite in so many ways — is a stark reminder that many Americans reject his approach.

Though Obama pulled the U.S. out of recession doldrums, many Americans struggling financially feel left behind. While he secured a sweeping health overhaul and economic reforms that reshaped the American economy, the same gridlock he promised to break through stopped him from delivering new laws and policies to fix immigration, tighten gun restrictions and reduce the role of money in politics.

Those are the same priorities that Clinton is putting at the core of her own campaign. The question for voters is whether she can do what Obama could not.

In front of thousands of die-hard, cheering Democrats, Obama could do no wrong. But heading into the fall, it's unclear how his depiction of the country will be received by the broader voting public.

"By so many measures, our country is stronger and more prosperous than it was when we started," Obama said. "And through every victory and every setback, I've insisted that change is never easy, and never quick — that we wouldn't meet all of our challenges in one term, or one presidency or even in one lifetime."

Just 19 percent of Americans said the country is heading in the right direction in an AP-GfK poll this month, a significant drop from the 39 percent who felt that way a year and a half earlier. Almost 4 in 5 voters feel the country is moving in the wrong direction this month, compared to 3 in 5 in early 2015.

Yet like it or not, Obama's legacy is now Clinton's. His former secretary of state, Clinton has embraced Obama's record and most of his policies as her own.

And her legacy is his. Should Clinton lose and Trump follow through on his promises, much of what Obama built as president could be unraveled.

With only a few months left in office, Obama is now taking stock of what the Democratic Party looks like after his two terms.

Obama's party is better positioned than ever before to appeal to minority and women voters who increasingly drive the outcome of U.S. elections, an advantage Democrats put on display this week by highlighting black, Hispanic, female and LGBT Democrats at the convention.

On the other hand, his party's argument to white men who still make up 1 in 3 voters in presidential elections appears to have gotten muddled along the way, a trend that polls show has deepened on his watch. Vice President Joe Biden said this week that Democrats have done the right thing for them, but added, "The Democratic Party overall hasn't spoken enough to those voters."

For years, Democratic leaders have griped privately that Obama neglected the sometimes tedious work of building up his party and keeping it viable for the next election. This week, after the breach of Democratic National Committee emails led to the party chairwoman's ouster, the White House rushed to distance itself from the party's political organization, where many of Obama's staffers once worked.

What may be Obama's most significant contribution to his party is the enduring power of his political brand. As he took the stage in Philadelphia, there were throwbacks to his own campaign eight years earlier, from the chants of "Yes we can" to the "Obama" signs that bobbed up and down in the crowd in an undulating sea of blue.

Democrats hope that Obama nostalgia will animate voters over the next three months as Obama clears much of his schedule to campaign for Clinton and other Democrats across the U.S.

"Tonight, I ask you to do for Hillary Clinton what you did for me," he said.

Australia: MH370 captain's simulator had Indian Ocean route

KRISTEN GELINEAU, Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Australian officials confirmed on Thursday that data recovered from a home flight simulator owned by the captain of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 showed that someone had used the device to plot a course to the southern Indian Ocean, where the missing jet is believed to have crashed.

There has been confusion over exactly what was found on Capt. Zaharie Ahmad Shah's flight simulator since New York Magazine reported last week that an FBI analysis of the device showed Zaharie had conducted a simulated flight to the southern Indian Ocean less than a month before the plane vanished along a similar route. The magazine cited the discovery as strong evidence that the disappearance was a premeditated act of mass murder-suicide at the hands of the captain.

Australia's Joint Agency Coordination Center — which is overseeing the search for the plane off Australia's west coast — confirmed in an email to The Associated Press that the captain's simulator showed that "someone had plotted a course to the southern Indian Ocean." In an earlier statement, it said that evidence of the route did not prove that Zaharie had planned to steer the plane off course and showed only "the possibility of planning" for such an event.

Malaysia's national police chief Khalid Abu Bakar declined to comment Thursday, saying investigations will not be conclusive until the black boxes — the cockpit voice recorder and a data recorder — are recovered.

"We cannot confirm anything. Whatever findings now are not conclusive until we recover the black box which will tell us what actually happened ... if not, everything else is speculative," he said.

Asked if the police investigation so far had ruled out the pilot suicide, Khalid said: "I never rule out anything."

He said Malaysian police had never handed any document or information to any authority abroad including the FBI. However, Malaysia's own transport minister confirmed two years ago that Malaysia was working with the FBI to analyze data from the simulator's hard drives.

Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai on Wednesday insisted there was no evidence to prove that Zaharie had plotted the same course as the doomed airliner into the machine.

Earlier this week, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declined to offer any details on what evidence had been found on the simulator, saying it was a matter for Malaysia, which is leading the investigation into the missing plane.

"I just note that even if the simulator information does show that it is possible or very likely that the captain planned this shocking event, it does not tell us the location of the aircraft," Turnbull told reporters.

Officials have been stymied in their efforts to explain why the Boeing 777 carrying 239 people veered so far off course during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014. Theories have ranged from a deliberate murder-suicide plot by one of the pilots, to a hijacking, to a mechanical catastrophe. Similarly, search crews have been unable to find the main wreckage of the plane despite a sweeping underwater hunt of a remote stretch of ocean off Australia's west coast.

Last week, officials from Malaysia, Australia and China announced that the underwater search will be suspended once the current search area has been completely scoured. Crews have fewer than 10,000 square kilometers (3,900 square miles) left to scan of the 120,000-square-kilometer (46,300-square-

mile) search area, and should finish their sweep of the region by the end of the year.

Satire site blames Merkel for burnt pizza, Pokemon problems

BERLIN (AP) — Who's to blame for socks with holes and empty beer glasses?

Angela Merkel, according to a Facebook page set up by Germans with a satirical sense of humor.

The page "Danke Merkel" — meaning "thanks, Merkel" — blames the German chancellor for many of life's little problems, including burnt pizza, broken pencils and overloaded "Pokemon Go" servers.

While it's unclear who created the page, it appears to be poking fun at German nationalists who regularly use social media to accuse the chancellor of trying to harm her own country.

Zimbabwe police detain spokesman of former loyalist group

FARAI MUTSAKA, Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Zimbabwe police have detained the spokesman of the veterans association that turned on President Robert Mugabe last week and called him dictatorial, raising concerns that a crackdown on what had been the president's most loyal supporters has begun.

Douglas Mahiya's detention comes a day after the 92-year-old Mugabe vowed "severe" punishment for the authors of the harshly worded statement by the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association.

Mahiya was detained on Wednesday night, police spokeswoman Charity Charamba said Thursday.

The veterans have been Mugabe's core loyalists since the southern African country's 1970s liberation war against white rule, often using violence to crush the opposition.

Frustration is growing in Zimbabwe over its rapidly deteriorating economy and alleged corruption, which the veterans' statement blamed on "bankrupt leadership."

"This rot needs to be uprooted, and right now," they said.

The association, whose members are in their 60s and older, also announced it would no longer support Mugabe's political campaigns, accusing him of abandoning the veterans for the youth league of the ruling ZANU-PF party.

The 92-year-old Mugabe told thousands of supporters on Wednesday that Western countries had infiltrated the veterans association. The president also demanded new leaders for the group.

Despite growing criticism that included nationwide protests organized via social media earlier this month, Mugabe has repeatedly said he plans to run again in 2018 and rule until he dies.

The world's oldest head of state has been in power for 36 years, and this month he told critics to leave Zimbabwe if they are unhappy with conditions at home.

Pope leads Mass celebrating Poland's deep Catholic roots

FRANCES D'EMILIO, Associated Press

CZESTOCHOWA, Poland (AP) — Pope Francis, visiting a shrine cherished by Poles, praised native son St. John Paul II on Thursday as a "meek and powerful" herald of mercy, and honored the countless "ordinary yet remarkable people" in Poland who held firm to their Catholic faith throughout adversity in the former Communist nation.

The Argentine pontiff, who had never had set foot in Eastern Europe before this week's five-day pilgrimage, gazed in awe for several minutes as he studied the Jasna Gora monastery shrine's iconic image of the so-called Black Madonna and Child. The faces in the images are blackened by centuries of varnish and candle soot since the artwork became the object of veneration, starting in the 14th century.

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A silver screen was raised slowly and dramatically to unveil the image as Francis stood silently in admiration and then prayed.

Then, during an outdoor Mass near the southern town of Czestochowa, before a crowd that appeared to number more than 100,000, Francis lavished praise on Poland's steadfast Catholic legacy as he urged Poles to hold fast to their faith.

As Francis walked up to the altar he tripped and fell over, but was quickly helped to his feet by others.

The Mass was held in celebration of the 1,050th anniversary this year of the Poland's acceptance of Roman Catholicism. The baptism of a medieval king in 966 put the nation on course to be part of the Latin-speaking Western world, setting it apart culturally from Orthodox nations in the region.

"Our minds turn to so many sons and daughters of your own people, like the martyrs who made the defenseless power of the Gospel shine forth, like those ordinary yet remarkable people who bore witness to the Lord's love amid great trials," Francis said in his homily, speaking in Italian and pausing for a priest to translate his words into Polish.

He then cited two beloved Polish saints, praising those meek and powerful heralds of mercy who were Sts. John Paul II and Faustina. "Through these channels of his love, the Lord has granted priceless gifts to the whole Church and to all mankind."

Francis then recalled the far less famous soldiers of the faith in Poland.

"Your own history, shaped by the Gospel, the cross and fidelity to the church, has seen the contagious power of a genuine faith, passed down from family to family, from fathers to sons and above all from mothers and grandmothers, whom we need so much to thank," he said.

Francis then urged today's Poles to stay united, as their nation is divided over such issues as how to view refugees and migrants, especially those who aren't Christians. He prayed that Poles would have "the desire to leave behind all past wrongs and wounds, and to build fellowship for all, without ever yielding to the temptation to withdraw or to domineer."

The pope did not elaborate. A right-wing government came to power in Poland last year that has faced international scrutiny for eroding past democratic gains, and many critics say they see a rise in xenophobic sentiment in the country.

Worry about bad weather prompted a last-minute change in his day's travel plans, with the pontiff opting to take a car instead of a military helicopter to Czestochowa, 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Krakow. But the gray skies held into the Mass.

Francis' visit to Poland centers around a Catholic youth jamboree that has drawn hundreds of thousands of participants this week. He will have his first big meeting with the young faithful in a Krakow meadow Thursday evening.

En route, Francis made an unscheduled stop at a clinic to visit and pray for comatose Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, an-89-year-old retired prelate who had been archbishop of Krakow. Marcharski had replaced Cardinal Karol Wojtyla in the post after the latter was elected the world's first Polish pontiff, John Paul II, in 1978.

With John Paul a national hero as well as a beloved saint, Francis on this five-day trip finds himself in a deeply Catholic country that is attached to Czestochowa, where the shrine is located, and where a main boulevard is named after John Paul.

In his first speech after arriving Wednesday, Francis called on Poles to be compassionate and welcoming to those in need, especially refugees. He also met with Polish President Andrzej Duda, whose populist government has virtually slammed the door on asylum-seekers and economic migrants from the Middle East and Africa who are flooding southern European shores. The president also attended the Mass at the Jasna Gora shrine.

Indonesia rebuffs family, global appeals to halt executions

ANDI JATMIKO, Associated Press

STEPHEN WRIGHT, Associated Press

CILACAP, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia rebuffed appeals from distraught relatives, rights advocates and foreign governments to abandon plans to execute 14 people for drug crimes as preparations intensified at the prison island holding death row inmates.

A convoy of ambulances, most of them carrying coffins, arrived Thursday morning at the port town nearest to the Nusa Kambangan prison island, where the mostly foreign drug convicts will be executed by firing squads. Officials began tightening security at the prison several days ago, with more than 1,000 police sent to Cilacap, the port town, and the island.

The European Union and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights called on Indonesia to impose an immediate moratorium on executions and the Indian and Pakistani governments said they were making urgent efforts to save two nationals among the condemned.

Indonesia has not released an official list of those to be executed but the country's attorney-general said 14 people would be put to death. Community Legal Aid Institute, which is involved in some of the death row cases, has given names for four Indonesians, six Nigerians, two Zimbabweans, one Indian and one Pakistani.

Lawyers and rights groups have raised serious doubts about the legitimacy of the convictions in several of the drug cases, including that of Pakistani Zulfikar Ali, Indonesian Merri Utami and Nigerian Humphrey Jefferson. About 10 women protesting in Cilacap against Utami's death sentence were taken away in a police van on Thursday.

But Muhammad Rum, a spokesman for Indonesia's attorney-general, said the executions are the "implementation of our positive laws" and will not be delayed or stopped. All the cases have gone through a long legal process including appeals, he said. "They all have been given chances at all stages." The foreign ministry also defended the use of capital punishment and the legal process.

In Cilacap, the sister-in-law of Michael Titus, a Nigerian sentenced to death, said his Indonesian wife was returning to Indonesia from West Africa in the hope she would be able to see him a final time. "We will keep fighting to seek justice for our family," said the relative, Nila, who used one name. "Michael is not alone. He has a wife, kids."

From Pakistan, a sister of Ali made an emotional appeal to the Indonesian authorities to review his case. Family members said the Indonesian government had arranged a final meeting between Ali and his wife and mother, who traveled to Indonesia.

"My brother is not a drug smuggler. I swear he is innocent," said Sajida Bibi. "I want to see my brother alive," she sobbed. "Don't send his body to us."

Justice Project Pakistan, a group that provides free legal representation, said Ali's confession following his arrest in November 2004 was obtained by police torture. It said his case has not been properly reviewed by Indonesian authorities despite an internal government investigation casting doubt on the conviction for drug trafficking.

The Indonesian government says the death penalty is necessary for drug crimes because the country is facing a drug epidemic, particularly affecting young people. But critics argue capital punishment is not an effective deterrent and some have also questioned the accuracy of the government's drug abuse statistics.

It would be the third set of executions under President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, who campaigned on promises to improve human rights. His 2-year-old administration will have executed more people than were executed in the previous decade. Fourteen were put to death last year.

Cap. Bintoro Wasono, a Cilacap police spokesman, said two burial sites, one for Muslims and the other for Christians, have been prepared for inmates whose bodies would not be taken by their families.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a statement he's "deeply concerned" by death penalty cases in Indonesia that lack transparency and compliance with the right to a fair trial, including the right to an appeal.

The EU called on Indonesia to "consider joining the wide community of over 140 states that have abolished the death penalty entirely or have adopted a moratorium."

The government of Jokowi's predecessor did not carry out executions between 2009 and 2012, but resumed them in 2013.

Worldwide, China is believed to be the country with the highest number of executions but it does not release figures. Amnesty International estimates several thousand people are executed in China each year. Of the more than 1,600 publicly announced executions last year, Amnesty says nearly 90 percent of them were in three countries: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran.

The Latest: Syrian forces take another Aleppo neighborhood

BEIRUT (AP) — The Latest on developments related to the Syrian war and international effort on the crisis (all times local):

12:15 p.m.

Syrian state media are reporting that government forces have taken another neighborhood from rebels in the contested northern city of Aleppo.

Thursday's report came as the Russian government says safe passage is being offered out of rebel-held areas of the city to civilians and rebels who lay down their arms.

The state SANA news agency says the military has taken control of the Bani Zeid neighborhood and has begun clearing land mines there. It says dozens of gunmen have laid down their weapons and surrendered in the neighborhood.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group says government forces have taken command of large swaths of Aleppo's Bani Zeid. Pro-government forces have been steadily tightening a siege on rebels in the eastern part of the city since last week.

11:55 a.m.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu says Moscow is sending a top general and experts to Geneva at request of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to discuss the crisis surrounding the embattled Syrian city of Aleppo.

The announcement comes after Russia said its forces and the Syrian government would open humanitarian corridors outside Aleppo and offer a way-out for fighters wanting to surrender.

Shoigu said in televised remarks on Thursday that President Vladimir Putin, in response to a request by Kerry, ordered a general and experts to Geneva.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov earlier this week said that recent U.S.-Russia discussions should encourage moderate Syrian opposition groups to leave areas occupied by al-Qaida's branch in Syria, thus helping to implement a truce there.

11:30 a.m.

Syria's President Bashar Assad has offered an amnesty to rebels who lay down their arms and surrender to authorities over the next three months.

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The amnesty offer was issued through a decree on Thursday and urged that all detainees be freed. It says that those who might set free their captives will be exempted from punishment if they turn themselves in within a month. It was reported by state-run news agency SANA.

The offer coincides with a government offensive that has succeeded in completely encircling rebels in the eastern part of the city of Aleppo.

11:00 a.m.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu says Russia and the Syrian government will open humanitarian corridors and offer a way-out for opposition fighters wanting to lay down their arms.

Syrian government forces and allied troops have tightened the noose on the main rebel enclave in the city of Aleppo, urging fighters there to surrender. Humanitarian groups have warned of a major catastrophe if the siege on the rebel-held parts of Aleppo continued.

Shoigu said in televised comments Thursday that President Vladimir Putin has a "large-scale humanitarian operation" that will be launched outside Aleppo to "help civilians who were taken hostage by terrorists as well as fighters who wanted to lay down the arms." Shoigu mentioned three humanitarian corridors as well as food and first aid points outside the city.

Lapel pins with images of ex-NKorean ruler found in South

HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean police found about 200 lapel pins bearing the image of late North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il strewn near the country's main international airport on Thursday, police officers said.

Police were analyzing security cameras to find how the 196 lapel pins ended up in a flowerbed of a hotel close to Incheon International Airport, just west of Seoul, according to a local police officer who requested anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media on the matter.

He gave no further details, but South Korean media said police were looking at a possibility that the lapel pins may have been carried by propaganda balloons that North Korea floated across the border.

The possession of such lapel pins would be illegal in South Korea, where praising North Korea is punishable by up to seven years in prison. North Korea, for its part, enforces strict, state-organized public reverence of the Kim family, which has ruled the impoverished yet authoritarian country since its foundation in 1948.

All North Koreans must wear lapel pins carrying the images of both Kim Jong Il and his father Kim Il Sung or the images of either of them. Portraits of the two Kims hang in public buildings and homes, and their birthdays are the two most important holidays in North Korea.

South Korean officials said they haven't received any reports that North Korea has produced a lapel pin for current leader Kim Jong Un, who took power after his father Kim Jong Il's death in late 2011.

A lapel pin with images of both Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il is considered more valuable than other pins because it's the one given to government and military officials and diplomats. Some ordinary citizens buy that pin at unauthorized street markets, according to defectors and activists in Seoul. A Kim Il Sung pin is more used by citizens than a Kim Jong Il pin, they said.

The rival Koreas restarted Cold War-era psychological warfare after the North's fourth nuclear test in January. Seoul began blaring anti-Pyongyang broadcasts and K-Pop songs via border loudspeakers, and Pyongyang responded by its own border broadcasts and launches of balloons carrying anti-South leaflets.

The rivals are divided along the world's most heavily fortified border since their war in the early 1950s ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Hotter weather expected near blaze that killed 1

TERENCE CHEA, Associated Press

KRISTIN J. BENDER, Associated Press

BIG SUR, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters are bracing for hotter weather and lower humidity in the area near Big Sur where a wildfire has destroyed 34 homes and killed a bulldozer driver working to contain the massive blaze.

Cooler temperatures gave the more than 3,000 fire crews working around the clock a brief respite Wednesday but forecasters say Thursday and Friday will bring temperatures in the upper 80s with light winds and low humidity.

Another 10 outbuildings also have been razed by the blaze that has charred 37 square miles (93 sq. kilometers). The blaze is 10 percent contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

On Tuesday, the operator of a bulldozer was killed when it rolled over during the fight against the blaze.

Another operator escaped injury when a second bulldozer rolled over and sustained minor damage, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The name and age of the operator who was killed was not immediately available.

Battalion Chief Robert Fish said the operator was working in steep and difficult-to-access terrain when the accident occurred. Fish did not have further details about the incident but said 60 bulldozers were being used in the fight against the fire.

The death occurred as firefighters worked around the clock against the blaze near a scenic stretch of the California coast, where smoke and the threat of flames forced the closure of state parks near Big Sur, a popular tourist area.

At least 2,000 structures were threatened.

Pacific Coast Highway remained open Wednesday, but its signature views were marred by a dark haze.

"We wanted to see more of the ocean," said Phoenix-area tourist Jim Newby, who drove along the highway with his family Tuesday. "We didn't see a whole lot of it unfortunately, and it's a beautiful, beautiful stretch."

The blaze could crest a ridge and make a run toward campgrounds, lodges and redwoods closer to the shore, officials said.

To the south, firefighters made progress containing a huge blaze in mountains outside Los Angeles, allowing authorities to let most of 20,000 people evacuated over the weekend return home.

The fire has destroyed 18 homes since it started and authorities found the burned body of 67-year-old Robert Bresnick on Saturday in a car and said he had refused to be evacuated.

The fire in rugged wilderness between the northern edge of Los Angeles and the suburban city of Santa Clarita grew slightly to nearly 60 square miles (154 square kilometers). It was 40 percent contained.

U.S. Forest Service spokesman Justin Correll said the 40 percent containment figure was good news but "that means there's still 60 percent of containment left to get. And that's a lot."

There was also high potential for "fire runs" up slopes still choked with unburned brush, he said.

The Big Sur closures were put into place for parks that draw 7,500 visitors a day from around the

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world for their dramatic vistas of ocean and mountains.

Residents of 300 homes were ordered to evacuate and more than 2,000 firefighters were trying to douse the blaze that started Friday.

Eight men who had been working on a marijuana field were rescued near the fire lines Tuesday after spending days wandering smoky trails with little water or food. No serious injuries were reported, John Thornburg, a spokesman with the Monterey County Sheriff's Office, told the Monterey Herald (<http://bit.ly/2ab2Gpy>). Authorities initially said the men had been hiking in the area.

Acting Gov. Tom Torlakson, substituting for Gov. Jerry Brown who is at the Democratic National Convention with other top state officials, declared a state of emergency for both fires on Tuesday night. The move frees up funding and relaxes regulations to help with the firefight and recovery.

N. Korea: US has crossed red line, relations on war footing

ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — North Korea's top diplomat for U.S. affairs told The Associated Press Thursday that Washington "crossed the red line" and effectively declared war by putting leader Kim Jong Un on its list of sanctioned individuals, and said a vicious showdown could erupt if the U.S. and South Korea hold annual war games as planned next month.

Han Song Ryol, director-general of the U.S. affairs department at the North's Foreign Ministry, said in an interview that recent U.S. actions have put the situation on the Korean Peninsula on a war footing.

The United States and South Korea regularly conduct joint military exercises south of the Demilitarized Zone, and Pyongyang typically responds to them with tough talk and threats of retaliation.

Han said North Korea believes the nature of the maneuvers has become openly aggressive because they reportedly now include training designed to prepare troops for the invasion of the North's capital and "decapitation strikes" aimed at killing its top leadership.

Han says designating Kim himself for sanctions was the final straw.

"The Obama administration went so far to have the impudence to challenge the supreme dignity of the DPRK in order to get rid of its unfavorable position during the political and military showdown with the DPRK," Han said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The United States has crossed the red line in our showdown," he said. "We regard this thrice-cursed crime as a declaration of war."

Although North Korea had already been heavily sanctioned internationally for its nuclear weapons and long-range missile development programs, Washington's announcement on July 6 was the first time Kim Jong Un has been personally sanctioned.

Less than a week later, Pyongyang cut off its final official means of communications with Washington — known as the New York channel. Han said Pyongyang has made it clear that everything between the two must now be dealt with under "war law."

Kim and 10 others were put on the list of sanctioned individuals in connection with alleged human rights abuses, documented by the United Nations Human Rights Commission, that include a network of political prisons and harsh treatment of any kind of political dissent in the authoritarian state. U.S. State Department officials said the sanctions were intended in part to highlight those responsible for the abuses and to pressure lower-ranking officials to think twice before carrying them out.

Pyongyang denies abuse claims and says the U.N. report was based on fabrications gleaned from disgruntled defectors. Pointing to such things as police shootings of black Americans and poverty in even

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the richest democracies, it says the West has no moral high ground from which to criticize the North's domestic political situation. It also says U.S. allies with questionable human-rights records receive less criticism.

Han took strong issue with the claim that it not the U.S. but Pyongyang's continued development of nuclear weapons and missiles that is provoking tensions.

"Day by day, the U.S. military blackmail against the DPRK and the isolation and pressure is becoming more open," Han said. "It is not us, it is the United States that first developed nuclear weapons, who first deployed them and who first used them against humankind. And on the issue of missiles and rockets, which are to deliver nuclear warheads and conventional weapons warheads, it is none other than the United States who first developed it and who first used it."

He noted that U.S.-South Korea military exercises conducted this spring were unprecedented in scale, and that the U.S. has deployed the USS Mississippi and USS Ohio nuclear-powered submarines to South Korean ports, deployed the B-52 strategic bomber around South Korea and is planning to set up the world's most advanced missile defense system, known by its acronym THAAD, in the South, a move that has also angered China.

Echoing earlier state-media reports, Han ridiculed Mark Lippert, the U.S. ambassador to South Korea, for a flight on a U.S. Air Force F-16 based in South Korea that he said was an action "unfit for a diplomat."

"We regard that as the act of a villain, who is a crazy person," Han said of the July 12 flight. "All these facts show that the United States is intentionally aggravating the tensions in the Korean Peninsula."

Han warned that Pyongyang is viewing next month's planned U.S.-South Korea exercises in this new context and will respond if they are carried out as planned.

"Nobody can predict what kind of influence this kind of vicious confrontation between the DPRK and the United States will have upon the situation on the Korean Peninsula," he said. "By doing these kinds of vicious and hostile acts toward the DPRK, the U.S. has already declared war against the DPRK. So it is our self-defensive right and justifiable action to respond in a very hard way.

"We are all prepared for war, and we are all prepared for peace," he said. "If the United States forces those kinds of large-scale exercises in August, then the situation caused by that will be the responsibility of the United States."

Last year's Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercises involved 30,000 American and 50,000 South Korean troops and followed a period of heightened animosity between the rival Koreas sparked by land mine explosions that maimed two South Korean soldiers. In the end, the exercises escalated tensions and rhetoric, but concluded with no major incidents.

Han dismissed calls for Pyongyang to defuse tensions by agreeing to abandon its nuclear program.

"In the view of cause and effect, it is the U.S. that provided the cause of our possession of nuclear forces," he said. "We never hide the fact, and we are very proud of the fact, that we have very strong nuclear deterrent forces not only to cope with the United States' nuclear blackmail but also to neutralize the nuclear blackmail of the United States."

Takeaways: Obama vouches for Clinton, Kaine steps up

MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — President Barack Obama used what is likely his last high-profile speech as president to make a powerful case for Hillary Clinton's election, saying it wasn't even a close choice between her and Donald Trump, whom he described as a homegrown demagogue.

Obama was the biggest of a number of big-name speakers Wednesday, the third day of the Demo-

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cratic National Convention. Vice President Joe Biden also made an emotional valedictory speech, and Clinton's running mate, Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, introduced himself to the nation.

All attacked Trump, who generated controversy earlier in the day by encouraging Russia to find and make public emails deleted by Clinton — an extraordinary suggestion that a foreign power meddle in U.S. elections.

Here are the top takeaways from Day Three of the Democratic National Convention:

OBAMA SALUTES CLINTON

Obama left no doubt that he was "ready to pass the baton" to Clinton.

He vouched for his former secretary of state's national security credentials, praising her as someone who keeps her cool in a crisis and "never, ever quits." Obama said Clinton is trusted by world leaders and will keep America safe.

Beyond personal ties and party loyalty, a big motivation for Obama's robust support is concern that Trump would unravel his legacy if the Republican wins in November.

Obama painted an optimistic picture of the country that contrasted sharply with the "deeply pessimistic vision" of America presented at last week's GOP convention.

In an implicit attack on Trump, Obama said traditional American values held by his grandparents — such as modesty, honesty and kindness — continue today and that "anyone who threatens our values, whether fascists or communists or jihadists or homegrown demagogues, will always fail in the end."

INTRODUCING KAINE

Kaine looked to build up his nice-guy image, but also take on the traditional vice presidential candidate role of attack dog.

The Virginia senator introduced himself to the many Americans who had never heard of him before he was tapped by Clinton last week. "I never expected to be here," he said.

He went on to ridicule Trump's habit of saying no more than "believe me" when offering vague details of how he'd build a wall on the Mexican border or destroy the Islamic State group "so fast."

ARE YOU LISTENING RUSSIA?

Trump touched off a firestorm with his comments about Russia, even as he dismissed suggestions from Democrats that Moscow was already acting on his behalf.

Responding to reports that Russia may have hacked Democratic party emails, Trump said he hopes Russia will find emails Clinton says she deleted from her years as secretary of state. "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," Trump said.

Democrats said the comments were the latest demonstration that Trump is unqualified to be commander in chief.

BIDEN BOWS OUT

Biden, who made a wrenching decision not to run for president, fired up delegates with a searing attack on Trump. Biden said Trump "has no clue" about the needs of working-class people or what makes the nation great.

Biden described Trump's claim to care about the middle class as "a bunch of malarkey." Delegates chanted "not a clue, not a clue" and jumped to their feet.

Biden, a loyal Democratic soldier and a popular figure within the party, said Clinton "has always been there for you. It's her life story."

NO LOVE AMONG NEW YORKERS

Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg denounced Trump as a "dangerous demagogue" and said his fellow New York billionaire was little more than a con artist with a well-documented record of bankruptcies. "I'm a New Yorker and I know a con when I see one," said Bloomberg, who was first elected as a Republican and now is an independent.

"Trump says he wants to run the nation like he's run his business. God help us," Bloomberg said.

Democratic donors, allies offer reward for Trump tax returns

JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The wealthy Democratic donors, many of them executives who run complex businesses, know firsthand how revealing tax returns can be. Perhaps that's why they can't stop talking about Republican nominee Donald Trump's refusal to release his.

In their suites at the Ritz Carlton hotel, where many are staying during this week's Democratic convention, and at its auxiliary swanky parties, the supporters of Hillary Clinton are sounding the alarm about Trump's break with decades of presidential campaign tradition.

Clinton put out eight years of recent tax filings last summer, and they lament that voters don't seem to understand why Trump's refusal to do the same matters.

Democratic talk of the taxes spilled onto the convention stage Wednesday night. Vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine, mocking Trump, said, "Believe me, there's nothing suspicious in my tax returns. Believe me!" The crowd laughed.

There's even a literally a bounty for the Trump documents.

Moishe Mana, a top fundraiser for Clinton, has offered to give \$1 million to the charity of Trump's choice if he makes them public. He joins an unnamed Republican donor working with Clinton ally David Brock who has made a similar offer of \$5 million.

"Through his financial documents, we are trying to break into the image that he's portraying to the American people," said Mana, a real estate developer in Miami. "He says he's a successful businessman who wants to do for the country what he did for his company. Well, go ahead, show me the money."

Trump is unmoved. The billionaire owner of the Trump Organization, an international development company, says the Internal Revenue Service is reviewing his most recent returns and that he'll release them once that audit is complete.

He reiterated that plan at a news conference Wednesday in Doral, Florida. Asked when he would put out the documents, he said: "I don't know. Depends on the audit."

There's no telling whether that would happen before Election Day, but the IRS says there's no legal reason Trump can't make the tax returns public even as they are under review.

The issue has flared up in recent days, in the wake of the hack of emails at the Democratic National Committee that the Obama administration said Wednesday was almost certainly the work of Russia. The group WikiLeaks released the emails on the eve of the convention, a leak its leader Julian Assange has said was timed to inflict political damage on Clinton.

Trump said Wednesday that he has no ties to Russia whatsoever, but that hasn't stopped Democratic donors in Philadelphia from saying that in the absence of Trump's tax returns, voters are left to wonder whether there are undisclosed financial ties between Trump and foreign entities.

"Think of what's gone on just this week and connect the dotted lines," said top Clinton donor J.B. Pritzker, a billionaire venture capitalist in Chicago. "I'm not sure what's going on, but it sure doesn't look good. The question is who his investors are, and whether there are any in China or Russia that are

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affecting his personal income.”

Mana also wants that answered. If Trump’s elected president, he said, “how much in debt would we be to other countries? This is about the security of the United States. We have the right to make sure he’s not in debt to other countries.”

While information about Trump’s debts has been made public in personal financial disclosures filed with federal election regulators, the Democratic donors say access to his taxes might shed light on previously unknown business arrangements. The returns would also detail for the first time how much he pays in income tax and how much he gives to charity.

“He is obfuscating in order to avoid being discovered as a liar,” Pritzker said.

The 2012 GOP nominee, Mitt Romney, resisted putting out his 2011 tax return until the September just before the election, after being pressed for months about doing so. The documents showed he paid an effective tax rate of 14.1 percent, far lower than the average person, spawning days of bad headlines.

Other presidential candidates, including Republican Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, have been dinged for not giving much to charity.

Bill and Hillary Clinton paid an overall federal tax rate of 31.6 percent between 2007 and 2014, her returns showed. In 2014, they donated almost 11 percent of their income to charity.

In addition to blaming the IRS audit, Trump has said in interviews that it might not make political sense for him to put out his returns.

Romney’s returns were “a tiny peanut compared to mine,” Trump said on “Meet the Press” in an interview that aired last Sunday. There was little controversial in the Romney documents, he said.

Yet the media “made him look bad,” Trump said. “In fact, I think he lost his election because of that.”

AP FACT CHECK: Many claims, some warped

CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER, Associated Press

EDITOR’S NOTE _ A look at the veracity of claims by political figures

WASHINGTON (AP) — It’s hot out there, politically speaking, with Hillary Clinton’s convention going full steam and Donald Trump refusing to stay quiet while Democrats put on their big show. Reality is sometimes getting warped in the process.

A look at some claims Wednesday and how they compare with the facts, on a day packed with a lengthy news conference by Trump and evening convention speeches by high-powered Democrats, capped by President Barack Obama:

OBAMA: “After a century of trying, we declared that health care in America is not a privilege for a few, but a right for everybody.”

THE FACTS: Obama’s health care overhaul does guarantee that people with pre-existing medical conditions can no longer be denied health insurance, but it also made coverage an obligation for everybody. People must have coverage or face fines from the IRS. That mandate remains highly unpopular.

The law provides subsidies to help low- to middle-income people purchase a private plan. But even so, some find their premiums too high. And nearly 29 million remain uninsured, according to government estimates. Health care as a “right for everybody” may better describe Bernie Sanders’ idea of a government-run system for all. That system also entails obligations: the higher taxes that would be collected to pay for it.

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VIRGINIA SEN. TIM KAINE, Clinton's running mate: "You can go to HillaryClinton.com right now and find out exactly how she'll make the biggest investment in new jobs in generations."

THE FACTS: It's the biggest in generations only if you don't count Obama's \$814 billion 2009 stimulus, a curious omission for a Democrat.

Clinton promises to spend \$275 billion over five years on roads, bridges and other infrastructure. Obama's stimulus was more of a hodge-podge and included tax cuts as well as aid to state and local governments. But all of it was intended to boost the economy and hiring.

TRUMP: "I never met Putin, I don't know who Putin is. ... I've never spoken to him." — Miami news conference, during a discussion of whether Russia had hacked into emails of the Democratic National Committee.

THE FACTS: Not so long ago, Trump bragged about how well he knew Russian President Vladimir Putin. Now he says he doesn't know him at all. That appears to be closer to the truth.

In November, when he was trying to burnish his foreign-policy credentials during a GOP primary debate, he said of Putin, "I got to know him very well because we were both on '60 Minutes,' we were stablemates, and we did very well that night. "

That claim was debunked at the time because Trump's only connection to the Russian leader was that they both appeared on the same show. He was interviewed in New York, Putin in Moscow and they weren't even in the same segment on the program.

OBAMA: "By so many measures, our country is stronger and more prosperous than it was when we started."

THE FACTS: That progress doesn't include much of an increase in household income, the yardstick people generally consider their most important measure of prosperity. The typical household now earns \$57,206 a year, according to Sentier Research. That's 2 percent higher than in June 2009, when the recession ended and six months into Obama's term. (All figures are adjusted for inflation). But it has barely budged since it was \$57,147 in December 2007, when the recession began.

KAINE: "I want to tell you why I trust Hillary Clinton. First, she's consistent."

THE FACTS: Not always — not on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, for example. She promoted the deal as the "gold standard" of trade agreements when she was secretary of state, then turned against it as a candidate who was facing a stiff contest from a primary rival who fiercely and consistently opposed the deal, Bernie Sanders.

Clinton hasn't been consistent in her explanations of why she had her own email server as secretary of state, changing her story as investigations revealed more about her email practices. That issue has contributed to public distrust of Clinton, a problem Kaine was trying to address in broaching the subject of trust in his remarks.

TRUMP: "I never had a second thought in my life."

THE FACTS: He may want to have a second thought about that thought.

In April, Trump told The New York Times that he should not have retweeted an unflattering photo of Heidi Cruz, wife of GOP primary rival Ted Cruz. "Yeah, it was a mistake," he said. "If I had to do it again, I wouldn't have sent it."

Then in May, he had a third thought.

He told Fox News that "I'm not walking it back" after all, and Mrs. Cruz was fair game because she

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was so involved in the campaign.

Then in the same interview, he had a fourth thought that was much like the second one: "I wish I didn't do it."

KAINE: "She'll make it possible to graduate from college debt-free."

THE FACTS: Hillary Clinton's plans would certainly reduce costs, but many students would probably still have to borrow. She has proposed that families who earn less than \$125,000 a year will be able to go to in-state colleges and universities tuition-free. Yet many students would still have to pay for room and board, which can make up at least half the cost of attending college.

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN, on Trump: "I know he's trying to be tough but he's going to go out and carpet bomb. You want to make friends and influence people in the Middle East? So you're going to go carpet bomb innocent people and bad people at the same time, and that's going to help us fight against ISIS?" — on MSNBC.

TRUMP: "I never said I wanted to carpet bomb. That was Ted Cruz."

THE FACTS: Trump is right. It was his former Republican rival who said repeatedly he would carpet bomb Islamic State targets.

Carpet bombing, by its nature, risks killing large numbers of innocent civilians because it is indiscriminate.

Trump has indeed talked tough about IS, vowing to "bomb the hell" out of the group, level the oil facilities it controls and "blow up every single inch, there would be nothing left." He didn't say what there would be nothing left of: an IS encampment, for example, or a city? But he did not call for carpet bombing; Biden put Cruz's words in Trump's mouth.

LEON PANETTA, former CIA director: "Hillary Clinton is the only candidate who has laid out a comprehensive plan to defeat and destroy ISIS and keep America safe." — Democratic convention speech.

THE FACTS: Clinton has been touting her plan for months. It's hardly comprehensive.

The three-part strategy, as described in November, involves crushing IS "on its home turf" in the Middle East, disrupting terrorist infrastructure on the ground and online, and protecting America and its allies.

All are elements already included in Obama's anti-IS strategy. And none addresses the biggest gaps in the U.S.-led response to the Islamic State over the last two years, such as the lack of effective local troops to defeat IS in Syria.

At what point should U.S. ground troops step in? What levels of civilian deaths are acceptable? How exactly does she propose to end Iraq's age-old Shiite-Sunni divisions?

She hasn't said. She's expounded further, but mostly to reject suggestions by Trump and other Republicans.

TRUMP: "I am a person that believes in enhanced interrogation, yes. And by the way, it works."

THE FACTS: While some intelligence officials still maintain the torture of terrorist suspects thwarted plots, none has pointed to a specific instance. The Senate intelligence committee's report in late 2014 concluded that no actionable intelligence was gained from the detainees who were put in ice baths, threatened with death, kept in cages, waterboarded and subjected to sleep deprivation, booming music and other forms of psychological torture.

TRUMP: "Hundreds of people walked out of the Democrat convention last night. I didn't even hear

about it. Nobody showed it. "

THE FACTS: If he didn't hear about it, how does he know about it?

The walkout by disenchanted supporters of Bernie Sanders was widely reported at the time.

Did hundreds walk out in protest? That's conceivable but impossible to know with precision because this happened at the same time as people were leaving for dinner.

KAINE: "Don't take it from me. Take it from ... John McCain's chief economic adviser in the '08 race, who estimates Trump's promises would cause America to lose 3.5 million jobs."

THE FACTS: That's a reference to Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, who did advise McCain's 2008 presidential campaign, though in only a minor role. His analysis concluded that Trump's tax cuts and trade policies would plunge the U.S. into recession and eliminate 3.5 million jobs. But Zandi has supported other presidential campaigns: In this election cycle, he donated to Clinton.

KAINE: Contractors Trump hired to build his casino in Atlantic City "did the work, hung the drywall, poured the concrete. But a year after opening, Trump filed for bankruptcy. He walked away with millions. They got pennies on the dollar." And people in Florida paid deposits on condos, "but the condos were never built. He just pocketed their money and walked away."

THE FACTS: Trump did stiff contractors on the casino. In Florida, he licensed his brand to a condo developer and appeared in marketing materials, attracting buyers. He was paid licensing fees, but condo buyers lost their deposits when the actual developer canceled the project.

TRUMP: "I have nothing to do with Russia, yes... I built an unbelievable company but if you look there you'll see there's nothing in Russia."

THE FACTS: Trump staged the Miss Universe competition in Russia, traveled there for it and boasted that it drew "almost all the oligarchs."

There's no evidence, though, that he has financial ties to Russia. He has neither developed properties nor licensed his name to buildings there, though he's tried.

He has sold property to Russians, such as a \$100 million Palm Beach, Florida, home in 2008.

Individuals, agencies dodge blame as Freddie Gray case ends

JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Fourteen months after the death of a black man whose neck was broken in a police van prompted massive protests, spawned rioting and toppled the careers of Baltimore's police commissioner and a Democratic mayor poised for re-election, no one will go to jail for the death.

The city's top prosecutor was righteous in her rage Wednesday as she stood behind a lectern perched at the intersection where Freddie Gray was arrested in April 2015.

Earlier in the day, Baltimore State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby had dropped the cases against the rest of the six police officers charged in Gray's death after prosecutors had suffered blow after crippling blow as a judge acquitted three others in rapid succession. Instead of conceding defeat, she blasted the police department for a biased investigation she blamed for failing to secure a single conviction.

"The prosecution of on-duty police officers in this country is surprisingly rare and blatantly wrought with systemic and inherent complications," the Democratic prosecutor said. "Unlike other cases where prosecutors work closely with the police to investigate what actually occurred, what we realized very early on in this case was that, police investigating police — whether they're friends or colleagues — was

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problematic. There was a reluctance and bias that was consistently exemplified.”

Gray died a week after he suffered a spinal injury in the back of the detainee wagon while he was handcuffed and shackled, but not buckled in with a seat belt. Prosecutors alleged the officers involved in his arrest and transport were criminally negligent when they failed to use the seat belt, instead placing Gray face-down and head-first on the floor of a prisoner compartment. The state also said the officers erred when they chose not to call a medic after Gray indicated he wanted to go to a hospital.

Last May, Mosby said in announcing the charges that her decision to prosecute was based on both a police department investigation and a separate, independent investigation conducted by her office.

Three of the four officers who stood trial elected to have Circuit Judge Barry Williams hear their cases without juries. Williams then ruled three times in a row that although the officers may have exercised poor judgment, the state presented no evidence to prove they meant to hurt Gray. Without evidence or eyewitnesses to prove intent, he said, he could not convict. The other trial ended in a mistrial.

The city spent roughly \$7.4 million on the trials, according to Anthony McCarthy, a spokesman for Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake.

The proceedings revealed deep fissures among the police, prosecutors and the people of Baltimore. During the trial of van driver Officer Caesar Goodson, Chief Deputy State’s Attorney Michael Schatzow accused a lead detective of trying to sabotage the investigation; in turn, the detective accused another prosecutor, Jan Bledsoe, of dismissing unfavorable evidence.

Police Commissioner Kevin Davis rejected Mosby’s accusations, saying that “while we are all entitled to our own opinions, we are not entitled to our own facts.” Marc Zayon, Nero’s attorney, said Mosby had “spun a false narrative” in her prosecution of the officers with “no evidence that there was any wrongdoing.”

Ivan Bates, who represented Sgt. Alicia White, added, “it is the Baltimore city state’s attorney’s office that denied justice to the Gray family and to these officers.”

Gray’s death prompted protests and became a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement. Three of the officers charged in his arrest and death are black, and three are white.

Some legal experts say the case’s outcome proves that Mosby’s desire to charge the officers was ill-conceived and politically motivated. To others, her office’s failure to secure a conviction is simply indicative of the grave challenges associated with prosecuting police, and the fact that she brought the charges in the first place should be celebrated as a slice of victory.

“This is part of the pains of breaking new ground,” said Doug Colbert, a University of Maryland, Baltimore, law school professor who observed each trial. “It’s an arduous task that requires dedication. But the message to every police officer is: You must protect and safeguard your prisoner or face possible prosecution. That wouldn’t happen if these cases hadn’t been prosecuted. It would have been just another person dying and the police would continue to engage in the same practices.”

But Warren Alperstein, an attorney in private practice who also watched the trials in their entirety, said Mosby’s inability to convict “was a total failure by the state’s attorney’s office.”

“Considering back in May of last year Ms. Mosby passionately promised the citizens of Baltimore city that justice would be sought through the conviction of these six officers, the bottom line is the state failed.”

University of Baltimore law professor David Jaros said the acquittals and dropped cases will embolden both Mosby’s supporters and critics.

“Different communities experience policing in very different ways and view these cases through very different lenses: For some, there may be a belief that Marilyn Mosby fought the good fight and was

defeated by the resistance of a police department unwilling to prosecute their own. Among others, this will be proof that the charges were not warranted in the first place," he said. "It's striking that this case demonstrates the limitations of expecting a criminal prosecution to resolve very difficult issues."

Obama passes baton to Clinton, imploring nation to elect her

KATHLEEN HENNESSEY, Associated Press

BRADLEY KLAPPER, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Hillary Clinton has the stage.

Stepping out of the shadows of presidents past, the former first lady, senator and vanquished-candidate-turned-secretary-of-state appeared unannounced on the platform at her nominating convention, pointed a finger at President Barack Obama and gave him a hug.

Clinton had just been anointed the inheritor of Obama's legacy with his vigorous endorsement speech, the candidate who could realize the "promise of this great nation."

"She's been there for us, even if we haven't always noticed," Obama said Wednesday, imploring the country to elect the woman he defeated eight years ago.

Summoning his most famous line from that campaign, Obama said: "If you're serious about our democracy, you can't afford to stay home just because she might not align with you on every issue. You've got to get in the arena with her, because democracy isn't a spectator sport. America isn't about 'Yes he will.' It's about 'Yes we can.'"

Wednesday's was the picture of diversity that Democrats have sought to frame the whole week: A black man symbolically seeking to hand the weightiest baton in the free world to a woman. It culminated a parade of speeches over the last 72 hours — from men and women, gay and straight, white, black and Hispanic; young and old — hoping to cast the Republicans as out-of-touch social conservatives led by an unhinged and unscrupulous tycoon.

Reeling off his greatest hits as president, from the auto industry bailout and health care overhaul to landmark deals on climate change and Iran's nuclear program, Obama said the choice was between "a deeply pessimistic vision of a country where we turn against each other, and turn away from the rest of the world" and "the America I know."

"There is only one candidate in this race who believes in that future, and has devoted her life to it," Obama said.

Republican Donald Trump did his best to steal the spotlight Wednesday.

Following reports Russia hacked Democratic Party emails, Trump said he'd like to see Moscow find the thousands of emails Clinton deleted from the account she used as secretary of state. The appearance of him encouraging Russia to meddle in the presidential campaign enraged Democrats and Republicans, even as he dismissed suggestions from Obama and other Democrats that Moscow already was intervening on his behalf.

Trump's comments fed Democrats' contentions that the billionaire businessman is unqualified to be commander in chief. He has no national security experience and has breezily dismissed decades of U.S. foreign policy constants, like standing by NATO allies that long suffered under Russian domination. Yet in a scattershot news conference Wednesday, Trump tried to turn the table on Clinton, saying he believed it unsafe for her to receive national security briefings in light of her well-known email missteps while in office.

In Philadelphia, the Democrats' heaviest hitters including Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and Clinton's running mate, Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, contrasted Trump's unpredictability with their candidate's steadiness.

Following former President Bill Clinton's address a day earlier, they touted Hillary's remarkable journey

from young attorney and Arkansas governor's wife to half of the two-for-one presidency that oversaw a booming economy, without mentioning the scandals; from New York lawmaker to defeated presidential hopeful; from America's top diplomat to the first woman ever put forward by a major party for president.

"There's only one person in this race who will be there, who's always been there for you, and that's Hillary Clinton's life story," Biden said.

"Hillary Clinton is 'lista,'" said Kaine, a former Richmond mayor and Virginia governor who speaks fluent Spanish. "She's ready because of her faith. She's ready because of her heart. She's ready because of her experience. She's ready because she knows in America we are stronger when we are together."

After a quarter-century just behind the men in charge, Clinton gets her turn alone with the American public on Thursday evening.

Many people don't trust her, polls consistently show, a legacy perhaps of the Clintons' 1990s-era controversies from the land deal known as Whitewater to Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky. To her detractors, Hillary's dishonesty has only been reinforced by the revelations over her use of a private email server in government.

And some Democrats still aren't convinced of her candidacy, either, after a difficult primary campaign against Bernie Sanders, a sentiment underscored by the protests of a small but boisterous set of Sanders' supporters.

A consistent message has been Clinton's perseverance. Obama noted his own bruising contest with Clinton in 2008, hailing his erstwhile rival's toughness as a candidate and "her intelligence, her judgment and her discipline" as a team member.

For the all the praise of Clinton, Wednesday's speakers spent significant time attacking her opponent.

"Trump says he wants to run the nation like he runs his business. God help us," said former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, himself a billionaire entrepreneur and an independent whom Democrats called on to broaden Clinton's appeal.

"Our strength, our greatness, does not depend on Donald Trump," Obama said.

Reagan shooter Hinckley will soon leave hospital for good

BEN FINLEY, Associated Press

BEN NUCKOLS, Associated Press

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (AP) — In little more than a week, the only living man to have shot an American president could pack his bags and leave a Washington psychiatric hospital for the last time.

John Hinckley Jr. has already been living with his 90-year-old mother at her home overlooking a golf course in Williamsburg, Virginia, for 17 days each month. Thanks to a judge's order Wednesday, he'll be able to live there full time, starting as early as Aug. 5.

Hinckley was 25 and had suffered from psychosis and depression for several years when he shot President Ronald Reagan and three others outside a Washington hotel on March 30, 1981. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity and committed to St. Elizabeths hospital.

Now 61, Hinckley has graying hair and suffers from arthritis and high blood pressure. He enjoys painting and photography and cares for feral cats. During his time in Williamsburg, he drives himself around town in a Toyota Avalon, going to movies and eating at fast-food restaurants.

The community has been reluctant to embrace him — he's been turned away from volunteer opportunities because of his notoriety and from restaurants where he's applied for part-time jobs. Some neighbors are wary of his presence, although the police chief said there's no need for his officers to pay special attention to Hinckley.

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But unless he violates the conditions of his leave, he won't return to St. Elizabeths, despite opposition by prosecutors to greater freedom for the would-be assassin. The order by Judge Paul Friedman cannot be appealed.

The assassination attempt was fueled by Hinckley's obsession with the movie "Taxi Driver" and its then-teenage star, Jodie Foster. He used a pawn-shop revolver to fire six shots at Reagan, the president's aides and his protective detail outside a Washington hotel, wounding the president and three others.

Doctors have said for years that Hinckley's mental illness was in remission, and Friedman concurred in his ruling. Hinckley was a "profoundly troubled 25-year-old young man" when he shot Reagan, the judge wrote, but has not exhibited symptoms of major depression or a psychotic disorder for more than a quarter-century.

"The court finds that Mr. Hinckley has received the maximum benefits possible in the inpatient setting (and) that inpatient treatment is no longer clinically warranted or beneficial," Friedman wrote.

Hinckley was first allowed to leave St. Elizabeths in 2003 to visit his parents in Washington, and he began staying with them at their home in 2006. For the past two-plus years, he has been allowed to spend more than half of each month there.

People in the neighborhood and around Williamsburg have gotten used to seeing him, even if they're not thrilled about it.

"From a mental illness perspective, I just have some reluctance about having him roam free like this," said Tom Campbell, 77, a retired manager at NASA. "How can he be allowed to roam the streets as if nothing happened?"

Philip Yosway, 85, a retired Navy pilot who lives about 12 miles from Hinckley's mother, had similar concerns.

"I'm not sure he's mentally stable," said Yosway, who added that Hinckley should still be confined as a result of his "heinous" crime.

The police chief of the Kingsmill community, James West, said the new resident will have zero impact on policing operations in the gated community of 2,400. He said officers haven't kept extra tabs on Hinckley during his visits, and that won't change. He declined to comment on whether any residents have ever called the police regarding Hinckley's presence.

"It's going to be business as usual," West said.

Hinckley is likely to be busy. The judge ordered him to work or volunteer at least three days a week. He has volunteered at a church and a local mental hospital, but he has not found a paying job. He described it as "awkward" and uncomfortable to be tailed by Secret Service agents when he inquired about working at Starbucks and Subway, court records show.

Court records have revealed other details about Hinckley's life in Williamsburg. A music lover, he has gone to concerts and looked at music sites online, and he often buys CDs. He's also exploring photography as a hobby and attended lectures at a local art museum. He treats his elderly mother to dinner at Ruby Tuesday and takes her on scenic drives.

He has enjoyed participating in group therapy in Williamsburg, which will continue, per the judge's order. "It's really refreshing to be in a group with people who aren't completely out of their minds," he said, according to court documents.

Many restrictions attached to Hinckley's temporary release will remain in place. He is barred from talking to the media. He can drive alone, but only within 30 miles of Williamsburg, and the Secret Service will periodically follow him. He also must return to Washington once a month so doctors can check on his mental state.

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He will have to reside with his mother for a year. After that, he can live on his own, with roommates or in a group home in the Williamsburg area.

The government could not persuade the judge to order Hinckley to wear an electronic ankle bracelet and install a tracking device on his car.

Hinckley's longtime attorney, Barry Levine, said he and his client were gratified by the order, and that Hinckley has thrived under his new liberties.

"Mr. Hinckley recognizes that what he did was horrific. But it's crucial to understand that what he did was not an act of evil," Levine said in a statement. "It was an act caused by mental illness, an illness from which he no longer suffers."

The foundation that honors Reagan's legacy said in a statement it was strongly opposed to Hinckley's release. Reagan's daughter, Patti Davis, also said she opposed it, writing on Facebook that "forgiving someone in your heart doesn't (mean) that you let them loose in Virginia to pursue whatever dark agendas they may still hold dear."

Reagan, who had emergency surgery after the shooting but was back to work within a month, died in 2004 at age 93. His press secretary, James Brady, suffered debilitating injuries and died of the after-effects in 2014. Brady became an advocate for gun control and the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence used Hinckley's release to renew its call for universal background checks for gun purchases.

Niece of Tibetan priest flees China, says he died of torture

ASHWINI BHATIA, Associated Press

DHARMSALA, India (AP) — The niece of a prominent Tibetan religious leader has fled China and arrived in exile in northern India to reveal what her family says is the truth about the man's death in a Chinese prison.

Nyima Lhamo told The Associated Press late Wednesday that her family believes Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died as a result of torture and not from a heart attack as Chinese officials said.

Nyima, 26, said that her uncle told her mother during prison visits that he was repeatedly beaten and starved and asked to demonstrate his religious powers by police officials.

The family was informed of the high priest's death in July last year and only allowed to see the body after Nyima tied a ceremonial Tibetan scarf to the bars of the prison gate and tried to hang herself.

Nyima and her mother were only given a few moments with Tenzin Delek's body. But other monks in prison, who had dressed his body in monks' robes and laid it on a platform, told them that his nails were black and he had a deep hollow behind his head. Nyima said her uncle's lips had also turned black.

She arrived in the northern hill town of Dharmsala via Nepal Sunday after two weeks on the road with the help of smugglers whom she paid \$9,700 for the trip. Dharmsala is home to the Dalai Lama, the supreme spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists.

She said she made the difficult decision to leave her aging mother and 6-year-old daughter behind to tell her uncle's story to the world.

"We don't trust what China is telling us and demand a thorough investigation into his death," she said.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was sentenced to death in 2002 on charges of terrorism and inciting separatism in connection with a blast in Chengdu earlier that year, but the sentence was commuted to life and later to 20 years in prison. He had denied any involvement and repeatedly claimed he was innocent.

The family was not given a medical report after his death, and Nyima and her mother, Dolkar, were put under house arrest for two weeks to prevent them from spreading the news of Tenzin Delek's death.

Chinese authorities also forbade any search for Tenzin Delek's reincarnation, denying Tibetans their traditional right.

There was no immediate response to Nyima's claims from Chinese officials.

Calls to the Sichuan provincial public security bureau's media section rang unanswered. A man at the press office of the police department in the city of Chengdu said he was not aware of the case.

French identify second church attacker from DNA

PARIS (AP) — The French prosecutors' office has identified the second man who killed a priest in a Normandy church. The office says DNA tests show he is a 19-year-old born in the eastern Vosges region of France, Abdel-Malik Nabil Petit Jean.

He and the other man, Adel Kermiche, also 19, attacked a church during morning Mass in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, outside Rouen, slashed the throat of the priest and took three nuns and an elderly couple hostage. The man was seriously wounded. One nun escaped and gave the alert.

With Auschwitz visit, pope faces complex Polish-Jewish story

VANESSA GERA, Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Two Holocaust survivors took to a stage at the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto this week to perform lively prewar tunes — the 91-year-old played drums and the 88-year-old was on accordion, keyboard and vocals. In the audience several elderly Christian Poles who saved Jews during the Holocaust swayed and tapped their feet to songs in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish.

Poland, a deeply Catholic nation, has a complex relationship with the Jews who flourished for centuries in the Eastern European land before perishing in the Holocaust. It is a deeply emotional story of both betrayal and salvation that Pope Francis will encounter during a somber visit Friday to the former Nazi German death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, where some 1.1 million people were murdered, most of them Jews.

There he will meet with both Christian and Jewish survivors of the camp, as well as a group of Christian Poles who risked their lives during the war to give aid to Jews, a group recognized by Israel's Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations." Church officials and several of the Righteous say it's the first time a pope will ever meet with them, a belated gesture to a group whose acts embody Francis' own determination to help people of other faiths threatened by war and violence today.

Several of the Christians who will meet the pope attended the open-air concert in the former ghetto Tuesday evening, an unusual performance by two Polish-born Jews who live in Florida and whose dream was to return to their birth country with a message of peace. On Sunday they also performed a private concert in front of Auschwitz in memory of the dead.

"I was very moved by this concert," said Stanislaw Swierczewski, an 84-year-old Pole who worked with his father during the war to help Jews escape the Plonsk ghetto and hide them in their attic. He spoke after the concert in Warsaw, which drew hundreds of enthusiastic people. "This is so beautiful and I will remember this day for the rest of my life."

Swierczewski said he was also looking forward to greeting the pope, and has a message for him if he gets a chance to say a few words: Christians and Jews are brothers and sisters.

"We are one family, bred on this soil," he said, pointing down to the ground.

Another rescuer, Tadeusz Stankiewicz, 86, reflected on how his family's Catholic faith — and knowing the difference between good and evil — inspired the help his family gave to Jews. He said he would like to tell Francis how faith and God sustained him in those difficult times.

"He is very modest and our life was just like that," Stankiewicz said.

Jews lived for nearly a millennium in Polish lands, forming Europe's largest Jewish community on the

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eve of World War II, at nearly 3.5 million people. Of those, an estimated 350,000 to 425,000 survived, and most of those ended up fleeing postwar anti-Semitism.

Though Germans were solely responsible for the Holocaust, Jewish-Christian relations in Poland are deeply marked by the war. Prewar anti-Semitism led to the indifference by some Poles to the slaughter of the Jews taking place before them — crimes that occurred as the Germans also murdered some 2.5 million non-Jewish Poles. There were also cases of Poles who murdered Jews themselves or handed them over to the Nazis.

But there were also those Poles who helped Jews, and some were summarily executed with their entire families for doing so. Yad Vashem has recognized 6,620 Polish rescuers, more than from any other nation.

With his visit to Auschwitz, Francis will become the third pontiff to visit the site after predecessors John Paul II, a Pole, and Benedict XVI, a German. There he will pray at an execution wall and in the cell of St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan friar who volunteered to die at Auschwitz to save the life of a family father. Francis will meet with Auschwitz survivors, among them Christians, at the main Auschwitz camp and will meet with the Righteous and members of the Jewish community at nearby Birkenau, where most of the camp's Jewish victims were murdered in gas chambers.

Organizers say his visit to Birkenau will be marked by silence, in a gesture reflecting the horrific nature of the atrocities committed there.

Seven decades after the war the relationship between Poles and Jews is sometimes marked by bitterness, but also many humane gestures of gratitude — like those on display Tuesday evening in Warsaw.

Reuwen Ruby Sosnowicz, the drummer in the Holocaust Survivor Band, said he survived with the help of a Polish farmer who let him sleep in his barn at night and brought him food. He was never able to thank the man because he never even knew his name.

Sosnowicz remembers that the farmer and his family "didn't want us to know who they are even, because they would kill them. People would kill them."

Ahead of the concert he was introduced to several Poles who rescued other Jews, saying "God bless you," to them.

His musical partner, Saul Dreier, survived three concentration camps and worked in one of the factories of German industrialist Oskar Schindler, who has been credited with saving the lives of more than 1,000 Jews. Dreier was in tears at meeting the Christian rescuers, hugging them and shaking their hands.

"Thank you, thank you," he told them.

"We are so bound together that nothing can separate us," Alicja Szczepaniak-Schnepf, an 85-year-old rescuer, told Dreier.

Later, the two even danced together briefly during an opening act by the Sentimental Warsaw Orchestra, which played foxtrots and other nostalgic prewar melodies.

The two men formed their group, the Holocaust Survivor Band, two years ago but were not able to take their show on the road before because they were both taking care of ill wives. When both women died in February within eight days of each other, they took it as a message from on high that they were meant to travel back to their Polish homeland and Israel to perform. The trip was organized by From the Depths, a Jewish foundation active in Poland.

"God wanted us to come here," said Sosnowicz.

He's a skydiver working with a net _ but no parachute

JOHN ROGERS, Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — He's made 18,000 parachute jumps, helped train some of the world's most elite skydivers, done some of the stunts for "Ironman 3." But the plunge Luke Aikins knows he'll be remembered for is the one he's making without a parachute. Or a wingsuit.

Or anything, really, other than the clothes he'll be wearing when he jumps out of an airplane at 25,000 feet this weekend, attempting to become the first person to land safely on the ground in a net.

The Fox network will broadcast the two-minute jump live at 8 p.m. EDT (5 p.m. PDT) Saturday as part of an hour-long TV special called "Heaven Sent."

And, no, you don't have to tell Aikins it sounds crazy. He knows that.

He said as much to his wife after a couple Hollywood guys looking to create the all-time-greatest reality TV stunt floated the idea by him a couple years ago.

"I said, 'You won't believe these guys,'" the affable skydiver recalls with a robust laugh. "They want me to jump out without a parachute.' She said, 'Oh, with a wingsuit.' I said, 'No, they want me to do it with nothing.' We both had a good laugh about that."

But in the weeks that followed he couldn't shake one persistent thought: Could anybody actually do this and live to tell the tale?

Because if anyone could, Aikins wanted to be that guy.

After all, the 42-year-old daredevil has practically lived his life in the sky. He made his first tandem jump when he was 12, following with his first solo leap four years later. He's been racking them up at about 800 a year ever since.

He took his wife, Monica, on her first jump when they were dating and she's up to 2,000 now. The couple lives with a 4-year-old son, Logan, in Washington, where Aikins' family owns Skydive Kapowsin near Tacoma.

Over the years Aikins has taught skydiving, taught others to teach skydiving, even participated in world-record stacking events, those exercises where skydivers line up atop one another as they fly their open chutes across the sky.

He tells of having his chute tangle with others on a couple of those efforts and having to come down under his reserve parachute. In all, he's used his reserve 30 times, not a bad number for 18,000 jumps.

This time, though, he won't have any parachute.

"If I wasn't nervous I would be stupid," the compact, muscular athlete says with a grin as he sits under a canopy near Saturday's drop zone.

"We're talking about jumping without a parachute, and I take that very seriously. It's not a joke," he adds.

Nearby, a pair of huge cranes defines the boundaries where the net in which Aikins expects to land is being erected. It will be about one-third the size of a football field and 20 stories high, providing enough space to cushion his fall, he says, without allowing him to bounce out of it. The landing target, which has been described as similar to a fishing trawler net, has been tested repeatedly using dummies.

One of those 200-pound (91-kilogram) dummies didn't bounce out. It crashed right through.

"That was not a good thing to see," recalled Jimmy Smith, the veteran Hollywood public relations man who, with his partner Bobby Ware, came up with the idea of having someone skydive without a parachute.

Chris Talley, who had worked with Aikins on other projects and helped train him for this one, recommended the skydiver to the two Amusement Park Entertainment executives. He told them Aikins was

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arguably the only guy not only good enough but also smart enough and careful enough to survive this. Smith recalled how the three men gazed at each other with a look of foreboding after that dummy crashed through the net. Then they looked over at Aikins.

"Luke just said, 'No biggie, that's why we test.'"

Fox has had little to say about the stunt other than it will be broadcast on a tape delay, as is the case with all its live broadcasts, says network spokesman Les Eisner. It contains a warning not to try this at home.

That would seemingly be difficult, as Smith and Ware had to scour a good part of the world, from Arizona Indian land to Dubai real estate, before they found what everyone agreed was the best place for Aikins to land.

He'll come down in a dry, dusty, desolate-looking section of an old movie ranch north of Los Angeles where not that long ago Shia LaBeouf was battling "Transformers."

The drop zone, surrounded by rolling hills, presents some challenges, Aikins said, noting he'll be constantly fighting shifting winds as he falls 120 mph (193 kph).

Other skydivers have jumped from planes without parachutes and had someone hand them one in midair. But Aikins won't even have that.

Why?

"To me, I'm proving that we can do stuff that we don't think we can do if we approach it the right way," he answers.

"I've got 18,000 jumps with a parachute, so why not wear one this time?" he muses almost to himself. "But I'm trying to show that it can be done."

Obama boosts Clinton: Carry her like you carried me

JULIE PACE, Associated Press

CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — His own legacy on the line, President Barack Obama implored Americans to elect Hillary Clinton to the White House, casting her as a candidate who believes in the optimism that drives the nation's democracy and warning against the "deeply pessimistic vision" of Republican Donald Trump.

"America is already great. America is already strong," he declared to cheering delegates Wednesday night at the Democratic convention. "And I promise you, our strength, our greatness, does not depend on Donald Trump."

For Democrats, the night was steeped in symbolism, the passing of the baton from a barrier-breaking president to a candidate trying to make history herself. It culminated with Clinton making a surprise appearance on stage to greet Obama with a long embrace, an almost unimaginable image eight years ago when they battled for the Democratic nomination.

Obama urged Americans to summon the hopefulness of that White House campaign, before recession deepened and new terror threats shook voters' sense of security. He robustly vouched for Clinton's readiness to finish the job he started, saying "no matter how daunting the odds, no matter how much people try to knock her down, she never, ever quits."

Earlier Wednesday, Clinton's running mate, Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, introduced himself to the nation as a formidable foil to Trump in his own right. With folksy charm, he ridiculed Trump's list of promises and imitated one of the GOP candidate's favorite phrases.

"Believe me!" he said mockingly, as the audience boomed back, "No!"

Obama's vigorous support for Clinton is driven in part by deep concern that Republican Trump might

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win in November and unravel his two terms in office. He warned repeatedly Wednesday that the billionaire businessman is unprepared for the challenges that would await him in the Oval Office.

Trump fueled more controversy Wednesday when he encouraged Russia to meddle in the presidential campaign. On the heels of reports that Russia may have hacked Democratic Party emails, Trump said, "Russia, if you're listening," it would be desirable to see Moscow find and publish the thousands of emails Clinton says she deleted during her years as secretary of state.

Wednesday night's Democratic lineup was aimed at emphasizing Clinton's own national security credentials. It was a significant shift in tone after two nights spent reintroducing Clinton to voters as a champion for children and families, and relishing in her historic nomination as the first woman to lead a major political party into the general election.

The convention's third night was also a time for Democrats to celebrate Obama's legacy. Vice President Joe Biden, who decided against running for president this year after the death of his son, called it a "bittersweet moment."

A son of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Biden appealed directly to the working class white voters who have been drawn to Trump's populism, warning them against falling for false promises and exploitation of Americans' anxieties.

"This guy doesn't have a clue about the middle class," he declared.

Kaine also picked up the traditional attacking role of the presidential ticket's No. 2. He tore into Trump, mocking his pledges to build a wall along the Mexican border, asking why he has not released his tax returns and slamming his business record, including the now-defunct Trump University.

"Folks, you cannot believe one word that comes out of Donald Trump's mouth," Kaine said. "Our nation is too great to put it in the hands of a slick-talking, empty-promising, self-promoting, one-man wrecking crew."

Liberals, particularly those who supported Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, have grumbled about Kaine being on the ticket, particularly because of his support for "fast track" approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact. Several delegates held up anti-TPP signs as he spoke.

In a move aimed at broadening Clinton's appeal, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg — an independent who considered launching a third party bid for president — endorsed the Democratic nominee. A billionaire businessman himself, Bloomberg took aim at Trump's bankruptcies, reliance on foreign factories and other economic experience: "The richest thing about Donald Trump is his hypocrisy."

President Bill Clinton, filling the role of devoted political spouse, joined the crowd packed to the arena rafters in cheering the attacks on Trump.

The core of Clinton's strategy is putting back together Obama's winning White House coalition. In both his campaigns, Obama carried more than 90 percent of black voters, the overwhelming majority of Hispanics, and more than half of young people and women.

That coalition was vividly on display in the first two nights of the convention in Philadelphia. Women lawmakers were prominently featured, along with young activists, immigrants, and mothers whose black children were victims of gun violence or killed during encounters with law enforcement.

Gun violence continued as a theme Wednesday night as families of mass shooting victims took the stage. Delegates rose in an emotional standing ovation for the mother of one of the victims in last month's Orlando nightclub shooting, who asked why "commonsense" gun policies weren't in place when her son died.

"I never want you to ask that question about your child," Christine Leinonen said.

Though Obama has six months left in office, his address Wednesday had the feeling of a political

transition. He was emotional as he thanked Americans for sustaining him through difficult stretches. "Tonight, I ask you to do for Hillary Clinton what you did for me," he said. "I ask you to carry her the same way you carried me."

Rift between Sanders' loyalists, Democratic brass lingers

GEOFF MULVIHILL, Associated Press

MEGAN TRIMBLE, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The tension between Bernie Sanders activists and Democratic Party brass set to crown Hillary Clinton their nominee lingered in pockets of Philadelphia as the final day of the convention dawned.

Actors and delegates took center stage in smaller and more subdued protests by Bernie Sanders supporters on a mostly quiet Day 3 of the Democratic National Convention.

Susan Sarandon, Danny Glover, Shailene Woodley and Rosario Dawson joined forces as night fell to protest what they consider slights against loyalists of Sanders, a Vermont U.S. senator who competed against Hillary Clinton in the party's presidential primaries before endorsing her.

Sarandon said convention organizers scuttled planned remarks from prominent Sanders surrogate Nina Turner, a former Ohio state senator, at the convention on Tuesday night.

"There's been a lot of difficulty in executing the will of Bernie Sanders' people and surrogates, and this was just a topping for the whole thing because she was ready to go. And she was very, very disappointed," Sarandon said as the other celebrities joined her on a platform. "This has not gone by lightly, and ... we are upset."

Late Wednesday, hundreds of protesters gathered outside the convention site as Vice President Joe Biden, vice presidential nominee Tim Kaine and President Barack Obama spoke inside. There were two distinct groups of protesters; one peaceful, the other anti-government. At one point a protester's clothes caught on fire while trying to stomp out the flames on a burning flag. The protester dropped to the ground and rolled around to put the fire out. Another tense moment arose when protesters knocked over part of a security fence, but police quickly moved in and put the fence back up. The Secret Service said seven people were arrested and will be charged with entering a restricted area. A group of peaceful protesters then sat on the ground and sang as the tension in the streets dropped back to normal.

Earlier in the day, half a dozen Sanders delegates spoke to about 300 demonstrators gathered at a plaza near City Hall, about 4 miles from the convention site, for rallies and speeches.

Erika Onsrud, an at-large delegate from Minnesota, told the people in the crowd that they need to continue to fight. Amid cheers, she exhorted them: "Stay awake!"

Other delegates acknowledged that Sanders' loss was disappointing but told the supporters that they can create change without the Democratic Party and the mainstream media, contending the media contributed to a rigged election.

A few blocks away, police detained 10 protesters at Comcast's corporate headquarters for holding a sit-in accusing the cable TV giant and NBC owner of not reporting the truth. Officers zip-tied them and briefly closed the 975-foot-tall skyscraper to all but Comcast employees. The demonstrators were ticketed and released.

Another group of about a dozen anti-Israel demonstrators protested at a hotel where a number of delegations to the four-day convention were staying. They called for a free Palestine.

The absence of marches was a marked change from earlier in the week, with some Sanders supporters saying their comrades seemed fatigued and frustrated.

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Thousands of activists have taken to the streets during the convention to voice support for Sanders and his liberal agenda. On Tuesday night, the Bernie or Bust brigades watched in dismay as Clinton became the first woman nominated for president by a major U.S. political party.

Demonstrator Shannon Morgan, who's from suburban New York, said she's fatigued by political frustration, long days and hot pavement that burned through the soles of her Vans and scorched the bottoms of her feet.

She described herself as an anarchist socialist and said she can't understand why Sanders supporters are still singing and cheering.

"I don't believe in burning things down," she said, but she added that it's frustrating "to see them still happy and not storm the convention center and sit in."

The longstanding bitterness between Sanders' supporters and Clinton's seemed to grow worse over the past few days after a trove of hacked emails showed that officials at the Democratic National Committee played favorites during the primaries and sought to undermine Sanders' campaign.

Sanders on Monday criticized Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and urged supporters to fall in line behind Clinton for the good of the country. But many were unmoved.

Thousands gathered in the streets outside the convention at the Wells Fargo Center on Tuesday night, and some tried to scale the 8-foot walls around a restricted zone. Police and the Secret Service arrested four protesters.

As of midday Wednesday, only about 75 people were at the nearby park that has become a base for the protesters.

Jennifer Hall flew into Philadelphia from California and said her fellow Sanders supporters seemed tired. She said she came to "comfort the heartbroken, mourn with the mourners and help sustain the effort" fighting against two-party politics.

"We can all cry and keep going," she said.

Merkel to face questions over migrant, security policies

BERLIN (AP) — Angela Merkel is holding her annual summer news conference Thursday at which questions over her government's policy on migrants and security are expected to dominate.

The German chancellor has faced criticism from opponents for her muted response to four violent attacks that shook the country over the past 10 days.

Two of them — an ax attack near Wuerzburg wounding five and a suicide bombing that injured 15 in Ansbach — were the first in Germany claimed by the Islamic State group. Both of the attackers were killed.

In two other attacks — a mass shooting in Munich that claimed 10 lives, including the attacker's, and the stabbing of a woman in a restaurant in Reutlingen — the motive is still unclear.

All attackers but the Munich shooter were asylum-seekers.

Regulators propose huge overhaul of debt collection industry

KEN SWEET, AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau proposed a massive overhaul of the multibillion dollar debt-collection industry on Thursday, which would restrict collectors from calling numerous times a day, require them to have more documentation on what's owed, and give people more ability to dispute their bills.

It would be the biggest overhaul of the debt collection industry since Congress passed the Fair Debt

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Collections Practices Act nearly 40 years ago. Regulators estimate roughly 70 million Americans are contacted by debt collectors each year, and more Americans submit complaints to state and federal agencies about unfair or deceptive practices than any other part of the consumer financial system.

"This is about bringing better accuracy and accountability to a market that desperately needs it," said CFPB Director Richard Cordray.

Like payday loans and so-called binding arbitration agreements — two parts of the U.S. financial system that the CFPB has proposed regulating more tightly — the new proposals from are likely to be resisted strongly by the industry and its allies in Washington.

Under the proposed rules, debt collectors would first have to more substantially prove a debt is valid before starting collection. Collectors typically find business by buying large databases of past-due loans and credit cards for pennies on the dollar, but those databases can include loans discharged in bankruptcy or some too old to legally collect.

The changes would affect only third-party debt collectors. The CFPB has yet to propose rules that would impact first-party debt collection practices, such as credit card companies and payday lenders.

Once a debt is considered valid, the new rules would limit a collector to no more than six communication attempts per week. If someone wants a collector to stop calling a certain number, such as a workplace, the new rules would make it easier to request that.

If a consumer disputes the debt's validity, the proposals would require collectors provide clearer and easier ways for that person to challenge it. That would include a proposed "tear off" portion of a collection notice where someone can specify why the amount is wrong or why the debt is invalid, or allowing consumers to start disputing the debt over the phone. Right now, most disputes must be handled in writing.

Collectors would be required to pause if a consumer disputes a debt, until they collect enough evidence to substantiate it. If the debt is sold, the new collector would inherit the dispute and would still have to provide validation, the CFPB says. This would solve a major source of complaints by consumers that collectors can harass them over debts that are in dispute already.

An advocacy group praised the CFPB for tackling the issue, but said the proposal does not go far enough. Margot Saunders with the National Consumer Law Center said the rules are overly complicated and still lets debt collectors rely on databases that may be inaccurate. The CFPB proposals do not address or increase the penalties that abusive debt collectors could face.

The CFPB is also proposing a 30-day waiting period for loans tied to a person who has recently died, stopping all collection attempts from a surviving spouse or child during that period.

The agency will hold a hearing Thursday in Sacramento, California, to discuss the proposed rules. This is the first step in CFPB's rulemaking process. Once formal rules are written, likely later this year, the public will have 90 days to comment before they go into effect.

Convention: O'Reilly attacks critics; Trump's party crashing

DAVID BAUDER, AP Television Writer

A look at the Democratic National Convention through a media lens:

An angry Bill O'Reilly defended himself Wednesday against critics who suggested he was justifying slavery with his assertion that slaves who helped build the White House "were well-fed and had decent lodgings provided by the government."

Calling slavery an "abomination," the Fox News Channel host said his statement was "not a justification, not a defense of slavery. Anyone who implies a soft-on-slavery message is beneath contempt."

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O'Reilly had made the comment the previous night while discussing First Lady Michelle Obama's convention speech, where she said she woke up every morning in a White House built by slaves. O'Reilly said Obama was right, but his "well-fed" comment created a social media storm.

He said his critics "want me dead, literally dead." He said there was an effort by the "sneaky, disgusting far-left press" to discredit Fox News because it was a network "where (Donald) Trump gets a fair shake" — unlike competitors covering the Republican presidential candidate.

While O'Reilly talked about the controversy that originated on his own show, CNN and MSNBC aired convention speakers who talked about gun violence, including a woman whose mother died in the Sandy Hook school shooting in Connecticut.

TRUMP INVASION: There was little doubt, as Fox News' Bret Baier said, that Trump was the talk of the third day of the Democratic convention with words encouraging Russia to try to find missing emails from Hillary Clinton. Analyst Charles Krauthammer, on Baier's show, called it a clever move that backed Clinton into a corner. CBS News analyst Bob Schieffer suggested that what Trump said was so harmful that it "may well be the turning point in the election."

QUOTE: "I do think some Republicans have been reticent about speaking out because they don't want to look like they're helping Hillary Clinton here. But I think this is bigger than that. This is a threat to the sovereignty of the United States." — NBC "Meet the Press" anchor Chuck Todd.

MEMORIES: His eyes moist, CNN analyst David Axelrod didn't pretend to be impartial about his former boss, President Barack Obama, following the president's address. "I love the man," he said. "In these big moments, he was able to rise up and speak about what is great about this country when the country needed it. I'm just very proud of him tonight."

NO PUEDE: Fox News' Tucker Carlson was bothered by Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine occasionally using Spanish phrases in his speech; time spent in Honduras made Kaine fluent in the language. Carlson said Kaine was, in effect, endorsing bilingualism. "I think this is symbolically important and something we should think about," he said.

QUOTE: "I feel this is the 'gloves-are-off' night." —NBC News' Savannah Guthrie.

RATINGS: Democrats had nearly 5 million more viewers Tuesday night than Republicans did for the corresponding night of their convention last week. That's from the Nielsen company's measurement of the six biggest commercial networks that showed the convention from 10 p.m. until its close. For a second straight night, CNN led the way with 5.93 million viewers, followed by NBC's 5.28 million. After winning last week with the Republicans, Fox News was sixth and last.

BOOKING: "Fox News Sunday" says it has booked Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton this week. It will be Clinton's fourth time on Fox since announcing her candidacy, and her first time on Chris Wallace's show in nearly five years.

Trump to Russia: Uncover, release deleted Clinton emails

ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

JACK GILLUM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump encouraged Russia on Wednesday to find and make public missing emails deleted by his presidential opponent, Hillary Clinton, setting off an instant debate over hacking and his urging of a foreign government to meddle in American politics.

Shortly after Trump's extraordinary remarks, his Republican running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, took a different tack and warned of "serious consequences" if Russia interfered in the election.

Democrats — and some Republicans — quickly condemned the remarks by the Republican presidential

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standard-bearer.

They came as the Democrats met on the third day of their national convention in Philadelphia, where Clinton will accept the presidential nomination Thursday night to face Republican Trump in November.

Trump's comments raised the question of whether he was condoning foreign government hacking of U.S. computers and the public release of information stolen from political adversaries — actions that are at least publicly frowned upon across the globe. His brief remarks managed to divert attention from an embarrassing leak of other hacked emails that exposed sensitive internal political communications that had divided Democrats.

"Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," Trump said. He was referring to emails on Clinton's private server that she said she deleted — because they were private — before turning other messages over to the State Department. The Justice Department declined to prosecute Clinton over her email practices, but FBI Director James Comey called her "extremely careless" in handling classified information as President Barack Obama's secretary of state.

The Clinton campaign called Trump's statement the "first time that a major presidential candidate has actively encouraged a foreign power to conduct espionage against a political opponent."

At a news conference in Doral, Florida, after Trump's initial remarks, he was asked whether he had any qualms about asking a foreign government to hack into computers in the United States. Trump did not directly respond except to say, "That's up to the president. Let the president talk to them."

He later added: "If Russia or China or any other country has those emails, I mean, to be honest with you, I'd love to see them."

Trump's invitation was immediately contradicted by his running mate. Pence condemned any possible cyberespionage, breaking from Trump for the first time since being selected to run with him.

"If it is Russia and they are interfering in our elections, I can assure you both parties and the United States government will ensure there are serious consequences," Pence said in a statement.

At the convention, Leon Panetta, former CIA director and defense secretary, blasted Trump's remarks, saying that Trump is "asking a U.S. adversary to engage in hacking or intelligence efforts against the United States of America to affect an election."

Stephen Miller, senior policy adviser for Trump, battled back, saying in a statement: "It is alarming that Leon Panetta would, through his silence, excuse Hillary Clinton's enablement of foreign espionage with her illegal email scheme and her corrupt decision to then destroy those emails and dissemble her 'private' server to hide her crimes from the public and authorities."

Brendan Buck, a spokesman for Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan said bluntly: "Russia is a global menace led by a devious thug. Putin should stay out of this election."

A Trump campaign communications adviser, Jason Miller, sought to clarify Trump's statements, saying on Twitter that Trump never urged or invited Russia to hack Clinton's emails. Instead, he said, Trump was "clearly saying" that if Russia or anyone else already had Clinton's deleted emails they should share them with the FBI.

Trump never mentioned the FBI in his comments.

It was not immediately clear where or how Clinton's deleted emails might be recovered, unless an adversary had previously hacked the computer server she operated in the basement of her home in Chappaqua, New York, before she had deleted the messages.

The Associated Press, which discovered the basement server's existence in March 2015, previously reported that it was connected to the internet in ways that made it more vulnerable to hackers. The FBI concluded it was possible hackers broke into her server but found no direct evidence.

Wednesday's exchange occurred hours after Obama identified Russia as almost certainly responsible

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for hacking the Democratic National Committee in a different case. WikiLeaks published on its website last week more than 19,000 internal emails stolen from the DNC earlier this year. The emails showed DNC staffers supporting Clinton when they were publicly promising to remain neutral during the primary elections between Sen. Bernie Sanders and her.

The head of the DNC, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, resigned over the disclosures.

Trump cast doubt on whether Russia was behind that hack. He said blaming Russia was deflecting attention from the embarrassing material in the emails.

"Russia has no respect for our country, if it is Russia," Trump said. "It could be China. It could be someone sitting in his bedroom. It's probably not Russia. Nobody knows if it's Russia."

Obama traditionally avoids commenting on active FBI investigations, but he told NBC News on Tuesday that outside experts have blamed Russia for the leak. Obama also appeared to embrace the notion that President Vladimir Putin might have been responsible because of what he described as Trump's affinity for Putin. Trump said he has no relationship with Putin.

In Moscow on Wednesday, Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said Russia would never interfere in another country's election.

Trump's comments were not the first time he urged hackers to release information to damage a political opponent.

He tweeted in September 2014 about one of his favorite topics— Obama's birthplace.

"Attention all hackers: You are hacking everything else so please hack Obama's college records (destroyed?) and check 'place of birth,'" Trump wrote.

Asian stock markets slip as investors await Bank of Japan

KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian stock markets were mostly lower Thursday as investors digested an upbeat Fed assessment of the U.S. economy that raised the prospect of further rate hikes as they anticipate more stimulus from Japan.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 1.0 percent to 16,504.20 and South Korea's Kospi slipped 0.4 percent to 2,016.87. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dipped 0.3 percent to 22,152.12 while the Shanghai Composite Index in mainland China slipped 0.1 percent to 2,987.44. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 0.3 percent to 5,558.40. Taiwan's benchmark edged higher while those in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and New Zealand fell.

FED VIEW: While policymakers at the U.S. central bank voted to keep interest rates unchanged, they noted that "near-term risks" to the world's biggest economy have diminished. The Fed said the U.S. job market has rebounded with signs that hiring is robust. It didn't give a timetable for when it might resume raising rates but analysts said its latest statement revives that possibility.

JAPAN IN FOCUS: Investors are now hoping for fresh stimulus efforts from the Bank of Japan, which is expected to vote Friday on expanding monetary policy measures aimed at reviving sputtering growth in Asia's second biggest economy. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has announced 28 trillion yen (\$266 billion) in extra government spending to jumpstart growth, but details are uncertain.

QUOTEWORTHY: "All focus will be on the Bank of Japan on Friday and trading will be cautious heading into the event," said Alex Furber of CMC Markets in Singapore.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks ended with little change. The Dow Jones industrial average fell less than 0.1 percent to 18,472.17 and the Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 0.1 percent to 2,166.58. The Nasdaq composite rose 0.6 percent to 5,139.81.

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ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 15 cents to \$42.07 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell \$1, or roughly 2.3 percent, to close at \$41.92 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, also gained 15 cents to \$44.06 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 104.86 yen from 105.15 yen. The euro strengthened to \$1.1077 from \$1.1064.

Today in History

The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 28, the 210th day of 2016. There are 156 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 28, 1976, an earthquake devastated northern China, killing at least 242,000 people, according to an official estimate.

On this date:

In 1540, King Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, was executed, the same day Henry married his fifth wife, Catherine Howard.

In 1655, French dramatist and novelist Cyrano de Bergerac, the inspiration for a play by Edmond Rostand, died in Paris at age 36.

In 1794, Maximilien Robespierre, a leading figure of the French Revolution, was sent to the guillotine.

In 1821, Peru declared its independence from Spain.

In 1866, British children's author Beatrix Potter was born in London.

In 1914, World War I began as Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

In 1932, federal troops forcibly dispersed the so-called "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans who had gathered in Washington to demand payments they weren't scheduled to receive until 1945.

In 1945, a U.S. Army bomber crashed into the 79th floor of New York's Empire State Building, killing 14 people. The U.S. Senate ratified the United Nations Charter by a vote of 89-2.

In 1959, in preparation for statehood, Hawaiians voted to send the first Chinese-American, Republican Hiram L. Fong, to the U.S. Senate and the first Japanese-American, Democrat Daniel K. Inouye, to the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he was increasing the number of American troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 "almost immediately."

In 1984, the Los Angeles Summer Olympics opened.

In 1995, a jury in Union, South Carolina, rejected the death penalty for Susan Smith, sentencing her to life in prison for drowning her two young sons (Smith will be eligible for parole in 2024).

Ten years ago: Actor-director Mel Gibson went into an anti-Semitic tirade as he was being arrested on the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, California, on suspicion of driving while drunk; Gibson later apologized and was sentenced to probation and alcohol treatment. A gunman who witnesses said identified himself as a Muslim American walked into the offices of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle and opened fire, killing a woman, Pamela Waechter, and wounding five others before he was arrested. (Naveed Haq was later convicted of aggravated first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without possibility of release.) Former Peruvian President Alan Garcia was inaugurated for a second term, 16 years after leaving office.

Five years ago: The body of the military chief of the Libyan rebels' National Transitional Council, Abdel-Fattah Younis, was found dumped outside Benghazi along with those of two top aides. The president of

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the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Rev. Howard Creecy Jr., died in a fall in his Atlanta home seven months after taking office; he was 57.

One year ago: President Barack Obama wrapped up his trip to Kenya and Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, where he urged African leaders to leave office peacefully after their terms expired. It was announced that Jonathan Pollard, the former U.S. Naval intelligence analyst who had spent nearly three decades in prison for spying for Israel, had been granted parole. In a case that outraged animal lovers, Zimbabwean police said they were searching for an American who had shot and killed a well-known, protected lion known as Cecil during a bow hunt; Walter Palmer, a Minnesota dentist, issued a statement saying he thought everything about his trip was legal. (Officials in Zimbabwe later said Palmer had not broken the country's hunting laws.) Tom Brady's four-game suspension for his role in using underinflated footballs during the AFC championship game was upheld by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Darryl Hickman is 85. Ballet dancer-choreographer Jacques d'Amboise is 82. Musical conductor Riccardo Muti is 75. Former Senator and NBA Hall of Famer Bill Bradley is 73. "Garfield" creator Jim Davis is 71. Singer Jonathan Edwards is 70. Actress Linda Kelsey is 70. TV producer Dick Ebersol is 69. Actress Sally Struthers is 69. Actress Georgia Engel is 68. Rock musician Simon Kirke (Bad Company) is 67. Rock musician Steve Morse (Deep Purple) is 62. CBS anchorman Scott Pelley is 59. Alt-country-rock musician Marc Perlman is 55. Actor Michael Hayden is 53. Actress Lori Loughlin is 52. Jazz musician-producer Delfeayo Marsalis is 51. Former hockey player turned general manager Garth Snow is 47. Actress Elizabeth Berkley is 44. Singer Afroman is 42. Country musician Todd Anderson (Heartland) is 41. Rock singer Jacoby Shaddix (Papa Roach) is 40. Country singer Carly Goodwin is 35. Actor Jon Michael Hill (TV: "Elementary") is 31. Actor Dustin Milligan is 31. Actor Nolan Gerard Funk is 30. Rapper Soulja Boy is 26. Pop/rock singer Cher Lloyd (TV: "The X Factor") is 23.

Thought for Today: "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power. If you realize that you have enough, you are truly rich." — From the Tao (dow) Te Ching, the sacred book of Taoism.