

Groton Daily Independent

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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**

Midwest Masonry & concrete Pumping

Greg Heilman, owner

405 E 1st Ave., Groton

Greg: 253/929-9137

Mike: 605/492-7041

midwestmasonry1@yahoo.com



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Sherry and Rick Koehler were presented with their GDI Festival Lighting Contest awards by Julianna and Jeslyn Kosel. They were awarded first place with a tree ornament and a \$25 gift card from Subway and Groton Dairy Queen.



Terry Kenny (not pictured is Kristen as she has the flu) was presented with their GDI Festival Lighting Contest awards by Julianna and Jeslyn Kosel. They were awarded third place with a tree ornament and a \$15 gift card from Subway and Groton Dairy Queen.

Bob and Shirley Meister were presented with their GDI Festival Lighting Contest awards by Jeslyn and Julianna Kosel. They were awarded fourth place with a tree ornament and a \$10 gift card from Subway and Groton Dairy Queen.



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Alan and Barbara Bell were presented with their GDI Festival Lighting Contest awards by Julianna and Jeslyn Kosel. They were awarded fifth place with a tree ornament and a \$5 gift card from Subway and Groton Dairy Queen.

This is a close-up of the tree ornament that was presented to each of the place winners. The contest was sponsored by the Groton Daily Independent.



Friday evening, Julianna and Jeslyn came along with me as we personally presented the awards of the GDI Festival Lighting Contest. It was fun visiting with each of the winners. The best part of Koehler's was their nativity scene which they have had a number of years. It is indeed a special display. Terry Kenny built his sleigh and it looks very festive. Meister's did not decorate their full two story house, but they still had a lot of neat decorations adorning the front of the house and yard. Alan Bell has a lot of decorations in their yard and he showed us all the decorations he has not put up. He was particular about how his manger scene is displayed and the baby Jesus does not go out until Christmas Eve. Their yard will be one to watch in the future. Our house, which was tied for first with Koehler's, featured more than a dozen angels throughout the yard with the nativity scene at the front corner of the yard. Unfortunately, with the impending freezing rain, the angels have taken flight into our garage.



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Larry Schelle (left) and Rick Schelle (right) from S & S Lumber presented Jeslyn Kosel with the World's Largest Stocking.



GDILIVE.COM will be sporting its own banner at events that will be broadcast.

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Freezing Rain Advisory URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ABERDEEN SD 428 AM CST SAT DEC 24 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...FREEZING RAIN...SLEET AND SNOW...ALONG WITH VERY STRONG NORTHWEST WINDS CAUSING BLIZZARD TO NEAR BLIZZARD CONDITIONS IN SOME AREAS.

TRAVERSE-BIG STONE-BROWN-MARSHALL-ROBERTS-DAY-INCLUDING THE CITIES OF..WHEATON...ORTONVILLE...ABERDEEN...BRITTON...SISSETON...WEBSTER
428 AM CST SAT DEC 24 2016

...FREEZING RAIN ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM 6 AM TO 6 PM CST SUNDAY...

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN ABERDEEN HAS ISSUED A FREEZING RAIN ADVISORY...WHICH IS IN EFFECT FROM 6 AM TO 6 PM CST SUNDAY. THE WINTER STORM WATCH IS NO LONGER IN EFFECT.

* TIMING...PLAN ON FREEZING RAIN TO DEVELOP AROUND 6 AM SUNDAY AND THEN DIMINISH AROUND 6 PM SUNDAY.

* ICE ACCUMULATIONS...TOTAL ICE ACCUMULATIONS OF 1/10 TO 2/10 OF AN INCH ARE EXPECTED.

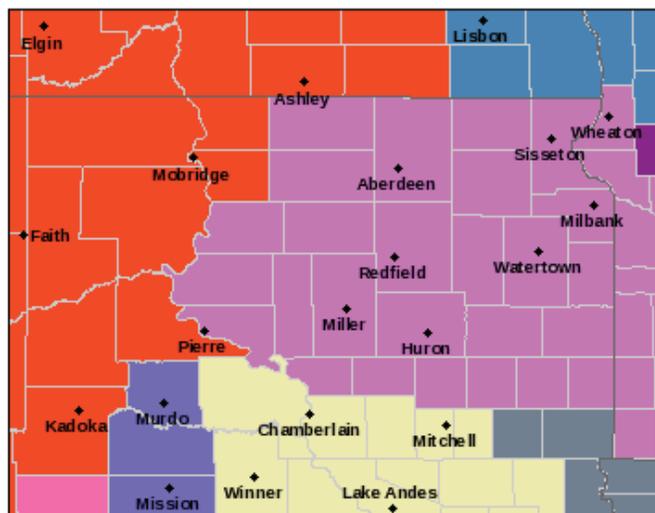
* WINDS...NORTHWEST WINDS OF 20 TO 30 MPH WITH GUSTS UP TO 50 MPH WILL BE POSSIBLE LATE SUNDAY NIGHT INTO MONDAY MORNING.

* IMPACTS...THE ICE WILL RESULT IN DIFFICULT TRAVEL CONDITIONS.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

A FREEZING RAIN ADVISORY MEANS THAT PERIODS OF FREEZING RAIN OR DRIZZLE WILL CAUSE TRAVEL DIFFICULTIES. BE PREPARED FOR SLIPPERY ROADS. SLOW DOWN AND USE CAUTION WHILE DRIVING. THE LATEST ROAD CONDITIONS FOR THE STATE YOU ARE CALLING FROM CAN BE OBTAINED BY CALLING 5 1 1.

Click a location below for detailed forecast.



Last Map Update: Sat, Dec. 24, 2016 at 7:29:02 am CST

Watches, Warnings & Advisories	
Blizzard Warning	Red
Ice Storm Warning	Dark Purple
Winter Storm Warning	Pink
Freezing Rain Advisory	Light Purple
Winter Weather Advisory	Dark Blue
Dense Fog Advisory	Grey
Winter Storm Watch	Blue
Hazardous Weather Outlook	Yellow

Today in Weather History

December 24, 1985: Snow fell over western South Dakota on December 23, with the greatest amounts in the northern Black Hills. Strong winds gusting to 50-60 mph developed over the western part of the state on the evening of December 23rd and continued into the morning of the 24th, with gusts to above 40 mph in the east. The winds caused ground blizzard conditions in the northern and central sections of South Dakota, and many vehicles were reported in ditches. Many people were stranded for a time in Martin in Bennett County. Several roads were completely blocked during this time, such as Highway 248 near Murdo in Jones County.

December 24, 1992: A deep area of low pressure traveled across the United States/Canada border, dragging a cold front southward across South Dakota and Minnesota by Christmas Day. Southerly winds gusted up to 50 mph over western Minnesota on the 23rd in advance of the storm, causing ground blizzard conditions. As the arctic cold front swept across the area, temperatures tumbled from the 20s and 30s to well below zero by Christmas morning. Wind gusts were up to 50 mph behind the front, causing ground blizzard conditions and wind chill readings from 40 to 60 degrees below zero. A church that was under construction in Litchfield in Meeker County, Minnesota was destroyed by strong winds. Many motorists were stranded on Christmas Eve and spent the night at area homes and motels. Interstate 94 from Alexandria to Moorhead, MN was closed for nearly eight hours. High winds gusted up to 55 mph in the Watertown, SD area, causing a steel frame building under construction to collapse sometime between 9 and 10 pm CST.

December 24, 2009: A broad upper level low pressure area over the Upper Midwest associated with an intense surface low pressure area brought widespread heavy snow along with blizzard conditions to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. The storm was a slow mover and produced several rounds of snow over a three-day period. Total snowfall amounts were from 7 to as much as 25 inches. The heavy snow combined with winds of 25 to 40 mph with gusts to 50 mph brought widespread blowing and drifting snow with visibilities frequently less than a quarter of a mile. This blizzard ranked in the top three for South Dakota snowfall with a state average of 15.4 inches. Most of the state received 10 inches of snowfall or more with many locations with 20 inches or more. Pollock in north central South Dakota set an all-time high three-day snowfall total with 17 inches. Prior to the onset of the storm, the Governor declared a state of emergency for South Dakota. Large portions of both Interstates 29 and 90 across South Dakota were closed late on Thursday, December 24th. Both Interstates were closed through Christmas Day and into Saturday, December 26th. There were some stranded holiday travelers due to the road closings along with a few rescues. Most roads were reopened by Sunday morning, December 27th. There were also several vehicle accidents with nothing serious. Several airports were also closed throughout the storm along with a few spotty power outages occurring in Lyman County in central South Dakota. Total snowfall amounts over the three-day period predominantly ranged from 1 to 2 feet. Snowfall amounts with a foot or more included; 12 inches at Mobridge, Eureka, Waubay, and Eagle Butte; 13 inches at Highmore and Miller; 14 inches at

Castlewood, Summit, Watertown, Pierre, and Ree Heights; 15 inches at Groton, Gettysburg, Webster, Wilmot, Hayti, and McLaughlin; 16 inches at McIntosh, east of Hayes and east of Hosmer; 17 inches at Timber Lake, Britton, and Pollock; 18 inches near Victor; 20 inches near Keldron; 22 inches at Murdo; 23 inches at Sisseton and 25 inches at Kennebec. In west central Minnesota Wheaton received 11 inches, Browns Valley received 15 inches with 16 inches at Ortonville and Artichoke Lake.

December 24, 2004: An extremely rare snowstorm impacts southeastern Texas on this day. Corpus Christi International Airport officially measured 4.4 inches from this event. This was their second white Christmas ever recorded in Corpus Christi. The other white Christmas occurred in 1918 when 0.1 inches was reported.

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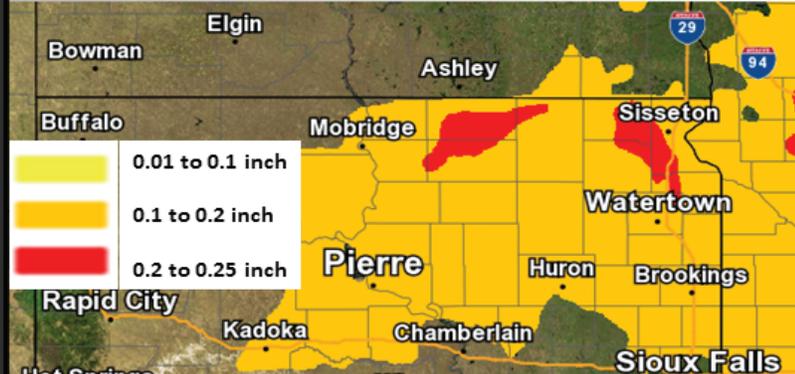
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Today	Tonight	Christmas Day	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Patched Fog then Cloudy	Cloudy then Slight Chance Freezing Drizzle	Breezy. Rain/Freezing Rain then Rain	Wintry Mix and Breezy then Chance Wintry Mix and Windy	Mostly Cloudy and Windy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 23 °F	Low: 21 °F↑	High: 37 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: 1 °F	High: 21 °F

Icy Conditions on Christmas

Ice Accumulations

Valid Ending Monday December 26th, 2016 at 12 PM CST

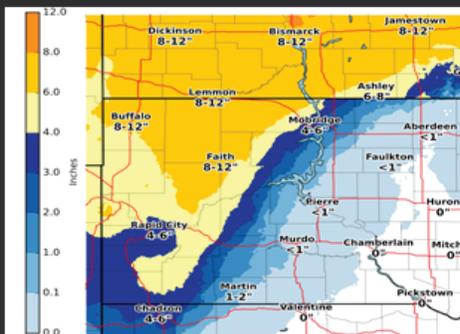


Freezing Rain on Christmas

- Icy Surfaces with Travel Impacted

Timing

- Before Sunrise and Noon
- Could Last into the Afternoon in Northeast South Dakota.



Don't Forget the Heavy Snow in Northwest and North Central South Dakota where Blizzard Conditions are expected!



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 12/24/2016 5:49 AM Central

Published on: 12/24/2016 at 5:55AM

A very active latter part of the weekend is expected as a major storm moves into the region. Precipitation will likely start off late Saturday night as freezing drizzle, but then will transition to freezing rain over Eastern South Dakota Sunday morning. Rain and freezing rain is expected to continue into Sunday afternoon. Meanwhile, snow should begin to fall over western South Dakota on Sunday. The storm will exit the region on Monday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 35.9 F at 7:41 AM

Low Outside Temp: 12.5 F at 11:58 PM

High Gust: 26.0 Mph at 6:33 AM

Snow:

Today's Info

Record High: 56° in 1907

Record Low: -24° in 1996

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 4°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.39

Precip to date in Dec.: 0.88

Average Precip to date: 21.59

Precip Year to Date: 18.22

Sunset Tonight: 4:55 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sat, Dec 24, 2016, issued 4:09 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Reinhart based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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JOSEPH'S DREAM

...Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

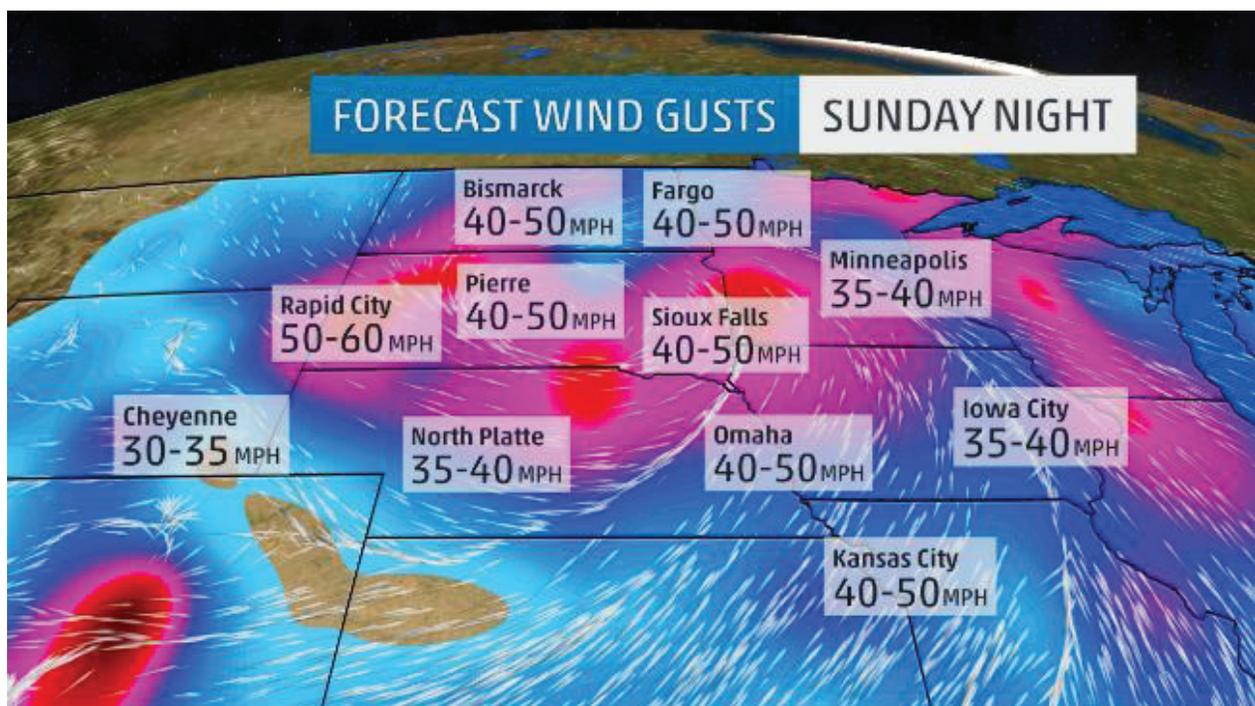
All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.

Prayer: May we, Heavenly Father, do as Joseph did: do whatever it is that You ask of us. May our faith be so strong that we will be obedient, faithful and trusting. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture: Read Matthew 1:18-24



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News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Sisseton 56, Mobridge-Pollock 32

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Entringer Classic

Chester 46, Elkton-Lake Benton 45

Colman-Egan 46, Dell Rapids St. Mary 29

Deuel 63, Lake Preston 40

Estelline 47, Arlington 42

Flandreau 64, Deubrook 43

Hamlin 52, Dell Rapids 48

Madison 49, Castlewood 42

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 41, Garretson 25

Rivalry games spice up holiday weekend in NFL

By BARRY WILNER, AP Pro Football Writer

Steelers-Ravens, Broncos-Chiefs and Vikings-Packers. Big rivalry games with plenty on the line. Happy Holidays.

There's been plenty of complaining about the NFL schedule this season. Not for Week 16, when those three gems and a few other strong matchups with postseason implications provide some extra gleam to this time of year.

Pittsburgh can ruin Baltimore's January plans with a win that would clinch the AFC North. Kansas City can eliminate defending champion Denver from contention by winning; both of those games are Sunday.

And while Minnesota has virtually no shot at making the playoffs, it could damage Green Bay's chances by knocking off the Packers.

"Most definitely," Vikings cornerback Captain Munneryn says. "If we can't go, they can't go. That's how we're going to look at it. We're going to try to spoil their parade and put them in a bad situation. Try to go out there and play hard for each other in this locker room and go out and play hard for ourselves."

The penultimate week of the regular season began Thursday night when the Philadelphia Eagles snapped a five-game slide by beating the visiting New York Giants 24-19.

Malcolm Jenkins had the second two-interception game of his eight-year career, returning one for a touchdown for the Eagles (6-9). The loss put the Giants (10-5) in a more difficult spot for ending their four-season playoff drought. They still own the top wild-card position heading into their finale at Washington, and can still get in this weekend if Detroit, Green Bay, Tampa Bay or Atlanta loses.

Baltimore (8-6) at Pittsburgh (9-5)

Only the Steelers can reach the postseason in this one. But a Ravens win would give them a sweep of Pittsburgh and the tiebreaker with one week remaining.

This one, kicking off late Sunday afternoon, figures to be a brutal, give-no-quarter match.

"It's what you play for. It's an AFC North championship game for us. It's big," Steelers safety Mike Mitchell says. "I would have took it against little sisters of the poor. It really didn't matter.

"When I got here it was just you don't like Baltimore. It was like growing up in the Cold War, you don't like Russia."

Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco is a bit more, uh, diplomatic.

"It might be a little bit illogical, but I think people are going to love it," he says. "I think people are going to be sitting at home on Christmas and loving the fact that they get to watch Ravens-Steelers."

Denver (8-6) at Kansas City (10-4)

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The nightcap on Christmas night can't possibly match the first meeting in Week 12, perhaps the game of the year, a 30-27 overtime classic.

KC is in with a win or a Ravens loss or tie. Denver's chore is much more difficult; it can't win the AFC West and is in a tight race for a wild card. A loss would be devastating for the champs .

"They're the division rival," Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce says. "We know what we're going to get out of them. We're both in a place where we're fighting for our lives, our playoff lives. It's late in the season where it's that type of grind. It's going to be a heck of a challenge for us; they know us well, we know them well."

Minnesota (7-7) at Green Bay (8-6)

A defeat eliminates the Vikings from playoff contention. Minnesota running back Adrian Peterson was ruled out Friday because of knee and groin injuries.

A Packers victory would set up a Week 17 game at the Lions for NFC North title. They climbed back into contention because Aaron Rodgers has 22 TD passes and six games with a 100-plus passer rating since Week 7.

They also can get in with a win and a combination of other results too complicated for Mike McCarthy and Co. to contemplate right now.

Detroit (9-5) at Dallas (12-2), Monday night

The Cowboys won the NFC East and secured home-field advantage throughout the conference playoffs when the Giants lost at Philadelphia.

Detroit, riding a superb season by quarterback Matthew Stafford and some clutch performances in the fourth quarter and overtime, takes the division with a win and a Packers loss or tie.

A playoff berth is there for the taking with a victory and a Buccaneers loss, or several other scenarios that Jim Caldwell and Co. are too busy to contemplate right now.

San Diego (5-9) at Cleveland (0-14)

The only team to go 0-16, the 2008 Lions, also are the only one to go 0-15. Cleveland is on the verge ...

Robert Griffin III gets another start to try and show the Browns he has a future with them. But rookie QB Cody Kessler figures to get a look at some point in the final two games.

The Chargers are the only NFL team with a takeaway in every game this season. San Diego has at least one takeaway in 20 straight games.

Tennessee (8-6) at Jacksonville (2-12)

After victories over Denver and Kansas City, this should be easy for the Titans, right? But with the Jaguars changing coaches from the fired Gus Bradley to interim Doug Marrone, many jobs are on the line in the final two weeks.

The Titans have won three straight and seven of 10, and need a victory to make next week's game against Houston for the AFC South title. Their strong running game could dictate matters.

Jacksonville has lost nine in a row and is winless in six games at EverBank Field.

Tampa Bay (8-6) at New Orleans (6-8)

Despite trailing Atlanta in the NFC South, the Bucs can make playoff plans with a win and losses by Green Bay, Detroit and Washington. For now, Tampa Bay will concentrate on a securing a rare winning record.

This has the elements of a potential shootout, but the Bucs' defense seems more capable of keeping down the score than does the Saints'.

However, Drew Brees emerged from a two-game slump in style last week, passing for 389 yards and four TDs at Arizona. Despite his monster numbers this season, Brees somehow didn't make the Pro Bowl.

Atlanta (9-5) at Carolina (6-8)

Atlanta moves into the postseason with a win and a Tampa Bay loss, owning the division. There are a few scenarios that give the Falcons at least a wild card if the Bucs also win, with Detroit, Green Bay and Washington involved.

The Panthers are eager to reach 8-8 and not have a completely lost season, and they showed their gumption in Washington on Monday night. They'll need to protect Cam Newton from Vic Beasley, who has five sacks and two forced fumbles in his past two road games, and rookie LB Deion Jones, who has become a force for the Falcons.

Carolina's Greg Olsen needs 8 yards receiving to become the first tight end with three straight 1,000-

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yard seasons.

Miami (9-5) at Buffalo (7-7)

A Dolphins victory and a Denver loss puts Miami into the postseason. That's due to Miami winning eight of nine while Denver has swooned.

Dolphins RB Jay Ajayi had a career-best 214 yards rushing in an earlier win over the Bills. QB Matt Moore makes his second consecutive start in place of Ryan Tannehill (strained left knee). Moore had a career-best four TD passes last week.

Buffalo is closing in on extending the NFL's longest active playoff drought to 17 seasons. It probably needs a big performance from RB LeSean McCoy, who has 1,462 yards from scrimmage, 30 percent of the team's 4,847 yards on offense.

Washington (7-6-1) at Chicago (3-11)

Barely breathing in the wild-card race, Washington needs lots of help this weekend. The Redskins have won six straight against Chicago.

The Bears have been competitive recently despite their record, and RB Jordan Howard is second among rookies with 1,059 yards rushing. The Redskins are allowing 4.5 yards per carry — 28th in the league.

New York Jets (4-10) at New England (12-2)

The road to the AFC crown once again will run through Gillette Stadium if the Patriots handle the Jets. The Patriots have won four of the past five meetings, while the Jets have lost five of their past six games overall.

Tom Brady has 22 regular-season wins against the Jets as a starter. One more and he would join Brett Favre as the only quarterbacks with at least 23 wins against two opponents; Brady has 26 wins vs. Buffalo.

With New York's secondary so vulnerable, Brady figures to continue his mastery.

Indianapolis (7-7) at Oakland (11-3)

Already earning its first playoff spot since making the Super Bowl in the 2002 season, the Raiders get the AFC West with a win and a Chiefs defeat. But the Colts have won four straight in this series and need to win out to have any chance for the playoffs.

Frank Gore needs 109 yards to become the first Colts runner to reach 1,000 yards in a season since Joseph Addai in 2007. Gore would join Hall of Famers Emmitt Smith (11), Curtis Martin (10), Walter Payton (10) and Barry Sanders (10) as the only players with at least nine 1,000-yard seasons.

Arizona (5-8-1) at Seattle (9-4-1)

With the NFC West in their pocket, the Seahawks earned a first-round bye by winning and having the Lions and Falcons fall. The league's only undefeated team at home, Seattle is seeking the fourth perfect home record in franchise history. It also was done in 2003, 2005 and 2012.

But Arizona has won two of its past three visits, and it dominated Seattle in the teams' 6-6 tie in October.

RB David Johnson has more than 100 yards from scrimmage in all 14 games, the longest streak to start a season in NFL history.

Cincinnati (5-8-1) at Houston (8-6)

If the Texans win out, they take the AFC South. Coach Bill O'Brien benched the inefficient Brock Osweiler and his \$72 million contract for untested Tom Savage last week. Savage led Houston to victory against Jacksonville and now gets the start.

Houston catches a break with Cincinnati tight end Tyler Eifert ruled out for the Christmas Eve night game with a back injury. Eifert had four TD receptions in his past four games and leads all NFL tight ends with 18 TD catches since 2015. However, wide receiver A.J. Green, listed as questionable, could play for the first time since injuring a hamstring in Week 11.

San Francisco (1-13) at Los Angeles (4-10)

Not much to recommend in this one. San Francisco opened with a win over the Rams in their first game back in Los Angeles. The Niners haven't won since.

LA at one point was 3-1, fell apart, and Jeff Fisher was canned as coach. That didn't help at all in a lopsided loss at Seattle in interim coach John Fassel's first game at the helm.

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

South Dakota seeks to strip sanctuary of wild horses

LANTRY, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota officials have taken the first step toward finding new homes for hundreds of wild horses from a troubled sanctuary in the north-central part of the state.

The South Dakota Animal Industry Board authorized their attorney Thursday to seek a court order to transfer horses owned by the nonprofit International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros to the ownership of another suitable caretaker, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2iluNZC>) reported.

A public complaint led to the impoundment of more than 800 horses in October at the organization's ranch near Lantry after a state veterinarian found they were being neglected and a former ranch employee said they were being starved to death.

About 270 horses have since been sold or adopted. The animals are still under the organization's ownership, but authorities in Dewey and Ziebach counties have been caring for the horses at the expense of the counties' taxpayers.

While some of the costs have been reimbursed by the nonprofit, public donations and grants, Dewey County State's Attorney Steve Aberle said an estimated \$75,000 remains outstanding.

The remaining costs could be reimbursed if negotiated as part of a transfer of ownership, Aberle said.

A consortium of concerned groups had proposed a deal to take ownership of the horses, find adoptive homes for them and reimburse the counties, but Aberle said the society did not respond to that proposal.

"It's still a possibility," Aberle said. "It would be up to them and (subject to) court approval."

A scheduled public auction of the society's horses was scheduled earlier this week but authorities postponed it indefinitely. Advocates for wild horses feared an auction would draw bids from foreign slaughter plants.

Society President Karen Sussman previously denied wrongdoing.

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

Vikings RB Adrian Peterson ruled out vs Packers

AP Photo MNJR124

Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson will not play Saturday at Green Bay because of knee and groin injuries. He returned last weekend for his first game in three months, playing 12 snaps in his return from surgery for a torn meniscus in his right knee. If Peterson is unable to play in the season finale against Chicago, there is a chance he will have played his last game as a Viking.

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson will not play Saturday at Green Bay because of knee and groin injuries.

The Vikings ruled out Peterson on Friday. He returned last weekend for his first game in three months, playing 12 snaps in his return from surgery for a torn meniscus in his right knee. He rushed for 22 yards on six carries as the Vikings lost to the Colts, 34-6, and were eliminated from playoff contention.

If Peterson is unable to play in the season finale against Chicago, there is a chance he will have played his last game as a Viking.

The 31-year-old is due to make \$18 million next season and would likely have to take a significant pay cut to remain in Minnesota. He is also coming off another injury, which could hurt his value on the free agent market.

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

South Dakota grand jury indicts man in death of 18-month-old

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Minnehaha County grand jury has indicted a 36-year-old man for the death of his 18-month-old stepson in southeastern South Dakota.

Keith Cornett is charged with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter, and child abuse. He remains jailed on \$2 million cash-only bail. An arraignment date has not been scheduled.

Authorities were called to a Dell Rapids home earlier this month where they found Hayden Wigton unresponsive with traumatic injuries. The toddler could not be revived. An autopsy found six blows to the child's head and bite marks.

Authorities say Cornett and his wife had been staying at the home with a couple who was renting the house.

Man dies in 1-vehicle rollover on icy South Dakota road

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say icy roads were a factor in a rollover near Brandon that killed a 24-year-old man.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol says the accident happened shortly before 7:30 Friday morning after the driver lost control of his 2007 GMC Yukon on an Interstate 90 exit ramp.

The driver was not wearing a seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle. He died from his injuries at a Sioux Falls hospital.

The name of the victim has not been released.

News year: Big charges, teacher pay hike and Black Elk Peak

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A raft of criminal charges in high-profile financial misconduct cases were big news in 2016, but the year's top story may have been a historic sales tax hike to boost South Dakota's lowest-in-the-nation teacher pay.

It almost fell apart in the state House, coming in one vote short. After another try, the half-cent sales tax increase — the first permanent bump since 1969 — scraped through with none to spare and headed to the Senate.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard's package of education measures became law in March. Teachers cheered average pay projected to rise almost 12 percent to nearly \$47,000.

Other notable stories:

BIG BILLS

Daugaard started 2016 without having knowingly met a transgender person. By March, he had met with a group of transgender people and vetoed a bill that would have made South Dakota first in the U.S. to approve a law requiring transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender at birth.

The bill drew national condemnation. Supporters said it would protect student privacy.

In another high-profile move during the 2016 session, Daugaard signed a bill prohibiting most abortions beyond 19 weeks of pregnancy.

BUILDING COLLAPSE

Construction worker Ethan McMahon, a 24-year-old former Marine, was killed in a December building collapse in downtown Sioux Falls that also trapped a woman for three hours under the debris. McMahon and his brother, who made it out of the wreckage, were working when the 100-year-old building fell down around them.

The trapped woman, 22-year-old Emily Fodness, was able to call her mother and eventually gave directions that helped rescuers find her.

BALLOT BOXING

The shine on a voter-approved government ethics overhaul didn't last long. A group of two dozen GOP lawmakers and others filed a lawsuit, and a state judge put the measure on hold while the challenge

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proceeds. In jeopardy are major political changes: an ethics commission, public campaign funding and limitations on lobbyist gifts to lawmakers.

The dispute appears likely to spill into the 2017 legislative session.

BIG COURT CASES

Joop Bollen, the man who once ran South Dakota's investment-for-visa program, was charged in March in a long-running and complicated financial misconduct case. Bollen, who has pleaded not guilty, is accused of diverting more than \$1.2 million from an account created to protect the state against costs or liability from South Dakota's EB-5 visa program. Authorities say he put back most of the money.

A tragedy in Platte stretched into this year, with charges filed in March against three people for allegedly aiding in an embezzlement scheme that eventually ended in Scott Westerhuis killing his wife, Nicole, and their children. Authorities believe the couple stole more than \$1 million beforehand.

Dan Guericke, Stephanie Hubers and Stacy Phelps have pleaded not guilty.

Two consultants who helped a Native American tribe plan the nation's first marijuana resort were charged with drug offenses in August, eight months after the Flandreau Santee Sioux destroyed their crop amid fears of a federal raid. Jonathan Hunt, who oversaw the first crop for the tribe, pleaded guilty to a drug conspiracy count. Eric Hagen, the CEO of the Colorado-based consulting firm Monarch America, has pleaded not guilty.

Seth Jeffs, brother of Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints leader Warren Jeffs, was one of 11 people indicted in an alleged multi-million-dollar food stamp fraud scheme. Authorities say Seth Jeffs, who has pleaded not guilty, has led a compound of the faithful in rural Custer County, South Dakota.

BLACK ELK PEAK

A federal board surprised South Dakota by renaming the state's tallest peak after Lakota spiritual leader Black Elk, who died in 1950. The August decision by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names swept aside the old name, Harney Peak, removing the name of a man whose soldiers killed Native Americans.

The board determined that Harney was offensive to area Native Americans. The Oglala Sioux member in his 80s who pushed to rechristen the peak said the decision was a sign of compassion and reconciliation. The change to Black Elk Peak was panned by Republicans Daugaard and U.S. Sen. John Thune.

'Peace on Earth' sign hangs next to building collapse site

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A sign with the phrase "Peace on Earth" is hanging these days on the exterior wall of a Sioux Falls nightclub that is adjacent to the lot where a building collapsed earlier this month.

John Geiken is the general manager of PAve. He tells the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2hgmcpA>) that given the "tragic events" that occurred three weeks ago, the nightclub "just wanted to spread some love and hope" with the sign.

The building adjacent to the nightclub had housed a bar and was being remodeled into a drug store when it collapsed Dec. 2. Construction worker Ethan McMahon was killed during the incident and 22-year-old Emily Fodness was trapped under rubble for three hours before being rescued.

The newspaper reports the sign went up last week.

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

Holiday weather frightful for some, with snow and storms

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — The weather outside will be frightful for some holiday travelers this weekend, with snow stretching from the Rocky Mountains to the upper Midwest on Christmas Eve and possible severe weather in the middle of the U.S. on Christmas Day.

Forecasters cautioned travelers to keep alternate routes in mind and prepare for possible delays.

There is a blizzard watch posted for much of the Dakotas and a winter storm watch in effect from Montana to Lake Superior.

The Storm Prediction Center cautioned that warm, humid air would bring possible severe weather to the

Plains states on Sunday — reaching as far north as Omaha, Nebraska.

A lesser threat of severe weather extended southward into Arkansas and Oklahoma, where the atmosphere would be warm but more stable.

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.

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

"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?'"

This story has been corrected to show a name in the seventh paragraph is spelled Terri Bruce, not Terry Bruce.

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

Nigeria: Boko Haram is crushed, forced out of last enclave

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Nigeria's president says the Boko Haram extremist group has finally been crushed, has been driven from its last forest stronghold with fighters on the run and no place to hide.

But despite President Muhammadu Buhari's victorious announcement Saturday, Nigeria is unlikely to see an end soon to the deadly suicide bombings, village attacks and assaults on remote military outposts carried out by Nigeria's homegrown Islamic extremist group.

Buhari says "gallant troops" on Friday drove the insurgents out of their "Camp Zero" deep in the north-eastern Sambisa Forest. The forest is also believed to hold more than 200 schoolgirls kidnapped in April 2014 by Boko Haram from a school in the town of Chibok.

Buhari urges troops to intensify efforts "to locate and free our remaining Chibok girls still in captivity."

As Obama accomplished policy goals, his party floundered

By LISA LERER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In boasting about his tenure in the White House, President Barack Obama often cites numbers like these: 15 million new jobs, a 4.9 percent unemployment rate and 74 months of consecutive job growth.

There's one number you will almost never hear: More than 1,030 seats.

That's the number of spots in state legislatures, governor's mansions and Congress lost by Democrats

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during Obama's presidency.

It's a statistic that reveals an unexpected twist of the Obama years: The leadership of the one-time community organizer and champion of ground-up politics was rough on the grassroots of his own party. When Obama exits the White House, he'll leave behind a Democratic Party that languished in his shadow for years and is searching for itself.

"What's happened on the ground is that voters have been punishing Democrats for eight solid years — it's been exhausting," said South Carolina state Sen. Vincent Sheheen. "If I was talking about a local or state issue, voters would always lapse back into a national topic: Barack Obama."

When Obama won the presidency, his election was heralded as a moment of Democratic dominance — the crashing of a conservative wave that had swept the country since the dawn of the Reagan era.

Democrats believed that the coalition of young, minority and female voters who swept Obama into the White House would usher in something new: an ascendant Democratic majority that would ensure party gains for decades to come.

The coalition, it turns out, was Obama's alone.

After this year's elections, Democrats hold the governor's office and both legislative chambers in just five coastal states: Oregon, California, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware. Republicans have the trifecta in 25, giving them control of a broad swath of the middle of the country.

The defeats have all but wiped out a generation of young Democrats, leaving the party with limited power in statehouses and a thin bench to challenge an ascendant GOP majority eager to undo many of the president's policies. To be sure, the president's party almost always loses seats in midterm elections. But, say experts, Obama's tenure has marked the greatest number of losses under any president in decades.

"Obama just figured his important actions on policies like immigration and health care would solidify support, but that hasn't really materialized," said Daniel Galvin, a political science professor at Northwestern University and the author of a book on presidential party building. "He's done basically the minimal amount of party building, and it's been insufficient to help the party."

It's a political reality that Obama has only been willing to acknowledge publicly after his party's devastating November losses. He's admitted he failed to create "a sustaining organization" around the political force that twice elected him to office.

"That's something I would have liked to have done more of, but it's kind of hard to do when you're also dealing with a whole bunch of issues here in the White House," he said at his year-end press conference.

It is perhaps not surprising that Obama — a politician who promised a post-party era — turned out not to be a party stalwart.

Obama and his aides came into office neither beholden to his party's establishment, nor particularly interested in reinforcing his party's weak spots.

He electrified the 2004 Democratic National Convention with a speech seeking common cause over party differences. Four years later, he defeated Hillary Clinton, the pick of the party insiders, to win the Democratic presidential nomination.

In the White House, Obama's failure to do the typical Washington schmoozing was a constant source of complaint among congressional Democrats, as was his reluctance to endorse down-ballot candidates and inability to parlay Organizing for Action, his grassroots organization, into a significant force.

State parties languished and the Democratic National Committee struggled with dysfunction and debt. "We built this beautiful house, but the foundation is rotten," said South Carolina Democratic Chairman Jaime Harrison, a candidate to lead the Democratic National Committee. "In hindsight we should have looked at this and said, 'Maybe the state parties should be strong.'"

Toward the end of his presidency, Obama began doing more, stepping in to assist more than 150 state legislative candidates in October and campaigning across the country for Clinton.

He's indicated he intends to make partisan politics a bigger piece of his post-presidential life. Aides say Obama will be closely involved in an effort to focus on drawing district lines more in the favor of Democrats.

The president's advisers blame the losses on such structural trends. They point to a flood of Republican super PAC dollars and a resurgence of Republican political power in statehouses. That state-level dominance has given Republicans the ability to redraw district lines and created voting rules that could benefit

their party for years to come.

The refusal by many Democrats to accept help from Obama in the 2010 and 2014 midterms was also a strategic mistake, they argue.

"Frankly, when people have asked, the president has been more than willing to engage," said David Simas, Obama's political director.

Some Democrats blame Obama for an executive agenda that highlighted social issues — such as transgender rights and access to birth control — over the economic anxiety still felt by many voters.

"The backlash to the Obama presidency was perhaps bigger than any of us really realized," said Simon Rosenberg, president of the New Democratic Network, a Democratic think tank. "A lot of the story of this election was people feeling like the culture was evolving in a way that made it feel like they were no longer living in the country they grew up in."

Others are focusing on the one clear truth of the November defeats: What worked for Obama just did not work for this party.

Perhaps the most remarkable twist of a shocking political season? Even as voters chose to elect a successor who vows to undo most of Obama's legacy, his approval rating remains the highest it's been since the spring of 2009.

Associated Press writer Josh Lederman contributed to this report.

GOP on taxes: Cut rates, brackets but what about the deficit

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressional Republicans are planning a massive overhaul of the nation's tax system next year, a heavy political lift that could ultimately affect families at every income level and businesses of every size.

Their goal is to simplify a complicated tax code that rewards wealthy people with smart accountants, and corporations that can easily shift profits — and jobs — overseas. It won't be easy. The last time it was done was 30 years ago.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., have vowed to pass a tax package that would not add to the budget. The Washington term is "revenue neutral."

It means that for every tax cut there has to be a tax increase, creating winners and losers. Lawmakers would get some leeway if non-partisan congressional analysts project that a tax cut would increase economic growth, raising revenue without increasing taxes.

Nevertheless, passing a massive tax package will require some tough votes, politically.

Some key Republican senators want to share the political risk with Democrats. They argue that a tax overhaul must be bipartisan to be fully embraced by the public. They cite President Barack Obama's health law — which passed in 2010 without any Republican votes — as a major policy initiative that remains divisive.

Congressional Democrats say they are eager to have a say in overhauling the tax code. But McConnell, who faulted Democrats for acting unilaterally on health care, is laying the groundwork to pass a purely partisan bill.

Both McConnell and Ryan said they plan to use a legislative maneuver that would prevent Senate Democrats from using the filibuster to block a tax bill.

McConnell says he wants the Senate to tackle a tax plan in the spring, after Congress repeals Obama's health law. House Republicans are more eager to get started, but haven't set a timeline.

Some things to know about Republican efforts to overhaul the tax code:

THE HOUSE PLAN

House Republicans have released the outline of a tax plan that would lower the top individual income tax rate from 39.6 percent to 33 percent, and reduce the number of tax brackets from seven to three. The gist of the plan is to lower tax rates for just about everyone, and make up the lost revenue by scaling

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back exemptions, deductions and credits.

The plan, however, retains some of the most popular tax breaks, including those for paying a mortgage, going to college, making charitable contributions and having children.

The standard deduction would be increased, giving taxpayers less incentive to itemize their deductions.

The non-partisan Tax Policy Center says the plan would reduce revenues by \$3 trillion over the first decade, with most of the savings going to the highest-income households.

That's not revenue neutral.

Small business owners would get a special top tax rate of 25 percent.

Investment income would be taxed like wages, but investors would only have to pay taxes on half of this income.

SENATE PLAN

Senate Republicans have yet to coalesce around a comprehensive plan, or even an outline.

TRUMP'S PLAN

Trump's plan has fewer details. He promises a tax cut for every income level, with more low-income families paying no income tax at all.

The Tax Policy Center says Trump's plan would reduce revenues by a whopping \$9.5 trillion over the first decade, with most of the tax benefits going to the wealthiest taxpayers. Trump has disputed the analysis.

Like the House plan, Trump would reduce the top income tax rate for individuals to 33 percent, and he would reduce the number of tax brackets to three. He would also increase the standard deduction.

Trump has embraced two ideas championed by Obama but repeatedly rejected by Republicans over the past eight years. Trump's plan would cap itemized deductions for married couples making more than \$200,000 a year. It would also tax carried interest, which are fees charged by investment fund managers, as regular income instead of capital gains.

CORPORATE TAXES

The top corporate income tax rate in the U.S. is 35 percent, the highest in the industrialized world. However, the tax is riddled with so many exemptions, deductions and credits that most corporations pay much less.

Both Trump and House Republicans want to lower the rate, and pay for it by scaling back tax breaks.

Trump wants to lower the corporate tax rate to 15 percent. Ryan says 20 percent is more realistic, to avoid increasing the budget deficit.

BORDER ADJUSTMENT TAX

This is one of the most controversial parts of the House Republicans' tax plan. It is also key to making it work.

Under current law, the United States taxes the profits of U.S.-based companies, even if the money is made overseas. However, taxes on foreign income are deferred until a company either reinvests the profits in the U.S. or distributes them to shareholders.

Critics say the system encourages U.S.-based corporations to invest profits overseas or, more dramatically, to shift operations and jobs abroad to avoid U.S. taxes.

House Republicans want to scrap America's worldwide tax system and replace it with a tax that is based on where a firm's products are consumed, rather than where they are produced.

Under the system, American companies that produce and sell their products in the U.S. would pay the new 20 percent corporate tax rate on profits from these sales. However, if a company exports a product abroad, the profits from that sale would not be taxed by the U.S.

There's more: Foreign companies that import goods to the U.S. would have to pay the tax, increasing the cost of imports.

Exporters love the idea. But importers, including big retailers and consumer electronics firms, say it could lead to steep price increases on consumer goods. The lobbying has already begun.

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

South Korean investigators summon Park's jailed friend

By **KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A South Korean special prosecutor on Saturday summoned the jailed friend of impeached President Park Geun-hye who allegedly exploited her connections with Park to extort money and favors from the country's largest companies and manipulate government affairs.

In handcuffs, white prison clothes and a surgical mask, Choi Soon-sil was escorted into a southern Seoul office where investigators have been widening their inquiry into the scandal. Millions of protesters have taken to the streets before the country's opposition-controlled parliament on Dec. 9 voted to impeach Park.

Lee Kyu Chul, an official from the investigation team led by special prosecutor Park Young-soo, said without elaborating that Choi would be "broadly" questioned on charges that were included in indictments and also on newer allegations. Choi can be summoned several more times in the coming weeks, he said.

Lee also said the team was planning to question Park, but did not say when that might happen.

"We can investigate (the president) depending on how things develop and we are preparing for it in our own way," Lee told reporters.

Choi's summoning came before a massive crowd gathered near the presidential palace to call for Park's permanent removal, extending the country's largest-ever protest movement to Christmas Eve. Carrying signs and candles and wearing Santa hats, the protesters marched toward the presidential residence and offices, Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn's office and the Constitutional Court.

Thousands of Park's conservative supporters rallied in nearby streets, waving the national flag and shouting for Park's powers to be restored.

The Constitutional Court has up to six months to decide whether Park should permanently step down or be reinstated. Her presidential powers are suspended until then, with the prime minister serving as the government caretaker.

State prosecutors have accused Park of colluding with Choi as she allegedly amassed an illicit fortune and held extraordinary sway over government decisions, such as choosing Cabinet ministers.

They have now handed over their investigation to the special prosecutor, whose team earlier on Saturday summoned former Vice Sports Minister Kim Chong.

Kim is suspected of helping Choi wrest money and favors from Samsung, the country's largest business group. He also allegedly swung lucrative business deals to sports organizations that Choi controlled and influenced the ministry's decision to financially support a winter sports group run by Choi's niece, who has also been arrested.

Samsung is under suspicion that it sponsored Choi to win government backing for a controversial merger deal between two affiliates last year that helped promote a father-to-son transfer of leadership and corporate wealth at the group.

Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong, son of ailing group chairman Lee Kun-hee, has apologized over the use of corporate funds to buy a horse for Choi's daughter, Yoora Chung, an equestrian athlete, but denied that Samsung sought favors from Choi or Park's administration.

Investigators are now trying to find and detain Chung and have requested the help of prosecutors in Germany, where she is believed to be staying. On Wednesday, they raided South Korea's National Pension Service, which supported the merger between the two Samsung affiliates even though the fund's stake in one of the companies lost an estimated hundreds of millions of dollars in value.

Samsung is also one of the main companies that gave a combined 77.4 billion won (\$65 million) to two nonprofit foundations Choi allegedly controlled and abused to expand her personal wealth.

Republicans to target unions, expand school choice in states

By DAVID A. LIEB, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Republicans are poised to use their newly attained capitol dominance to make Missouri the 27th right-to-work state prohibiting mandatory union fees. That is unless Kentucky's recently crowned GOP majorities can beat them to it.

The race to expand right-to-work laws is just one of several ways that Republicans, who strengthened their grip on power in the November elections, are preparing to reshape state laws affecting workplaces, classrooms, courtrooms and more during 2017.

As President-elect Donald Trump leads an attempted makeover in Washington, Republican governors and state lawmakers will be simultaneously pushing an aggressive agenda that limits abortion, lawsuits and unions, cuts business taxes and regulations, and expands gun rights and school choice.

Republicans will hold 33 governors' offices, have majorities in 33 legislatures and control both the governor's office and legislature in 25 states — their most since 1952. Democrats will control both the governor's office and legislature in only about a half-dozen states; the rest will have politically divided governments.

"Really, the sky's kind of the limit," said Sean Lansing, chief operating officer at Americans for Prosperity, the conservative group bankrolled partly by billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch. "It's really the best opportunity in quite some time to accomplish a lot of big ticket items — not just in one or two states, but in five, 10 or 15."

Democrats did make some gains in the recent elections, most notably by defeating Republican North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory and winning both chambers of the Nevada and New Mexico legislatures. But in all three of those states, Republicans still control at least one branch of government.

While officials in Democratic strongholds such as California and New York pledge a vigorous fight against Trump's agenda, some Democrats elsewhere seem resigned to get steamrolled on policies they long have opposed, such as right-to-work laws that undercut the financial strength of unions, a traditional Democratic ally.

In Missouri, term-limited Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon previously vetoed a right-to-work measure passed by the Republican-led Legislature. But he's being replaced Jan. 9 by Republican Gov.-elect Eric Greitens, who promised to sign a right-to-work law. GOP legislative leaders have placed it atop their agenda. And their ranks are strengthened following a campaign season in which businessman David Humphreys poured more than \$12 million into Missouri candidates and political committees that backed right-to-work.

"Oh, it's going to happen," said Senate Minority Leader Gina Walsh, a retired union laborer who is president of the Missouri State Building and Construction Trades Council. She added: "I'm not willing to lay down on it yet, but I'm also a realist."

Assuming right-to-work will become law, Missouri AFL-CIO President Mike Louis already is preparing for the next battle. He has filed several versions of a proposed initiative petition that would ask voters in 2018 to approve a constitutional amendment reversing right-to-work by ensuring that unions can negotiate contracts requiring that employees pay fees for their representation.

Republican Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin also hopes to sign a statewide right-to-work law in 2017, now that Republicans who already hold the Senate also have won control of the House for the first time in nearly a century. A dozen Kentucky counties already have passed local right-to-work laws.

Right-to-work supporters also are targeting New Hampshire, where Republican Gov.-elect Chris Sununu will be paired with a GOP-led Legislature. And collective bargaining restrictions for public employees could be on the agenda in Iowa, where the Republican governor will work with a Legislature that will be under full GOP control when lawmakers reconvene in January.

Bevin said Kentucky Republicans will pursue "things that have been bottled up for years and need to at least have votes on them," citing school choice measures and "reform" proposals for pension, tax and litigation laws, among others.

The aftermath of the November elections has particularly raised the hopes of school choice advocates. They support tax credits for families who opt for private over public schools and vouchers that allow public

tax dollars to pay for private-school tuition. They also want to expand public charter and magnet schools to give parents additional choices.

Trump pledged during the campaign to spend \$20 billion during his first year in office to help states expand school choice programs, and he wants states to divert an additional \$110 billion of their own education budgets toward the cause. His pick for education secretary is Betsy DeVos, chairwoman of the school choice advocacy group American Federation for Children.

The federation's political arm backed 121 state and local candidates this year, winning in 108 of the races, said spokesman Matthew Friendewey. Now it's focusing on at least a dozen states—nearly all of which have Republican-led legislatures—where it believes school choice laws could be enacted or expanded in 2017.

"The environment is ripe for this, and there's a hunger for expanding choice and creating more educational options for families," Friendewey said.

Republican leaders also are planning to use their statehouse power to pursue a variety of pro-business proposals, including reduced regulations and taxes. Imposing limits on lawsuits that seek damages for product liability claims, injuries, medical malpractice and workplace discrimination is another priority.

Since Republicans swept into control of many statehouses in the 2010 elections, the so-called tort reform movement has touted the passage of 170 bills in 38 states, including some where Democrats were at least partially in control.

"We're very bullish about our prospects," said Matt Fullenbaum, the legislative director for the American Tort Reform Association.

Republicans still could grapple with some internal dissention, because such issues as lawsuit limits, union powers and school choice don't always split along party lines. But in states where they now control both the legislative and executive branches, Republicans no longer will have an excuse if their agenda stalls.

"You could always blame it on a Democratic governor for killing it before," said Republican state Sen. Brian Munzlinger of Missouri. Now "it's up to us to get it done."

Associated Press writers Adam Beam in Frankfort, Kentucky, and Kathleen Ronayne in Concord, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

Vote on Israel could spur further action _ or trouble for UN

By EDITH M. LEDERER, BRADLEY KLAPPER and JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.S. green light that allowed the U.N. Security Council to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem could spur moves toward new terms to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But it also poses dangers for the United Nations with the incoming Trump administration and may harden Israel's attitude toward concessions.

The Obama administration's decision to abstain and allow the U.N.'s most powerful body to approve a long-sought resolution calling Israeli settlements "a flagrant violation under international law" was a sharp rebuke to a longstanding ally and a striking rupture with past U.S. vetoes.

U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power said "it is because this resolution reflects the facts on the ground — and is consistent with U.S. policy across Republican and Democratic administrations throughout the history of the state of Israel — that the United States did not veto it."

She cited a 1982 statement by then-President Ronald Reagan that the United States "will not support the use of any additional land for the purpose of settlements" and that "settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel."

The Security Council vote Friday, however, was anything but routine for Washington, which traditionally vetoes all resolutions related to the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict on grounds that differences must be solved through negotiations. It was the first resolution on the conflict approved during President Barack Obama's nearly eight years in office and shone a spotlight on his icy relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The U.S. decision to abstain on the 14-0 vote followed months of intensely secret deliberations in Wash-

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ington, a spate of fresh Israeli settlement announcements that sparked exasperation and anger from American officials, and recent attempts by Israel's government to have parliament legalize thousands of homes built on privately owned Palestinian land.

After Egypt suddenly postponed a scheduled vote on the resolution Thursday, reportedly under pressure from Israel and supporters of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, four new sponsors stepped up and pushed it through — Malaysia, New Zealand, Venezuela and Senegal, each representing a different region and reflecting the wide support for the measure.

Trump demanded that Obama veto the resolution and tweeted after the vote, "As to the U.N., things will be different after Jan. 20th" — when Trump takes office.

It would be virtually impossible, however, for Trump to overturn the resolution. It would require a new resolution with support from at least nine members in the 15-member Security Council and no veto by one of the other permanent members — Russia, China, Britain or France, all of whom supported Friday's resolution.

Republicans, who control Congress, immediately threatened consequences. Sen. Lindsay Graham, who heads the Senate panel in charge of U.S. payments to the U.N., said he would "form a bipartisan coalition to suspend or significantly reduce" funding. He added that countries receiving U.S. aid could also be penalized for supporting the resolution.

Under U.N. rules, failure to pay dues leads to the loss of voting privileges in the General Assembly.

The vote on settlements sparked behind-the-scenes discussion in the usually divided Security Council on what else might be achieved on the Israeli-Palestinian issue while Obama is still in the White House.

New Zealand has been pressing for the council to consider a resolution that would set out the parameters for a settlement of the conflict, and its draft ideas remain on the table.

But Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon warned the council after the vote that the resolution would not spur peace efforts.

"By voting 'yes' in favor of this resolution, you have in fact voted 'no,'" Danon said. "You voted 'no' to negotiations. You voted 'no' to progress, and a chance for better lives for Israelis and Palestinians. And you voted 'no' to the possibility of peace."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately retaliated against some of the nations that proposed Friday's resolution. He recalled his nation's ambassadors to New Zealand and Senegal for consultations, canceled a planned January visit to Israel by Senegal's foreign minister and ended Israeli aid programs to the West African nation.

"Israel rejects this shameful anti-Israel resolution at the U.N. and will not abide by its terms," Netanyahu's office said in a statement.

The Israeli leader blamed Obama for failing to "protect Israel against this gang-up at the U.N." and even colluding with its detractors. He said, "Israel looks forward to working with President-elect Trump and with all our friends in Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to negate the harmful effects of this absurd resolution."

By contrast, chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat hailed the result as a "victory for the justice of the Palestinian cause." He said Trump's choice was now between "international legitimacy" or siding with "settlers and extremists."

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, urged the Security Council to "stand firm by this decision" and "not be cowed by negative threats or spin."

Trump vows nuclear expansion, warns of 'alternate path'

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump has stepped away from his typically tempered view of U.S.-Russia relations, vowing to expand America's nuclear capabilities while warning that the two global powers should restore collaboration so they don't "have to travel an alternate path."

Trump's transition team said Friday that the president-elect received a "very nice letter" from Russian president Vladimir Putin, urging Trump to act "in a constructive and pragmatic manner" to "restore the

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framework of bilateral cooperation.”

The letter, dated Dec. 15, also notes that serious global and regional challenges “show that the relations between Russia and the U.S. remain an important factor in ensuring stability and security in the modern world.”

In response, Trump agreed with Putin, adding that he hopes “we do not have to travel an alternate path.”

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Putin sent the letter, “voicing hope for an improvement of bilateral ties,” according to the Interfax news agency. Trump’s transition team described the text as an unofficial translation.

The exchange comes on the heels of comments by Trump and Putin about the need to strengthen their countries’ nuclear arsenals. Trump declared Thursday on Twitter that the U.S. should “greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability” until the rest of the world “comes to its senses” regarding nuclear weapons. Those comments echoed an earlier statement by Putin, who said earlier Thursday that strengthening his country’s nuclear capabilities should be a chief military objective in the coming year.

Putin downplayed the significance of Trump’s comments at a marathon end-of-year news conference Friday. Putin said he sees “nothing unusual” in Trump’s pledge to strengthen the U.S. nuclear forces, saying the statement is in line with the president-elect’s campaign promises.

In his wide-ranging remarks, the Russian leader claimed that his country’s military is stronger than that of any potential aggressor, but acknowledged that the U.S. military is bigger. He also cast the modernization of Russia’s nuclear arsenal as a necessary response to a U.S. missile defense system.

Trump extolled Putin’s leadership during the campaign and called for a tempered approach to U.S.-Russia relations. And while Putin has described Trump in favorable terms, observers say Russia’s interest is centered around winning relief from crippling sanctions implemented under the Obama administration.

Tensions have been mounting between the U.S. and Russia in recent months over accusations by the Obama administration that the Russian government hacked the emails of U.S. citizens and institutions, including political organizations, and handed them over to DCLeaks.com and WikiLeaks for distribution. The FBI said this month that it supports the CIA’s conclusion that Russia interfered in the presidential election with the goal of supporting Trump.

At his press conference Friday, Putin addressed the accusations, saying that the Democrats “are humiliating themselves. They must know how to lose with dignity.”

“So true!” Trump reacted in a tweet late Friday.

Trump has repeatedly dismissed claims that Russia sought to usher in his victory, but his remarks indicate that Russia may not be an exception to Trump’s vow to assert American influence through “unquestioned military strength.” His comments are prompting fears of a nuclear race in the making if Trump breaks longstanding nuclear treaties, and if Russia or other countries seek to counter American nuclear gains.

The two countries signed the New START treaty in 2010, capping the number of nuclear warheads and missile launchers each country can possess. The agreement is in effect until 2021.

“Modernization is quite different from expansion,” said Michael McFaul, Obama’s ambassador in Moscow between 2012 and 2014. “Modernization is allowed under the New START treaty; expansion is not.”

“Putin is smartly playing down the tweet because he has several concessions that he wants to secure from President Trump — lifting of sanctions, support for his war in Syria, recognition of Crimea as part of Russia — and therefore does not want to rock the boat right now by reacting to this vague Trump statement,” McFaul added.

Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, and Lolita Baldor, Bradley Klapper, Lynn Berry and Julie Pace in Washington contributed to this report.

Carrie Fisher remains in intensive care unit, brother says

By SANDY COHEN, AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — “Star Wars” actress Carrie Fisher is receiving treatment in an intensive care unit after suffering a medical emergency on a flight Friday, according to her brother.

Todd Fisher said Friday night that his sister is receiving excellent care, but that he could not classify her condition. He had earlier told The Associated Press that she had been stabilized and was out of the emergency room. In a subsequent interview he said many details about her condition or what caused the medical emergency are unknown.

Carrie Fisher, 60, experienced medical trouble during a flight from London and was treated by paramedics immediately after the plane landed in Los Angeles, according to reports citing unnamed sources.

Celebrity website TMZ, which first reported the incident, said anonymous sources told them the actress suffered a heart attack.

Todd Fisher said much of what had been reported about the incident was speculation.

“We have to wait and be patient,” he said. “We have so little information ourselves.”

Fisher’s publicists and representatives for her mother, Debbie Reynolds, and her daughter, Billie Lourd, did not immediately return calls from the AP.

Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman Erik Scott said paramedics administered advanced life-saving care to a patient at Los Angeles International Airport Friday and transported the person to a nearby hospital. He did not identify the patient.

A large gathering of media personnel was camped outside Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles hospital, where TMZ and the Los Angeles Times reported she had been taken.

Fisher is considered by many to be a member of Hollywood royalty — her parents are Reynolds and the late singer Eddie Fisher.

Catapulted to stardom as Princess Leia in 1977’s “Star Wars,” Carrie Fisher reprised the role as the leader of a galactic rebellion in three sequels, including last year’s “Star Wars: The Force Awakens.”

The author and actress may be best known for her portrayal of Leia, but she is also an accomplished writer known for no-holds-barred accounts of her struggles with addiction and mental illness.

Her thinly veiled autobiography “Postcards from the Edge” was adapted into a 1987 film version starring Shirley MacLaine and Meryl Streep. She also transformed her one-woman show “Wishful Drinking,” which played on Broadway and was filmed for HBO, into a book.

Most recently, Fisher has been promoting her latest book, “The Princess Diarist,” in which she reveals that she and co-star Harrison Ford had an affair on the set of “Star Wars.”

AP Entertainment Writer Anthony McCartney contributed to this report.

Berlin attack suspect slain in shootout with Italian police

By COLLEEN BARRY and FRANK JORDANS, Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — A routine request for ID papers outside a deserted train station in a Milan suburb at 3 a.m. Friday led to a police shootout that killed the Tunisian fugitive wanted in the deadly Christmas market attack in Berlin.

While authorities expressed relief that the search for Anis Amri was over, his four-day run raised fresh questions about whether he had any accomplices and how Europe can stop extremists from moving freely across its open borders, even amid an intense manhunt.

Italian police said Amri traveled from Germany through France and into Italy after Monday night’s truck rampage in Berlin, and at least some of his journey was by rail. French officials refused to comment on his passage through France, which has increased surveillance on trains after recent attacks in France and Germany.

Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni called for greater cross-border police cooperation, suggesting some dismay that Europe’s open frontier policy had enabled Amri to move around easily despite being its No. 1 fugitive.

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Amri, whose fingerprints and wallet were found in the truck that plowed into Christmas market outside Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, killing 12 people and injuring 56 others, was caught seemingly by chance after eluding police for more than three days.

"He was a ghost," Milan police chief Antoio de Iesu said, adding that Amri was stopped because of basic police work, intensified surveillance "and a little luck."

Like other cities, Milan has been on heightened alert, with increased surveillance and police patrols. Italian officials stressed that the two young officers who stopped Amri didn't suspect he was the Berlin attacker, but rather grew suspicious because he was a North African man, alone outside a deserted train station in the dead of night.

Amri, who had spent time in prison in Italy, was confronted by the officers in Sesto San Giovanni, a suburb of Milan. He pulled a gun from his backpack after being asked to show his ID and was killed in an ensuing shootout.

One of the officers, Christian Movio, 35, was shot in the right shoulder and had surgery for what doctors said was a superficial wound. His 29-year-old partner, Luca Scata, fatally shot Amri in the chest.

The suspect had no ID or cellphone and carried only a pocket knife and the loaded .22-caliber pistol he used to shoot Movio, police said. He was identified with the help of fingerprints supplied by Germany.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for Monday's attack. On Friday, it noted his death in Milan and released a separate video showing Amri swearing allegiance to the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, while vowing to fight non-Muslims.

The video, which appeared to have been taken by Amri himself, showed him on a footbridge in northern Berlin, not far from where the truck used in the attack was hijacked. It was not known when the video was taken.

German authorities were suspicious of Amri and had put him under covert surveillance for six months following a warning from intelligence agencies that he might be planning an attack. But the surveillance ended in September after police found no proof of his alleged plans.

Separately, German authorities tried to deport Amri 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 said he has used at least six different names and three nationalities.

Even as she voiced relief at the news from Milan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel ordered a comprehensive investigation to determine whether mistakes had been made and legal hurdles had hampered the authorities' handling of the case.

"We can be relieved at the end of this week that one acute danger has been ended," she said in Berlin. "But the danger of terrorism as a whole remains, as it has for many years — we all know that."

Amri passed through France before arriving by train at Milan's central station where video surveillance showed him at about 1 a.m. Friday, de Iesu said.

A Milan anti-terrorism 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 that is 7.5 kilometers (nearly 5 miles) from the main station.

Authorities are still trying to determine how Amri arrived at the piazza because only a few buses operate at that hour.

"It is now of great significance for us to establish whether the suspect had a network of supporters or helpers in preparing and carrying out the crime, and in fleeing, whether there were accessories or helpers," said Germany's chief federal prosecutor, Peter Frank, who heads the investigation.

Holger Muench, the head of the Federal Criminal Police Office said Amri's name "has come up in the past" in connection with the network centering allegedly run by Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah A., also known as Abu Walaa.

The Germany-based preacher was arrested Nov. 8 with four other men and accused of leading a group whose aim was to steer people to the Islamic State group in Syria. Prosecutors say the network smuggled at least one young man and his family to Syria.

Family members in Amri's central Tunisian hometown of Oueslatia said he wasn't particularly religious

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before leaving for Europe in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring.

In Italy, where Amri first lived, he served 3½ years in jail for setting a fire at a refugee center and making threats, among other things — but authorities apparently detected no signs of radicalization. He was transferred repeatedly among Sicilian prisons for bad conduct, with records saying he bullied inmates and tried to spark insurrections.

After learning of his death, Amri's mother said she feared the world would never know why he allegedly rammed a truck through a holiday crowd.

"Within him is a great secret. They killed him, and buried the secret with him," Nour El Houda Hassani told The Associated Press. She begged for his remains to be brought home, and said, "I want the truth about my son — who was behind him, those who indoctrinated him."

Under pressure to show that her government is taking seriously the threat posed by young extremists who, like Amri, slipped into Germany along with an influx of migrants in the past two years, Merkel said her country would step up the deportation of Tunisians who aren't entitled to residency in Germany.

Last year, Germany deported just 17 to Tunisia. That figure increased to 117 so far this year.

Associated Press writer Colleen Barry reported this story in Milan and AP writer Frank Jordans reported from Berlin. AP writers Geir Moulson in Berlin, Nicole Winfield in Rome, Angela Charlton in Paris and Bouazza ben Bouazza in Tunis, Tunisia, contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that San Giovanni is a suburb of Milan.

The Latest: Trump calls Putin election remarks 'so true!'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President-elect Donald Trump (all times local):

7:15 p.m.

Donald Trump is reacting to Russian President Vladimir Putin's comment that Democrats are "humiliating themselves" by accusing Russia of tampering in the U.S. presidential election.

Trump tweeted "So true!" late Friday, quoting comments made by Putin at his end-of-year press conference.

Putin said Friday that Democrats "are losing on all fronts, and are trying to find the culprits elsewhere." He added: "They are humiliating themselves. They must know how to lose with dignity."

The Obama administration has said the Russian government hacked the emails of U.S. citizens and institutions, including political organizations. The FBI and CIA have also said Russia interfered in the presidential election with the goal of supporting Trump.

Russia has denied the accusations, and Trump has dismissed the notion that his candidacy received outside support.

5 p.m.

Donald Trump is asking when the United States and other countries will "fight back" against the perpetrators of attacks like Monday's deadly truck rampage in a Christmas market in Berlin.

Trump is quoting a video released Friday by the Islamic State group that shows Berlin attack suspect Anis Amri swearing allegiance to the group's leader while vowing to fight non-Muslims.

Trump, writing on Twitter Friday, quotes Amri saying, "By God's will we will slaughter you pigs."

The president-elect adds: "This is a purely religious threat, which turned into reality. Such hatred!" Amri was killed Friday morning by police in Milan.

3:20 p.m.

President-elect Donald Trump is criticizing the Obama administration's decision to allow the U.N. Security Council to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

He says in a tweet, "As to the U.N., things will be different after Jan. 20th." That's the day he will be

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inaugurated as president.

In a striking rupture with past practice, the United States allowed the U.N. Security Council on Friday to condemn the settlements as a "flagrant violation" of international law. In doing so, the Obama administration brushed aside Trump's demands that the U.S. exercise its veto and provided a climax to years of icy relations with Israel's leadership.

11:25 a.m.

President-elect Donald Trump is passing along a "very nice letter" he says was sent by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The letter notes that serious global and regional challenges "show that the relations between Russia and the U.S. remain an important factor in ensuring stability and security in the modern world." The letter, which the Trump team describes as an unofficial translation, is dated Dec. 15.

The text was sent as an attachment to a statement from Trump's transition team Friday.

Trump said in response that Putin's "thoughts are so correct," adding, he hopes "both sides are able to live up to these thoughts, and we do not have to travel an alternate path."

The exchange comes on the heels of comments by both Trump and Putin about the need to strengthen their countries' nuclear arsenals.

10:45 a.m.

President-elect Donald Trump is teeing up for 18 holes with golf champion Tiger Woods.

Trump and Woods met Friday morning at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida, where Trump typically spends the holidays.

The two have met on several occasions when Woods competed at various Trump-owned golf courses. It's unclear whether this is the first time they're playing a round of golf together.

Woods made a long-awaited comeback at the Hero World Challenge this month, his first competitive round in more than a year after back injuries sidelined him from the game.

Woods has also played golf with President Barack Obama.

7:55 a.m.

A spokesman says the president-elect is putting other countries on notice with his tweet calling for greatly expanded U.S. nuclear capability.

The spokesman says Donald Trump was responding to Russia, China and other countries talking about expanding their own nuclear capabilities.

Sean Spicer said Friday, "The president isn't saying we're going to do this. He said, 'unless they come to their senses.' It's a warning to them that this president isn't going to sit idly by."

Also Friday, MSNBC reported that Trump said: "Let it be an arms race, because we will outmatch them at every pass and outlast them all."

The network's "Morning Joe" host Mika Brzezinski (brehz-ZIN'-skee) said Trump made the statement in a phone call with her.

Spicer spoke on Fox News and NBC's "Today."

7:27 a.m.

President-elect Donald Trump is complaining about the pressure that led his son to stop directly raising money for a foundation.

Eric Trump said he would stop soliciting donations because he worried about the perception of buying access to his father. He says his namesake foundation has raised more than \$15 million for terminally ill children.

Trump tweeted early Friday, "My wonderful son, Eric, will no longer be allowed to raise money for children with cancer because of a possible conflict of interest with my presidency. Isn't this a ridiculous shame? He

loves these kids, has raised millions of dollars for them, and now must stop. Wrong answer!"

Trump's tweets followed an Associated Press report that Eric Trump's foundation financially benefits charities connected to his family and members of his foundation's board.

Kardashian-Chyna reality show continues on social media

By SANDY COHEN, AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The night before the "Rob & Chyna" baby special premiered on E!, Rob Kardashian announced to his 8.2 million Instagram followers that his fiance and mother of their month-old daughter had abruptly left him and taken the baby with her.

A few days later, Kardashian replaced those posts with various images of holiday-themed socks from his company. He explained in another entry that he'd been "in an emotional bad place and did some things that embarrassed myself and my family" in the days before. He apologized to fiancée Blac Chyna, said he is "seeking help" for his "flaws/issues" and asked his fans to "please pray for me."

The drama continues to unfold across multiple media platforms. The couple's reality show has been renewed for a second season, and according to Kardashian family tradition, social media is where future plot points are born.

The Kardashians are the reality-TV experts of cross-platform storytelling, said Katie Walsh, a doctoral student at USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, who presented her studies on reality TV and fan culture at last year's Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Montreal.

"Rob and Chyna have a TV show, and you can continue watching it on social media," she said. "The other aspect of social media that makes it so important is that it's participatory... Everybody has access to Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and then you can actually participate in the story line of the show by making comments on their Instagram."

The Kardashians are also champions of using social media as marketing, said David Schwab, head of celebrity strategy firm Octagon First Call.

"There is nobody like them in the states that has a socialite social footprint and therefore have been able to cross promote everything they do, from shows to products to anything they want to help a sister or niece or godkid out with," he said. "It's unique."

Rob Kardashian may have kept a lower profile than his sisters in the past, but more interest in his personal life means more potential viewers for his reality show. The first season of "Rob & Chyna," which launched in September with an episode titled "Are You Still Texting Bitches?" tracked the newly engaged couple's preparations for the birth of their first child together. Daughter Dream was born Nov. 10.

E! would not provide weekly ratings data for the show, but it was popular enough to be renewed: The network said last week that a second season of "Rob & Chyna" is in the works. No premiere date has been announced.

Kardashian has a long way to go to catch up with the social-media reach of his five sisters, who each have more than 50 million Instagram followers. Kim Kardashian West, who has been on a social-media blackout since being robbed at gunpoint in Paris in October, has 89 million followers on Instagram and another 49 million on Twitter.

Chyna, who has been using her Instagram feed to promote a variety of products, has 10 million followers on the photo-sharing site.

Having a TV show gives the Kardashians "a mark of legitimacy" that helps fuel their marketing power, Walsh said.

"It's all little bits of advertising that they're spreading around to all these different platforms," she said. "So they're selling their followers' attention to advertisers — whether it's flat-tummy tea or teeth whitening or whatever they're selling — or they're promoting their own businesses and the stuff that they sell: Khloe has jeans, Kylie has makeup, Rob has socks. But they have to give some part of themselves away for people to pay attention to it."

Sharing details from their personal lives and relationship dramas has become part of the family business, Schwab said.

"The personal revelations just add to the fascination and gossip around them," he said. "It's a circular machine."

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Sandy Cohen at www.twitter.com/APSandy .

UN condemns Israeli settlements as Obama declines to veto

By **EDITH M. LEDERER, BRADLEY KLAPPER and JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press**

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — In a striking rupture with past practice, the United States allowed the U.N. Security Council on Friday to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem as a "flagrant violation" of international law. In doing so, the outgoing Obama administration brushed aside Donald Trump's demands that the U.S. exercise its veto and provided a climax to years of icy relations with Israel's leadership.

The decision to abstain from the council's 14-0 vote is one of the biggest American rebukes of its long-standing ally in recent memory. And it could have significant ramifications for the Jewish state, potentially hindering Israel's negotiating position in future peace talks. Given the world's widespread opposition to settlements, the action will be almost impossible for anyone, including Trump, to reverse.

Nevertheless, Trump vowed via Twitter: "As to the U.N., things will be different after Jan. 20th."

The resolution said Israel's settlements in lands the Palestinians want to include in their future state have "no legal validity." It demanded a halt to such activities for the sake of "salvaging the two-state solution." Loud applause erupted in the council chamber after U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power permitted the resolution to pass.

Friday's condemnation, a day after Egypt suddenly postponed a scheduled showdown, capped days of frantic diplomacy in capitals around the world.

American officials indicated they would have been prepared to let the resolution pass, despite blocking such proposals for years. Israeli officials said they were aware of such plans and turned to Trump for support. The U.S. president-elect sent a tweet urging President Barack Obama to block the U.N. effort. Egypt then pulled its resolution, with U.S. officials citing fierce Israeli pressure as the reason. Israeli officials then accused Obama of colluding with the Palestinians in a "shameful move" against the Jewish state. Washington denied the charge.

Most of the world is opposed to Israel's construction of Jewish settlements in lands it seized in the 1967 Mideast War. The primary holdout at the U.N. has been the United States, which sees settlements as illegitimate but has traditionally used its veto power as a permanent member of the Security Council to block such resolutions on the grounds that Israeli-Palestinian disputes should be addressed through negotiation.

Underscoring that unity, Friday's resolution was proposed by nations in four different parts of the world: Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela. It is the first resolution on settlements to pass in 36 years, Malaysia's U.N. Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered several diplomatic steps in retaliation, recalling his nation's ambassadors to New Zealand and Senegal for consultations and canceling a planned January visit to Israel by Senegal's foreign minister. He also ended Israeli aid programs to the African country.

"Israel rejects this shameful anti-Israel resolution at the U.N. and will not abide by its terms," Netanyahu's office said in a statement, blaming Obama for failing to "protect Israel against this gang-up at the UN" and even colluding with the country's detractors. "Israel looks forward to working with President-elect Trump and with all our friends in Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to negate the harmful effects of this absurd resolution."

By contrast, chief Palestinian negotiation Saeb Erekat hailed the result as a "victory for the justice of the Palestinian cause." He said Trump's choice was now between "international legitimacy" or siding with "settlers and extremists."

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Explaining the U.S. vote, Power quoted a 1982 statement from then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan, which declared that Washington "will not support the use of any additional land for the purpose of settlements."

"That has been the policy of every administration, Republican and Democrat, since before President Reagan and all the way through to the present day," Power said.

"One would think that it would be a routine vote," Power said. But she acknowledged that, in reality, the vote was "not straightforward" because it occurred at the United Nations, a body that has singled out Israel for criticism for decades.

In a statement, Secretary of State John Kerry said the vote was guided by one principle: "To preserve the possibility of the two-state solution."

In some ways, the American abstention served as a direct reflection of the deep distrust between Obama and Netanyahu. It followed months of intensely secret deliberations in Washington, including what one official said was an unannounced meeting earlier this month between Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, and a spate of fresh Israeli settlement announcements that have wrought exasperation and anger from American officials.

Obama told aides he might abstain on the original Egyptian resolution in a late-night call Wednesday with Vice President Joe Biden, Kerry and other top aides, a White House official said. After Egypt backed down, Israeli officials and Trump's team both reached out to the administration, and Kerry spoke with Netanyahu. But when Obama saw the final draft Friday, the official said, he approved the abstention.

Trump has signaled he will be far more sympathetic to Israel's stances on the two territories, where some 600,000 Israelis live. His campaign platform made no mention of the establishment of a Palestinian state, a core policy objective of Democratic and Republican presidents over the past two decades. He also has vowed to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which would anger Palestinians and lack international support. Trump's pick for ambassador to Israel, Jewish-American lawyer David Friedman, is a donor and vocal supporter of the settlements.

The resolution is little different in tone or substance from Obama's view, with the exception of its language on the legality of settlements. Washington has long avoided calling the activity illegal, in part to maintain diplomatic wiggle room for a negotiated solution that would allow Israel to incorporate some of the larger settlement blocs.

While the resolution doesn't impose sanctions on Israel, it enshrines the world's disapproval of the settlements. A reversal would require a follow-up vote that avoids a veto from the U.S., Britain, China, France or Russia — a highly unlikely scenario given the current stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

In Washington, Republicans were already threatening consequences. Sen. Lindsey Graham, who heads the Senate appropriations panel in charge of U.S. payments to the global body, said he would "form a bipartisan coalition to suspend or significantly reduce" such funding. He said countries receiving U.S. aid also could be penalized for backing the effort.

In a Hanukkah message Friday, Obama didn't mention the matter. He referenced Israel once, noting that Jews there and around the world would soon "gather to light their Hanukkah menorahs, display them proudly in the window and recall the miracles of both ancient times and the present day."

Klapper reported from Washington and Federman reported from Jerusalem. Josh Lederman in New York and Ian Deitch in Jerusalem contributed.

Trump welcomes 'nice' letter from Putin after nuclear vow

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida (AP) — After months of promising to engage more with Russia, President-elect Donald Trump vowed to enhance America's nuclear capabilities, admonishing Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday that he hopes both global powers can restore collaboration so that "we do not have to travel an alternate path."

Trump passed along a "very nice letter" that his transition team said was sent to him by Putin urging

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Trump to act "in a constructive and pragmatic manner" to "restore the framework of bilateral cooperation."

The letter, dated Dec. 15, also notes that serious global and regional challenges "show that the relations between Russia and the U.S. remain an important factor in ensuring stability and security in the modern world."

In response, Trump said that Putin's "thoughts are so correct," and that he hopes "both sides are able to live up to these thoughts, and we do not have to travel an alternate path."

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Putin sent the letter, "voicing hope for an improvement of bilateral ties," according to the Interfax news agency. Trump's transition team described the text as an unofficial translation.

The exchange comes on the heels of comments by Trump and Putin alike about the need to strengthen their countries' nuclear arsenals. Trump reopened the debate over nuclear proliferation Thursday, declaring on Twitter that the U.S. should "greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability" until the rest of the world "comes to its senses" regarding nuclear weapons. Those comments echoed an earlier statement by Putin, who said earlier Thursday that strengthening his country's nuclear capabilities should be a chief military objective in the coming year.

But Putin downplayed the significance of Trump's comments at a marathon end-of-year news conference Friday. Putin said he sees "nothing unusual" in Trump's pledge to strengthen the U.S. nuclear forces, saying the statement is in line with the president-elect's campaign promises.

In his wide-ranging remarks, the Russian leader claimed that his country's military is stronger than that of any potential aggressor, but acknowledged that the U.S. military is bigger. He also cast the modernization of Russia's nuclear arsenals as a necessary response to the U.S. missile defense system.

Trump extolled Putin's leadership during the campaign and called for a tempered approach to U.S.-Russia relations. And while Putin had described Trump in favorable terms during the campaign, observers say Russia's interest is centered around winning relief from crippling sanctions implemented under the Obama administration and bolstering Russia as the political and economic equivalent of the United States.

Tensions have been mounting between the U.S. and Russia in recent months over accusations by the Obama administration that the Russian government hacked the emails of U.S. citizens and institutions, including political organizations, and handed them over to DCLeaks.com and WikiLeaks for distribution. The FBI said this month that it supports the CIA's conclusion that Russia interfered in the presidential election with the goal of supporting Trump.

Trump has repeatedly dismissed claims that Russia sought to usher in his victory, but his remarks indicate that Russia may not be an exception to Trump's vow to assert American influence through "unquestioned military strength." His comments are prompting fears of a nuclear race in the making if Trump breaks longstanding nuclear treaties, and if Russia or other countries seek to counter American nuclear gains.

Earlier this year, Trump said, with regard to the decades-old U.S. policy of refusing to rule out being the first to use nuclear weapons, "I would certainly not do first strike." That would seem to indicate he does not support the current policy of keeping it indefinite. But then he said, "I can't take anything off the table."

Outgoing Defense Secretary Ash Carter has also said the Pentagon plans to spend \$108 billion over the next five years on its commitment to correct decades of shortchanging its nuclear force. He accused Russia in September of "nuclear saber-rattling" and North Korea of nuclear and missile provocations.

Trump's spokesman said Friday the president-elect is putting other countries on notice. "It was in response to a lot of countries. Russia, China and others are talking about expanding their nuclear capability," spokesman Sean Spicer said on Fox News.

Spicer also told NBC's Today, "We're not going to sit back and watch other nations threaten our safety. ... But just to be clear: The president isn't saying we're going to do this. He said, 'unless they come to their senses.' It's a warning to them that this president isn't going to sit idly by."

Trump also called on the U.S. and other countries to "fight back" against the perpetrators of attacks like Monday's deadly truck rampage in a Christmas market in Berlin. Trump quoted a video released Friday by the Islamic State group that shows the Berlin attack suspect saying, "By God's will, we will slaughter

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you pigs.”

“This is a purely religious threat, which turned into reality. Such hatred!” the president-elect wrote on Twitter.

Trump spent Friday in West Palm Beach, where he spends most holidays. In the morning, he played 18 holes with golf champion Tiger Woods at the Trump International Golf Course, and he was set to hold high-level staff meetings later in the day, his transition team said.

The president-elect took to Twitter early Friday, declaring it a “ridiculous shame” that his son Eric will have to stop soliciting funds for his charitable foundation, the Eric Trump Foundation, because of a conflict of interest. Eric Trump had said Wednesday he made the decision to avoid the appearance of a conflict.

“He loves these kids, has raised millions of dollars for them, and now must stop. Wrong answer!” Trump said.

Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, and Lolita Baldor, Bradley Klapper, Lynn Berry and Julie Pace in Washington contributed to this report.

US warns of possible attacks on churches, holiday gatherings

By DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal authorities warned law enforcement authorities across the nation Friday that Islamic State sympathizers are continuing to call for attacks on churches and other holiday gathering sites.

The warning was issued after a publicly available list of U.S. churches was posted on a militants’ social media site. It also came just days after Monday’s attack at a Christmas market in Berlin that left 12 dead and 56 injured.

Separately on Friday, police in Australia detained five men suspected of planning a series of Christmas Day attacks using explosives, knives and a gun in the heart of Melbourne.

FBI spokesman Andrew Ames said U.S. citizens are advised to maintain awareness of their surroundings and report suspicious activity. He said the FBI will work closely with federal, state and local law enforcement should there be any potential threat to public safety.

“The FBI is aware of the recent link published online that urges attacks against U.S. churches,” Ames said. “As with similar threats, the FBI is tracking this matter while we investigate its credibility.”

Malta plane hijacking ends peacefully; 2 Libyans surrender

By RAMI MUSA and STEPHEN CALLEJA, Associated Press

VALLETTA, Malta (AP) — Two Libyan hijackers diverted a domestic flight to the Mediterranean island of Malta on Friday to demand asylum in Europe and create a new political party in honor of the late dictator Moammar Gadhafi, officials said. After hours of negotiations, the standoff ended peacefully with the hijackers freeing all 117 people on board and walking off the plane to surrender.

The hijacked Airbus A320 flight, operated by Afriqiyah Airways, was traveling from the Libyan oasis city of Sabha to the coastal city of Tripoli when it was diverted to Malta and landed at 11:34 a.m. local time.

Malta state television TVM said the two hijackers had hand grenades and had threatened to explode them. All flights to Malta International Airport were immediately diverted and emergency teams including negotiators were sent to the airport tarmac.

Afriqiyah Airways said when the plane reached a cruising altitude of 36,000 feet (10,980 meters), pilot Ali Milad was told the hijackers were armed and wanted to land in Rome. Milad suggested landing in Tripoli, the hijackers refused, and a decision was made to land in Malta due to fuel limitations.

Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat told reporters the hijackers wanted negotiators to board the plane after it landed but his government refused and insisted that all passengers and crew be released.

The hijackers then allowed the plane’s doors to open at 1:44 p.m. and a staircase was brought over so freed passengers could disembark in groups.

In a series of tweets, Muscat said 65 people were allowed to leave, then another 44 were freed, includ-

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ing some crew, all coming out without hand luggage. Finally the two hijackers walked off the plane with the final crew members, including the pilot and co-pilot.

Muscat announced that the hijacking was over in a tweet at 3:44 p.m., saying the two hijackers surrendered unconditionally. They were searched, taken into custody and being questioned, he said.

The airline said 117 people, including six crew members, had been on board the hijacked plane. Twenty-five of the passengers were artists, writers and intellectuals from southern Libya heading to a cultural forum in Tripoli.

Muscat said the two hijackers had one hand grenade and one pistol on them and a second pistol was found on the plane when it was searched by Maltese soldiers.

In a later statement, the government said initial forensic investigations showed that the weapons used by the hijackers were identical "replica" weapons — imitation weapons that may not actually fire but are difficult to distinguish visually from real guns.

Police said it was most likely the two hijackers would be arraigned Saturday.

Late Friday, security experts were still checking to make sure the aircraft was free of explosives or other arms and Maltese authorities were still questioning the passengers and doing security checks on them to make sure another hijacker was not among them.

Passenger Ibrahim Bashir told Al-Nabaa TV the passengers were "trapped" inside buses at the Malta airport and not allowed to leave. The airline said a chartered plane was being sent to Malta to bring the passengers back to Libya after the questioning.

Milad, the pilot, identified the two hijackers as Moussa Shaha and Ahmed Ali, who other Libyan officials said were in their twenties.

The pilot said the men were seeking political asylum in Europe and wanted to set up a political party called "the New Fateh." Fateh is a reference to Gadhafi, who led the Fateh revolution after his coup in 1969.

After many hostages left the plane Friday afternoon, one hijacker waved Libya's old green flag from the plane's doorway.

At a news conference later in Tripoli, Libya's transportation minister defended his country's airport security.

"Security breaches happen everywhere and Libya is not an exception," Milad Matouq said. "Despite the security situation (in the country), things are excellent. This is the first incident since the (2011) revolution."

But a Libyan lawmaker disputed the minister's comments, saying he was not surprised that a plane from Sabha was hijacked because security measures were "messy" at the nearby Tamanhent airport.

The Sabha airport was closed after tribal clashes two years ago and its air base was turned into a civilian airport for internal Libyan flights. A small militia from the city of Misrata in northwestern Libya has been guarding it since 2014.

Salah Qalma, a lawmaker from Sabha, said while the airport has an electronic gate at its arrival hall there are no electronic gates or guards at its adjacent exit gates.

"It's very easy for anyone to enter without passing through the electronic gates," he said.

Qalma also said the airport building has no fence or guards outside it and planes on the tarmac are not separated from the parking lot.

Malta International Airport said it hoped to clear up the backlog of delayed and diverted flights by late Friday. It said 44 flights were affected.

Libya, a sprawling oil-rich North African country, has been split between rival parliaments and governments, each backed by a loose array of militias and tribes, since Gadhafi was ousted and killed in 2011.

Western nations view the newly-formed U.N.-brokered government as the best hope for uniting the country, but Libya's parliament, which meets in the country's far east, has refused to accept it. Amid chaos, the Islamic State and al-Qaida affiliates have gained a foothold over the past years.

This version corrects the spelling to Tamanhent airport.

Musa reported from Benghazi, Libya. Maggie Michael also contributed from Cairo.

Assad won back Aleppo, but immense challenges lie ahead

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **ZEINA KARAM**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hundreds of people returned to eastern Aleppo neighborhoods on Friday to check on their homes after the last opposition fighters left the city, picking through debris and wreckage for personal belongings blasted by years of fighting.

In a sign of the immense challenges that still lie ahead for President Bashar Assad, rebels outside the city shelled a neighborhood in the city, killing three people in the first bombardment since government forces took full control of Syria's largest city a day earlier, state TV reported.

The rebel surrender in Aleppo ended a brutal chapter in Syria's nearly six-year civil war, and marked Assad's most significant victory since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule began in 2011. But large parts of the war-ravaged country remain outside his control, including rural areas in Aleppo province south and west of the city where opposition fighters still operate.

Assad has said that the most important priority after securing Aleppo will be fortifying the countryside around it before moving on to other strongholds outside his control, including the nearby province of Idlib, west of Aleppo, and the city of Raqqa controlled by the Islamic State group in eastern Syria.

Syrian TV said Friday's rockets which hit the southwestern neighborhood of Hamadaniyeh were fired by insurgents based southwest of Aleppo.

Associated Press footage from inside neighborhoods in eastern Aleppo taken over by the army after the last rebels were bused out a day earlier captured the staggering destruction: Row after row of destroyed buildings, many with blown out doors and windows, and toppled floors, along debris-strewn streets lined with charred vehicles. Not a single building appeared intact.

In the Sukkari, Ansari and Amiriyeh neighborhoods, army experts were dismantling explosives and booby-traps left behind by rebels before they left.

Hundreds of people walked through the Bustan al-Qasr crossing, a passageway that separated rebel-controlled eastern Aleppo from the government-controlled al-Masharqa district, which was closed years ago, cutting off links between the two sides of the divided city.

Ahmad Khayata was among those who returned to see what remains of his home in Sukkari, one of the last neighborhoods to be evacuated by opposition fighters Thursday. He was told by soldiers he needed to wait until they finish de-mining the area.

"It's been five years since I left my home," he said. "Thank God now we are back... They (soldiers) told us maybe in the afternoon or tomorrow it will be possible" to go in, he said.

The Syrian government's recapture of Aleppo after a prolonged and punishing air assault leaves Assad in control of almost all major urban areas — and poised to play a role in the world community's broader war against jihadis clinging to parts of Syria. It is a devastating blow for the opposition, whose main backer, Turkey, is now heavily engaged with Moscow in searching for a settlement to the six-year war in Syria.

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin, one of Assad's key backers, said it's necessary to establish a cease-fire across the entire territory of Syria, to be followed by peace talks.

"In the next stage, an agreement on a cease-fire on the entire territory of Syria should be reached and practical talks on a political settlement should start immediately after," Putin said at his annual news conference.

He said the leaders of Turkey and Iran, which have helped broker the withdrawal of the remaining civilians and militants from Aleppo, have agreed that Syria peace talks should be held in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana. He added that Assad has agreed to that proposal.

The Kremlin later said that Putin called Assad to congratulate him on the capture of Aleppo.

"This success was possibly only thanks to joint efforts of everyone who rallied together against international terrorism in Syria," Putin was quoted as saying.

The Kremlin also said Putin told Assad that "the main goal now is to focus efforts on issues of advancing a peace settlement including hammering out an agreement on a comprehensive settlement for the Syria crisis."

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in a meeting with Putin that a military police battalion had

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been deployed to eastern Aleppo the previous evening to "ensure order." He didn't specify how many troops had been deployed.

Shoigu told Putin that the Russian military is helping restore water and energy supplies to eastern districts of Aleppo and clearing them from mines. Shoigu said that an agreement on a "complete cease-fire" in Syria is very close, didn't offer details.

Syrian state TV said the Russian force aims to protect explosive experts in the Russian base of Hemeimeem on the coast.

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 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.

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 and ended Thursday night.

Pro-government TV stations reported that rebels killed dozens of prisoners they were holding before they evacuated the city. Syrian rebels denied the reports in an exchange monitored by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, saying the prisoners were released.

A Syrian military official told The Associated Press that the gunmen carried out "criminal acts" before the left east Aleppo, adding that he will not go into details until a military investigation is over. He spoke by telephone from Syria on condition of anonymity in line with army regulations.

Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov and Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 24, the 359th day of 2016. There are seven days left in the year. This is Christmas Eve; the Jewish Festival of Lights, Hanukkah, begins at sunset.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 24, 1906, Canadian physicist Reginald A. Fessenden became the first person to transmit the human voice (his own) as well as music over radio, from Brant Rock, Massachusetts.

On this date:

In 1814, the United States and Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812 following ratification by both the British Parliament and the U.S. Senate.

In 1851, fire devastated the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., destroying about 35,000 volumes.

In 1865, several veterans of the Confederate Army formed a private social club in Pulaski, Tennessee, that was the original version of the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1871, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Aida" had its world premiere in Cairo, Egypt.

In 1914, during World War I, impromptu Christmas truces began to take hold along parts of the Western Front between British and German soldiers.

In 1939, Pope Pius XII delivered a Christmas Eve address in which he offered a five-point program for peace and denounced "premeditated aggressions."

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe as part of Operation Overlord.

In 1951, Gian Carlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors," the first opera written specifically for television, was first broadcast by NBC-TV.

In 1968, the Apollo 8 astronauts, orbiting the moon, read passages from the Old Testament Book of

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Genesis during a Christmas Eve telecast.

In 1974, Cyclone Tracy began battering the Australian city of Darwin, resulting in widespread damage and causing some 65 deaths.

In 1980, Americans remembered the U.S. hostages in Iran by burning candles or shining lights for 417 seconds — one second for each day of captivity.

In 1995, fire broke out at the Philadelphia Zoo, killing 23 rare gorillas, orangutans, gibbons and lemurs.

Ten years ago: Ethiopia sent fighter jets into Somalia and bombed several towns in a dramatic attack on Somalia's powerful Islamic movement; Ethiopia's prime minister said his country had been "forced to enter a war." Broadcasting pioneer Frank Stanton, CBS president for 26 years, died in Boston at age 98.

Five years ago: In a setback, Republican presidential hopefuls Newt Gingrich and Texas Gov. Rick Perry failed to qualify for Virginia's Super Tuesday primary ballot by falling short of the 10,000 signatures required. Troops commanded by relatives of Yemen's outgoing president, Ali Abdullah Saleh (AH'-lee ahb-DUH'-luh sah-LEH'), attacked a crowd of more than 100,000 peaceful protesters, killing at least nine and driving Saleh to promise to leave the country. Pope Benedict XVI decried the increasing commercialization of Christmas as he celebrated Christmas Eve Mass.

One year ago: Christian faithful from around the world descended on the biblical city of Bethlehem for Christmas Eve celebrations as an outburst of Israeli-Palestinian violence dampened the typically festive mood. California Gov. Jerry Brown pardoned actor Robert Downey Jr. for a nearly 20-year-old felony drug conviction that sent the Oscar-nominated actor to jail for nearly a year. William Guest, 74, a member of Gladys Knight and the Pips, died in Detroit.

Today's Birthdays: Songwriter-bandleader Dave Bartholomew is 98. Author Mary Higgins Clark is 89. Federal health official Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., is 76. Recording company executive Mike Curb is 72. Actress Sharon Farrell is 70. Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., is 70. Actor Grand L. Bush is 61. Actor Clarence Gilyard is 61. Actress Stephanie Hodge is 60. The former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAHR'-zeye), is 59. Rock musician Ian Burden (The Human League) is 59. Actor Anil Kapoor (ah-NEEL' kuh-POOR') is 57. Actress Eva Tamargo is 56. Actor Wade Williams is 55. Designer Kate Spade is 54. Rock singer Mary Ramsey (10,000 Maniacs) is 53. Actor Mark Valley is 52. Actor Diedrich Bader is 50. Actor Amaury Nolasco is 46. Singer Ricky Martin is 45. Author Stephenie Meyer is 43. Former "American Idol" host Ryan Seacrest is 42. Actor Michael Raymond-James is 39. Rock singer Louis Tomlinson (One Direction) is 25.

Thought for Today: "Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful." — The Rev. Norman Vincent Peale (born 1898, died this day in 1993).