

Groton Daily Independent

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Kayla Schuring Bridal shower

Feb. 25.

Open House 10:00-12:00

St Elizabeth Ann Seaton Catholic Church, Groton
Please bring a recipe to share with the bride to be

Apts for Rent

1 bedroom apartment for rent. Move in by Feb. 28th and get a FREE 32" Flat Screen TV! All utilities included except A/C, for \$600. 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 **OPEN**

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Friday, Feb. 24

School Breakfast: Cinnamon roll, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Pizza, green beans, fruit, Romaine salad.

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combo, mashed potatoes and gravy, 7 layer salad, peaches, whole wheat bread.

State Wrestling Tourney in Sioux Falls

Saturday, Feb. 25

Region DI Tourney in Groton

Robotics at Mitchell Technical Institute

Show Choir at Vermillion

State Wrestling Tourney in Sioux Falls

Sunday, Feb. 26

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship/Milestones at 9 a.m., Sunday School at 10 a.m.

Catholic Parish: Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton Catholic Church at 9 a.m., then at St. Joseph in Turton at 11 a.m.

United Methodist Parish: Worship in Conde

PARTS COUNTER SALES

Self motivated individual needed to fill our Parts Counter Sales position. Duties include parts sales, display stocking, shipping and receiving. Sponsored training, excellent benefits package and the possibility for advancement. Contact Steve at 605-395-6421 or email resume to s.harry@harrysinc.com.

Harry Implement Inc.

PO Box 841

Ferney, SD

57439



**Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling**

New & Cleaning of
Stockdams with our
60' reach trackhoe

605/395-6531

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School Board Minutes from Feb. 15

UNOFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF BOARD OF EDUCATION

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 06-6

REGULAR MEETING

February 15, 2017

President Steve Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the High School Conference Room. Members present: Fjelstad, Gengerke, Harder, Rix, Smith and Weismantel. Absent: Kjelden. Others present were Supt. J. Schwan, Principals A. Schwan and B. Schwan, and Business Manager Weber.

Moved by Weismantel, second Rix to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Smith read a potential conflict disclosure pursuant to SDCL 23-3. A copy of the potential conflict is on file in the business office. Moved by Rix, second Fjelstad to accept the conditions and determine that the matter underlying the conflict is fair, reasonable and not contrary to the public interest. Motion carried.

Moved by Harder, second Weismantel to approve all consent agenda items as presented: North Central Special Ed Coop agenda items, District minutes of January 9 and 23, bills, financial reports, agency reports, school lunch reports and transportation reports. Motion carried.

GENERAL FUND: Net Salary – 182,308.14; FIT – 20,121.78; Medicare – 6,909.42; FICA – 29,543.80; American Funds – 764.50; Washington National – 98.40; SDRS – 29,487.98; Waddell & Reed – 1,429.65; Horace Mann – 539.21; Thrivent – 226.50; AFLAC – 2,090.91; Delta Dental – 4,587.80; SD Supplemental Retirement – 851.53; Wellmark – 62,744.00; Reliastar – 573.35; A&B Business – supplies, 87.57; Aberdeen American News – audit notice, 117.68; ACP Direct – headphones, 110.70; Agency Fund – advance payments, 22,477.32; Bob's Piano Service – tuning, 315.00; Brookings School District– ads, 70.00; Carquest – supplies, 855.43; City of Groton – utilities, 12,702.03; Cole Papers – supplies, 404.52; Crawford Trucks – belt, 72.27; Dacotah Prairie Museum – entry fee, 75.00; Dakota Brush – supplies, 200.00; Dakota Electronics – services, 47.50; Dakotaland Autoglass – filler, 18.47; Days Inn, Brookings – lodging, 91.10; Days Inn, Pierre – lodging, 228.00; Demco – supplies, 66.85; Dependable Sanitation – services, 1,238.00; DSS Image Apparel – shirts, 363.00; Eide Bailly – audit services, 1,833.73; Ewell Educational Services – resource, 265.00; Farm Tire Service – repairs, 109.00; G&K Services – rug services, 473.06; Geffdog Designs – shirts, 235.22; Groton Area Booster/PAC – supplies, 68.00; GASD Food Service – supplies, 355.25; Groton Chiropractic – physical, 95.00; Hanlon Brothers – services, 1,760.00; K. Hanson – poms, 163.20; Hauff Mid-America – warm-ups, 2,265.00; Hillyard – supplies/services, 1,842.56; Holiday Inn Express – lodging, 136.99; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt – training, 2,950.00; JW Pepper – music, 495.99; James Valley Telco. – services, 823.36; Ken's – fuel, 8,120.97; Leidholdt Tool Sales – tools, 35.71; LS Scholarship Fund – entry fee, 75.00; Matheson – supplies, 254.40; Mid-American – supplies, 1,071.86; MJ's Sinclair – services/fuel, 746.29; Motel West – lodging, 340.00; Northside Implement – repairs, 8,171.40; Northwestern Energy – utilities, 4,452.96; Productivity Plus – services, 3,468.82; Riley Bus Service – charter, 1,279.50; R. Scepaniak – fees, 70.00; A. Schwan – meals, 22.78; J. Schwan – fuel, 29.89; SDAESP – registration, 100.00; SDASSP – registration, 100.00; Sewer Saver – services, 282.23; C. Swanson – sc supplies, 175.62; Taylor Music – repairs, 25.00; TrackWrestling – services, 157.14; Tresona – licensing fees, 600.00; TruGreen – services, 2,308.60; J. Weber – fees, 43.25. Total General Fund - \$427,620.19.

CAPITAL OUTLAY: 1800 Calculators – calculators, 1,965.00; Agency Fund – advance payments, 14,515.00; Daktronics – horn, 85.00; Engel Music – power cords, 79.98; Follett – library books, 372.01; Groton Area School – interfund transfer, 100,000.00; House of Glass – parts, 142.67. Total Capital Outlay - \$117,159.66.

SPECIAL ED: Net Salary – 26,050.42; FIT – 2,537.42; Medicare – 994.90; FICA – 4,253.82; SDRS – 4,462.12; Waddell & Reed – 250.00; AFLAC – 592.58; Delta Dental – 845.22; SD Supplemental Retirement – 200.00; Wellmark – 11,392.00; Reliastar – 225.46; Agency Fund – advance payments, 558.45; Patron – mileage, 670.32. Total Special Ed - \$53,032.71.

CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND: Agency Fund – advance payment, 25.00; Clark Engineering – services, 3,200.00; Foster, Jacobs & Johnson – services, 165,686.40; Soil Technologies – services, 4,500.00. Total Capital Projects Fund - \$173,411.40.

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ENTERPRISE: Food Service Net Salary – 5,599.46; FIT – 471.55; Medicare – 199.84; FICA – 854.52; SDRS – 586.36; AFLAC – 54.22; Wellmark – 1,510.00; Reliastar – 1.30; A&B Business – calculator, 93.96; Agency Fund – advance payment, 32.25; CWD – food/suppl, 2,339.05; Dean Foods – dairy products, 1,179.23; Earthgrains – bakery products, 400.00; G&K Services – linen services, 280.35; Mid-American Research Chemical – supplies, 245.45; Reinhart – food, 2,103.95; SD DOE-CANS – commodities, 422.27; Sysco – suppl/food, 1,187.72; US Foods – suppl/food, 3,537.77. Total Food Service - \$21,099.25.

OST Net Salary – 1,205.42; FIT – 57.88; Medicare – 42.10; FICA – 179.98; SDRS – 154.10; AFLAC – 135.98; Wellmark – 664.00; Reliastar – .65; Agency Fund – advance payments, 3,446.07. Total OST - \$5,886.18. Total Enterprise Funds - \$26,985.43.

AGENCY FUND: Total - \$67,598.50.

RECEIPTS: Local Sources, Taxes – 28,025.43; Other Local Sources – 90,494.87; County Sources – 4,394.01; State Sources – 10,593.00; Federal Sources – 31,101.49. Total Receipts - \$164,608.80.

Members of the public were allowed five minutes to address the board on any topic of their choice. With no public members present to speak, the board proceeded with their remaining agenda items.

The board heard program overview presentations from CTE Instructors Don Donley, Adam Franken, Lindsey Tietz and Brooke Lingbeck and Destination Imagination Coordinator JoAnn Donley.

Moved by Weismantel, second Harder to approve adoption of formal resolution calling for bond issue on April 11, 2017. Motion carried. The resolution is printed as an extract to these minutes.

Tom Grimmond of Dougherty & Company presented financial issues associated with the high school project bond issue. A range of financial terms from 20 to 30 years were reviewed and discussed. No action was taken.

The board discussed dates for public meetings concerning the high school project and agreed to hold them at the Columbia American Legion on Feb 27th, Bristol Community Center on March 6th and the Groton Community Center on March 9th. All public meetings will begin at 7:00 pm.

Superintendent Schwan presented the school calendar for 2017-18. No action was taken.

There were no committee reports were given.

The following topics were discussed in administrative reports: elementary project update, legislative issues, Every Student Succeeds Act, food service administrative review, student teachers, pre-admission field experience, 2017 testing, Kindergarten Round Up, Math Family Night, OST Training, zSpace Technology, NSU Educator Prep Workshop, NSU Symphonic Band, America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Grant, Parent/Teacher Conferences, professional conference, election polling place change in Andover, and school board election update.

Superintendent Schwan presented Certificates of Appreciation to School Board Members in honor of School Board Recognition Week.

The board reviewed 1st reading of recommended policy changes to Policy AE – Wellness Policy.

Moved by Gengerke, second Weismantel to set the summer 2017 driver's education fee at \$250 for in-district students and \$300 for out-of-district students. Motion carried.

Superintendent Schwan presented the results of the SD Department of Health Food Service Inspection of Groton Area Elementary on February 6th. 99 out of 100

Moved by Harder, second Gengerke to approve the resignation of high school teacher Sarah Honerman at the end of the 2016-17 school year. Motion carried.

Moved by Gengerke, second Weismantel to go into executive session at 8:33 pm pursuant to SDCL 1-25-2(1) to discuss Superintendent's evaluation and SDCL 1-25-2(2) for a student issue. Motion carried.

Smith declared the board out of executive session at 9:41pm.

Moved by Weismantel, second Rix to issue administrative contracts for school year 2017-18 with terms and conditions to be negotiated at a later date. Motion carried.

Moved by Rix, second Fjelstad to adjourn. Motion carried.

M. J. Weber, Business Manager

Steven R. Smith, President

The addition of signatures to this page verifies these minutes as official.

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Chipmunks 8, Foxes 8, Cheetahs 8, Coyotes 6, Shih Tzus 3, Jackelopes 3

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 225, Randy Stanley 210, Roger Spanier 202, 201

Women's High Games: Lori Giedt 180, Darci Spanier 173, Karen Spanier 171

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 596, Roger Spanier 591, Brad Larson 528

Women's High Series: Lori Giedt 498, Darci Spanier 482, Sue Stanley 471

Brown County Feb. 21 Meeting Minutes

FEBRUARY 21, 2017 – GENERAL MEETING

Meeting called to order by Commission Chair Kippley at 8:45 A.M. in the Commissioner's Chambers, Courthouse Annex, Brown County, SD. Present were Commissioners Hansen, Sutton, Fischbach and Fjeldheim. Commissioner Hansen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Fjeldheim to approve the General Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2017. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

CLAIMS: Moved by Fischbach, seconded by Hansen to approve the following claims:

Payroll: Commission \$5,289.97; Auditor \$7,909.21; Treasurer \$13,688.75; States Attorney \$19,944.10; SVAWA Grant \$1,286.82; Maintenance \$7,480.96; Assessor \$13,625.67; Register of Deeds \$9,277.35; Veterans Service Office \$4,199.28; GIS \$2,301.47; Information Technology \$7,748.01; Human Resources \$3,082.21; Sheriff Admin \$34,457.14; Jail \$47,020.28; JDC \$21,426.52 Welfare Office \$3,665.57; Museum \$8,192.50; Parks & Fairgrounds \$4,723.13; Fair Board \$3,757.12; 4-H \$582.40; Weed \$1,578.40; Planning and Zoning \$1,866.02; Highway \$45,640.11 Communications \$22,843.44; Emergency Management \$3,967.96; Teen Court \$592.85; 24/7 \$3,414.12; Landfill \$10,989.99.

Matching Benefits: FICA \$18,376.53; Medicare \$4,297.79, SDRS \$38,075.37, Health Ins \$115,188.36, Life Ins \$797.30, Dental Ins \$6,979.50.

Professional Fees: Aberdeen Advanced Care Ambulance \$422.52; Avera Aberdeen Family Physicians \$201.42; AMG Radiology \$214.03; Avera St. Luke's \$9,926.40; Bantz, Gosch & Crèmer \$3,358.61; Carrels & Bain Family Dental \$281.44; Michelle Gaikowski \$505.40; Horn Law Office \$212.80; KCH Law Office \$133.11; Language Line \$372.42; Lewis & Clark BHS \$800.00; Mikelson Law Office \$454.43; Public Engines \$2,865.60; Richardson, Wyly, Wise & Sauck \$338.40; Sanford Clinic \$254.46; Sanford Health \$2,030.09; SD Department of Revenue & Regulation \$2,739.53; SD Junior Point Show \$400.00; Christy Griffin-Serr Law Office \$211.50; Siegel, Barnett & Schutz \$833.49; Jennifer Stoddard \$174.80; Jodi Sudweeks \$37.40; US Bank \$380.00; Yankton Co. Sheriff \$50.00; Yankton Co. Treasurer \$584.35.

Publishing: US Bank \$134.32.

Repairs & Maintenance: Auto Glass Solutions \$393.11; Electrical Engineering & Equip. \$390.00; ESRI \$15,250.00; Graham Tire \$168.60; Pierson-Ford \$275.12; US Bank \$212.65.

Supplies: 446-Praxair \$137.30; Aberdeen Area Radiator \$455.00; Trent Anderson \$135.00; Bonnie Bitz \$48.00; DSG \$202.11; DT Pharmacy \$1,998.06; Geffdog \$21.56; Keeley's \$1,801.20; Marco \$44.89; McLeod's \$340.35; Midstates Printing \$110.00; Network Services \$943.41; Police Magazine \$25.00; US Bank \$11,339.45; West Payment Center \$1,655.76.

Travel & Conference: US Bank \$2,991.03.

Utilities: Aberdeen City Treasurer \$277.32; AT&T \$455.88; CenturyLink \$1,834.91; Dependable Sanitation \$20,654.28; James Valley Telecommunications \$223.50; Midcontinent \$941.26; Northern Electric \$95.10; NWPS \$52.43; US Bank \$766.18; Verizon \$3,282.55; Web Water \$69.16.

Machinery & Equip.: Lamb Chevrolet \$68,486.00.

Other: Angela Kreiman \$1,551.99; JRWD \$4,091.57; US Bank \$331.74.

Buildings: Huff Construction \$202.04. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

PERSONNEL: Moved by Fjeldheim, seconded by Hansen to approve the Commission Assistant/HR Office Report, which includes the following personnel changes:

- Approve the following employee step increases, effective February 26, 2017: Randy Kutter @ \$18.67 /hr, Cory Erhardt @ \$17.48 /hr, Wes Graff @ \$21.64 /hr, John Florey @ \$17.98/hr. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

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• Acknowledge the following miles driven and amount to be taxed for personal use of County vehicles during the month of January 2017: Kendell Titze- 102 @ \$55.08, Dirk Rogers – 760 @ \$410.40, Mike Scott-190 @ \$102.60, Gary Vetter- 133 @ \$71.82.

• Approve the following employee classification changes: Matt Heupel from Highway Department to Landfill Department (Grade 4, Step 5), effective March 6, 2017 @ \$17.89 per hour; Ryan McClain from Jail Correctional Officer to Deputy Sheriff, effective March 9, 2017 @ \$19.93 per hour. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

FAIR CONTRACT: Moved by Fjeldheim, seconded by Sutton to approve and authorize the Chair sign the following contract for the 2017 Brown County Fair: Antique Tractor Pull @ \$1,200.00. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

LEASE AGREEMENT: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Fjeldheim to approve and authorize the Chair sign agreement for lease of the Club House (with Alcohol Use Permission Form) on Sept 2-3, 2017 @ \$350.00. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

CLAIM ASSIGNMENT: Moved by Fjeldheim, seconded by Sutton to approve and authorize the Chair sign documentation to assign claim against an individual to Credit Collections Bureau for purpose of collecting liens. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

SUBORDINATION AGREEMENT: Moved by Fischbach, seconded by Fjeldheim to approve and authorize the Chair sign Subordination Agreement with the United States, Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration for purpose of subordinating a poor relief lien and indigent council lien held by the County to an easement for a transmission line to be installed by Western Area Power. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

2016 FINANCIAL REPORTS: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Fjeldheim to accept the 2016 Financial Reports as presented February 21, 2017 and approve not preparing the optional M, D & A (Manager's Discussion and Analysis) supplement to the report. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

PARTIAL PAYMENTS: Moved by Hansen, seconded by Sutton to authorize Sheila Enderson enter into contracts on the following properties: Lot 2 except S 35' of E 15' Blk 23 Hecla Village (607 Pine Street, Hecla), with payment of all 2014 and 2015 taxes and begin monthly payments of \$200 per month effective March 31, 2017; Lot 2 Johnson Replat of Lots 5-6 Blk 26 Thomas Addn to Aberdeen (215 12th Ave SE, Aberdeen) with \$7,500.00 down and \$1,000 per month, effective March 31, 2017. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING-SD SHERIFF ASSN: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Hansen to approve and authorize the Chair sign Memorandum of Understanding Assignment and Assumption Agreement with the SD Sheriff's Association for equipment and services in order to electronically monitor certain individuals arrested in Brown County, effective when concerns about additional fees are resolved. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

CONTRACTS FOR HIGHWAY MATERIAL, SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT RENTAL: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Fischbach to authorize the Chair sign contracts for material, supplies and rental of equipment bids for the Highway Department, as they are presented. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

APPLICATION FOR OCCUPANCY: Moved by Fischbach, seconded by Fjeldheim to approve and authorize the Chair sign application, submitted by NorthWestern Energy for occupancy of Brown County Hwy # 13 (West Richmond Road) in Sec 34-T124N-R64W of the 5th P.M., Brown County, SD for purpose of installing natural gas pipeline. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASE: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Fischbach to approve purchase of a 2014 JD 6130D Tractor from RDO for the Highway Department in amount of \$49,930.00. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Moved by Fischbach, seconded by Fjeldheim to go into executive session for personnel discussion, per SDCL 1-25-2(1) with Larry Lovrien, Gary Vetter and Dirk Rogers in attendance. All members present voting aye. Motion carried. The Chair declared the executive session closed, with no action taken as a result of the discussion.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Sutton, seconded by Fjeldheim to adjourn the Brown County Commission at 9:40 a.m. All members present voting aye. Motion carried.

Maxine Fischer, Brown County Auditor

Today in Weather History

February 24, 2001: Heavy snow of 6 to 14 inches fell across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota. Along with the heavy snow came blizzard conditions across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota during the morning hours of the 25th as northwest winds increased to 25 to 45 mph. As a result of the heavy snow and blizzard conditions, travel became difficult, if not impossible, resulting in some accidents and stranded motorists. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Waubay, Onida, Murdo, and Artas, 7 inches at Aberdeen, Faulkton, Ipswich, Kennebec, and Clark, 8 inches at Miller, Castlewood, 23 N Highmore, and Pierre. Nine inches of snow fell at Browns Valley, Wheaton, Clinton, Graceville, Dumont, Roy Lake, Mellette, Blunt, and Watertown. Other snowfall amounts included, 10 inches near Summit, 11 inches at Webster, Ortonville, and Artichoke Lake, and 14 inches at Milbank.

1852 - The Susquehanna River ice bridge at Havre de Grace, MD, commenced to break up after forty days of use. A total of 1738 loaded freight cars were hauled along rails laid on the ice. (David Ludlum)

1936 - Vermont and New Hampshire received brown snow due to dust from storms in the Great Plains Region. A muddy rain fell across parts of northern New York State. (24th-25th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A massive winter storm began to overspread the western U.S. In southern California, Big Bear was blanketed with 17 inches of snow, and Lake Hughes reported four inches of snow in just one hour. Snow pellets whitened coastal areas of Orange County and San Diego County, with three inches at Huntington Beach. The storm also produced thunderstorms with hail and waterspouts. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region which created "white-out" conditions in eastern Upper Michigan. Squalls produced up to 14 inches of snow in Geauga County of northeastern Ohio. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A total of thirty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date, and an Atlantic coast storm spread heavy snow from Georgia to southern New England. Snowfall totals in New Jersey ranged up to 24 inches in May County, with 19 inches reported at Atlantic City.

Totals in North Carolina ranged up to 18 inches in Gates County, and winds along the coast of North Carolina gusted to 70 mph at Duck Pier. Strong winds gusting to 52 mph created blizzard conditions at Chatham MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



livestream








Upcoming Events

Tuesday, BBB Region

gdilive.com

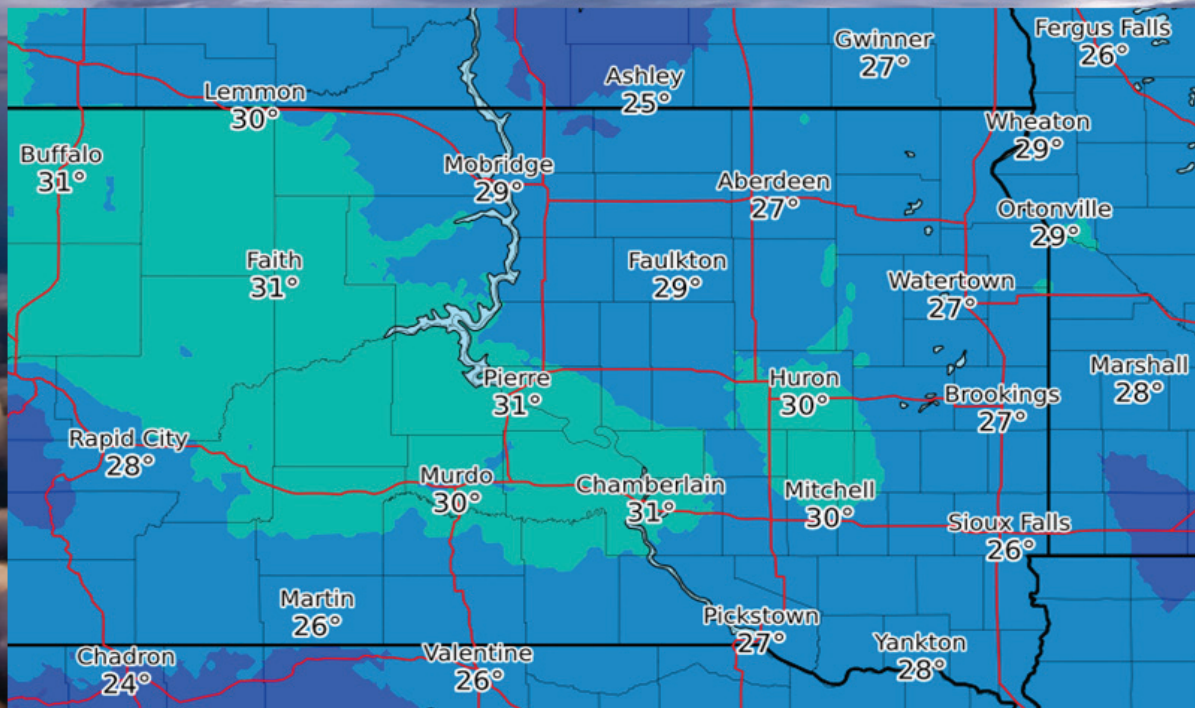
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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Decreasing Clouds	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Chance Snow	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 27 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 36 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 39 °F

Windy – A Mix Of Sun & Clouds

Friday Highs



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 2/24/2017 4:37 AM Central

Published on: 02/24/2017 at 5:00AM

As low pressure departs the area, winds will remain gusty but skies will show some clearing. Temperatures will be at or just above normal for the next few days.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 29.3

Low Outside Temp: 21.5

High Gust: 26

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 62° in 1976

Record Low: -26 in 1940

Average High: 30°F

Average Low: 10°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.45

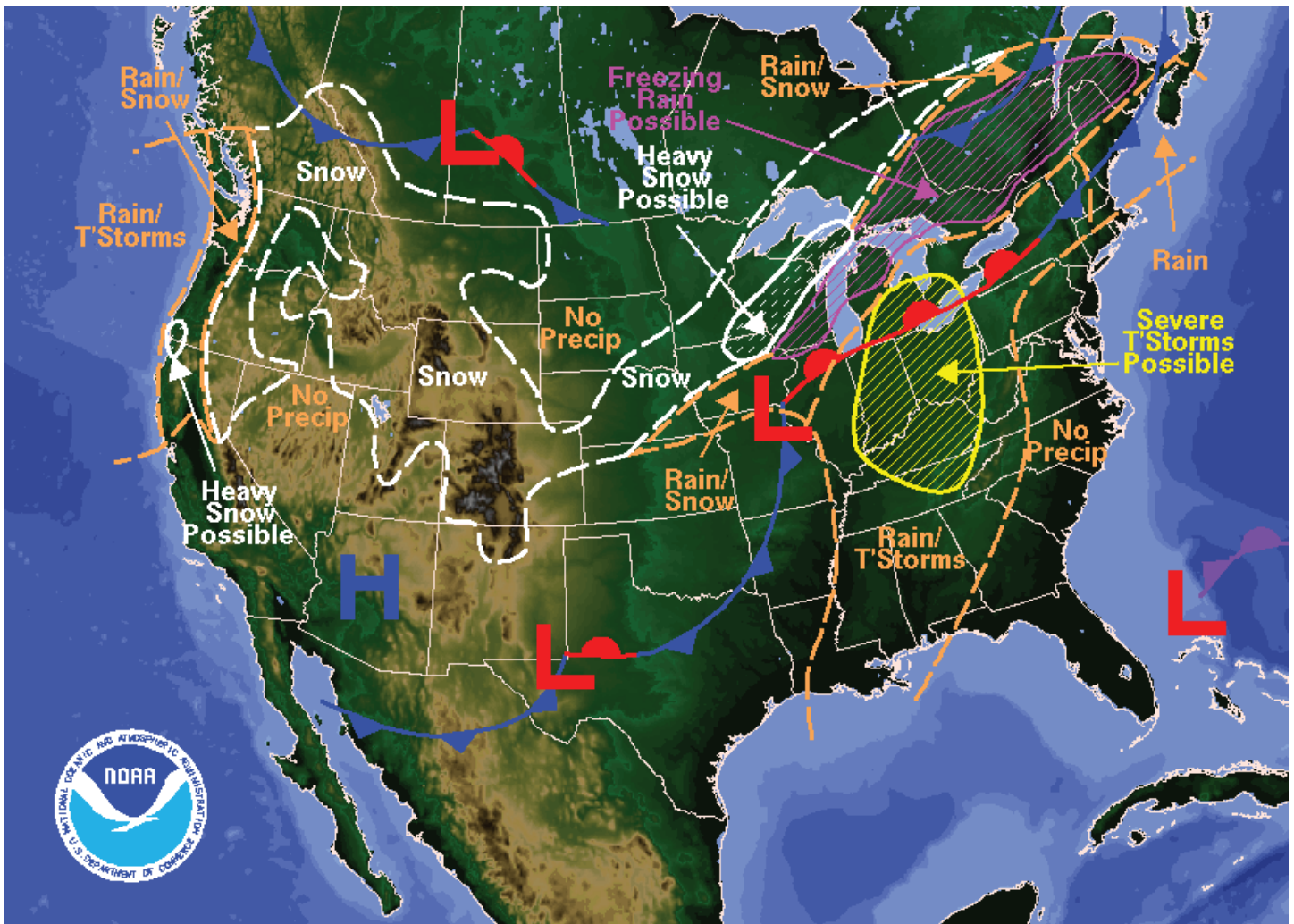
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.92

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 6:14 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:18 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Feb 24, 2017, issued 3:54 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



WHERE'S THE PICCOLO?

Sir Michael Costa was a celebrated and successful conductor in England. He was recognized by others for the demands he placed on musicians to be accurate and to perform with excellence. In fact, many resented him for his adherence to high musical standards.

On one occasion, during a rehearsal of a large choir and orchestra, he brought the music to an abrupt stop. The musicians were puzzled until he shouted, "Where's the piccolo? I can't hear the piccolo."

With all of the musicians playing as loudly as they could, and the choir singing as loudly as it could, the piccolo player thought to himself, "My instrument is so small and the sound it makes is so insignificant it won't be missed." But to Costa, the sound of one small instrument was essential to make the harmony needed for the concert to be complete.

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth said, "Now, all of you together are Christ's body and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it." Here we find him emphasizing the significance that each of us have, though we have our own distinctive talents and skills, that is necessary to do the work of Christ through our church and its various activities.

One of the dangers of comparing ourselves to others is that we come out looking as small as a piccolo. But remember, the Conductor needs us to play our part.

Prayer: Lord, may we each play our part in Your symphony of grace, realizing that if we do not play our part, Your Kingdom will be incomplete. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Crazy Horse 64, Marty Indian 45

Tri-Valley 65, Sioux Falls Christian 62

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Avon vs. Burke/South Central, ccd.

Beresford vs. Tea Area, ccd.

Canton vs. Vermillion, ccd.

Centerville vs. Menno, ppd. to Feb 25.

Freeman vs. Parker, ccd.

Gayville-Volin vs. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, ccd.

Platte-Geddes vs. Gregory, ppd. to Feb 25.

Rapid City Central vs. Mitchell, ccd.

Tripp-Delmont/Armour vs. Colome, ccd.

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Region 1A

Regional Semifinal

Milbank Area 51, Aberdeen Roncalli 40

Webster 56, Sisseton 35

Region 2A

Regional Semifinal

Hamlin 53, Deuel 25

Sioux Valley 50, Clark/Willow Lake 37

Region 5A

Regional Semifinal

West Central 54, Tri-Valley 29

Region 6A

Regional Semifinal

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 59, McLaughlin 50

Crow Creek 49, Miller 39

District 1B

Championship

Florence/Henry 52, Waverly-South Shore 45

District 2B

Championship

Warner 51, Leola/Frederick 32

District 3B

Championship

Herreid/Selby Area 51, Ipswich 50, OT

District 4B

Championship

Sully Buttes 65, Hitchcock-Tulare 25

District 5B

Semifinal

Castlewood 54, Deubrook 47

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DeSmet 71, Lake Preston 53
District 6B
Championship
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 60, Wolsey-Wessington 31
District 7B
Semifinal
Chester 49, Elkton-Lake Benton 36
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 46, Colman-Egan 37
District 8B
Semifinal
Ethan 77, Canistota 13
Howard 54, Hanson 47
District 14B
Championship
New Underwood 54, Philip 43
District 15B
Championship
Timber Lake 49, McIntosh 28
District 16B
Championship
Faith 65, Bison 31
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS
Region 3A
Regional Semifinal
Sioux Falls Christian vs. Dell Rapids, ppd. to Feb 25.
Flandreau vs. Madison, ppd. to Feb 25.
Region 4A
Regional Semifinal
Elk Point-Jefferson vs. Lennox, ppd. to Feb 25.
Vermillion vs. Dakota Valley, ppd. to Feb 27.
Region 5A
Regional Semifinal
Parkston vs. McCook Central/Montrose, ppd. to Feb 24.
Region 7A
Regional Semifinal
Winner vs. Little Wound, ppd. to Feb 25.
Region 8A
Region Qualifier
Belle Fourche vs. Custer, ppd. to Feb 24.
Hill City vs. St. Thomas More, ppd. to Feb 24.
District 13B
Championship
Kadoka Area vs. Lyman, ppd. to Feb 25.

White House adviser asked FBI to dispute Russia reports

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House chief of staff Reince Priebus asked a top FBI official to dispute media reports that President Donald Trump's campaign advisers were frequently in touch with Russian intelligence agents during the election, a White House official said.

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The official said that Priebus' request came as the White House sought to discredit a New York Times report about the contacts last week. As of Thursday, the FBI had not commented publicly on the report and there was no indication it planned to.

The New York Times reported that U.S. agencies had intercepted phone calls last year between Russian intelligence officials and members of Trump's 2016 campaign team.

Priebus' discussion with FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe sparked outrage among some Democrats, who said that the chief of staff was violating policies intended to limit communications between the law enforcement agency and the White House on pending investigations.

"The White House is simply not permitted to pressure the FBI to make public statements about a pending investigation of the president and his advisers," said Michigan Rep. John Conyers, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee.

A 2009 memo from then-Attorney General Eric Holder said the Justice Department is to advise the White House on pending criminal or civil investigations "only when it is important for the performance of the president's duties and appropriate from a law enforcement perspective." When communication has to occur, the memo said, it should involve only the highest-level officials from the White House and the Justice Department.

The White House official would not comment when asked if the administration was concerned about the appropriateness of Priebus' communications with McCabe. The official was not authorized to disclose the matter publicly and insisted on anonymity.

Trump himself, however, complained early Friday that the "FBI is totally unable to stop the national security 'leakers' that have permeated our government for a long time."

"They can't even find the leakers within the FBI itself. Classified information is being given to media that could have a devastating effect on U.S. FIND NOW," Trump tweeted.

The FBI would not say whether it had contacted the White House about the veracity of the Times report. The official told the AP that Priebus' request came after the FBI told the White House it believed a New York Times report last week describing those contacts was not accurate.

CNN first reported that Priebus had asked the FBI to weigh in on the matter.

Trump has been shadowed by questions about potential ties to Russia since winning the election. U.S. intelligence agencies have also concluded that Russia meddled in the campaign to help Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Last week, Trump fired national security adviser Michael Flynn because he misled Vice President Mike Pence and other White House officials about his contacts with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. Flynn, who was interviewed by the FBI about his contacts, is said to have talked with the ambassador multiple times during the transition, including a discussion about U.S. sanctions policy.

Still, Trump and his advisers have denied having had contacts with Russian officials during the election. Last week, Trump said "nobody that I know of" spoke with Russian intelligence agents during the campaign.

Priebus alluded to his contacts with the FBI over the weekend, telling Fox News that "the top levels of the intelligence community" have assured him that the allegations of campaign contacts with Russia were "not only grossly overstated, but also wrong."

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said Priebus' comments opened the door for FBI Director James Comey to discuss the bureau's investigation publicly.

"If the White House chief of staff can make public claims about the supposed conclusions of an FBI investigation, then Director Comey can come clean with the American people," Wyden said.

Justin Shur, a former Justice Department public corruption prosecutor, said it was imperative that Justice Department investigations not be swayed by political considerations.

"As a general matter, investigations and prosecutions should be about gathering the facts and the evidence and applying the law," Shur said.

During the campaign, Trump and other Republicans vigorously criticized a meeting between then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch and former President Bill Clinton, husband of Trump's general election opponent. The meeting came as the FBI — which is overseen by the Justice Department — was investigating Hillary

Clinton's use of a private email address and personal internet server.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Eileen Sullivan contributed to this report.

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

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. WHO ASKS FBI TO DISPUTE RUSSIA REPORTS

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus wanted the agency's top official to challenge media reports that Trump's campaign advisers were in touch with Russian intelligence agents during the election campaign.

2. WHAT MALAYSIA SAYS KILLED OUTCAST NORTH KOREAN SCION

The banned chemical weapon VX nerve agent, considered by some experts to be the nastiest of nerve agents, was used to kill Kim Jong Nam by two women who rubbed the substance on his face.

3. ATTACKS NEAR SYRIAN TOWN CAPTURED FROM ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS KILL 62

Meanwhile, the U.N. envoy for Syria kicks off his second day of meetings aimed to reach a political solution to end the country's war by hosting a delegation from Assad's government.

4. SHOOTING OF INDIAN MEN IN KANSAS CALLED RACIALLY MOTIVATED

The accused man is charged with murder and attempted murder. The attack sends shock waves through the victims' hometowns in India.

5. WHERE IRAQI FORCES REGAIN GROUND FROM ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS

Iraqi forces take control of most of Mosul's airport and all of military base next to it on city's southwestern edge.

6. WHY SUPREME COURT COULD DECIDE TRANSGENDER CASE

Both the transgender teen who sued to use the boys' bathroom and the Virginia school board that won't let him want the justices to issue a definitive ruling in the dispute.

7. CAITLYN JENNER CALLS TRUMP TRANSGENDER DECISION 'A DISASTER'

She is taking Trump to task for his administration's reversal of a directive on transgender access to public school bathrooms.

8. HOW TRUMP RETURNS TRANSFORMED TO CONSERVATIVE CONFAB

Trump will find a much more receptive crowd at the nation's largest gathering of conservative activists than when he first addressed the group six years ago.

9. VULNERABLE DEMOCRATS LAY LOW

Some senators are avoiding town hall meetings as their Republican counterparts get pummeled by an energized electorate frustrated with President Donald Trump's early agenda.

10. FAR-RIGHT CANDIDATE SEES FRANCE WITHOUT KIPPAS OR HEADSCARVES

Marine Le Pen's plan to ban religious symbols from French streets if elected president targets both the country's Muslim population and Europe's largest Jewish community.

Indian man killed in possibly racial shooting at Kansas bar

By JIM SUHR, Associated Press

OLATHE, Kan. (AP) — A man has been charged with murder in what some witnesses described as a racially motivated shooting at a crowded suburban Kansas City bar that left one Indian man dead and two other men hospitalized.

Local police are working with the FBI to investigate the shooting Wednesday night in Olathe, Kansas, but have declined to describe the attack as a hate crime.

A bartender at Austins Bar and Grill said Adam Purinton used "racial slurs" before he opened fire as patrons watched the University of Kansas-TCU basketball game on television. Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32,

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died at a hospital, while 32-year-old Alok Madasani and 24-year-old Ian Grillot are hospitalized in stable condition, police said.

Purinton, 51, was taken into custody about five hours after the shooting after he told a bartender at an Applebee's some 70 miles away in Clinton, Missouri, that he had been involved in a shooting. He has been charged with murder and attempted murder.

A spokesman for India's External Affairs Ministry, Vikas Swarup, said Kuchibhotla was from the southern state of Telangana. Sushma Swaraj, India's External Affairs Minister, said Kuchibhotla's body would be transported to the city of Hyderabad, where his family lives.

The LinkedIn accounts for Kuchibhotla and Madasani describe them as engineers for GPS device-maker Garmin, which has a customer service center in Olathe.

India's government said its diplomats would monitor progress in the investigation in Kansas.

Asked at a news conference Thursday if the involvement of federal authorities indicated the shooting might be considered a hate crime, FBI special agent Eric Jackson said it was too early to determine.

"This was a violent crime and we want the best prosecution that relates to this because there are victims of this crime and we want the community to know that. ... We're looking to make sure that the individual involved in this is held accountable for his actions."

Bartender Garret Bohnen told the Kansas City Star that Kuchibhotla and Madasani stopped at Austins for a drink once or twice a week.

"From what I understand when he was throwing racial slurs at the two gentlemen (Kuchibhotla and Madasani), Ian (Grillot) stood up for them," Bohnen said. "We're all proud of him."

Witnesses also told the Star that Purinton yelled "get out of my country" before he opened fire.

Grillot said in an interview from his hospital bed that when the gunfire started, he hid until nine shots had been fired and he thought the suspect's gun magazine was empty.

"I got up and proceeded to chase him down, try to subdue him," Grillot said in a video from the University of Kansas Health System. "I got behind him and he turned around and fired a round at me."

Grillot said that the bullet went through his hand and into his chest, just missing a major artery.

"It's not about where he (the victim) was from or his ethnicity," Grillot said. "We're all humans, so I just did what was right to do."

GoFundMe pages have been established to help pay the victims' expenses.

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas posted a statement on Facebook saying he was disturbed by the shooting.

"I strongly condemn violence of any kind, especially if it is motivated by prejudice and xenophobia," Moran said.

Malaysia: VX nerve agent killed outcast North Korean scion

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — The poison used to kill the estranged half brother of North Korea's leader at a crowded air terminal in Malaysia last week was the banned chemical weapon VX nerve agent, police said Friday. Eleven days after the deadly toxin was used, they said they would eliminate any possible remaining trace of it from the airport and other locations.

The revelation that VX nerve agent, deadly even in minute amounts, was used in the Feb. 13 attack boosted speculation that Pyongyang dispatched a hit squad to kill Kim Jong Nam, the outcast older sibling of North Korea's ruler.

The case also raised questions about public safety, although there was no sign that any bystanders had fallen ill. Police said one of the alleged attackers had been vomiting in the hours after the attack, but there were no reports that anyone else had been sickened.

Police had gone more than a week saying the airport was safe, even though it had not been decontaminated after a mysterious and deadly poisoning. After the announcement that VX was to blame, The Associated Press asked Malaysia's Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar in a text message whether decontamination would take place. He responded, "We are doing it now."

He later said police were arranging for the atomic energy agency to decontaminate the airport and

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"sweep all locations which we knew that the suspects went to."

Asked if people should avoid the airport because of fears of contamination, Khalid said, "No. No. No. But I don't know. I am not the expert."

Director-General Hamrah Mohamad Ali of the Atomic Energy Licensing Board later told The Associated Press in a text message that although his office did receive a police request for technical assistance, VX doesn't come under his jurisdiction because it's not radioactive. Police did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

VX nerve agent was detected on Kim's eyes and face, Khalid said earlier in a written statement, citing a preliminary report from the country's Center for Chemical Weapons Analysis.

According to Malaysian investigators, two female suspects coated their hands with the liquid toxin and wiped it on Kim's face as he waited for a flight home to Macau, where he lived with his family.

Kim sought help from airport staff but he fell into convulsions and died on the way to the hospital within two hours of the attack, police said.

Malaysian police say the women — one Vietnamese, one Indonesian — washed their hands immediately after the attack as they'd been trained to do, and had practiced the attack in Kuala Lumpur shopping malls.

Malaysian police had initially said no one besides Kim Jong Nam had been sickened. But Khalid told reporters that one of the two women accused of wiping the toxin on Kim's face became sick later and suffered from vomiting. He declined to say which woman had been sick but said she is no longer under treatment.

Khalid said police were still investigating how the lethal nerve agent entered Malaysia.

VX nerve agent has the consistency of motor oil and can take days or even weeks to evaporate. It could have contaminated anywhere Kim was afterward, including medical facilities and the ambulance he was transported in, experts say.

Dr. Bruce Goldberger, a leading toxicologist who heads the forensic medicine division at the University of Florida, said even a tiny amount of VX nerve agent can be fatal. An antidote can be administered by injection. U.S. medics and military personnel carried kits with them on the battlefield during the Iraq war in case they were exposed to the chemical weapon.

"It's a very toxic nerve agent. Very, very toxic," he said. "I'm intrigued that these two alleged assassins suffered no ill effect from exposure to VX. It is possible that both of these women were given the antidote."

He said symptoms from VX would generally occur within seconds or minutes and could last for hours starting with confusion, possible drowsiness, headache, nausea, vomiting, runny nose and watery eyes. Prior to death, a victim would likely have convulsions, seizures, loss of consciousness and paralysis.

The toxin was almost certainly produced in a sophisticated state weapons laboratory, and is banned under an international treaty. But North Korea never signed that treaty, and has spent decades developing a complex chemical weapons program that has long worried the international community.

Outside experts believe North Korea has the capacity to produce up to 4,500 metric tons of chemical weapons a year, and could raise that to 12,000 tons during a crisis. Its current inventory has been estimated at 2,500 to 5,000 tons.

It is suspected of being particularly focused on mustard, phosgene, sarin and V-type chemical agents — substances including VX that are designed to poison through contact and remain lethal for long periods of time. The North's development of such agents has been of special concern because of fears it might try to put them in artillery shells for an attack on South Korea's capital, potentially threatening the lives of millions.

Joseph Bermudez, a well-known North Korea analyst, wrote an article for the respected 38 North website in 2013 that said the North is capable of not only employing "significant quantities and varieties of chemical weapons" across the Korean Peninsula but also using those weapons worldwide "using unconventional methods of delivery."

He also said there is a "growing body of evidence" indicating the North has shared chemical weapons capabilities with Syria, Iran and others.

In addition to the suspected attackers, Malaysia has arrested a North Korean man said to be an informa-

tion technology worker at a Malaysian herbal supplements company and is seeking at least seven people, including the second secretary of North Korea's embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

Kim Jong Nam's very public assassination has unleashed a diplomatic crisis. North Korea has denounced Malaysia's investigation as full of "holes and contradictions" and manipulated by Pyongyang's enemies.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman pointedly defended his country's work on Friday, saying at a news conference, "The entire world knows that the investigation has been objective, impartial and also transparent."

He said the North Korean ambassador "continues to be delusional and spew lies and accusations" about the Malaysian government, and noted that Pyongyang's top diplomat in Kuala Lumpur "must realize that he must enjoy the confidence of the government of Malaysia."

AP writers Margie Mason in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Eric Talmadge in Tokyo contributed to this report.

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AP writers Margie Mason in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Eric Talmadge in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Trump can expect receptive crowd at conservative gathering

By JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Six years ago, as the "money, money, money, money" chorus of his reality TV show's theme song blasted, Donald Trump stepped out before the nation's largest gathering of conservative activists for the first time. The crowd was less than adoring, occasionally laughing at and booing the

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longtime former Democrat.

The intro music is more likely to be "Hail to the Chief" when he takes the stage Friday at the Conservative Political Action Conference. The audience will have changed its tune, too.

Trump's upcoming speech is designed to be one of appreciation, White House senior strategist Steve Bannon said Thursday. "He understands, at CPAC there are many, many, many voices," he said. "This is the room where he got his launch."

Bannon said Breitbart News, which he led before joining Trump's team last summer, and other conservative outlets first took note of the brash billionaire at his CPAC debut. And that's where Trump first began understanding the conservatives who years later would help him win the presidency.

"He wasn't familiar with CPAC when we introduced the concept to him," said Roger Stone, Trump's longtime informal political adviser. He said he thought Trump did quite well in that first appearance — "when you consider that he's not a pure ideologue. He's a populist with conservative instincts."

Stone and a gay Republican group had arranged the last-minute appearance, which Trump locked in with a donation to the American Conservative Union, which hosts the conference.

Although Trump returned most years afterward, he was notably absent last year. ACU chairman Matt Schlapp said the presidential candidates were asked to participate in a question-and-answer session, but Trump wanted to make a speech.

He did show up in 2015, however, a few months before he announced his candidacy.

"I am really inclined. I want to do it so badly," Trump said about the likelihood he'd run. Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker were the top two choices in that year's straw poll.

Now, CPAC is largely the Trump show — "TPAC," White House counselor Kellyanne Conway called it. She, Bannon and other administration officials spoke Thursday, and Vice President Mike Pence gave a keynote address.

Schlapp said Trump will be the first president to address the group during his first year in office since Ronald Reagan in 1981. He called that a "huge sign of respect."

Trump's first speech to the group bore little resemblance to the mega-rallies that were the hallmark of his presidential campaign, although many of the themes were the same. He read from papers on a lectern. He appeared to eye the crowd nervously.

No one in the crowd cheered or applauded when he explained why he might run for president.

He vowed to repeal President Barack Obama's health care law. He promised to create "vast numbers of productive jobs" and not to raise taxes. A Trump presidency, he predicted, would mean for the U.S. "hundreds of billions of dollars from other countries that are screwing us."

Although he eventually decided not to run — then — the audience got a sneak peek at his free-wheeling, non-sequitur-filled style. He ping-ponged from high gas prices to his love of open markets to his belief that China is manipulating currency.

He noted that a German company had bought the New York Stock Exchange, and abruptly changed the subject: "How about the Somali pirates? Now, you know, that doesn't really pertain to us, but how simple would that be? If we had a good admiral. Give me one good admiral and a couple of good ships — we'd blast them out of the water so fast."

He tried to burnish his conservative credentials with assertions that he is pro-life and anti-gun control, while heaping praise on himself and his business acumen.

And he appeared to test-drive the "make America great again" phrase that would become his 2016 presidential campaign slogan. "Our country will be great again," he said. He trademarked that phrase in 2012, just after Mitt Romney lost to Obama.

He told the skeptical crowd: "I have a reputation for telling it like it is. I'm known for my candor."

He seemed to back that up later.

Near the end of the speech he told the skeptical crowd that he was only thinking about running because he didn't like any of the potential candidates — prompting shouts of "Ron Paul" to break out. A Texas congressman at the time, Paul was a fan favorite of CPAC and won its straw poll that year.

Trump looked amused and shook his head. "By the way, Ron Paul cannot get elected, I'm sorry," he said. Loud boos erupted as Trump reiterated, "Zero chance of getting elected."

An angry audience member shouted: "You have zero chance of getting elected."

Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Follow Julie Bykowicz on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/bykowicz>

Attacks near Syria town captured from IS kill 62

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Two attacks near a Syrian town just captured by Turkish forces and Syrian opposition fighters from the Islamic State group killed at least 60 people, mostly civilians, and two Turkish soldiers on Friday, as the group retreats from one of its last remaining strongholds in northern Syria, Turkey's news agency and Syrian activists said.

A suicide car bomb went off Friday outside a security office operated by Syrian opposition north of al-Bab, killing 60 people, mostly civilians who had gathered to return home to the town liberated from IS only a day earlier. At least six fighters were among those killed in the attack, according to Turkey's Prime Minister, who spoke in Ankara.

According to Mohammed al-Tawil, a leading Syrian opposition fighter north of al-Bab, a suicide attacker blew up his small pick-up truck outside a security office in Sousian village, about 8 kilometers (5 miles) north of al-Bab. He said the explosion went off as the opposition fighters were organizing the return of civilians from al-Bab who had been displaced by the fighting for their town.

"These people have suffered a lot," al-Tawil told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from Sousian. "They have been waiting for this moment" to return home.

Al-Tawil, a member of the opposition al-Bab military council, said about four fighters manning the checkpoint were killed in the attack. Al-Tawil, who was at the security office at the time of the explosion, said the rest of the casualties were civilians from al-Bab.

Al-Bab, which had been controlled by IS since late 2013, was captured on Thursday, after more than two months of intense fighting led by Turkish troops supporting Syrian opposition fighters.

IS militants who withdrew from the town still control areas around it. The Sousian security office was supervising the issuing of permits and providing escorts for civilians wishing to return to al-Bab. Al-Tawil said at least two groups of about 150 civilians had already left early on Friday for al-Bab, accompanied by a mine sweeping unit run by Syrian opposition fighters.

Hours later, a second explosion was reported south of al-Bab, where two Turkish soldiers were killed, Turkey's military said. The military said the two soldiers were killed when an explosive device went off as they were removing land mines. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also said the soldiers were killed when an explosive device went off near Tadif, an IS-controlled town south of al-Bab. But the Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, however, called the explosion a "suicide attack." It was not immediately possible to reconcile the accounts.

The deaths Friday bring to 70 the total number of Turkish soldiers killed in Syria since August.

The Observatory's head Rami Abdurrahman said Turkish artillery have been intensely shelling IS-controlled Tadif Friday.

Turkey's Anadolu news agency said at least 41 of those wounded in the attack in Sousian were taken to the Turkish border town of Kilis, where they are being treated in a state hospital. Some of the wounded were in serious condition, the agency said.

The Observatory said at least seven opposition fighters were killed in the town by land mines left behind by IS — a trademark of the retreating militants.

Al-Bab had a prewar population of about 60,000, many of whom were displaced to neighboring areas, including during the most recent clashes.

Footage emerging from al-Bab showed a deserted town, badly damaged by the war. At least one of the streets appears completely wrecked, with buildings damaged or leveled on both sides. Trenches and

earth berms have made other streets unpassable, and nearly every building shows some signs of artillery shelling or heavy machine-gun fire.

Meanwhile, the U.N. envoy for Syria has kicked off his second day of meetings aimed to reach a political solution to end the country's war by hosting a delegation from the government of President Bashar Assad.

Associated Press writer Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey contributed to this report.

Iraqi forces enter western Mosul, take airport from IS

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi forces pushed into the first neighborhood in western Mosul on Friday and took full control of the international airport on the city's southwestern edge from the Islamic State group, according to Iraqi officials.

The gains mark the first key moves in the battle, now in its sixth day, to rout IS militants from the western half of the city of Mosul, the extremists' last urban stronghold in Iraq.

The push by Iraqi forces into Mosul's western Mamun neighborhood was followed by intense clashes with IS militants, according to an Iraqi special forces officer on the ground, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

An Associated Press team near the front line saw at least four wounded special forces' members and the bodies of three soldiers, suggesting more intense fighting than the previous day. Iraq's military does not release official casualty information.

Earlier on Friday, the spokesman of the Joint Military Operation Command, Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool, said Iraqi forces had also retaken a sprawling military base adjacent to the airport.

The advances come a day after special forces joined the fight. Both the sprawling Ghazlani military base and the airport will be key to the next steps in the daunting battle and will serve as a base of operations as Iraqi forces launch subsequent pushes into western Mosul, which is divided by the Tigris River into two halves.

Iraqi authorities declared the city's eastern half "fully liberated" from the Sunni militants in January, three months after launching the operation to take back Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city.

On Thursday, Iraqi special forces joined federal police and rapid response units in the push while the Popular Mobilization Forces — an umbrella group of government-sanctioned Shiite militias — secured the main roads west of Mosul, largely cutting the city off from IS-held territory in Syria.

The United Nations estimated that about 750,000 civilians are trapped in western Mosul. The initial numbers of displaced from western Mosul have been low, but Iraqi forces are yet to punch into the city's dense urban neighborhoods.

The battle for western Mosul is expected to be the most trying yet. The western half of the city is denser with older neighborhoods and narrower streets that will likely complicate the already difficult urban combat ahead.

Associated Press writer Andrea Rosa south of Mosul, Iraq, contributed to this report.

Supreme Court could decide transgender case. Or not.

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Both the transgender teen who sued to use a boys' bathroom and the Virginia school board that won't let him still want the Supreme Court to issue a definitive ruling in their ongoing dispute, even after the Trump administration retreated from an Obama-era policy on bathroom use.

The big issue for both sides is whether the main federal law barring sex discrimination in education protects high school senior Gavin Grimm and other transgender students.

Grimm was born a girl but identifies as a boy. The Virginia teen has been issued an amended birth

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certificate identifying him as a male, received hormone treatments and underwent chest reconstruction surgery.

His lawyers said in court papers filed Thursday that prohibiting him from using the boys' restroom is discrimination "on the basis of sex."

The Gloucester County school board said the law known as Title IX was "intended to erase discrimination against women in classrooms, faculties and athletics." It does not include gender identity, the board said.

But the withdrawal on Wednesday of joint Education and Justice Department guidance to school systems gives the high court an easy out if it is seeking to avoid a major ruling on transgender rights. The appeals court that sided with Grimm relied on the Obama administration's reading of the anti-discrimination law and an Education Department regulation to hold that Grimm should be allowed to use a restroom that conforms to his chosen gender.

The Trump administration's decision to abandon Obama's restroom guidance set off tensions within the Cabinet. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos expressed reluctance to rescind protections for transgender students and clashed with Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who supported it, according to a person familiar with the conversations but not authorized to speak publicly about internal discussions and so requested anonymity.

After Wednesday's the announcement, DeVos released her own statement, stressing that the administration had a "moral obligation" to protect LGBT students, which she said was "not only a key priority for the department, but for every school in America." Speaking Thursday to the Conservative Political Action Conference, however, she framed it as a legal matter, "a very huge example of the Obama administration's overreach."

The court on Thursday asked both sides to say what they think it should do following the administration's action.

Now that the basis for the appellate ruling has disappeared, the justices could return the case to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, and direct it to decide for itself what the law and regulation require. No appeals court has yet to do so and the high court typically won't take up a major legal issue until after several courts around the country have weighed in.

Similar cases are making their way through other courts of appeal.

The temptation to wait may be even stronger because the court has been one justice short for more than a year, since Justice Antonin Scalia's death. President Donald Trump has nominated Judge Neil Gorsuch, but there is no chance Gorsuch could join the court in time for the March 28 argument in the Virginia case.

"If I were a justice on the court, my inclination would be to say that I'd much rather be reviewing a lower court opinion that looked at the Title IX question," said Case Western Reserve University law professor Jonathan Adler. Adler signed onto a legal brief in support of the school board that dealt with when courts should defer to federal agencies. That issue is no longer part of the case.

There are some reasons why the justices might want to resolve the issue before the court breaks for the summer. Joshua Block, the American Civil Liberties Union lawyer who is representing Grimm, said the administration's actions have created confusion and "only underscore the need for the Supreme Court to bring some clarity here."

Some strategic considerations may be at work as well. The outcome is likely to divide the liberal and conservative justices. The four liberal justices would need Justice Anthony Kennedy's vote to form a majority. It's not clear he's with them.

Back in August, five justices voted to block the 4th circuit ruling ordering the school district to allow Grimm to use the boys' restroom, at least until the high court finished its review of the case. At the time, Justice Stephen Breyer said he was providing the necessary fifth, majority-making vote as a courtesy to Kennedy and the other more conservative justices.

It is impossible to know whether the court was spurred to act in August because of its concern about when courts should rely on agencies' interpretations of laws and regulations, or the larger issue of Title IX protections.

Fourteen states already prohibit discrimination against transgender students, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

White House adviser asked FBI to dispute Russia reports

By JULIE PACE, AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House chief of staff Reince Priebus asked a top FBI official to dispute media reports that President Donald Trump's campaign advisers were frequently in touch with Russian intelligence agents during the election, a White House official said late Thursday.

The official said Priebus' request came after the FBI told the White House it believed a New York Times report last week describing those contacts was not accurate. As of Thursday, the FBI had not stated that position publicly and there was no indication it planned to.

The New York Times reported that U.S. agencies had intercepted phone calls last year between Russian intelligence officials and members of Trump's 2016 campaign team.

Priebus' discussion with FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe sparked outrage among some Democrats, who said he was violating policies intended to limit communications between the law enforcement agency and the White House on pending investigations.

"The White House is simply not permitted to pressure the FBI to make public statements about a pending investigation of the president and his advisers," said Michigan Rep. John Conyers, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee.

A 2009 memo from then-Attorney General Eric Holder said the Justice Department is to advise the White House on pending criminal or civil investigations "only when it is important for the performance of the president's duties and appropriate from a law enforcement perspective." When communication has to occur, the memo said, it should involve only the highest-level officials from the White House and the Justice Department.

The White House official would not comment when asked if the administration was concerned about the appropriateness of Priebus' communications with McCabe. The official was not authorized to disclose the matter publicly and insisted on anonymity.

The FBI would not say whether it had contacted the White House about the veracity of the Times report.

CNN first reported that Priebus had asked the FBI to weigh in on the matter.

Trump has been shadowed by questions about potential ties to Russia since winning the election. U.S. intelligence agencies have also concluded that Russia meddled in the campaign to help Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Last week, Trump fired national security adviser Michael Flynn because he misled Vice President Mike Pence and other White House officials about his contacts with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. Flynn, who was interviewed by the FBI about his contacts, is said to have talked with the ambassador multiple times during the transition, including about U.S. sanctions policy.

Still, Trump and his advisers have denied contacts with Russian officials during the election. Last week, Trump said "nobody that I know of" spoke with Russian intelligence agents during the campaign.

Priebus alluded to his contacts with the FBI over the weekend, telling Fox News that "the top levels of the intelligence community" have assured him that the allegations of campaign contacts with Russia were "not only grossly overstated, but also wrong."

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said Priebus' comments opened the door for FBI Director James Comey to discuss the bureau's investigation publicly.

"If the White House chief of staff can make public claims about the supposed conclusions of an FBI investigation, then Director Comey can come clean with the American people," Wyden said.

Justin Shur, a former Justice Department public corruption prosecutor, said it was imperative that Justice Department investigations not be swayed by political considerations.

"As a general matter, investigations and prosecutions should be about gathering the facts and the evidence and applying the law," Shur said.

During the campaign, Trump and other Republicans vigorously criticized a meeting between then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch and former President Bill Clinton, husband of Trump's general election opponent. The meeting came as the FBI — which is overseen by the Justice Department — was investigating Hillary Clinton's use of a private email address and personal internet server.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Eileen Sullivan contributed to this report.

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

White House expects Justice crackdown on legalized marijuana

By SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department will step up enforcement of federal law against recreational marijuana, White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Thursday, offering the Trump administration's strongest indication to date of a looming crackdown on the drug, even as a solid majority of Americans believe it should be legal.

"I do believe you'll see greater enforcement of it," Spicer said in response to a question during a news conference. But he offered no details about what such enforcement would entail. President Donald Trump does not oppose medical marijuana, he added, but "that's very different than recreational use, which is something the Department of Justice will be further looking into."

A renewed focus on recreational marijuana in states that have legalized pot would present a departure from the Trump administration's statements in favor of states' rights. A day earlier, the administration announced that the issue of transgender student bathroom access was best left to states and local communities to decide.

Enforcement would also shift away from marijuana policy under the Obama administration, which said in a 2013 memo that it would not intervene in state's marijuana laws as long as they keep the drug from crossing state lines and away from children and drug cartels.

But the memo carried no force of law and could be rewritten by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has consistently said he opposes legal marijuana but has not indicated what he might do.

Eight states and Washington, D.C., have legalized marijuana for recreational use. The Justice Department has several options available should it decide to enforce the law, including filing lawsuits on the grounds that state laws regulating pot are unconstitutional because they are pre-empted by federal law. Enforcement could also be as simple as directing U.S. attorneys to send letters to recreational marijuana businesses letting them know they are breaking the law.

Washington's attorney general, Bob Ferguson, said he and Gov. Jay Inslee, both Democrats, requested a meeting with Sessions about his approach to legal, regulated marijuana. Ferguson led the states in fighting off Trump's executive order on immigration in court and said Thursday he's prepared to lead the way in defending legal marijuana, too.

"We will resist any efforts to thwart the will of the voters in Washington," Ferguson said.

Kevin Sabet, head of the anti-marijuana group Smart Approaches to Marijuana, said pot enforcement is a matter of public safety.

"The current situation is unsustainable," Sabet said in a statement. "This isn't an issue about states' rights, it's an issue of public health and safety for communities."

Spicer's comments came the same day as a Quinnipiac poll said 59 percent of Americans think marijuana should be legal and 71 percent would oppose a federal crackdown.

Pot advocates said they hoped Spicer's prediction would not come to pass.

"It is hard to imagine why anyone would want marijuana to be produced and sold by cartels and criminals rather than tightly regulated, taxpaying businesses," said Mason Tvert, communications director for the Marijuana Policy Project.

States have been flouting the U.S. Controlled Substances Act since at least 1996, when California voters

approved marijuana for sick people, a direct conflict with federal guidelines barring the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

And presidents since Bill Clinton have said the federal government unequivocally rejects a state's ability to modify federal drug law.

However, three presidents over the last 20 years have each concluded that the limited resources of the U.S. Department of Justice are best spent pursuing large drug cartels, not individual users of marijuana.

Nevada state Senate Majority Leader Aaron Ford said in a statement Thursday that meddling in recreational pot laws would be federal overreach and harm state coffers that fund education.

In Washington state, sales at licensed pot shops now average nearly \$4.4 million per day — with little evidence of any negative societal effects. That's close to \$1 billion in sales so far for the fiscal year that began last July, some \$184 million of which is state tax revenue.

Associated Press writers Kristen Wyatt in Denver and Gene Johnson in Seattle continued to this report.

Mayor 'deeply disturbed' over incident between cop and teen

By AMY TAXIN and BRIAN MELLEY, Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Anaheim officials pressed for calm Thursday after a night of raucous protests that followed an incident in which an off-duty policeman scuffled in his front yard with a boy, drew a weapon and fired a shot into the ground after another teen pushed him over a hedge and others surrounded him.

Mayor Tom Tait said he was "deeply disturbed" and angered by what he saw on video of the incident, but he also denounced violence and damage caused by demonstrators.

"The video shows an adult wrestling with a 13-year-old kid, and ultimately firing a gun," Tait said. "This has been a blow to our community."

The street demonstrations five years after unruly protests over two fatal police shootings served as a reminder that the home of Disneyland, dubbed "The Happiest Place on Earth," has the problems of any city with 350,000 residents.

No one was hurt in the scuffle on a residential street that started Tuesday after the Los Angeles officer took action in an ongoing dispute with students walking after school. The officer had reported the problem in the past to local police, said Anaheim Sgt. Daron Wyatt.

Police Chief Raul Quezada defended his department's decision to arrest two teens, but not the officer, who detained the 13-year-old boy after believing the boy threatened him. The investigation continues and the chief wouldn't rule out charges against anyone involved.

Videos shot from different angles and posted on YouTube show the officer clenching the boy's sweatshirt and pulling him across the lawn as they argued about what precipitated the incident.

The 13-year-old believed the officer, who was not named, had cursed at a teenage girl who had walked across his lawn in the area of single-family homes, many with tidy flower beds and well-pruned trees, about 2 miles west of Disneyland.

Michael Carrillo, an attorney representing the teenage girl, said she had "grazed" the officer's lawn when he began shouting expletives at her. Carrillo said the altercation turned physical after the boy stepped in and told the officer he shouldn't curse at a child.

In the video, the officer said he had heard the boy say he was going to "shoot" him, but the teen insists he said he was going to "sue" him.

At one point, the teen said, "Let me go. ... I'm only 13."

Another youth rushed the officer, who stumbled back through a low hedge, still holding the 13-year-old.

A teen then took a swing at the officer. Other kids approached, and the man — still gripping the 13-year-old with one hand — pulled a gun from his waistband, crouched and fired a shot.

Teens shooting video began running down the street and cursing.

The 13-year-old, who is the stepson of an Anaheim police officer, was booked on suspicion of making a criminal threat and battery. A 15-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of assault and battery.

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Both boys, who weren't named because they're juveniles, were later released, Quezada said. The union representing Los Angeles police officers said the officer had a right to self-defense after being physically assaulted.

If he mistakenly thought the boy said "shoot" instead of "sue," he had a reasonable basis to fear for his safety, said Jon Shane, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

"You can always be mistaken about the facts, but you must be right about the law," Shane said. "Shooting and suing are two different things and they clearly have two different outcomes. ... Shooting would provide a reasonable basis for imminent fear of bodily harm. The other not so much."

Carillo has filed a claim against the cities of Anaheim and Los Angeles, the precursor to a civil lawsuit, alleging the incident shows the Los Angeles Police Department was deficient in training officers.

Attorney Carl Douglas, who is not involved in the case, called it an outrageous use of force and intimidation and questioned the officer's qualifications.

"Anyone present could have been killed because of this reckless use of force," Douglas said. "Because someone was walking on his grass, this officer thought the circumstances justified his walking out of his house with his gun in his waistband to confront some teenager."

The LAPD is also investigating the incident.

Hundreds of people marched through suburban Anaheim streets late Wednesday, some blocking traffic and carrying signs that said "no shooting zone." Police arrested two dozen people, including children, after the crowd ignored orders to disperse.

The city 24 miles southeast of Los Angeles was roiled in 2012 by demonstrations following the fatal police shootings of two unarmed Latino men. The deaths sparked four days of violent protests resulting in smashed shop windows and dozens of arrests.

Neighbor Joe Gulrich, 76, said his house was spray-painted during the protest on Wednesday and police told him he should leave for his own safety. When he returned late at night, he found a rock had been thrown through his front window.

"He did the right thing," Gulrich said. "If he hadn't done that they would have ganged up on him."

Mike Gutierrez, 35, said he was concerned by the officer's handling of the incident.

"What kind of officer goes against a child?" asked Gutierrez, who lives a few blocks away.

AP writers Christopher Weber, Michael Balsamo and Andrew Dalton contributed from Los Angeles. Melley reported from Los Angeles.

Homeland Security chief: No use of military for deportations

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Seeking to tamp down growing unease in Latin America, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly pledged Thursday that the United States won't enlist its military to enforce immigration laws and that there will be "no mass deportations."

Only hours earlier, President Donald Trump suggested the opposite. He told CEOs at the White House the deportation push was a "military operation."

Kelly, speaking in Mexico's capital, said all deportations will comply with human rights requirements and the U.S. legal system, including its multiple appeals for those facing deportation. He said the U.S. approach will involve "close coordination" with Mexico's government.

"There will be no use of military forces in immigration," Kelly said. "There will be no — repeat, no — mass deportations."

Yet while Kelly and U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson tried to alleviate Mexico's concerns, Trump was fanning them further, with tough talk about "getting really bad dudes out of this country at a rate nobody has ever seen before."

"It's a military operation," Trump said Thursday while his envoys were in Mexico City. "Because what has been allowed to come into our country, when you see gang violence that you've read about like never

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before and all of the things, much of that is people who are here illegally.”

It was an altogether different message from Kelly and Tillerson, who traveled here to meet with top Mexican officials at a time of intense turbulence for U.S.-Mexico relations. Indeed, Trump acknowledged he had sent his top diplomat south of the border on a “tough trip.”

In contrast to Trump, Tillerson and Kelly emphasized a U.S. commitment to work closely with Mexico on border security, illegal immigration and trafficking of drugs and weapons — issues Trump has made a central focus of his young presidency, much to Mexico’s dismay. Both Tillerson and Kelly appeared to downplay any major rift between the U.S. and Mexico.

“In a relationship filled with vibrant colors, two strong sovereign countries from time to time will have differences,” Tillerson said. “We listened closely and carefully to each other as we respectfully and patiently raised our respective concerns.”

For Mexico, that patience was running short.

Foreign Relations Secretary Luis Videgaray noted the “public and notorious differences” between the countries and said the Mexicans had raised the “legal impossibility” of a government making “unilateral” decisions affecting another country. Videgaray has previously raised the prospect Mexico could seek recourse at the United Nations or elsewhere for U.S. moves violating international law.

“It is an evident fact that Mexicans feel concern and irritation over what are perceived as policies that may hurt Mexicans and the national interest of Mexicans here and abroad,” Videgaray said.

The divergent tones from Trump and from his Cabinet officials left Mexico with an uncomfortable decision about whom to believe. Throughout Trump’s first weeks, foreign leaders have grown increasingly skeptical as Trump’s envoys deliver soothing messages that are then negated by the president.

Mexico has been incensed that the U.S. announced — without Mexico’s sign-off — that people caught crossing the border illegally will be sent back to Mexico — even those from third countries who have no connection to Mexico. Interior Secretary Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, Kelly’s Mexican counterpart, said that concern had come up Thursday, too.

Both countries said it was positive that the neighbors remained committed to working through the disputes diplomatically, though there were no indications they were any closer to a resolution. As the Americans wrapped up their Mexico visit, they remained at odds with their hosts over the deportations and over the massive border wall Trump has vowed to construct at Mexico’s expense.

Trump spoke during the presidential campaign about using a “deportation force.” His Homeland Security Department at one point considered using the National Guard to help with deportations, although the White House has said that idea has been ruled out.

The Homeland Security Department didn’t immediately respond to requests to clarify why Trump’s remark about “a military operation” had conflicted with that of Kelly, who blamed the media for “misreporting.” At the White House, spokesman Sean Spicer said Trump hadn’t been speaking literally. He said Trump used the “military operation” phrase “as an adjective” to describe the precision with which immigration enforcement was being carried out.

Tillerson and Kelly also met behind closed doors with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto before returning to Washington. Pena Nieto’s office said he told the visitors that Mexico’s top priorities are “the protection of Mexicans in the United States and respect for their rights.” The U.S. declined to release any details about what was discussed in the meeting.

Pena Nieto recently canceled a trip to Washington over Trump’s insistence that Mexico pay for the wall. It has not been rescheduled.

In addition to sending border-crossers from third countries into Mexico, new memos signed by Kelly this week call for prioritizing deportation for anyone charged or convicted of any crime, rather than just serious crimes. That potentially subjects millions in the U.S. illegally to deportation, many Mexicans included.

Those policies have stoked fears in Mexico about the possibility of deportee and refugee camps emerging along Mexico’s northern border. Mexican officials were also apprehensive that a forthcoming report ordered by Trump’s administration listing all current U.S. aid to Mexico is intended to threaten Mexico into compliance over immigration or the wall.

Mexico has also raised concerns about Trump's pledge to overhaul the trade relationship and possibly apply steep taxes to Mexican products, a move with profound impacts for Mexico's export-heavy economy. Tillerson said the leaders had agreed the trade relationship needed to be modernized and strengthened.

Associated Press writer Mark Stevenson in Mexico City and Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this report.

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

Dakota Access oil pipeline camp cleared of protesters

By JAMES MacPHERSON and BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press



A law enforcement officer climbs a ladder to speak to one of the final holdouts of the Dakota Access Pipeline protest camp sitting atop a wood structure built at the Oceti Sakowin camp in Morton County Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017, near Cannon Ball, N.D. After a couple of hours the protester came down on his own and was arrested. (Mike McCleary/The Bismarck Tribune via AP, Pool)

CANNON BALL, N.D. (AP) — Authorities on Thursday cleared a protest camp where opponents of the Dakota Access oil pipeline had gathered for the better part of a year, searching tents and huts and arresting dozens of holdouts who had defied a government order to leave.

It took 3 ½ hours for about 220 officers and 18 National Guardsmen to methodically search the protesters' temporary homes. Authorities said they arrested 46 people, including a group of military veterans who had to be carried out and a man who climbed atop a building and stayed there for more than an hour before surrendering.

Native Americans who oppose the \$3.8 billion pipeline established the Oceti Sakowin camp last April on federal land near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation to draw attention to their concerns that the project will hurt the environment and sacred sites — claims Dallas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners disputes. The camp gained increased attention starting in August after its population had grown and authorities made their first arrests. At its height, the camp included thousands of people, but the numbers had dwindled during the winter and as the fight over the pipeline moved into the courts.

The Army Corps of Engineers said it needed to clear the camp ahead of spring flooding, and had ordered everyone to leave by 2 p.m. Wednesday. The agency said it was concerned about protesters' safety and about the environmental effects of tents, cars, garbage and other items in the camp being washed into nearby rivers.

Most protesters left peacefully Wednesday, when authorities closed the camp, but some stayed overnight in defiance of the government order.

Before the arrests, protester Ed Higgins 39, of Lowell, Massachusetts, said by phone from the camp that morale was high and opponents were prepared to stay as long as necessary. Protesters maintain that the camp was on

land that rightfully belongs to American Indians under old treaties.

"They do not own the land. They do not have the right to be here," said Higgins, who did not answer his phone after authorities cleared the camp.

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Several dozen law enforcement personal march south on Highway 1806 before assembling above the Oceti Sakowin camp to begin the final sweep of Dakota Access oil pipeline of the camp and arrests of protesters Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017, near Cannon Ball, N.D. (Mike McCleary/The Bismarck Tribune via AP, Pool)



A backhoe rips through a wood structure to begin the cleaning up process at the Oceti Sakowin camp as law enforcement swept through the camp arresting the final Dakota Access oil pipeline protesters in Morton County Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017, near Cannon Ball, N.D. (Mike McCleary/The Bismarck Tribune via AP, Pool)

As police in full riot gear worked to arrest the stragglers, cleanup crews began razing buildings on the square-mile piece of property at the confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri rivers.

American Indian activist Chase Iron Eyes, an outspoken supporter of the camp, said its shutdown is not the end of the fight against the pipeline.

"The battleground has shifted to the legal courts and the court of public opinion," he said, referring to lawsuits filed by tribes and an effort planned by the Lakota People's Law Project to rally lawmakers and others in Washington, D.C., to their cause.

Authorities entered the camp "cautiously and tactfully" to ensure the safety of officers and protesters, Highway Patrol Lt. Tom Iversen said. The arrests were a last resort, he said.

"We did not want this. Unfortunately, there were some bad actors that forced us into this position," he said.

Only one person resisted arrest; otherwise there were no major incidents, and there were no injuries, Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier said.

Afterward, officers showed visible relief, smiling, shaking hands and patting one another on the back.

Guardsmen and officers entered the camp from two directions shortly before midday, alongside numerous law enforcement and military vehicles and with a helicopter and airplane overhead. As they checked and cleared buildings, they marked them with a fluorescent orange "X."

They declared the camp cleared shortly after 2 p.m., though Morton

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County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier said 50 protesters crossed the frozen Cannonball River on foot to another camp on the south bank. That land also is Corps-managed but is on the Standing Rock Reservation, where North Dakota authorities don't have jurisdiction. They planned to station officers on the north shore to keep anyone from re-entering the main camp.

Before authorities moved in, Gov. Doug Burgum had said those remaining at the camp still had a chance to leave without facing charges. The state sent a bus to the site on Thursday to transport anyone to Bismarck, where officials were doling out basic necessities, along with hotel and bus vouchers.

No one took advantage of the offer Thursday, and only nine people used the center Tuesday and Wednesday. The center was closed Thursday due to the lack of use, state Emergency Services spokeswoman Cecily Fong said.

Energy Transfer Partners began work on the last big section of the oil pipeline this month after the Army gave it permission to lay pipe under a reservoir on the Missouri River. When complete, the pipeline will carry oil through the Dakotas and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois.

Nicholson reported from Bismarck, N.D. Follow him on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 24, the 55th day of 2017. There are 310 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 24, 1942, the SS Struma, a charter ship attempting to carry nearly 800 Jewish refugees from Romania to British-mandated Palestine during World War II, sank in the Black Sea off Turkey after it was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine; all but one of the refugees on board perished.

On this date:

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII issued an edict outlining his calendar reforms. (The Gregorian Calendar is the calendar in general use today.)

In 1868, the U.S. House of Representatives impeached President Andrew Johnson following his attempted dismissal of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton; Johnson was later acquitted by the Senate.

In 1912, the American Jewish women's organization Hadassah was founded in New York City.

In 1920, the German Workers Party, which later became the Nazi Party, met in Munich to adopt its platform.

In 1938, the first nylon bristle toothbrush, manufactured by DuPont under the name "Dr. West's Miracle Toothbrush," went on sale.

In 1955, the Cole Porter musical "Silk Stockings" opened at the Imperial Theater on Broadway.

In 1966, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, was overthrown in a military coup while he was visiting Beijing; he was replaced by Joseph Arthur Ankrah.

In 1975, the Congressional Budget Office, charged with providing independent analyses of budgetary and economic issues, began operating under its first director, Alice Rivlin.

In 1983, a congressional commission released a report condemning the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II as a "grave injustice."

In 1987, Fawn Hall, former personal secretary to fired National Security Council aide Oliver L. North, posed for news photographers outside her attorney's office, calling the attention "a little overwhelming."

In 1992, Nirvana lead singer Kurt Cobain married Hole lead vocalist Courtney Love in Hawaii.

In 1996, Cuba downed two small American planes operated by the group Brothers to the Rescue that it claimed were violating Cuban airspace; all four pilots were killed.

Ten years ago: A suicide truck bomber struck worshippers leaving a Sunni mosque in Habbaniyah, 50 miles west of Baghdad, killing at least 52 people. The Virginia General Assembly passed a resolution

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expressing “profound regret” for the state’s role in slavery. Denver Broncos running back Damien Nash, 24, collapsed and died after hosting a charity basketball game in suburban St. Louis.

Five years ago: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in Tunisia for a conference on Syria, called Russia and China “despicable” for opposing U.N. action aimed at stopping the bloodshed caused by the Damascus regime’s crackdown on an anti-government uprising. Jan Berenstain, 88, who with her husband, Stan, wrote and illustrated the Berenstain Bears books, died in Solebury Township, Pennsylvania.

One year ago: The Senate overwhelmingly confirmed Dr. Robert Califf to be commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. President Barack Obama nominated Carla Hayden, longtime head of Baltimore’s library system, to be the 14th Librarian of Congress; Hayden became the first woman and the first African-American to hold the position. An Indianapolis man was convicted of murder, arson and insurance fraud for his role in a 2012 house explosion that killed two neighbors and devastated a subdivision. (Bob Leonard was sentenced to two consecutive life prison terms without parole, plus 70 years.) Surgeons at the Cleveland Clinic performed the nation’s first uterus transplant on a 26-year-old woman, using an organ from a deceased donor (however, the transplant failed).

Today’s Birthdays: Actor-singer Dominic Chianese (kee-uh-NAY’-see) is 86. Movie composer Michel LeGrand is 85. Opera singer-director Renata Scotto is 83. Singer Joanie Sommers is 76. Former Sen. Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn., is 75. Actor Barry Bostwick is 72. Actor Edward James Olmos is 70. Singer-writer-producer Rupert Holmes is 70. Rock singer-musician George Thorogood is 67. Actress Debra Jo Rupp is 66. Actress Helen Shaver is 66. News anchor Paula Zahn is 61. Baseball Hall of Famer Eddie Murray is 61. Country singer Sammy Kershaw is 59. Actor Mark Moses is 59. Actress Beth Broderick is 58. Singer Michelle Shocked is 55. Movie director Todd Field is 53. Actor Billy Zane is 51. Actress Bonnie Somerville is 43. Jazz musician Jimmy Greene is 42. Rhythm-and-blues singer Brandon Brown (Mista) is 34. Rock musician Matt McGinley (Gym Class Heroes) is 34. Actor Wilson Bethel is 33. Actor Alexander Koch is 29. Rapper-actor O’Shea Jackson Jr. is 26.

Thought for Today: “Be kind to unkind people — they need it the most.” — Ashleigh Brilliant, English-born American writer.