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**Missing North of Groton, a black
600 lb. Heifer Calf.
Yellow Ear Tag #955
If found or seen,
call 605/290-1019.**

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

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

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Opening today**

Today's Schedule

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, tossed salad, dressing, garlic toast, sherbet.

5 p.m.: 8th Grade GBB at Britton/Hecla followed by the varsity game at 6:30 p.m.

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting at Groton Community Center

School Lunch: Spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic toast, romaine salad, fruit.

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

GROTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

**December 19, 2016 – 7pm
Groton Community Center**

- 1) Minutes
- 2) Bills
- 3) Contingency Transfers 2016
- 4) Fund Transfers
- 5) 2017 Rubble Site Fees
- 6) Brown County Deputies Proposed Coop Agreement
- 7) Municipal Legislative Day – February 7, 2017
- 8) SDML report - Anita
- 9) Marcy's Law – Release of Accident Reports
- 10) Exe Session – Legal or Personnel 1-25-2 (1) or (3)

Harry Implement
"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"



(605) 395-6421

Ferney

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings lost to the Indianapolis Colts, 34-6. If you were one of the many who turned their televisions off before the game was over, don't worry, you didn't miss anything. After watching the game, I'm not sure if there are strong enough adjectives to properly describe how horribly the Vikings played on Sunday. The Vikings are not technically out of the playoff race, but they are no longer in control of their own destiny. The team will need to win out and have lots of help if they stand a chance of reaching the playoffs.

The Vikings' offense has been inept all season, but it was especially horrific this week. The Colts have one of the worst defenses in the National Football League, but they looked like the '85 Bears on Sunday. The Vikings were unable to move the ball or find the endzone, finishing with 282 total yards and two field goals on the day.

The biggest story of the week was the return of Adrian Peterson. The Vikings only ran the ball nine times, and Peterson got six of those carries for 22 yards. His 3.7 yards per carry is well below his career average (4.9), but significantly better than what he was getting earlier this season (1.6). It was great to see him back on the field, but until the Vikings improve their offensive line the running game will ultimately remain futile.

The Vikings' offense was anemic, but that should be expected at this point. The truly disappointing aspect of the Vikings' beat-down was the defense. The Colts were starting three rookies along their offensive line, yet the Vikings were unable to get any pressure. Andrew Luck dissected the Vikings' secondary, completing 21 of 28 passes for 250 yards and two touchdowns. Luck wasn't sacked in the game and was only hit twice.

The player of the game for the Vikings is Kyle Rudolph. The tight end had one of the best games of his career, catching eight passes for a team-high 97 yards. Rudolph's 97 receiving yards are tied for the second-most of his career. Rudolph has been consistent this year, and he is far from a liability on the Vikings' offense. I also want to note the play of Anthony Harris, who was filling in for an injured Harrison Smith. Harris led the team in tackles with 15(!) and had a pass deflection.

The player who needs the most improvement is... everyone? For me, it all starts and ends with the defensive line. Against a porous Colts' offensive line, the Vikings' defensive line failed miserably. Everson Griffen had one tackle. Brian Robison had a tackle and a QB hit. Danielle Hunter had a single tackle. Linval Joseph is the only defensive lineman who made a difference with his 13 tackles, but he also had a personal foul that directly led to a Colts' touchdown when he tried to jump the long-snapper on a Colts' field goal attempt. Anthony Barr, who I've spoken about a lot recently, had another shameful day. Barr finished with one tackle, and was routinely out of position (often due to his own actions).

Looking ahead, the Vikings travel to Green Bay to take on the Packers on Saturday (Christmas Eve). The Vikings beat the Packers 17-14 in week 2, and will be looking to sweep their division rivals. The Packers are still in the hunt for the NFC North, and have been looking much better as a team in recent weeks. Unless the Vikings' defense takes a big step forward, this will likely be another blowout.



Groton Community Transit invites you to
their

HOLIDAY BAKE SALE

Wednesday, December 21st

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Coffee, cider and Christmas goodies will
be served.

205 East 2nd Ave
Groton, SD 57445

*If you would like to donate baked goods please contact the Groton
Community Transit dispatch office at 605-397-8661. Any and all
donations welcome.*

Prepare for Medicare Part A and B Price Changes in 2017

By Nathaniel Sillin

If you're eligible for Medicare, or will be in the coming year, there are a few changes you should know about for 2017.

An increase in the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI) means there'll be an increase in Social Security benefits and Medicare Part B premiums. For most recipients the increases almost offset each other, but those who aren't covered by the "hold harmless" provision (about 30 percent of recipients) face a larger Part B premium increase.

These changes, along with several others, will go into effect soon and you should consider how they could affect your budget.

A slight increase in your Social Security benefits. Since 1975, Social Security benefits have an automatic cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The adjustment depends on the CPI and helps keep your benefits in line with the rising cost of goods.

There wasn't a COLA for 2016 benefits, but there is a .3 percent adjustment for next year. Meaning, you'll get an additional \$3 per \$1,000 you receive in benefits. The estimated average monthly benefit for all retired workers is expected to increase \$5, from \$1,355 to \$1,360.

Medicare Part B premiums will also rise. The COLA also affects Medicare Part B premiums, the part of Medicare that covers some types of procedures and medical equipment. However, for about 70 percent of Medicare recipients, the Social Security Act's "hold harmless" provision prohibits an increase to Medicare B premiums of more than the previous year's COLA adjustment.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, held harmless recipients will pay \$109 per month, an increase of \$4.10.

If you aren't held harmless, Part B premiums could increase by about 10 percent. The remaining 30 percent of Social Security beneficiaries will have their Part B premium increase by about 10 percent. You could fall into the non-held-harmless group if you:

Are a new enrollee

Enrolled in Medicare but don't receive Social Security benefits

Get billed directly for Medicare Part B

Receive Medicare and Medicaid benefits and your state Medicaid programs pay your Part B premium

Are a high-income earner subject to an income-adjusted premium

For the non-held-harmless group, the premium depends on the recipient's (or couple's when filing a joint tax return) adjusted gross income (AGI).

The lowest monthly premium, for individuals who have an AGI of \$85,000 or less (\$170,000 for couples), will increase from \$121.80 to \$134 a month per person.

On the high end, for recipients with an AGI over \$214,000 (\$428,000 for couples), the monthly premium will increase from \$389.80 to \$428.60 per person.

Medicare Part A and B deductibles will also increase. Most people don't have to pay Medicare Part A premiums, but you could still have to pay a deductible or coinsurance for some Part A benefits.

The deductible for inpatient hospital coverage, which helps cover the first 60 days of care, will increase from \$1,288 to \$1,316 per benefit period.

Daily coinsurance for the 61st through 90th day of treatment will increase from \$322 to \$329.

Daily coinsurance for day 91 on will rise from \$644 to \$658.

Each day past day 90 counts towards your lifetime reserve. You have a maximum of 60 lifetime reserve days; after which you could be responsible for all costs.

Skilled nursing facility care is completely covered for your first 20 days.

Daily coinsurance for day 21 to 100 of skilled nursing care will increase to \$164.50.

You could be responsible for all costs beyond day 100.

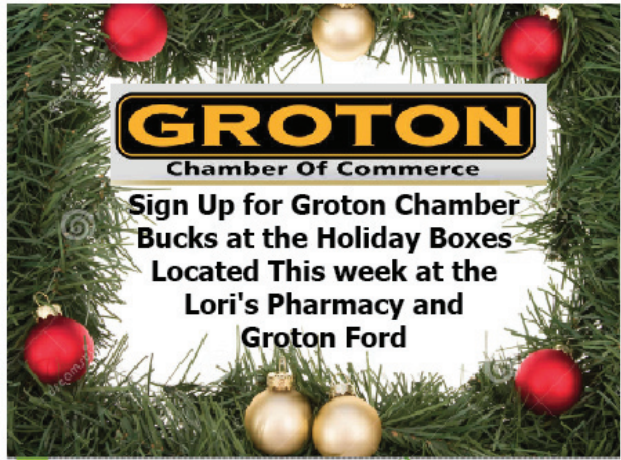
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The Part B annual deductible will also increase, from \$166 to \$183. Generally, after you've met your deductible, you'll pay 20 percent of Medicare-approved costs for services covered by Part B.

Bottom line: Social Security benefits, Medicare Part B premiums and Part A and B deductibles and coinsurance will increase in 2017. Whether you're held harmless or not, take steps to understand which changes could affect you and alter your budget accordingly.

Nathaniel Sillin directs Visa's financial education programs. To follow Practical Money Skills on Twitter: www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney.



Windchill recorded as low as -54

The South Dakota State University Mesonet weather station near Groton reported a wind chill as low as -54F yesterday morning. "Shortly after midnight, the wind chill dropped below fifty below and basically stayed there until about 7:00AM," said SDSU Mesonet Manager Nathan Edwards. Air temperatures plummeted to -33F.

The station is part of the statewide network of 26 locally supported weather stations maintained by South Dakota State University that serve agriculture, water resource management, emergency management, research and the public. The Groton station is supported by a joint research effort between SDSU Extension and DuPont Pioneer. Live, archived and forecast weather is available at <http://climate.sdstate.edu/mobile>.



Today in Weather History

December 19, 1968: Snow and near-blizzard conditions existed across west central Minnesota, with 5 to 7 inches of new snow reported. Heavier snows were reported further to the southeast in Minnesota. Six inches of snow was reported in Artichoke Lake in Big Stone County.








December 19, 1990: Snow began to fall over the northwest part of Minnesota by early afternoon on the 19th, and fell heavily during the night into the early afternoon of the 20th, spreading over the entire northern 2/3 of the state and into some of northeastern South Dakota overnight. By mid-morning, a swath of snow of 6 inches or more was deposited over much of the northern half of the state, or north of a line from Elbow Lake to Garrison to near Two Harbors. In west central Minnesota, Wheaton received 6 inches, Browns Valley received 4 inches, and Artichoke Lake received 3 inches. In South Dakota, Webster reported 8 inches, Britton reported 7 inches, Sisseton reported 5 inches, and Aberdeen reported 4 inches.

December 19, 1777: George Washington led his hungry and weary from long marches men to Valley Forge on this day. The winds greeted the 12,000 Continentals as they prepared for the winter. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

December 19, 2009: Snowfall totals from 1 to 2 feet were common place in what will go down as one of the biggest snowstorms in history on the East Coast and the first of four snowstorms for the Mid-Atlantic during the winter of 2009-10. The 15 inches of snow measured at Reagan International Airport on Dec. 19th was the third highest daily snowfall on any calendar day at Washington, DC since snowfall records began in 1884. The storm total snowfall of 16.4 inches on Dec 18-19 2009 marks the 6th highest two-day snowfall record for Washington, DC putting it just below the second President's Day storm in 2003 and ahead of the Jan 1996 storm. Baltimore Washington Airport saw 20.5 inches of snow and went down as the fifth highest daily snowfall on any calendar day at Baltimore since snowfall records began in 1893. The storm total snowfall of 21.0 inches on Dec 18-19 2009 marks the 6th highest two-day snowfall record for Baltimore. The daily snowfall records for Dec 19 were smashed for the most snowfall for any calendar day during the month of December at the following stations. Reagan National Airport's new record was 15.0 inches, old record 11.5 in 1932. Baltimore Washington Airport's new record was 20.5 inches, old record 11.5 in 1932. This was the biggest December snowstorm on record and setting a record for the snowiest December for Baltimore, MD. Dulles Airport's new record was 16.0 inches, old record 10.6 in 1982. Richmond International Airport had a total of 6.4 inches. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported its second greatest daily snowfall total on record with 22.9 inches. It also was the single biggest December snowfall for the city of Philadelphia, PA. Roanoke, Virginia recorded 17.8 inches setting a record for the greatest 24-hour snowfall in December. Washington, DC reported 16.4 inches of snow making 2009 the snowiest December on record, all in one storm. In New York, Upton on Long Island recorded 26.3 inches, the biggest snowstorm on record.

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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Mostly Sunny	Decreasing Clouds	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow 20%	Slight Chance Snow and Breezy 20%	Slight Chance Snow and Blustery then Mostly Clear 20%	Sunny
High: 24 °F	Low: 19 °F↑	High: 31 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 34 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 28 °F

Warmest Since December 5th!

High Temperatures through Thursday:



Strong Winds I-29 Sisseton – Summit Area this Morning

Localized Wind Gusts of 40 to near 60 mph

White Out Conditions Possible

Blowing Snow



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 12/19/2016 5 AM Central

weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Published on: 12/19/2016 at 5:11AM

After 2 weeks of well below normal temperatures, highs will be in the 20s and 30s through Friday! Very strong winds will continue this morning along and just east of the Sisseton Hills region of northeast South Dakota, with reduced visibility in blowing and drifting snow. Wind gusts of 40 to occasionally 60 mph will be possible, especially on Interstate-29 between Summit and Peever. Expect winds to weaken this afternoon, before increasing again tonight.

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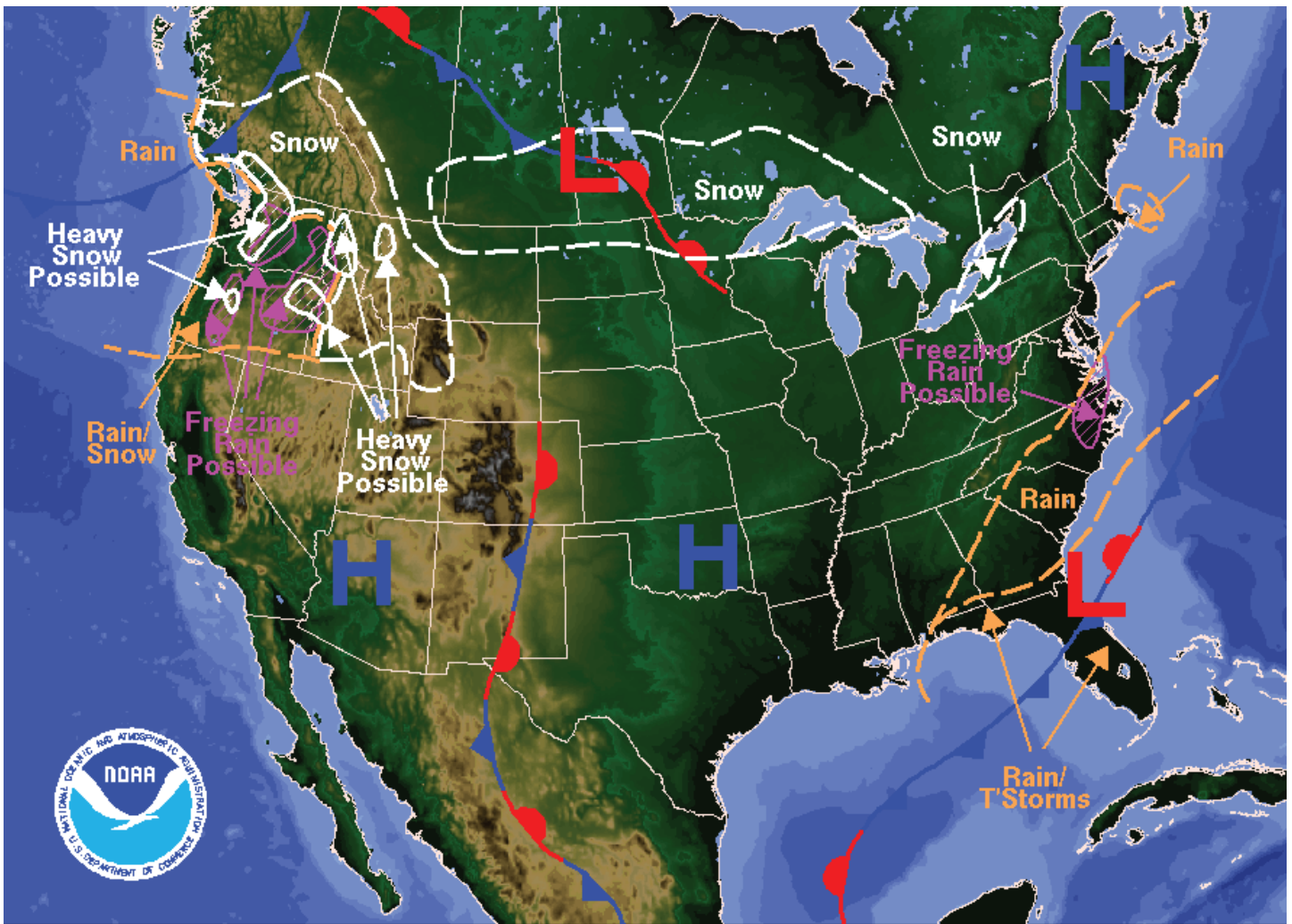
Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 1.4 F at 11:53 PM
Low Outside Temp: -31.8 F at 3:01 AM
High Gust: 28.0 Mph at 10:42 AM

Snow:

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1893
Record Low: -29° in 1916
Average High: 24°F
Average Low: 5°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.31
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.88
Average Precip to date: 21.51
Precip Year to Date: 18.22
Sunset Tonight: 4:52 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Mon, Dec 19, 2016, issued 4:45 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



GOD'S LOVE AND OUR FAMILY

Speaking to a Sunday school class, a pastor asked, "Why do you love God?"

"Because," answered a young boy, "loving God runs in our family."

What a wonderful statement to make about his family. What an important goal for every family. But God only enters and stays with families as long as He is welcome.

Here's how it works: Each member of the family must ask Jesus to be their Savior. Then, His Word must be read and accepted, honored and obeyed, followed faithfully and carefully if He is to have His rightful place in the family. Examples of His presence in the lives of the family will be on display. He will be present at every meal, part of every conversation and readily recognized in the way family members treat one another.

Children learn how they are to behave from their parents. Parents must show love and understanding, care and compassion, patience and thoughtfulness, respect and honor toward each other first and then to each child.

If we expect God's love to run in our families, we must first "run" with God and become obedient to His Word.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize the importance of You always being present in our families. May we recognize our need to depend on You, to honor You and to follow the example of Jesus as we show love for each other: in His name. Amen.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:1-4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

News from the Associated Press

Suspect in slaying on Pine Ridge Reservation in custody

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The suspect in a fatal shooting on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation late last month is in custody.

Authorities issued an arrest warrant for second-degree murder against 26-year-old Thomas Brewer after the slaying of Shawn Stevens on Nov. 30.

The FBI earlier this month included Brewer on its most-wanted list. Rapid City and Pennington County officers acting on a tip arrested Brewer on Friday at a Rapid City hotel.

Court documents don't list an attorney for Brewer, nor do they list his initial court hearing.

Electors set to cast South Dakota's 3 votes for Donald Trump

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's electors are gathering at the state Capitol to cast the state's three Electoral College votes.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Attorney General Marty Jackley and state Republican Party Chairwoman Pam Roberts will cast their votes Monday in the governor's reception room.

Donald Trump carried South Dakota in the November election. Daugaard's chief of staff, Tony Venhuizen, says all three electors intend to support Trump.

Roberts is a substitute for Lt. Gov. Matt Michels. The lieutenant governor was chosen to be an elector but can't attend the event because of a scheduling conflict.

Forward Operating Base divides security and protesters

By **CAROLINE GRUESKIN, The Bismarck Tribune**

FORT RICE, N.D. (AP) — There are two tent cities in southern Morton County.

One is filled with teepees, colorful flags and the smell of burning wood and sage. The other is home to army tents, Humvees and heavy dirt-moving machinery.

Known as the Forward Operating Base, it's been the main hub for police and National Guard patrolling the Dakota Access Pipeline protests since late October. It's located on the campground at Fort Rice, where people usually come to go fishing in the summer, a place 8 miles north of the main protest camp.

Police and protesters have faced off as if enemies over the past several weeks, but their makeshift worlds are more similar than may be expected, The Bismarck Tribune (<http://bit.ly/2gspq5t>) reported. And their proximity to each other and the pipeline construction hint at the intermediary role law enforcement has undertaken.

"We have been kind of caught in the middle," said North Dakota Highway Patrol Lt. Tom Iverson.

At both places, there are tents for eating, trailers for medical equipment and rooms full of supplies — essentially, what is needed to keep people fueled, ready and warm in the plunging temperatures.

On Thursday afternoon, two dozen officers and guardsmen line up for food then sit in clusters at long tables in the main mess hall. Its lunchtime and many are glad that vegetables came with the cheese steaks.

As part of the larger operation, for which North Dakota has borrowed \$17 million to fund, health and emergency departments provide food, medical care and other wraparound services to the hundreds of law enforcement and guardsmen rotating through there.

Chinese stir fry and an amalgam of tater tots, meatballs and gravy are among the favorite dinners, said Doug Murphy, of the state health department, who helps coordinate food at the camp. On the very busiest day, he served 2,000 meals.

"They take this, this and dump this on it," he said. "Everybody lives off coffee, let me tell you that."

Another tent, used for the twice-daily briefings, has cots stacked toward the left side, in case officers get stuck as they did during the blizzard Monday. In the protest camp, a dining tent similarly serves as extra sleeping quarters.

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"It's crazy and sleep-deprived," said Murphy, who, tending to lunch, showed a close eye for what the soldiers and officers liked and wanted. He's usually called to assist in floods, marathons and tornadoes.

Boxes of supplies are everywhere. Some are filled with the same as the protesters have: hand warmers, car batteries, snacks. While others, filled with riot helmets, flex cuffs, rubber bullets and buckets of tear gas canisters, are crude reminders of the most violent and tense standoffs that are the reason law enforcement is staged here.

Throughout the camp, there is a sense of readiness. School buses for transporting guardsmen are constantly running. Small groups of soldiers meet in hushed circles. Tactical maps are pinned to walls in an operations hub.

Officers typically start their day at this staging area, where they get briefed on what happened yesterday and what to expect today, Iverson said. Then they go on their assignments: observing the camp, staging behind the police line in case of arrests and shuttling supplies out to officers at the front.

Out-of-state law enforcement has been scaled back "substantially," according to Iverson, but many here still have commuted from several hours away. And the National Guard recently stepped up its presence to 500 soldiers, who work highway barricades and surveillance, according to spokeswoman Maj. Amber Balken.

As of now, the law enforcement presence remains the same as it has been for the past few weeks, Iverson said, but the cold weather and anecdotal evidence that people are leaving the camps once estimated to contain 3,000 to 5,000 people may lead to changes soon.

"At that point, we do need to reassess our numbers that are involved and decide if we need to scale back as well," Iverson said.

The FOB, as it's known, is situated just off Highway 1806, a once pastoral drive, now lined with forbidding concertina razor wire and trenches to keep people off the Cannonball Ranch, where protesters established a camp in October atop the pipeline route.

The operation, which appears as if out of a war zone, is also the launching point for a police response widely criticized as militarized and aggressive.

On Thursday afternoon, radio transmissions came in to the base: There are a couple people on the Backwater Bridge. The police would know, as they have several Humvees and police cars stationed at a second base at the entrance to Cannonball Ranch and above the camp at all times. They watch for activity that could signal a protest or a move toward Turtle Island, a hill on Army Corps of Engineers Land, which protesters have attempted to climb multiple times in order to pray at a site they see as sacred and potentially to access the drill site a mile north.

Lately, tensions have reduced some, with police backing away from the bridge and up to their bases and observation points. And protesters have, by and large, stayed off the bridge.

Iverson said the extended protests have been stressful and "life-consuming" for the officers, who are often hours away from family and friends. On a personal level, Iverson, who has worked nearly every day since mid-August, recounted his son tearing up when he had to leave him at church to work on a recent Sunday.

"You're either pro-DAPL or no-DAPL, and somehow it's transformed into anti-police," Iverson said. "We're finding ourselves in the position where some are treating us as the enemy."

Iverson maintains that law enforcement has acted professionally and with restraint, though many protesters, civil liberties groups and others have criticized them as taking a heavy-handed approach, favoring the rights of the pipeline company and using unnecessary force, including tear gas, water hoses and rubber bullets.

He said part of the goal has been to keep the protesters and pipeline security apart and avoid conflict between them, as happened on Sep. 3, when protesters clashed with security personnel armed with dogs and several people on both sides were reportedly injured.

"We don't want to see a protester group get into a confrontation with the private security group," Iverson said. "So we need to be in the middle."

Defenders of Black Hills disband after 14 years

By Tom Griffith, Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Following 14 years of stalwart efforts to preserve Native American sacred sites from desecration and to protect natural resources from fracking, uranium mining and overharvesting of timber, the nonprofit Defenders of the Black Hills has decided to call it quits.

The organization's final meeting was conducted Saturday at the Mother Butler Center in Rapid City, and with smiles, hugs and a few tears likely. At the farewell, supporters celebrated nearly a decade and a half of volunteer activism and partnerships developed, all in the name of protecting the environment.

The decision to disband was not made without careful thought, said Charmaine White Face, one of the group founders and its coordinator since its inception.

"I'm getting old and tired," said White Face, who turns 70 in March. "There are other groups now but, when we started, there were hardly any. Others will take up the mantle, but we feel like it's time now. It's time to back out."

Defenders of the Black Hills was founded in 2003 to counter federal legislation passed that opened up the last 3 percent of the Black Hills to logging, including a wilderness area and two roadless areas that were supposed to be preserved untouched for time immemorial.

In the ensuing years, the Defenders group has pestered those promoting mineral extraction and fracking, successfully promoted legislation funding the cleanup of abandoned uranium mines and worked to prevent water pollution in the region, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2hfSSQj>) reported.

In January 2003, White Face said the Defenders had 32 issues on its docket, all intended to protect, preserve and restore the environment. Among those issues was a firing range proposed within sight of Bear Butte, a sacred site to several Native American tribes. So the newly formed group held a prayer gathering at Bear Butte, followed by a dinner at Sturgis Brown High School attended by 200, she said.

At that session, a local attorney stepped forward and offered his services pro bono to the Defenders. Further investigation of the planned firing range found it was going to be financed through a Community Development Block Grant, a federal funding mechanism designed to assist poor people, White Face explained.

"We pushed it hard and took it to court," she said. "We discovered that 12 of the 16 CDBGs in South Dakota were illegal, the state and the businessmen backed out, and the firing range was dropped in the fall of 2003."

A writer and scientist who holds a double major in biology and physical sciences from Black Hills State University, White Face also serves as a spokesperson for the Sioux Nation Treaty Council, a lifetime position. Disbanding the Defenders, she said, would allow her to devote more time to the oldest treaty council in the region.

"Who am I?" the self-effacing woman asked rhetorically. "I'm just a little grandma."

In fact, White Face is the mother of four biological and eight adopted children, as well as 13 grandkids and four great-grandchildren. But her friends and fellow environmental advocates say she is so much more.

"Charmaine deserves all the recognition she gets," said Liliias Jarding of the Rapid City-based Clean Water Alliance. "She and the Defenders leave a legacy of the focused defense of the resources and the people of the Black Hills."

Jarding said White Face and the Defenders were instrumental in the establishment of the Clean Water Alliance and have worked in tandem on issues involving "unwise projects" over the years. She said she worries about the group disbanding.

"I think we will lose the skills and talents that were brought to bear on defending the vision of what the Black Hills can be; Lakota values and a broad natural resources viewpoint," said Jarding, who planned to attend Saturday's final meeting of the Defenders.

Michelle May, director of the Oglala Lakota College Academic and Public Library and Archives at Kyle, lauded White Face for making monthly treks to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to make environmental presentations to students and interested community members.

"Charmaine and the information she conveys are so relevant to our world and, not just the reservation,

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but the world of humanity," May said. "Personally she is such a blessing and such a good friend. She always goes the extra mile and shares her information. It's incredible the generosity she has."

May said the legacy of the Oglala Sioux scientist, environmentalist and activist, and the organization she helped establish, will live on through videos captured of White Face's presentations, which have been archived in the tribal library.

Over the years, efforts by White Face and the Defenders have been recognized far and wide.

In 2007, the organization won the Nuclear Free Future Award, described as "the Nobel Prize for Environmentalists." Last summer, White Face was named a Giraffe Hero by the Giraffe Heroes Project, a nonprofit organization that encourages people to "stick their necks out for the common good."

White Face was chosen for the latter award due to her battles that have extended from her fight against corruption within tribal governments stretching back to the 1980s, as well as her more recent opposition to uranium mining in the Black Hills.

Her work has been met with threats as well as plaudits. White Face said that the brake lines on her car have been cut, and that people have told her to "watch out" or a bomb would be placed in her car.

But White Face doesn't dwell on negatives and, despite the disbanding of the Defenders she said she'd continue to fight "the good fight" for as long as she can.

"Why was it all so important?" she asked last week. "I love the earth. They told me I've been like this since I was a tiny girl. I don't like to see the earth ruined and I'm sorry, but I get a little choked up."

Speaking of Mother Earth, she said: "Nothing can live if she's sick."

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Mooney's 28 points lead South Dakota over Montana State

BOZEMAN, Mont. (AP) — Matt Mooney scored a career-high 28 points and South Dakota pulled away in the second half to beat Montana State 80-68 on Sunday.

Mooney was 8 of 12 from the field with four 3-pointers and went 8 of 8 from the line. Triston Simpson scored 14 points off the bench and Trey Burch-Manning added 13 points with six rebounds. The Coyotes (9-5) shot over 55 percent and hit 8 of 17 (47 percent) from beyond the arc.

Montana State (5-7) was led by Tyler Hall with 32 points on 10-of-15 shooting with four 3-pointers and six boards. It was his fifth game this season with 28-plus.

South Dakota trailed 36-32 at intermission and by as much as 10 in the second half. A 14-3 run midway through the second —culminated by a pair of free throws by Simpson— gave the Coyotes the lead with 9:07 left. An 11-0 run from that point gave South Dakota a double-digit lead with just over five minutes and Montana State couldn't find another run.

Warmer temperatures returning to the Dakotas

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Warmer temperatures are returning to the Dakotas.

The National Weather Service says the frigid start to the week in South Dakota will give way to temperatures as high as the 30s for much of the week, with readings near or above freezing on Tuesday. Mid-afternoon temperatures Sunday hit the teens in a few cities, after lows as cold as minus-37 in Aberdeen and Watertown. Afternoon wind chills in the teens below were common across the state.

Temperatures should be at or above their seasonal averages by Monday afternoon in North Dakota, where wind chills plunged to the 40-below range and even below minus-50 over the weekend. After lows mostly in the minus-20s across the state early Sunday, afternoon temperatures crept into the double digits in western North Dakota.

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The Latest: Subzero temps set records; warmer weather ahead

CHICAGO (AP) — The Latest on bitter cold weather in the Midwest. (all times local):
1:30 p.m.

Record low temperatures have been recorded in cities across South Dakota, northwest Iowa and southwest Minnesota, while a blizzard shut down Interstate 90 in parts of Montana.

The National Weather Service in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, says the city of Huron set a new low for Sunday's date in that location of minus 31 degrees. Another record fell in Marshall, Minnesota, where it was 31 below zero. Spencer, Iowa's negative 27 degrees was a record-breaker there.

Extreme cold is forecast for the Great Lakes, Ohio Valley and New England. The weather service says the Gulf Coast region will have below normal temperatures for a few days.

But a warming trend is expected to start early in the week in many spots as a quieter weather pattern begins with much less precipitation nationwide compared with recent days.

11:30 a.m.

Colorado residents are digging out after up to 16 inches of snow fell across the state, stranding motorists and leaving some areas of the state with subzero temperatures.

Wind chill advisories are in effect Sunday for parts of Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Bismarck, North Dakota, posted a new record low for Saturday's date with 31 degrees below zero before midnight. Linton, North Dakota, was even colder with minus 33 degrees early Sunday.

10:15 a.m.

The National Weather Service says overnight lows reached the minus 20s and lower across much of the northern Plains on Sunday morning as a fresh surge of bitter arctic air reached into the Midwest.

Weather-related delays at Indianapolis International Airport caused about 100 passengers to spend the night in the terminal, but most travelers were on their way Sunday morning.

In southwestern Michigan, icy conditions appear to have played a role in a crash that killed a 73-year-old motorist.

Chicago police say a commercial plane slid off a runway early Sunday at O'Hare International Airport. There were no injuries reported from the incident just after 1 a.m.

The Chicago Bears host the Green Bay Packers Sunday at Soldier Field for what could be one of the coldest home games ever. The coldest Bears game at Soldier Field was on Dec. 22, 2008, when the thermometer hit 2 degrees with a wind chill of minus 13.

5:45 a.m.

Temperatures in the nation's midsection and on the East Coast are warming up after a bitterly cold last few days.

The National Weather Service says a warm front passing through the region on Sunday is pushing temperatures into the mid- to upper 40s in New York.

Meteorologist Jay Engle says the last few days have been more than 10 degrees below normal for this time of year.

Snow and freezing rain spawned a multitude of highway accidents, some serious. At least nine deaths were blamed on the slick roads. Authorities were investigating other traffic fatalities as possibly weather-related.

A tanker carrying gasoline skidded off a highway in Baltimore on Saturday and exploded.

Winter weather advisories were posted from Denver to Bangor, Maine. Airports reported hundreds of flight delays or cancellations.

Construction bids due soon for aquatic center in Mitchell

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Construction bids are due soon for a city aquatic center that Mitchell voters narrowly approved a year ago.

At least one opponent wondered whether the bids will fall within the \$8.1 million authorized by 54 percent of voters.

But Mitchell City Councilman Jeff Smith expects the high interest from contractors will create competition and keep the cost down, the Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2gS1R7n>) reported.

"All we can go on is what we've been listening to from the architect that so far the numbers look good, they look positive, and the number of contractors that are very interested," Smith said.

Bids are being accepted until Dec. 22.

Ed Potzler, who's been leading the charge against the project, was skeptical of it because he thought it should be funded more by private dollars instead of taxpayer dollars.

"I don't want to come across as a totally negative person," Potzler said. "Had they found a different funding mechanism for this, I would be 100 percent behind the pool."

The aquatic center is supposed to include a competitive lap pool, a leisure pool, a slide, lockers and competition and play equipment, among other items. Although the Mitchell Aquatic Club has pledged \$1 million to help fund the project, Potzler wants formal documents proving the commitment.

"When I brought up that I'd like to see a letter of credit, that was just laughed down," he said.

City officials have estimated the project would be complete by the summer of 2018.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

Volunteer group helps stranded drivers on reservations

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The temperature was around zero when Rish Little Moon's vehicle slid off an icy road and into a snowdrift about two miles away from her home on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. She considered walking along the road in pitch-dark conditions, but the two minutes she stood outside her car were enough to make her lungs hurt.

She sent a text message asking for help and hoped it would get delivered, given the poor cellphone service. Three men showed up about 20 minutes later to pull her car back on the road — an endeavor that took 45 minutes.

Those men are among 10 ex-officers or prison guards volunteering this winter to help stranded motorists and emergency vehicles on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations. These self-proclaimed road guardians help tow vehicles, deliver fuel, change tires, provide traffic control at crash scenes and perform several other duties during a season when the lives of stranded motorists could be at risk.

And it's all free of charge.

"I probably would've ended up with pneumonia," Little Moon said of the possibility of walking home during this month's car trouble. "I know you're not supposed to walk in those conditions."

Jerrold Mesteth, a resident of the Pine Ridge community of Porcupine, was moved to start helping drivers after he was stranded for hours more than two years ago after a midnight shift. Mesteth said several vehicles drove past, but nobody stopped to help. Weeks later, he bought a pickup truck, a tow chain and jugs of gas.

In this sprawling expanse of badlands on the South Dakota-Nebraska border, most people live paycheck to paycheck — if there's even a paycheck. Federal statistics put the poverty rate around 50 percent and the unemployment rate at least 20 percent.

Very few can afford a AAA membership or pay for a tow truck service. It's also not uncommon for people to pool money for a few gallons of gas to make it to a hospital or another destination.

"To get towed out here by any of these businesses, it can cost you anywhere from \$150 to \$300," Little Moon said. "Nobody has that kind of money, and these guys actually do it for free. If you have something,

you give it to them, and they really appreciate it, but they don't charge you."

Mesteth said winter is the busiest time of the year for the road guardians, who have a Facebook page with a phone number that stranded drivers can call or text. They are contacted by emergency services sometimes and given the coordinates of motorists who called 911 asking for road-side assistance. And they also help drivers they encounter while they are out on the road.

Mesteth said the group has collected spare tires to bring while responding. The group uses their own vehicles to assist others, though Mesteth said they are "trying to save up" for a tow truck.

Follow Regina Garcia Cano on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/reginagarciaakNO>

Haakon County residents worried about nuclear waste project

PHILIP, S.D. (AP) — A proposed federal effort to assess whether nuclear waste can be stored in 3-mile-deep holes is raising the ire of some Haakon County residents in western South Dakota.

Two other prospective sites in North Dakota's Pierce County and South Dakota's Spink County were abandoned when local opposition turned the project away, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2hvxIPE>) reported.

Rapid City-based engineering consulting firm RESPEC and the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology are seeking a \$35 million contract from the U.S. Department of Energy to fund the project. RESPEC would drill an 8-inch borehole 3.2 miles into solid granite, only to see if it could be done.

"It's a very unique project," RESPEC spokesman Todd Kenner said. "The aspects of the project make it one of a kind when you combine the depth of the borehole, the diameter of 8 inches, and the tolerances."

The two entities have held meetings with the Haakon County Commission to explain the project — which Kenner says is the first of its kind and the deepest hole ever drilled in South Dakota — and gauge public support.

More than 40 county residents mostly expressed their concerns about the future of their land, their water and their children at a public meeting.

But Gov. Dennis Daugaard has said he supports it for its scientific and research aspects, but that the state "in no way should be seen as a repository for spent nuclear waste, because we're not."

The project needs county and state approvals to advance.

Kenner said if the project overcame the regulatory hurdles, drilling likely would not begin until 2018 at the earliest.

The deep borehole project was proposed to learn how to drill basement rock for nuclear waste storage.

Lacking lawyers, Plains states try new rural staffing tactics

By MARGERY A. BECK, Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — In Wheeler County, Nebraska, if you want a divorce, attorneys who can help you are nearly 50 miles away.

There's only one attorney, James McNally, in the north-central county, and he is its sole prosecutor. He's been there for 50 years and was at one point one of five attorneys. He has a side practice handling probate and estate services, but obviously can't take criminal defense cases.

There's a reason more lawyers don't land in places like Wheeler County, one of 11 counties that have no attorneys outside of elected prosecutors, he said. With so few people to serve and recent graduates carrying loads of student debt, it just doesn't pay, he said.

"They go where the money is, and that's not a small town," he said.

It's an issue that several Plains states tried to address years ago, but hasn't seemed to be solved — particularly in states such as Nebraska with vast stretches of sparsely populated land. In response, Nebraska has launched a program that targets rural high schools students, hoping to persuade them to return to their roots to practice law.

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Modeled after the Rural Health Opportunities Program, which recruits rural students to become small-town doctors, Nebraska's program targets high-achieving students with plans to go to law school, offering full-tuition undergraduate scholarships to three rural Nebraska colleges: Chadron State College, the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Wayne State College.

Participating students who maintain a 3.5 GPA and get a minimum LSAT score automatically will be accepted to the University of Nebraska College of Law in Lincoln.

"The idea is: Let's start with the kids that have come from rural areas," said Thomas Maul, the immediate past president of the Nebraska State Bar Association who helped get the Rural Law Opportunities Program off the ground. "I really think it could be a game changer. No other state has this."

Like the medical program, the rural lawyer program does not include a requirement that the students practice in rural areas after law school.

"The rural health program reports about a 60 percent return on investment, meaning about 60 percent of the students return to rural areas to practice medicine," Maul said. "We hope to achieve similar results with this program."

South Dakota is believed to be the first state to pay lawyers to practice in rural areas, starting in 2013 and offering an annual subsidy of 90 percent of the cost of a year at the University of South Dakota Law School to live and practice in rural communities.

Since the program began, it has placed 17 attorneys in rural counties that have a population of 10,000 or less, according to Suzanne Star, director of policy and legal services for the South Dakota State Court Administrator's Office.

"We consider it to be very successful," Star said. "We are now looking at legislation to expand the programs to municipalities in counties where there are more than 10,000 people, but do not have local access to an attorney."

But it hasn't been a panacea, Star acknowledged. Recent retirements and relocations left two South Dakota counties with no attorneys, eight counties with one lawyer and four counties with two.

Nebraska, North and South Dakota and Iowa all run programs to help place recent law school grads in summer clerkships at rural firms as a way to get new lawyers into rural areas. But the states have learned introductions simply aren't enough.

In southwestern Iowa, some counties have only one or two attorneys — and they're rapidly approaching retirement age, said attorney Philip Garland, 71, the chairman of the Iowa State Bar Association's Rural Practice Committee.

He's been trying to get those aging attorneys to follow his lead and hire young associates, which can be expensive, and consider turning over, not selling, practices to young lawyers already saddled with loads of student debt.

"For the good of the community," he explains. "So, how do you think that's working? It's not working at all."

Follow Margery Beck on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/margery3>

The Latest: UNICEF: 47 kids evacuated from Aleppo orphanage

BEIRUT (AP) — The Latest on developments in the civil war in Syria where a cease-fire deal is back on and evacuations of civilians and rebels resume (all times local):

2:20 p.m.

The U.N. children's agency says 47 children in an orphanage in the rebel-held section of Syria's eastern Aleppo have been evacuated to safety, though some are in critical condition.

UNICEF had previously expressed concerns about the children inside the orphanage near the front line in eastern Aleppo.

The agency's spokeswoman Malene Jensen said on Monday that the children are being fed, clothed, medically examined and looked after by the agency and its partners, as well as by medical teams.

A UNICEF statement said some were in "critical condition from injuries and dehydration."

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It also cautioned that there are many other "vulnerable children" among untold thousands of people still inside eastern Aleppo, according to estimates from the U.N. and humanitarian agencies.

1:35 p.m.

The Russian military says defense ministers of Russia, Turkey and Iran will meet in Moscow to discuss Syria.

The meeting, due Tuesday, will coincide with the meeting of the three nation's foreign ministers, also in the Russian capital.

The military said on Monday that Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu will host his Iranian counterpart Hossein Dehghan and Turkey's Fikri Isik.

It says they will discuss ways to resolve the Syrian conflict and help implement U.N. Security Council's resolutions on Syria.

1:20 p.m.

Turkey says some 4,500 people have been evacuated from eastern Aleppo since midnight, as a fragile cease-fire in Syria resumed.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said through his Twitter account on Monday that a total of 12,000 people have so far been evacuated from the besieged city to an area under opposition control.

The evacuations were made possible through a cease-fire deal brokered by Russia and Turkey that paved way for rebels and civilians to leave the last opposition-held enclave in the city.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency says a total of 131 wounded people — including 46 children — were brought to Turkey for treatment since the evacuations began last week.

The agency says five of them have since died.

Russia is allied with Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Turkey is a leading sponsor of the opposition battling to topple him.

9:10 a.m.

A Syrian activist group and a Lebanon-based TV station say that 10 buses with civilians from two Shiite villages besieged by rebels in the country's north are on their way to government-controlled areas.

The evacuations from Foua and Kfarya were conditions that were added on to a cease-fire deal that paved way for the last rebels and civilians to depart from the remainder of the rebel enclave in the eastern half of the Syrian city of Aleppo.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV say the buses left Foua and Kfarya on Monday. More than 2,000 sick and wounded people are supposed to leave the villages.

The evacuation came a day after militants burned six buses assigned to the villages' evacuations. The Observatory reported shortly before midnight Sunday that government forces allowed five buses to leave rebel-held parts of east Aleppo.

8:20 a.m.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution aimed at immediately deploying U.N. monitors to eastern Aleppo, a move France says will be critical to prevent "mass atrocities" by Syrian forces, and especially militias, who captured the rebel stronghold.

The resolution, due to be put to a vote on Monday, comes as thousands more trapped Aleppo civilians and rebels await evacuation in freezing temperatures in the rebel enclave.

The text calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor the evacuations and demands that U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon urgently consult all parties on the immediate deployment of the monitors.

France and Russia, who submitted rival draft resolutions, struck a compromise text after more than three hours of closed-door consultations by the U.N. Security Council on Sunday.

China disputes US claim it's top source of synthetic drugs

By ERIKA KINETZ and GILLIAN WONG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — U.S. assertions that China is the top source of the synthetic opioids that have killed thousands of drug users in the U.S. and Canada are unsubstantiated, Chinese officials told the Associated Press.

Both the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy point to China as North America's main source of fentanyl, related drugs and the chemicals used to make them.

Such statements "lack the support of sufficient numbers of actual, confirmed cases," China's National Narcotics Control Commission told DEA's Beijing field office in a fax dated Friday.

In its letter to the DEA, which the commission also sent to AP, Chinese officials urged the U.S. to provide more evidence about China's role as a source country.

It's a point the state-run China Daily newspaper drove home publicly in an article this month stating that made-in-China carfentanil was not the cause of overdose deaths in the U.S.

DEA officials said their casework and investigations consistently lead back to China. DEA data also shows that when China regulates synthetic drugs, U.S. seizures plunge.

"China is not the only source of the problem, but they are the dominant source for fentanyls along with precursor chemicals and pill presses that are being exported from China to the U.S., Canada and Mexico," said Russell Baer, a DEA special agent in Washington.

Beijing is concerned enough about international perceptions of China's role in the opioid trade that after AP published investigations highlighting the easy availability of fentanyls online from Chinese suppliers, the narcotics commission made a rare invitation to a team of AP journalists to discuss the issue at the powerful Ministry of Public Security, a leafy complex just off Tiananmen Square at the historic and political heart of Beijing. They also provided responses, in writing, to AP's questions.

U.S.-China cooperation is essential for mounting an effective global response to an epidemic of opioid abuse that has killed more than 300,000 Americans since 2000. The presence of fentanyl, a prescription painkiller up to 50 times stronger than heroin, and related compounds in the U.S. drug supply began to rise in 2013, after dealers learned they could multiply profits by cutting the potent chemicals into heroin, cocaine and counterfeit prescription pills.

Even as the U.S. Congress considers legislation that would punish opioid source countries, no government agency has produced comprehensive data on seizures of fentanyl-related substances by country of origin.

The national database on drug seizures overseen by DEA does not require reporting by source country and may not accurately reflect seizures of all fentanyl-related compounds. Baer said it didn't even have a "fentanyl" category until around two years ago.

It also takes time for forensic chemists to identify drugs seized from the field, which means fentanyl-related samples may get incorrectly logged as other drugs. "The field agent may not, and I think it's fair to say usually does not, revise or amend the initial seizure," Baer said. He added that DEA is trying to improve its data-collection methods.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy declined to comment or to provide data that would back up the U.S. assertions.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said it had data on fentanyl seizures by country of origin only for 2015: Nearly two-thirds of the 61 kilograms (134 pounds) of fentanyl seized last year came from Mexico. The rest, 35 percent, came from China.

DEA officials say Mexican cartels are key bulk suppliers of fentanyl to the U.S., but portray Mexico primarily as a transshipment point. U.S. authorities have tracked shipments of fentanyl precursors from China to Mexico and the U.S., but many appear legitimate and are diverted to the black market upon arrival, Baer said.

Mexican officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to be quoted, said fentanyl and its precursors were coming from China. Only two labs trying to produce fentanyl from

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scratch have been located in Mexico in recent years, with others apparently taking simpler steps to turn precursors into fentanyl, the officials said.

Mexican authorities did not immediately respond to requests for data on fentanyl and fentanyl precursor seizures by country of origin.

Still, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence indicating that China plays an important role in the fentanyl trade and, despite disagreements about data, Chinese authorities have been proactive in trying to stop their manufacture and export.

It is easy to find Chinese companies online offering to export synthetic opioids, the AP found in investigations published in October and November. In response to that reporting, China's narcotics commission said it was scrutinizing 12 opioid vendors the AP identified, along with other companies that advertise fentanyl analogs. They said they also found three American companies advertising fentanyls, and noted that some vendors use servers based outside of China. China's National Narcotics Laboratory has analyzed 25 fentanyl-related samples since 2012, the vast majority of which were being smuggled by mail to the U.S. or Europe, the commission said.

In some cases, China has enacted faster, more comprehensive changes to its drug control laws than much of the rest of the world.

The commission said China has taken a precedent-setting approach to synthetic drug regulation, controlling dozens of substances that aren't abused domestically. At the same time, Beijing has struggled to get the international community to reciprocate. China has twice asked the United Nations to place the drug ketamine under international control. Ketamine, also known as Special K, is widely abused within China but prized as an essential anesthetic across the developing world by the World Health Organization and others.

"China looks forward to further practical action taken by the U.S. to jointly promote the international control of ketamine," the narcotics commission said in written remarks to AP.

Beijing already regulates fentanyl and 18 related compounds and is considering designating four more: carfentanil, furanyl fentanyl, acryl fentanyl and valeryl fentanyl, the narcotics commission told AP. A formal review began in October, and the process can take up to nine months. In the meantime, the commission said it had warned Chinese vendors and websites that carfentanil, a weapons-grade substance so lethal it has been called a terrorism threat, and other analogs can harm human health and should not be sold.

That message sent a ripple of anxiety across the internet and caused some to start pushing alternative opioids, like U-47700, the AP found in conversations with a dozen companies advertising drugs online. "Friend, fent is illegal in China, it is dangerous for us," wrote one vendor.

Baer said DEA is actively investigating U.S.-based vendors who use dark net markets to sell fentanyl and related compounds, as well as Chinese companies that use U.S. servers to sell carfentanil.

But the extent to which those U.S. companies are merely retailing made-in-China drugs is not clear. Baer said the DEA doesn't believe fentanyl is mass-produced in the U.S., though authorities have uncovered mom-and-pop pill press operations.

One of them was run by a 28-year-old in Utah, who was busted late last month with a pill press, piles of powder and cash, and nearly 100,000 pills laced with suspected fentanyl in his Cottonwood Heights home. According to the criminal complaint, the young man hired people to accept packages shipped to their homes, which they'd hand over unopened.

The packages came from China.

AP reporters Mark Stevenson in Mexico City, Desmond Butler in Washington and researcher Fu Ting in Shanghai contributed to this report.

Buses resume taking remaining civilians, rebels from Aleppo

By BASSEM MROUE, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A fragile cease-fire was back on in Syria on Monday, as buses resumed evacuating those still remaining in eastern Aleppo following days of delays, and others departed with the sick and wounded from two rebel-besieged Shiite villages in the country's north.

At the United Nations, the Security Council was expected to vote within hours on a resolution seeking to deploy U.N. monitors to Aleppo immediately in order to prevent what France has warned could be "mass atrocities" by Syrian forces and allied pro-government militias as they assume control of all of the rebel enclave.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV said that 10 buses left with civilians from the two Shiite villages long besieged by rebels — Foua and Kfarya — and were on their way to government-controlled areas on Monday.

According to the deal, more than 2,000 sick and wounded are supposed to leave the villages. The Observatory and the pan-Arab TV said 15 additional buses entered the two villages to bring out more people.

The evacuations from the villages were added on as conditions to a Turkey- and Russia-brokered cease-fire deal that paved way for the last rebels and civilians to leave the remainder of the rebel enclave in the eastern half of Aleppo.

The departure from the villages had stalled on Sunday after militants burned six empty buses assigned to take the villagers out.

The Observatory and Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu later said that since midnight Sunday, some 4,500 people have been evacuated from eastern Aleppo.

Reports differed on how many people remain in what was once the Aleppo rebel enclave, ranging from 15,000 to 40,000 civilians, along with an estimated 6,000 fighters.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency said a total of 131 wounded people — including 46 children — were brought to Turkey for treatment since the evacuations began last week. The agency said five of them have since died.

Al-Mayadeen aired live footage from Aleppo, showing buses it said were carrying opposition fighters and civilians heading west, toward rebel-held parts of the Aleppo province.

If the evacuation from Aleppo is completed later on Monday, it will close another chapter in Syria's civil war, now in its sixth year, with rebels having no remaining presence in Syria's largest city and the country's once commercial center.

The rebels captured eastern Aleppo in July 2012 and held on to it despite a ferocious assault in the past weeks by Syrian government forces, backed by Russia and a host of Shiite militias from Iraq, Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan. The captured of the entire city would be President Bashar Assad's biggest victory since the Syrian conflict began in March 2011.

Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman said he expected Aleppo evacuations to be completed sometime on Monday.

He said the evacuations will happen in three phases.

First, 1,250 people from Foua and Kfarya will leave in return for the government allowing half of the people still in eastern Aleppo to head to rebel-held parts of the country.

Then, another 1,250 people will leave from the two Shiite villages, in exchange for the departure of all remaining civilians and opposition fighters in eastern Aleppo.

The third phase will include 1,500 people leaving from Foua and Kfarya and, in return, 1,500 people will be allowed to leave two besieged rebel-held towns, Madaya and Zabadani, near the Lebanon border.

At the United Nations, the compromise text of the resolution calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor the evacuations and demands that U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon urgently consult all parties on the immediate deployment of the monitors.

France and Russia, who submitted rival draft resolutions, struck a compromise text after more than three hours of closed-door consultations by the U.N. Security Council on Sunday.

The draft text also demands that all parties allow unconditional and immediate access for the U.N. and its partners to deliver humanitarian aid and medical care "and respect and protect all civilians across Aleppo and throughout Syria."

France's U.N. Ambassador Francois Delattre, who expressed hope that the resolution will be approved, said the goal is to avoid "a new Srebrenica," a reference to the massacre of nearly 8,000 Bosnian Muslims who sought protection in the U.N. safe haven of Srebrenica in 1995, during the Bosnian war.

U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power said "100 plus" U.N. personnel are ready to monitor evacuations once there is a green light. She said following the siege of eastern Aleppo, there have been "many, many reports of people being pulled off buses and disappeared, whether into conscription or into torture chambers or killed outright."

The U.N. doesn't know because it's not there, Power said, but if monitors are deployed it could deter "some of the worst excesses."

Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Trump aides: Democrats' complaints are sour grapes

By ANNE FLAHERTY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sour grapes. That's how Donald Trump's closest advisers see Democrats' complaints that Moscow hacked their private emails this election season in a bid to sow discord among their supporters and sway the election toward Republicans.

The pushback comes ahead of the Electoral College vote, which was expected to make official Trump's election win and pave his way to take office on Jan. 20.

"Let's assume it's true," Reince Priebus, Trump's incoming chief of staff, said Sunday of Russian interference in the election. "There's no evidence that shows that the outcome of the election was changed because of a couple dozen John Podesta emails that were out there."

The number of leaked emails by Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, was actually closer to tens of thousands. And it'd be difficult to prove exactly what influenced voters.

But Democrats said it was a personal attack and a threat to democracy.

"The emails were weaponized," said Donna Brazile, interim chair of the Democratic National Committee. "The release of stolen, hacked emails caused a lot of confusion and of course it disrupted our daily campaign life."

Foreign policy experts say part of Russia's calculation was likely a desire for payback for years of U.S. criticism of its own elections and to paint America as a flawed champion of democracy — potentially weakening it on the world stage.

"I would characterize it as a thinly disguised, covert operation intended to discredit the American election and to basically allow the Russians to communicate to the rest of the world that our elections are corrupt, incompetent, rigged, whatever — and therefore no more honest than anybody else's in the world including theirs," said Robert Gates, who was defense secretary under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Gates, who is no longer in government but has met privately with Trump, said he couldn't confirm that Russia was trying to help Trump win.

But "I think it clearly was aimed at discrediting our elections and I think it was aimed certainly at weakening Mrs. Clinton," he said.

Trump's transition team and loyalists on Capitol Hill weren't buying it — at least not on the eve of Monday's Electoral College vote.

"Where's the evidence?" asked Kellyanne Conway, another close Trump adviser.

On Obama's vow to retaliate against the Russians for hacking, Conway said: "It seems like the president is under pressure from Team Hillary, who can't accept the election results."

Trump himself weighed in Sunday evening, tweeting, "If my many supporters acted and threatened

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people like those who lost the election are doing, they would be scorned & called terrible names!"

Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, said an unclassified intelligence review could be released within the next two or three weeks.

As president-elect, Trump would have access to high-level intelligence on the cyberattacks, although it's unclear what he's been told. Trump has previously called the intelligence finding of Russian involvement "ridiculous." On Sunday, Conway said she wasn't privy to the same intelligence briefings as the president-elect and couldn't say what he knows.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. WHO'S MAKING IT OFFICIAL FOR TRUMP

Electors are gathering in every state to formally elect Donald Trump president even as anti-Trump forces try one last time to deny him the White House.

2. LAST EVACUATIONS BACK ON IN SYRIA

A fragile cease-fire holds sway as buses resume taking out those still remaining in eastern Aleppo and from two rebel-besieged Shiite villages in the country's north.

3. TRIAL UNDERWAY FOR CONFIDANTE OF DISGRACED SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT

Appearing in court, Choi Soon-sil, the woman at the heart of the scandal that led to Park Guen-hye's impeachment, denies using her presidential ties to extort money from powerful companies.

4. SOUR GRAPES, SAYS TRUMP CAMP

The president-elect's advisers dismiss complaints that Moscow hacked Democrats' private emails in a bid to sway the election toward Republicans.

5. GUNMEN LAUNCH BLOODY ATTACK IN JORDAN

A series of assaults, including at a Crusader castle popular with tourists, leaves seven police officers dead, along with two local civilians and a visitor from Canada.

6. CHINA PUSHES BACK AT DRUG CLAIMS

U.S. assertions that China is the top source of the synthetic opioids that have killed thousands of users in the U.S. and Canada are unsubstantiated, Chinese officials tell the AP.

7. HOW CITIES ARE GIRDING AGAINST IMMIGRATION HARD-LINERS

Major U.S. cities and counties beef up legal services for immigrants and set aside government money to help them fight deportation in the wake of Trump's election.

8. FAMOUSLY FAMOUS ZSA ZSA GABOR DIES

Long before Paris Hilton first uttered a breathy "that's hot," or Kim Kardashian sashayed down a red carpet flashing her dangerous curves, there was Zsa Zsa.

9. WHICH WORD SEEMS TO SUM UP 2016

Merriam-Webster picks "surreal" as its word of the year, driven by times of great tragedy and sorrow but also following Trump's rise to president-elect.

10. BRONCOS IN PRECARIOUS SPOT

Denver's 16-3 loss to the Patriots puts the Broncos in danger of missing the playoffs a year after winning Super Bowl 50.

Electoral College meets amid effort to deny Trump presidency

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — And you thought Election Day was in November.

Electors are set to gather in every state on Monday to formally elect Donald Trump president even as anti-Trump forces try one last time to deny him the White House.

Protests are planned for state capitals, but they are unlikely to persuade the Electoral College to dump Trump. An Associated Press survey of electors found very little appetite to vote for alternative candidates.

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Republican electors say they have been deluged with emails, phone calls and letters urging them not to support Trump. Many of the emails are part of coordinated campaigns.

"The letters are actually quite sad," said Lee Green, a Republican elector from North Carolina. "They are generally freaked out. They honestly believe the propaganda. They believe our nation is being taken over by a dark and malevolent force."

Wirt A. Yerger Jr., a Republican elector in Mississippi, said, "I have gotten several thousand emails asking me not to vote for Trump. I threw them all away."

A joint session of Congress is scheduled for Jan. 6 to certify the results of the Electoral College vote, with Vice President Joe Biden presiding as president of the Senate. Once the result is certified, the winner — likely Trump — will be sworn in on Jan. 20.

The Electoral College was devised at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. It was a compromise between those who wanted popular elections for president and those who wanted no public input.

The Electoral College has 538 members, with the number allocated to each state based on how many representatives it has in the House plus one for each senator. The District of Columbia gets three, despite the fact that the home to Congress has no vote in Congress.

To be elected president, the winner must get at least half plus one — or 270 electoral votes. Most states give all their electoral votes to whichever candidate wins that state's popular vote. Maine and Nebraska award them by congressional district.

The AP tried to reach all of the electors and interviewed more than 330 of them, finding widespread aggravation among Democrats with the electoral process, but little expectation Trump would be derailed.

Some Democrats have argued that the Electoral College is undemocratic because it gives more weight to less populated states. That is how Hillary Clinton, who got more than 2.6 million more votes nationwide, lost the election to Trump. Some have also tried to dissuade Trump voters by arguing that he is unsuited to the job. Others cite the CIA's assessment that Russia engaged in computer hacking to sway the election in favor of the Republican.

But despite the national group therapy session being conducted by some Democrats, only one Republican elector told the AP that he will not vote for Trump.

There is no constitutional provision or federal law that requires electors to vote for the candidate who won their state. Some states require their electors to vote for the winning candidate, either by law or through signed pledges. But no elector has ever been prosecuted for failing to vote as pledged, according to the National Archives.

Those laws are rarely tested. More than 99 percent of electors through U.S. history have voted for the candidate who won their state.

Electors are selected by state parties, and so are often insiders who can be trusted to vote for the party's candidate. Many Republican electors said they feel duty-bound to honor their pledge to vote for the candidate who won their state, regardless of how they feel about Trump.

Still, some anti-Trump activists have been getting creative in trying to persuade electors to dump Trump.

In addition to thousands of emails, Republican elector Charlie Buckels of Louisiana said he received a FedEx package with a 50-page document that the sender said "had absolute proof that the Russians hacked the elections."

"From the tenor of these emails, you would think these people are curled up in a corner in a fetal position with a thumb in their mouth," Buckels said.

Associated Press writers Hope Yen in Washington, Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, and Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, contributed to this report.

Online:

AP interactive on election results: <http://interactives.ap.org/2016/road-to-270/>

Follow Stephen Ohlemacher on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/stephenatap>

Gunmen kill 10, including Canadian, in attacks on police

By OMAR AKOUR and MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH, Associated Press

KARAK, Jordan (AP) — Gunmen assaulted Jordanian police in a series of attacks Sunday, including at a Crusader castle popular with tourists, killing seven officers, two local civilians and a woman visiting from Canada, officials said. Several armed men barricaded themselves inside the castle for hours, hemmed in by special forces soldiers.

At least 34 people, including two foreign nationals, were wounded in the day's violence, which was one of the bloodiest attacks in Jordan in recent memory.

Security officials announced late Sunday, several hours after reports of the first shooting, that the operation had ended and that four gunmen were killed. They said troops continued to search the area.

The officials said large amounts of weapons had been seized. They made no reference to local media reports that at one point, the attackers had held hostages.

The shootings were the latest in a series of attacks that have challenged this pro-Western kingdom's claim to be an oasis of calm in a region threatened by Islamic extremists.

A witness said attackers immediately targeted tourists when they reached the castle.

"Four gunmen got out of their car" at the castle, said Wasfi al-Habashneh, a local resident. "They opened fire at the Canadian tourists. The woman was killed, the other Canadian tourist escaped and hid behind a car and one of the children was injured."

Al-Habashneh said the attackers also targeted other people. Security forces "engaged with the gunmen and cornered the gunmen at the castle gate," he said.

The killing of the Canadian visitor could further hurt Jordan's embattled tourism sector, which has declined sharply since the Islamic State group seized large parts of neighboring Syria and Iraq two years ago.

Canada's global affairs spokesman, John Babcock, told The Associated Press that the dead woman was Linda Vatcher. Babcock said her son Chris was injured.

"Canadian officials in Amman are actively working with local authorities to gather additional information and are providing consular assistance to Canadians at this difficult time," Babcock said.

Barb Rhymes, a cousin of the slain tourist, said the victim was a retired elementary teacher from Burgeo, Newfoundland, and was visiting her son in Jordan where he works. Rhymes said Linda Vatcher, 62, was a widow and a mother of two adult sons.

"She was very friendly, outgoing. She was nice to everyone. A friend to all," Rhymes said from Burgeo, a remote town of 1,400 people on Canada's East Coast. "It's devastating. It has hit the town hard. My mind is not there right now. She was a beautiful person."

The Canadian Embassy in Amman issued an alert warning urging Canadians to avoid travel to Karak, a town in central Jordan about 140 kilometers (87 miles) south of the capital.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks in and near Karak.

The chain of events began when a police patrol received reports of a house fire in the town of Qatraneh in the Karak district, said a statement by Jordan's Public Security Directorate. Officers responding to the call came under fire from inside the house, the statement said. Two policemen were wounded and the assailants fled in a car, it said.

In another attack, gunmen fired on a security patrol in Karak, causing no injuries, the statement said.

Armed men also opened fire on a police station at the Crusader fort, wounding members of security forces.

In all, seven members of the security forces, two local civilians and the tourist from Canada were killed, security officials said. Fifteen members of the security forces, 17 local civilians and two foreign nationals were injured.

Jordan faces homegrown extremism, with hundreds of Jordanians fighting alongside other Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria and several thousand more supporting the extremist group in the kingdom.

Jordan is a key U.S. ally, and a member of a U.S.-led military coalition fighting IS.

Over the past year, gunmen have carried out several attacks on members of the Jordanian security forces and foreign trainers. Earlier this year, Jordanian security forces engaged in a deadly shootout with suspected IS sympathizers in a northern Jordanian town.

In the most recent incident, three U.S. military members were killed in a shooting outside an air base in southern Jordan in November. The three were in Jordan on a training mission, and came under fire while driving into the base.

Associated Press writer Omar Akour reported this story in Karak and AP writer Mohammed Daraghmech reported from Gaza City, Gaza Strip. AP writer Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

S. Korea to begin trial of impeached president's confidante

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The jailed confidante of disgraced South Korean President Park Geun-hye begins a trial Monday that will explore a scandal that led to Park's impeachment after millions took to the streets in protest.

The trial of Choi Soon-sil, Park's friend of 40 years, is the biggest since the 2014 trial of the crew of a ferry that sank and killed more than 300 people, mostly teenagers. Ten others swept up in the scandal also face trial.

Speculation about Choi dominated local news every day for months, but she is still a mystery. She last appeared in public on Oct. 31, when, after losing a Prada shoe in a crush of media and protesters, she told reporters at the Seoul prosecutors' office that she had "committed a sin that deserves death."

What you should know:

THE TRIAL

The hearing at the Seoul Central District Court will review the charges against Choi, who prosecutors say manipulated state affairs and extorted businesses. It will also set the trial schedule. The office of her lawyer said Choi is expected to attend Monday's hearing though she is not required to do so.

The trial is open to the public. Worried about a crush of spectators, the court last week raffled admission tickets.

It's not clear how long the trial will last. Courts normally issue a verdict within six months of an indictment, so she'll likely get a verdict by May if prosecutors don't bring new charges.

Park's representatives have questioned the legality of her impeachment and said no serious crime was committed.

THE CHARGES

Choi is charged with abuse of power, extortion and attempted fraud. If convicted on all charges, she could receive up to 15 years in prison, according to court spokesman Shin Jae-hwan.

Before her arrest, Choi said she that received some of Park's speeches in advance but that she didn't know if they included confidential information. She denied the other allegations.

Prosecutors allege that Choi helped pressure 16 companies to donate a total of 77.4 billion won (\$65.6 million) to create two nonprofit foundations, Mir and K-Sports.

According to the prosecution, Park first brought up the idea of launching the foundations and ordered her senior secretary for policy coordination at the time, Ahn Jong-beom, to ask companies to finance their establishment while letting Choi handle the appointment of foundation officials.

Choi allegedly used a top Chinese official's visit to Seoul to propose pressuring firms to donate quickly to Mir.

Choi has been charged with pressuring Hyundai Motors and the KT telecommunication firm to sign \$6 million and \$5.7 million worth of ad contracts, respectively, with Playground, an ad agency she ran. She was also charged with pushing Hyundai to buy \$930,450 worth of car components from a company owned

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by an acquaintance.

WHO IS SHE?

Choi, 60, is a daughter of the late Choi Tae-min, a purported cult leader who served as Park's mentor. Park, 64, is the daughter of Park Chung-hee, a dictator who ruled South Korea for 18 years until his 1979 assassination.

The two women became friends in the 1970s, around the time when Park Geun-hye began serving as first lady after her mother was killed during a failed 1974 assassination attempt on Park Chung-hee. Park Geun-hye once headed a patriotic group set up by the elder Choi, while Choi Soon-sil served as head of its college unit.

Park acknowledged her ties with Choi Soon-sil after the scandal broke in October, and described Choi as someone who helped her "when I had difficulties" in the past — an apparent reference to her parents' assassinations.

Choi's ex-husband served as chief of staff for Park when she was a member of parliament before becoming president in early 2013.

OTHERS INDICTED

Among the others indicted are four former government officials.

Ahn, Park's former economic adviser, allegedly conspired with Park and Choi to extort companies. Another ex-presidential adviser, Jung Ho-sung, has been charged with passing on confidential documents to Choi. Former Vice Culture and Sports Minister Kim Chong allegedly pressured companies to donate money to a winter sports-related foundation run by Choi's niece, Chang Si-ho, who has also been indicted.

A well-known music video director, Cha Eun-taek, is also on trial for allegedly using his ties with Choi to win key culture-related projects from government agencies.

Park has immunity from prosecution for most crimes while in office. She has acknowledged that she got help from Choi for editing speeches and unspecified "public relations" issues, but has denied any other legal wrongdoing.

The country's Constitutional Court is reviewing Park's impeachment. If it rules against her, she'll be formally unseated and must undergo a direct investigation.

Follow Hyung-jin Kim on Twitter at twitter.com/hyungjin1972

Brady leads Patriots to 16-3 win over Broncos

By ARNIE STAPLETON, AP Pro Football Writer

DENVER (AP) — Tom Brady brought a power run game and a sturdier offensive line with him to the Mile High City this time.

They helped him walk away a winner for just the third time in 10 trips to Denver.

Brady overcame both a slow start and another dazzling performance by Denver's defense in New England's grinding 16-3 win Sunday that secured a first-round bye in the playoffs. It also dealt a crushing blow to the Broncos' playoff hopes.

"It was a great feeling," Brady said.

He was equally pleased with the rare win in Denver as he was with his avoidance of another beating like the one he suffered in the AFC championship last January, when the Broncos hit him a career-high 23 times .

This time, they only got to him seven times — the same amount Von Miller had in the conference championship. Miller didn't get his hands on Brady at all Sunday.

"They played great," Brady said of his O-line that allowed only two sacks and five QB hits . "We ran the ball well. It was a great feeling. They did a great job."

Brady missed his first six passes for just the second time his career — the first was way back on Oct.

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12, 2003, against the Giants — but he came back to lead the Patriots (12-2) to a record eighth consecutive division title.

This time, it was the Broncos' hopes of defending their Super Bowl title that took a beating.

The Broncos (8-6) lost for the third time in four games and were supplanted by the Dolphins for the sixth and final playoff spot in the AFC race with two weeks remaining.

Brady completed just half of his 32 passes for 188 yards with no touchdowns and no interceptions for a passer rating of 68.2. That was actually worse than Broncos' QB Trevor Siemian, who was 25 for 40 for 282 yards with an interception for a rating of 73.1.

Those numbers alone belied the Patriots' all-around dominance of their nemesis.

Behind Dion Lewis' 95-yard effort, New England outrushed Denver 136 yards to 58.

Brady's first completion was a 17-yarder to Julian Edelman a minute into the second quarter, igniting a drive that ended with LeGarrette Blount powering his way in from the 1. That was his 15th rushing touchdown, which set a single-season franchise record and broke a 3-3 tie.

The Patriots put the ball on the ground twice on that drive. Brady was sack-stripped on the first snap with left guard Joe Thuney pouncing on the fumble, and Lewis recovered his own fumble at the Denver 1 just before Blount scored.

"That's what makes us sick, when we come out and play stout like we did today" and still lose, Chris Harris Jr. said.

Unfathomable is how Aqib Talib described losing a game in which the Broncos held Brady to 16 points and 16 completions.

"It's football," Talib said.

The Broncos outgained New England by more than 100 yards in the first quarter, but Siemian made two bad decisions that thwarted promising drives.

His throw to Emmanuel Sanders from the New England 14 was both poorly timed and poorly placed. Cornerback Ryan Logan picked it off and returned it to midfield, setting up Blount's TD run.

The Broncos reached the New England 31 on the ensuing drive. Siemian was pressured and instead of throwing the ball away dumped it off to running back Justin Forsett for a 6-yard loss that pushed Denver out of field goal range.

"I missed a couple of opportunities to at least get us some points early on," Siemian lamented. "It comes back to haunt you for sure."

PUNT RETURN PROBLEMS: Jordan Norwood, benched in favor of rookie speedster Kalif Raymond after two muffed punts in a loss against Kansas City last month, muffed his first chance Sunday when Raymond was a surprise scratch.

Norwood allowed Ryan Allen's punt to go through his arms and legs, giving the ball to the Patriots at the Denver 31. That resulted in a 45-yard field goal by Stephen Gostkowski.

Kubiak explained he needed Norwood in three-receiver sets on offense, but Norwood fumbled away his only touch from scrimmage following a 15-yard gain in the final minute.

"He doesn't want to go out there and make a mistake," Kubiak said. "He wants to go out there and make plays. And he's done that for this team many, many times over."

SLOW DOWN: Brandon McManus' 33-yard field goal accounted for Denver's only points. They came in the first quarter, when the Broncos are the slowest starters in the NFL with just 26 points this season. But Denver limited the Patriots to a field goal in the first quarter, and New England came in with a league-leading 103-point tally in the first 15 minutes of games.

INJURIES: Broncos TE Virgil Green left with a concussion and DE Derek Wolfe missed the second half with a neck injury. Patriots DT Malcom Brown went out in the second quarter with a stomach issue.

UP NEXT:

Patriots: Host Jets on Saturday.

Broncos: Visit Chiefs on Sunday.

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

Trump aides ask of Russian meddling: Does it matter?

By ANNE FLAHERTY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's top aides on Sunday said the president-elect isn't ready to accept the finding by intelligence officials that Moscow hacked Democratic emails in a bid to elevate Trump. Even if it's true, they said, Trump still won the White House fair and square.

The pushback came a day before members of the Electoral College are scheduled to formally cast votes for Trump as the 45th president. While Democrats likely are powerless to stop it, they suggested Trump's victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton would forever be tainted by Russian meddling.

Republican electors have been inundated by Trump opponents urging them to defy the results in their states and vote against Trump.

"This whole thing is a spin job," said Trump's incoming chief of staff, Reince Priebus. "And I think what the Democrats ought to do is look in the mirror and face the reality that they lost the election."

Trump himself weighed in Sunday evening, tweeting, "If my many supporters acted and threatened people like those who lost the election are doing, they would be scorned & called terrible names!"

The partisan swipes mostly ignored warnings by foreign policy experts that part of Russia's calculation also was likely payback for years of U.S. criticism of its own elections and a desire to portray America as a flawed champion of democracy — potentially weakening U.S. power on the world stage. Russia has vehemently denied the accusation.

Many lawmakers, including some leading Republicans, say voters may not have been swayed by the release of tens of thousands of private emails. But the fact that a foreign power tried to intervene in U.S. democracy and exploit divisions in American politics is cause for alarm, they say.

Still, Trump's transition team and loyalists on Capitol Hill weren't buying it, at least not on the eve of the Electoral College vote.

"Where's the evidence?" asked Kellyanne Conway, another close Trump adviser.

Asked about President Barack Obama's vow to retaliate against the Russians, Conway said: "It seems like the president is under pressure from Team Hillary, who can't accept the election results."

Democrats say it's unlikely the public will ever hear detailed evidence because doing so would disclose classified sources and methods. But with last week's declaration by CIA Director John Brennan that there was "strong consensus" that Russia hacked Democrats to try to sway the election, lawmakers are stepping up demands for closed-door briefings and a separate congressional investigation.

California Rep. Adam Schiff, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said an unclassified intelligence review could be released within the next two weeks or three weeks.

As president-elect, Trump would have access to high-level intelligence on the matter, although it's unclear what he's been told. Trump has previously called the intelligence finding of Russian involvement "ridiculous." On Sunday, Conway said she wasn't privy to the same intelligence briefings as the president-elect and couldn't say what he knows.

Donna Brazile, interim head of the Democratic National Committee, said the DNC was no match for a sophisticated foreign power in cyberspace that "weaponized" private emails to "sow misinformation and to sow discord" between Clinton and her primary rival, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Also on Sunday:

—Brazile said the cyberattacks against the DNC occurred every day through the end of the election. The comment seemed to contradict Obama's assertion that they stopped after he warned Russian President Vladimir Putin in September.

—Sens. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and John McCain, R-Ariz., called for creation of a special Senate investigative committee focused on Russia, China and Iran potentially trying to interfere in U.S. elections through high-tech meddling.

—Priebus said he was “100 percent confident” that the Senate would confirm Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson as Trump’s secretary of state. The oil company oil executive has deep ties to Russia and no government experience.

—Priebus said the naming of lawyer David Friedman as Trump’s ambassador to Israel doesn’t mean that Trump rejects the notion of a two-state solution in the Middle East. Friedman has suggested Trump would support Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank, effectively eliminating the possibility of a Palestinian state.

“There’s going to be things that individually people may believe in their hearts or in their mind,” Priebus said of Trump’s nominees to top posts. “But ultimately, it’s their job to represent the president-elect of the United States and his foreign policy.”

Priebus appeared on “Fox News Sunday,” Conway was interviewed on CBS’ “Face the Nation” and Brazile and Schiff were on ABC’s “This Week.”

France, Russia reach compromise as Aleppo rescue uncertain

By **KARIN LAUB** and **EDITH M. LEDERER**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — France struck a compromise Sunday with Russia on a U.N. resolution that it said would prevent “mass atrocities” in besieged areas of Aleppo, where thousands of trapped civilians and rebel fighters await evacuation in freezing temperatures.

On the ground, prospects for swift evacuations from Aleppo and other besieged areas were thrown into doubt again Sunday after militants burned buses assigned to the rescue operation, although one convoy of five buses was reported to have reached safety from the city late Sunday.

The Aleppo evacuations were to have been part of a wider deal that would simultaneously allow more than 2,000 sick and wounded people to leave two pro-government villages that have been besieged by Syrian rebels. Most villagers are Shiite Muslims, while most rebels are Sunni Muslims.

Six buses that were among those poised to enter the villages of Foua and Kfarya on Sunday were set on fire by unidentified militants, presumably to scuttle any deal.

A video posted online showed armed men near the burning buses as celebratory gunshots rang out. “The buses that came to evacuate the apostates have been burned,” the narrator of the video said. He warned that no “Shiite pigs” would be allowed to leave the towns.

The video could not be verified independently, but was in line with Associated Press reporting from the area.

Earlier Sunday, pro-Syrian government TV stations showed dozens of buses on stand-by at a crossing near eastern Aleppo, reportedly poised to resume evacuations from the opposition’s last foothold in the city.

Later, a Syrian opposition war monitoring group said the first civilians and fighters to evacuate eastern Aleppo in over 48 hours arrived safely in the countryside from the city. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said shortly before midnight Sunday that government forces allowed five buses to leave Aleppo.

Evacuations were suspended two days earlier amid mutual recriminations after several thousand people had been ferried out of the war zone. Thousands more desperate civilians are believed trapped in the city.

About 2,700 children were evacuated in the first rescue mission earlier this week, but hundreds more “are now waiting in freezing temperatures, close to the front lines,” said Shushan Mebrahtu of the U.N. agency for children, UNICEF. “We are deeply worried.”

The troubled evacuations are throwing into disarray an Aleppo deal that was brokered last week by Syria ally Russia and opposition supporter Turkey.

The deal marked a turning point in the country’s civil war. With the opposition leaving Aleppo, Syrian President Bashar Assad has effectively reasserted his control over Syria’s five largest cities and its Mediterranean coast nearly six years after a national movement to unseat him took hold.

At the United Nations, France and Russia announced agreement on a compromise U.N. resolution to deploy U.N. monitors to eastern Aleppo to ensure safe evacuations and immediate delivery of humanitarian aid.

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France's U.N. ambassador, Francois Delattre, told reporters the compromise was reached after more than three hours of closed consultations on Sunday and the Security Council would vote on the resolution at 9 a.m. EST on Monday.

He said some countries want to report to their capitals overnight. He said he hoped for a positive vote, but that he remained cautious.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, told reporters before consultations that Moscow could not accept the French draft resolution unless it was changed. He presented council members with a rival text.

After the consultations, Churkin said a "good text" had been formulated.

The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Samantha Power, said the resolution would quickly put more than 100 U.N. personnel on the ground to monitor evacuations. "The text contains all the elements for safe, secure, dignified evacuation, for humanitarian access to those who choose to remain in eastern Aleppo" and for protecting civilians, she said.

She said that following the siege in eastern Aleppo, there have been "many, many reports of people being pulled off buses and disappeared, whether into conscription or into torture chambers or killed outright." Deploying U.N. monitors would deter "some of the worst excesses," she said.

Delattre agreed. Approval of the resolution, he said, "would give us collectively the tools to avoid ... a situation in which, after the end of major military operations, forces including militias, would commit mass atrocities."

He said the resolution could also offer leverage to negotiate a broader cease-fire.

Associated Press writer Karin Laub reported this story from Beirut and AP writer Edith M. Lederer reported from the United Nations. AP writer Philip Issa in Beirut contributed to this report.

The Latest: 1st Aleppo evacuees in 2 days reported

By PHILIP ISSA, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The latest on the conflict in Syria (all times local):

1 a.m.

A Syrian war monitoring group says the first convoy to evacuate civilians and fighters from eastern Aleppo in over 48 hours has arrived safely to the Aleppo countryside.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said shortly before midnight Sunday that government forces allowed five buses to leave Aleppo. An attack on a separate convoy of buses earlier in the day had cast doubt on the fate of the evacuations.

Thousands of Syrians are in need of evacuation from the government's siege of the opposition's last foothold in Aleppo, once the country's commercial capital and its largest city. Rebels surrendered the enclave to the government in a deal brokered in Turkey last week that would evacuate fighters and civilians unwilling to return to living under government authority.

But the evacuations have moved along at a halting pace. Several thousand were able to leave the city at midweek but this was only a fraction of total in need. The government's side obstructed evacuations Friday to demand simultaneous evacuations of the sick and wounded from two nearby villages, Fouah and Kefarya, that are besieged by rebels.

12:15 a.m.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations says a compromise Security Council resolution to be voted on Monday would quickly put over 100 U.N. personnel on the ground to monitor evacuations from Aleppo, the former rebel stronghold now under Syrian government control.

Ambassador Samantha Power told reporters that following the siege in eastern Aleppo there have been "many, many reports of people being pulled off buses and disappeared, whether into conscription or into torture chambers or killed outright."

She says the United Nations doesn't know the facts because it's not there, but if U.N. monitors are de-

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ployed it could deter "some of the worst excesses."

France and Russia announced agreement on a draft resolution after Security Council negotiations Sunday. A vote is scheduled for Monday morning.

Power says that "the text contains all the elements for safe, secure, dignified evacuation, for humanitarian access to those who choose to remain in eastern Aleppo" and for protecting civilians.

If the resolution is adopted and works, Power predicts a rapid exodus of people from eastern Aleppo on buses with monitors that pass through monitored checkpoints.

11:30 p.m.

A senior Russian diplomat says the foreign ministers of Russia, Turkey and Iran will meet in Moscow to discuss Syria.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said Sunday in remarks carried by the Tass news agency that the meeting will take place Tuesday.

He said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed plans for the meeting in a phone call with his counterparts from Turkey and Iran and they welcomed the idea.

Earlier reports said the meeting would be held Dec. 27.

Russia and Iran have backed Syrian President Bashar Assad throughout the nearly six-year Syrian conflict, while Turkey has supported Assad's foes.

Russian and Turkey have recently narrowed their differences on Syria and co-sponsored an agreement for the withdrawal of rebels and civilians from Aleppo. Thousands left the rebel-controlled neighborhoods of Aleppo on Thursday, but many others are still trapped in eastern Aleppo.

11 p.m.

A compromise U.N. resolution to be put to a vote calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor evacuations from eastern Aleppo and demands that the U.N. chief urgently consult Syria and other parties on arrangements for immediate deployment of the monitors.

The agreed text also demands that all parties allow unconditional and immediate access for the U.N. and its partners to deliver humanitarian aid and medical care "and respect and protect all civilians across Aleppo and throughout Syria."

France and Russia initially submitted rival draft resolutions, then announced agreement on a text after more than three hours of closed-door consultations by the U.N. Security Council on Sunday. The final draft is expected to be put to a vote at 9 a.m. EST Monday.

The text was obtained by The Associated Press. It expresses alarm at "the continued deterioration of the devastating humanitarian situation in Aleppo and by the fact that urgent humanitarian evacuations and assistance are now needed by a large number of Aleppo inhabitants."

10:15 p.m.

Russia and France have announced agreement on a compromise U.N. resolution to deploy U.N. monitors to eastern Aleppo to ensure safe evacuations and immediate delivery of humanitarian aid.

France's U.N. ambassador Francois Delattre told reporters after more than three hours of closed consultations Sunday that the Security Council will vote on the compromise resolution at 9 a.m. EST on Monday.

He said some countries want to report to their capitals overnight and "hopefully we'll have a positive vote" but he said he was still "cautious at this stage."

Russia's U.N. ambassador Vitaly Churkin told reporters before consultations that Moscow could not accept the French draft resolution unless it was changed and he presented council members with a rival text.

As he left consultations Sunday afternoon, Churkin told reporters: "I think we put in some good hours of work and I think we have a good text, and we're going to vote tomorrow morning."

Delattre said approval of the resolution "would give us collectively the tools to avoid ... a situation in which after the end of major military operations, forces including militias, would commit mass atrocities."

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He said it would also "give us some leverage to try to open the way to a broader cease-fire and toward political negotiations."

9:45 p.m.

Activists say hundreds of Syrians anxiously awaiting evacuation from east Aleppo have been trapped for over eight hours in a no-man's-land between rebel and government control, without food or water.

East Aleppo resident Rami Zien, who says he is on one of the buses "stopped a no-man's land", told The Associated Press via messenger service that evacuees were stressed and frightened.

"Government forces are just ahead of me and if anything goes wrong I'll be the first to die," he wrote.

Zien said evacuees are crammed, 70 people to a bus, with many having no room to sit. He said the Red Crescent, which is facilitating the evacuation, has been unable to provide water. He said there are between 50-to-60 buses in the convoy.

Thousands of civilians and fighters are awaiting urgent evacuation from Syria's largest city after rebels surrendered their last foothold in city to government control in a deal brokered in Ankara last week.

8:15 p.m.

Russia has proposed a rival U.N. resolution that would require Syrian government approval before the United Nations could deploy any monitors to eastern Aleppo to check on civilians.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told reporters as he headed into closed Security Council consultations earlier Sunday that he would veto a French-drafted resolution unless it was changed.

The French draft calls on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to immediately redeploy U.N. humanitarian staff to carry out "neutral monitoring" on evacuations from besieged parts of Aleppo. It also calls on Ban to take urgent steps to enable the U.N. and its partners to observe "the well-being of civilians," and whether international law is being respected.

The Russian draft eliminates any U.N. monitoring of the evacuation of civilians from Aleppo.

It only asks the secretary-general to provide security and other arrangements "in coordination with the interested parties" — which include the Syrian government now in control of eastern Aleppo — to allow U.N. personnel "to monitor the condition of civilians remaining in Aleppo in light of international humanitarian law."

Diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because consultations are closed, said Security Council members were discussing whether it is possible to merge the two texts.

7:30 p.m.

France's U.N. ambassador says the goal of its U.N. resolution is to avoid "mass atrocities" by Syrian forces, and especially militias, in eastern Aleppo which is now defenseless following the defeat of rebel forces.

He told reporters before heading into closed Security Council consultations on the French-drafted resolution Sunday that its demands — safe evacuations, immediate and unconditional U.N. access to deliver humanitarian aid, and protection of medical facilities and personnel — "are very difficult to compromise."

Delattre stressed that "it's a humanitarian resolution to save lives."

Russia's U.N. ambassador Vitaly Churkin said he will veto the resolution unless it is changed, arguing that allowing monitors to wander in the ruins of eastern Aleppo without proper preparation "has disaster written all over it."

Delattre said "our goal is to avoid another or a new Srebrenica," a reference to the massacre of nearly 8,000 Bosnian Muslims who sought protection in the U.N. safe haven of Srebrenica in 1995 during the Bosnian war.

If Russia vetoes the resolution, he said France will seek an emergency special session of the U.N. General Assembly.

6:40 p.m.

Russia says it will veto a French-drafted U.N. resolution demanding immediate access to besieged areas of Aleppo and "neutral monitoring" of the evacuation of civilians.

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Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told reporters before Security Council consultations on the draft resolution Sunday that Moscow has no problem with any kind of monitoring.

But he said the idea that monitors "should be told to go to wander around the ruins of eastern Aleppo without proper preparation and without informing everybody about what is going to happen — it has disaster written all over it."

He says Russia has "some very simple ideas" — which he refused to disclose — to put to council members, and that if they agree a resolution could be adopted Sunday.

But France's U.N. Ambassador Francois Delattre said he intends to put the draft to a vote immediately after consultations and indicated he wouldn't accept any changes.

4 p.m.

Activists say militants have burned at least five buses assigned to evacuate wounded and sick people from two villages in northern Syria. The incident could scuttle a wider deal that encompasses the evacuation of thousands of trapped rebel fighters and civilians from the last opposition foothold in east Aleppo.

The opposition's Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Sunday that the al-Qaida affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front burned buses assigned to evacuate people from the rebel-besieged villages of Foua and Kfarya.

Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group fighting alongside Syria's government, says the buses were burned during fighting between the al-Qaida-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front and a rebel group that supported the evacuations.

The Observatory says six buses were burned while Hezbollah's media outlet put the number at five.

3 p.m.

The head of Israel's official Holocaust memorial says the world must put an end to the killing in Syria.

Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev's comments Sunday marked a rare venture into contemporary affairs for a body devoted to commemorating the World War II genocide of 6 million Jews. Speaking at an academic conference devoted to the plight of Jewish refugees in the Holocaust, Shalev expressed "deep concern over the appalling images of massacres of human beings" in Syria.

He noted how after World War II world leaders enacted universal principles and instituted organizations aimed at preventing future crimes against humanity. Shalev says "the global community must put a stop to these atrocities and avert further suffering as well as provide humanitarian assistance to the victims seeking safe haven."

2 p.m.

Syrian media says buses and ambulances are preparing to enter east Aleppo to resume evacuating rebels and civilians from the opposition's remaining districts in the city.

Pro-government Al-Ikhbariya TV says Sunday that convoys are also preparing to evacuate over 2,000 wounded and sick residents from the northern Syrian villages of Foua and Kfarya , which are besieged by rebels.

In Aleppo, English teacher Wissam Zarqa says families have been assigned bus numbers and are preparing to evacuate after pro-government forces halted operations on Friday.

The government's side said it wanted simultaneous evacuations from Foua and Kfarya. Several thousand civilians evacuated Aleppo Thursday before the process was halted.

10 a.m.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution demanding immediate and unconditional access for the United Nations and its partners to besieged parts of Aleppo and throughout Syria to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The council scheduled consultations Sunday morning on the French-drafted resolution followed by an open meeting where members are expected to vote.

The draft resolution, obtained by The Associated Press, calls on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to immediately redeploy U.N. staff already on the ground to carry out "neutral monitoring" and "direct observation and to report on evacuations."

It stresses that evacuations of civilians "must be voluntary and to destinations of their choice"

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said Friday he would examine the draft but was skeptical that monitors could be deployed quickly.

Bitter cold front moves across Plains to Midwest, heads east

CHICAGO (AP) — Dangerous, record-low temperatures caused cancellations of some holiday festivities in the Plains and Midwest over the weekend before the cold front pushed into the Ohio Valley and the Eastern Seaboard on Sunday.

The National Weather Service forecast a warming trend to start early in the week in many spots as a quieter weather pattern was expected to develop.

On Sunday, temperatures plunged to minus 20 degrees and lower across much of the northern Plains with a fresh surge of bitter arctic air reaching into the Midwest.

A church in Lincoln, Nebraska, canceled its living nativity scene. Patti Crittenden, Trinity United Methodist Church's director of youth ministries, told the Lincoln Journal Star, "In my opinion, this is too cold for anyone to be standing outside — bundled up or not."

In suburban Chicago, an arboretum canceled its holiday light show planned for Sunday night and a holiday gift market was canceled in the Chicago suburb of Naperville.

Travelers were stranded and delayed as a blizzard shut down Interstate 90 in parts of Montana on Sunday. Authorities urged people to stay home to avoid endangering themselves and possible rescuers.

Weather-related delays at Indianapolis International Airport caused about 100 passengers to spend the night in the terminal, but most travelers were on their way Sunday morning.

Chicago police said a commercial plane slid off a runway early Sunday at O'Hare International Airport. There were no injuries reported from the incident just after 1 a.m.

Bismarck, North Dakota, posted a new record low for the date of Dec. 17 with 31 degrees below zero on Saturday before midnight, said National Weather Service meteorologist Zachary Hargrove. Linton, North Dakota, was even colder at minus 33 degrees early Sunday.

In South Dakota, the city of Huron set a new low for Sunday's date of minus 31 degrees. Another record fell in Marshall, Minnesota, where it was 31 below zero. Spencer, Iowa's negative 27 degrees was also a record-breaker.

Colorado residents were digging out after up to 16 inches of snow fell across the state on Saturday, stranding motorists and leaving some areas of the state with subzero temperatures on Sunday. The National Weather Service said the thermometer dipped to 27 degrees below zero in Limon. Breckenridge reported the most snow, with 16 inches that gave skiers and snowboarders the heavy snow they have been hoping for all season.

Snow and freezing rain led to numerous highway accidents, some serious. Perhaps the biggest accident was in Baltimore, when a tanker carrying gasoline skidded off a highway and exploded, killing two people and causing a nearly 70-vehicle pileup on Interstate 95, authorities said. Hospital officials said nearly two dozen people were treated for injuries including broken bones and head trauma. A total of seven remained hospitalized Sunday with two in critical condition, two in serious condition and three in fair condition.

In southwestern Michigan, icy conditions appear to have played a role in a crash that killed a 73-year-old motorist. There were dozens of crashes in Indiana — two of them with fatalities — due to freezing rain and ice. The roads were so slick that authorities had to move motorists stranded on an overpass with a ladder.

In Ohio, a Columbus woman died Saturday when her car skidded off a slick road, authorities said.

In Virginia, a Fairfax County firetruck slid off an icy road while responding to a crash, but no one was injured.

In North Carolina, police and emergency workers reported more than 100 crashes in Raleigh and Charlotte as the drizzle combined with temperatures below freezing to create dangerous icy patches.

In Missouri, Jared Leighton, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pleasant Hill, said Sunday the winter storm Saturday left 2 to 4 inches of snow in Missouri and was followed by sub-zero temperatures early Sunday.

Leighton said a "gentle warmup" is expected.

"It's still going to be rather cold, but when you start with minus 9 anything is going to feel warm," he said. "We'll struggle to get out of the single digits," he said Sunday. "We might get to 10 degrees today."

Corpus Christi lifts water ban after tests find no corrosive

By JUAN LOZANO

HOUSTON (AP) — A nearly four-day ban on drinking the water in Corpus Christi, Texas, was lifted on Sunday after test results showed no contamination due to a chemical leak, the city's mayor announced.

Mayor Dan McQueen said residents could resume using the city's water supply for drinking, bathing and cooking.

"It is all full use but we are going to continue to monitor as we go on," McQueen said.

None of the 28 drinking water samples the Environmental Protection Agency reviewed tested positive for Indulin AA-86, an asphalt-emulsifying agent that's corrosive, the federal agency said Sunday in a statement. Indulin can burn the eyes, skin and respiratory tract if a person comes into contact with concentrated amounts.

The water ban had been issued late Wednesday out of concern that a chemical leak at an asphalt plant leased to Ergon Asphalt and Emulsions by oil refiner Valero could have contaminated the city's water supply.

The EPA said there have been seven "unconfirmed" reports of symptoms possibly related to prohibited water use. The federal agency, along with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, will continue collecting and testing water samples over the next few days.

McQueen said officials will continue investigating the leak at the asphalt plant and seek possible damages from those responsible.

EPA spokesman David Gray said Saturday night the federal agency would begin an in-depth investigation of the leak "and take appropriate action" as soon as it finished with the water testing.

On Saturday, city officials had said that there had been three reports of dirty water before the ban had been issued.

There has been some confusion over when city officials were notified of the serious water problems at the plant site that ultimately led to the water ban.

There had been two reports earlier this month of dirty water at the plant site that resulted in city workers flushing out pipes. City officials have said such dirty-water reports are common.

Valero said in a statement Saturday that it then notified the city of "milky, sudsy water" at the plant on Dec. 7, a week before the water use ban was announced. Ergon had said in a statement that it uses a soap solution comprised of about 98 percent water and 2 percent Indulin and hydrochloric acid in its asphalt operations.

Assistant City Manager Mark Van Vleck had told The Associated Press on Saturday that city technicians responding to dirty water complaints at the plant were not alerted to white, sudsy water until Dec. 12.

But on Sunday, Van Vleck said he believes Valero's version of events is probably accurate.

"When I read it I said, 'That's a little different from what I've been told,'" said Van Vleck, who added that he was going on what people in the public works department had told him.

Ergon has acknowledged the "soap solution" had backflowed into a pipe through which it receives water at the plant. It said that pipe isn't directly connected to the city water main but rather is interconnected.

On Sunday, Ergon said it was pleased the water ban had been lifted and would continue to cooperate with officials.

Officials in Corpus Christi began on Sunday to dismantle distribution centers that had been set up to give water to residents, said City Manager Margie Rose.

The mayor cautioned residents to be conservative in their water use to avoid overtaxing the system after

water tanks were flushed in parts of the city, which has about 300,000 residents and is located along the Texas Gulf Coast.

"This certainly isn't something the city wanted to do," he said. "My heart goes out to everybody in our city right now. And I apologize. I apologize personally."

This was the latest in a string of water scares for the city. In May, the city issued its third boil-water advisory in a year as a precaution after nitrogen-rich runoff from rain flowed into the water system, resulting in low chlorine disinfectant levels in the water supply.

Associated Press writer Frank Bajak in Houston contributed to this report.

China says it will give drone back, but Trump says 'keep it'

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China says its military seized a U.S. Navy unmanned underwater glider in the South China Sea, but that it will give it back. President-elect Donald Trump, however, says the Chinese government should be told "we don't want the drone they stole back" and "let them keep it!"

This comes after U.S. officials confirmed that they "secured an understanding" for the return of the device. Trump's tweet Saturday evening may extend one of the most serious incidents between the American and the Chinese militaries in years.

The Chinese navy on Thursday seized the drone, which the Pentagon said was being operated by civilian contractors to conduct oceanic research. The U.S. lodged a formal diplomatic complaint and demanded the drone back.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun issued a statement late Saturday saying that a Chinese navy lifeboat discovered an unknown device in the South China Sea on Thursday.

"In order to prevent this device from posing a danger to the safe navigation of passing ships and personnel, the Chinese lifeboat adopted a professional and responsible attitude in investigating and verifying the device," Yang said.

The statement said that after confirming that the device was an American unmanned submerged device, "China decided to transfer it to the U.S. through appropriate means."

The U.S. said that "through direct engagement with Chinese authorities, we have secured an understanding that the Chinese will return" the unmanned underwater vehicle, according to a statement from Peter Cook, spokesman for U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter.

But Trump, after holding a rally to thank supporters for his election, took to Twitter to criticize the deal. "We should tell China that we don't want the drone they stole back.- let them keep it!" the president-elect tweeted Saturday evening.

Earlier in the day, he had blasted the seizure.

Misspelling "unprecedented," he tweeted: "China steals United States Navy research drone in international waters - rips it out of water and takes it to China in unprecedented act." He later reissued the tweet, correcting the spelling.

The U.S. said China's "unlawful seizure" came in international waters. Yet China pointedly accused the U.S. of long sending ships "in China's presence" to conduct "military surveying."

"China is resolutely opposed to this and requests the U.S. stop such activities," Yang, the Defense Ministry spokesman, said in the statement. "China will continue to maintain vigilance against the relevant U.S. activities and will take necessary measures to deal with them."

Earlier Saturday, China's Foreign Ministry said the nation's military was in contact with its American counterparts on "appropriately handling" the incident, though it offered no details on what discussions were underway.

Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican who is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" that the seizure of the drone was a "gross violation of international law."

The drone was seized while collecting unclassified scientific data about 92 kilometers (57 miles) north-

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west of Subic Bay near the Philippines in the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Friday.

"It is ours. It's clearly marked as ours. We would like it back, and we would like this not to happen again," Davis told reporters. He said the drone costs about \$150,000 and is largely commercial, off-the-shelf technology.

The USNS Bowditch, which is not a combat ship, was stopped in international waters Thursday afternoon and recovering two of the gliders when the Chinese ship approached, Davis said. The two vessels were within some 450 meters (500 yards) of each other. He said the USNS Bowditch carries some small arms, but that no shots were fired.

According to the Pentagon, as the Chinese ship left with the drone, which is about 3 meters (10 feet) long, its only radio response to the U.S. vessel was, "We are returning to normal operations."

Bonnie Glaser, senior adviser for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the seizure of the glider occurred inside the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, not China, and appeared to be a violation of international law.

China delineates its South China Sea claims with a roughly drawn sea border known as the "nine-dash line" that runs along the west coast of the Philippines. However, it hasn't explicitly said whether it considers those waters as sovereign territory, and says it doesn't disrupt the passage of other nations' shipping through the area. The U.S. doesn't take a position on sovereignty claims, but insists on freedom of navigation, including the right of its naval vessels to conduct training and other operations in the sea.

Davis said that the incident could be the first time in recent history that China has taken a U.S. naval vessel. Some observers have called it the most significant dispute between the sides' militaries since the April 2001 midair collision between a U.S. Navy surveillance aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet about 110 kilometers (70 miles) from China's Hainan island that led to the death of a Chinese pilot.

The drone seizure seemed likely to fray the already tense relations between U.S. and China. Beijing was angered by Trump's decision to talk by phone with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on Dec. 2, and by his later comments that he did not feel "bound by a one-China policy" regarding the status of Taiwan, unless the U.S. could gain trade or other benefits from China. China considers the self-governing island its own territory to be recovered by force if it deems necessary.

There also have been increased tensions over Beijing's ongoing military buildup in the South China Sea, mainly the development and militarization of man-made shoals and islands aimed at extending China's reach in the strategically vital area, through which about \$5 trillion in global trade passes annually.

Boy, 3, out shopping with grandma dies in road rage shooting

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — A 3-year-old boy being taken on a shopping trip by his grandmother was killed in a road rage shooting when a driver opened fire on the grandmother's car because he thought she "wasn't moving fast enough at a stop sign," police said.

The boy and his grandmother were at the stop sign in southwest Little Rock on Saturday evening when a driver apparently angry about the delay stepped out of his car and opened fire, police said. The boy was struck by gunfire at least once, they said.

The grandmother, who wasn't struck, drove away and called police from a shopping center.

Police arrived at the shopping center and found the boy in the car outside a JCPenney department store. The boy was taken to a hospital, where he died shortly after, becoming the second young child shot dead in a road rage incident in the city in the last few weeks.

Police Lt. Steve McClanahan said investigators believe the boy and his grandmother "were completely innocent" and have no relationship with Saturday's shooter, who was being sought. He said the grandmother simply was "driving the car and was taking her grandson shopping when the incident occurred."

Police said they were looking for an older black Chevrolet Impala. Police did not release a detailed description of the man who was driving it.

Last month, a 2-year-old girl was killed when a car drove by and someone fired into her vehicle; the

shooter in that case hasn't been captured.

Police Chief Kenton Buckner said the road rage killings were frustrating for the police department and the community, especially because the young victims were "very innocent" and "can do very little to protect themselves."

"We cannot have a community to where the least protected among us, being infants, who are dying (in) these senseless crimes in our city," Buckner said.

He said he didn't know if the children's shootings were related.

US says it will work with Duterte after latest outburst

By JIM GOMEZ, Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The United States said Sunday that it would work with the Philippine president to address any concerns after he threatened to terminate a pact that allows U.S. troops to visit the Philippines.

President Rodrigo Duterte was enraged after a U.S. government aid agency deferred a vote on a renewal of a major development assistance package for the Philippines over concerns about extrajudicial killings in Duterte's war on illegal drugs, which has left thousands dead.

Although no decision on the aid package has been taken, Duterte on Saturday launched an expletives-laden tirade, telling the U.S. to "prepare to leave the Philippines, prepare for the eventual repeal or the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement."

He was referring to a 1998 accord that governs American forces visiting the Philippines for joint combat exercises. The pact has helped the Philippines contain a violent Muslim insurgency in the south and train and equip Filipino forces facing an assertive China in disputed South China Sea waters.

"You know, tit for tat ... if you can do this, so (can) we. It ain't a one-way traffic," Duterte said, adding tauntingly, "Bye-bye America."

The U.S. Embassy in Manila said in a statement that Washington would work closely with the Duterte administration to address any concerns it may have. It did not elaborate.

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment, but spokesman Josh Earnest has said previously that the White House would not react publicly each time Duterte made an offhand remark.

The 71-year-old Duterte, who describes himself as a left-wing politician, has made similar threats before and after taking office in June, but he and his officials have walked back on many of his public statements, causing confusion.

While calling Americans "sons of bitches" and "hypocrites," Duterte on Saturday praised China as having "the kindest soul of all" for offering what he said was significant financial assistance. "So what do I need America for?" he asked.

He also said Russia can be a very important ally. "They do not insult people, they do not interfere," he said.

The Philippines had been slated for another aid package after its previous five-year, \$434 million poverty reduction program was successfully completed in May under Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino III.

A spokeswoman for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Laura Allen, said Thursday that it would continue to monitor events in the Philippines before the next board review in March 2017.

The U.S. decision is among the first signs of how concerns about the rule of law and human rights under Duterte could entail economic costs.

The U.S. government, along with European Union and U.N. officials, has raised concerns about Duterte's crackdown on illegal drugs, which has left more than 2,000 suspected drug users and dealers dead in purported gunbattles with police. More than 3,000 other deaths are being investigated to determine if they were linked to illegal drugs.

At a news conference in his southern hometown of Davao, Duterte was asked Saturday how many crime suspects he killed while he was a crime-busting city mayor. The former government prosecutor again gave contrasting replies.

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"Maybe one, two three ... I'm saying, maybe my bullets hit them, maybe not, but after the burumbumbum, they're all dead," Duterte said.

Replying to another question, he said that he indeed has killed, but did not provide details and tried to justify his act. "When I tell you now that I killed, do not term them as suspects because all of them died while they were fighting government people," he said.

He asked God for forgiveness in advance, saying he may not have time to pray if he's assassinated. "God, forgive me for killing these idiots," Duterte said, before blaming God for the presence of criminals. "You create a human monster, so if you are God, why do you have to create these idiots? That's why they die."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Dec. 19, the 354th day of 2016. There are 12 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 19, 1946, war broke out in Indochina as troops under Ho Chi Minh launched widespread attacks against the French.

On this date:

In 1777, Gen. George Washington led his army of about 11,000 men to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to camp for the winter.

In 1813, British forces captured Fort Niagara during the War of 1812.

In 1843, "A Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens, was first published in England.

In 1907, 239 workers died in a coal mine explosion in Jacobs Creek, Pennsylvania.

In 1932, the British Broadcasting Corp. began transmitting overseas with its Empire Service to Australia.

In 1957, Meredith Willson's musical play "The Music Man" opened on Broadway.

In 1961, former U.S. Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy Sr., 73, suffered a debilitating stroke while in Palm Beach, Florida.

In 1974, Nelson A. Rockefeller was sworn in as the 41st vice president of the United States in the U.S. Senate chamber by Chief Justice Warren Burger with President Gerald R. Ford looking on.

In 1975, John Paul Stevens was sworn in as an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1986, the Soviet Union announced it had freed dissident Andrei Sakharov (AHN'-dray SAHK'-ah-rawf) from internal exile, and pardoned his wife, Yelena Bonner. Lawrence E. Walsh was appointed independent counsel to investigate the Iran-Contra affair.

In 1996, the television industry unveiled a plan to rate programs using tags such as "TV-G" (suitable for all ages), "TV-Y" (suitable for all youngsters) and "TV-M" (for mature audiences only). Actor Marcello Mastroianni died in Paris at age 72.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton was impeached by the Republican-controlled House for perjury and obstruction of justice (he was subsequently acquitted by the Senate).

Ten years ago: A Libyan court convicted five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor of deliberately infecting 400 children with HIV and sentenced them to death. (The six later had their death sentences commuted, and were transferred to Bulgaria, where they were pardoned and set free.)

Five years ago: North Korea announced the death two days earlier of leader Kim Jong Il; North Koreans marched by the thousands to mourn their "Dear Leader" while state media proclaimed his youngest son, Kim Jong Un, a "Great Successor." Paroled American Lori Berenson, who had stirred international controversy after being convicted of aiding Peruvian guerrillas, left Lima on a flight to the United States for her first visit back home since her arrest in 1995.

One year ago: Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton debated in Manchester, New Hampshire, where they engaged in a pointed but polite discussion of national security, Americans' heightened terrorism fears and the economy. Conductor Kurt Masur, 88, died in Greenwich, Connecticut.

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Spain's Mireia Lalaguna Royo was named the winner of the Miss World 2015 competition in a Chinese island resort, an event dogged by controversy over China's refusal to allow Canada's entrant to attend.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Cicely Tyson is 92. Former game show contestant Herb Stempel is 90. Former South Korean President Lee Myung-bak is 75. Actress Elaine Joyce is 73. Actor Tim Reid is 72. Paleontologist Richard E. Leakey is 72. Musician John McEuen is 71. Singer Janie Fricke is 69. Jazz musician Lenny White is 67. Actor Mike Lookinland is 56. Actress Jennifer Beals is 53. Actor Scott Cohen is 52. Actor Robert MacNaughton is 50. Magician Criss Angel is 49. Rock musician Klaus Eichstadt (Ugly Kid Joe) is 49. Actor Ken Marino is 48. Actor Elvis Nolasco is 48. Rock musician Kevin Shepard is 48. Actor Derek Webster is 48. Actress Kristy Swanson is 47. Model Tyson Beckford is 46. Actress Amy Locane is 45. Pro Football Hall of Famer Warren Sapp is 44. Actress Rosa Blasi is 44. Actress Alyssa Milano is 44. Actor Jake Gyllenhaal (JIH'-lihn-hahl) is 36. Actress Marla Sokoloff is 36. Rapper Lady Sovereign is 31. Actor Iain de Caestecker is 29.

Thought for Today: "Serious-minded people have few ideas. People with ideas are never serious." — Paul Valery, French poet and critic (1871-1945).