

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Friday's Information

No School  
Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on wheat bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, Crunchy Cranberry Salad.

## City Lighting Contest

1st Place – Terry & Kristin Kenny, 610 N Main St  
2nd Place – Rick & Sherry Koehler, 801 N 3rd St  
3rd Place – Bob & Shirley Meister, 602 N 4th St  
4th Place – Paul & Tina Kosel, 110 N Washington

### Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Christmas Eve: 7 p.m. service  
Christmas Day: 9 a.m. worship with communion

### St. John's Lutheran Church

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m.  
Christmas Day: 9 a.m.

### First Presbyterian Church

Christmas Eve: 6:30 p.m. service  
Christmas Day: 11 a.m. service

### Catholic Parish

Christmas Eve: 4 p.m. Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Groton, 6 p.m. at St. Joseph in Turton  
Christmas Day: 9 a.m. Mass at St. Anthony in Bristol

### Methodist Parish

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m. in Groton, 7 p.m. in Conde  
Christmas Day: 9 a.m. in Conde, 11 a.m. in Groton

### Heaven Bound Ministries in Pierpont

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m.

## 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 **Closed**



**Lifetime Warranty on all Collision Work!**

13556 400th Ave., Groton SD 57445  
Allen McKiver, Owner ~ 605/397-4404

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## Thankful for a Happy and Healthy 2016

For many South Dakotans, the presidential election probably dominated conversations with friends and family for much of the year. It's no surprise, considering how historic the election was from beginning to end. And while that certainly makes 2016 a year for the history books, I'm sure there are many other reasons why South Dakotans will remember the last 12 months and be thankful for the opportunities that came their way. So before we flip the calendar from 2016 to 2017, I wanted to share just a handful of reasons why this year has been so special for me.

After my faith, my family means more to me than anything else in the world. Kimberley, my far better half, has been my rock for more than 30 years and continues to push me to be a better person both personally and professionally. Our daughters Brittany and Larissa never cease to amaze me, and I'm so proud of the lives they continue to build with their respective husbands Luke and Scott.

This year was a year of firsts for our family as Larissa and Scott welcomed their first child, Henley Joy Hargens, who also happened to be our first grandchild. I joke with Kimberley that it was easier for her than me to add "grand" to our titles of mother and father, but all joking aside, there is no way to fully describe in words the immense joy of seeing your baby girl holding a baby girl of her own. Next year will bring another first for our family as Brittany and Luke welcome their first child, too.

After becoming a grandfather, it's hard not to think about my dad who is now a great grandfather to 20 amazing kids. While my dad will turn 97 years old this year, he's a perfect example of age merely being a number. He and I spent a morning on the golf course earlier this summer, and although he's more than 40 years my senior, he can still golf a better round than me. My dad still joins us every October for the pheasant opener, too. Roosters or not, he's usually one of the happiest people in camp.

I'm also thankful for the people of South Dakota. It's a humbling experience to be elected to the Senate and bring your voice to the halls of the U.S. Capitol. My staff, who work throughout South Dakota and in Washington, D.C., are easily the hardest-working group in the Senate. Like me, whether it is spring, summer, fall, or now during the holiday season, they are always ready to work hard for you.

2016 has been busy, but it has also been a fun, healthy, and happy year. Here's to an even better 2017.

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## Remembering Friends

The years go faster as one gets older, and as 2016 closes, I have been thinking back on the past year. As always, Linda and I have much to be thankful for. We are also remembering four good friends and great South Dakotans who we lost this year.

In January, Paul Kinsman passed away after a brave battle with cancer. Paul was a longtime public servant. He served in my cabinet as Commissioner of the Bureau of Administration, and he had also served in Gov. Rounds' cabinet. The Bureau of Administration maintains State Capitol and grounds and other state buildings. It handles the state motor fleet, state purchasing, management of records and many other administrative duties. BOA isn't the flashiest part of state government, but it is very important that its work be done well. That is why Paul Kinsman fit the Bureau so well. Paul didn't care about attention or credit. He cared deeply about his work, and he took particular pride in our efforts to preserve and improve the State Capitol and the grounds.

In May, we were saddened by the unexpected death of Colette Abbott, the University of South Dakota's first lady. Linda and I had known Colette for years through her work with Children's Home Society. Colette never held public office, but she was in every way a public servant. She worked hard on behalf of USD and graciously welcomed many to the campus. Colette had a particular connection with students, who came to love her over the Abbotts' two decades at USD. She particularly connected with the university through her enthusiastic support of Coyote athletics.

The next month, our friend Patricia Adam passed away. Pat Adam was an institution in South Dakota. She was the daughter of Gov. George T. Mickelson and the sister of Gov. George S. Mickelson. Pat took a particular interest in promoting South Dakota history, through her work with the state historical society, the Trail of Governors project, and the committee to restore the First Lady gown collection. She also served for years on the Pierre School Board and was president of the state school board association. I met Pat when I was a state senator, and we grew close when I was President of the Senate while she served as Secretary of the Senate, keeping the senate running smoothly.

Finally, in August, we lost Rep. Dan Dryden of Rapid City after his battle with cancer. I first came to know Dan in 2011, when I was a new governor and Dan was a new state legislator. We had to cut the state budget that year, and as a new member of the appropriations committee, Dan was right in the middle of that. He had worked for years as the Rapid City school business manager, and as a "numbers guy" he was up to the challenge. Dan was a gentleman and a straight-talker, and he came to be one of the best-liked and most-respected members of the legislature. Like many of his peers, he believed in balanced budgets and fiscal responsibility. Even as he quietly fought his battle with cancer, he continued to carry out his duties in Pierre, without complaint.

South Dakota is a great state because we are led by everyday people – friends and neighbors who give their time to serve the people of our state. Paul Kinsman, Collette Abbott, Pat Adam and Dan Dryden all exemplified this spirit of servant leadership. As this year closes, Linda and I are thankful to have had each of them as friends. We can all be thankful for the good work they did for South Dakota.

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## Groton Prairie Mixed

**Team Standings:** Jackelopes 3, Cheetahs 3, Chipmunks 2, Foxes 2, Shih Tzus 1, Coyotes 1

**Men's High Games:** Mike Siegler 244, Brad Waage 232, 223, 214, Ron Beldon 223, Roger Spanier 208, Brad Larson 203, Doug Jorgensen 200

**Women's High Games:** Dar Larson 170, Vicki Jorgensen 169, Darci Spanier 166

**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 669, Mike Siegler 575, Roger Spanier 549

**Women's High Series:** Vicki Jorgensen 468, Dar Larson 450, Vicki Walter 446

## GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Larry Schelle introduced members of the GHS robotics team, who gave a demonstration for the weekly dinner meeting of the Kiwanis Club, last Wednesday noon. Next week's program leader will be Sharon Simon, followed by Lee Schinkel, in January.



This is the 11th year that Tina Kosel has run the Angel Tree in Groton. Pictured are Jeslyn, Tina and Julianna Kosel with some of the Angel Tree presents.

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## Winter Storm Watch

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ABERDEEN SD  
334 AM CST FRI DEC 23 2016**

...SIGNIFICANT CHRISTMAS STORM EXPECTED...

.A STRONG LOW PRESSURE AREA WILL MOVE NORTHEAST ACROSS THE CENTRAL AND NORTHERN PLAINS CHRISTMAS DAY THROUGH MONDAY. THIS WILL BRING EVERYTHING FROM RAIN TO FREEZING RAIN... SLEET...SNOW... ALONG WITH VERY STRONG NORTHWEST WINDS CAUSING BLIZZARD TO NEAR BLIZZARD CONDITIONS.

MCPHERSON-BROWN-EDMUNDS-POTTER-FAULK-SULLY-HUGHES-HYDE-HAND-LYMAN-BUFFALO-INCLUDING THE CITIES OF...EUREKA...ABERDEEN...IPSWICH...GETTYSBURG...FAULKTON...ONIDA...PIERRE...HIGHMORE...MILLER...KENNEBEC...FORT THOMPSON  
334 AM CST FRI DEC 23 2016

...WINTER STORM WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM SUNDAY MORNING THROUGH MONDAY MORNING...

\* TIMING...SNOW AND FREEZING RAIN ARE POSSIBLE FROM SUNDAY MORNING THROUGH MONDAY MORNING.

\* SNOW AND ICE ACCUMULATIONS...TOTAL SNOW ACCUMULATIONS OF 2 TO 5 INCHES AND ICE ACCUMULATIONS ARE POSSIBLE.

\* WINDS / VISIBILITIES...SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN VISIBILITY ARE POSSIBLE.

\* IMPACTS...THE ICE AND SNOW WILL RESULT IN DIFFICULT TRAVEL CONDITIONS.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A WINTER STORM WATCH MEANS THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT SNOW...SLEET OR ICE ACCUMULATIONS THAT MAY IMPACT TRAVEL.

CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE LATEST FORECASTS.



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## Today in Weather History

December 23, 1987: Five to sixteen inches of snow fell in 24 hours in east central and southeast South Dakota from the morning of the 23rd through the morning of the 24th. Some of the larger amounts measured were 9 inches at Huron, 10 inches at Mitchell, Platte and Brookings, twelve inches at Chamberlain, and sixteen inches at Alpena. Heavy snow also fell in southwestern Minnesota, with Big Stone and Traverse Counties in the west central portion of the state missing out on the heaviest snow. Considerable blowing and drifting snow hampered removal, particularly in South Dakota, due to reduced visibilities. Snowfall amounts also included three inches at Castlewood, five inches at Clear Lake, and six inches at Bryant.

December 23, 1996: Blizzard conditions developed across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota in the late afternoon of the 23rd and continued into the late evening. Visibilities were frequently below one quarter of a mile. Two to six inches of new snowfall combined with the already significant snow cover and north winds of 20 to 40 mph to cause widespread blizzard conditions and heavy drifting on area roads. Travel was significantly impacted if not impossible, and one fatality resulted from a head-on collision. Some snowfall amounts in Minnesota included 5 inches at Artichoke Lake and 6 inches at Wheaton and Browns Valley. In South Dakota, 7 inches fell at Britton, Webster, and Clear Lake, with 6 inches at Sisseton and 5 inches at Summit.

1811 - A cold storm hit Long Island sound with a foot of snow, gale force winds, and temperatures near zero. During the storm many ships were wrecked, and in some cases entire crews perished. (David Ludlum)

December 23, 1921: An estimated F3 tornado struck the town of Clarkedale, Arkansas, killing 6 and injuring 60 others. Four people died in the destruction of the Banks and Danner store, where 50 people were doing their Christmas shopping.

December 23, 1924: A storm producing winds of 70 mph cause extensive damage to Sydney, Australia during the evening hours.

1955 - The barometric pressure dipped to 28.97 inches (981 millibars) at Boise ID, an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - A major winter storm struck Colorado producing heavy snow and blizzard conditions. A record two feet of snow was reported at Stapleton Airport in Denver, which was shut down for 33 hours. Up to 44 inches of snow fell in the foothills surrounding Denver. The storm hurt the ski industry as skiers were unable to make it out of Denver to the slopes, and the closed airport became a campground for vacationers. (23rd-25th) (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data)

1983 - The temperature plunged to 50 degrees below zero at Williston ND to equal their all-time record. Minneapolis MN reported an afternoon high of 17 degrees below zero, and that evening strong northerly winds produced wind chill readings of 100 degrees below zero in North Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

December 23, 1998: A major ice storm struck central and southeast Virginia and much of North Carolina beginning on Wednesday, December 23 and lasting until Christmas Day morning. Icy conditions caused injuries from slips and falls and numerous vehicle accidents. Ice accumulations of up to an inch brought down trees and power lines. Outages were so widespread with 400,000 customers were without power on Christmas Eve. Some people were without power for up to ten days.

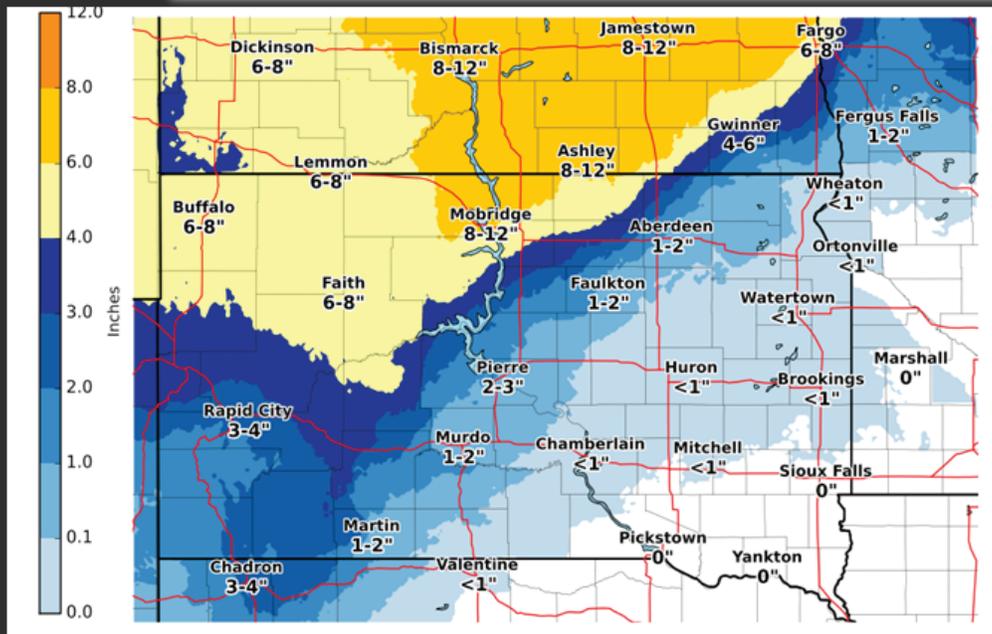
2009 - Severe storms and heavy rainfall were associated with the same storm that brought blizzard conditions to the central parts of the U.S. on December 23rd and 24th. At least one death in Louisiana was blamed on the heavy rainfall and storms. There were 35 preliminary tornado reports and 34 hail and wind reports along the Gulf Coast over the 2-day period. The 10-year average number of tornadoes across the country in December is 36. (NCDC)

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| Today   | Tonight   | Saturday  | Saturday Night  | Winter Storm Watch   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| Today   | Tonight   | Saturday  | Saturday Night  | Christmas Day  | Sunday Night  | Monday  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mostly Cloudy   | Increasing Clouds   | Mostly Cloudy   | Mostly Cloudy then Chance Wintry Mix  | 70% Wintry Mix Likely and Breezy then Rain and Windy                               | 80% Wintry Mix and Blowing Snow   | 60% Blowing Snow and Windy  |

## Potential Snowfall Amounts 25<sup>th</sup> Sun through 26<sup>th</sup> Mon



**Snow Not the Only Hazard!**

- Rain, Freezing Rain and Sleet Possible.
- Dangerous Travel

Less Snowfall Does NOT = Better Conditions  
It Means Better Chances for Rain, Freezing Rain and Sleet!



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 12/23/2016 5:33 AM Central

Published on: 12/23/2016 at 5:43AM

A significant winter storm is taking aim on the region during the Holiday weekend, and persisting into Monday. Travel will be impacted with this system, mainly Sunday through Monday. Less snowfall does not equal better conditions. It means there are better chances of seeing rain, freezing rain, and sleet. All areas will see very strong winds Sunday afternoon through Monday. Stay tuned for updates on this #Holidaystorm.

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## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 28.9 F at 11:53 PM**

**Low Outside Temp: 8.9 at 6:29 AM**

**High Gust: 21 at 12:13 PM**

Snow:

## Today's Info

**Record High: 54° in 1893**

**Record Low: -34° in 1983**

**Average High: 24°F**

**Average Low: 4°F**

**Average Precip in Dec.: 0.38**

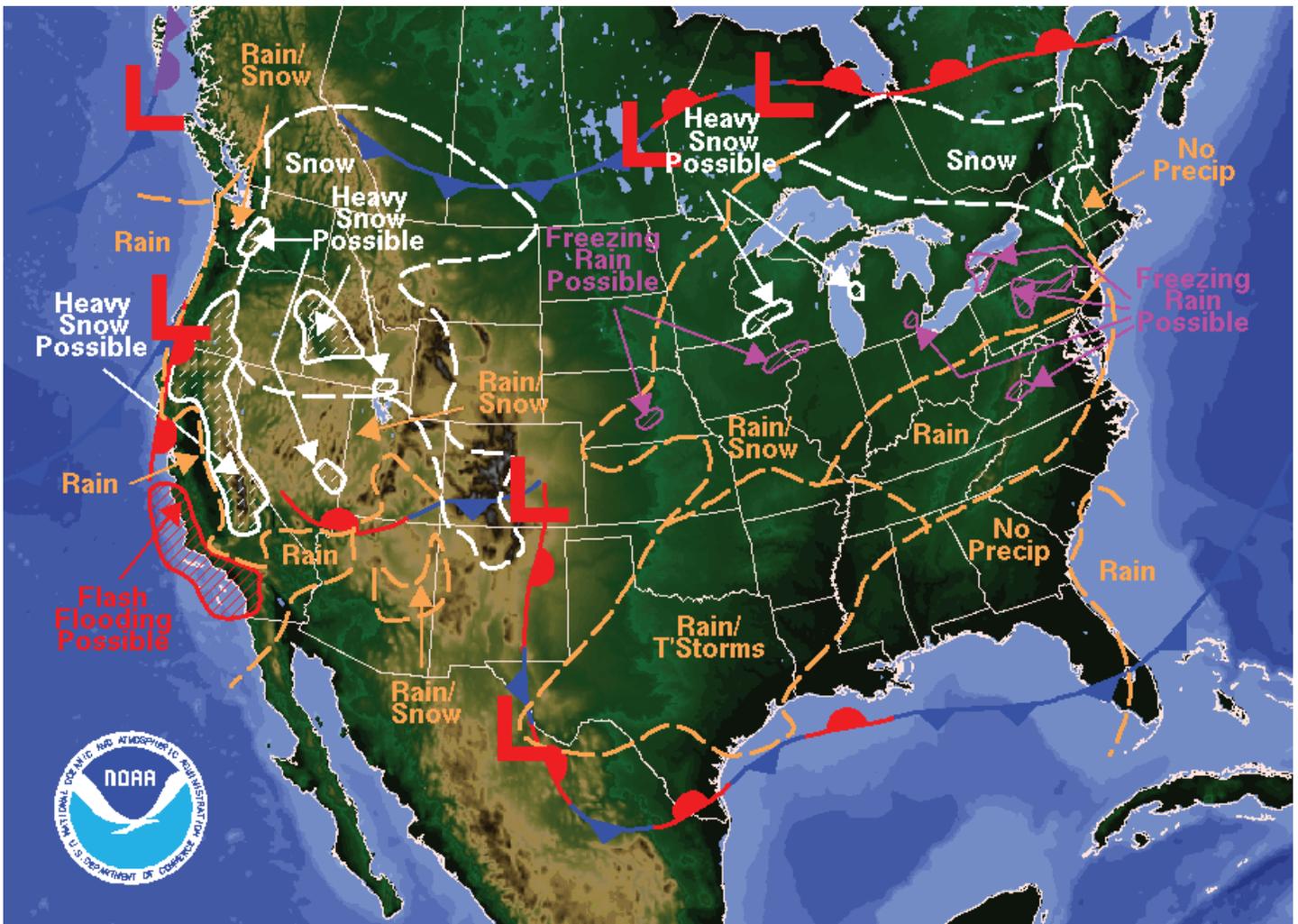
**Precip to date in Dec.: 0.88**

**Average Precip to date: 21.58**

**Precip Year to Date: 18.22**

**Sunset Tonight: 4:54 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 a.m.**



Weather Forecast for Fri, Dec 23, 2016, issued 4:59 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



## THE ANGEL'S VISIT TO MARY

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think of what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; His Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen! I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And the angel left her.

Prayer: Father, may we, like Mary, believe the impossible. May we accept the fact that Your promises to Mary have the same power that Your promises have for us. Help our unbelief! In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture: Read Luke 1:26-38

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## News from the Associated Press

### Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

#### BOYS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 58, Harrisburg 49  
Aberdeen Roncalli 60, Deuel 33  
Castlewood 57, Arlington 48  
Chester 57, Tri-Valley 56  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 58, McCook Central/Montrose 42  
Faith 51, Timber Lake 36  
Lake Preston 68, Deubrook 48  
Lennox 87, Pipestone, Minn. 81  
Madison 67, Sioux Valley 53  
Milbank Area 59, Webster 34  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 76, Gregory 43  
Newell 47, Dupree 18  
Northwestern 71, Iroquois 58  
Parkston 58, Winner 49  
Redfield/Doland 47, Tiospa Zina Tribal 40  
Scotland 49, Bon Homme 45  
Sioux Falls Washington 67, Marshall, Minn. 64  
South Border, N.D. 41, Herreid/Selby Area 36  
Viborg-Hurley 48, Hanson 40  
Walthill, Neb. 75, Freeman Academy 37  
West Central 69, Wagner 35  
Wolsey-Wessington 52, Faulkton 40  
Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D. 52, Waubay/Summit 39  
Yankton 60, Mitchell 37

#### GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 70, Deuel 37  
Alcester-Hudson 45, Canistota 39  
Beresford 57, Bridgewater-Emery 43  
Dupree 54, Newell 32  
Faulkton 55, Wolsey-Wessington 30  
Freeman 60, Platte-Geddes 36  
Freeman Academy 59, Walthill, Neb. 43  
Hamlin 63, DeSmet 62, OT  
Hanson 66, Viborg-Hurley 15  
Harrisburg 55, Aberdeen Central 51  
Madison 65, Sioux Valley 39  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 39, Gregory 20  
Redfield/Doland 48, Tiospa Zina Tribal 33  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 48, Sioux Falls Lincoln 33  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 50, Brandon Valley 47  
Sioux Falls Washington 54, Marshall, Minn. 22  
Sisseton 44, Ortonville, Minn. 40  
Southwest Minnesota Christian, Minn. 78, Sioux Falls Christian 49  
Timber Lake 50, Faith 30

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Tri-Valley 58, Chester 29  
Waverly-South Shore 48, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 35  
Webster 65, Milbank Area 56  
West Central 59, Wagner 45  
Winner 64, Parkston 49  
Yankton 56, Mitchell 23

## Fortunes of Vikings, Packers headed in opposite directions

By GENARO C. ARMAS, AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — The Green Bay Packers have powered through injuries to Aaron Rodgers and Clay Matthews to surge back into postseason contention.

The fading Minnesota Vikings need a miracle to get into the playoffs, especially if running back Adrian Peterson is sidelined again.

Heated division rivals headed in opposite directions meet Saturday at Lambeau Field in a game that could help clear up the NFC playoff picture.

Vikings cornerback Captain Munnerylyn would rather muddle things up.

"Most definitely. If we can't go, they can't go," Munnerylyn said. "We're going to try to spoil their parade and put them in a bad situation."

A four-game winning streak has changed the fortunes of the Packers (8-6). A win over the Vikings (7-7) would set up a winner-take-all showdown at first-place Detroit for the NFC North crown.

"Especially in these division games, it can be taken from you in a heartbeat, so we just got to continue to play well, prepare well, execute and finish," Packers receiver Jordy Nelson said.

Green Bay has pushed through a spate of injuries all season, including those late in the year to its biggest stars, to overcome a midseason, four-game losing streak.

Matthews has been slowed by a painful left shoulder injury that has kept the long-haired linebacker's production down in a reduced, pass-rushing role.

Rodgers is still prolific, even if his mobility might be limited. Second in the league with 32 passing touchdowns, Rodgers remains strong-armed and accurate, as evidenced by his 60-yard bomb to Nelson late in the fourth quarter last week against the Bears to set up a winning field goal as time expired.

On that same day, Minnesota's playoff hopes took a severe hit after a deflating 34-6 loss to Indianapolis at home. It was Peterson's first game back since tearing the meniscus in his right knee in the Vikings' 17-14 win over the Packers in Minnesota in Week 2.

Peterson did not practice at midweek after the running back said he had a "couple of nicks" for which he needed treatment following his first game in three months. Playing only 12 snaps, Peterson rushed for 22 yards on six carries and had a fumble deep in Colts territory.

The Packers aren't taking any chances.

"Well, I think anytime there's a chance of Adrian Peterson being on the field it's going to catch your attention," defensive coordinator Dom Capers said.

Other notes and things to watch ahead of Saturday's game:

**MINNESOTA'S PATH:** It's a very tough road to get back into the playoffs for the Vikings, who started 5-0. They've already been eliminated from repeating for the division title. To get a wild card, Minnesota must win its final two games against the Packers and Bears, have the Buccaneers lose out and Washington lose at least once.

**TY HIM UP:** Now a full-timer in the backfield, former receiver Ty Montgomery has had his workload increase each of the last three games, culminating in a career-high 162 yards rushing and two touchdowns on 16 carries against Chicago. Christine Michael also ran for a 42-yard score last week, when the Packers amassed a season-high 226 yards rushing.

**RODGERS' CALF:** Rodgers' injured right calf seemed to be improving after the quarterback was a full practice participant at midweek. His limited mobility played a part in the Bears getting four sacks last week. The Vikings are tied for seventh in the league with 35 sacks and sacked a healthy Rodgers five

times in Week 2.

The Packers' offense has been much more prolific since then, too, amassing yards with a quick passing attack.

**SLINGIN' SAM:** The Vikings have had trouble scoring points and generating big plays this season, but they could end up being a record-setting unit anyway. Quarterback Sam Bradford is completing 71.6 percent of his passes with two games to go, which puts him on pace to break Drew Brees' single-season record of 71.2 set with New Orleans back in 2011. The number is skewed somewhat by the Vikings' over-reliance on the short passing game.

"The focus is to win games," Bradford said. "It's not about stats. ... So, I don't think it would do much for me, to be honest."

**SITTING SMITH?:** Rodgers dissected a Seahawks defense two weeks ago that was without safety Earl Thomas. Now the quarterback could face a Vikings D without its standout safety, Harrison Smith. One of Minnesota's biggest playmakers has missed the last two games with an ankle injury. Smith missed practice again at midweek, which could be trouble against an offense that is hitting on deep passing plays again.

AP Sports Writer Jon Krawczynski in Eden Prairie, Minnesota contributed to this story.

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and [http://www.twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## **Shamet scores 21, leads Wichita St. over South Dakota St.**

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Landry Shamet made six 3-pointers and scored a career-high 21 points to lead Wichita State over South Dakota State 89-67 on Thursday night.

Markis McDuffie added 17 points and a career-best five steals for the Shockers (10-3), who bounced back from their only home loss, 93-76 against Oklahoma State on Saturday. Zach Brown added 10 points and a career-high five assists.

Mike Daum scored 20 points to lead South Dakota State (7-8). A.J. Hess had 15 points.

The Shockers had a double-digit lead with five minutes left in the first half and led 44-32 at the break. Wichita State opened the second half on a 15-7 spurt to stretch its lead to 59-39 with 13 minutes left and cruised from there.

The Shockers improved to 7-1 at home. South Dakota State had its three-game win streak snapped.

## **Group to push transgender bathroom bill in South Dakota**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The leader of a conservative advocacy group in South Dakota said he plans to push for another bill to bar transgender students from using bathrooms or locker rooms that don't match their gender at birth.

The group approved a draft of the bill last week, Family Heritage Alliance executive director Dale Bartscher told the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2igHFjH>). It calls for schools to provide accommodations for "students with unique privacy needs, including transgender students."

Bartscher said it's important for the Legislature to debate the issue in 2017. He said he hopes the bill could be approved there sooner than at the ballot box, where voters could have a chance to weigh in on the issue in 2018.

"We don't want to see any initiated measure in 2018, we want to see the Legislature approve it and the governor sign it," Bartscher said. "This issue is on the front burner for a lot of South Dakotans."

The legislation's details, including which legislator would sponsor it, weren't clear Wednesday. The Legislature previously approved a similar bill, but Gov. Dennis Daugaard vetoed it.

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, the Center for Equality and Human Rights Watch have launched fundraising campaigns to raise awareness about transgender students' challenges.

Terry Bruce, a transgender rights advocate from Rapid City, said lawmakers should consider the repercussions that would come with the proposed bill.

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"South Dakota depends on state sales tax revenue to run the state, if our state enacts some law that targets trans kids, there is going to be an economic backlash," Bruce said.

Bruce added "we just have to ask ourselves, 'Why are we targeting children?'"

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

## Man, 77, fatally struck by car in Rapid City

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City police say a 77-year-old man is dead after he was struck by a car. Police were called to the crash early Thursday afternoon. Emergency medical personnel began treating the man, and he was taken to Rapid City Regional Hospital where he died.

The name of the man was not immediately released. Police say he was from Rapid City.

Police determined the collision happened at a very low rate of speed, and that the driver's vision was diminished by glare from the sun. Alcohol was not a factor in the crash.

## Testing completed of bridge damaged by pipeline protesters

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The North Dakota Department of Transportation has completed additional testing of a bridge damaged during protests of the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

The department said its testing was completed Thursday with help from the Highway Patrol, the Morton County Sheriff's Department, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There's no timetable for reopening the span.

Core samples were taken from the bridge and will be sent to an out-of-state lab specializing in evaluating concrete cores exposed to high temperatures. Results could take up to a month.

The Backwater Bridge north of Cannon Ball has been closed since October, when protesters blocked it with burning vehicles. The bridge has been the site of several clashes between protesters and police.

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault said the successful testing of the bridge is a big step toward restoring relations between the state and the tribe.

"Today was an example of how we can collaborate to restore relationships and peace in North Dakota," Archambault and Burgum said in a joint statement Thursday.

State transportation officials had said they can't inspect the bridge until they know their workers will be safe. Before he left office last week, then-Gov. Jack Dalrymple met with Archambault, agreeing to enlist the BIA to help ensure the safety of inspectors so that the bridge can reopen.

Protesters worry about the pipeline's effects on drinking water and on Native American artifacts, while Texas-based developer Energy Transfer Partners said the pipeline will be safe. The four-state, \$3.8 billion pipeline is to carry North Dakota oil 1,200 miles to Illinois. The project is stalled while the developer and the Army clash in federal court over permission for the pipeline to cross under the Missouri River.

## Number of home-schooling families on the rise in Sioux Falls

By Megan Raposa, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Home-school families are like red cars.

"You don't see them until you start looking," Sioux Falls home-school parent Chad Theisen said. "Then you're like, 'There's a red car; there's a red car.'"

And those red cars are starting to pop up everywhere.

The number of home-school families has been on the rise nationally for most of the past two decades, and it's a trend that has held true in Sioux Falls, where the number of home-schoolers has nearly doubled since 2009, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2h4naXx>) reported.

More parents are taking their children's education into their own hands for a variety of reasons, from dislike of Common Core curriculum, to wanting more family time, to wanting religion in children's education.

While South Dakota's laws are friendly to families choosing to keep school at home, home-school families still face stereotypes and social stigma.

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But it's getting better, parents say, especially as the community grows through home-school groups and social media.

Cathy and Bernie Schock were the only people they knew home-schooling in Sioux Falls in 1981.

They knew they wanted to spend more time with their kids, and after hearing radio personality Paul Harvey talk about home-school families in Missouri, Bernie started getting excited about the prospect of teaching the couple's three children at home.

"A lot of people thought we were crazy," Bernie said.

At the time, the Schocks were the first family to fill out the state's alternate education application in the Sioux Falls School District. The application was added to state law in 1981—the same year the couple began home-schooling.

Cathy and Bernie were pioneers in home education. They lobbied in Pierre and met with legislators to make their case for home-schooling as a viable form of learning.

"They had to see that we were normal parents with normal children," Cathy said. "That we wanted to give them a normal education."

Today, the Schocks are seeing their grandchildren among thousands of home-schooled kids in the state.

Their daughter-in-law Barb Schock has been teaching her kids for nine years. She's also a board member of home-school group Living Legacy Academy (LLA), one of several parent groups in the state.

LLA started in 2005 with about 25 families. Today, it has 87 families, with 50 more on a wait list, said board member Marla Peters.

Statewide, home-school enrollment has risen 40 percent since 2010, according to a count from the South Dakota Department of Education.

Ask Natalie Michael why she home-schools, and she'll ask why the question wasn't framed another way.

"Why does anybody put their kid in the school system that doesn't have to?" said Michael, a home-school parent and director of the eastern South Dakota chapter of Classical Conversations.

Not all home-school parents feel as strongly opposed to public schools as Michael, but most will mention Common Core curriculum as at least one reason influencing their choice to teach at home.

Joel Brunick, who serves on the Sioux Empire Christian Home Educators board with his wife, Kristin Brunick, said he sees Common Core as one of the biggest drivers of home-school growth in recent years.

Michael fought strongly against Common Core in South Dakota until she began the eastern South Dakota chapter of Classical Conversations home-schooling in 2013, a group that now has between 85 and 90 families.

"Instead of fighting Common Core directly . I decided to offer them a better solution, which is, in my opinion, home-schooling," Michael said.

Parents also choose home-schooling as a way to spend more time with their children.

Theisen and his wife, Brooke Theisen, always planned on having one stay-at-home parent with their three children. Though they didn't always plan on home-schooling, now they see their kids' education as a lifestyle.

"Nobody's more passionate about the education of my kids than I am," he said.

The Brunicks also saw home educating as a way to not only spend more time with their kids, but also to share with them the joys of learning.

Religion also plays a role in choosing to home-school for many families, but Joel Brunick said that often receives too much emphasis.

He said it's a stereotype that families only home-school their children for religious reasons.

"A lot of it has to do with families wanting to reconnect," Brunick said.

Many parents said that home educating is a "calling," but it's not a method that works for everybody, Theisen said.

Home-schooling isn't free, unlike public schools, but Marla Peters, an LLA board member and 10-year home educator, said it can be done on a "shoestring budget." Peters estimates spending \$250 annually on home-school supplies.

Sarah Kramer began home-schooling her children when private school tuition became too expensive.

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She said the initial curriculum investment was about \$1,000, but then materials can be reused.

For those who do feel the home-school "calling," the growth in home educators makes the choice to teach at home easier. There are about a dozen parent groups and co-operatives in the state, and countless resources online.

A Facebook group for home-schoolers in the Sioux Falls area alone has more than 550 members.

That's helpful for parents new to home-schooling or those looking for answers to curriculum questions, Theisen said. Ask a question, and within an hour, someone, somewhere is willing to help you.

Those groups also make it easier for home-school parents to find social outlets for their children.

Peters doesn't feel like there are many forces that work against home-school families — except the stereotypes that home-schooled children aren't social.

That's a stereotype that hits close to home for 13-year-old Na'ama McGowan.

The spunky short-haired teen said when she meets new people and tells them she's home-schooled, they dismiss her or assume that she's overly sheltered or shy. She wants the world to know that's not true.

"People assume you're not going to be a rebel," she said. "(Or) you're not going to fight with your parents. ... Just because we learn in a different environment doesn't mean we're that different."

Peters' children are involved in 4-H, sports, church groups and the weekly LLA meetings, which allow home-schooled children to learn in a traditional classroom environment with each parent teaching different subjects.

Barb Schock's children also have plenty of outlets to socialize with children of all ages and with adults. She said she's surprised that people sometimes think kids have to go to school to develop social skills.

"My kids are not lacking in the slightest bit of socialization," Schock said.

As the primary educator in his household, Theisen also has heard plenty of generalizations about home schooling, including that parents who home-school aren't as educated.

"Yeah, there's stereotypes," said Theisen, who has a master's degree in education and previously worked for a university. "And I don't meet any of those."

Theisen doesn't see the rise in home-school families stopping any time soon.

Home-schooling is a way to adapt to each child's style of learning, he said, adding that he has a "class size of three." It's also empowered him to teach his children using the latest technologies, adapting to changes quicker than traditional schools are able.

As more people teach their own children, home-schooling is also continuing to become more widely accepted, Kristin Brunick said.

"I was always kind of embarrassed to admit that we home-school at first," Brunick said, adding that her mother taught in public schools for 30 years.

Today, people still ask questions, but Brunick said almost everyone she talks to knows somebody that has home-schooled.

"It's been more and more accepted," Brunick said. "It's just a lifestyle that I think people are really embracing."

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

## Federal government expands database access for Indian tribes

By MARTHA BELLISLE, Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — The federal government is expanding a program that allows American Indian tribes to access national criminal databases and fix a system that allowed a man to buy a gun that was later used by his son to kill four classmates and himself at a Washington high school.

The Tribal Access Program, launched last year, lets tribes enter and search for records in the National Crime Information Database, used when someone tries to buy a firearm. The Justice Department chose 10 tribes, including two from Washington state, to participate in the initial phase of the program and announced this week that it has added 11 tribes to that list.

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The Tulalip Tribe didn't have access to the database, so a domestic violence protection order against Raymond Fryberg was never entered and he was able pass a background check and purchase a gun that was later used by his son, Jaylen, to kill four classmates and himself at the Marysville-Pilchuck High School in October 2014.

Washington state's U.S. Attorney Annette Hayes said gaps in data-sharing had tragic consequences.

The FBI oversees a justice information services system in all 50 states. The system includes the National Crime Information Center, used by law enforcement to get data on stolen property, wanted people and sex offenders, and the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, used by Federal Firearms Licensees during gun purchases.

Before the new program, the systems were available to federal, state and local law enforcement but not to all tribes.

Tulalip Chairman Melvin Sheldon Jr. said TAP will empower tribal law enforcement agencies nationwide by giving them the tools they have sought for years to protect their communities. In addition to using the database during firearms purchases, it's used for background checks when placing children with a foster parent.

Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates said the "landmark effort" strengthens both the sovereignty and safety of American and Alaska Native people.

"Since its launch in 2015, this project has not only helped law enforcement locate suspects, rescue victims and extradite captured fugitives, but it's also made it easier for civil courts to enter and enforce orders of protection for domestic violence victims," Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates said in a statement.

During 2016, the tribes received a kiosk workstation that gave them access to national systems.

The tribes used the program for variety of criminal agencies, including law enforcement, criminal courts and jails. It lets tribes enter arrests and convictions into national databases.

Tribal civil agencies also used the program. Agencies that took advantage of the new access included those whose staff and volunteers have contact with or control over Indian children; public housing agencies; child support enforcement agencies; Head Start programs; civil agencies that investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children; civil courts that issue orders of protection, restraining orders or other keep away orders; and sex offender registration programs.

The program helps tribes register sex offenders and have protection orders enforced off the reservations.

Phase Two of TAP will grant access to national crime information databases and technical support to the following tribes:

- Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation, Washington state.
- Metlakatla Indian Community, Annette Island Reserve, Alaska.
- Navajo Nation, Arizona, New Mexico & Utah.
- Pueblo of Laguna, New Mexico.
- Yurok Tribe of the Yurok Reservation, California.
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North & South Dakota.
- Tohono O'odham Nation of Arizona.
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation, South Dakota.
- Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana.
- Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, Nevada.
- Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Wisconsin.

Follow Martha Bellisle at <https://twitter.com/marthabellisle>

## Sioux Falls man pleads guilty to rape of 14-year-old girl

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man accused of raping a teen before fleeing to Minnesota has pleaded guilty and faces 50 years in prison.

Frederick McAbee pleaded guilty Wednesday to raping the 14-year-old girl in Sioux Falls in 2015, then shooting at her as she tried to run. He then fled to Minnesota, where he raped another woman.

The Argus Leader reports (<http://argusne.ws/2hYEvRo>) that McAbee told the judge that he doesn't remember the incident with the teen, but doesn't dispute the facts presented by prosecutors.

McAbee was also convicted of raping a Pipestone, Minnesota, woman while he was on the run. After that conviction, he was brought back to Sioux Falls to face charges.

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

## Berlin truck attack suspect killed in Milan police shootout

By COLLEEN BARRY and NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — The Tunisian man suspected of driving a truck into a crowded Christmas market in Berlin was killed early Friday in a shootout with police in Milan, ending a Europe-wide manhunt, Italy's interior minister said.

Checks conducted after the shootout showed "the person killed, without a shadow of a doubt, is Anis Amri, the suspect of the terrorist attack," Interior Minister Marco Minniti said.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the Monday attack in Berlin, which killed 12 and injured 56 others.

Amri, 24, who had spent time in prison in Italy, was stopped by two officers during a routine police check in the Sesto San Giovanni neighborhood of Milan early Friday. He pulled a gun from his backpack after being asked to show his identity papers and was killed in the ensuing shootout.

One of the officers was shot and is in the hospital, but his condition is not life-threatening, Minniti said. The other officer fatally shot Amri.

German authorities said they were still awaiting official confirmation that the person killed in Milan was Amri, but German Interior Ministry spokesman Tobias Plate said "should this turn out to be true, then the Interior Ministry is relieved that this person doesn't pose a threat anymore."

It was unclear how and when Amri traveled from Berlin to Milan. German authorities issued a Europe-wide wanted notice for him on Wednesday, two days after the attack.

A Milan anti-terrorism official said Amri arrived at Milan's train station early Friday and investigators are trying to figure out where he came from.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk publicly about the investigation, said Amri made his way to the piazza outside the Sesto San Giovanni train station in a suburb of Milan, which is 7.5 kilometers (4.7 miles) away from the main train station.

The official says two police officers were suspicious because it was 3 a.m. and the station was closed. Officials are still trying to determine how he arrived at the piazza. Some buses run at that hour, but no trains, trams or metros.

The official says investigators are also working to determine what contacts, if any, Amri had in Milan. There is no evidence that he ever passed through Milan during his previous stay in Italy, where he spent time after leaving Tunisia in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

He was repeatedly transferred among Sicilian prisons for bad conduct, with prison records saying he bullied inmates and tried to spark insurrections. He served 3 ½ years for setting a fire at a refugee center and making threats, among other things — but Italy apparently detected no signs that he was becoming radicalized.

His mother said he went from there to Switzerland, then moved on to Germany last year.

Authorities in Germany deemed him a potential threat long before the Berlin market attack, and even kept him under covert surveillance for six months this year.

They had been trying to deport him after his asylum application was rejected in July but were unable to do so because he lacked valid identity papers and Tunisia initially denied that he was a citizen.

Authorities say Amri has used at least six different names and three nationalities in his travels around Europe.

A spokeswoman for Chancellor Angela Merkel, Ulrike Demmer, said the German leader would speak with her Tunisian counterpart later Friday to discuss issues including the deportation of Tunisian citizens.

Winfield reported from Rome. Frank Jordans and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed to this report.

## 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. BERLIN TRUCK ATTACK SUSPECT KILLED IN MILAN POLICE SHOOTOUT

Italian officials say the Tunisian man suspected of driving a truck into a crowded Christmas market is dead, ending a Europe-wide manhunt.

### 2. WHY A TRUMP CAMPAIGN TACTIC MIGHT MAKE GOVERNING DIFFICULT

As Donald Trump shapes his policy agenda ahead of next month's inauguration, his trafficking in ambiguity could be a high-risk doctrine once he takes office.

### 3. OBAMA'S MIXED FOREIGN POLICY LEGACY

The president opened a new era of diplomacy in his presidency while running headlong into limitations: His pragmatic approach to world affairs ultimately couldn't deliver on his promise to end wars.

### 4. ALEPPO CONFRONTS VAST DESTRUCTION LEFT BY 4 YEARS OF WAR

Brutal street fighting and punishing bombardments in Aleppo have destroyed thousands of homes, wiped out the city's industrial base and reduced ancient landmarks to rubble.

### 5. AUSTRALIA POLICE SAY CHRISTMAS DAY BOMB PLOT FOILED

Five men suspected of planning a series of holiday bomb attacks in the heart of the country's second-largest city have been detained.

### 6. HOW CHRISTMAS LOOKS IN NORTH KOREA

Trees, lights, a Christmas song or two, but no hint of the holiday's real meaning in a country with almost no practicing Christians left.

### 7. FINAL TEST RESULTS CONFIRM EBOLA VACCINE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

It's a major milestone in the search for a vaccine to stop future outbreaks, like the one that killed thousands in West Africa.

### 8. WHERE WALKING WINTER STREETS REQUIRES FANCY FOOTWEAR

In Alaska's largest city, innovative entrepreneurs have created imaginative shoes, like boots that click like ruby slippers, instantly sending down titanium spikes to dig into slippery surfaces.

### 9. WHO'S THE NHL'S NO. 2 ALL-TIME LEADER IN POINTS

Florida Panthers forward and 44-year-old Czech star Jaromir Jagr got career point No. 1,888, breaking a tie with Mark Messier.

### 10. WHAT "OM TELOLET OM" MEANS

It's a meme that's fanning across social media, started by Indonesian children standing on the side of the road yelling for bus and truck drivers to toot their horns, which play a series of jingle-like beeps.

## Eagles prevent Giants from clinching playoff spot, 24-19

By ROB MAADDI, AP Pro Football Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Because they couldn't win on the road, the New York Giants ensured they won't open at home if they make the playoffs.

Three of Eli Manning's career-high 63 passes were intercepted, including one that Malcolm Jenkins returned for a touchdown, and the Philadelphia Eagles beat the Giants 24-19 Thursday night to snap a five-game losing streak and prevent New York from clinching a playoff spot.

"We didn't play well enough," Manning said. "I got off to a bad start and spotted them a 14-0 lead."

The loss gave Dallas the NFC East title — and home-field advantage throughout the conference playoffs. The Giants (10-5) still own the top wild-card position and will end their four-season playoff drought this weekend if Detroit, Green Bay, Tampa Bay or Atlanta loses.

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If not, they get in with a win at Washington next week.

"We need to be confident," Manning said. "We can get healthy and get a little break these next couple days and come back and practice and play better football."

After Darren Sproles gave the Eagles (6-9) a 7-0 lead on a 25-yard TD run, Jenkins picked off Manning and ran it back 34 yards for a 14-0 lead. Jenkins got another interception in the second half, the second time he's had two picks in a game in his eight-year career.

"I want to be wherever the ball is," Jenkins said. "If I play deep too long a lot of times, I get bored."

Carson Wentz threw a touchdown pass to Nelson Agholor and later shook off a late hit that forced him to miss his first snaps of the season. The rookie quarterback even threw a lead block on a double reverse after he passed concussion tests.

Then the defense delivered a stop on fourth down before Terrence Brooks clinched the win with an interception at the Eagles 5.

"My name was called and I made the most of it," said Brooks, who had not played a defensive snap this season before getting in for two plays against the Giants.

Here's some things we learned in Philadelphia's win over the Giants:

**LANE'S IMPACT:** Eagles right tackle Lane Johnson returned from a 10-game suspension for violating the NFL's policy on performance-enhancing drugs and immediately showed why he's so valuable. He wiped out the left side of New York's defensive line twice on big gains on the offense's first series, including a block on Landon Collins to clear a path for Sproles on his TD run. The Eagles are 4-1 with Johnson, 2-8 without him.

"It was huge to get Lane back," Wentz said. "That was a big spark for us."

**WAITING GAME:** The Giants couldn't do the deed themselves Thursday night and now must wait for the weekend's action. They have plenty of opportunity to qualify for the postseason while opening holiday gifts.

If the Falcons (9-5) lose at Carolina, New York is in. If the Packers (8-6) lose to Minnesota, New York is in.

Should Tampa Bay fall at New Orleans, the Giants advance. And if Detroit (9-5) is beaten by Dallas, the Giants are playoff-bound.

"We're disappointed right now in the way we played tonight," said Manning, who completed 38 passes for 356 yards and one TD. "We know we can bounce back next week and still get a win and get in the playoffs."

They might not need that victory.

**BECKHAM'S NUMBERS:** Earlier this season, when the Giants beat the Eagles 28-23, Odell Beckham Jr. had only four receptions for 46 yards, though he scored twice. At the Linc, he made 11 catches for 150 yards, but didn't find the end zone.

Beckham has 96 catches for 1,323 yards. His career highs are 97 receptions, set last season, and 1,450 yards.

"I think anytime you get the ball in his hands," Giants coach Ben McAdoo said, "you have a chance to go for a touchdown."

Manning targeted Beckham 20 times; the next favored receiver was Victor Cruz, who caught eight of the 13 balls thrown his way. New York's only touchdown was a 13-yard pass over the middle to Sterling Shepard, who had seven catches on 11 targets.

But all those throws weren't enough.

**TOUGH KID:** Wentz was wobbly after banging his head following Olivier Vernon's hit but didn't hesitate to throw himself at Eli Apple on a block after returning to the game.

"If there was anyone out in front, I was going to pick up a block," Wentz said. "Once you're cleared, you're good to go."

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and [http://www.twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Australia police: Christmas Day bomb plot foiled, 5 detained

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Police in Australia have detained five men suspected of planning a series of Christmas Day attacks using explosives, knives and a gun in the heart of the country's second-largest city, officials said Friday.

The suspects were inspired by the Islamic State group and planned attacks on Melbourne's iconic Flinders Street train station, neighboring Federation Square, a fashionable bar and restaurant precinct, and St. Paul's Cathedral, an Anglican church, Victoria state Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton said.

He said they had been plotting the attack for three weeks. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said it was one of the most substantial plots that have been disrupted over the last several years.

The arrests came after a truck smashed into a Christmas market in Berlin on Monday, killing 12 people. A manhunt is underway for the person behind that attack, which prompted increases in security around the world.

Two of seven people initially arrested in raids Thursday night and Friday morning in Melbourne — a 26-year-old man and a 20-year-old woman — were released without being charged, police said.

Five men between the ages 21 and 26 remained in custody. Three appeared in a Melbourne court charged with preparing or planning a terrorist attack. They each face a life sentence if convicted.

Hamza Abbas, 21, Ahmed Mohamed, 24, and Abdullah Chaarani, 26, did not enter pleas or apply for bail. They will appear in court next on April 28.

Police said the other two detained will also be charged with preparing a terrorist attack.

Four of the suspects were born in Australia and the fifth was Egyptian-born with Egyptian and Australian citizenship.

The suspects were preparing to use explosives, knives and a gun, Ashton said.

Police believed the threat had been neutralized through the raids on five Melbourne premises, he said.

"Islamist terrorism is a global challenge that affects us all. But we must not be cowed by the terrorists," Turnbull told reporters.

"We will continue to go about our lives as we always have. What these criminals seek to do is to kill. But they also seek to frighten us, to cow us into abandoning our Australian way of life," he added.

Since Australia's terrorist threat level was elevated in September 2014, the government says there have been four extremist attacks and 12 plots foiled by police.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin said the plotters had moved very quickly from a plan to develop a capability to attack.

"In terms of events that we have seen over the past few years in Australia, this certainly concerns me more than any other event that I've seen," Colvin said. "We believe that we have removed the bulk of this particular cell, this group."

Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews said there will be extra police on the streets of Melbourne on Christmas Day to make the public feel safe.

About 400 police officers were involved in the raids.

## Trump: US must 'greatly strengthen' nuclear capability

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday abruptly called for the United States to "greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability" until the rest of the world "comes to its senses" regarding nuclear weapons.

His comments on Twitter came hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin said strengthening his country's nuclear capabilities should be a chief military objective in the coming year. The president-elect's statement also followed his meetings a day earlier with top Pentagon officials and defense contractors.

Trump, who is spending the holidays at his palatial private club in Florida, did not expand on the actions

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he wants the U.S. to take or say why he raised the issue Thursday.

Spokesman Jason Miller said the president-elect was referring to the threat of nuclear proliferation "particularly to and among terrorist organizations and unstable and rogue regimes." Miller said Trump sees modernizing the nation's deterrent capability "as a vital way to pursue peace through strength."

If Trump were to seek an expansion of the nuclear stockpiles, it would mark a sharp shift in U.S. national security policy. President Barack Obama has made nuclear non-proliferation a centerpiece of his agenda, calling in 2009 for the U.S. to lead efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons — a goal he acknowledged would not be accomplished quickly or easily.

Still, the U.S. has been moving forward on plans to upgrade its aging nuclear arsenal. Earlier this year, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said the Pentagon planned to spend \$108 billion over the next five years to sustain and improve its nuclear force.

The U.S. and Russia hold the vast majority of the world's nuclear weapons. In 2010, the two countries signed the New START treaty capping the number of nuclear warheads and missile launchers each country can possess. The agreement is in effect until 2021 and can be extended for another five years.

Thomas Karako, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the last comprehensive review of the U.S. nuclear force — which was conducted during Obama's first term — occurred against the backdrop of efforts to reset relations between Washington and Moscow. The relationship has since deteriorated, with Obama and Putin clashing over Russia's provocations in Ukraine and support for Syrian President Bashar Assad.

"We need to candidly assess what the environment is and what the prospects are for Russian compliance with current treaties," Karako said.

Trump has repeatedly called for closer relations with Russia and has spoken favorably about Putin. Democrats have questioned his ties to the Kremlin, particularly after U.S. intelligence officials assessed that Russia had interfered in the U.S. election on Trump's behalf.

Putin addressed his country's nuclear capabilities during an annual year-end meeting of the Russian defense ministry. He said Russia should enhance missile complexes that can "penetrate existing and future missile defense systems."

A U.S.-backed missile shield in Eastern Europe has been another source of tension between Washington and Moscow. Russia argues the system is a threat, while U.S. and NATO officials say it's meant to deter Iran from targeting Europe.

The state of the U.S. nuclear arsenal was rarely addressed during the presidential campaign. To the extent it was, Trump showed faint understanding of its details. During a Republican primary debate, he appeared unfamiliar with the concept of a nuclear triad, the Cold War-era combination of submarines, land-based missiles and strategic bombers for launching nuclear attacks.

Trump's vanquished campaign rival Hillary Clinton repeatedly cast the Republican as too erratic and unpredictable to have control of the nation's nuclear arsenal.

The president-elect's transition website says he "recognizes the uniquely catastrophic threats posed by nuclear weapons and cyberattacks," adding that he will modernize the nuclear arsenal "to ensure it continues to be an effective deterrent."

Trump has spent the week at Mar-a-Lago, his South Florida estate, meeting advisers and interviewing candidates for a handful of Cabinet positions that remain unfilled. On Wednesday, he met with Pentagon officials and the CEOs of Boeing and Lockheed Martin, companies with lucrative government contracts.

Since winning the election, Trump has complained about the cost of Boeing's work on two new Air Force One planes and Lockheed's contract for F-35 fighter jets. Following the meetings, both CEOs said they had discussed lowering costs of the projects with the president-elect.

On Thursday, Trump pitted the two companies against each other on Twitter. "Based on the tremendous cost and cost overruns of the Lockheed Martin F-35, I have asked Boeing to price-out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet!" he tweeted.

Boeing spokesman Todd Blecher said Thursday, "We have committed to working with the president-elect

and his administration to provide the best capability, deliverability and affordability." Lockheed declined to comment.

Trump's tweet came after the close of trading on Wall Street. But in after-hours dealings, shares of Bethesda, Maryland-based Lockheed Martin Corp. fell 2 percent, while Chicago-based Boeing Co.'s stock rose 1 percent.

Boeing and Lockheed are also among the companies pursuing a contract for replacing Minuteman missiles in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Spokespeople for the two companies declined to comment on whether that contract came up during Trump's meetings with their CEOs.

The president-elect was also building up his White House staff, announcing Thursday that campaign manager Kellyanne Conway would serve as a counselor. The move will put Conway in close proximity to the president, though she is also expected to remain a visible presence promoting Trump's agenda in the media.

Trump also announced veteran Republican operatives Sean Spicer as his press secretary and Jason Miller as communications director. Hope Hicks, Trump's long-serving campaign spokeswoman, is also joining the White House in a senior communications position.

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Associated Press writers Lynn Berry and Joan Lowy in Washington and Jonathan Lemire in Palm Beach, Florida, contributed to this report.

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Follow Julie Pace at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

## Happy birthday to Colo: Oldest gorilla in US turns 60

By **ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS, Associated Press**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — She is a mother of three, grandmother of 16, great-grandmother of 12 and great-great-grandmother of three. She recently had surgery to remove a malignant tumor, but doctors say she's doing well.

She's Colo, the nation's oldest living gorilla, and she turned 60 on Thursday at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.

Colo was the first gorilla in the world born in a zoo and has surpassed the usual life expectancy of captive gorillas by two decades. Her longevity is putting a spotlight on the medical care, nutrition and up-to-date therapeutic techniques that are helping lengthen zoo animals' lives.

"Colo just epitomizes the advances that zoos have made, going all the way back to her birth at Columbus," said Dr. Tom Meehan, vice president for veterinary services at Chicago's Brookfield Zoo and veterinary adviser to a national gorilla species survival plan.

The changes also mean more animals living with the normal aches and pains of growing older. Today, zoo veterinarians regularly treat animals for heart and kidney disease, arthritis, dental problems and cancer.

Hundreds of people gathered at the zoo Thursday to see Colo, singing "Happy Birthday" moments before the gorilla ambled into an enclosure decorated with multicolored construction paper chains and filled with cakes such as squash and beet and cornbread with mashed potato parsley frosting.

Among the first in line was Pam Schlereth of Columbus, who at 63 was just a little girl when her father brought her to see the newborn Colo in a gorilla incubator in 1956.

"It's a tribute to the zoo that she's alive at 60 years old," Schlereth said.

Colo represents so much to the zoo, Tom Stalf, president of the zoo, told the crowd. "It's all about connecting people and wildlife," he said.

Colo is one of several elderly gorillas around the country. The oldest known living male gorilla, Ozzie, is 55 years old and lives at the Atlanta Zoo, which has a geriatric gorilla specialty.

At Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, staff members use acupuncture, massage, laser therapy, and heat and joint supplements to help Emma, a 13-year-old rabbit.

At the National Zoo in Washington, Shanthi, a 42-year-old Asian elephant with arthritis, receives osteo-

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arthritis therapy and was recently fitted with specially crafted front foot boots to help her feet heal as medications are applied.

In Oakland, California, Tiki, a 27-year-old giraffe and one of the oldest in the nation, gets foot care, massage therapy, acupuncture and chiropractic care, along with traditional veterinary medicine. Gao Gao, a 26-year-old male panda at the San Diego Zoo with a heart condition, periodically undergoes cardiac ultrasounds.

"Geriatrics is probably one of our most common medical challenges that we face in a zoo situation," said Dr. Keith Hinshaw, director of animal health at the Philadelphia Zoo. "So pretty much anything that you could imagine would happen with an older person is going to happen eventually with any animal."

That's up to and including medication: JJ, a 45-year-old orangutan at the Toledo Zoo, is on the human heart medicines carvedilol and Lisinopril, along with pain and orthopedic medications. He also takes Metamucil.

Colo, a western lowland gorilla, holds several other records. On her 56th birthday in 2012, she exceeded the record for longest-lived gorilla. On Thursday, she surpasses the median life expectancy for female gorillas in human care (37.5 years) by more than two decades.

Other age-defying zoo animals:

## POLAR BEAR

Coldilocks, a 36-year-old polar bear at the Philadelphia Zoo and considered the oldest polar bear in the U.S. The bears' typical lifespan in captivity is 23 years. The zoo says treating her early for kidney disease appears to have helped prolong her life.

## RHINO

Elly, an eastern black rhino at the San Francisco Zoo estimated to be 46 years old, is the oldest of her species in North America. She has had 14 calves, and her offspring have produced 15 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild.

## ELEPHANT

Packy, an Asian elephant at the Oregon Zoo, and at 54, the oldest male of his species in North America. The zoo says Packy, born in 1962, became the first elephant to be born in the Western Hemisphere in 44 years.

## MONKEY

Nikko, a 33-year-old snow monkey at the Minnesota Zoo, the oldest male snow monkey in North America.

## CHIMPANZEE

Little Mama, a chimpanzee living at Lion Country Safari in Loxahatchee, Florida, with an estimated age in her late 70s. She takes allergy medicine, iron supplements and omega 3 multivitamins, and has been trained to accept a nebulizer treatment for coughing.

## TORTOISE

Emerson, a Galapagos tortoise at the Toledo Zoo in Ohio, whose age is estimated at about 100.

Andrew Welsh-Huggins can be reached on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/awhcolumbus>. His work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/andrew-welsh-huggins>

This story has been corrected to show that Tiki the giraffe is in Oakland, California, not San Francisco.

Australia police: Christmas Day bomb plot foiled, 5 detained

By ROD MCGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Police in Australia have detained five men suspected of planning a series of Christmas Day bomb attacks in the heart of the country's second-largest city, officials said Friday.

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The suspects had been inspired by the Islamic State group and planned attacks on Melbourne's Flinders Street train station, neighboring Federation Square and St. Paul's Cathedral, Victoria state Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton said.

The arrests came after a truck smashed into a Christmas market in Berlin on Monday, killing 12 people. A manhunt is underway for the person behind that attack, which prompted increases in security around the world.

Two of seven people initially arrested in raids Thursday night and Friday morning in Melbourne — a 26-year-old man and a 20-year-old woman — were released without being charged, police said.

Five men between the ages 21 and 26 remained in custody and would be charged later Friday with preparing a terrorist attack. They were not identified but police said four were born in Australia and the fifth was Egyptian-born with Egyptian and Australian citizenship.

Police had been watching the alleged plotters for some time, and believed they were preparing to use explosives, knives and a gun, Ashton said.

Police believed the threat had been neutralized through the raids on five Melbourne premises, he said.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said: "This is one of the most substantial terrorist plots that have been disrupted over the last several years."

"Islamist terrorism is a global challenge that affects us all. But we must not be cowed by the terrorists," Turnbull told reporter.

"We will continue to go about our lives as we always have. What these criminals seek to do is to kill. But they also seek to frighten us, to cow us into abandoning our Australian way of life. They want to frighten Australians. They want to divide Australians. They want us to turn on each other. We will not let them succeed," he added.

Since Australia's terrorist threat level was elevated in September 2014, the government says there have been four extremist attacks and 12 plots foiled by police.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin said the plotters had moved very quickly from a plan to develop a capability to attack.

"In terms of events that we have seen over the past few years in Australia, this certainly concerns me more than any other event that I've seen," Colvin said.

"We believe that we have removed the bulk of this particular cell, this group," he said.

Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews said there will be extra police on the streets of Melbourne on Christmas Day to make the public feel safe.

About 400 police officers were involved in the raids.

Ashton described those arrested as "self-radicalized" and inspired by Islamic State propaganda.

## Mexican president pledges to rebuild fireworks market

By MARIA VERZA and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN, Associated Press

TULTEPEC, Mexico (AP) — President Enrique Peña Nieto pledged on Thursday to help rebuild a fireworks market where explosions killed at least 35 people and reopen it next year, while a Roman Catholic church held funeral Masses throughout the day.

Families packed Our Lady of Loreto Catholic Church in Tultepec in Mexico State, where chain-reaction blasts destroyed the country's best-known fireworks market Tuesday. Investigators have still not announced the cause of the tragedy, which was the third explosion at the market since 2005 and cast a pall over Mexico's Christmas season.

Peña Nieto visited the injured in a hospital near Tultepec. But it was later at an anniversary ceremony for one of Mexico's independence heroes that the president spoke about the future of the San Pablito fireworks market.

"We commit to support all of the artisans, the 300 vendors from this market, to recover or to support them so that they can restart their normal activities next year and we can achieve the reconstruction of that market," Peña Nieto said.

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Vendors have said that while they recognize the dangers of the fireworks market, it is their only way to make a living and they would return to work there.

Safety measures were put in place after the previous two explosions at the market but were apparently ignored.

Investigators were focusing their attention on reports that vendors displayed fireworks outside their concrete stalls in the passageways that were designed as safety buffers to prevent exactly the sort of devastating chain-reaction explosions that occurred.

Refugio Leon, whose family ran seven stalls in the market, said vendors commonly stacked displays of bottle rockets and firecrackers outside their establishments in the passageways in violation of the rules.

"Everybody did it," Leon said, speculating that it may have played a role in the rapid spread of the explosions.

Video and photos of the stalls from previous years show concrete-block enclosures with open dirt passageways between them. Later photos show the passageways filling up with fireworks and awnings.

Because it was the holiday season, the market was packed with fireworks and bustling with hundreds of shoppers when the blasts reduced the market to a stark expanse of ash, rubble and scorched metal. Dramatic video of the disaster showed a towering plume of smoke that was lit up by a staccato of bangs and flashes of light.

On Dec. 12, the city of Tultepec had issued a statement calling San Pablito "the safest market in Latin America." It said 100 tons of fireworks were expected to be sold during the high season, which runs from August to New Year's.

The city quoted Juan Ignacio Rodarte Cordero, director of the state's Fireworks Institute, as saying that "the stalls are perfectly designed and with sufficient space between them to avoid any chain of fires." City officials said the stalls were equipped with trained personnel, sand, shovels and fire extinguishers.

But during a recent visit to the market, little of that safety equipment could be seen. And when Tuesday's explosions began, vendors and customers didn't have time to look for it — or even, in many cases, to run.

Deadly fireworks explosions have also occurred elsewhere in Mexico: In 2002, a blast at a market in the Gulf coast city of Veracruz killed 29; in 1999, 63 people died when an explosion of illegally stored fireworks destroyed part of the city of Celaya; in 1988, a fireworks blast in Mexico City's La Merced market killed at least 68; and in 2013 a rocket struck a truck loaded with fireworks for a religious procession in Tlaxcala state, killing 17 people.

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Associated Press writer Maria Verza reported this story in Tultepec and AP writer Christopher Sherman reported from Naucalpan.

## Syrian government takes full control of Aleppo after 4 years

By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Syrian government took full control of Aleppo on Thursday for the first time in four years after the last opposition fighters and civilians were bused out of war-ravaged eastern districts, sealing the end of the rebellion's most important stronghold.

The evacuations ended a brutal chapter in Syria's nearly six-year civil war, allowing President Bashar Assad to regain full authority over the country's largest city and former commercial powerhouse. It marked his most significant victory since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule began in 2011.

The announcement was made via an army statement broadcast on Syrian state TV shortly after the last four buses carrying fighters left through the Ramousseh crossing.

"Thanks to the blood of our heroic martyrs, the heroic deeds and sacrifices of our armed forces and the allied forces, and the steadfastness of our people, the General Command of the Army and the Armed Forces announces the return of security and stability to Aleppo," an army general said in the statement.

Western Aleppo erupted in heavy celebratory gunfire, with Syrian TV showing uniformed soldiers and civilians shouting "Aleppo, Aleppo!" and "God, Syria and Bashar only!"

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"No more east and west, Aleppo is back for all Aleppans," said the Syrian TV correspondent, surrounded by people waving Syrian flags.

For Syria's opposition, it was a crushing defeat that signaled the start of a new struggle to forge a way forward.

Ahmad al-Khatib, an opposition media activist who left the city before the siege, said the fall of Aleppo was a date "we'll never forget and we will never forgive."

"Let the world bear witness that Bashar Assad has killed and displaced and destroyed Aleppo, and he celebrates in his victory over the blood and offspring of Aleppo ... with the agreement of the Arab and Western nations," he posted on Twitter.

The ancient city had been divided into rebel and government parts since 2012, when rebels from the countryside swept in and took hold of eastern districts. That set the stage for more than four years of brutal fighting and government bombardment that laid waste to those neighborhoods.

The army statement said the victory in Aleppo is a "strategic transformation and a turning point in the war on terrorism and a deadly blow to the terrorist project and its supporters."

It was a further incentive to keep fighting to "eradicate terrorism and restore security and stability to every span of the homeland," it added.

Earlier in the day, Assad said his forces' achievements in Aleppo are a "major step on the road to wiping out terrorism" and ending the civil war.

The rebel evacuations were set in motion after a months-long siege and Russian-backed military campaign. Years of resistance were stamped out in a relentless campaign over the past month that saw hospitals bombed, bodies left unburied and civilians killed by shells as they fled for safety.

The campaign targeted all remaining hospitals, knocking them out of service. Medical and food supplies ran out and fighters were left demoralized and abandoned by their regional allies.

Under a deal brokered by Russia and Turkey, tens of thousands of residents and fighters began evacuating to opposition-controlled areas in the surrounding countryside, a process that took a week.

More than 35,000 fighters and civilians were bused out, according to the United Nations. The ICRC said in a statement that more than 4,000 additional fighters were evacuated in private cars, vans and trucks since Wednesday.

The departure of the last convoy Thursday was a humiliating defeat for the opposition.

The rebels' hold in Aleppo was a major point of pride, and at times the city seemed to be an invulnerable part of what was once a growing opposition-held patch of territory in the north.

The divided northern city has paid dearly as a central theater of the war. In the past month alone, hundreds of civilians were killed by intense bombardment of rebel-held zones.

A photo of 5-year-old Omran Daqneesh — confused and covered in dust and blood as he sat in an ambulance after being rescued in August from the rubble of a building — became a haunting image in the unforgiving struggle.

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Associated Press writers Philip Issa and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed reporting.

## North Carolina fails to repeal LGBT law as culture wars rage

By EMERY P. DALESIO and GARY D. ROBERTSON, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Repealing North Carolina's law limiting LGBT protections at the close of a bitter election year was supposed to heal blows to the economy and perhaps open a truce in the culture wars in at least one corner of the divided United States.

The failure of state lawmakers to follow through instead shows how much faith each side has lost in the other, as Americans segregate themselves into communities of us and them, defined by legislative districts that make compromise unlikely.

The deal was supposedly reached with input from top politicians and industry leaders: Charlotte agreed to eliminate its anti-discrimination ordinance on the condition that state lawmakers then repeal the legislation known as House Bill 2, which had been a response to Charlotte's action.

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But bipartisan efforts to return both the city and state to a more harmonious past fell apart amid mutual distrust, and neither side seemed to worry about retribution in the next election.

With GOP map-drawers drawing most legislative districts to be uncompetitively red or blue, politicians see little downside to avoiding a negotiated middle-ground. And since the day Republicans passed and signed it into law last March, HB2 has reflected these broad divisions in society.

The failed repeal shows the same polarization, said David Lublin, a Southern politics expert in American University's School of Public Affairs.

North Carolina had been "seen as the forefront of the new South," focusing on education and economic development, and wasn't "viewed as crazy-right wing or crazy-left wing," Lublin said. Keeping the law in effect, he said, "reverses that impression."

It was always more than just a "bathroom bill."

Republican lawmakers commanding veto-proof majorities framed HB2 as a rebuke to the values of Charlotte and other urban, white-collar communities where Democrats are clustered and where gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people generally find support.

HB2 — which omits these people from state anti-discrimination protections, bars local governments from protecting them with their own ordinances, and orders transgender people to use facilities that match their birth certificates — created a backlash that has cost the state's economy millions.

Corporations, entertainers and high-profile sporting events backed out to avoid being seen as endorsing discrimination. Two-thirds of North Carolina voters surveyed in November's Associated Press exit poll said they oppose the law, and even Trump's supporters narrowly trended against it.

IBM executives worry that the failure to repeal HB2 is an obstacle to attracting the best employees to its largest North American operation, in Research Triangle Park outside Raleigh, home to an outsized number of college graduates from around the world.

"The state of North Carolina has a tremendous amount to do to recover its reputation as a great place to live, work and do business," IBM chief diversity officer Lindsey-Rae McIntyre said in an interview Thursday. "Our position is that we will fight this, that we are deeply committed to hiring the very best, diverse talents and that this law and this mindset does nothing to fuel our commitment to hiring that talent."

Across the divide, supporters of HB2 express anger against what they feel are challenges to their religious freedoms, and fear that women could be endangered by transgender people in public bathrooms and showers.

"As much as North Carolina's 'reputation' may have been harmed in the eyes of some, just as many — if not more — respected us for the stance we took in support of privacy and security protections of our public restrooms and dressing facilities," said GOP state Rep. Chris Millis, whose district covers all or parts of two largely rural, coastal counties where President-elect Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton by a margin of more than 2-to-1.

The divide cuts both ways in the legislature.

Rep. Cecil Brockman represents a heavily Democratic district in urban Guilford County, where voters chose Barack Obama over Mitt Romney in 2012 by nearly a 4-to-1 margin. Brockman, who publicly identifies as bisexual, pleaded with his colleagues to repeal what he called an "offensive, disastrous" law.

Brockman's district is about to change.

After Republicans were accused of unlawfully clustering black voters to diminish their influence, a federal court panel ruled that about a sixth of the state's 170 legislative districts were illegally drawn. The judges ordered North Carolina lawmakers to redraw districts by March 15 and to hold new elections in November.

If lawmakers don't resolve it somehow, HB2 is likely to be a hot-button issue in those elections, although even the most one-sided districts are unlikely to change enough to unseat Republican majorities in the evenly divided state.

Polls show Republican Gov. Pat McCrory's support for the law played into his loss — by about 10,000 votes out of 4.7 million cast — to Democratic Gov.-elect Roy Cooper, who ran in part on repealing HB2.

Republican legislative leaders and Cooper, who appears to have had a significant role in brokering the deal that ultimately collapsed, are still hopeful that a solution can be reached in 2017. The General As-

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sembly, with newcomers elected last month, begins in less than three weeks.

"I certainly believe that negotiations will resume, and frankly we all know that we have to work through this," House Speaker Tim Moore told the AP in a phone interview Thursday, but "an issue with strong social overtones is always a problematic vote for members."

Follow Gary D. Robertson on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/garydrobertson> and Emery P. Dalesio at <http://twitter.com/emerydalesio>. Dalesio's work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/emery-p-dalesio>.

## Continuing battle with media, Trump avoids news conference

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Less than a month from taking office, President-elect Donald Trump has yet to hold the traditional news conference that most incoming presidents have held within days of their victory.

As of Thursday, it had been 147 days since Trump held his last formal news conference as a candidate.

Trump, whose refusal to do news conference has been criticized by journalism groups and media watchdogs, has instead tried to convey his message directly to the American public, bypassing the media with pronouncements at his boisterous rallies and, of course, distributing his thoughts 140 characters at a time on his famed Twitter account.

He was slated to hold a press conference on December 15 to discuss his plan to leave his sprawling business empire as he takes office but that event was postponed. Aides have said it will be rescheduled for January but no date has yet been set.

"America has a tradition of an aggressive, free and independent press and a large part of that is that the press inquiries about the president and his stances on the issues," said Tobe Berkovitz, a communications professor at Boston University. "They probably can wave goodbye to that. It's quite obvious that Trump has no interest in following the traditions of the presidency and relationship with the press."

But while his lack of press interaction is a worry to some, many Trump supporters cheered the celebrity businessman's battles with what they felt were biased reporters. Trump made his antagonistic relationship with the media a centerpiece of his campaign, inciting his rally crowds to boo the press, singling out individual reporters with derogatory names like "sleazebag" and using Twitter to attack coverage he didn't like.

His predecessors took a different approach.

Two days after the Supreme Court decision gave him the 2000 election, George W. Bush held a press conference where reporters asked him about his Cabinet picks and tax plans. He proceeded to field more questions each of the next two days. Barack Obama, also regularly held news conferences after winning, taking questions from the White House press corps 18 different times as president-elect. Bush, who had a shorter transition due to the extended Florida recount, did so 11 times.

No modern president-elect has waited as long as Trump to field questions. Since taking office, he has sat for a few television interviews and has taken a handful of shouted questions from the press pool — a small group of reporters who follow the president — a few times at Trump Tower in New York and on Thursday outside his coastal Florida estate.

Trump's team has downplayed the need for news conferences. Kellyanne Conway, a newly appointed White House counselor, said Thursday that the press would have access to the president.

"This will be a traditional White House in the sense that you will have a great deal of press availability on a daily basis and you'll have a president who continues to be engaged with the press," she said in an interview with ABC.

Trump's last full-fledged news conference was July 27, which he held at his Miami-area golf course as counter-programming to the ongoing Democratic National Convention. It was there that Trump called upon Russia to hack his opponent Hillary Clinton's emails saying, "I will tell you this, Russia: If you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing."

His staff later insisted that Trump was joking.

Before that, Trump and his staff had mocked Clinton for not holding her own news conferences. In May, Trump tweeted: "I am getting great credit for my press conference today. Crooked Hillary should be admonished for not having a press conference in 179 days."

Clinton eventually had one after 276 days and then held several more before Election Day. Trump fielded a few questions from a handful of reporters in September on his plane and took a few more in a gaggle after the first presidential debate but did not hold another news conference.

But since the one he hosted in July, he has tweeted more than 1,000 times.

Reach Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire>

## Officials say fingerprints tie Tunisian to Berlin attack

By **GEIR MOULSON** and **FRANK JORDANS**, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German officials presented mounting evidence Thursday that Anis Amri was behind the wheel of a truck that smashed into a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12, as authorities across Europe pressed ahead with their feverish manhunt for the 24-year-old Tunisian, who has evaded capture since the attack.

Police raided properties in Berlin and the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia where Amri is believed to have spent time. They also swooped on a bus in the southwestern city of Heilbronn after receiving a tip that turned up nothing.

No arrests were made, said Frauke Koehler, a spokeswoman for federal prosecutors.

Even so, investigators were increasingly confident that Amri carried out the rampage after finding his fingerprints in the cab of the truck that had been hijacked shortly before Monday's attack.

"We can tell you today that there are additional indications that this suspect is with high probability really the perpetrator," Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said after visiting the Federal Criminal Police Office along with Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"Fingerprints were found in the cab, and there are other, additional indications that suggest this," he told reporters. "It is all the more important that the search is successful as soon as possible."

German authorities have been on the defensive after it emerged that Amri had been considered a potential threat for months, subjected to surveillance and put in pre-deportation detention in August only to be released again due to paperwork problems.

The fact that the attack is alleged to have been carried out by a man who came to Germany seeking asylum last year also prompted fresh criticism of Merkel's decision to allow hundreds of thousands of migrants into the country without thorough security checks.

While police have noted that most migrants are law-abiding, a number of high-profile crimes, including the New Year's Eve assaults in Cologne and several violent attacks over the summer have stoked anti-migrant feeling in Germany. Two attacks in July, along with the truck attack in Berlin, were claimed by the Islamic State group.

"We have made great efforts in recent years to better prepare for terrorist threats," Merkel told reporters. "This makes me confident that we will withstand the test that we now face."

While members of Merkel's party have called for tighter asylum laws and a crackdown on potential extremists in the wake of the attack, the chancellor appealed once more for calm.

"I want to say how very proud I've been in recent days that the great majority of people have reacted soberly," she said.

At the site of the bloodbath, Berliners made a show of defiance. Vendors reopened their stalls at the Christmas market next to the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church even as police placed concrete blocks by the roadside to provide extra security.

In tribute to the victims, organizers decided to do without festive music and bright lights. Berliners and

visitors placed candles and flowers at a makeshift shrine for the victims .

Berlin's state Health Ministry raised the number of injured in the attack to 56, saying some victims went to hospitals on their own.

The agency said 12 people were being treated for severe injuries, with some still in critical condition. Another 14 people with less-serious injuries remained hospitalized and 30 others had been discharged.

German authorities have offered a reward of 100,000 euros (\$105,000) for information leading to Amri's arrest, but they warned he could be "violent and armed."

In Tunisia, Amri's brothers spoke to The Associated Press, urging him to surrender to authorities. "Whether he did it or not, I ask him to report to the police. We are suffering because of him," said Abdelkader Amri.

Another brother, Walid, said Amri may have been radicalized in prison in Italy, where he went after leaving Tunisia in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

Italy's Justice Ministry confirmed reports that Amri was repeatedly transferred among Sicilian prisons for bad conduct, with prison records saying he bullied inmates and tried to spark insurrections. He served 3½ years for setting a fire at a refugee center and making threats, among other things — but Italy apparently detected no signs that he was becoming radicalized.

Amri's mother, Nour El Houda Hassani, insisted he had shown no signs of radicalization and questioned whether he was really the market attacker. Speaking in the central Tunisian town of Oueslatia, she said poverty drove Amri to steal and to travel illegally to Europe.

"I want the truth to be revealed about my son," she said. "If he is the perpetrator of the attack, let him assume his responsibilities and I'll renounce him before God. If he didn't do anything, I want my son's rights to be restored."

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This story has been amended to correct the attribution of quotes between Abdelkader Amri and brother Walid Amri.

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Associated Press writers Bouazza ben Bouazza in Oueslatia, Tunisia; Ciaran Fahey in Berlin; and Frances D'Emilio in Rome contributed.

## **Putin: Russia's military is stronger than any potential foe**

**By NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press**

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's military today can overpower any potential foe but should strengthen its nuclear arsenal, President Vladimir Putin told an annual end-of-year meeting Thursday with defense chiefs.

"We can say with certainty: We are stronger now than any potential aggressor," he told the meeting. "Anyone!"

His comments come at the end of a year when tensions between Russia and the West have remained on edge over the civil war in Syria.

Tensions between Russia and the West have been souring ever since Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and surreptitious support of separatists in eastern Ukraine. Relations dipped further after Russia last year launched an air offensive in Syria to support President Bashar Assad.

Both Russia and NATO members have conducted a flurry of military drills near Russia's borders this year. Russia insists it is responding to a growing NATO threat.

Speaking at the defense ministry's headquarters in Moscow, Putin said Russia should be swift in "adjusting plans to neutralize potential threats to our country."

He said strengthening Russia's nuclear capability should be a chief objective for 2017.

"We need to enhance the combat capability of strategic nuclear forces, primarily by strengthening missile complexes that will be guaranteed to penetrate existing and future missile defense systems," Putin said.

At the same meeting, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu presented an annual report that lauded Russian military achievements in Syria and ongoing efforts to modernize the army.

Shoigu said Russia has fully covered the Russian border with early warning anti-missile systems for the

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first time. He complained about increased NATO surveillance flights in border areas and announced plans to send more troops to Russia's west, southwest and the Arctic.

"Instead of uniting efforts against the global evil, terrorism, NATO has proclaimed Russia its main threat and continues to increase its military potential around our borders," Shoigu said.

Analysts say Russia's military forces remain materially weaker than NATO armies but are gaining technological ground, aided by Putin's aggressive command.

Igor Sutyagin, a senior research fellow at London's Royal United Services Institute think tank, said the Russian military was not the world's strongest. But he said Russian military performance was improving in part because Putin wields more control over his military compared with NATO nations.

"The lack of restrictions makes them better equipped for combat," he said. "They are stronger because if Putin wants to use them, he doesn't ask advice. He doesn't come to Parliament or to Capitol Hill."

In its annual report on the global military balance, Britain's International Institute for Strategic Studies noted that Russia's use of new cruise missile designs in Syria and other recent military displays showed that it was catching up with the West on advanced weapons systems.

Putin thanked the defense ministry for its work but cautioned that "the situation might change very quickly (if) ... we let ourselves relax even for a moment."

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Associated Press reporter Sylvia Hui in London contributed to this story.

## **US economy grew at strong 3.5 pct. annual rate last quarter**

**By MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a 3.5 percent annual rate in the July-September quarter, the fastest pace in two years and more than the government had previously estimated. But the growth spurt isn't expected to last.

The gain in the gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — came from added strength in consumer spending, business investment and the government sector, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The government had previously estimated last quarter's annual growth rate at 3.2 percent.

Thursday's GDP report "paints a picture of a healthy consumer, likely fueled by ongoing gains in employment, modest increases in wages, and solid balance sheets," Michael Gapen of Barclays.

The economy's acceleration last quarter marked a sharp pickup from the tepid annual growth of 0.8 percent in the first quarter and 1.4 percent in the second. Still, growth is expected to slow to a roughly 1.5 percent annual rate in the October-December quarter, reflecting in part less consumer spending and less business stockpiling.

Growth for the entire year, economists say, is likely to be around 1.5 percent. That would be down from 2015 and would be the weakest performance since the economy shrank 2.8 percent in 2009 at the depths of the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. The recovery began in mid-2009, but growth has averaged just over 2 percent, the weakest expansion in the post-World War II period.

President-elect Donald Trump had criticized the sluggish pace of growth during the campaign and said his economic policies would accelerate annual GDP growth to 4 percent or better. To do that, Trump said he would eliminate many government regulations, boost spending on the nation's aging infrastructure and slash taxes.

Most economists don't think 4 percent growth is realistic, given a chronic slowdown in worker productivity and a slower-growing U.S. workforce due in part to retiring baby boomers.

Most forecasters expect growth of around 2.5 percent next year, though they say those estimates could rise if Trump wins congressional support for much of his economic program. Stock markets have surged since Trump's election, partly a reflection of optimism that his proposals would boost growth and corporate profits.

Thursday's report was the government's third and final estimate of GDP growth for the July-September

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quarter. The upward revision mainly reflected stronger consumer spending, which grew at a 3 percent annual rate, more than the 2.8 percent pace that was estimated a month ago. Consumer spending is closely watched because it accounts for about 70 percent of economic activity.

The government also upgraded its estimate for business investment: It showed an increase at a 1.4 percent annual rate, up from a much smaller 0.1 percent rate in the previous estimate.

Government spending was also revised up to show growth at a 0.8 percent annual rate, an increase that reflected a smaller drag from cutbacks at the state and local level.

The Federal Reserve last week boosted a key interest rate by a quarter-point, just the second increase in the past decade. Fed officials say they think they can begin to gradually raise interest rates as they near their goals for full employment, and inflation increases by about 2 percent a year.

In public comments last week, Chair Janet Yellen made no predictions about Trump's economic program. But Fed officials forecast that they would raise rates three times in 2017, up from their previous forecast of two hikes.

## Clinton wins popular vote by nearly 2.9 million

By LISA LERER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hillary Clinton received nearly 2.9 million more votes than President-elect Donald Trump, giving her the largest popular vote margin of any losing presidential candidate.

Certified results in all 50 states and the District of Columbia show Clinton winning nearly 65,844,610 million votes — 48 percent — to Trump's 62,979,636 million votes — 46 percent — according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

Clinton is the fifth presidential candidate in American history to win the popular vote and lose the Electoral College. Democrat Al Gore, the only other presidential candidate this century to come up short in the Electoral College but claim a popular vote victory, received 540,000 more votes than President George W. Bush.

The vote total discrepancy between Democratic nominee Clinton and Trump has fueled arguments by some Democrats that the election process is undemocratic and an intense lobbying push to convince electors to cast their votes against Trump.

The effort failed: The Republican president-elect won all but two of the Electoral College votes he claimed on Election Day when electors met in state capitals on Monday.

With all states voting, Trump finished with 304 votes and Clinton had 227.

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.

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 will be sworn in on Jan. 20.

AP's popular vote count does not include finalized results for third-party candidates and write-in votes.

## US-based cleric rejects links to Russian envoy's killing

By NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A U.S.-based Muslim cleric on Thursday condemned the killing of Russia's envoy to Turkey and rejected accusations that his movement was behind the attack.

Ambassador Andrei Karlov was shot dead by an off-duty policeman in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition Monday in the Turkish capital, Ankara. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has implicated Fethullah Gulen in the killing, accusing his movement of links to the gunman.

In a video address made available to The Associated Press, Gulen accused Erdogan of defaming his movement and suggested that the Turkish government would facilitate other assassinations and blame

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them on Gulen's own followers.

Gulen said "it is not possible for them to convince the world of such accusations."

Russia flew a team of 18 investigators and foreign ministry officials to Turkey to help investigate Karlov's killing.

In Moscow, Foreign ministry officials and lawmakers gathered at the Russian foreign ministry's headquarters for a farewell ceremony to Karlov. Diplomats and officials laid flowers at the open casket alongside an honorary guard.

"Those who raised a hand against Ambassador Karlov, who took his life, will definitely fail in their attempts to stop Russia from cooperating with other countries including Turkey," said Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the foreign affairs committee in the upper chamber of Russia's parliament.

President Vladimir Putin arrived at the end of the ceremony, laid flowers at the casket, offered condolences to the ambassador's widow and left.

Karlov's casket then was carried out of the foreign ministry building and bound for a funeral service at Moscow's main Christ the Savior Cathedral.

Patriarch Kirill, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, said as the service began that the ambassador died a "martyr's death."

Karlov later was laid to rest at a cemetery north of Moscow.

In Ankara, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim visited the Russian Embassy to lay a memorial bouquet of carnations.

Karlov "now has become the eternal symbol of Turkish-Russian friendship," Yildirim wrote in a book of condolences.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 23, the 358th day of 2016. There are eight days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 23, 1941, during World War II, American forces on Wake Island surrendered to the Japanese.

On this date:

In 1788, Maryland passed an act to cede an area "not exceeding ten miles square" for the seat of the national government; about 2/3 of the area became the District of Columbia.

In 1823, the poem "Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas" was published in the Troy (New York) Sentinel; the verse, more popularly known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas," was later attributed to Clement C. Moore.

In 1893, the Engelbert Humperdinck opera "Haensel und Gretel" was first performed in Weimar, Germany.

In 1913, the Federal Reserve System was created as President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act.

In 1928, the National Broadcasting Company set up a permanent, coast-to-coast network.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt restored the civil rights of about 1,500 people who'd been jailed for opposing World War I.

In 1948, former Japanese premier Hideki Tojo and six other Japanese war leaders were executed in Tokyo.

In 1954, the first successful human kidney transplant took place at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston as a surgical team removed a kidney from 23-year-old Ronald Herrick and implanted it in Herrick's twin brother, Richard.

In 1968, 82 crew members of the U.S. intelligence ship Pueblo were released by North Korea, 11 months after they had been captured.

In 1975, Richard S. Welch, the Central Intelligence Agency station chief in Athens, was shot and killed outside his home by the militant group November 17.

In 1986, the experimental airplane Voyager, piloted by Dick Rutan (ruh-TAN') and Jeana Yeager, completed the first non-stop, non-refueled round-the-world flight as it returned safely to Edwards Air Force

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Base in California.

In 1991, fire destroyed a house in Corsicana, Texas, killing three young children; their father, Cameron Todd Willingham, was convicted of starting the blaze and was executed in 2004, although some experts raised questions about whether the fire had been deliberately set.

Ten years ago: The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to impose sanctions on Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment; Iran immediately rejected the resolution. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (EH'-hood OHL'-murt) and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (mahk-MOOD' ah-BAHS') held the first Israeli-Palestinian summit in 22 months. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger broke his leg while skiing with his family in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Five years ago: After days of stalemate and rancor, Congress approved a two-month renewal of payroll tax cuts for 160 million workers and unemployment benefits for millions; President Barack Obama immediately signed the bill into law. Two car bombers blew themselves up in Damascus outside the heavily guarded compounds of Syria's intelligence agencies, killing at least 44 people and wounding dozens more in a brazen attack on the powerful security directorates.

One year ago: Protesters blocked access to a terminal and caused significant holiday traffic delays around Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport after staging a Black Lives Matter rally that also briefly shut down part of the Mall of America; the demonstrations were organized to draw attention to the recent police shooting of a black man in Minneapolis. Peggy Say, 74, who spent nearly seven years on a tireless quest for the release of her brother, AP journalist Terry Anderson, and fellow hostages from kidnappers in Lebanon, died in Cookeville, Tennessee.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ronnie Schell is 85. Emperor Akihito of Japan is 83. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Paul Hornung is 81. Actor Frederic Forrest is 80. Rock musician Jorma Kaukonen (YOR'-mah KOW'-kah-nen) is 76. Rock musician Ron Bushy is 75. Actor-comedian Harry Shearer is 73. U.S. Army Gen. Wesley K. Clark (ret.) is 72. Actress Susan Lucci is 70. Singer-musician Adrian Belew is 67. Rock musician Dave Murray (Iron Maiden) is 60. Actress Joan Severance is 58. Singer Terry Weeks is 53. Rock singer Eddie Vedder (Pearl Jam) is 52. The former first lady of France, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, is 49. Rock musician Jamie Murphy is 41. Jazz musician Irvin Mayfield is 39. Actress Estella Warren is 38. Actress Elvy Yost (TV: "The Catch") is 29. Actress Anna Maria Perez de Tagle (TAG'-lee) is 26. Actor Spencer Daniels is 24.

Thought for Today: "Life began for me when I ceased to admire and began to remember." — Willa Cather, American author (1873-1947).