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GROTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

January 3, 2017 - 7pm
Groton Community Center

- 1) Minutes
- 2) Financial Report
- 3) Bills
- 4) Department Reports – Herron, Lambertz
- 5) Insurance Coverages
- 6) Rubble Site prices 2017
- 7) Donation request from PAC
- 8) Donation to Park Playground from Lions
- 9) Copiers & Printers
- 10) Legislative Day – Pierre – Feb 7
- 11) Recognize Employees and Volunteers
- 12) Exe Session – Legal 1-25-2 (3)
- 13) Br Co Law Enforcement Agreement

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**

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Saturday, Dec. 31

Catholic Parish: Worship at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church at 4 p.m., worship at St. Joseph in Turton at 6 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 1

United Methodist Church Parish: 9 a.m. service in Conde, 10 a.m. coffee fellowship time, 11 a.m., worship at Groton (No Sunday School)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church: Worship at 9 a.m. (No Sunday School)

Catholic Parish: Worship at St. Anthony in Bristol at 9 a.m.

Heaven Bound Ministries in Pierpont: Worship at 10 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran Church: Worship with Communion at 9 a.m.

Monday, Jan. 2

Emmanuel Lutheran Church: Bible Study at 6:30 a.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 3

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

Boys' Basketball at Webster Area (C game at 5:15 p.m., JV at 6:30 p.m. with varsity game to follow)

City Council meeting at Groton Community Center at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 4

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, pineapple/mandarin orange sauce, peanut butter cookie.

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, wedge fries, fruit,



Dakota Outdoors

Erik Dean

402 N Main St
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605.229.0123

dakoutdoors@midconetwork.com



South Dakota Governor
Dennis Daugaard



The Importance of South Dakota's Animal Health Laboratory

For a state like South Dakota, with five times as many cattle and twice as many hogs and chickens as we have citizens, livestock health is a big deal. We all know the tremendous impact the livestock sector has on our state's economy, but it's easy to forget the connection between livestock health and human health.

Livestock disease control techniques have advanced rapidly in recent years in response to worldwide disease epidemics. Since 2013, South Dakota has seen outbreaks of four new diseases not previously seen in the United States.

The state, our agriculture industry and South Dakota State University work together to fund the Animal Disease Research and Diagnostic Laboratory, which serves as our state animal health laboratory. The current facility was built in 1967 and remodeled in 1993. It is out-of-date and needs to be modernized to correct aging infrastructure, accommodate new technologies, and meet current and future standards. That's why I'm working with the Legislature and agriculture industry to upgrade and expand the lab.

The lab provides critical research and diagnostic support to protect our citizens and livestock industry from disease outbreaks. The scientists who work there conduct tests to identify diseases, distinguish unique strains, and develop vaccines and other treatments to assist veterinarians, ranchers, farmers, pet owners, wildlife managers, public health officials, and state and federal agencies.

Each year the lab tests hundreds of thousands of samples in nine specialized areas. When the lab was last upgraded, molecular diagnostic tests, which analyze genetic code to determine irregularities, had not yet been developed as a cost effective diagnostic tool. Now the lab conducts more than 200,000 such tests annually.

More new technologies are coming and further space is needed to accommodate them. We have to be cutting edge; we are not testing for yesterday's diseases, we're testing for the diseases of today and tomorrow.

Politicians talk about public-private partnerships all the time – it's almost a catchphrase. But in South Dakota we take action. It's going to be a lean budget year and the agriculture sector is not as strong as it has been. Although this is a difficult time to make investments in our core infrastructure, a strong animal health lab is essential to the long-term security of our number one industry and the citizens of our state.

We all know the cost of doing nothing. When disease outbreaks risk the production of our food and the health of our citizens, a timely, accurate diagnosis of the cause is essential. I look forward to working with the Legislature, agriculture industry, and SDSU to sustain this public-private partnership and upgrade and expand South Dakota's animal health laboratory.

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SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



Larry Zimmerman
Secretary

Happy New Year everyone! We wish you a terrific 2017 filled with happiness and good fortune. Brad Paisley once said, "Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one." Let's ensure that our 2017 book is not left blank! Let's write a good one!

Our 2016 book was full of projects, accomplishments and stories. During 2016 we honored over 1,000 Korean War Veterans, we helped Vietnam War Veterans celebrate the tenth anniversary of the dedication of their memorial, participated in numerous welcome home and outreach events, and opened the doors to a new state-of-the-art veteran's home. We partnered with the Department of the Military to create South Dakota Joining Forces; an initiative to grow community support for veterans, service members and their families. We improved veteran's preference status, provided numerous training programs for our county and tribal veteran's service officers, assisted incarcerated veterans, served on committees for Veterans Courts and increased the number of nursing home beds at the State Veterans Home. In addition, our staff worked closely with veterans to secure over \$170 Million in compensation and pension benefits for veterans.

Each year we set new priorities to reflect the needs of all generations of veterans. As always, we encourage veterans to contact their local County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer to determine eligibility of benefits.

How many of you buy books, gadgets, or tools, only to let them sit on the shelf - never to be used? Of course you don't! But according to our records, only 2,300 veterans in South Dakota are using their GI Bill benefits and the On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship program. The result for those not using the benefit is that 36 months of education they have paid for is sitting on the shelf unused. That education benefit is part of what veterans earned for their service so why not collect it and use it? Why not add a chapter to your book?

As a veteran you have shown you have the talents to get things done under difficult circumstances. Build on that by picking up the right tools and improving what you have. Veterans from Vietnam Era, Post 9/11 and Gulf War Era should give our team a call and visit with them about education benefits, free tuition and housing allowances (605-773-3269).

We truly enjoy interacting with veterans, service members, and their families throughout our great state. We have tremendous partners at federal, state, and local levels who work tirelessly to ensure great outcomes. We are all here to work with our veterans.

Let's make sure our 2017 book has numerous pages and is a best seller. Keep the book open and continue to add chapters to your journal.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Tyler Bowling

Public Affairs Specialist

Question: I will rely on Medicare when I retire. Can you explain the different parts of Medicare?

Answer:

The different parts of Medicare cover your specific needs. There are four parts, all of which work in tandem to deliver healthcare services.

- Part A (hospital insurance): Hospital insurance helps pay for inpatient care in a hospital or skilled nursing facility (following a hospital stay), some home health care, and hospice care.
- Part B (medical insurance): Medical insurance helps pay for doctors' services and many other medical services and supplies that hospital insurance doesn't cover.
- Part C (Medicare Advantage plans): If you have Medicare Parts A and B, you can join a Medicare Advantage plan. Private companies offer Medicare Advantage plans which are approved by Medicare. These plans generally help you pay the medical costs not covered by Medicare Part A and B.
- Part D (prescription drug coverage): Prescription drug coverage helps pay for medications doctors prescribe for treatment.

Question: I want to make sure I have enough credits to receive Social Security retirement benefits when I need them. How can I get a record of my Social Security earnings?

Answer:

The best way for you to check whether you have earned enough credits (40 total, equaling 10 years of work) is to open a free my Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount to review your Social Security Statement any time you want.

Once you create an account, you can:

- Keep track of your earnings to make sure your benefit is calculated correctly. The amount of your payment is based on your lifetime earnings;
- Get an estimate of your future benefits if you are still working;
- Get a replacement SSA-1099 or SSA-1042S;
- Get a letter with proof of your benefits if you currently receive them; and
- Manage your benefits:
 - o Change your address; and
 - o Start or change your direct deposit.

Accessing my Social Security is quick, convenient, and secure, and you can do it from the comfort of your home.

Question: I went back to work after retiring, but now the company I work for is downsizing. I'll be receiving unemployment benefits in a few weeks. Will this affect my retirement benefits?

Answer:

When it comes to retirement benefits, Social Security does not count unemployment as earnings, so your retirement benefits will not be affected. However, any income you receive from Social Security may reduce your unemployment benefits. Contact your state unemployment office for information on how your state applies the reduction to your unemployment compensation.

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Help Wanted!

The South Dakota Creativity Association board (SD DI) is currently looking for people interested in filling open Affiliate and Regional Challenge Master positions for the upcoming tournament season. These positions involve studying a current Destination Imagination Challenge and being involved in insuring that consistency in appraising is maintained from tournament to tournament throughout our state. Many of these positions are open this year due to retiring long-time dedicated volunteers. This is a volunteer position, but the board helps defray some travel costs. The tournaments run from the end of February to the end of March, but we'd like these positions filled within the next month. Please pass this on to anyone that you think might be interested in a position. If interested yourself, or if you want more details as to what the position entails, please contact the SD Affiliate Director, Dean Fenenga at di.soda.ad@gmail.com. The board and hundreds of students across our state thank you for your support of South Dakota Destination Imagination.

Case IH Heaters

70,000 BTU Heater- \$249.00

125,000 BTU Heater- \$349.00

215,000 BTU Heater-\$449.00

Great Buys!



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Today in Weather History

December 31, 1972: A winter system visited the area on the 29th through the 31st, with precipitation beginning as rain in South Dakota during the early morning hours of the 29th. A period of freezing rain had occurred across South Dakota before the precipitation there changed to all snow, while in west central Minnesota snow in the morning turned to a period of freezing rain and sleet in the afternoon. Damages from the 40-mile wide ice storm from the Wheaton-Morris-Appleton area ENE through St. Cloud and Pine City, MN were some of the largest known to date across the area. Thousands of farms and homes across the ice storm strip were without power and telephone service as the result of thousands of broken lines and broken poles. Many were without utilities from one to three days, and a few without utilities for nearly a week. Utility damages were estimated to be 1.5 million dollars. In South Dakota, snowfall of 2 to 6 inches was common. Strong winds of over 40 mph accompanied the snow, causing drifting and blowing snow and occasionally reducing visibility to zero. Some of the roads were blocked. The most severe conditions occurred on the 30th when the highway department advised no traveling.



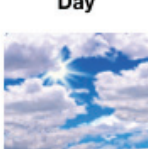




December 31, 2010: A second stronger surface low-pressure area moved across the region on New Year's Eve bringing widespread heavy snowfall along with blizzard conditions. Bitter cold northwest winds of 25 to 40 mph combined with additional snowfall of 6 to 10 inches brought visibilities to near zero across much of the region. This storm was the second blizzard in two days across the area. The blizzard conditions continued into early New Year's Day. Both Interstates 29 and 90 were closed from the 31st until Sunday, January 2nd. There were several stranded motorists along Highway 83 with five people being rescued. The total snowfall amounts from the two storms ranged from 6 to 15 inches across the region. The two-day snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Eagle Butte; 7 inches at Doland; 8 inches at Mobridge and Gann Valley; 9 inches at Castlewood; 10 inches at Murdo, Clark, Ipswich, Kennebec, and Watertown and 11 inches at Clear Lake and Bryant. Locations with a foot or more of snow included 12 inches at Aberdeen, Gettysburg, Highmore, Milbank, Mission Ridge, and Bowdle; 13 inches at Eureka, Pierre, Onida, and Blunt; 14 inches at Mellette, Sisseton, Victor, and Roscoe with 15 inches at Britton, Webster, and Redfield. The snowfall began between 6 am and noon CST on the 31st and ended between 4 am and 11 am CST on January 1st.

December 31, 1890: According to the National Meteorological Library and Archive from the United Kingdom, during the month of December 1890, Westminster, England saw zero hours of sunshine. Click

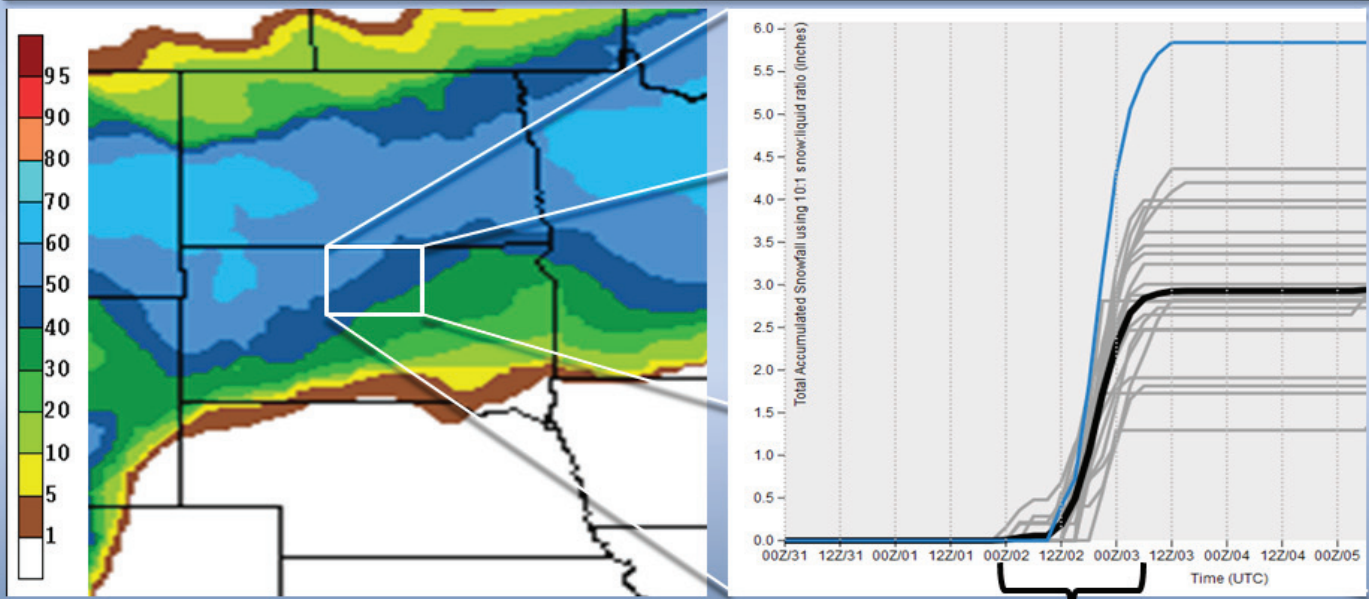
December 31, 1933: During the last week of December, a series of winter storms pounded the mountainside with 12 inches of rain near Los Angeles. More rain occurred on New Year's Eve, including 4.86 inches in downtown Los Angeles. The 4.86 inches is currently the fourth most rainfall to occur in one day in downtown Los Angeles since 1877. Around midnight, hillsides in at least three mountain locations collapsed sending millions of tons of mud and debris into the Crescenta Valley neighborhoods below. Crescenta Valley is a few miles north of Los Angeles. This mudslide destroyed more than 400 homes. Following the disaster, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the County of Los Angeles built a flood control system of catch basins and concrete storm drains, designed to prevent a repeat of the 1934 disaster.

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Today	Tonight	New Year's Day	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Decreasing Clouds	Partly Cloudy	Increasing Clouds	Chance Wintry Mix	Chance Wintry Mix then Snow Likely	Snow Likely then Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow then Partly Sunny
High: 24 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 15 °F	High: 20 °F	Low: 3 °F	High: 6 °F

Average Temperatures Through The Weekend Winter Conditions To Start Next Week – Ice & Snow Possible



**Another Bout Of Arctic Air Follows
Expected To Persist Through Next Week**

**Sunday PM – Tuesday AM
Uncertainty Continues To Be High
Example: Mobridge Range 2 – 6"**



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Published on: 12/31/2016 at 5:39AM

A weak system will move across the region late Sunday into early Tuesday. This system will initially bring a wintry mix to the area, with some ice possible. Precipitation turns to all snow Monday with accumulations most likely for north central South Dakota. Still quite a bit of uncertainty over the totals however. The Arctic blast that follows will result in temperatures in the teens below zero and lower for Lows with highs struggling into the single digits. This Arctic air will remain with us into next weekend as well.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 31.0 F at 7:38 PM

Low Outside Temp: 10.6 F at 2:21 AM

High Gust: 28.0 Mph at 10:16 PM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 49° in 1904

Record Low: -39° in 1967

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 2°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.52

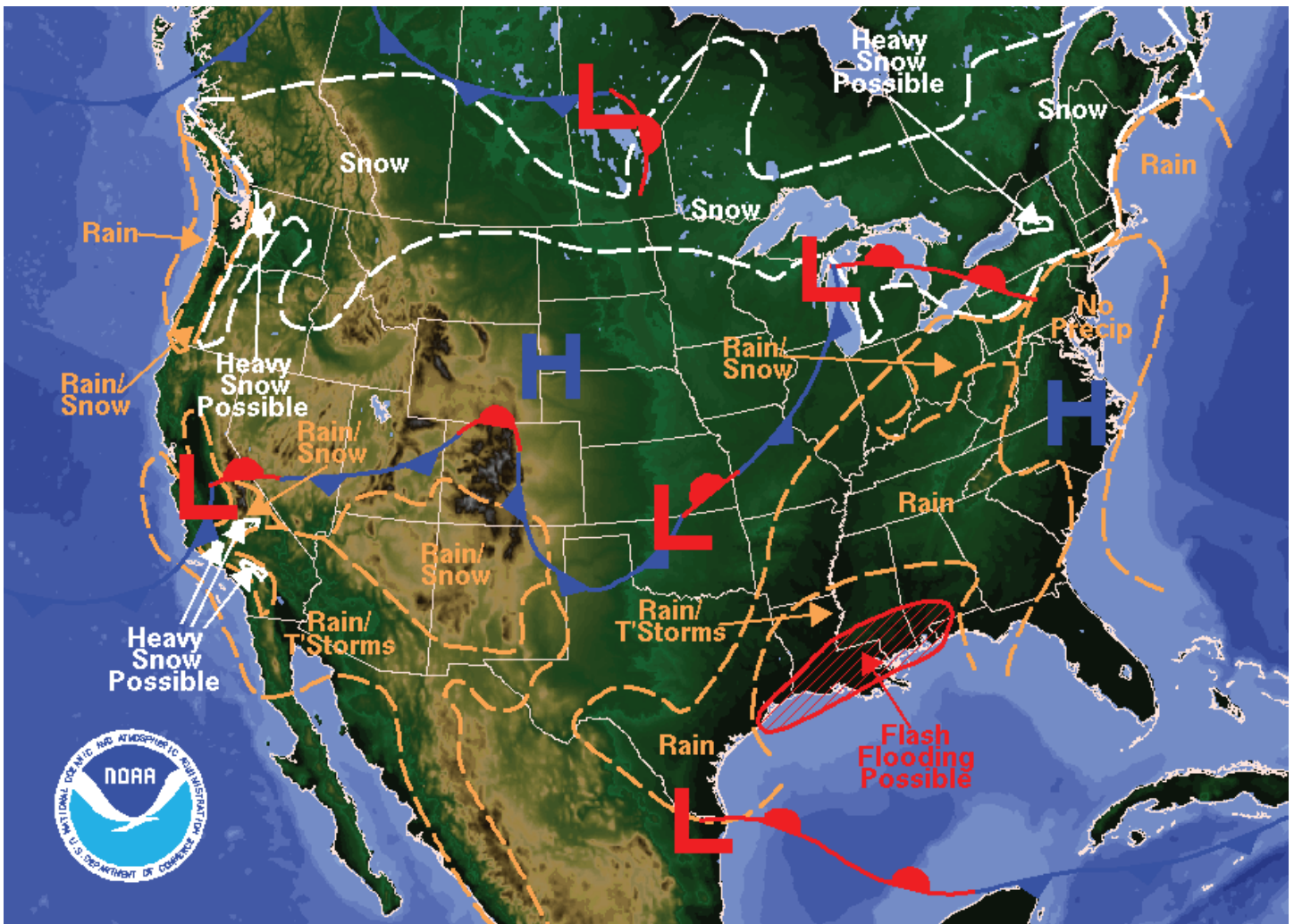
Precip to date in Dec.: 1.74

Average Precip to date: 21.72

Precip Year to Date: 19.08

Sunset Tonight: 5:00 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sat, Dec 31, 2016, issued 4:11 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Tate based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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KEEP THEM AT HOME

A man once said to Mark Twain, "It is my deepest desire to go to the mount where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and recite them there!" Puzzled, Mark Twain asked, "Don't you think it would be better to stay at home and try to keep them there?"

The Lord did not give us the Ten Commandments to review, but to reveal; not to look at but to live; not to admire but to acknowledge in the way we behave.

There are many who say one thing with their lips but show another thing with their lives. There are those who say the right things but live the wrong way. And there are some who speak the language of faith but give no evidence of it in their lives. The proof of our faith is not our words but our works.

Some say, "I am a Christian" but if they are watched closely there is no evidence of Christ in their lives. We are reminded by James that we are not only to be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. A good time to start doing good is now. A good place to start doing good is where you are.

Prayer: Father, help me to follow the directions for living that I find in Your Word. Do not allow me to deceive myself into thinking that I am acting on Your behalf when my behavior does not reflect what Your Word tells me to do. In Your Name. Amen.

Scripture: James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 58, Avon 43
Belle Fourche 49, Lemmon 48
Beresford 60, Irene-Wakonda 36
DeLaSalle, Minn. 71, Mitchell 25
Dickinson, N.D. 72, Rapid City Central 50
Huron 49, Rapid City Stevens 47
Ipswich 58, Waubay/Summit 47
Rapid City Christian 64, Sunshine Bible Academy 20

Chadron Tournament

Championship
Chadron, Neb. 55, Spearfish 44

Mike Miller Classic

Bridgewater-Emery 75, Prairie Seeds Academy, Minn. 63
SA St. Anthony, Texas 73, Sioux Falls Washington 50

Snowball Classic

Canton 60, Gregory 37
Hot Springs 46, Colome 44
Winner 67, Hill City 46

St. Thomas More Tournament

Elk Point-Jefferson 66, Sisseton 52
St. Thomas More 66, Aberdeen Roncalli 58

Swiftel Classic

Deuel 47, Custer 37
Estelline 47, Wilmot 41

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Avon 49, Alcester-Hudson 35
Belle Fourche 44, Lemmon 28
Beresford 56, Irene-Wakonda 52
Corsica/Stickney 42, Scotland 38
Ethan 59, Sully Buttes 53, OT
Faith 47, New Underwood 44
Gayville-Volin 53, Wagner 46
Hanson 60, Dell Rapids 57
Ipswich 50, Highmore-Harrold 37
Madison 55, Redfield/Doland 37
Parkston 46, Menno 37
Platte-Geddes 59, Tea Area 55
Rapid City Central 73, Dickinson, N.D. 22
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 54, McCook Central/Montrose 44
Todd County 69, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 31

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Aberdeen Classic

St. Thomas More 64, Aberdeen Roncalli 23

Webster 64, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 38

Chadron Tournament (Invite)

Third Place

Spearfish 55, Valentine, Neb. 40

Mike Miller Classic

Aberdeen Central 78, Waconia, Minn. 62

Snowball Classic

Winner 75, Hill City 50

Swiftel Classic

Canistota 47, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 38

Deuel 51, Custer 46

Sioux Valley 70, Estelline 30

Man accused of stealing credit cards from Spearfish churches

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Police have arrested a man accused of stealing credit cards from two Spearfish churches on Christmas Eve.

The 34-year-old man from Norman Park, Georgia, was arrested Friday in Rapid City after he was spotted by police and fled into a business, where he barricaded himself in a restroom. Police say the suspect did not allow another person in the restroom to leave and destroyed part of the ceiling while trying to escape from law enforcement. No injuries were reported.

The suspect is facing charges of obstruction, false imprisonment, destruction of private property, impersonation to deceive law enforcement and two out-of-state felony warrants.

Power restored to thousands of South Dakota residents

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Officials say power has been restored to thousands of residents in northeastern South Dakota who were hit by the Christmas weekend ice and wind storm.

East River Electric Power Cooperative representatives say crews began re-energizing the lines Thursday night and many households were online by Friday morning. Power is expected to be restored to remaining members by the end of the weekend, if the weather cooperates.

Authorities say the Western Area Power Administration's substation in the Summit area lost structures in all three of its high-voltage substation feeds. That substation provides power to the East River Electric Power Cooperative.

East River's transmission system suffered severe damage to almost 500 structures. Officials say there is still ice on lines and substations so high winds could continue to cause outages.

Justice, retirement systems among Daugaard's top priorities

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard enters his final two years in office aiming to tackle issues ranging from rising methamphetamine use to the solvency of the state retirement system.

During the legislative session that starts Jan. 10, the Republican governor will likely be the final word on reshaping a voter-approved government ethics overhaul and deciding whether to restrict the bathrooms that transgender students use.

Daugaard told The Associated Press that he and First Lady Linda Daugaard are looking forward to

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leaving politics after his second term. He said he hasn't considered seeking the U.S. House seat being vacated by Rep. Kristi Noem for the 2018 election.

"As Linda would say, 'not with this wife,'" he said with a laugh.

GOVERNOR'S PRIORITIES

The governor heads into his penultimate legislative session hoping to enact policies to address issues surrounding mentally ill people entering the criminal justice system and fight against growing meth use and mounting drug arrests. The policies would be based on recommendations made by state workgroups.

Daugaard, who takes pride in South Dakota's financial health, is also backing changes to the state's retirement system to make sure it's sustainable by tying cost-of-living adjustments more closely to inflation, among other proposals.

The governor said he doesn't foresee proposing any more tax increases over the rest of his term.

ETHICS OVERHAUL

Daugaard said he would be "surprised" if the ethics overhaul isn't repealed this session, saying that the campaign for the ballot measure was misleading. The high-profile initiative created an ethics commission, public campaign funding and limitations on lobbyist gifts to lawmakers.

"I'd be surprised if there were a hundred voters who've read the measure itself," said Daugaard, who has suggested studying the issues covered by the initiative to find other solutions.

A group of GOP legislators are challenging the ethics overhaul in court, and their ire will likely build into fireworks during the session. Initiative supporters say they're prepared to fight for it in the Legislature and again at the ballot box if necessary.

Daugaard said he's also open to changes to South Dakota's initiative system. Some Republican lawmakers are weighing whether to make it harder for people to put measures before voters after an election season that brought in millions of dollars from out-of-state groups.

BATHROOM BILL

Daugaard vetoed a bill in 2016 that would have required transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender at birth. Conservative group Family Heritage Alliance Action has said it "will encourage" legislation in 2017 on the topic.

The governor said a twin bill would face his same objections, but said he would have to evaluate other potential proposals.

TOUGH CALL

Daugaard said his toughest 2016 decision was not calling a special legislative session to consider expanding the Medicaid health coverage program for low-income and disabled people. Daugaard had floated a special session to open the program to roughly 50,000 more low-income residents, but decided against it because it was unlikely to succeed in the Legislature.

He called it making the "right decision, regretfully." The governor ultimately abandoned plans for expansion in 2017 after a discussion with Vice President-elect Mike Pence about the Trump administration's plans for repealing or overhauling the Affordable Care Act.

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

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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 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.

Fiesta Bowl: Swinney looks to put a rare L on Meyer's record

By RALPH D. RUSSO, AP College Football Writer

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP) — Urban Meyer was giving the abridged version of the core values he has instilled in Ohio State football, the pillars upon which he has built the Buckeyes.

There is 4 to 6, A to B, in reference to the effort expected on each play. Power of the unit focuses on each position group. Competitive excellence, which sort of speaks for itself.

"You mean the game-day underwear, that's not the key ingredient?" Clemson coach Dabo Swinney chimed in, getting a smile from Meyer.

"I'm not saying I don't wear them," Meyer responded.

Swinney and Meyer shared the stage Friday morning for the final news conference before the second-ranked Buckeyes (11-1, No. 3 CFP) and Tigers (12-1, No. 2 CFP) face off in the Fiesta Bowl. The coaches exchanged handshakes and kind of a half-hug, pat-on-the-back thing before posing for photos with an ostentatious trophy that goes to the winner of Saturday night's game — along with a trip to the College Football Playoff championship game.

The 52-year-old Meyer has a resume few who have ever coached college football can match. No current coach who has at least 10 seasons of experience has a better winning percentage than Meyer's .854. He has won three national championships, including the first College Football Playoff title two years ago.

At the beginning of this week in Arizona, Swinney compared Meyer to Notre Dame legend Knute Rockne and joked about how he needed to quickly read Meyer's book to gain some insight.

Swinney, 47, talks about Meyer with reverential deference, but he is on the short list of current coaches who can claim Meyer-levels of success. Clemson needed more work when Swinney took over during the 2008 season than Ohio State did when Meyer became coach in 2012. But since 2011, Swinney is 68-14 (.829), including a victory against Ohio State in the 2014 Orange Bowl, one of only two postseason losses on Meyer's record (10-2).

The only thing Swinney and Clemson have not accomplished during this run, the greatest in the history of the program, is a national championship. Deshaun Watson and the Tigers came up just short last year against Alabama. Watson, the Heisman Trophy runner-up, was fabulous against the Tide and followed it up with another spectacular season (3,914 yards passing and 37 touchdowns).

"I would think that you would see his poise," Swinney said about Watson. "And to me his poise really makes him incredibly unique, because he just — he just never changes."

Clemson returns to the playoff for a semifinal in the stadium where they lost 45-40 to Alabama in January. University of Phoenix Stadium is also the site of Meyer's first national championship victory. His Florida Gators won the 2006 BCS title in Glendale, routing Ohio State.

"That was the first one, and I still, to this day remember, everybody on the sideline celebrating, screaming it's not over yet. And it was pretty much over. And then we ran a bubble screen with about a minute and a half left to Percy Harvin, and he nudged the ball past the first down marker, and I thought, even us, we can't screw this up now," Meyer said. "The knees started shaking and it was a

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special moment, though.”

Swinney can relate. He played on the 1992 Alabama team that won the national championship.

“So I can definitely see it and visualize that and hopefully we’ll have our opportunity to hold the trophy up one of these days,” Swinney said.

“And we’ve got a chance this year. But they don’t give those things away, man,” he added. “You’ve got to go earn it and play well and you’ve got to beat the best. And that’s what we’re playing, the best of the best.”

Things to know about the third, and by far most important, meeting between Ohio State and Clemson:

AS GALLMAN GOES: Wayne Gallman has a Clemson record 17 100-yard rushing games in his career and the Tigers are 17-0 in those games.

“Once he gets to the next level, it’s hard to take him down,” Ohio State linebacker Raekwon McMillan said about Gallman.

GROUNDING BUCKEYES: Redshirt freshman Mike Weber has 1,072 yards rushing for the Ohio State, but when games get tight the Buckeyes like to let quarterback J.T. Barrett carry the ball.

Barrett had 92 yards rushing and two touchdowns in a come-from-behind, overtime victory against Wisconsin. He ran for 125 yards and a touchdown in the double overtime win against Michigan.

DO-IT-ALL SAMUEL: Ohio State All-American Curtis Samuel is the only player in the country with at least 800 yards receiving (822 on 65 catches) and 700 rushing (730). He has 15 touchdowns (eight rushing and seven receiving) and the key to stopping the Buckeyes is to identify where Samuel is lining up. It’s like playing Where’s Waldo, Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables said.

“Everybody’s focusing on the quarterback on that little read power play, well, who has Waldo out here on the edge?” he said.

Follow Ralph D. Russo at www.Twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP

More college football coverage: <http://collegefootball.ap.org/>

Krebs: Record 30,000 concealed carry permits issued in 2016

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Secretary of State Shantel Krebs says the roughly 30,000 concealed carry permits issued in 2016 is a record.

Krebs said Friday that the previous high was nearly 27,000 permits issued in 2013. She says South Dakota residents value Second Amendment rights.

She says national events and discussions about limiting gun rights directly influence the number of permits issued.

January saw the highest volume, with 3,879 permits issued. The secretary of state’s office says there are roughly 96,000 active permit holders, or about one in six adults in South Dakota.

The state’s two most populous counties, Minnehaha and Pennington, each have over 14,000 active permit holders.

Krebs’ office issues a permit after it gets approved by an applicant’s county sheriff. People must meet age, criminal record and mental competency requirements, among other conditions.

Police: Man accused in deadly assault said he ‘snapped’

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Court documents say a man accused in a fatal beating at a Rapid City motel told investigators he “snapped” in anger and used a walking stick and his hands and feet in the assault.

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Thirty-four-year-old Clifford Leigh Gilbert is being held on \$250,000 cash bond in the death of Robert Laverne Smith at the Stardust Motel. Court documents say Gilbert used the name Gilbert Clifford as an alias.

A police affidavit says Gilbert and a woman were with Smith in a motel room when Smith struck Gilbert with the walking stick. The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2iMUUJo>) reports police say Gilbert grabbed the stick and struck Smith in the head, then repeatedly punched him and kicked him in the head.

Gilbert is charged with alternate counts of second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter.

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

Ohio court: Tigers' owner can visit seized animals

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — The Ohio owner of tigers, bears and other exotic animals seized by the state will be allowed to examine the ones that were sent to a South Dakota sanctuary then later relocated because of neglect, a court has ruled.

A state appeals court said Kenny Hetrick and his veterinarian should be allowed to check on the animals that were relocated to a Colorado sanctuary and ordered the state to arrange the visits within the next month.

The court said last week that a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture detailing the neglect of some of Hetrick's animals is understandably the cause of great concern for him. It also said the Ohio Department of Agriculture had a duty to make sure the animals were receiving proper care.

The department took custody of 11 animals from Hetrick's roadside sanctuary near Toledo in January 2015 after officials say he ignored warnings about needing a permit. Officials hauled away the animals under a state law that came about after a man in eastern Ohio released dozens of his exotic animals before killing himself in 2011. Many of those animals were killed by law enforcement out of a public safety concern.

Hetrick's animals eventually were moved to sanctuaries in other states while he and his family continued to fight the state in court, arguing the animals were improperly taken and should be returned.

One of Hetrick's tigers sent to the South Dakota sanctuary before being removed in the fall because it was found in poor health and having trouble eating was euthanized in early December. The tiger was among a dozen animals removed from the Spirit of the Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in South Dakota and sent to another sanctuary in Colorado.

Meanwhile, the same state appeals court ruling that will allow Hetrick to visit his animals denied his appeal to lift a stay of a county judge's order that said the state unfairly denied a permit to him and that the tigers, bear and three other big cats should be returned to Ohio.

That means the county judge's order will remain on hold while the state appeals that ruling.

Revelers bid adieu to a year of conflicts, celebrity deaths

By The Associated Press

As 2016 draws to a close, revelers around the world are bidding a weary adieu to a year filled with political surprises, prolonged conflicts and deaths of legendary celebrities.

How people are ushering in the new year:

AUSTRALIA

Sydney sent up a dazzling tribute to 2016's fallen icons with a New Year's Eve fireworks display honoring the late singer David Bowie and late actor Gene Wilder, becoming the first major city to bid a bittersweet adieu to a turbulent year.

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The glittering display over Sydney's famed harbor and bridge featured Saturn and star-shaped fireworks set to "Space Oddity," the classic song by Bowie — one of the seemingly endless parade of beloved entertainers who died in 2016.

Wilder was also honored as the bridge lit up in a rainbow of colors while a song from Wilder's famed film "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" played.

"This year, sadly, we saw the loss of many music and entertainment legends around the world," fireworks show co-producer Catherine Flanagan said. "So celebrating their music as part of Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks displays is an opportunity to reflect on the year that has been and what the future may hold."

LAS VEGAS

More than 300,000 visitors are expected to descend on Las Vegas for an extravagant New Year's Eve celebration.

Nightclubs are pulling out all the stops with performances from DJ Calvin Harris, rappers T-Pain and Kendrick Lamar and artists Drake and Bruno Mars. The city's celebrity chefs have crafted elaborate prix fixe menus complete with caviar and champagne toasts.

An eight-minute fireworks show will kick off at the stroke of midnight, with rockets launching from the tops of half a dozen casinos.

Federal officials have ranked the celebration just below the Super Bowl and on par with the festivities in Times Square. FBI and Secret Service agents will work alongside local police departments that are putting all hands on deck for the big night.

GERMANY

In Berlin the mood was more somber than celebratory.

"I don't like the way politics is going," said Daniel Brandt. "Fears are being fanned and people are so angry with each other."

The tone of public debate in Germany has become shriller over the past two years with the influx of hundreds of thousands of migrants. Some Germans blame Chancellor Angela Merkel for attacks such as the recent rampage in Berlin, where a failed asylum-seeker from Tunisia rammed a truck into a crowded Christmas market, killing 12 people and injuring dozens more.

As the country heads for a general election in which the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany party is expected to poll strongly, Brandt said he was hoping for "proper solutions to our problems."

Two Israeli tourists, on a visit to the German capital, seemed at a loss when asked about their wishes for 2017. "Peace on Earth. Just happiness, really," said Nathan and Libat, declining to give their last names.

Berlin hosts Germany's biggest open-air New Year's Eve celebration near the city's iconic Brandenburg Gate. Security, as in previous years, was tight Saturday, with police checking the bags of those entering the party zone.

Authorities have also increased police presence at hotspots in other major cities, including Cologne, where a string of robberies and sexual assaults last year that were blamed largely on migrants from North Africa prompted nationwide outrage.

TURKEY

Neslihan Dogruol, a restaurant owner in a chic Istanbul neighborhood, said she hopes for peace in 2017 following a year filled with "unrest and death."

"2016 affected everyone badly," she said, referring to major attacks that hit Turkey in the past year.

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The restaurant, adorned with snowflakes and tiny decorative lights for the evening, will have fewer people for dinner. "There is a serious gap between 2015 and 2016 in terms of business, people are going out less," Dogruol said, adding that she expects more people to come for drinks.

Security measures were heightened in major Turkish cities. Traffic leading up to key squares in Istanbul and the capital, Ankara, will be closed, police said. In Istanbul, 17,000 police officers have been put on duty, some camouflaged as Santa Claus and others as street vendors, Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency reported on Friday.

Ankara and Istanbul were targeted by bomb attacks in 2016, killing more than 180 people. Turkey has been in the throes of violence, combatting the Islamic State group, Kurdish militants and a coup attempt blamed on the U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen.

JAPAN

Temple bells will echo at midnight as families gather around noodles and revelers flock to shrines for the biggest holiday in Japan.

"I feel this sense of duality," said Kami Miyamoto, 21, an economics student at Meiji University in Tokyo, who traveled home in Hakusan, Ishikawa prefecture, for the holiday.

"The world is heading toward conservative insular policies," she said of the U.S. election, Brexit and what she believes lies ahead for elections in Europe in 2017. "We learned about how valuable it is to get correct information."

One of the most memorable experiences for Miyamoto in 2016 was a three-week study program in South Korea. She was surprised and moved by the friendship she formed with South Korean students, and she has decided to focus her studies on relations with South Korea.

"Studying about the U.S. and Europe seems to be about looking at the past, but East Asian studies are focusing on the future," she said.

Miyamoto's mother is preparing soba noodles, a standard New Year's Eve dish in Japan, except in their home it will be filled with green onions and shrimp. As the new year rolls in, the entire family, including her younger brother and sister, will drive to a nearby shrine, which, like temples all over Japan, will be filled with those praying for good fortune in the Year of the Rooster, according to the Chinese zodiac.

CHINA

Residents in Beijing and Shanghai, China's two largest cities, will pass New Year's Eve in a relative state of security lockdown, according to Chinese media reports citing police.

The Bund waterfront in Shanghai will not have any celebrations, authorities announced this week, while the sale, use and transportation of fireworks in central Shanghai will be prohibited altogether. Large buildings that often display light shows will also stay dark. More than 30 people died two years ago in a deadly stampede on Shanghai's waterfront, where 300,000 people had gathered to watch a planned light show.

Beijing police also said countdowns, lightshows, lotteries and other organized activities will not be held in popular shopping districts such as Sanlitun and Guomao. Beijing police advised citizens to avoid crowded areas, closely watch elderly relatives and children, and be aware of exit routes in venues.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said in his annual New Year's Eve address that his government will continue to focus on poverty alleviation at home and resolutely defending China's territorial rights on the foreign front.

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SOUTH KOREA

Hundreds of thousands of South Koreans ushered in the new year with a massive protest demanding the resignation of disgraced President Park Geun-hye. It was the 10th straight weekend of protests that led to Park's impeachment on Dec. 9 over a corruption scandal.

The evening rally was to overlap with Seoul's traditional bell-tolling ceremony at the Bosinngak pavilion at midnight, which was also expected to be a political statement against Park.

The city's mayor, Park Won-soon, invited as guests a man whose teenage son was among more than 300 people who died during a 2014 ferry sinking, and a woman who was forced into sexual slavery by Japan's World War II military.

Park came under heavy criticism over the way her government handled the ferry disaster.

"So many unbelievable things happened in 2016. It didn't feel real; it felt like a movie," protester Lee Huymi said about the bizarre scandal that brought Park down. "So I hope 2017 brings a movie-like ending to the mess. Everything getting solved, quickly and all at once, leaving us all happy."

INDIA

For most people in India, New Year's Eve is a time for family. In New Delhi and many other cities, newspapers are full of big advertisements for lavish parties at upscale hotels and restaurants. The big draws at the hotel parties are song and dance performances from Bollywood and television stars.

Police with breath analyzers check for drunk driving, and security is tightened in malls and restaurants.

The western city of Mumbai will host big street parties with thousands of people at the iconic Gateway of India, a colonial-era structure on the waterfront overlooking the Arabian Sea. There'll be music and dancing and occasional fireworks.

PHILIPPINES

The Philippines' notorious tradition of dangerous New Year's Eve celebrations persisted after President Rodrigo Duterte delayed to next year his ban on the use of powerful firecrackers, often worsened by celebratory gunfire.

Powerful firecrackers and gunfire have maimed hundreds of people and killed some each year across the Philippines despite government crackdowns, an annual government scare campaign and efforts by officials to set up centralized fireworks displays, like on Saturday night.

Duterte's southern Davao City hasn't been tainted by the bloody record because of a largely successful firecrackers ban he enforced when he was still the city's crime-busting mayor. Last month, he said he would delay his plan to replicate his Davao ban nationwide by a year because many have already invested in firecrackers and he was concerned by the impact of an abrupt ban on poor Filipinos employed in the industry.

In a preview of what may likely be another bloody New Year's Eve, the Department of Health said Saturday that 139 people have already been injured by firecracker blasts in recent days, mostly children under 15. More than 800 revelers were injured last year.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In Dubai, hundreds of thousands of people are expected to watch as fireworks shoot from the sides of the world's tallest building, the 828-meter (2,716-foot) Burj Khalifa. The show also will be streamed live online.

But authorities hope they won't see a repeat of last year's excitement, when police say faulty wiring sparked a fire several hours before midnight at The Address Downtown, a 63-story skyscraper nearby. The high-rise tower still remains under repair.

The United Arab Emirates, a staunch Western ally that hosts U.S. military personnel fighting against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, remains a peaceful corner in the otherwise turbulent Middle East.

However, the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi issued a warning Thursday to Americans that "extremist sympathizers or self-radicalized extremists may conduct attacks worldwide during this period with little or no warning."

Associated Press writers contributing to this report were: Kristen Gelineau in Sydney, Michelle Rindles in Las Vegas, Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo, Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, Gerry Shih in Beijing, Muneeza Naqvi in New Delhi, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Frank Jordans in Berlin, Zeynep Bilginsoy in Istanbul and Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines.

UN Security Council to vote on Syria cease-fire agreement

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council will vote Saturday on a resolution that would endorse the cease-fire agreement in Syria brokered by Russia and Turkey, and reiterate support for a roadmap to peace that starts with a transitional government.

The resolution also calls for "rapid, safe and unhindered" access to deliver humanitarian aid throughout the country. And it looks forward to a meeting in late January between the Syrian government and opposition in Kazakhstan's capital Astana "as an important part of the Syrian-led political process facilitated by the United Nations."

Russia and Turkey are on opposing sides of the Syrian conflict: Moscow along with Iran provides crucial military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Turkey has long served as a rear base and source of supplies for the rebels.

Divisions in the Security Council between Russia and the veto-wielding Western powers — the U.S. Britain and France who support the moderate opposition and demand that Assad steps down — have blocked action to end the war, now in its sixth year.

Russia and Turkey sent the cease-fire agreement and the draft resolution to Security Council members Thursday night. After closed discussions in the council Friday morning, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin circulated a revised draft, urged council members to support it, and called for a vote on Saturday.

The Security Council needs to participate "in this important process," Churkin said.

The council is scheduled to meet at 11 a.m. EST. Russia's U.N. Mission said members would hold closed consultations and then vote.

The cease-fire agreement, if it holds, would mark a potential breakthrough in a conflict that began in 2011 with an uprising against decades of rule by President Bashar Assad's family and has left over 250,000 dead and more than 13.5 million people in need of urgent assistance, and triggered a refugee crisis across Europe.

The draft resolution reiterates "that the only sustainable solution to the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva communique of June 30, 2012," which was endorsed by the Security Council.

The communique, adopted by key nations, calls for the formation of a transitional government with full executive powers "on the basis of mutual consent" and steps leading to elections.

Churkin told reporters "there is no competition" between the talks in Astana and negotiations that

the U.N. special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, hopes to arrange between the government and opposition in Geneva on Feb. 8.

"As you know Staffan de Mistura had trouble reconvening the talks, so Russia and Turkey obviously decided to give the United Nations a hand in pushing things forward, and this is what we see happening," Churkin told reporters.

He said de Mistura has been in contact with the Russian government and "indicated his eagerness to help organize the Astana meetings. ... So we expect the United Nations to be fully involved in the preparations of the meetings."

Churkin said Russia's understanding is that seven major rebel groups have joined in the cease-fire, representing 60,000 fighters, "and they control a large chunk of the territory of Syria."

As with previous failed cease-fire attempts, the current agreement excludes both the al-Qaida-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front, which fights alongside other rebel factions, and the Islamic State group.

If the Astana meetings are successful, Churkin said, "they could move on to Geneva as far as I am concerned, so we don't see any competition there or overlapping of the two processes."

Churkin said Russia and Turkey have made clear they want other countries to participate in the Astana meetings.

He said Iran will definitely participate "actively" in preparing the Astana meeting and in Russia's view Egypt can also join the preparatory process right now.

Churkin said there are other very important players who are welcome including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar — and "we do expect the Trump administration after it comes into the White House on Jan. 20 will be an important participant."

The United States was left out of the cease-fire agreement, reflecting the deterioration of relations between Moscow and the Obama administration after the failure of U.S.-Russian diplomatic efforts to halt the fighting in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria.

Ban Ki-moon buoyed by climate accord but laments conflicts

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Ban Ki-moon ends 10 years at the helm of the United Nations lamenting the "fires still burning" from Syria to South Sudan but buoyed by a global agreement to combat climate change and new U.N. goals to fight poverty and inequality.

As a final act before his term ends at midnight on New Year's Eve, the secretary-general will push the button starting the descent of the glittering 11,875-pound ball in New York's Times Square in the countdown to 2017's arrival. At that moment, former Portuguese prime minister Antonio Guterres will start his tenure as United Nations chief for the next five years.

Looking back at his stewardship of the United Nations at a farewell news conference earlier this month, Ban told reporters "this has been a decade of unceasing test."

While he has seen collective action improve millions of lives, Ban expressed frustration at the failure to end Syria's war, now in its sixth year, and conflicts in South Sudan, Yemen, Central African Republic and Congo, to name a few.

And in rare criticism of world leaders, he blamed unnamed presidents, prime ministers and monarchs for the turmoil in the world today — and expressed disappointment many care more about retaining power than improving their people's lives. He singled out Syria, saying he can't understand why it is being held hostage to "the destiny" of one man, Bashar Assad.

Even after leaving the U.N., Ban said he will keep urging new and longstanding leaders to embrace

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the “pre-eminent 21st century fact” — that “international cooperation remains the path to a more peaceful and prosperous world” — and to demonstrate “compassionate leadership.”

To reinforce this, the secretary-general’s final trip this month was to visit the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. “Lincoln was a heroic force for equality, integration and reconciliation; and desperately, we need that spirit today,” Ban said of the U.S. leader during America’s Civil War.

Ban has also expressed frustration at the way the U.N. operates and expectations in some quarters that the secretary-general has the power “to be some almost almighty person.” That’s impossible, he told the AP in September, because the U.N.’s 193 member states make decisions and the secretary-general implements them. The U.N. chief cannot implement his or her own policies and initiatives.

John Bolton, who was U.S. ambassador to the U.N. when Ban was selected to be secretary-general, said President George W. Bush’s administration supported him because “we wanted someone who would do what the member governments wanted” — and not take the lead on issues and act as the world’s top diplomat like then-secretary-general Kofi Annan.

“I think Ban Ki-moon lived up to our expectations, which is not to say I agreed with every position he took on climate change and things like that,” Bolton told AP.

When the former South Korean foreign minister, who grew up during the Korean War, took over as secretary-general from Annan at the start of 2007, he promised his tenure would be “marked by ceaseless efforts to build bridges and close divides.” And he made tackling global warming, then on a back burner, a top priority.

During his first term, he won plaudits for helping move climate change close to the top of the global agenda, for creating UN Women to focus on the fight for gender equality, and for speaking out early and strongly for demonstrators in Tunisia and other countries that rose up in the Arab Spring.

During his second term, his campaign for a new global climate deal culminated in the December 2015 Paris agreement. He got all 193 member states to agree on 17 new U.N. goals and 169 targets to combat poverty, achieve gender equality, protect the environment and ensure good governance by 2030. He called early on for an end to the Syrian conflict and he strongly backed gay rights despite opposition from many countries.

But Ban also faced criticism — in his first term for not speaking out against human rights abuses in China and Russia. In his second term, the U.N.’s handling of the cholera epidemic in Haiti and its failure to deal effectively with sexual abuse by U.N. peacekeepers in the Central African Republic and elsewhere were widely criticized. Ban’s temporary removal of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen from a U.N. blacklist for allegedly killing children after coalition supporters threatened to stop funding many U.N. programs was sharply rebuked as well.

A workaholic, Ban traveled more than any of his predecessors on U.N. business. He said most Western leaders speak through statements, but he believes face-to-face meetings with world leaders are critical to getting support to end conflicts or promote action on issues like climate change and combatting poverty.

Despite his decade as U.N. chief, Ban Ki-moon is hardly a household name. He has been criticized for his lack of charisma and communication skills crucial in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, though in private and at the off-the-record U.N. Correspondents Association’s annual gala he has regularly displayed a good sense of humor.

France’s U.N. Ambassador Francois Delattre told AP he deeply values Ban’s “sense of humility.”

“The world owes him a lot, both as a man whose commitment to common good is second to none and as a leader whose secret weapon is a genuine respect for others — the best tool for real leadership,”

Delattre said.

When Ban came to the U.N., he had been in the forefront of South Korea's nuclear negotiations with Pyongyang. He said he planned to travel to North Korea as secretary-general, something Annan never did, but he didn't get there.

His hope of using his U.N. position to promote peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula "and a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue" remained unrealized. But after some time off, he will return to South Korea amid widespread speculation he will be a candidate to replace the country's impeached president. If so, North Korea will again be at the top of his agenda.

Obama lines up a meeting with lawmakers, a speech in Chicago

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Eager to stop Republicans from destroying his signature health care law, President Barack Obama and Democratic lawmakers will meet next week to try to forge a common strategy. Obama also plans a major valedictory speech in Chicago, his hometown, shortly before his presidency ends.

Obama will travel to the Capitol on Wednesday morning for the meeting with House and Senate Democrats, according to an invitation sent to lawmakers. The White House is casting it as an effort to unite Democrats behind a plan to protect the law, known as the Affordable Care Act, before Republicans have a chance to settle on their own plan for repealing it.

Democrats are on edge over the future of the ACA, given the GOP's disdain for "Obamacare" and President-elect Donald Trump's vows to gut it. Though Republicans are united behind the notion of repealing the law, they're split over how best to replace it. Some want to strip out unpopular provisions while leaving others intact, while other Republicans prefer a start-from-scratch approach.

It's that lack of unanimity among Republicans that Obama and Democrats hope can be exploited, if they can lay the groundwork even before Trump takes office. To that end, Obama also planned to answer questions about the future of the health care law next Friday during a livestreamed event at Blair House, just across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House.

Initially stunned by the defeat of Hillary Clinton, Democrats are now trying to organize a counter-attack to preserve the ACA, among the most significant expansions of the social safety net since Medicare and Medicaid were created 50 years ago. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi has urged her lawmakers to make health care their focus at the start of the year.

Defenders of the law have also launched a political coalition called "Protect Our Care," bringing together more than 20 groups, including the NAACP and the Service Employees International Union.

One of their objectives is to try to prevent Republicans from repealing the ACA without also enacting a replacement. (Currently Republicans plan to quickly vote on repealing the law, and delay the effective date to give them time to craft a replacement.) Another goal for Democrats is to pre-empt bigger health care changes to Medicare and Medicaid long sought by Republicans.

Since the ACA passed, about 20 million people have gained coverage and the uninsured rate has dropped to a historic low of around 9 percent. Some of the coverage gains are due to employers offering jobs with health care in a stronger economy, but most experts mainly credit Obama's law.

A recent poll suggests that defenders of the law may get a receptive hearing from the public. Only about 1 in 4 Americans want Trump and the GOP-led Congress to completely repeal the ACA, according to a post-election survey by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

"Republicans don't fully appreciate the implications of even a partial repeal of the ACA," said Rob Restuccia, executive director of Community Catalyst, one of the advocacy groups in the coalition trying to preserve the law. "People use the analogy of the dog that caught the car."

Obama's speech in Chicago on Jan. 10 is expected to serve as his closing words to the nation as president. His appearance will be open to the public and followed by a "family reunion" for alumni of Obama's former campaigns, according to a save-the-date notice sent to Obama alumni and obtained by The Associated Press.

The White House has not confirmed Obama's speech or trip to Chicago.

White House Correspondent Julie Pace and Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Trump's praise of Putin could signal a new day for US policy

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Moscow is hoping Donald Trump will reconsider the sanctions the U.S. is levying in response to its finding of election hacking, a wait-and-see strategy bolstered by the American president-elect's own approving words for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin has essentially put relations with the U.S. on hold until Trump replaces President Barack Obama on Jan. 20. Though his foreign minister encouraged him to slap back at Washington for the sanctions imposed by Obama, Putin decided that Russia wouldn't immediately retaliate.

"Great move on delay (by V. Putin)," Trump wrote Friday on Twitter. "I always knew he was very smart!"

Praise for a longtime adversary at odds with a sitting American president is remarkable for a president-elect — and the latest signal that U.S.-Russia relations, among other policies, could be getting a makeover from Trump.

Whether he steers the U.S. toward or away from Russia is shaping up as the first major test of his foreign policy disposition and his willingness to buck fellow Republicans, who for years have argued Obama wasn't being tough enough on Russia.

In response to the election hacking he blames on Russia, Obama ordered sanctions on Russian spy agencies, closed two Russian compounds and expelled 35 diplomats the U.S. said were really spies. Brushing off Obama, Putin said Russia would plan steps to restore U.S. ties "based on the policies that will be carried out by the administration of President D. Trump." Not only would Russia not kick Americans out, Putin said, he was inviting the kids of all U.S. diplomats to the Kremlin's New Year's and Christmas parties.

"At this point, they're trolling Obama," said Olga Oliker, who directs the Russia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Obama administration said it had seen Putin's remarks but had nothing more to say.

Russia denies the U.S. intelligence community's assessment that in an attempt to help Trump win the presidency, Moscow orchestrated cyber breaches in which tens of thousands of Democrats' emails were stolen and later made public. Trump, too, has refused to accept that conclusion and insisted the country should just "move on," though he has agreed to meet next week with intelligence leaders to learn more.

Notably, after the U.S. on Thursday issued a report it said exposed Russia's cyber tactics, Putin's aides didn't offer any specific rebuttal. The report included detailed technical information like IP addresses and samples of malware code the U.S. said Russia uses.

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One utility company, Burlington Electric Department in Vermont, reported Friday that it had detected the malware on a company laptop that was not connected to its grid systems. Burlington said, "We took immediate action to isolate the laptop and alerted federal officials of this finding."

There's little certainty about how Trump will actually act on Russia as president. Though he's praised Putin as a strong leader and said it would be ideal for the two countries to stop fighting, he also suggested this month the U.S. might mount a new nuclear arms race, triggering fresh anxieties about a return to Cold War-style tensions.

Ambassador Michael McFaul, Obama's former envoy to Russia, said while Trump has defined his top objective as "getting along with the Kremlin," Putin has higher goals, including the lifting of economic sanctions and, ideally, U.S. recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

"Obviously, Putin's not responding because he's waiting for Jan. 20," McFaul said in an interview. "He's got these much more important objectives to him than getting into a tit-for-tat response with the outgoing administration."

Trump's warm outreach to Putin, combined with picks for secretary of state and national security adviser who are seen as friendly to Russia, have left hawkish Republicans with a particularly unpleasant choice: look hypocritical for backtracking on their own tough talk, or risk a public rift with their party's new president.

In the House, many Republicans who have long called for tougher sanctions have been silent or vague about Obama's penalties and Trump's positions. But a handful of GOP senators have shown they have no intentions of letting up pressure on the Kremlin.

"We intend to lead the effort in the new Congress to impose stronger sanctions on Russia," Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said in a statement. McCain, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, scheduled a hearing next week on "foreign cyber threats" in an attempt to further spotlight Russia's actions.

Even if Trump opts to pull back Obama's sanctions and overlook hacking allegations, he may find rapprochement with Russia isn't that simple. The past two presidents both tried to reach out to Russia early in their terms but left office with relations in no better shape.

Though Trump has suggested the U.S. and Russia should align strategies in Syria by focusing on their mutual enemy, the Islamic State group, Russia's military campaign has almost exclusively targeted American-backed Syrian rebels, the U.S. has said. Nor is it clear whether Trump and Putin share a common approach to Europe's security issues.

And if Trump follows through on his vow to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal, he won't find a receptive audience in Moscow. Putin's government brokered the deal with the U.S., Iran and other world powers and has no intention of slapping sanctions back on Iran.

Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva and Jim Heintz in Moscow and Lynn Berry in Washington contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

List: Ban 'echo chamber,' 'post-truth,' 'bigly' and 'dadbod'

By JEFF KAROUB, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — You, sir, (or ma'am): Focus, if you will, on a historic, on fleek listicle containing words nominated for bigly banishment. But don't convene a town hall meeting or get your dandruff up in the echo chamber over them.

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Northern Michigan's Lake Superior State University on Saturday released its 42nd annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse and General Uselessness.

The tongue-in-cheek, non-binding list comes from suggestions to the Sault Ste. Marie school. It includes "you, sir," "focus," "town hall meeting," "historic," "echo chamber," "on fleek," "bigly," "listicle" and "get your dandruff up," an apparent substitute for "dander," its hair-and-skin kin.

The others were "Frankenfruit," "bête noire," "guesstimate," "ghost," "dadbod," "selfie drone," "manicured," "post-truth," "disruption" and "831" — a texting encryption of "I love you" (eight letters, three words, one meaning).

The divisive 2016 election influenced nominations, and was reflected in the inclusion of "bigly" and "post-truth."

"Bigly" also made Merriam-Webster's Top 10 for 2016. President-elect Donald Trump was fond this year of saying "big league" but making it sound like "bigly," an archaic adverb or adjective dating to around 1400.

"Post-truth," a term sometimes used to describe the current political climate, is Oxford Dictionaries' word of the year.

John Shibley, Lake Superior State spokesman and list-compiler in chief, said "lots of political vitriol" came in this year, with people wanting to ban "President Trump," "Crooked Hillary" and "Electoral College." Shibley said he "made an editorial decision not to wade into that swamp," — drained or otherwise.

He said all words that made the final list garnered 200-300 votes apiece, and the top vote-getter was "echo chamber," with more than 500 submissions.

Overall, the university received submissions from about 8,000 people and maintains an archive of more than 850 words.

Another Michigan school takes the opposite approach: Detroit's Wayne State University attempts through its Word Warriors campaign to exhume worthy words that have fallen out of favor. This year's list included "absquatulate," which means to discreetly and abruptly leave a place, such as a gathering or party, without informing the host. That's an old-school analog to "ghost" on the banished words list.

Follow Jeff Karoub on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/jeffkaroub> . His work can be found at <http://big-story.ap.org/author/jeff-karoub> .

Online:

<http://www.lssu.edu/banished/>

Mexican man charged with rape had 19 deportations, removals

By ROXANA HEGEMAN, Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — A Mexican man accused of raping a 13-year-old girl on a Greyhound bus that traveled through Kansas had been deported 10 times and voluntarily removed from the U.S. another nine times since 2003, records obtained by The Associated Press show.

Three U.S. Republican senators — including Kansas' Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts — demanded this month that the Department of Homeland Security provide immigration records for 38-year-old Tomas Martinez-Maldonado, who is charged with a felony in the alleged Sept. 27 attack aboard a bus in Geary County. He is being held in the Geary County jail in Junction City, which is about 120 miles west of Kansas City.

U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley, from Iowa and chairman of the judiciary committee, co-signed a Dec. 9 letter with Moran and Roberts to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, calling it "an extremely dis-

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turbing case" and questioning how Martinez-Maldonado was able to re-enter and remain in the country.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it has placed a detainer — a request to turn Martinez-Maldonado over to ICE custody before he is released — with Geary County. ICE declined to discuss his specific case beyond its October statement regarding the 10 deportations.

Court filings show Martinez-Maldonado has two misdemeanor convictions for entering without legal permission in cases prosecuted in 2013 and 2015 in U.S. District Court of Arizona, where he was sentenced to serve 60 days and 165 days respectively.

A status hearing in the rape case is scheduled for Jan. 10. Defense attorney Lisa Hamer declined to comment on the charge, but said, "criminal law and immigration definitely intersect and nowadays it should be the responsibility of every criminal defense attorney to know the possible ramifications in the immigration courts."

Nationwide, 52 percent of all federal prosecutions in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30 were for entry or re-entry without legal permission and similar immigration violations, according to Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University.

It's not unusual to see immigrants with multiple entries without legal permission, said David Trevino, a Topeka immigration attorney who has provided legal advice to Martinez-Maldonado's family. Most of Martinez-Maldonado's family lives in Mexico, but he also has family in the United States, and the family is "devastated," Trevino said.

"(President-elect Donald Trump) can build a wall 100 feet high and 50 feet deep, but it is not going to keep family members separated. So if someone is deported and they have family members here ... they will find a way back — whether it is through the air, under a wall, through the coast of the United States," Trevino said.

He declined to comment on Martinez-Maldonado's criminal history and pending charge.

Records obtained by AP show Martinez-Maldonado had eight voluntary removals before his first deportation in 2010, which was followed by another voluntary removal that same year. He was deported five more times between 2011 and 2013.

In 2013, Martinez-Maldonado was charged with entering without legal permission, a misdemeanor, and subsequently deported in early 2014 after serving his sentence. He was deported again a few months later, as well as twice in 2015 — including the last one in October 2015 after he had served his second sentence, the records show.

ICE said in an emailed statement that when it encounters a person who's been deported multiple times or has a significant criminal history and was removed, it routinely presents those cases to the U.S. attorney's office for possible criminal charges.

Cosme Lopez, spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Arizona, declined comment on why prosecutors twice dismissed felony re-entry after deportation charges against Martinez-Maldonado in 2013 and 2015 in exchange for guilty pleas on misdemeanor entry charges.

Arizona ranks third in the nation — behind only the Southern District of Texas and the Western District of Texas — for the number of immigration prosecutions among the nation's 94 federal judicial districts for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse records show.

Moran told the AP in an email that the immigration system is "broken."

"There must be serious legislative efforts to address U.S. immigration policy, and we must have the ability to identify, prosecute and deport illegal aliens who display violent tendencies before they have an opportunity to perpetrate these crimes in the United States," he said.

This version of the story corrects Trevino's relationship to Martinez-Maldonado.

Vermont utility finds malware code attributed to Russians

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP) — A state electric utility confirmed on Friday it had found on one of its laptops a malware code the U.S. government says is used by Russian hackers.

The Burlington Electric Department said U.S. utilities were alerted by the Department of Homeland Security on Thursday of a malware code used in Grizzly Steppe, the name Homeland Security has applied to a Russian campaign linked to recent hacks.

Burlington Electric, which is municipally owned, said it detected the malware in a laptop not connected to its grid systems. It said it took "immediate action to isolate the laptop and alerted federal officials."

"Our team is working with federal officials to trace this malware and prevent any other attempts to infiltrate utility systems," it said in an emailed statement.

It said it had briefed state officials and would fully support an investigation into the potential Russian hack. Russia, which has been accused of interfering in the U.S. presidential election by hacking American political sites and email accounts, has denied hacking U.S. systems.

Democratic Gov. Peter Shumlin said his administration had been in touch with the federal government and the state's utilities.

"Vermonters and all Americans should be both alarmed and outraged that one of the world's leading thugs, (Russian President) Vladimir Putin, has been attempting to hack our electric grid, which we rely upon to support our quality-of-life, economy, health, and safety," he said in a statement.

He said the hacking episode should highlight the urgent need for the federal government to "vigorously pursue and put an end to this sort of Russian meddling."

Burlington Electric, which says it's "at the forefront of the green energy revolution," is one of the state's two largest electric utilities. The other, Colchester-based Green Mountain Power, said its systems were secure.

"Our teams have done a complete systems check and found no security concerns," it said.

Green Mountain Power, which serves about 265,000 residential and business customers, said it recently was thoroughly reviewed for safety by Homeland Security. It said it would continue to rigorously monitor its systems and "remain vigilant."

Syria's cease-fire holding despite minor violations

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **SUZAN FRASER**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A nationwide Syrian cease-fire brokered by Russia and Turkey that went into effect at midnight held Friday despite minor violations, marking a potential breakthrough in a conflict that has disregarded high-level peace initiatives for over five years.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported clashes early Friday between troops and rebels in the central province of Hama and near the capital, Damascus. It said that later in the day a man was killed by sniper fire in eastern suburbs of Damascus, becoming the first fatality since the truce went into effect. The group also reported an aerial attack on the rebel-held Barada Valley near Damascus.

The Syrian army denied reports it was bombarding the Barada Valley region saying opposition claims aim to show that the army is not abiding by the truce.

Opposition activist Mazen al-Shami, who is based in the Damascus suburb of Douma, said minor clashes nearby left one rebel wounded. Activist Ahmad al-Masalmeh, in the southern Daraa province, said government forces had opened fire on rebel-held areas.

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Several past attempts at halting the fighting have failed. As with previous agreements, the current cease-fire excludes both the al-Qaida-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front, which fights alongside other rebel factions, and the Islamic State group.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that the cease-fire will be guaranteed by both Moscow and Turkey, and the agreement has been welcomed by Iran. Moscow and Tehran provide crucial military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Turkey has long served as a rear base and source of supplies for the rebels.

If it holds, the truce between the Syrian government and the country's mainstream rebel forces will be followed by peace talks next month in Kazakhstan, Putin said in announcing the agreement. He described it, however, as "quite fragile" and requiring "special attention and patience."

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called the cease-fire a "major achievement" in a tweet Friday. "Let's build on it by tackling the roots of extremist terror," he added.

Russia said the deal was signed by seven of Syria's major rebel factions, though none of them immediately confirmed it, and one denied signing it.

At U.N. headquarters in New York, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin circulated a draft resolution that would endorse the cease-fire agreement and the Security Council scheduled a vote on it for Saturday.

U.N. humanitarian chief Stephen O'Brien urged the Syrian government in an interview with The Associated Press to give the green light for the United Nations to deliver aid to thousands in need in the war-ravaged country and ensure aid workers' safety.

He called the cessation of hostilities "extremely welcome" and said "incessant and relentless contacts are going on" with the government, but so far there has been no positive response.

Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the U.N. Special Envoy for Syria, told AP the U.N. especially wants to get aid to the 15 besieged areas where some 700,000 people live, but it needs security guarantees from all sides "and we're not given them."

"The reports I have from the field is that there is a decrease, a marked decrease in fighting, in bombing, in violence, compared to yesterday. But certainly there's been a number of violations," he said.

"January needs to be really different," Egeland stressed. "If not — there will be starvation, there will be untold, unnecessary deaths."

The truce came on the heels of a Russian-Turkish agreement earlier this month to evacuate the last rebels from eastern Aleppo after they were confined to a tiny enclave by a government offensive. The retaking of all of Aleppo marked Assad's greatest victory since the start of the 2011 uprising against his family's four-decade rule.

"The defeat of the terrorists in Aleppo is an important step toward ending the war," Assad said in an interview with TG5, an Italian TV station, adding that the capture of the city does not mean that the war has ended because "terrorists" are still in Syria.

The United States was left out of both agreements, reflecting the deterioration of relations between Moscow and Washington after the failure of previous diplomatic efforts on Syria.

Assad told TG5 "we are more optimistic, with caution," about the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump, who has suggested greater cooperation with Russia against extremist groups.

"We can say part of the optimism could be related to better relation between the United States and Russia," Assad said, speaking in English.

"Mr. Trump, during his campaign - (said) that his priority is fighting terrorism, and we believe that this is the beginning of the solution, if he can implement what he announced," Assad said in the interview,

which was apparently filmed before the cease-fire was announced.

Asked about the possibility of the United States' participation in the peace process in Kazakhstan, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the process would "be open to everyone."

"I hope that this cease-fire holds and turns into a lasting peace so that the deaths of more innocent people, of civilians and children is halted and 2017 brings calm," Yildirim said.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency meanwhile quoted the military as saying Russia carried out three airstrikes against Islamic State targets near the northern town of al-Bab, where Turkish troops and allied Syrian opposition forces have been battling the extremist group. The strikes indicated that Russia and Turkey may work together to combat IS once the fighting elsewhere in Syria has been halted.

Turkish Foreign Mevlut Cavusoglu Minister said the U.S.-led coalition forces resumed aerial operations around al-Bab on Thursday, after Turkey complained that it was not getting support from its allies in its fight against IS there.

The Turkish military statement quoted by Anadolu did not say when the Russian air strikes took place, but said they killed 12 IS militants.

Separately, 26 IS militants, including some senior commanders, were killed in Turkish airstrikes on al-Bab and the Daglabash region, and some 17 IS targets were destroyed, Anadolu reported. It said a Turkish soldier was killed in a IS attack on troops south of the al-Azrak area.

It said among those killed was an IS commander known as Abu Hussein al-Tunsi.

Turkey sent troops and tanks into northern Syria in August to help opposition forces clear a border area of IS militants and curb the advances of U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters, who are also battling the extremist group.

Fraser reported from Ankara, Turkey. Associated Press video journalist Samira Becirovic in London and Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Russia, brushing off Obama, looks to friendlier Donald Trump

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Stung by new punishments, Russia is looking straight past President Barack Obama to Donald Trump in hopes the president-elect will reverse the tough U.S. stance toward Moscow of the last eight years. In a stunning embrace of a longtime U.S. adversary, Trump is siding with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Whether Trump steers the U.S. toward or away from Russia upon taking office is shaping up as the first major test of his foreign policy disposition and his willingness to buck fellow Republicans, who for years have argued Obama wasn't tough enough. Now that Obama has finally sanctioned Russia over hacking allegations, Putin has essentially put relations on hold till Trump takes over.

"Great move on delay (by V. Putin)," Trump wrote Friday on Twitter. "I always knew he was very smart!"

He was referring to Putin's announcement that Russia won't immediately retaliate after Obama ordered sanctions on Russian spy agencies, closed two Russian compounds and expelled 35 diplomats the U.S. said were really spies. Though Putin reserved the right to hit back later, he suggested that won't be necessary with Trump in office.

Brushing off Obama, Putin said Russia would plan steps to restore U.S. ties "based on the policies that will be carried out by the administration of President D. Trump." Not only would Russia not kick Americans out, Putin said, he was inviting the kids of all U.S. diplomats to the Kremlin's New Year's and Christmas parties.

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"At this point, they're trolling Obama," said Olga Oliker, who directs the Russia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Obama administration said it had seen Putin's remarks but had nothing more to say.

Trump's move to side with a foreign adversary over the sitting U.S. president was a striking departure from typical diplomatic practice. In a sign he wanted maximum publicity, Trump pinned the tweet to the top of his Twitter page so it would remain there indefinitely.

Russia denies the U.S. intelligence community's assessment that in an attempt to help Trump win the presidency, Moscow orchestrated cyber breaches in which tens of thousands of Democrats' emails were stolen and later made public. Trump, too, has refused to accept that conclusion and insisted the country should just "move on," though he has agreed to meet next week with intelligence leaders to learn more.

Notably, after the U.S. on Thursday issued a report it said exposed Russia's cyber tactics, Putin's aides didn't offer any specific rebuttal. The report included detailed technical information like IP addresses and samples of malware code the U.S. said Russia uses.

One utility company, Burlington Electric Department in Vermont, reported Friday that it had detected the malware on a company laptop that was not connected to its grid systems. Burlington said, "We took immediate action to isolate the laptop and alerted federal officials of this finding."

There's little certainty about how Trump will actually act on Russia once he takes office Jan. 20. Though he's praised Putin as a strong leader and said it would be ideal for the two countries to stop fighting, he also suggested this month the U.S. might mount a new nuclear arms race, triggering fresh anxieties about a return to Cold War-style tensions.

Ambassador Michael McFaul, Obama's former envoy to Russia, said while Trump has defined his top objective as "getting along with the Kremlin," Putin has higher goals, including the lifting of economic sanctions and, ideally, U.S. recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

"Obviously, Putin's not responding because he's waiting for Jan. 20," McFaul said in an interview. "He's got these much more important objectives to him than getting into a tit-for-tat response with the outgoing administration."

Trump's warm outreach to Putin, combined with picks for secretary of state and national security adviser who are seen as friendly to Russia, have left hawkish Republicans with a particularly unpleasant choice: look hypocritical for backtracking on their own tough talk, or risk a public rift with their party's new president.

In the House, many Republicans who have long called for tougher sanctions have been silent or vague about Obama's penalties and Trump's positions. But a handful of GOP senators have shown they have no intentions of letting up pressure on the Kremlin.

"We intend to lead the effort in the new Congress to impose stronger sanctions on Russia," said Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. McCain, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, scheduled a hearing next week on "foreign cyber threats" in an attempt to further spotlight Russia's actions.

Even if Trump opts to pull back Obama's sanctions and overlook hacking allegations, he may find rapprochement with Russia isn't that simple. The past two presidents both tried to reach out to Russia early in their terms but left office with relations in no better shape.

Though Trump has suggested the U.S. and Russia should align strategies in Syria by focusing on their mutual enemy, the Islamic State group, Russia's military campaign has almost exclusively targeted American-backed Syrian rebels, the U.S. has said. Nor is it clear whether Trump and Putin share a common approach to Europe's security issues.

And if Trump follows through on his vow to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal, he won't find a receptive audience in Moscow. Putin's government brokered the deal with the U.S., Iran and other world powers and has no intention of slapping sanctions back on Iran.

Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva and Jim Heintz in Moscow and Lynn Berry in Washington contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

UN Security Council to vote Saturday on Syria cease-fire

By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council scheduled a vote for Saturday on a resolution that would endorse the cease-fire agreement in Syria brokered by Russia and Turkey, and reiterate support for a roadmap to peace that starts with a transitional government.

The Russian-sponsored resolution also calls for "rapid, safe and unhindered" access to deliver humanitarian aid throughout the country. And it looks forward to a meeting in late January between the Syrian government and opposition in Kazakhstan's capital Astana "as an important part of the Syrian-led political process facilitated by the United Nations."

Russia and Turkey are on opposing sides of the Syrian conflict: Moscow along with Iran provides crucial military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Turkey has long served as a rear base and source of supplies for the rebels.

Divisions in the Security Council between Russia and the veto-wielding Western powers — the U.S. Britain and France who support the moderate opposition and demand that Assad steps down — have blocked action to end the war, now in its sixth year.

Russia and Turkey sent the cease-fire agreement and the draft resolution to Security Council members Thursday night. After closed discussions in the council Friday morning, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin circulated a revised draft, urged council members to support it, and called for a vote on Saturday.

The Security Council needs to participate "in this important process," Churkin said.

The council is scheduled to meet at 11 a.m. EST. Russia's U.N. Mission said members would hold closed consultations and then vote.

The cease-fire agreement, if it holds, would mark a potential breakthrough in a conflict that began in 2011 with an uprising against decades of rule by President Bashar Assad's family and has left over 250,000 dead and more than 13.5 million people in need of urgent assistance, and triggered a refugee crisis across Europe.

The draft resolution reiterates "that the only sustainable solution to the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva communique of June 30, 2012," which was endorsed by the Security Council.

The communique, adopted by key nations, calls for the formation of a transitional government with full executive powers "on the basis of mutual consent" and steps leading to elections.

Churkin told reporters "there is no competition" between the talks in Astana and negotiations that the U.N. special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, hopes to arrange between the government and opposition in Geneva on Feb. 8.

"As you know Staffan de Mistura had trouble reconvening the talks, so Russia and Turkey obviously

decided to give the United Nations a hand in pushing things forward, and this is what we see happening," Churkin told reporters.

He said de Mistura has been in contact with the Russian government and "indicated his eagerness to help organize the Astana meetings. ... So we expect the United Nations to be fully involved in the preparations of the meetings."

Churkin said Russia's understanding is that seven major rebel groups have joined in the cease-fire, representing 60,000 fighters, "and they control a large chunk of the territory of Syria."

As with previous failed cease-fire attempts, the current agreement excludes both the al-Qaida-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front, which fights alongside other rebel factions, and the Islamic State group.

If the Astana meetings are successful, Churkin said, "they could move on to Geneva as far as I am concerned, so we don't see any competition there or overlapping of the two processes."

Churkin said Russia and Turkey have made clear they want other countries to participate in the Astana meetings.

He said Iran will definitely participate "actively" in preparing the Astana meeting and in Russia's view Egypt can also join the preparatory process right now.

Churkin said there are other very important players who are welcome including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar — and "we do expect the Trump administration after it comes into the White House on Jan. 20 will be an important participant."

The United States was left out of the cease-fire agreement, reflecting the deterioration of relations between Moscow and the Obama administration after the failure of U.S.-Russian diplomatic efforts to halt the fighting in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria.

Coast Guard suspends search for missing plane with 6 onboard

By MARK GILLISPIE, Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — The U.S. Coast Guard on Friday suspended its search for an airplane that was carrying a beverage distribution company executive and five other people when it vanished over Lake Erie shortly after takeoff from the city's lakeshore airport.

The Coast Guard said it would step aside to allow Cleveland to begin recovery efforts of the plane and the victims.

"The decision to suspend a search is never easy," Capt. Michael Mullen, chief of response for the Coast Guard 9th District, said in a statement. "I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of those who lost loved ones during this tragedy."

John T. Fleming, the chief executive of a Columbus-based beverage distribution company, was piloting the plane, which was carrying his wife, Sue Fleming, their teenage sons, Jack and Andrew, a neighbor and the neighbor's daughter. The plane suddenly lost altitude about 2 miles out during a scheduled return trip to Columbus, according to a flight-tracking service.

The Coast Guard began searching the air after being notified soon after the plane's disappearance. High waves and blustery conditions prevented smaller Coast Guard boats from the Cleveland area from deploying Thursday night. A 140-foot Coast Guard cutter joined a search that covered 128 square miles of the lake on Friday.

Mullen had held out the possibility of finding survivors Friday morning despite water temperatures that hovered around 40 degrees. But when asked if the twin-engine corporate jet could land safely on Lake Erie, he said, "Aircraft are not designed to float, especially in 12-foot seas."

Tracking service FlightAware logged only three location pings for the plane after takeoff from Burke Lakefront Airport, and the last one indicated rapid altitude loss. Authorities have said there were no distress signals from the pilot.

The aircraft took off westward from Burke, then turned north across the lake, according to the tracking service flightradar24.com. The departure procedure at Burke could take an aircraft over the lake before turning south toward a destination, Mullen said.

The plane, which had made the roughly half-hour trip from Columbus earlier in the day, was registered to a limited liability company under the same Columbus address as Superior Beverage Group, the company where Fleming was president and CEO.

Authorities detected "faint hints" but no strong pulse from an emergency locating transmitter, a beacon that could help searchers find the plane, Mullen said. No signs of debris were found.

The search overnight was made difficult by snow squalls, high seas and darkness, Mullen said. It would have been the pilot's responsibility to determine whether it was safe to fly Thursday night, he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said the Cessna Citation 525 plane left Burke at 10:50 p.m., and the Coast Guard said it was notified about the missing plane by air traffic control at Burke about 30 minutes later.

An FAA spokeswoman declined to comment on Friday. A spokesman for the National Transportation Safety Board said investigators would be sent to Cleveland after the aircraft is recovered.

The aircraft was headed to Ohio State University Airport, northwest of downtown Columbus.

Associated Press writers Kantele Franko in Columbus and David Koenig in Dallas contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show the missing jet has two engines, not one.

Obama's spat with Moscow is latest in long line

By ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. relations with Moscow during and after the Cold War have been marred by diplomatic dustups ranging from espionage scandals to an Olympics boycott.

Current tensions, highlighted by President Barack Obama's decision to impose sanctions and expel 35 Russia diplomats, are exceptional because they stem from U.S. allegations of Russian cyber meddling in the presidential election and because they are playing out during a White House transition. They also coincide with a collapse of military-to-military relations and nervousness in Europe over Russia's annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine.

Some of the more significant episodes of the past three decades:

— MAY 2013: A U.S. diplomat was expelled after the Kremlin's security services said he tried to recruit a Russian agent, and they displayed tradecraft tools that seemed straight from a spy thriller: wigs, packets of cash, a knife, map and compass, and a letter promising millions for "long-term cooperation." The FSB, the successor agency to the Soviet-era KGB, identified the diplomat as Ryan Fogle, a third secretary at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. The Fogle case was a reminder that years after the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia and the United States still spy on each other and maintain active counterespionage operations.

— DECEMBER 2012: President Vladimir Putin signed into law a ban on adoptions of Russian children by American citizens. The ban was a blow to U.S.-Russian diplomatic relations and was imposed in response to Russian accusations of abuses of adopted Russian children in the United States. It was included in a broader Russian law retaliating for U.S. passage of the Magnitsky Act, an effort to punish Russian human rights violators.

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— JULY 2010: In the biggest spy swap since the Cold War, 10 confessed Russian agents who infiltrated suburban America as “sleeper” agents were ordered deported in exchange for four people convicted of betraying Moscow to the West. The agents, many speaking in heavy Russian accents despite having spent years in the U.S., pleaded guilty to conspiracy, were sentenced to time served and were ordered out of the country. The 10 were accused of embedding themselves in ordinary American life while leading double lives complete with false passports, secret code words, fake names, and encrypted radio.

— FEBRUARY 2001: A veteran FBI counterintelligence agent, Robert P. Hanssen, was arrested and charged with committing espionage for Russia and the former Soviet Union by providing highly classified national security information to intelligence officers assigned to the Soviet embassy in Washington. In the aftermath, the U.S. expelled 50 Russian diplomats. The FBI has called Hanssen the most damaging spy in the bureau’s history.

— FEBRUARY 1994: The U.S. expelled Russian senior intelligence officer Alexander Lysenko, saying he was in a position to be responsible for the spying of CIA agent Aldrich Ames. This was just days after Ames and his wife, Rosario, were arrested on charges of selling secrets to Moscow from at least 1985 to 1993. Even in expelling Lysenko, the administration of President Bill Clinton softened the blow by emphasizing the importance of strong ties with Russia and the continuation of reforms under Boris Yeltsin, who was seen as key to Russia’s move toward democracy.

— OCTOBER 1986: In one of the more memorable tit-for-tat expulsions for alleged espionage activities, President Ronald Reagan ordered 55 Soviet diplomats in Washington and San Francisco to leave the U.S., shortly after expelling 25 others from the Soviet mission to the United Nations. The Soviets retaliated each time, kicking out American diplomats and announcing that the U.S. missions in Moscow and Leningrad could no longer employ Soviet workers.

— MARCH 1980: In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, President Jimmy Carter announced the United States would boycott the Summer Olympic Games scheduled to be held in Moscow. He acted when the Soviets refused to comply with Carter’s ultimatum for the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan by February. The Soviets retaliated by leading a communist-bloc boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games held in Los Angeles. The Soviet army did not leave Afghanistan until 1989.

Associated Press writer Lynn Berry in Washington and AP investigative researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

‘Turbocharged’ storm clobbers northern New England with snow

By DAVID SHARP, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The most powerful nor’easter in nearly two years brought heavy snow, powerful winds and even thunder and lightning to northern New England, leaving tens of thousands of people in the dark Friday and burying some towns under 2 feet of snow.

More than 100,000 homes and businesses in Maine were without electricity at the storm’s peak, and residents were warned that it could take days to restore service. The National Weather Service received reports of snow falling at up to 6 inches per hour.

“It went from just a garden-variety, low-pressure system to a turbocharged storm,” meteorologist Eric Schwibs said.

In Brunswick, resident Jason Weymouth went to bed with a sense of dread as powerful thunderclaps accompanied the falling snow.

“It hit over the house, and it was pretty loud and very strong and very unusual. That set me a little

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bit on edge," he said.

By Friday morning, he was among the thousands of Maine residents without power. Compounding his misery: His snowblower was unable to cope with the heavy snow and his wood-carving shop was knocked offline for the day.

The storm's fury walloped some places and skipped others as powerful bands of snow buried some communities while others just miles away received mostly rain.

Hundreds of cars slid off roads from the beginning of the storm on Thursday through Friday morning, when the sun appeared. In Vermont, a 69-year-old man was killed in Cornwall when his car went off the road in slippery conditions Thursday and crashed into a tree, state police said.

In Maine, the storm was believed to have contributed to a fatal fire in the town of Pownal. The victim's power had gone out, and investigators suspect he was using an alternative heat source when he died early Friday.

The heavy snow knocked down power lines and tree limbs. In Orono, the domed structure used by student-athletes at the University of Maine athletic complex collapsed under the weight.

Southern and western Maine turned out to be in the storm's bull's-eye, but the storm played a game of hopscotch, pummeling some communities with snow while leaving others just miles away drenched in rain.

In Cumberland County, Portland received 7.7 inches of snow while Standish was buried under 27 inches of snow, Schwibs said.

Other big snow totals in Maine included 27 inches in Naples, 25 inches in Parsonsfield and 22.7 inches in Hollis. Snow in New Hampshire peaked at around 17 inches in several towns near the Maine border.

New Hampshire and Vermont were largely spared significant damage and power outages. The power company Eversource said about 11,000 New Hampshire homes lost power, but most was restored by Friday morning.

The nor'easter's barometric pressure reading was expected to close in on readings from a crippling storm on Valentine's Day 2014, a storm that canceled flights, knocked out power and claimed more than two dozen lives on the East Coast.

Because of the power outage Friday, the National Weather Service couldn't immediately provide a comparison of the two storms.

More snow was forecast for New Year's Eve, providing incentive for people to get busy cleaning up before more snow began falling.

Portland resident Richard Haynes found out the hard way that the icy conditions were hazardous. He slipped Thursday night and ended up in the emergency room. But that didn't keep him from digging out Friday.

"It caught us off-guard," he said Friday as he shoveled snow. "I almost broke my back, had to get it checked at the hospital before I started shoveling."

Associated Press writers Kathleen Ronayne in Concord, New Hampshire, and Marina Villeneuve in Portland, Maine, contributed to this report.

Tennis, sailing or spying? US shuts 2 Russian compounds

By BRIAN WITTE and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

CENTREVILLE, Md. (AP) — Two luxury retreats in New York and Maryland where Russian diplomats have gone for decades to play tennis, sail and swim were shut down by the Obama administration Fri-

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day in retaliation for Moscow's cyber-meddling in the presidential election.

The U.S. said the two Cold War-era estates were being used for intelligence activities.

About a half-hour before the noon eviction deadline, caravans of diplomatic vehicles, some carrying boxes, left both Russian compounds under the watch of U.S. State Department agents.

The 45-acre Maryland retreat boasts a brick mansion along the Corsica River in the bucolic Eastern Shore region. It was bought by the Soviet Union in 1972 and served as a getaway for its diplomats in nearby Washington.

In New York, Russian diplomatic staff members were evicted from a mansion on Long Island's Gold Coast. The estate, once called Elmcroft, is in the town of Oyster Bay and was purchased by the Soviets in 1952.

Russian U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told reporters at U.N. headquarters that the Obama administration is destroying holiday fun for the children of Russian diplomats who vacation at the two retreats during their New Year's break.

"I think it's quite scandalous that they chose to go after our kids," Churkin said. He added: "Here go their family values."

President Barack Obama announced the shutdown Thursday as part of a raft of sanctions that included the expulsion of 35 Russians who the U.S. said were spies operating under diplomatic cover.

Neighbors of both compounds described generally friendly relations with the diplomats and their families.

"We coexist with these people peacefully," said Alison Davis, who lives near the Maryland retreat. "It's basically their summer cottage, but we see the diplomat tags driving here all the time, very friendly. We see them biking, say hello."

Still, she said, "They kind of keep to themselves."

She said the compound has a private beach and was typically used for a sailing regatta during the end-of-summer Labor Day weekend.

An Associated Press story from 1992 said the compound had four tennis courts, a swimming pool and a soccer field. A camp was held there for Russian children during the summer and for two weeks each Christmas.

The story said that the brick mansion had been converted into 12 apartments and a dozen cottages, each with four apartments, and that the compound could accommodate 40 families at a time.

Russia maintains two weekend retreats for its U.N. diplomats about an hour's drive outside New York City, where the United Nations has its high-rise headquarters.

One of them, Elmcroft, was built on a part of Long Island made famous in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel "The Great Gatsby."

Its main house originally had 27 rooms and 11 baths and was constructed for an executive at a Brooklyn company that made heavy machinery and torpedoes. Later it became the home of a former New York governor, Nathan Miller.

Satellite photography shows that the grounds today include a tennis court, gardens, a soccer field and another large, modern building.

Penny Hallman, 68, whose home abuts the estate, called the diplomats "wonderful neighbors."

"They brought a bottle of vodka and chocolates to wish us a Merry Christmas," she said. "It's mostly a social club, a vacation spot."

A short drive away, Russian diplomats stay at another grand Gold Coast estate, the Killenworth mansion, not far from the city of Glen Cove. It, too, was bought during the Cold War. Glen Cove Mayor Reggie Spinello said Friday that Killenworth was not being closed down by the government.

Both Long Island properties were the subject of long-running property-tax battles between the Rus-

sian government and local officials. Those disputes have been resolved, and for years Oyster Bay has waived parking and beach fees for Russia's U.N. diplomats as a goodwill gesture.

Balsamo reported from Oyster Bay, New York. Associated Press writers Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Juliet Linderman in Baltimore contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to fix the wording of the quote from Russia's U.N. ambassador.

Cubs, Cavs douse droughts, cleanse curses with 2016 titles

By TOM WITHERS, AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — They hugged, danced and cried while waving those 'W' flags like never before after an inconceivable win — 108 years of pent-up emotion released.

But after the wait and surviving an epic, ulcer-inducing Game 7, Chicago Cubs fans — relatives spanning generations, college pals and life-long friends who came to Cleveland hoping to share history — weren't about to leave.

Someone was going to have to kick them out.

As thousands swarmed around Chicago's dugout like ants climbing a hill more than an hour after their cherished Cubbies won the World Series for the first time since 1908 by capping a colossal comeback with an 8-7 win over the Indians, the skies opened over Progressive Field.

And what began as a sprinkle turned into a hard, cooling November rain, soaking the delirious fans so caught up in the joyful celebration that they couldn't possibly appreciate the downpour's symbolism.

The drought was doused, the curse cleansed.

In 2016, sports misery changed addresses.

From Chicago to Cleveland and across the Atlantic to England, where 5,000-to-1 longshot Leicester City stunned the soccer world by winning the Premier League for its first title in 132 years, cities and teams who had suffered for decades finally finished on top.

"2016, it was a magical ride," said Cavaliers superstar LeBron James, who guided his team to an NBA title — the first for one of the city's three major sports teams since the Browns, who were on the verge of a winless season until a few days ago, ruled the NFL in 1964. And if not for the Cubs, Cleveland would have chugged more champagne.

There were a few others who ended long dry-spells:

— Villanova won its first NCAA title in 31 years when Kris Jenkins drained a 3-pointer at the horn to beat North Carolina, giving the Wildcats a championship nearly as stunning as when Rollie Massimino's team barely missed against mighty Georgetown.

— Army stopped 14 years of frustration with a 21-17 win over Navy as the next commander in chief watched from the stands.

— Down under, the Western Bulldogs, playing in their first Grand Final since 1961, ended a 64-year gap between Australian Football League titles with a win over Great Western Sydney.

All remarkable, the Cubs' victory, though, felt otherworldly.

Wait 'til next year? Yeah, someplace else.

Those lovable losers who for more than a century blamed their failures on a goat, a black cat and fan Steve Bartman for interfering with a foul ball, the Cubs rallied from a 3-1 deficit to beat the Indians, whose 68-year gap between titles is now baseball's longest. Chicago's feel-good victory was one for the downtrodden everywhere, except that it was difficult to see them as true underdogs given their \$116

million payroll and collection of young stars sprinkled around the diamond.

Still, they captured America's heart.

Manager Joe Maddon made his players believe they could do it, convincing them to focus on each other and the present, and not to buy into external forces — real or imagined.

"It has nothing to do with curses, superstition," he said. "If you want to believe in that kind of stuff, it's going to hold you back for a long time. I love tradition. I think tradition is worth time mentally, and tradition is worth being upheld, but curses and superstitions are not."

That's how they feel in Believeland, Ohio. Cleveland rocked like never before in '16.

Behind James, who had promised to bring home a title, the Cavaliers climbed from a 3-1 hole and shocked 73-win Golden State in the NBA Finals. And, like the Cubs, the Cavs won Game 7 on the road and returned as conquering heroes to northeast Ohio, which hadn't witnessed a major championship since 1964 and where the nicknames of the miscues, collapses and second-place finishes were passed down through generations like family heirlooms.

James ended the city's sports despair with a triple-double and chase-down block in the closing minutes of Game 7, a defensive gem that preceded a 3-pointer by Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love's defense on Stephen Curry in the closing seconds.

The Block, The Shot and The Stop are the newest entries in Cleveland's sports lexicon.

While the Cubs and Cavs vanquished long odds, Leicester City did the impossible.

There may not be a comparable championship in sports history to this football fairy-tale.

The Foxes weren't even in the Premiere League two years back, and then almost dropped out before climbing past perennial powers like Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United and Manchester City for their unexpected title. They were at their best in close games, getting 13 wins and nine ties in matches decided by one goal or fewer.

"Nobody believed we could do it, but here we are," captain Wes Morgan said.

They weren't the only ones saying that in 2016.

Firefighters rescue dog that fell through ice into lake

WHITEHALL, Mich. (AP) — Three Michigan firefighters used rope and their wits to rescue a 90-pound retriever that fell through the ice about 100 yards from shore on a western Michigan lake.

Wearing ice rescue gear and tethered together, they carefully walked onto White Lake in Muskegon County's Whitehall and hauled the dog to safety.

White Lake Fire Chief Gregory Holman said the dog was unable to drag itself from the hole in the ice and was in distress when firefighters reached it Wednesday morning.

Holman said his firefighters will do their "best to rescue" a "family pet, like a dog."

The 14-year-old dog was given to an area shelter and its owner was later located. Shelter owner Lana Carson said the dog "kind of wandered off and found itself on the ice."

More tests needed to establish George Michael cause of death

LONDON (AP) — Police say an initial autopsy of George Michael has been "inconclusive" and more tests must be carried out to establish a cause of death.

Thames Valley Police said Friday the results of further tests will not be known for several weeks.

Michael's death on Christmas Day is being treated as "unexplained but not suspicious." This is an indication that police found no evidence of foul play.

The 53-year-old's manager said the singer died of apparent heart failure at his country home.

The post-mortem examination was conducted Thursday.

Putin says Russia won't oust US diplomats in hacking flap

MOSCOW (AP) — President Vladimir Putin has condemned a new round of U.S. sanctions against Russia but said Moscow will not retaliate by expelling American diplomats.

U.S. President Barack Obama on Thursday imposed sanctions on Russian officials and intelligence services in retaliation for Russia's interference in the U.S. presidential election by hacking American political sites and email accounts. 35 Russian diplomats were ordered to leave the U.S. in 72 hours and two facilities closed.

Putin, in a statement the Kremlin's web-site on Friday, referred the new sanctions as a "provocation aimed to further undermine Russian-American relations."

But he said Russia would not be expelling American diplomats in retaliation like the Russian foreign ministry earlier suggested.

Family reflects on 10-year anniversary of Williams' death

By PAT GRAHAM, AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — The teenager glances at the picture in his room of Darrent Williams returning a kick, reading the inscription he long ago memorized.

"To my wonderful son, Darius, daddy will always love you. Keep doing good in school, in sports. When you think of me, and I'm not there, look at this picture."

And so the son does, each day. A prized memento from his dad just before his death.

It's been 10 years since Williams, a 24-year-old defensive back/returner for Denver, was shot and killed in the early hours of Jan. 1, 2007, following a confrontation between Broncos players and gang members at a nightclub.

The family doesn't really celebrate New Year's anymore. Too painful. They do celebrate Williams.

"He'll always be alive in our hearts," said Tierra Leonard, who had two kids with Williams, Jaelyn, now 14, and Darius, 17.

Instantly, Broncos players took a liking to Darrent Williams and his charisma.

A second-round pick out of Oklahoma State in 2005, he was fun loving and played with flair. He even once famously wore his hair in what he called a "Fro-hawk" — part Afro, part Mohawk — for a Monday night game.

"There's kind of a general rule in the NFL when you're a rookie, where you just kind of shut up and do your job," said former Broncos safety John Lynch, who's now an NFL analyst for Fox. "In Year 2, you can start talking. But Darrent was one of those kids who got away with it, because he came in talking and was such a positive energy and so much fun. That smile. You'd look at him like, 'Come on rookie,' but you couldn't help but crack up.

"I remember the disbelief when that happened — four hours earlier I was in the huddle with the guy, and then I'm hearing he's no longer with us."

Williams and several of his teammates went out after a season-ending 26-23 overtime loss to San Francisco on Dec. 31, 2006.

He was killed while riding in the back of a limousine.

Witnesses at the murder trial said Willie Clark exchanged words with then-Broncos wide receiver Brandon Marshall as Williams arrived at the nightclub with a group. The confrontation escalated inside when somebody in Williams' group sprayed champagne in celebration.

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The dispute continued outside as Williams and his group tried to leave. Witnesses said Clark desperately searched for a gun following the altercation, hopped into an SUV to catch up with a limousine carrying Williams, then fired the fatal shots. Williams died in the arms of teammate Javon Walker.

Clark was sentenced to life in prison plus 1,152 years. A judge denied his recent request for a new trial.

Williams' mom, Rosalind, was there for all of the testimony. So was Leonard, who wanted to know everything for later, when her kids had questions.

Rosalind Williams has pictures of her son all over her home in Mansfield, Texas. On bad days, when she's really thinking of her son, she will retreat into a room and meditate.

"Sometimes, you just have to have a good cry," she said. "You just take it one moment at a time, so you can get through it."

This warmed her heart: On May 29, 2008, the Darrent Williams Memorial Teen Center was dedicated to serve the youth in a suburb of Denver. A place where kids could play and do homework.

"It speaks volumes of the people that are so caring in Denver," the mom said.

There's also the Darrent Williams Good Guy Award, which is given to the Broncos player who best exemplifies Williams' enthusiasm, cooperation and honesty when dealing with the media. The first recipient, in 2007, was Lynch. This season, the award went to Broncos outside linebacker DeMarcus Ware.

Fitting, since Ware, who was playing for the Dallas Cowboys at the time, sent Rosalind his Pro Bowl jersey soon after Williams' death.

Several former Broncos have reached out to the family over the years. Safety Nick Ferguson has checked in. Same with Walker and running back Tatum Bell, who also played at Oklahoma State with Williams.

Ten years. It's hard for Lynch to believe it's been that long.

"This gives me a chance to reflect, get on the phone and see how Rosalind is doing, see how his (family) is doing," Lynch said. "It's important on these anniversaries that we all stop and remember the promises we made when he tragically passed away.

"Darrent will always have an indelible place in my heart. He was such a special and vibrant personality."

Tierria Leonard remembers the last Christmas the family spent together. Days before Williams' death, they traveled to Denver to watch him play on Christmas Eve and open presents. Darius received a remote-controlled car — a present he still has. Jaelyn got snow boots. For Leonard, Williams gave her a diamond ring, tennis bracelet and earrings.

The ring never comes off.

She met Williams at a high school basketball game and had her cousin get his number. She had Darius at 16 and Jaelyn at nearly 19.

"They each remind me of him," said Leonard, who lives in Fort Worth, Texas. "Jaelyn, her grin and laugh are just like his. Darius, you look at him and just see 'D.'"

Darius Williams is a defensive back — just like dad. A good one, too, with colleges taking a look at him. He once wore No. 27 — dad's old number — before switching to No. 4 in high school at Fort Worth Arlington Heights (No. 27 was taken his freshman year).

The senior watches clips of his father on his phone all the time. His favorites are from Williams' college

days at Oklahoma State, especially a pick-six against Kansas State in 2003.

Another memory: The blue Impala. His father would pick him up from school in that car, and he was the envy of all the kids.

"People would run up to the car," Darius recounted.

On game days last fall, Darius honored his father by wearing a wrist band with his initials and number, along with shoes on which he wrote "RIP." But his biggest tribute was playing like him.

"I've got that fight," Darius said, "that heart of his."

Recently, he began getting a tattoo of dad on his chest — a picture of Williams in his Broncos uniform, with a pair of wings.

"I hope he's proud of me," Darius said.

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

As he turns 32, LeBron James savors 'magical' ride in 2016

By TOM WITHERS, AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Not everyone wants 2016, month after month of messy moments and mayhem, to end.

For LeBron James, it was a charmed year.

"A magical run," he said. "I felt like Aladdin on my flying magic carpet."

On top of the world.

James soared in his second season back in Cleveland, his homecoming was capped by an historic comeback in which he led the Cavaliers to an NBA title to ending the city's 52-year sports championship drought.

There was no stopping James this year. He mesmerized on the court, his game showing no signs of decay in his 14th season. He is ascending in every statistical career list and might be better than ever.

But numbers don't reveal the full measure of James, who this year broadened his business profile and made a deeper commitment to philanthropic and social causes — in Ohio and across the country. The face of the league is also the front man for an entire region transformed by his return.

The Akron wunderkind who has spent half his life being pegged as the "Next Michael Jordan" has surpassed immense expectations. He turned 32 on Friday and calls his 31st year like no other.

A third NBA title. Finals MVP. Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year. Sports Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year. A White House visit. Husband. Father of three. The adoration of millions.

"It's been a great year and I can say, yes, it's been the best because I'm in the present and I'm a present type of guy," he told the AP recently. "But not just to see everything I've been able to accomplish individually, but also the things that I've been able to do to inspire others with my foundation and people in this city, it's been a great year for sure."

Cleveland doesn't just look different, it feels different. James can take some of the credit.

Downtown is nearly unrecognizable, revived by new hotels and apartment buildings and a renewal of The Flats, a trendy area with bars and restaurant on the banks of the Cuyahoga River, which famously burned in the 1970s. Young Clevelanders, who for decades fled after college for opportunities elsewhere, are coming back — just as James did.

There's also something deeper. The population has been flushed with a civic pride that in part has grown by what James and the Cavs did in June. He's given Clevelanders swagger and it doesn't hurt that he's one of them.

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Perhaps the best snapshot of Cleveland's triumphant year was James wearing a "Cleveland Or No-where" T-shirt while cheering for the Indians during the World Series.

"I look at the accomplishments, and none of it is for me," he said. "It's for my wife and my kids and my mother and my in-laws, all my friends, all the kids in the foundation, everyone I tried to inspire. I accomplished everything for them to be happy. I do everything because of them and for people to be able to say, this is who we are and be confident about it. That's what matters to me."

Now that he's got three rings — halfway to Jordan's six — the debate over whether James can one day pass His Airness as the greatest player in league history has intensified.

James has always left the argument for others to ponder. Even though it makes for good talk radio and bar stool banter, James won't join the discussion.

"Our games are so different," he said when asked about Jordan at 32. "He was much more of a scorer, and did a lot of post work at that time. But our games are just different. His body is different. So you recognize the dominance that someone had at that age, but there's no similarities in our games at all."

In the eyes of Cleveland coach Tyronn Lue, James can't be compared to any one player. He's an amalgamation of talent.

"He's got the explosiveness and power of Dominique Wilkins, the scoring ability of Jordan at times," Lue said. "The court vision and the way he pushes the pace like Magic Johnson. And as far as a comparison between him and Jordan, the comparisons I have is when you're on top, the best player in the league for so long and having to carry that each and every year and never get knocked down off that pedestal, that's a big accomplishment because guys are coming for you. You're a target."

As his grand year trickles to its final hours, James isn't looking too far ahead.

How do you top the greatest year of your life?

"You don't even try," he said. "You start from scratch and say, 'All right, it's 2017, let's see what happens.' I've never been a New Year's resolution guy. I don't need to make goals when I've been living my life the right way for a long time. You don't want to start over, you say, let's see what happens, continue to give praise to the man above and live your life and continue to inspire people.

"It's already written, so let's see what happens."

Washington's rise came after 25 years of turmoil

By TIM BOOTH, AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — Twenty-five years ago, Washington stood on top of college football as co-national champions in the midst of a three-year run as Pac-10 Conference champions.

What happened in the 2½ decades since that 1991 season for Washington was a roller coaster of momentary highs and pitiful lows, providing a cautionary tale of how quickly the foundation for being on top can crumble due to a series of missteps.

When Washington takes the field for Saturday's Peach Bowl against top-ranked Alabama it will mark a return to the national stage for the Huskies. They were there briefly during the 2000 season when the Huskies won the Pac-10 and Rose Bowl, finishing the year ranked No. 3 in the AP Top 25. But this season marks the Huskies' first shot at a national title since that shared title with Miami in 1991.

So, what happened? A carousel of coaching changes; growing apathy of a once-rabid fan base; and the rise of programs Washington once dominated all added up to lead to the Huskies' demise.

"I think it was those combinations of things that the Northwest got way more competitive and the Huskies ship was lost at sea for a little bit," said ESPN analyst and former Washington captain Ed Cunningham. "It's pretty easy."

THE STUMBLE

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Washington walked off the field on Jan. 1, 1992, after thumping Michigan 34-14 in the Rose Bowl, assuring itself a share of the national title. A year later, Washington was back in the Rose Bowl, this time falling to Tyrone Wheatley and Michigan in what proved to be the start of the Huskies' fall.

Before the start of the 1993 season, coach Don James resigned in protest of sanctions handed down by the Pac-10 for NCAA rules violations. Jim Lambright took over as head coach and while the Huskies went to bowl games in each of Lambright's four seasons after Washington's bowl game ban was lifted, it wasn't good enough in a place where the expectations were to compete for conference titles.

"I think there was just destined to be some serious fallout when Don left," longtime Washington broadcaster Bob Rondeau said.

THE BUMP

Rick Neuheisel was lured away from Colorado to take on the task of getting Washington back to elite status. For a short time, it worked. Led by Marques Tuiasosopo and a roster of future NFL players, Washington won the Pac-10 and Rose Bowl in 2000, Neuheisel's second season.

"That team was great," Cunningham said. "They weren't good. They were great."

But issues started to surface. Recruiting suffered. Washington went from 11 wins in 2000 to eight wins, then seven.

Then, the capper: Neuheisel was fired in June 2003 for taking part in a neighborhood NCAA basketball tournament pool. For the second time in 10 years, Washington was dealing with a coaching change just before the season started.

"Overall I would just say (it was) mismanagement during chaos and trying to find your way through," Cunningham said.

THE FALL

Washington's collapse was beginning before Neuheisel was fired. Keith Gilbertson took over and won six games in his first season, but the Huskies tumbled to 1-10 in 2004. Recruiting missteps finally caught up to the program and the talent was gone. Washington's nightmare was only just starting.

Enter Tyrone Willingham, who was the wrong coach at the wrong time. Washington went 11-37 under Willingham, capped by a 2008 season when the Huskies endured the indignity of an 0-12 record that made the school the laughingstock of college football.

Washington had found its bottom.

"I guess it had to hit rock bottom for you to look up and see what it was going to take to start bringing it back," Rondeau said.

THE RISE

For as much as coach Steve Sarkisian is derided in Seattle for never getting Washington over the seven-win hump until his final season, he deserves acknowledgement for rebuilding the credibility of Washington and restocking the talent. He started to get top prospects to again consider the Huskies and was able to lift Washington from the bottom of the Pac-12 to at least the middle.

It was Chris Petersen who has been able to find the ingredients to make the leap back into prominence that Sarkisian could not. Much of Washington's rise this year was rooted in last year's challenge to reach bowl eligibility by winning its last two regular-season games before a bowl victory over Southern Mississippi.

The success this season was likely a year ahead of schedule. Most pointed to 2017 as the potential breakout for Petersen's crew. But now that they're here, the Huskies are intent not to let the missteps of the past keep them from being in the national discussion.

"Whether we're playing in this type of game, I don't really think like that," Petersen said. "I just think about getting really good people here and creating this environment where everyone can have

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a chance to get to their potential and they feel it and they're growing — from coaches to players to everybody. And when it's like that, you know really good things are going to happen."

More AP college football: www.collegefootball.ap.org and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Serena wins at love again; says 'yes' to engagement in poem

By The Associated Press

Court and spark: Serena Williams is tying the knot.

The tennis great announced her engagement to Alexis Ohanian on Thursday, posting a poem on Reddit that she accepted the proposal of the social news website's co-founder.

Williams' agent, Jill Smoller, confirmed the engagement in an email to The Associated Press.

Ohanian wrote on his Facebook page, "She said yes."

Williams, 35, has been dating Ohanian, 33, for over a year.

Her poem:

"I came home/A little late/Someone had a bag packed for me/And a carriage awaited/Destination: Rome/To escort me to my very own "charming"/Back to where our stars first collided/And now it was full circle/At the same table we first met by chance/This time he made it not by chance/But by choice/Down on one knee/He said 4 words/And I said yes."

Williams in July won Wimbledon for the seventh time to tie Steffi Graf's record of 22 Grand Slam titles. In September she passed Roger Federer for most all-time Grand Slam match victories, winning her 308th in the U.S. Open.

No wedding date has been announced.

US university's 42nd list of words it would like to banish

By The Associated Press

Lake Superior State University's 42nd annual list of words nominated for banishment by members of the public:

- Bête noire
- Bigly
- Dadbod
- Disruption
- Echo chamber
- 831
- Focus
- Frankenfruit
- Get your dandruff up
- Ghost
- Guesstimate
- Historic
- Listicle
- Manicured
- On fleek
- Post-truth
- Selfie drone

- Town hall meeting
- You, sir

3,000 years ago, it ruled the Mideast, now blown to pieces

By LORI HINNANT, Associated Press

NIMRUD, Iraq (AP) — The chilly December wind whipped rain across the strewn wreckage of a city that, nearly 3,000 years ago, ruled almost the entire Middle East. Rivulets of water ran through the dirt, washing away chunks of ancient stone.

The city of Nimrud in northern Iraq is in pieces, victim of the Islamic State group's fervor to erase history. The remains of its palaces and temples, once lined in brilliant reliefs of gods and kings, have been blown up. The statues of winged bulls that once guarded the site are hacked to bits. Its towering ziggurat, or step pyramid, has been bulldozed.

The militants' fanaticism devastated one of the Middle East's most important archaeological sites. But more than a month after the militants were driven out, Nimrud is still being ravaged, its treasures disappearing, imperiling any chance of eventually rebuilding it, an Associated Press team found after multiple visits in the past month.

With the government and military still absorbed in fighting the war against the Islamic State group in nearby Mosul, the wreckage of the Assyrian Empire's ancient capital lies unprotected and vulnerable to looters.

"When I heard about Nimrud, my heart wept before my eyes did," said Hiba Hazim Hamad, an archaeology professor in Mosul who often took her students there.

In three of the AP's four visits, its team wandered the ruins alone freely for up to an hour before anyone arrived. No one is assigned to guard the site, much less catalog the fragments.

Toppled stone slabs bearing a relief that the AP saw on one visit were gone when it returned.

Perhaps the only vigilant guardian left is an Iraqi archaeologist, Layla Salih. She has visited multiple times, photographing the wreckage to document it and badgering militias to watch over it. Walking through the ruins on a rainy winter day, she pointed out things that were no longer in place.

Still, Salih finds reasons for optimism.

"The good thing is the rubble is still in situ," she said. "The site is restorable."

To an untrained eye, that's hard to imagine, seeing the destruction caused by the Islamic State group. Salih estimated 60 percent of the site was irrecoverable.

The site's palaces and temples were spread over 360 hectares (900 acres) on a dirt plateau on the edge of the Tigris River valley.

A 140-foot-high ziggurat once arrested the gaze of anyone entering Nimrud. Now there is only lumpy earth. Archaeologists had never had a chance to explore the now-bulldozed structure.

Past it, in the palace of King Ashurnasirpal II, walls are toppled into giant piles of bricks. The palace's courtyard is a field of cratered earth. Pieces of the two monumental winged bulls are piled nearby — their heads missing, likely taken to be sold.

Off to the left are the flattened remains of the temple of Nabu, a god of writing. During a Dec. 14 UNESCO assessment tour, a U.N. demining expert peered at a hole leading to a seemingly intact tomb and warned that it could be rigged to explode.

From 879-709 BC, Nimrud was the capital of the Assyrians, one the ancient world's earliest empires. In modern excavations, the site yielded a wealth of Mesopotamian art. In the tombs of queens were found troves of gold and jewelry. Hundreds of written tablets deepened knowledge about the ancient Mideast.

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Touring the site, UNESCO's representative to Iraq, Louise Haxthausen, called the destruction "absolutely devastating."

"The most important thing right now is to ensure some basic protection," she said.

But the government has many priorities. It is still fighting IS in Mosul, and the list of reconstruction needs is long.

Tens of thousands of citizens live in camps. Much of the city of Ramadi is destroyed. More than 70 mass graves have been unearthed in IS territory. Other ancient sites remain under IS control.

None of the various armed groups around Nimrud — whether the military or various militias — has been dedicated to guarding it.

During the UNESCO tour, Salih noticed that some of the ancient bricks from the rubble had been neatly piled up as if to be hauled away — perhaps, she suspects, to repair homes damaged in fighting. Stone tiles at the palace entrance vanished from where she saw them last.

Two locals were arrested with a marble tablet and stone seal from Nimrud, presumably to sell. The men are in custody.

But it's unclear where the artifacts seized from them are.

The police insisted they were at a lab in the northern city of Irbil. The lab said it knew nothing about them. The Antiquities Ministry in Baghdad said they were safe in the Nineveh government offices. An official there said they were with the police awaiting transit to Baghdad.

That circle of confusion makes theft easy.

Salih is seeking international funding to pay someone to guard the site. But she recognizes the job will have to go to one of the militia factions, and she has no illusions they will provide full protection.

She'll have to cajole them into doing as much as they can.

"There isn't another choice, as you see," she said.

Associated Press photographer Maya Alleruzzo and videographer Bram Janssen in Nimrud; and Salar Salim and Mohammed Nouman in Irbil, Iraq contributed to this report.

Read previous reports in the AP's series "A Savage Legacy" chronicling the impact of the Islamic State group at: <https://www.ap.org/explore/a-savage-legacy/>

Guest lineups for the Sunday news shows

By The Associated Press

Guest lineups for the Sunday TV news shows:

ABC's "This Week" — Sean Spicer, spokesman for President-elect Donald Trump; Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

NBC's "Meet the Press" — Journalists, White House veterans discuss Trump's relationship with the media.

CBS' "Face the Nation" — Analysts discuss issues facing the nation in 2017.

CNN's "State of the Union" — Reps. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., and Darrell Issa, R-Calif.; House members-elect Lisa Blunt Rochester, D-Del.; and Charlie Crist, D-Fla.

"Fox News Sunday" —Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark.

Grand Old Party? Donald Trump remaking GOP in his image

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For eight years, a leaderless Republican Party has rallied around its passionate opposition to President Barack Obama and an unceasing devotion to small government, free markets and fiscal discipline.

No more.

On the eve of his inauguration, Donald Trump is remaking the party in his image, casting aside decades of Republican orthodoxy for a murky populist agenda that sometimes clashes with core conservative beliefs. Yet his stunning election gives the GOP a formal leader for the first time in nearly a decade. The New York real estate mogul becomes the face of the party, the driver of its policies and its chief enforcer.

Despite their excitement, Republican loyalists across the country concede that major questions remain about their party's identity in the age of Trump.

The simple answer: The modern-day Republican Party stands for whatever Trump wants it to.

"He's a sometime-Republican," American Conservative Union Chairman Matt Schlapp said. "Donald Trump was elected without having to really put all the details out on all these questions. We are going to see in the first six months how this plays out. Does government get bigger or does it get smaller?"

Trump is eyeing a governing agenda that includes big-ticket items that Schlapp and other conservative leaders would fight against under any other circumstances. Yet some see Trump's agenda as more in line with the concerns of average Americans, which could help the party's underwhelming public standing and keep them in power.

The president-elect initially promised a massive infrastructure spending bill to update the nation's roads and bridges, an investment that could dwarf the infrastructure spending Republicans opposed when it appeared in Obama's 2009 stimulus package. Trump has also vowed to put the federal government in the child care business by allowing parents to offset child care costs with tax breaks. And he has railed against regional trade deals and threatened to impose tariffs on some imports, a sharp break from the free-market approach that has defined Republican policies for decades.

"From a policy perspective, he might be one of the more flexible Republican presidents. He's just not encumbered with 30 years of Republican ideology," said veteran Republican operative Barry Bennett, a former Trump adviser.

"If there's a win involved, he's interested," Bennett said.

Republicans in Congress and elsewhere have expressed some hesitation, but most appear to be willing to embrace the incoming president's priorities — at least at first.

There are indications that Trump may initially avoid issues that would divide his party. That's according to Trump's incoming chief of staff, Reince Priebus, who said in a recent radio interview that the new administration will focus in its first nine months on conservative priorities like repealing Obama's health care law and rewriting tax laws.

In a post-election interview with The New York Times, Trump acknowledged that he didn't realize during the campaign that New Deal-style proposals to put people to work building infrastructure might conflict with his party's small-government philosophy.

"That's not a very Republican thing — I didn't even know that, frankly," Trump said.

Trump's confusion can be forgiven, perhaps, given his inexperience in Republican politics. He was a

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registered Democrat in New York between August 2001 and September 2009. And once he became a Republican, his political views were shaped from his perch in New York City, where the Republican minority is much more liberal — particularly on social issues — than their counterparts in other parts of the country.

Trump said he was “fine” with same-sex marriage in a post-election interview in November, for example. And while he opposes abortion rights, he supported Planned Parenthood’s non-abortion-related women’s health services throughout his campaign.

It’s unclear how aggressively Trump will fight for his priorities, but there are signs that he’s not expected to have much tolerance for detractors in either party. He has been remarkably thin-skinned, using Twitter to jab critics like former President Bill Clinton, “Saturday Night Live” and a little-known union official from Indiana.

“You cross him at your peril,” said Rick Tyler, a Republican strategist who worked for Texas Sen. Ted Cruz’s GOP presidential bid.

Tyler said Trump’s leadership style as he prepares to enter the Oval Office sends a clear message: “Unless you move in my way, I’ll make your life, including Republicans, pretty miserable.”

At the same time, the public’s perception of the Republican Party seems to be improving, albeit modestly.

A NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll conducted in December found that 37 percent of Americans have a positive rating of the GOP compared to 36 percent who have an unfavorable view. That’s slightly better than the Democratic Party, which earns positive marks from 34 percent and negative from 42 percent.

Before Trump’s rise, the Republican Party’s message didn’t necessarily resonate with the needs of “everyday Americans,” said veteran Republican strategist Alex Conant.

“The challenge for the party now is to adopt policies that fulfil those needs. And we have a lot of work to do on that front,” Conant said.

The uncertainty leaves longtime Republican loyalists with more questions than answers about the future of their party.

“The party will be what Trump wants it to be,” said Steve Duprey, a Republican national committeeman from New Hampshire.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 31, the 366th and final day of 2016.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Dec. 31, 1946, President Harry S. Truman officially proclaimed the end of hostilities in World War II.

On this date:

In 1775, during the Revolutionary War, the British repulsed an attack by Continental Army generals Richard Montgomery and Benedict Arnold at Quebec; Montgomery was killed.

In 1879, Thomas Edison first publicly demonstrated his electric incandescent light in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

In 1904, New York’s Times Square saw its first New Year’s Eve celebration, with an estimated 200,000 people in attendance.

In 1942, Frank Sinatra opened a singing engagement at New York’s Paramount Theater.

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In 1951, the Marshall Plan expired after distributing more than \$12 billion in foreign aid.

In 1969, Joseph A. Yablonski, an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the United Mine Workers of America, was shot to death with his wife and daughter in their Clarksville, Pennsylvania, home by hit men acting at the orders of UMWA president Tony Boyle.

In 1972, Major League baseball player Roberto Clemente, 38, was killed when a plane he'd chartered and was traveling on to bring relief supplies to earthquake-devastated Nicaragua crashed shortly after takeoff from Puerto Rico.

In 1978, Taiwanese diplomats struck their colors for the final time from the embassy flagpole in Washington, D.C., marking the end of diplomatic relations with the United States.

In 1985, singer Rick Nelson, 45, and six other people were killed when fire broke out aboard a DC-3 that was taking the group to a New Year's Eve performance in Dallas.

In 1986, 97 people were killed when fire broke out in the Dupont Plaza Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. (Three hotel workers later pleaded guilty in connection with the blaze.)

In 1991, representatives of the government of El Salvador and rebels reached agreement at the United Nations on a peace accord to end 12 years of civil war.

In 2001, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (joo-lee-AH'-nee) spent his final day in office praising police, firefighters, and other city employees in the wake of 9/11, and said he had no regrets about returning to private life.

Ten years ago: The death toll for Americans killed in the Iraq war reached 3,000. Hundreds of Iraqis flocked to the village of Ouja (OO'-juh) where Saddam Hussein was born to see the deposed leader buried in a religious compound 24 hours after his execution. Ordinary Americans paid their respects to former President Gerald R. Ford, walking slowly by his flag-covered casket in the U.S. Capitol.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama signed a wide-ranging defense bill into law despite having "serious reservations" about provisions that regulated the detention, interrogation and prosecution of suspected terrorists. A NASA GRAIL probe fired its engine and slipped into orbit around the moon in the first of two back-to-back arrivals over the New Year's weekend.

One year ago: Belgian authorities announced the arrest of a 10th person in connection with the Nov. 2015 bloodbath in Paris. A towering inferno engulfed a 63-story luxury hotel in Dubai as officials went ahead with a massive New Year's fireworks display (there were no serious injuries reported). Death claimed singer Natalie Cole at age 65; actor Wayne Rogers at age 82; and actress Beth Howland at age 74.

Today's Birthdays: TV producer George Schlatter is 87. Actor Sir Anthony Hopkins is 79. Actor Tim Considine (TV: "My Three Sons") is 76. Actress Sarah Miles is 75. Rock musician Andy Summers is 74. Actor Sir Ben Kingsley is 73. Producer-director Taylor Hackford is 72. Fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg is 70. Actor Tim Matheson is 69. Pop singer Burton Cummings is 69. Actor Joe Dallesandro is 68. Rock musician Tom Hamilton (Aerosmith) is 65. Actor James Remar is 63. Actress Bebe Neuwirth is 58. Actor Val Kilmer is 57. Singer Paul Westerberg is 57. Actor Don Diamont is 54. Rock musician Ric Ivanisevich (Oleander) is 54. Rock musician Scott Ian (Anthrax) is 53. Actress Gong Li is 51. Author Nicholas Sparks is 51. Actor Lance Reddick is 47. Pop singer Joe McIntyre is 44. Rock musician Mikko Siren (Apocalyptica) is 41. Rapper PSY (Park Jae-sang) is 39. Rock musician Bob Bryar is 37. Actor/singer Erich Bergen is 31. DJ/vocalist Drew Taggart (The Chainsmokers) is 27. Olympic gold medal gymnast Gabby Douglas is 21.

Thought for Today: "In masks outrageous and austere/ The years go by in single file;/ But none has merited my fear,/ And none has quite escaped my smile." — Elinor Wylie, American author (1885-1928).