

# Groton Daily Independent

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**For Sale by Owner: Very nice two-story home 107 South First Street, Andover, SD – 10 minutes from Groton and 20 minutes to Webster. Includes two lots, garage, small shed, three bedrooms, kitchen, living room, dining room, 1 ½ baths, new roof. Call 605-351-7991**

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

**The cardboard/paper**  
recycling trailer at the school is **Closed**

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## Wednesday, April 12

**School Lunch:** Soft shell tacos, tri taters, fruit.

**School Breakfast:** Bosco sticks, fruit, juice, milk.

**Senior Menu:** Vegetable beef soup, chicken salad sandwich, Mandarin oranges, oatmeal raisin cookie.

**Emmanuel Lutheran:** Sarah Circle at 5 p.m., League at 6:30 p.m., Confirmation at 7 p.m.

**St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church:** Living Stations at 7 p.m. (to be carried live on GDILIVE.COM)

**St. John's Lutheran:** Confirmation at 3:45 p.m.

**United Methodist, Groton:** Community Coffee Time from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. with free coffee and rolls; Kid Zone at 3:30 p.m., Confirmation at 6 p.m. with 8th grade mentors joining.

## Thursday, April 13

7th/8th grade track at Sisseton, 4 p.m.

**School Lunch:** Chicken noodle soup, grilled cheese, broccoli and dip, fruit.

**School Breakfast:** Cereal, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

**Senior Menu:** Easter Dinner: Ham, raisin sauce, baked sweet potato, green bean casserole, Easter dessert, dinner roll.

**Emmanuel Lutheran:** Worship with 1st communion for Fifth Graders at 7 p.m.

**St. John's Lutheran:** Maundy Thursday Service at 7 p.m.

**United Methodist:** Conde Maundy Thursday service at 5:30 p.m., Finance Meeting at 6 p.m., Groton Maundy Thursday service at 7:30 p.m.

## JOHNSON AGENCY

Real Estate & Insurance

Jay Johnson, Broker

[www.johnsonagencygroton.com](http://www.johnsonagencygroton.com)

102 N Main St.  
Groton, SD 57445

Office: 605/397-2424  
Home: 605/397-8565



## Doeden, Wanner are state qualifiers

Two Groton Area athletes met the state qualifying standard at the Groton Invitational Track Meet held Tuesday. Jonathan Doeden took second in the 110m Hurdles and qualified for state and Audrey Wanner won the triple jump and qualified for state in that event. Wanner was picked as the Dick Donovan Field Events MVP as she won the long jump and the triple jump.

Others taking first were Sean Schuring in the 800m run, the boys 400m relay team of Trevor Pray, Bennett Shabazz, Jackson Oliver and Lucas Hinman, and Jessica Bjerke in the discus.

### Boy's Division

**110m Hurdles:** 2, Jonathan Doeden, 14.74 (SQ); Garret Schroeder, 19.3.

**300m Hurdles:** 7, Garret Schroeder, 51.28.

**100m Dash:** 5, Lucas Hinman, 11.78; 7, Jackson Oliver, 11.92.

**200m Dash:** 6, Thomas Cranford, 24.54; 8, Jackson Oliver, 24.81; Garret Schroeder, 27.7.

**400m Dash:** 7, Treyton Diegel, 58.66; 8, Austin Jones, 58.91; Brandon Keith, 1:00.

**800m Run:** 1, Sean Schuring, 2:12.61; Mitchell Koens, 2:31.

**1600m Run:** 3, Sean Schuring, 5:09.84.

**400m Relay:** 1, (Trevor Pray, Bennett Shabazz, Jackson Oliver, Lucas Hinman), 46.28.

**800m Relay:** 3, (Trevor Pray, Jonathon Doeden, Thomas Cranford, Lucas Hinman), 1:39.13.

**1600m Relay:** 8, (Treyton Diegel, Austin Jones, Brandon Keith, Sean Schuring), 3:57.42.

**3200m Relay:** 5, (Mitchell Koens, Austin Jones, Brandon Keith, Treyton Diegel), 9:35.25.

**High Jump:** 3, Bennett Shabazz, 5'7"; 8, Austin Jones, 5'1".

**Long Jump:** Thomas Cranford, 17'5"; Lucas Hinman, 17'4 1/4"; Bennett Shabazz, 17'8 1/2".

**Triple Jump:** 4, Bennett Shabazz, 36'11".

**Discus:** 5, Luke Thorson, 120'3"; McClain Lone, 99'4"; Grady O'Neill, 90'6".

**Shot Put:** 3, McClain Lone, 44'5"; 7, Luke Thorson, 38'4".

### Girl's Division

**100m Hurdles:** 7, Eliza Wanner, 19.88; Emerald Sturdevant, 28.9.

**300m Hurdles:** 3, Payton Maine, 52.84; Jodi Hinman, 59.9; Emerald Sturdevant, 1:21.3.

**100m Dash:** Tady Glover, 14.05; Kaylin Kucker, 15.16.

**200m Dash:** Kaylin Kucker, 32.73; Jodi Hinman, 30.9; Nicole Marzahn, 30.4.

**1600m Run:** Emily Thompson, 6:41.

**400m Relay:** 3, (Audrey Wanner, Heather Lone, Eliza Wanner, Harleigh Stange), 54.59.

**800m Relay:** 2, (Harleigh Stange, Payton Maine, Katie Koehler, Audrey Wanner), 1:55.89.

**Medley Relay:** 5, (Tayden Glover, Eliza Wanner, Kenzie McInerney, Regan Leicht), 5:22.15.

**1600m Relay:** 6, (Harleigh Stange, Katie Koehler, Payton Maine, Eliza Wanner), 4:40.65.

**Long Jump:** 1, Audrey Wanner, 15'4 1/2"; 7, Nicole Marzahn, 13'10 1/4"; Tady Glover, 12'10 3/4"; Jodi Hinman, 10'11"; Harleigh Stange, 12'6 1/4".

**Triple Jump:** 1, Audrey Wanner, 34'1 1/2" (SQ); Katie Koehler, 28'4"; Nicole Marzahn, 27'9"; Tayden Glover, 26'3".

**Discus:** 1, Jessica Bjerke, 109'4"; 3, Taylor Holm, 93'10"; 4, Jennie Doeden, 91'4"; Madison Sippel, 64'5".

**Shot Put:** 2, Jessica Bjerke, 32'8 3/4"; 5, Taylor Holm, 31'8"; Kaycie Hawkins, 29'8"; Jennie Doeden N/A; Madison Sippel, 29'6".

## Bond Issue Fails

The patrons of the Groton Area School District voted overwhelming to vote down the proposed bond issue for the middle/high school addition. With 651 no votes to 336 yes votes, the measure fails with 38.4 percent of the eligible voters taking part in the election.

Superintendent Joe Schwan said, "Although the election outcome was somewhat disappointing, the voter turnout was strong and patrons of the Groton Area School District have spoken. I anticipate the school board will put this issue to voters again as some of our existing school debt expires and the agriculture economy rebounds. The current 1934 school building has issues and they must be addressed soon. For the few patrons that were disappointed in not having more input on the building design, the board will most likely ask them to serve on the building committee for the next proposal."

	<b>"YES"</b>	<b>"NO"</b>	<b>TOTAL CAST</b>
<b>ANDOVER</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>BRISTOL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>221*</b>
<b>GROTON</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>606**</b>
<b>COLUMBIA</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>105***</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>991</b>

**PERCENTAGE**

**33.9%**

**65.7%**

**ISSUE "FAILS"**

**\*one ballot un-voted**

**\*\* two ballots provisional, one spoiled un-voted**

**\*\*\* one ballot provisional**

**Eligible voters – 2,583 Total Votes Cast – 991 Percentage of patrons voting – 38.4%**

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## Groton Area Third Quarter Honor Roll

### Seniors

4.0 GPA: Thane Henschel, Erin Smith, Megan Malsam, Keri Pappas, Nathan Fjelstad, Landon Marzahn, Trey Wright, Macy Knecht, Whitney Voss, Kate Helmer, Patrick Gengerke, Alexis Harder

3.99-3.50: Paityn Bonn, Shane Simon, Turner Webb, McClain Lone, Katelyn Koehler, Heather Lone, Sean Schuring Braiden Craig, Taje Taylor

3.49-3.00: Emmalea Watje, Emily Locke, Jessica Adler, Kellyn Fluke, Colton Hokana, Trevor Pray, Tevin Abeln, Halie Yarborough, Bennett Shabazz, Nicklos Menzia, Katlyn Idt, Audrey Wanner, Gabrielle Kramer

### Juniors

4.0 GPA: Jenifer Fjelstad, Marshall Lane, Madilyn Wright, Alexis Gustafson, Madison Sippel

3.99-3.50: Alexandra Stange, Insa Deden, Brandon Keith, Jackson Oliver, Hattie Weismantel

3.49-3.00: Hunter Monson, Harleigh Stange, Gia Gengerke, Anthony Sippel, Jessica Bjerke, Erika Herr, Hayden Pigors, Brenna Johnson, Luke Thorson

### Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Shyla Larson, Alexis Simon, AnneMarie Smith, Emily Thompson, Cassandra Townsend

3.99-3.50: Ashley Garduno, Kylie Kassube, Micah Poor, Taylor Holm, Tylan Glover, Jillian Barton, Kaitlyn Kassube, Kaitlyn Anderson, Jennie Doeden, Samantha Menzia, Payton Maine, Maggie Crosby

3.49-3.00: Shannon Wiedrick, Portia Kettering

### Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Kaycie Hawkins, Kayla Jensen

3.99-3.50: Nicole Marzahn, KaSandra Pappas, Payton Colestock, Kaylin Kucker, Madeline Schuelke

3.49-3.00: Tadyn Glover, Katlyn Kyar, Indigo Rogers, Kya Jandel, Caitlynn Barse, Austin Jones

### Eighth Grade

4.0 GPA: None

3.99-3.50: Isaac Smith, Erin Unzen, Jasmine Gengerke, Tanae Lipp, Sage Mortenson, Samantha Pappas, Grace Wambach, Alexis Hanten, Alexa Herr, Tessa Erdmann, Regan Leicht, Trey Gengerke, Hailey Monson, Grace Wiedrick, Brooklyn Gilbert

3.49-3.00: Alyssa Fordham, Steven Paulson, Gabriella Merkel, Chandler Larson, Lucas Simon, Lee Iver-son, Alex Morris, Kale Pharis, Eh Tha You Say, Kenzie McInerney, Dragr Monson, Tiara DeHoet, Braden Freeman, Hunter Kassube, Paxton Bonn, Chloe Crosby, Kaden Carda

### Seventh Grade

4.0 GPA: Stella Meier

3.99-3.50: Madeline Flihs, Seth Johnson, Allyssa Locke, Jackson Cogley, Riley Gengerke, Trista Keith, Travis Townsend, Lane Krueger, Madisen Bjerke, Hannah Gustafson, Pierce Kettering, Jordan Bjerke, Kaden Kurtz, Kennedy Anderson, Jayden Zak, Megan Flihs, Kansas Kroll, Rease Jandel, Macine McGannon

3.49-3.00: Julianna Kosel, Trey Johnson, Jackson Becker, Andrea Davidson, Jace Kroll, River Pardick

### Sixth Grade

4.0 GPA: None

3.99-3.50: Jackson Bahr, Ethan Clark, Caleb Hanten, Andrew Marzahn, Jackson Dinger, Jacob Lewandowski, Kaleb Antonsen, Cole Bisbee, Kamryn Flihs, Brooke Gengerke, Cole Simon, Ava Tunheim

3.49-3.00: Cade Larson, Carter Barse, Cadance Tullis, Shallyn Foertsch, Aspen Johnson, Elliana Weismantel, Tate Larson, Aeydon Johnson



## Babcock wins Ward 3 race

Karyn Babcock will be the new councilman from Ward 3. Babcock received 66 votes to incumbent's Mary Fliehs' 58 votes. Voter turnout in Ward 3 was 41 percent.



**Karyn Babcock**  
New Councilman, Ward 3

## Living Stations to be presented tonight

Living Stations event at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church on April 12, 2017 at 7:00pm. The address is 107 E. 7th Avenue. There will be bars and coffee afterwards. It is being sponsored by the High School CCD students. The event will be carried live on GDILIVE.COM.



Call or Text  
Paul at  
397-7460  
or Tina at  
397-7285  
for  
membership  
Information

## Flipping Houses — It's Not Like TV

By Nathaniel Sillin

Flipping a house can seem like a walk in the park when it's wrapped into a few montages during a half-hour TV segment. Find a run-down property. Buy it. Take out a few walls, paint, replace carpets, upgrade the kitchen and voilà – you could make tens of thousands of dollars in just a short time. Reality is seldom so straightforward. Flipping a home can be risky, and there's no guarantee you'll profit.

Finding and buying the right house at the right price point can be difficult. The shows often start with the submission of a winning offer on a home. You may not realize that it takes a lot of work to determine what a potentially good flip looks like and find a property to match.

Experienced flippers have learned how to estimate costs and work backward. A rule of thumb in the industry is to take 70 percent of the potential selling price (what's known as the after-repair value, or ARV), subtract the renovation costs and use that as the maximum buying price.

You'll need a lot of background information, including comparable selling prices of similar homes, to figure out the right numbers. The ability to be honest with yourself while estimating the cost of parts and labor is also important.

For example, if you estimate that you could sell your renovated home for \$200,000, you'd start at \$140,000 (70 percent of a \$200,000). If you calculate that the renovation costs will be \$40,000, you'll arrive at the maximum buying price of \$100,000. The 30 percent margin that remains if everything goes according to plan isn't entirely profit; you may still have expenses like closing costs or reimbursing your investors.

You need a lot of working capital. While paying cash for a home can expedite the sale and increase profits, it might not be an option for beginner flippers. However, traditional lenders don't necessarily offer financing for flips, especially if you're trying to fix up a dilapidated home. Even when they do, you might not be able to borrow enough to cover all your expenses.

Instead, some flippers turn to hard-money lenders, private individuals or companies that issue short-term loans backed by real assets (such as the home you're buying). With either traditional or hard-money lenders, expect the financing costs to be higher than what you'd pay for a mortgage if you're buying a home to live in.

Keeping an eye on your total budget is essential. If you borrow enough money to make the purchase but don't have cash on hand to pay for the renovations and unexpected contingencies, you'll be stuck before you even start.

In addition to the purchase price, you'll need money for renovations, upgrades, inspections and permits. Also, consider the cost of ownership between the purchase and sale. Carrying costs, including utilities, financing, insurance and property maintenance, can add up each month.

You want to move fast. One thing you pick up from TV is that time is of the essence. In competitive markets, you'll need to move quickly to evaluate a home and put in an offer before someone else buys it.

Successful flippers may have a real estate license or work with a real estate agent to get access to the multiple listing service (MLS), a directory of homes that are for sale. Others look for homes that are for sale by owner (FSBO) or use direct mail campaigns to reach out to prospective sellers.

Once you buy the home, there's another race against time to complete the work and make a sale. Working with a trusted contractor and real estate attorney could expedite the project. Once you've developed a strong working relationship, you may even want to invite others to join your team and contribute their work in exchange for a cut of the profits.

Bottom line: Flipping homes can be profitable, particularly for those who have professional real estate experience, but don't expect it to be easy money. Months of hard work can go into a flip without any guarantee of success.

## Today in Weather History

April 12, 1970: A strong spring storm affected the northern and western two-thirds of South Dakota. Heavy snow fell throughout the morning hours dumping over a foot of snow over a large area of the state. Winds whipped the snow into 2 to 4 foot drifts across much of northern South Dakota. The Aberdeen area was the hardest hit with around 17 inches reported. While southeast South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa did not feel the effects of the storm, east central South Dakota was not as fortunate. Freezing drizzle and freezing rain resulted in heavy icing in east central South Dakota causing extensive damage. The ice storm caused power outages to 20 to 80% of the rural electric service in the area.

1927: A tornado wiped out the town of Rock Springs Texas, killing 72 persons and causing 1.2 million dollars damage. The tornado was more than one mile in width and destroyed 235 of 247 buildings, leaving no trace of lumber or contents in many cases. Many survivors were bruised by large hail that fell after the passage of the tornado.

1934: Winds atop Mount Washington New Hampshire, averaged 186 mph for five minutes, with a peak gust of 231 mph, the highest wind speed ever clocked in the world at that time. In a report released by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), that record was toppled in 1996 at Barrow Island, Australia during Typhoon Olivia. The new world record is now 253 mph. The 316 mph wind speed recorded at Moore, Oklahoma on 5/3/1999 logged during an F5 tornado was not recorded at ground level.

1945: A series of major tornadoes raked Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois. Antlers, Oklahoma were nearly obliterated by a massive F5 tornado that zigzagged from southwest to northeast across the town. 69 people died in the twister. Another tornado killed 8 people in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The disaster was overshadowed by the loss of President Franklin Roosevelt, who died suddenly at his vacation home at Warm Springs, Georgia.

1987 - A cold front crossing the central U.S. produced heavy snow in the Central Rockies, and severe thunderstorms over Kansas and Oklahoma. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Red Mountain Pass CO. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 87 mph at Ponca City OK. Winds associated with the cold front itself gusted to 69 mph at Tucumcari NM. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow blanketed the Southern Appalachians. Totals in North Carolina ranged up to 17 inches at Mitchell. Winds at Flat Top Mountain gusted to 80 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-two cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins WV with a low of 15 degrees, and Baton Rouge LA with a reading of 37 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

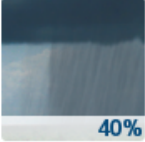
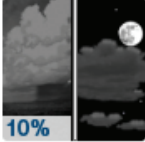





1990 - Arctic air invaded the central U.S. Lincoln, NE, reported a record low of 17 degrees. Thunderstorms developing along the arctic cold front produced heavy snow in north central Kansas, wind gusts to 61 mph at Midland TX, and wind gusts to 69 mph at Rawlins WY. Warm weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Las Vegas NV reported a record high of 91 degrees, and on the 13th, Sacramento CA reported a record high of 95 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2010 - One-inch diameter hail falls in Fresno, CA. Two condominiums are destroyed by thunderstorms in California's San Joaquin Valley. Up to three funnel clouds were also seen in the region.

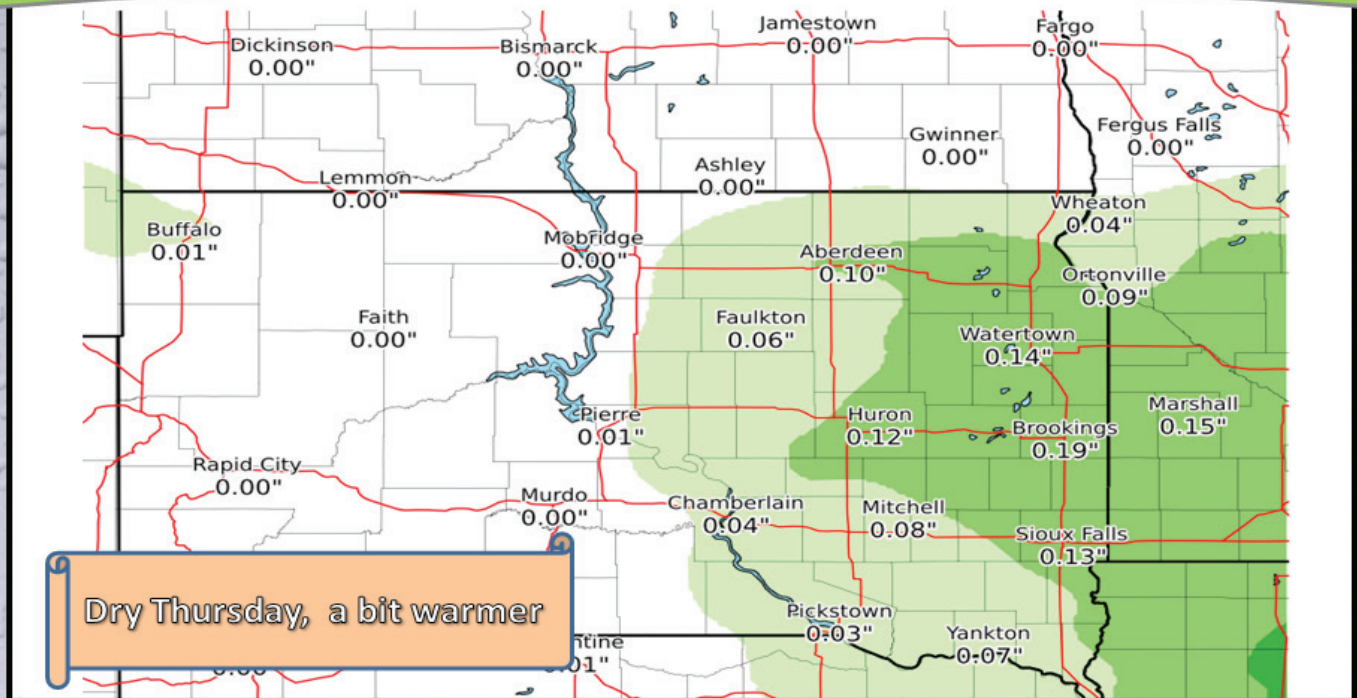


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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
 40%	 10%			 20%	 20%	 20%
Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Increasing Clouds and Breezy	Breezy. Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance Showers	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers
High: 57 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 65 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 69 °F	Low: 46 °F	High: 67 °F

## Predicted Rainfall through Tonight



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 4/12/2017 3:55 AM Central

Published on: 04/12/2017 at 3:59AM

A relatively weak storm will pass over the region today, with fairly decent rain chances, but with not much measurable rainfall. The showers will end tonight, leaving a dry day on Thursday. Thursday will also be milder than today due to more sunshine.



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## Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 59.1

Low Outside Temp: 19.5

High Gust: 15

Snow: Precip: 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 85° in 1931

Record Low: 9° in 1961

Average High: 55°F

Average Low: 30°F

Average Precip in April.: 0.57

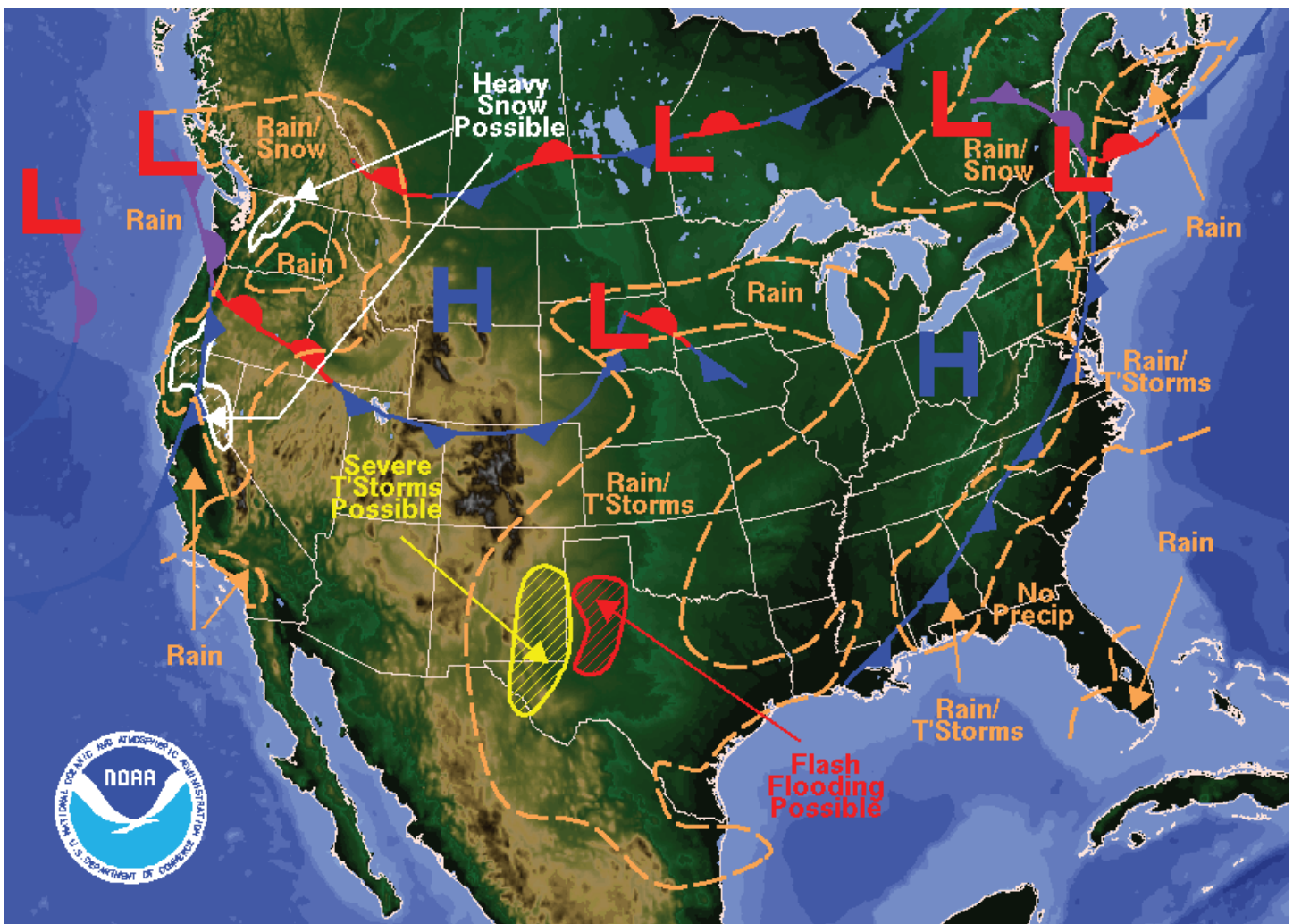
Precip to date in April.: 0.13

Average Precip to date: 2.75

Precip Year to Date: 0.72

Sunset Tonight: 8:16 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:51 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Wed, Apr 12, 2017, issued 4:43 AM EDT  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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## BE WHO GOD WANTS YOU TO BE

When Bill Robinson joined the New York Yankees, he was introduced as the "new Mickey Mantle." He tried desperately to live up to that title, and in the process, he failed.

After being traded from one team to another, he ended up with the Pittsburgh Pirates. The coach came to him one day and said, "Bill, stop trying to be Mickey Mantle. Be yourself!"

When he did, he became a star.

Paul wrote, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

In His infinite wisdom, God created each of us to be different from every other person who has ever lived. So, when we try to act, be like or think like another person we are, in fact, abandoning the plan that He has designed especially for us.

When we accept the fact that God has "transformed" us into new persons, that makes life so very exciting for the Christian. Imagine the limitless possibilities that become ours as a result of allowing God to change the way we think! New thoughts will result in our eyes being opened to see the limitless opportunities that God has designed for each of us that only we can do.

We limit God's power in our lives when we refuse to allow Him to transform our minds. Transformed minds always result in transformed lives that are truly unique.

Prayer: Father, we pause in a moment of humility to consider the fact that You have a special plan for each of us. May we be willing to change our minds and follow You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

19-34-35-38-49, Mega Ball: 8, Megaplier: 5

(nineteen, thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-eight, forty-nine; Mega Ball: eight; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$25 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$60 million

### Waiting list expected to grow for Sioux Falls preschool

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The waiting list for hundreds of Sioux Falls families wanting to enroll their children in early childhood education programs is expected to grow longer.

Sioux Falls public schools have had long waiting lists for years for Head Start, a federally funded early childhood education program that serves more than 400 students in the area.

Early Childhood Education coordinator Val Peters told Sioux Falls School Board members Monday that Head Start's new federal performance standards require schools to more than double the amount of time children spend in the program. And with no additional funds, Peters said fewer children would be served.

South Dakota is one of six states that don't offer funding for preschool, which results in communities relying on limited federal funds and nonprofit aid.

Legislators shot down a state-funded preschool pilot program last year, and state leaders have not seriously discussed funding early childhood education. The lack of funding means Head Start is the only option for most low-income families who can't afford to pay for private preschool tuition, the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2onunnE>) reported.

Head Start gave the Sioux Falls School District a more than \$189,000 grant to help adjust to the new standards, but the grant will only send 17 of the hundreds of kids in the program to full-day preschool.

The board said the district will have to cut the number of students in the program if it doesn't receive more funding to comply with the new Head Start standard by 2021.

Board member Doug Morrison suggested the district reach out to Head Start's federal office and South Dakota's congressional delegation to highlight the impact the new performance standards will have on Sioux Falls children.

"We'll just have to figure out how we communicate the potential impact to our district," he said.

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

### Guilty plea expected in fatal reservation crash

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Court documents show a former corrections officer plans to plead guilty in a fatal distracted driving case on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

As part of a plea agreement with prosecutors, Sophia Janis, of Porcupine, has admitted to killing 58-year-old Theresa Martinez by recklessly driving an Oglala Sioux Tribe corrections SUV on the reservation in July 2015. Prosecutors say Janis was looking at Facebook on her cellphone when she crossed into oncoming traffic and collided with a minivan.

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2nBnKix>) reports Martinez, a passenger in the van, was killed. The

driver survived and had to have her right leg amputated. A second female passenger was also injured. Janis is scheduled to plead guilty at the federal courthouse in Rapid City on April 28.

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

## AP Exclusive: UN child sex ring left victims but no arrests

By PAISLEY DODDS, Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — In the ruins of a tropical hideaway where jetsetters once sipped rum under the Caribbean sun, the abandoned children tried to make a life for themselves. They begged and scavenged for food, but they never could scrape together enough to beat back the hunger, until the U.N. peacekeepers moved in a few blocks away.

The men who came from a far-away place and spoke a strange language offered the Haitian children cookies and other snacks. Sometimes they gave them a few dollars. But the price was high: The Sri Lankan peacekeepers wanted sex from girls and boys as young as 12.

"I did not even have breasts," said a girl, known as V01 — Victim No. 1. She told U.N. investigators that over the next three years, from ages 12 to 15, she had sex with nearly 50 peacekeepers, including a "Commandant" who gave her 75 cents. Sometimes she slept in U.N. trucks on the base next to the decaying resort, whose once-glamorous buildings were being overtaken by jungle.

Justice for victims like V01 is rare. An Associated Press investigation of U.N. missions during the past 12 years found nearly 2,000 allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers and other personnel around the world — signaling the crisis is much larger than previously known. More than 300 of the allegations involved children, the AP found, but only a fraction of the alleged perpetrators served jail time.

Legally, the U.N. is in a bind. It has no jurisdiction over peacekeepers, leaving punishment to the countries that contribute the troops.

The AP interviewed alleged victims, current and former U.N. officials and investigators and sought answers from 23 countries on the number of peacekeepers who faced such allegations and, what if anything, was done to investigate. With rare exceptions, few nations responded to repeated requests, while the names of those found guilty are kept confidential, making accountability impossible to determine.

Without agreement for widespread reform and accountability from the U.N.'s member states, solutions remain elusive.

Here in Haiti, at least 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers exploited nine children in a sex ring from 2004 to 2007, according to an internal U.N. report obtained by the AP. In the wake of the report, 114 peacekeepers were sent home. None was ever imprisoned.

In March, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced new measures to tackle sexual abuse and exploitation by U.N. peacekeepers and other personnel.

"Let us declare in one voice: We will not tolerate anyone committing or condoning sexual exploitation and abuse. We will not let anyone cover up these crimes with the U.N. flag," Guterres said.

But the proclamation had a depressingly familiar ring: More than a decade ago, the United Nations commissioned a report that promised to do much the same thing, yet most of the reforms never materialized.

For a full two years after those promises were made, the children in Haiti were passed around from soldier to soldier. And in the years since, peacekeepers have been accused of sexual abuse the world over.

In one particularly grim case in Haiti, a teenage boy said he was gang-raped in 2011 by Uruguayan peacekeepers who filmed the alleged assault on a cellphone. Dozens of Haitian women also say they were raped, and dozens more had what is euphemistically called "survival sex" in a country where most people live on less than \$2.50 a day, the AP found.

Haitian lawyer Mario Joseph has been trying to get compensation for victims of a deadly cholera strain linked to Nepalese peacekeepers that killed an estimated 10,000 people. Now, he is also trying to get child support for about a dozen Haitian women left pregnant by peacekeepers.

"Imagine if the U.N. was going to the United States and raping children and bringing cholera," Joseph



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said in Port-au-Prince. "Human rights aren't just for rich white people."

U.S. Sen. Bob Corker agrees. The Tennessee Republican, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been calling for reforms in the United Nations. He may well get them under President Donald Trump, whose administration has proposed a 31 percent reduction to the U.S. foreign aid and diplomacy budget. Corker and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley want a review of all missions.

Corker recalled his disgust at hearing of the U.N. sexual abuse cases uncovered last year in Central African Republic.

"If I heard that a U.N. peacekeeping mission was coming near my home in Chattanooga," he told AP, "I'd be on the first plane out of here to go back and protect my family."

The Habitation Leclerc resort was once well known throughout Port-au-Prince as a lush refuge amid the capital's grimy alleyways. During its heyday in the 1980s, celebrities like Mick Jagger and Jackie Onassis would perch by the pool or stroll past the property's Voodoo temple.

By 2004, the resort was a decrepit clutch of buildings, and several children, either orphaned or abandoned by their parents, were living in its ruins.

It was there that V01 met other victims, two girls referred to in the U.N. report as "V02" and "V03" and a young boy, "V08." The boy initially supported them by occasionally bringing food from his aunt, but they were often hungry.

The peacekeepers had arrived that year as part of a new mission to help stabilize Haiti in the wake of President Jean-Bertrande Aristide's ouster. The Sri Lankans, numbering about 900 troops, landed in a historically unstable country in the grip of scattered violence and kidnappings — and a broken government ill-suited to confront the chaos.

Some of the peacekeepers in the Sri Lankan contingent were based near the former resort.

In August 2007, the U.N. received complaints of "suspicious interactions" between Sri Lankan soldiers and Haitian children. U.N. investigators then interviewed nine victims, as well as witnesses, while the sex ring was still active.

V02, who was 16 when the U.N. team interviewed her, told them she had sex with a Sri Lankan commander at least three times, describing him as overweight with a moustache and a gold ring on his middle finger. She said he often showed her a picture of his wife. The peacekeepers also taught her some Sinhalese so she could understand and express sexual innuendo; the children even talked to one another in Sinhalese when U.N. investigators were interviewing them.

V03 identified 11 Sri Lankan troops through photographs, one of whom she said was a corporal with a "distinctive" bullet scar between his armpit and waist. V04, who was 14, said she had sex with the soldiers every day in exchange for money, cookies or juice.

During her interview with investigators, another young victim, V07, received a phone call from a Sri Lankan peacekeeper. She explained that the soldiers would pass along her number to incoming contingent members, who would then call her for sex.

The boy, V08, said he had sex with more than 20 Sri Lankans. Most would remove their name tags before taking him to U.N. military trucks, where he gave them oral sex or was sodomized by them.

Another boy, V09, was 15 when his encounters began. Over the course of three years, he said he had sex with more than 100 Sri Lankan peacekeepers, averaging about four a day, investigators said.

Under Haitian law, having sex with someone under 18 is statutory rape. U.N. codes of conduct also prohibit exploitation.

"The sexual acts described by the nine victims are simply too many to be presented exhaustively in this report, especially since each claimed multiple sexual partners at various locations where the Sri Lankan contingents were deployed throughout Haiti over several years," the report said.

Investigators showed the children more than 1,000 photographs that included pictures of Sri Lankan troops and locations of where the children had sex with the soldiers.

"The evidence shows that from late 2004 to mid-October 2007, at least 134 military members of the

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current and previous Sri Lankan contingents sexually exploited and abused at least nine Haitian children," the report said.

After the report was filed, 114 Sri Lanka peacekeepers were sent home, putting an end to the sex ring. But the sexual exploitation visited upon Haiti's people didn't stop there.

Janila Jean said she was a 16-year-old virgin when a Brazilian peacekeeper lured her to a U.N. compound three years ago with a smear of peanut butter on bread, raped her at gunpoint and left her pregnant. She finds herself constantly in tears.

"Some days, I imagine strangling my daughter to death," she said in an interview under the shadow of banana palms near the former Jacmel base.

With her were three other women who said they also were raped by peacekeepers. One of them sat on her heels, scraping coconut from its shell and into a large cauldron of water and corn, the barest of meals for the women and their small children.

Adm. Ademir Sobrinho of Brazil's armed forces said at a conference in London that his force had no such cases of rape, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

But like many, Jean didn't report the rape. Nearly a dozen women interviewed by the AP said they were too scared to report the crimes out of fear they would be blamed — or worse, would meet their victimizers again.

The AP found that some 150 allegations of abuse and exploitation by U.N. peacekeepers and other personnel were reported in Haiti alone between 2004 and 2016, out of the worldwide total of nearly 2,000. Aside from the Sri Lankan sex ring in Haiti, some perpetrators were jailed for other cases.

Alleged abusers came from Bangladesh, Brazil, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uruguay and Sri Lanka, according to U.N. data and interviews. More countries may have been involved, but the United Nations only started disclosing alleged perpetrators' nationalities after 2015.

The litany of abuses is long.

In July 2011, four Uruguayan peacekeepers and their commanding officer allegedly gang-raped a Haitian teenager. The men also filmed the alleged attack on their phones, which went viral on the internet. The men never faced trial in Haiti; four of the five were convicted in Uruguay of "private violence," a lesser charge. Uruguayan officials said at the time that it was a prank gone wrong and that no rape occurred.

The following year, three Pakistanis attached to the U.N.'s police units in Haiti were allegedly involved in the rape of a mentally disabled 13-year-old in the northern city of Gonaives.

U.N. investigators went to Haiti to investigate, but the Pakistanis abducted the boy to keep him from detailing the abuse that had gone on for more than a year, according to one of the investigators in the case, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from the U.N.

Finally, the men were tried in a Pakistani military tribunal in Haiti, and eventually sent back to Pakistan. In theory, the tribunal could have allowed for better access to witnesses, but it's unclear whether any were called. The Pakistani authorities also refused to allow the U.N. to observe the proceedings. In the end, one man was sent to prison for a year, according to Ariane Quentier, a spokeswoman for the Haiti mission.

Pakistan's military has refused several requests for comment on the case.

U.N. data during the 12-year period reviewed by AP is incomplete and varies in levels of detail, particularly for cases before 2010. Hundreds of other cases were closed with little to no explanation. In its review, the AP analyzed data from annual reports as well as information from the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

In the wake of the child sex ring investigation, a team of Sri Lankans spent two weeks in Haiti in October 2007. They interviewed only 25 soldiers out of more than 900 in the country and concluded that just two Sri Lankan corporals and one private had sex with two "young" victims. Three soldiers denied sexual encounters but were suspected of lying, according to the U.N. investigation report.

For six months, the Sri Lankan army and the government declined to respond to AP's questions about the 2007 case. Instead, officials first dodged repeated queries, then gave vague assurances that the scandal represented an isolated incident. Last month, the Sri Lankan government acknowledged its military had conducted inquiries into just 18 soldiers it said were implicated, and that "the U.N. Secretariat has

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acknowledged in writing, action taken by the Government, and informed that the Secretariat, as of 29 September 2014, considers the matter closed.”

Some of the peacekeepers involved in the ring were still in the Sri Lankan military as of last year, Sri Lankan military officials say. The United Nations, meanwhile, continued to send Sri Lankan peacekeepers to Haiti and elsewhere despite corroborating the child sex ring.

Sri Lankan Defense Secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi defended the troops, saying, “People are quite happy and comfortable with the peacekeepers.”

Above a rusty bench at an abandoned bus stop in the village of Leogane hangs a sign that reads, “Constructed by the 16th Sri Lanka Peacekeeping Battalion.” It’s one of the few physical reminders of the battalion’s mission — along with children fathered by U.N. personnel.

Marie-Ange Haitis says she met a Sri Lankan commander in December 2006 and he soon began making night-time visits to her house in Leogane.

“By January, we had had sex,” she said. “It wasn’t rape, but it wasn’t exactly consensual, either. I felt like I didn’t have a choice.”

She said when she first realized that she was pregnant, the Haitian translator assigned to the Sri Lankans told her to have an abortion. Then, she said, U.N. officials accused her of lying. As she spoke, her daughter Samantha sat on her lap wearing an oversized pair of sunglasses with a missing lens.

When she was interviewed in August, Haitis said she had been waiting nearly a decade for the U.N. to consider her paternity claim to help support her daughter.

Finally, early this year, Sri Lankan and U.N. officials told AP that a onetime payment of \$45,243 had been made for Haitis’ daughter. The United Nations said Sri Lanka accepted the paternity claim without proof of DNA and the commander was dismissed from service.

But such payments are rare.

U.N. officials said they were unable to find any members of the mission in Haiti who might have dealt with the victims in the sex-ring case and did not know what happened to the children. An Italian non-governmental organization, AVSI, said it helped the children by trying to find homes for them, providing them with counseling and helping reintegrate them into schools, but it also lost track of the children shortly after the country’s devastating 2010 earthquake.

Atul Khare, the U.N.’s head of field support which oversees the conduct and discipline of peacekeepers, acknowledged the scope of the problem and said the global agency must do more to help victims, including gathering accurate information and following up with troop-contributing countries.

An AP review of reports into conduct on U.N. field missions showed haphazard record-keeping. In a 2008 report, for example, 19 allegations were reported in Haiti, but the U.N. recorded only two incidents worldwide involving minors — a seeming contradiction to the U.N.’s own investigation report in late 2007 that detailed the child sex ring with at least nine child victims.

Some Haitians wonder whether the U.N. has done more harm than good in a country that has endured tragedy after tragedy since it became the first black republic in 1804.

U.N. personnel say they have contributed to the stability in the Caribbean nation over the years, saved lives during the 2010 earthquake’s aftermath and prevented violence during periods of unrest. The mission, which currently has nearly 5,000 personnel and is expected to scale down by October, has also been credited with training police, providing security during elections and support to the judiciary.

“I would not say we have achieved everything we set out to do, but we are engaged in a process of continuous improvement that any harmful effect on the local populations could be minimized, if not completely eradicated,” Khare said.

Many here are not convinced.

“I’d like to see my attacker face to face and tell him how he has destroyed my life,” said 21-year-old Melida Joseph, who said she was raped by one peacekeeper and narrowly escaped being gang-raped in Cite-Soleil, a seaside slum. Like others, she never reported the crime.

“They’ll look at this as one big joke,” she said. “As far as the U.N. goes, they came here to protect us,

but all they've brought is destruction."

Dodds reported from several locations in Haiti and London and Geneva. Others who contributed to the report were Katy Daigle in Colombo, Sri Lanka; Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal; Kathy Gannon in Islamabad, Pakistan; Saleh Mwanamilongo in Kinshasa, Congo; Francis Kokutse in Accra, Ghana; Brahim Ouedraogo in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and Sylvester Domasa in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

## United pledges to review policies on removal of passengers

By DON BABWIN, Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — After people were horrified by video of a passenger getting dragged off a full United Express flight by airport police, the head of United's parent company said the airline was reaching out to the man to "resolve this situation."

Hours later on Monday, his tone turned defensive. He described the man as "disruptive and belligerent."

By Tuesday afternoon, almost two days after the Sunday evening confrontation in Chicago, CEO Oscar Munoz issued his most contrite apology yet as details emerged about the man seen on cellphone videos recorded by other passengers at O'Hare Airport.

"No one should ever be mistreated this way," said Munoz, who also pledged to conduct a wide-ranging review of company policies.

The passenger was identified as physician David Dao, 69, of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, who was convicted more than a decade ago of felony charges involving his prescribing of drugs and spent years trying to regain his medical license.

But while Dao's history quickly became a focus of attention, there's no indication that his past influenced how he was treated or that the airline or police were aware of his background or would have known anything about him other than basic information such as his name and address, if that.

Screaming can be heard on the videos, but nowhere is Dao seen attacking the officers. In fact, he appears relatively passive both when he was dragged down the aisle of the jet and when he is seen standing in the aisle later saying quietly, "I want to go home, I want to go home."

Munoz's latest statement described the removal as "truly horrific." He said the company would reassess policies for seeking volunteers to give up their seats, for handling oversold situations and for partnering with airport authorities and local law enforcement.

An attorney who represents Dao said his client was being treated at a Chicago hospital for injuries he sustained on the plane and that the family would not comment.

According to records from the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure, Dao went to medical school at the University of Medicine of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, graduating in 1974. He was licensed in Kentucky with a specialty in pulmonary disease.

His legal troubles started in 2003, when his medical license was suspended after an undercover sting operation at a Louisville motel for allegedly writing fraudulent prescriptions.

According to the documents, the licensing board had learned that Dao had become sexually interested in a patient and hired the patient as his office manager. That man later said he quit his job because Dao "pursued him aggressively" and arranged to provide him with prescription drugs in exchange for sex.

Dao was ultimately convicted in late 2004 of several counts of obtaining drugs by fraud or deceit and was placed on five years of supervised probation and surrendered his medical license.

His longtime effort to get his license back finally succeeded in 2015, when the licensing board allowed him to practice medicine again.

About a year after his medical license was suspended, Dao joined the professional poker circuit, according to his World Series of Poker profile. His biggest competitive win came in 2009 when he took home more than \$117,000 from a tournament in Mississippi.

Airport officials have said little about Sunday's events and nothing about Dao's behavior before he was pulled from the jet that was bound for Louisville, Kentucky. Likewise, the Chicago Aviation Department



has said only that one of its employees who removed Dao did not follow proper procedures and has been placed on leave.

No passengers on the plane have mentioned that Dao did anything but refuse to leave the plane when he was ordered to do so.

Also Tuesday, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel called the way Dao was treated "completely unacceptable" and praised Aviation Commissioner Ginger Evans for taking "swift action." He promised that a city investigation would "ensure nothing like this ever happens again."

The event stemmed from a common air travel issue — a full flight. United was trying to make room for four employees of a partner airline, meaning four people had to get off.

At first, the airline asked for volunteers, offering \$400 and then when that did not work, \$800 per passenger to relinquish a seat. When no one voluntarily came forward, United selected four passengers at random.

Three people got off the flight, but the fourth said he was a doctor and needed to get home to treat patients on Monday. He refused to leave.

Three Aviation Department police officers got on the plane. Two officers tried to reason with the man before a third came aboard and pointed at the man "basically saying, 'Sir, you have to get off the plane,'" said Tyler Bridges, a passenger whose wife, Audra D. Bridges, posted a video on Facebook.

One of the officers could be seen grabbing the screaming man from his window seat, across the armrest and dragging him down the aisle by his arms.

Other passengers on Flight 3411 are heard saying, "Please, my God," "What are you doing?" "This is wrong," "Look at what you did to him" and "Busted his lip."

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced Tuesday that it is reviewing Sunday's events to see if United violated rules on overselling flights.

Dao's relatives are focused only on his medical care, attorney Stephen L. Golan said. The family "wants the world to know that they are very appreciative of the outpouring of prayers, concern and support they have received."

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Associated Press Writer David Koenig in Dallas and AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

## Russia accuses US of unlawful Syria raid as Tillerson visits

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's top diplomat accused the United States on Wednesday of carrying out an unlawful attack against Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces as he opened a fraught meeting with visiting U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Giving Tillerson a chilly reception, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia was trying to understand the "real intentions" of the Trump administration. He said Moscow has lots of questions about the "very ambiguous" and "contradictory" ideas emanating from Washington.

"We have seen very alarming actions recently with an unlawful attack against Syria," Lavrov said, referring to the cruise missiles President Donald Trump ordered to punish Assad for using chemical weapons. "We consider it of utmost importance to prevent the risks of replay of similar action in the future."

It was an ominous start to Tillerson's visit — the first to Russia by a Trump Cabinet official. Tillerson conceded the two world powers had "sharp differences" that have obstructed cooperation but voiced optimism that their talks could narrow those differences.

"We both have agreed our lines of communication shall always remain open," Tillerson said.

The palpable tension hanging over Tillerson's trip spoke to a widening chasm between the former Cold War foes.

Only weeks ago, it appeared that Trump, who lavishly praised Putin throughout the campaign, was poised for a potentially historic rapprochement with Russia. But any expectations of an easy rapport have

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crashed into reality as the two countries trade escalating accusations over what happened last week in rebel-held territory in northern Syria.

As their envoys gathered in Moscow, President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin were voicing protests of their own.

"Frankly, Putin is backing a person that's truly an evil person," Trump told the Fox Business Network, referring to Assad. "I think it's very bad for Russia. I think it's very bad for mankind."

Of Assad, Trump added: "This is an animal."

And Putin, who U.S. intelligence agencies say tried to help Trump get elected, insisted that relations with the U.S. had only gone downhill since Trump took office in January.

"The level of trust at the working level, especially at the military level, has not become better but most likely has degraded," Putin said in an interview broadcast Wednesday by state television channel Mir.

It was unclear whether Putin, who once gave Tillerson an "Order of Friendship" award, would grant the visiting American an audience. Though the Kremlin had declined to say whether the leaders would meet, Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday: "There is a certain likelihood."

Moscow has strenuously objected to Trump's decision to launch 59 U.S. Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian air base that the U.S. says was used to pummel civilians with nerve gas, killing more than 80 people. Russia, Assad's staunchest ally, has insisted that Assad is blameless and that it was actually the rebels responsible for the disbursed chemical weapons.

Intelligence services from several Western countries dispute that claim. The health minister in Turkey, which treated many of the attack's victims and conducted autopsies on others, said Tuesday that test results conducted on victims confirmed sarin gas was used.

Adding further fuel to rising tensions: the White House's move to circulate declassified U.S. intelligence accusing Moscow of aiding Assad's government in covering up the chemical attack. The U.S. also accused Russia of mounting a disinformation campaign aimed at exonerating Assad.

Tillerson, on a mission to persuade Russia to abandon Assad, issued an ultimatum to Putin before flying to Moscow: Either side with the U.S. and likeminded countries, or with Assad, Iran and the militant group Hezbollah.

But Russia made clear it had no intention to acquiesce. Putin quickly invited the Syrian and Iranian foreign ministers to Moscow on Friday, the day after Tillerson departs.

"Our policy is consistent and it's formulated exclusively on the basis of international law and not under the impact of current opportunistic motives or false choice: "You are with us or against us," Lavrov told Tillerson.

The Trump administration's growing willingness to confront Russia directly is serving another purpose: defanging the perception of coziness between Trump and Moscow. As the FBI and multiple congressional committees investigate potential collusion between Russia and Trump's campaign in last year's U.S. election, Trump can point to his hard-line stance as fresh evidence that he's far from beholden to the Russian leader.

Subtly mocking his guest, Lavrov said their talks were especially important because "not all key positions in the State Department have been filled yet." He was referring to widespread vacancies throughout the top State Department leadership that has fueled a perception in the U.S. that Tillerson and his agency are being sidelined by Trump.

"It's not easy to get clarifications on the current as well as prospective issues because of that," Lavrov said.

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Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov, Nataliya Vasilyeva and Jim Heintz contributed to this report.

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

## In surprise move, Iran's Ahmadinejad to run for president

By AMIR VAHDAT and JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Wednesday stunned the country by unexpectedly filing to run in the May presidential election, contradicting a recommendation from the supreme leader to stay out of the race.

Ahmadinejad's decision could upend an election many believed would be won by moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who negotiated the nuclear deal with world powers. Though Rouhani has yet to formally register, many viewed him as a shoe-in following Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's recommendation in September for Ahmadinejad to stand down and conservatives' inability to coalesce around a single candidate.

Ahmadinejad's firebrand style could prove appealing for hard-liners seeking a tough-talking candidate who can stand up to U.S. President Donald Trump. His candidacy also could expose the fissures inside Iranian politics that linger since his contested 2009 re-election, which brought massive unrest.

Associated Press journalists watched as stunned election officials processed Ahmadinejad's paperwork on Wednesday. Asked about Ahmadinejad's decision, one Tehran-based analyst offered a blunt assessment.

"It was an organized mutiny against Iran's ruling system," said Soroush Farhadian, who backs reformists.

Ahmadinejad previously served two four-year terms from 2005 to 2013. Under Iranian law, he became eligible to run again after four years out of office, but he remains a polarizing figure, even among fellow hard-liners.

Two of his former vice presidents have been jailed for corruption since he left office. Iran's economy suffered under heavy international sanctions during his administration because of Western suspicions that Tehran was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election in 2009 sparked massive protests and a sweeping crackdown in which thousands of people were detained and dozens were killed.

Internationally, Ahmadinejad is more known for repeatedly questioning the scale of the Holocaust, predicting Israel's demise and expanding Iran's contested nuclear program.

The memory of the 2009 unrest likely sparked Khamenei's comments in September. At that time, he recommended an unnamed candidate not seek office as it would bring about a "polarized situation" that would be "harmful for the county."

Ahmadinejad described comments by the supreme leader suggesting he not run as "just advice" in a news conference shortly after submitting his registration.

"His advice does not prevent me from running," he said. "There is extensive pressure on me from dear people of different walks of life as their small servant to come to the election."

There was no immediate reaction from the supreme leader's office.

Ahmadinejad said his decision to run was intended to help former Vice President Hamid Baghaei, a close confidant. Baghaei, who was imprisoned for seven months after he left office, registered alongside Ahmadinejad on Wednesday. So did Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, another of the former president's close allies.

More than 120 prospective candidates submitted their names as candidates on the first day of registration Tuesday, including six women and seven clerics. Registration remains open until Saturday.

Under Iran's electoral system, all applicants must be vetted by the Guardian Council, a clerical body that will announce a final list of candidates by April 27. The council normally does not approve dissidents or women for the formal candidate list.

The May 19 election is seen by many in Iran as a referendum on the 2015 nuclear agreement and other efforts to improve the country's sanctions-hobbled economy. Under the nuclear deal, Iran agreed to curb its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.

Since the deal, Iran has signed multi-billion-dollar contracts with airplane manufacturers Boeing Co. and Airbus. The benefits have yet to trickle down to the average Iranian, however, fueling some discontent.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Adam Schreck in Dubai

contributed to this report.

## Police investigating 'in all directions' in Dortmund blasts

By MIKE CORDER and MARK CARLSON, Associated Press

DORTMUND, Germany (AP) — German authorities said Wednesday they are investigating "in all directions" after three explosions went off near Borussia Dortmund's team bus ahead of a Champions League quarterfinal match, injuring one of the soccer team's players.

German news media reports citing unnamed sources said a note found at the scene contained radical Islamic rhetoric but that police were unsure whether that was genuine or an attempt to throw them off the track. Federal prosecutors took over the investigation; they typically handle especially serious cases, including those in which a terrorist motive is suspected.

The first-leg match against Monaco was called off shortly before kickoff Tuesday evening following the blasts near the team hotel in suburban Dortmund, which authorities assume were a targeted attack. Players and police were preparing to go ahead with the rescheduled match on Wednesday evening, with heavy security in place.

Investigators were checking the authenticity of a letter claiming responsibility that they found near the scene, and were refusing to give any details of its contents, citing the ongoing probe. Police spokeswoman Nina Vogt told ZDF television that "of course our investigations have to go in all directions to begin with."

Die Welt newspaper and Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported online that the unsigned note made reference to Germany's participation in the military coalition opposed to Islamic State. German Tornado reconnaissance planes, based in Turkey, are taking part in a noncombat role. The papers said experts on Islam were reviewing the note to try to determine its authenticity.

Investigators were also probing statements found on the web that indicated a left-wing motive to punish the club for allegedly not opposing racism strongly enough, the dpa news agency reported.

Federal prosecutors didn't immediately say why they were taking over the investigation, but scheduled a statement for 1200 GMT.

Spanish defender Marc Bartra suffered injuries in the wrist and arm and underwent an operation Tuesday night. Police said an officer who was accompanying the bus on a motorbike was suffering from blast trauma and shock.

Borussia Dortmund president Reinhard Rauball said Wednesday's rescheduled match would be a challenge for the team.

"However, we expect and I am confident that the team will do its best and deliver a spectacle in the Champions League this evening," he said.

UEFA, European soccer's governing body, said security was being reviewed at all three Champions League games on Wednesday. It urged fans to allow extra time for the possibility of tougher security.

By the end of Wednesday morning, about 40 fans had gathered outside the team's training ground, many in the club's distinctive yellow and black shirts.

As police waited in vans lined up in front of the screened-off training pitch, four young women drew "You'll Never Walk Alone" in black markers on yellow cards.

Annika Lentwojt, a 21-year-old engineering student, said she was in the stadium Tuesday when the match was called off but "always felt safe."

Lentwojt said she is confident Dortmund's players will be able to perform in the rescheduled match.

"I think the game or the score in the end is not that important," she said. "They will concentrate, they are professional players. It's not the main topic of the game today."

Peter Sobeck, a 55-year-old city planner who described himself as a lifelong Dortmund fan, said he was shocked that players were targeted in a relatively small city like Dortmund. The city, located in the densely populated Ruhr industrial region, has just under 600,000 inhabitants.

"I thought (in) these great cities, Paris or Munich or London, something like that, but in Dortmund, I never thought that," he said.

Dortmund is one of Germany's most popular teams and a regular contender for the Bundesliga title,



which it last won in 2011 and 2012. It is in fourth place with six games left to play this season, 18 points behind leader Bayern Munich — Germany's dominant club of recent years.

Geir Moulson in Berlin and David McHugh in Frankfurt contributed to this report.

## **Xi stresses China's North Korea concerns in talk with Trump**

**By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN and GERRY SHIH, Associated Press**

BEIJING (AP) — Beijing is willing to work with Washington on ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program but wants a peaceful solution to the escalating conflict, Chinese President Xi Jinping told President Donald Trump in a phone call Wednesday.

Xi's comments came after Trump tweeted that China should do more on an issue that Washington sees as an increasingly urgent threat, or else the U.S. would go it alone.

China's calls for calm come as tensions have risen with the dispatch of a U.S. aircraft carrier to the area and the deployment of thousands of U.S. and South Korean troops, tanks and other weaponry for their biggest-ever joint military exercises.

During their phone call, Xi told Trump that China is willing to continue working with the U.S. on denuclearization, according to a brief description of the call released by the Chinese foreign ministry.

"China insists on realizing the denuclearization of the peninsula, insists on maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula, and advocates resolving the problem through peaceful means," Xi was quoted as saying.

The two leaders spoke Tuesday night Washington time after Trump said an "armada" of vessels including the USS Carl Vinson carrier was steaming to waters off the Korean Peninsula in a show of force.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Wednesday at a regular briefing in Beijing that it was a "good thing" that the two leaders were in touch again days after meeting in Florida.

Regarding the U.S. navy strike force's arrival in the western Pacific, Lu said: "We hope all parties will refrain from irresponsible actions that would be very dangerous at the moment."

North Korean state media has warned of a nuclear attack on the United States in retaliation for any signs of aggression, a threat that has been made numerous times before.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump suggested the U.S. could "solve" the North Korea issue unilaterally.

"North Korea is looking for trouble. If China decides to help, that would be great. If not, we will solve the problem without them! U.S.A.," Trump tweeted.

In another tweet, he sought to persuade Xi to put pressure on North Korea in exchange for a good trade deal with the U.S. He wrote: "I explained to the President of China that a trade deal with the U.S. will be far better for them if they solve the North Korean problem!"

Trump and other U.S. officials have repeatedly called on China to leverage its status as North Korea's biggest economic partner and source of food and fuel aid to force Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

China says it is in full compliance with sanctions enacted under U.N. Security Council resolutions. In February, China suspended imports of coal from North Korea — a key source of foreign currency for Kim Jong Un's hard-line Communist regime.

The U.S. and other foreign governments have long overestimated China's ability to affect Pyongyang's behavior, said Ruan Zongze, a U.S. relations expert at the China Institute of International Studies, a think tank run by the foreign ministry.

"There's a view that China possesses the key to solving the peninsula problem, or that China has the faucet and that all China has to do is shut it off and the peninsula issue is solved," Ruan said.

"In fact, I think the outside exaggerates the sort of role China can play. China isn't really as influential as all that," he said.

Beijing's insistence on a peaceful approach to resolving the issue is rooted in its belief that any attempt to denuclearize the North by force would bring cataclysmic results upon all sides, including China, Ruan said.

"When it comes to the issue of the Korean Peninsula, violence is not an option," he said.

Beijing says it will not countenance measures that could bring about a collapse of the regime that could release a flood of refugees across its border, destabilize northeast Asia and result in a U.S.-friendly government taking power in Pyongyang.

## **AP Exclusive: Manafort firm received Ukraine ledger payout**

**By JACK GILLUM, CHAD DAY and JEFF HORWITZ, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Last August, a handwritten ledger surfaced in Ukraine with dollar amounts and dates next to the name of Paul Manafort, who was then Donald Trump's campaign chairman.

Ukrainian investigators called it evidence of off-the-books payments from a pro-Russian political party — and part of a larger pattern of corruption under the country's former president. Manafort, who worked for the party as an international political consultant, has publicly questioned the ledger's authenticity.

Now, financial records newly obtained by The Associated Press confirm that at least \$1.2 million in payments listed in the ledger next to Manafort's name were actually received by his consulting firm in the United States. They include payments in 2007 and 2009, providing the first evidence that Manafort's firm received at least some money listed in the so-called Black Ledger.

The two payments came years before Manafort became involved in Trump's campaign, but for the first time bolster the credibility of the ledger. They also put the ledger in a new light, as federal prosecutors in the U.S. have been investigating Manafort's work in Eastern Europe as part of a larger anti-corruption probe.

Separately, Manafort is also under scrutiny as part of congressional and FBI investigations into possible contacts between Trump associates and Russia's government under President Vladimir Putin during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. The payments detailed in the ledger and confirmed by the documents obtained by the AP are unrelated to the 2016 presidential campaign and came years before Manafort worked as Trump's unpaid campaign chairman.

In a statement to the AP, Manafort did not deny that his firm received the money but said "any wire transactions received by my company are legitimate payments for political consulting work that was provided. I invoiced my clients and they paid via wire transfer, which I received through a U.S. bank."

Manafort noted that he agreed to be paid according to his "clients' preferred financial institutions and instructions."

Previously, Manafort and his spokesman, Jason Maloni, have maintained the ledger was fabricated and said no public evidence existed that Manafort or others received payments recorded in it.

The AP, however, identified in the records two payments received by Manafort that aligned with the ledger: one for \$750,000 that a Ukrainian lawmaker said last month was part of a money-laundering effort that should be investigated by U.S. authorities. The other was \$455,249 and also matched a ledger entry.

The newly obtained records also expand the global scope of Manafort's financial activities related to his Ukrainian political consulting, because both payments came from companies once registered in the Central American country of Belize. Last month, the AP reported that the U.S. government has examined Manafort's financial transactions in the Mediterranean country of Cyprus as part of its probe.

Federal prosecutors have been looking into Manafort's work for years as part of an effort to recover Ukrainian assets stolen after the 2014 ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia. No charges have been filed as part of the investigation.

Manafort, a longtime Republican political operative, led the presidential campaign from March until August last year when Trump asked him to resign. The resignation came after a tumultuous week in which The New York Times revealed that Manafort's name appeared in the Ukraine ledger — although the newspaper said at the time that officials were unsure whether Manafort actually received the money — and after the AP separately reported that he had orchestrated a covert Washington lobbying operation until 2014 on behalf of Ukraine's pro-Russian Party of Regions.

Officials with the Ukrainian National Anti-Corruption Bureau, which is investigating corruption under

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Yanukovich, have said they believe the ledger is genuine. But they have previously noted that they have no way of knowing whether Manafort received the money listed next to his name. The bureau said it is not investigating Manafort because he is not a Ukrainian citizen.

Still, Manafort's work continues to draw attention in Ukrainian politics.

Last month, Ukrainian lawmaker Serhiy Leshchenko revealed an invoice bearing the letterhead of Manafort's namesake company, Davis Manafort, that Leshchenko said was crafted to conceal a payment to Manafort as a purchase of 501 computers.

The AP provided to Manafort the amounts of the payments, dates and number of the bank account where they were received. Manafort told the AP that he was unable to review his own banking records showing receipt of the payments because his bank destroyed the records after a standard 7-year retention period. He said Tuesday the "computer sales contract is a fraud."

"The signature is not mine, and I didn't sell computers," he said in a statement. "What is clear, however, is individuals with political motivations are taking disparate pieces of information and distorting their significance through a campaign of smear and innuendo."

Leshchenko said last month the 2009 invoice was one of about 50 pages of documents, including private paperwork and copies of employee-issued debit cards, that were found in Manafort's former Kiev office by a new tenant.

The amount of the invoice — \$750,000— and the payment date of Oct. 14, 2009, matches one entry on the ledger indicating payments to Manafort from the Party of Regions. The invoice was addressed to Neocom Systems Ltd., a company formerly registered in Belize, and included the account and routing numbers and postal address for Manafort's account at a branch of Wachovia National Bank in Alexandria, Virginia.

The AP had previously been unable to independently verify the \$750,000 payment went to a Manafort company, but the newly obtained financial records reflect Manafort's receipt of that payment. The records show that Davis Manafort received the amount from Neocom Systems the day after the date of the invoice.

Leshchenko contended to AP that Yanukovich, as Ukraine's leader, paid Manafort money that came from his government's budget and was "stolen from Ukrainian citizens." He said: "Money received by Manafort has to be returned to the Ukrainian people."

Leshchenko said U.S. authorities should investigate what he described as corrupt deals between Manafort and Yanukovich. "It's about a U.S. citizen and money was transferred to a U.S. bank account," he said.

A \$455,249 payment in November 2007 also matches the amount in the ledger. It came from Graten Alliance Ltd., a company that had also been registered in Belize. It is now inactive.

The AP reported last month that federal prosecutors are looking into Manafort's financial transactions in Cyprus, an island nation once known as a favored locale for money laundering.

Among those transactions was a \$1 million payment in October 2009 routed through the Bank of Cyprus. The money was deposited into an account controlled by a Manafort-linked company, then left the account on the same day, broken into two disbursements of \$500,000, according to documents obtained by the AP.

The records of Manafort's Cypriot transactions were requested by the U.S. Treasury Department Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, which works internationally with agencies to track money laundering and the movement of illicit funds around the globe.

Dozens of Ukrainian political figures mentioned in the Black Ledger are under investigation in Ukraine. The anti-corruption bureau, which has been looking into the Black Ledger, publicly confirmed the authenticity of the signature of one top official mentioned there. In December, the bureau accused Mykhaylo Okhendonovsky of receiving more than \$160,000 from Party of Regions officials in 2012, when he was Ukraine's main election official.

The bureau said it would identify more suspects in the coming months.

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Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva contributed reporting from Kiev and Moscow, and Lynn Berry from Washington.

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Reach the AP's Washington investigative team at <https://www.ap.org/tips>.

## The Latest: Tillerson, Lavrov open tense meeting in Moscow

MOSCOW (AP) — The Latest on U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's visit to Moscow (all times local):  
12:38 p.m.

Russian President Vladimir Putin says relations between Moscow and Washington have deteriorated in the early months of Donald Trump's presidency.

"It can be said that the level of trust at the working level, especially at the military level, has not become better but most likely has degraded," Putin said in an interview broadcast Wednesday by state television channel Mir.

Putin also asserted that Syria has complied with an agreement to dispose of chemical weapons "so far as we know." He reiterated previous Russian assertions that the chemical weapons attack last week that prompted a US Tomahawk missile barrage on a Syrian air base was either a rebel provocation or caused by Syrian warplanes hitting a rebel chemical weapons facility.

The interview was broadcast as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson held his first meeting with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

12:30 p.m.

The spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin says Putin may still meet visiting U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Tillerson, who arrived on Tuesday on his first visit to Russia since he was named to lead the U.S. State Department, is meeting for talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Wednesday that "if it is decided" that the Russian president needs to be briefed on the outcome of the Tillerson-Lavrov talks, he will meet them.

The Kremlin previously refused to say whether Putin would meet with Tillerson in Moscow.

11:50 a.m.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says he aims to clear up "sharp differences" with Russia as he opens a tense meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Tillerson and Lavrov are meeting in Moscow amid rising tensions over Syria.

Lavrov says Russia has lots of questions about the "very ambiguous" and "contradictory" ideas coming from the U.S. He says through a translator that it's important for Russia to understand the "real intentions" of the Trump administration.

Tillerson says he wants to understand why U.S.-Russia differences exist. He says both countries have agreed that their lines of communications must stay open.

Lavrov is also subtly mocking Tillerson for the fact that top U.S. State Department positions are unfilled. He says that makes it hard to have clarity about U.S. positions.

10:45 a.m.

President Donald Trump says Russian President Vladimir Putin is backing an "evil person" in Syria.

Trump says Syrian President Bashar Assad is "an animal." He tells Fox Business Network that Putin's support for Assad is "very bad for Russia." Trump says it's also "very bad for mankind."

Trump is increasing pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin to abandon Assad just as U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is visiting Moscow. Tillerson has a meeting set later Wednesday in Moscow with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. It's unclear whether Putin will grant Tillerson a meeting.

The meeting comes as early expectations of an easy rapport between the Trump administration and Russia are crashing into reality. Washington and Moscow are trading sharp accusations about a chemical weapons attack last week in Syria.



## US show of force to North Korea also could show US weakness

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Upping the stakes in its slow-burning confrontation with North Korea, the Trump administration deployed an aircraft carrier to the region this week in a show of force that also could expose American weakness. If the North proceeds with a ballistic missile or nuclear test and the U.S. does nothing in response, America's deterrence will appear diminished.

The USS Carl Vinson is steaming to waters off the Korean Peninsula as anticipation mounts that Kim Jong Un will stage another weapons test around the anniversary of the birth of his grandfather, Kim Il Sung, the nation's founder, on Saturday. Another potential date: An April 25 celebration of its armed forces.

Tensions are high on the divided peninsula. The North sees U.S.-South Korea war games as preparations for an invasion. The U.S. and its allies have expressed alarm about Pyongyang's recent ballistic missile launches, including a four-rocket salvo last month it described as a practice to strike U.S. bases in Japan. Washington's ultimate concern is the North's developing ability to mount a nuclear warhead on an inter-continental missile, which it should be able to master in the next few years.

At the Pentagon Tuesday, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said sending the Vinson was "prudent."

And Army Gen. Vincent Brooks, commander of U.S. forces in South Korea, decided not to come to Washington for congressional hearings this month, his office said Tuesday, suggesting he had to stay for a potentially hazardous situation under his command. U.S. defense officials said that didn't mean military action was imminent. A similar decision was made amid tensions in 2013.

But the Vinson's presence near North Korea points to the larger challenge for the U.S. of deterrence, which has to be backed by the real threat of force. No one has spoken of shooting down a North Korean missile unless it directly threatens the U.S. or its allies in East Asia. And Kim is likely to be undeterred to conduct tests because he has made nuclear weapons development a national priority, seeing them as a guarantee against U.S.-backed regime changes that have toppled authoritarian regimes in Iraq, Libya and elsewhere.

President Donald Trump's policy toward the North Korean threat is still taking shape. The emphasis has been on pressing China to use its economic leverage to rein in its wayward ally. When Chinese leader Xi Jinping met Trump in Florida last week, the U.S. urged China to block North Korea's access to the international financial system by cracking down on banks and companies that deal with it.

But the Trump administration has been unusually outspoken about retaining pre-emptive military options against North Korea. The president has issued repeated, ambiguous warnings about his willingness to take unilateral actions — a threat that assumed new resonance after he ordered a missile strike against Syria last week over its alleged use of chemical weapons. The order was issued during Xi's visit.

"North Korea is looking for trouble. If China decides to help, that would be great. If not, we will solve the problem without them! U.S.A.," Trump tweeted Tuesday.

The United States periodically deploys aircraft carrier strike groups to waters near the Korean Peninsula to retain a naval presence and project power in the Asia-Pacific region. The Carl Vinson took part last month in the ongoing U.S.-South Korea war games.

President Barack Obama also ordered an aircraft carrier to the Korean Peninsula in a show of force in November 2010 after North Korea launched a deadly artillery barrage on the South. Then, the fear was a conflagration at the heavily militarized border.

Washington now views the threat as one against the U.S. itself, as North Korea's nuclear and missile programs approach the capacity to reach the U.S. mainland. That has raised the question of whether the U.S. would be prepared to shoot down a North Korean missile. Doing so would be a real-world test of America's uncertain missile defense capabilities.

The Carl Vinson is accompanied by a destroyer ship with an Aegis combat system to track and intercept missiles.

John Park, director of the Korea Working Group at the Harvard Kennedy School, said if North Korea went ahead with a missile test to mark this weekend's anniversary, there would be questions if the U.S. was in

the region but did not try to stop it. If it uses the Aegis system, a failure would hurt the system's credibility. That would also alarm allies Japan and South Korea, which also have the Aegis.

Even if the U.S. used the missile defense system successfully, the question would be how Pyongyang responds.

Escalation into a full-blown conflict would leave South Korea's capital, 25 miles from the heavily militarized border, vulnerable to the North's artillery and rockets. Nearly 30,000 U.S. forces in South Korea, many accompanied by families, would also be in the firing line.

In a statement Tuesday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry said the aircraft carrier deployment "goes to prove that the U.S. reckless moves for invading ... have reached a serious phase."

## San Bernardino school looks to recover after killings

By **AMANDA LEE MYERS** and **MICHAEL BALSAMO**, Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (AP) — Ruben Gutierrez did not hesitate. A day after his 7-year-old grandson's good friend was gunned down in a classroom at their school, he took the boy right back to the small San Bernardino campus of North Park Elementary, even though school was closed.

He wanted the boy to see the flowers, the candles, the balloons, the love shown to his friend, 8-year-old Jonathan Martinez, and the teacher who was also killed. And he wanted him to have good associations with the place before it reopens next week.

"I thought it was important to get him down here today to see what's going on, to see the community support," Gutierrez said Tuesday. "To see that his school is safe. You know, it's not a scary place to be, and just kind of help him process more and re-experience what happened to hopefully make this as healthy an experience as can be given the circumstances."

Gutierrez's grandson, Jeffrey Imbriani, had become friends with Jonathan, who was killed Monday morning when Cedric Anderson, a Navy veteran, walked into the special-education classroom of his wife Karen Smith, opening fire on her and striking Martinez and another student in the process.

Anderson, 53, fired off 10 shots from a .357 Magnum. Just a month into their marriage, Anderson had accused his wife of infidelity — though police say there is no evidence of that — and when reconciliation efforts failed, he shot and killed her, San Bernardino Police Chief Jarrod Burguan said.

Smith told family members that Anderson had also threatened her after she moved out, but she didn't take him seriously and thought he was just seeking attention, the police chief said.

The 8-year-old who died had Williams syndrome, a rare genetic disorder characterized by learning delays, mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities and heart problems. Jonathan had survived a previous heart surgery. School officials said Jonathan was a happy child who loved music and playing with friends. Family members posted photos of Jonathan on social media of him on amusement rides, sitting on Santa's lap and riding a horse — all of them show him flashing a smile.

Another boy was also struck by gunfire but is expected to recover. The 9-year-old was stable and in good spirits as he watched cartoons in his hospital bed Tuesday, the school district's superintendent said.

As a memorial continued to grow on the sidewalk outside of the elementary school, parents and colleagues remembered Smith as a dedicated educator who cared deeply for her students and was devoted to education.

"She was an excellent teacher," said Marie Cabreras, who has two young children at North Park and also has an older daughter who was Smith's student for two years at a nearby high school. "Her whole life was surrounded around kids and helping them, and helping them build a future."

Rachel Valles, whose 8-year-old son Ethan was a student in Smith's class, said the boy had struggled with reading and math until he started in Smith's class in August.

"She had a huge impact on his life. He started reading and doing long math," Valles said. "I told her you have turned his life around. You've done for him but I couldn't do."

The young boy was not in school Monday but when Valles heard the shooting was in Smith's classroom, she said she almost passed out.

"He started crying hysterically I spent all night hugging him and telling him, 'Please don't ever leave my

side," she said.

Valles is still struggling with how she's going to break the news of his teacher's death to him.

"I just keep telling him, 'Baby, Miss Smith is on vacation. She's visiting God. So is Jonathan. He's visiting God and they're happy there.'"

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers John Antczak, Christopher Weber and Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

## Penguins hoping to end defending Cup champ hex

By WILL GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Marc-Andre Fleury's sprawling save on Detroit's Nicklas Lidstrom in the final moments of Game 7 of the 2009 Stanley Cup Finals was supposed mark the end of one potential dynasty and the beginning of another.

Yet it took the Penguins and star Sidney Crosby seven years to provide a bookend moment to that giddy night at Joe Louis Arena, the breakthrough coming in San Jose last June when they closed out the Sharks in six games to capture the franchise's fourth title.

Ten months after that joyous flight back home and the victory parade jammed with half a million fans, Crosby and company are back for more.

There are 16 teams alive for the Stanley Cup when the 2017 playoffs begin on Wednesday night. Only one, however, enters as the defending champion. Only one can become the first club since the Red Wings in 1997 and 1998 to capture consecutive Cups.

"I think there's a lot of reasons (it hasn't happened)," said Crosby, the Conn Smythe winner as playoff MVP last season. "You need so many things to go right. There are so many things you have to overcome. That's why it's not easy to do in back to back years."

It's more likely that things tend to fall apart. Twice since 1998 the reigning Cup champs didn't even make the playoffs the following season (Carolina in 2007 and the Los Angeles Kings in 2015). Seven times the champs went home after the first round. Only three managed to make it all the way back to the final the next year.

"We have to find a way to change that trend," Crosby said.

While the Penguins, Los Angeles and Chicago have created a monopoly on hockey's most prized possession (winning seven of the last eight Cups), finding the right mix of talent, grit and puck luck to do it in consecutive years is a formula no one has figured out since Steve Yzerman and the Red Wings did it nearly 20 years ago.

Yzerman, a Hall of Fame player and currently the general manager of the Tampa Bay Lightning, can't quite put a finger on why it hasn't happened since the Red Wings swept Washington in 1998.

"I think (the salary cap) plays a part of it," Yzerman said. "The timing of contracts coming up and things."

It wasn't that way back in Yzerman's prime, when teams could spare no expense to keep their core group together. It's how Montreal in the 1970s and the New York Islanders and the Edmonton Oilers in the 1980s were able to turn Cup-sipping celebrations into annual rites of spring.

Now general managers need creative math, an ability to find the right spare parts to fill in the gaps and a steady hand at the helm.

Pittsburgh appeared to be in good shape in 2010, easing by Ottawa in six games in the opening round and taking a 3-2 lead over Montreal in the conference semifinals. Then Canadians goaltender Jaroslav Halak got hot, forward Mike Cammalleri did too and Montreal rallied to win in seven games.

If former Red Wings forward Kirk Maltby is being honest, even he's a little surprised the '98 team remains the last to recapture the magic.

"I can't really answer the why because I guess the why really is, it's extremely difficult to win it one time, let alone back to back," Maltby said. "If you can't stay healthy, especially your big guys, or if you don't have depth (it hurts you)."

Yzerman is bullish on the Penguins, who put together the league's second-best record despite a mish-

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mash of injuries along the blue line and Evgeni Malkin's extended absence late in the season. Pittsburgh persevered behind Crosby's NHL-high 44 goals and most of the familiar faces are back in time for the playoffs, Malkin included.

"It's a tough battle in the East but I think they're a fantastic team," Yzerman said. "If they can get their guys healthy, I think Sidney is playing the best hockey of his entire career. They can win but it's tough."

Pittsburgh forward Matt Cullen's rookie season coincided with Detroit's '98 title. He helped Carolina to the Cup in 2006 but was traded to the Rangers in the offseason and watched from afar as the Hurricanes stumbled. He could have retired last summer with his name on the Cup for a second time but decided to give it one more shot, confident the Penguins had what it takes to make another run.

There's nothing Cullen's seen over the last six months that's made him reconsider.

"For this group we've kind of come through the season and managed the season pretty impressively," Cullen said. "We feel really good about where we're at. We've got some bodies back in the lineup we've been missing for a while. We enter the postseason pretty confident with what we have here and if we play our best hockey, we have a good chance."

## THE NEXT WAVE

Forward Nolan Patrick of the Brandon Wheat Kings in the Western Hockey League has been selected as the top eligible skater for the 2017 NHL draft by the Central Scouting Bureau. The 18-year-old Patrick had 20 goals and 26 assists in 33 games for the Wheat Kings despite missing a significant portion of the season with an injury. Patrick, whose father Steve played 250 games for three NHL teams in the 1980s, posted 91 goals and 113 assists in three seasons with Brandon.

Forward Nico Hischier, a center for the Halifax Mooseheads of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, is the second-ranked prospect. Hischier, who had 38 goals and 48 assists in 57 games, could be the highest-ever draft pick from Switzerland. The New York Islanders took Nino Niederreiter with the fifth overall pick in 2010.

## LEADERS (at end of regular season)

Points, McDavid (Edmonton), 100; Goals, Crosby (Pittsburgh), 44; Power-play goals, Alex Ovechkin (Washington), Brayden Schenn (Philadelphia), Nikita Kucherov (Tampa Bay), 17; Game-winning goals, Rickard Rakell (Los Angeles), 10; Goalies wins, Holtby (Washington), Bobrovsky, 41 (Columbus). Goals-against average: Bobrovsky (2.06). Shutouts: Holtby, 9.

AP Hockey Writer Larry Lage in Detroit and AP Sports Writer Jimmy Golen in Boston contributed to this report.

More AP NHL: [apnews.com/tag/NHLhockey](http://apnews.com/tag/NHLhockey)

## What's at stake for winners \_ and losers \_ in NBA finale

By BRIAN MAHONEY, AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For some teams, it's win and they're in.

For others, winning is the worst thing they can do Wednesday.

The last night of the NBA regular season isn't just about playoff spots. It's also about lottery seeds, the final chance to lock up the best odds possible for landing a high pick in what's considered a deep draft.

The Boston Celtics, with a victory over Milwaukee, will clinch the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference, but they've already got the top spot for next month's lottery. The Brooklyn Nets will finish with the league's worst record, and their 25 percent chance of winning the lottery goes to Boston as part of the ongoing payment of the Paul Pierce-Kevin Garnett trade three years ago.

But other teams have been doing their best — or worst, rather — to fall down the standings with curious lineups and questionable strategies. Commissioner Adam Silver has noticed the tanking going on and said last week it's a serious issue for the league.

"Sometimes there are opportunities to give other players on the roster additional minutes," he said. "But



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there's no question there's also a certain amount of jockeying that's going on there as teams look to go into the draft."

One of them is Phoenix (24-58), which wrapped up the second-worst record in the league Tuesday having already shut down starters Eric Bledsoe and Tyson Chandler a while ago. Charlotte is also finished, but the other 28 teams will be in action one more time.

And with respect to the Indiana Pacers and Chicago Bulls, who would clinch the final two playoff spots with victories, in some other games there might be more at stake for the team that loses.

A look at some games that matter:

ATLANTA AT INDIANA

BROOKLYN AT CHICAGO

The Pacers and Bulls are playoff-bound with victories and they should get some help from their opponents. The Hawks have nothing to play for after being locked into the No. 5 seed when they beat Charlotte on Tuesday, and the Nets have already announced they'll rest Brook Lopez and Jeremy Lin along with some injured players.

Miami is still alive and needs a victory over Washington along with help.

TORONTO AT CLEVELAND

The Raptors are locked into the third seed, while the Cavaliers can still be No. 1 with a victory and a Boston loss.

If that happened, Toronto could avoid the champs until the conference finals. Beat them Wednesday, and the Raptors are guaranteed to see them one round sooner.

PHILADELPHIA AT NEW YORK

One of the only things Phil Jackson has gotten right while running the Knicks is drafting Kristaps Porzingis at No. 4 two years ago. New York has its first-round pick for the first time since then and currently has the sixth-worst record, but a victory and the Knicks risk drafting around No. 10 if they were to fall backward the maximum three spots in the lottery.

The 76ers are tied with Orlando for the fourth-worst record.

DETROIT AT ORLANDO

Nobody celebrates their lottery luck like the Magic, who have pingpong balls in their trophy case in recognition of wins in 1992, '93 and 2004. But it's easier to be lucky from No. 4 than No. 5, so another loss couldn't hurt. Orlando looks capable of one after losing by a franchise-record 47 points to Chicago on Monday.

SAN ANTONIO AT UTAH

SACRAMENTO AT THE LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS

A Clippers win or a Jazz loss and their first-round series starts in Los Angeles. Utah needs to win and have the Clippers lose to seize the No. 4 seed.

## North Korea decries US carrier dispatch as parliament meets

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — North Korea's parliament convened Tuesday amid heightened tensions on the divided peninsula, with the United States and South Korea conducting their biggest-ever military exercises and the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier heading to the area in a show of American strength.

North Korea vowed a tough response to any military moves that might follow the U.S. decision to send the carrier and its battle group to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

"We will hold the U.S. wholly accountable for the catastrophic consequences to be entailed by its outrageous actions," a spokesman for its Foreign Ministry was quoted as saying by the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

The statement followed an assertion by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that U.S. missile strikes against a Syrian air base in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack carry a message for any nation op-

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erating outside of international norms. He didn't specify North Korea, but the context was clear enough.

"If you violate international agreements, if you fail to live up to commitments, if you become a threat to others, at some point a response is likely to be undertaken," Tillerson told ABC's "This Week."

Pyongyang is always extremely sensitive to the annual U.S.-South Korea war games, which it sees as an invasion rehearsal, and justifies its nuclear weapons as defensive in nature. It has significantly turned up the volume of its rhetoric that war could be on the horizon if it sees any signs of aggression from south of the Demilitarized Zone.

"This goes to prove that the U.S. reckless moves for invading the DPRK have reached a serious phase of its scenario," the North's statement said, referring to the country by its formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "If the U.S. dares opt for a military action, crying out for 'pre-emptive attack' ... the DPRK is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the U.S."

In Washington, White House spokesman Sean Spicer said President Donald Trump has been very clear that it's "not tolerable" for North Korea to have nuclear-armed missiles.

"The last thing we want to see is a nuclear North Korea that threatens the coast of the United States, or, for that matter, any other country, or any other set of human beings," Spicer said at the Tuesday news briefing.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported that Trump spoke Wednesday morning Beijing time with Chinese President Xi Jinping about North Korea. It said Xi stressed the need for an end to North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and that China insists on peace and stability on the peninsula and advocates resolving the problem through peaceful means. Xi said China would maintain "communication and coordination" with Washington over the issue.

Spicer said that Trump spoke last week with Xi about the "shared national interest" in stopping its close ally, North Korea, from having nuclear capabilities, adding that it would be helpful if China was more outspoken on the matter.

"He would welcome President Xi weighing in on this a little bit more," Spicer said.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump also said that he tried to persuade Xi to put pressure on North Korea in exchange for a good trade deal with the U.S.

"I explained to the President of China that a trade deal with the U.S. will be far better for them if they solve the North Korean problem!" Trump tweeted.

In a second tweet he wrote: "North Korea is looking for trouble. If China decides to help, that would be great. If not, we will solve the problem without them! U.S.A."

North Korea's parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, nominally the highest organ of government, opened Tuesday with the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, taking the center seat.

Foreign media are not allowed to attend parliamentary sessions. Initial reports from state media said the meeting went through domestic issues, with Premier Pak Pong Ju making a speech about the latest five-year economic plan, which was announced last year. Another closely watched category on the official agenda is organizational issues, which can mean new appointments to senior positions.

Like other attendees, Kim Jong Un was shown on the North Korean news late Tuesday holding up his assembly membership card to vote on state business.

This year's meeting kicks off what are expected to be major celebrations, including a large-scale military parade and fireworks, to mark the 105th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung, North Korea's first leader and "eternal president," and Kim Jong Un's late grandfather.

Though the details of the April 15 anniversary — known as the "Day of the Sun" — have not been officially confirmed, Pyongyang residents have been out every day diligently practicing in the city's squares and parks for the mass event.

The North Korean parliament is often dismissed as rubberstamp because it tends to approve, rather than formulate, policies and laws, but its role is a bit more complex than the facade and spectacle presented to the nation by state-run media.

For one thing, the regularity of its meetings — it usually meets once or twice a year — is, in itself, a

sign of stability.

"The SPA gatherings completely undercut any analysis or prognostications that the country is going to collapse. If they failed to convene an SPA session, that would be an indication that there is a fundamental problem among DPRK elites," said Michael Madden, editor of the North Korea Leadership Watch website.

"If there was an existential problem with the (ruling) Workers' Party of Korea and the political culture, then they wouldn't be convening so many people at one time in Pyongyang," Madden said.

Associated Press writer Joshua Boak in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Toyota shows robotic leg brace to help paralyzed people walk**

**By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer**

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota is introducing a wearable robotic leg brace designed to help partially paralyzed people walk.

The Welwalk WW-1000 system is made up of a motorized mechanical frame that fits on a person's leg from the knee down. The patients can practice walking wearing the robotic device on a special treadmill that can support their weight.

Toyota Motor Corp. demonstrated the equipment for reporters at its Tokyo headquarters on Wednesday.

One hundred such systems will be rented to medical facilities in Japan later this year, Toyota said. The service entails a one-time initial charge of 1 million yen (\$9,000) and a 350,000 yen (\$3,200) monthly fee.

The gadget is designed to be worn on one leg at a time for patients severely paralyzed on one side of the body due to a stroke or other ailments, Eiichi Saito, a medical doctor and executive vice president at Fujita Health University, explained.

The university joined with Toyota in developing the device.

A person demonstrating it strapped the brace to her thigh, knee, ankle and foot and then showed how it is used to practice walking on the treadmill. Her body was supported from above by a harness and the motor helped to bend and straighten her knee. Sensors in the device monitor the walking and adjust quickly to help out. Medical staff control the system through a touch panel screen.

Japanese automakers have been developing robotics both for manufacturing and other uses. Honda Motor Co.'s Asimo humanoid can run and dance, pour a drink and carry on simple conversations, while WelWalk is more of a system that uses robotics than a stand-alone robot.

Given how common paralysis due to strokes is in fast-aging Japan, Toyota's device could be very helpful, Saito said. He said patients using it can recover more quickly as the sensitive robotic sensor in Welwalk fine-tunes the level of support better than a human therapist can.

"This helps just barely enough," said Saito, explaining that helping too much can slow progress in rehabilitation.

The field of robotic aids for walking and rehabilitation is growing quickly. A battery-powered wearable exoskeleton made by Israeli manufacturer ReWalk Robotics enables people relying on a wheelchair to stand upright and walk.

Such systems also can aid therapists in monitoring a patient's progress, Luke Hares, chief technology officer at Cambridge Medical Robotics in Britain, said in a phone interview.

"They can be so much more precise," he said.

Previously, Toyota has shown robots that play the violin and trumpet. It plans to start sales in Japan of a tiny boy-like robot for conversational companionship. It is also investing in artificial intelligence and developing self-driving vehicles.

Toshiyuki Isobe, Toyota's chief officer for research, said Welwalk reflects the company's desire to apply robotics in medicine and other social welfare areas, not just entertainment. The company also has an R2-D2-like machine, called the Human Support Robot, whose mechanical arm can help bed-ridden people pick things up.

"Our vision is about trying to deliver mobility for everybody," said Isobe. "We have been developing in-

dustrial robotics for auto manufacturing, and we are trying to figure out how we can use that technology to fill social needs and help people more.”

Yuri Kageyama can be reached at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>  
Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/yuri-kageyama>

## Kansas outcome a warning to GOP as Georgia contest nears

By ROXANA HEGEMAN, Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Republicans pulled out a victory in Kansas in the first of four U.S. House special elections to replace GOP congressmen named to top jobs in President Donald Trump’s administration, but the next contest for a seat in Georgia could be tougher to hold.

The margin of victory Tuesday for Kansas Republican Ron Estes in the 4th District special election slid to only seven percentage points from a 31-point margin in November, when incumbent Mike Pompeo was running before he was appointed Trump’s CIA director.

In a further warning sign for Republicans, Estes narrowly lost the district’s most populous county around the city of Wichita to his Democratic opponent James Thompson, a political newcomer. Trump won that county by 18 points.

The outcome was a shot across the bow of national Republicans as the party faces three more special elections in Georgia, Montana and South Carolina. Republicans now hold a 237-193 majority in the House.

“Republicans nationally should be very worried,” said Bob Beatty, a Washburn University political scientist. “It’s remarkable that Thompson got this close.”

Both parties will now turn their attention to Georgia and the extremely competitive April 18 contest to replace Tom Price, who resigned to serve as Trump’s Health and Human Services secretary.

Democratic hopes rest with Jon Ossoff, 30, a former congressional staffer turned investigative filmmaker who has raised more than \$8 million, an extraordinary amount for a special election. Ossoff is counting on opposition to Trump to propel him to a decisive victory.

All 18 candidates from both parties will appear on one primary ballot, with polls suggesting that Ossoff will lead the first round of voting. Republicans are aiming to keep Ossoff below the majority required to win outright, forcing a two-person runoff — basically a Republican v. Democrat general election — on June 20.

The Republican candidates in Georgia have engaged in a bitter squabble and none of them has clearly emerged to lead the party.

While the Kansas result suggested some blowback against Trump, another important factor was anger with the state’s unpopular Republican governor Sam Brownback.

Democrats tapped into voter frustration after Brownback made Kansas a laboratory for sweeping tax cuts that left the state short of revenue and facing a budget crisis. Brownback also refused to expand the Medicaid health program for the poor.

Lucy Jones-Phillips, a 31-year-old insurance representative and Democrat, acknowledged she doesn’t vote in every election, but said she voted for Thompson because she wanted to register her disappointment in Brownback, especially his veto of an expansion of Medicaid.

“I can’t stand Brownback,” she said as she left her polling site in Belle Plaine.

In a sign of nervousness in the waning days of the campaign, Republicans poured money into the race to bolster Estes. Republicans pulled in U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas to campaign in Wichita for Estes, and both Vice President Mike Pence and Trump recorded robo calls for him.

Those GOP calls prompted Charlene Health, a 52-year-old homemaker and Republican in Belle Plaine, to cast a ballot for Estes.

“I wasn’t even going to vote,” she said as she left her polling site Tuesday morning. “I finally did. I realized this was important.”

Republicans have represented the south-central Kansas district since 1994. The district has been hurt by the downturn in the agricultural economy and the loss of hundreds of well-paying, blue-collar jobs in



aircraft manufacturing plants. Wichita is home to Koch Industries, the company led by conservative billionaire political donors Charles and David Koch.

AP Political Writer John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, also contributed to this report.

## Philippines: Troops killed militant blamed for beheadings

By JIM GOMEZ, Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine troops battling militants in a central province killed a key Abu Sayyaf commander who had been blamed for the beheadings of two Canadians and a German hostage and was apparently attempting another kidnapping mission, the military chief said Wednesday.

Military chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Ano told The Associated Press that troops have recovered and identified the remains of Moammar Askali, who used the nom de guerre Abu Rami, in the scene of the battle in a far-flung coastal village on Bohol island, where five other Abu Sayyaf gunmen were killed in the fighting Tuesday, along with four soldiers and policemen.

Ano said troops took the picture of Askali after his death and that captured Abu Sayyaf militants identified the young militant leader.

"This is a major blow to the Abu Sayyaf," Ano told The AP. "If they have further plans to kidnap innocent people somewhere, they will now have to think twice."

The military chief said Askali had led several of militants who traveled by speedboats from their jungle lairs in southern Sulu province to Bohol province in an apparent bid to carry out another kidnapping in a region that is popular for its beach resorts and wildlife. Sporadic gunbattles between the remaining Abu Sayyaf militants and government forces continued Wednesday, military officials said.

At least 10 people has been killed since Tuesday in the fighting in Bohol, far from the extremists' southern jungle bases and in a region where the U.S. government has warned that the gunmen may be plotting kidnappings, officials said.

Military officials said at least six gunmen, three soldiers and a policeman had died in the ongoing gunbattle in a village in the coastal town of Inabanga. The island province lies near Cebu province, a bustling commercial and tourism hub.

National police chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa said troops and policemen attacked the gunmen early Tuesday in Inabanga, where the gunmen had arrived aboard three boats. The gunmen took cover in three houses as the firefight broke out.

Government forces seized control of two of the houses, and the rest of the gunmen either were in the third house or had fled the area, dela Rosa told reporters.

It's the Abu Sayyaf's first known attempt to carry out ransom kidnappings deep in the heartland of the central Philippines, far from its jungle lairs in the southern provinces of Sulu and Basilan.

Bohol island, where one of the world's smallest primates, called tarsiers, are found, drawing many tourists, lies about 640 kilometers (397 miles) southeast of Manila. Bohol is about an hour away by boat from Cebu province, across the busy Cebu Strait, which is crisscrossed daily by ferries, cargo ships and fishing vessels.

Abu Sayyaf militants have crossed the sea border with Malaysia on powerful speedboats and kidnapped scores of foreign tourists in past years. In 2001, they sailed as far as western Palawan province, where they seized 20 people, including three Americans, from a resort.

"If we were not able to monitor this and engage them with our government forces, it's a cause for alarm if they were able to carry out kidnappings," dela Rosa said.

Ano said military intelligence operatives had been trying to track down the movements of the suspected militants, who first traveled from Sulu to southern Zamboanga peninsula. Intelligence later indicated the gunmen landed ashore in Inabanga, prompting military and police officials to deploy their forces, he said.

The gunmen traveled on board motor boats along a river to Inabanga's Napo village, where government forces assaulted them, military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said, adding that troops recovered four

rifles and a homemade bomb from the slain gunmen.

The U.S. Embassy in Manila recently advised Americans to take precautions amid "unsubstantiated yet credible information" of possible kidnappings by terrorists in Bohol, nearby Cebu province and other central areas.

The United States and the Philippines have separately blacklisted the Abu Sayyaf as a terrorist organization for bombings, kidnappings for ransom and beheadings. Some Abu Sayyaf commanders have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered troops to destroy the extremists in Sulu and in outlying island provinces, and has threatened to declare martial law in the country's south if the threat posed by the Abu Sayyaf and other extremist groups aligned with the Islamic State group gets out of control.

Although the Abu Sayyaf militants have been weakened by years of battle setbacks, they came back to international attention when they separately beheaded two Canadians last year and a German hostage earlier this year after ransom deadlines lapsed. The militants are still holding at least 29 captives in Sulu's jungles, many of them foreign tugboat and cargo ship crewmen seized at the sea border between the southern Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

## During border visit, Sessions outlines immigration plan

By ASTRID GALVAN, Associated Press

NOGALES, Ariz. (AP) — Attorney General Jeff Sessions toured the U.S.-Mexico border Tuesday and unveiled what he described as a new get-tough approach to immigration prosecutions under President Donald Trump.

The nation's top law enforcement official outlined a series of changes that he said mark the start of a new push to rid American cities and the border of what he described as "filth" brought on by drug cartels and criminal organizations.

The tour included visiting a port of entry, where Sessions exited an SUV in a white shirt and baseball cap before entering a restricted area.

Sessions has been steadily expanding the Justice Department's role in the anti-immigration agenda of the Trump administration, but the border trip offered the most comprehensive look yet at his plans.

During his visit, he urged federal prosecutors to intensify their focus on immigration crimes such as illegal border crossing or smuggling others into the U.S.

Such prosecutions are already happening on a large scale. They made up more than half of all federal prosecutions in fiscal year 2016, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University. But prosecutions were slightly down from fiscal year 2015.

In a three-page memo, Sessions told U.S. attorneys to prioritize immigration prosecutions by appointing a border security coordinator who can oversee investigations, keep statistics and provide legal advice and training to prosecutors. The coordinators would meet regularly with federal immigration authorities.

In addition, Sessions said federal prosecutors must consider bringing felony charges against those who have illegally entered the country more than once as well as those who marry to evade immigration laws. He also urged prosecutors to consider charging those illegally in the country with felony identity theft and document fraud.

"This is a new era. This is the Trump era," he said. "The lawlessness, the abdication of the duty to enforce our immigration laws, and the catch and release practices of old are over."

Sessions defended Trump's proposed border wall, saying it will be another tool to fight illegal immigration amid efforts within the Justice Department and other branches of government to punish and deter border crossers.

He also returned to a common theme from the Trump campaign by saying drug cartels and criminal gangs are turning American cities into "war zones" by raping and killing innocent people.

"It is here, on this sliver of land, where we first take our stand against this filth," he said.

Critics blasted the initiatives announced by Sessions as fear-mongering and anti-immigrant rhetoric not rooted in facts.

"Once again, Attorney General Sessions is scaring the public by linking immigrants to criminals despite studies showing that immigrants commit crimes at lower rates than the native born," said Gregory Z. Chen, director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Sessions made the announcement in Nogales, a border city that has witnessed a dramatic drop in immigrant and drug smuggling in recent years as more people enter the country in Texas, many of them Central Americans fleeing violence in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The Border Patrol's Tucson sector, which comprises most of Arizona, saw about 65,000 arrests of immigrants last fiscal year, roughly half the number agents made in 2012, according to Border Patrol data. Marijuana seizures have also dropped by about 28 percent from 1 million pounds in 2012 to 728,000 last year.

Following the border tour, Sessions spoke to officials at an International Association of Chiefs of Police conference outside Phoenix. He discussed crime rates, the border wall, immigration enforcement and sanctuary cities. He chided critics of mass incarceration and the decline in the prison population.

Sessions was also set to speak with service members at Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix.

Sessions' immigration plans have long been foreshadowed. Even as it plans to cut the Justice Department's budget by more than \$1 billion, the Trump administration wants hundreds of millions of dollars to hire 60 federal prosecutors and 40 deputy U.S. marshals to focus on border cases.

The proposal also calls for adding \$1.5 billion to Immigration and Customs Enforcement's budget to find, detain and deport immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, along with more than \$300 million to hire 500 new Border Patrol agents and 1,000 immigration agents.

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Associated Press Writer Sadie Gurman contributed to this report in Washington, D.C.

## **United CEO issues apology, calls removal 'truly horrific'**

**By DON BABWIN, Associated Press**

CHICAGO (AP) — After people were horrified by video of a passenger getting dragged off a full United Express flight by airport police, the head of United's parent company said the airline was reaching out to the man to "resolve this situation."

Hours later on Monday, his tone turned defensive. He described the man as "disruptive and belligerent."

By Tuesday afternoon, almost two days after the Sunday evening confrontation in Chicago, CEO Oscar Munoz issued his most contrite apology yet as details emerged about the man seen on cellphone videos recorded by other passengers at O'Hare Airport.

"No one should ever be mistreated this way," Munoz said.

The passenger was identified as physician David Dao, 69, of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, who was convicted more than a decade ago of felony charges involving his prescribing of drugs and spent years trying to regain his medical license.

But while Dao's history quickly became a focus of attention, there's no indication that his past influenced how he was treated or that the airline or police were aware of his background or would have known anything about him other than basic information such as his name and address, if that.

Screaming can be heard on the videos, but nowhere is Dao seen attacking the officers. In fact, he appears relatively passive both when he was dragged down the aisle of the jet and when he is seen standing in the aisle later saying quietly, "I want to go home, I want to go home."

Munoz's latest statement described the removal as "truly horrific." He said the company would review policies for seeking volunteers to give up their seats, for handling oversold situations and for partnering with airport authorities and local law enforcement.

An attorney who represents Dao said his client was being treated at a Chicago hospital for injuries he sustained on the plane and that the family would not comment.

According to records from the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure, Dao went to medical school at the University of Medicine of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, graduating in 1974. He was licensed in Kentucky

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with a specialty in pulmonary disease.

His legal troubles started in 2003, when his medical license was suspended after an undercover sting operation at a Louisville motel for allegedly writing fraudulent prescriptions.

According to the documents, the licensing board had learned that Dao had become sexually interested in a patient and hired the patient as his office manager. That man later said he quit his job because Dao "pursued him aggressively" and arranged to provide him with prescription drugs in exchange for sex.

Dao was ultimately convicted in late 2004 of several counts of obtaining drugs by fraud or deceit and was placed on five years of supervised probation and surrendered his medical license.

His longtime effort to get his license back finally succeeded in 2015, when the licensing board allowed him to practice medicine again.

About a year after his medical license was suspended, Dao joined the professional poker circuit, according to his World Series of Poker profile. His biggest competitive win came in 2009 when he took home more than \$117,000 from a tournament in Mississippi.

Airport officials have said little about Sunday's events and nothing about Dao's behavior before he was pulled from the jet that was bound for Louisville, Kentucky. Likewise, the Chicago Aviation Department has said only that one of its employees who removed Dao did not follow proper procedures and has been placed on leave.

No passengers on the plane have mentioned that Dao did anything but refuse to leave the plane when he was ordered to do so.

Also Tuesday, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel called the way Dao was treated "completely unacceptable" and praised Aviation Commissioner Ginger Evans for taking "swift action." He promised that a city investigation would "ensure nothing like this ever happens again."

The event stemmed from a common air travel issue — a full flight. United was trying to make room for four employees of a partner airline, meaning four people had to get off.

At first, the airline asked for volunteers, offering \$400 and then when that did not work, \$800 per passenger to relinquish a seat. When no one voluntarily came forward, United selected four passengers at random.

Three people got off the flight, but the fourth said he was a doctor and needed to get home to treat patients on Monday. He refused to leave.

Three Aviation Department police officers got on the plane. Two officers tried to reason with the man before a third came aboard and pointed at the man "basically saying, 'Sir, you have to get off the plane,'" said Tyler Bridges, a passenger whose wife, Audra D. Bridges, posted a video on Facebook.

One of the officers could be seen grabbing the screaming man from his window seat, across the armrest and dragging him down the aisle by his arms.

Other passengers on Flight 3411 are heard saying, "Please, my God," "What are you doing?" "This is wrong," "Look at what you did to him" and "Busted his lip."

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced Tuesday that it is reviewing Sunday's events to see if United violated rules on overselling flights.

Dao's relatives are focused only on his medical care, attorney Stephen L. Golan said. The family "wants the world to know that they are very appreciative of the outpouring of prayers, concern and support they have received."

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Associated Press Writer David Koenig in Dallas and AP researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

## Bill O'Reilly goes on vacation amid sponsor backlash

By LYNN ELBER, AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bill O'Reilly is taking a vacation from his Fox News Channel show amid sponsor defections triggered by sexual harassment allegations.

Announcing the break at the end of Tuesday's show, O'Reilly made a point of saying it was planned and



long in the works. He said he will return April 24.

Around this time of year, "I grab some vacation, because it's spring and Easter time. Last fall, I booked a trip that should be terrific," he said.

His vacation announcement comes as about 60 companies said they won't advertise on his show. The exodus followed a recent report in The New York Times that five women were paid a total of \$13 million to keep quiet about harassment allegations.

The amount of advertising time by paying customers on "The O'Reilly Factor" has been cut by more than half since the Times report, according to an analysis issued Tuesday by Kantar Media.

But O'Reilly, cable TV news' most popular personality, hasn't been abandoned by his audience. His show averaged 3.7 million viewers over five nights last week, up 12 percent from the 3.3 million he averaged the week before and up 28 percent compared to the same week in 2016.

"O'Reilly Factor" drew an average of just under 4 million viewers for the first three months of 2017, his biggest quarter ever in the show's 20-year history.

On Tuesday, the host offered his audience some general advice.

"If you can possibly take two good trips a year, it will refresh your life. We all need R&R. Put it to good use," O'Reilly said.

Online:

<https://www.billoreilly.com>

AP Television Writer David Bauder in New York contributed to this report.

## **Veteran kills wife at California school after making threats**

**By AMANDA LEE MYERS and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press**

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (AP) — The man who opened fire in a San Bernardino school was a deeply religious Navy veteran who accused his newlywed wife of infidelity.

They had separated and when they did not reconcile, he went to her special-education classroom and fatally shot her and one of the children she taught before turning the gun on himself, police said Tuesday.

In the weeks before Monday's violence, Karen Smith told family members her new husband, Cedric Anderson, had tried to get her to return home and threatened her, San Bernardino Police Chief Jarrod Burguan said. She didn't take him seriously and thought he was just seeking attention, he said.

Police do not know what triggered the attack or why Anderson chose to shoot Smith at the school, Burguan said, adding that she never shared any information about her marital problems with colleagues.

"She effectively kept her private life private," Burguan said.

Hundreds of panicked parents descended on North Park Elementary School on Monday, waiting for hours for information on their children in a city that is still on edge 16 months after a terror attack that killed 14 people and wounded 22 others at a meeting of county employees.

Anderson, 53, walked into the special-education classroom and fired 10 shots with a .357 Magnum, targeting his wife but also hitting two of her students.

Killed was Jonathan Martinez, 8, who had a rare genetic condition known as Williams syndrome and had survived heart surgery. A 9-year-old boy also was shot but was in stable condition and in good spirits, watching cartoons in his hospital bed Tuesday, police said.

Anderson and Smith had married in late January but separated in mid-March after Anderson accused her of infidelity, leading Smith to move out, Burguan said.

Just weeks before the shooting, Anderson had professed his love to Smith in a series of social media posts, including one that called her an "angel."

Smith's mother, Irma Sykes, said her daughter had been friends with Anderson for about four years before they got married.

"She thought she had a wonderful husband, but she found out he was not wonderful at all," Sykes told

the Los Angeles Times.

"She left him and that's where the trouble began," Sykes said. "She broke up with him and he came out with a different personality. She decided she needed to leave him."

Anderson, a self-proclaimed pastor whose Facebook profile is filled with Bible quotes and religious references, had been unemployed but previously held jobs as a maintenance worker, police said.

He had joined the Navy in 1982 and re-enlisted as a reservist from 1987 until 2003, working as a builder, according to military records.

Anderson had been arrested four times since 1982, though none resulted in convictions, Burguan said. Those arrests included one in August 2012 on suspicion of spousal battery and another in May 2013 on suspicion of brandishing a knife, Torrance police Sgt. Ronald Harris said. Police had been called to his home five times that year, he said.

Anderson's ex-wife, Natalie Anderson, had sought a restraining order against him in 1996 after he told her he would kill her and her children and take his own life when she refused to pay for their divorce, according to court documents obtained by the New York Daily News. Their divorce was finalized the next year.

Another of Anderson's girlfriends was granted a restraining order in 2013 after Anderson held a pillow over her face, the newspaper reported.

Investigators who searched Anderson's home after the shooting found a note that made reference to the relationship, feeling dishonored and "moving forward with no regrets," Burguan said. But outside the context of the shooting, nothing about the note would have been alarming, he said.

The slain teacher was remembered Tuesday by one school parent as "nothing but good" with the patience and understanding to handle special-needs students.

"She was an excellent teacher," said Marie Cabrerias, who has two young children at North Park and also has an older daughter who was Smith's student for two years at a nearby high school.

"She loved on kids. Her whole life was surrounded around kids and helping them, and helping them build a future," Cabrerias said.

Teachers hugged one another and wiped away tears as they returned to the school Tuesday to retrieve their belongings. It was to remain closed for the remainder of the week.

Ruben Gutierrez, whose 7-year-old grandson Jeffrey Imbriani was friends with Martinez, said the shooting was "just beyond words." Gutierrez brought his grandson back to the school to show him how community members were coming together after the shooting and to reinforce that the school is safe.

"You know, it's not a scary place to be, and just kind of help him process more and re-experience what happened to hopefully make this as healthy and experience as can be given the circumstances," Gutierrez said.

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers John Antczak and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

## Spicer apologizes for 'insensitive' reference to Holocaust

By KEN THOMAS and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer apologized Tuesday for making an "inappropriate and insensitive" comparison to the Holocaust in earlier comments about Syrian President Bashar Assad's use of chemical weapons — remarks that drew instant rebuke from Jewish groups and critics.

Spicer said in an interview with CNN that he was trying to make a point about Assad's use of chemical weapons and gas against his people but "mistakenly made an inappropriate and insensitive reference to the Holocaust, for which there is no comparison. And for that I apologize. It was a mistake to do that."

During the daily White House briefing, Spicer told reporters that Adolf Hitler "didn't even sink to using chemical weapons." Critics noted the remark ignored Hitler's use of gas chambers to exterminate Jews during the Holocaust.

It was the second day in a row in which Spicer, President Donald Trump's main spokesman, appeared to struggle to articulate the president's foreign policy at a critical time. The White House generated criticism

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at the start of the year when a statement on international Holocaust Remembrance Day did not make any reference to Jews.

In the CNN interview, Spicer said his comments did not reflect Trump's views. "My comments today did not reflect the president's, were a distraction from him and frankly were misstated, insensitive and wrong." He added, "Obviously it was my blunder."

The interview capped several attempts by the White House to clarify Spicer's statement.

During the briefing, Spicer was asked about his initial statement but delivered a garbled defense of his remarks in which he tried to differentiate between Hitler's actions and the gas attack on Syrian civilians last week. The attack in northern Syria left nearly 90 people dead, and Turkey's health minister said tests show sarin gas was used.

"I think when you come to sarin gas, there was no, he (Hitler) was not using the gas on his own people the same way that Assad is doing," Spicer said. "There was clearly ... I understand your point, thank you. There was not ... He brought them into the Holocaust center I understand that."

The comparison to World War II appeared to be part of a message the administration was trying to deliver as it explains its tactics in Syria. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis noted in a separate briefing that "the intent was to stop the cycle of violence into an area that even in World War II chemical weapons were not used on battlefields."

After the briefing, Spicer emailed a statement to reporters: "In no way was I trying to lessen the horrendous nature of the Holocaust. I was trying to draw a distinction of the tactic of using airplanes to drop chemical weapons on population centers. Any attack on innocent people is reprehensible and inexcusable."

Democrats and Jewish organizations condemned the comments.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California said in a statement that Spicer was "downplaying the horror of the Holocaust" and should be fired. Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., said on Twitter, "Someone get @PressSec a refresher history course on Hitler stat (hashtag)#Icantbelievehereallysaidthat."

The New York-based Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect called on Trump to fire Spicer, saying he denied that Hitler gassed Jews during the Holocaust.

Rep. Lee Zeldin, a Jewish Republican from New York, said in a statement that "as far as comments being made and comparisons of various tactics and methods between now and World War II, you can make the comparison a little differently and it would be accurate, but it's important to clear up that Hitler did in fact use chemical warfare to murder innocent people."

But Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, said that while "using the issue of the Holocaust or Hitler is problematic on many levels," he believed Spicer had "genuinely and sincerely apologized."

"He's bent over backward to make clear those views are not his, not what he was trying to say," Brooks said in a statement, adding, "We accept that and move on."

Spicer's comments came on the first day of Passover and a day after the White House held a Seder dinner marking the emancipation of the Jewish people, a tradition started during the Obama administration.

According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Nazis experimented with poison gas in late 1939 with the killing of mental patients, which was termed "euthanasia." Both mobile and stationary gas chambers were later used, with up to 6,000 Jews gassed each day at Auschwitz alone.

On Monday, the White House clarified remarks Spicer made from the podium that the use of barrel bombs by Assad's government might lead to further military action by the United States.

In an exchange with reporters, Spicer appeared to draw a new red line for the Trump administration when he told reporters that if a country gases a baby or it puts "a barrel bomb into innocent people, I think you will see a response from this president."

Until Monday the administration had maintained that last week's airstrikes were in response to the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons against its own citizens. A White House spokesman said later that "nothing has changed in our posture" and the president retains the option to act if it's in the national interest.

Associated Press writer Julie Bykowicz contributed to this report. Follow Thomas and Colvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC> and <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

## 10 Things to Know for Wednesday By The Associated Press

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

### 1. TILLERSON'S GAMBLE ON RUSSIA-SYRIA RELATIONS

The U.S. Secretary of State is hoping that President Trump's willingness to threaten military action will give the U.S. leverage to end the war in Syria.

### 2. WHO'S SORRY NOW

United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz issued a more contrite apology to the passenger who was dragged from a plane in Chicago, calling his treatment "truly horrific."

### 3. EXPLOSIONS NEAR BORUSSIA DORTMUND SOCCER TEAM'S BUS INJURES PLAYER

German police say a letter found nearby claimed responsibility for the blasts, which happened as the team was leaving a hotel in Dortmund.

### 4. WHY WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN IS APOLOGIZING

Sean Spicer says he made a mistake when he said that Adolf Hitler "didn't even sink to using chemical weapons" as Syria did — failing to note that Hitler did use poison gas during the Holocaust.

### 5. SCHOOLMATES REMEMBER CHILD KILLED IN SAN BERNARDINO CLASSROOM SHOOTING

Eight-year-old Jonathan Martinez had already survived heart surgery in his short life, but was known for his friendliness.

### 6. ATTORNEY GENERAL JEFF SESSIONS WANTS HARSHER PENALTIES FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY INTO U.S.

During a tour of the US-Mexico border, Sessions urged prosecutors to charge those in the U.S. illegally with felony identity theft and document fraud.

### 7. YAHOO ACCUSED OF MISMANAGING FUND FOR DISSIDENTS IN CHINA

A lawsuit filed in Washington, D.C. alleges that Yahoo mismanaged \$17M it set aside to help activists after Yahoo provided information on them to the Chinese government.

### 8. AIDE INVOLVED WITH TRUMP UNIVERSITY CASE IN FLORIDA TAPPED FOR FEDERAL JOB

Carlos G. Muniz was a top aide to Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi who defended the office's decision not to take legal action against Trump University, which had been accused of defrauding students.

### 9. "CHARGING BULL" SCULPTOR SAYS "FEARLESS GIRL" VIOLATES HIS RIGHTS

The creator of Wall Street's famous bull statue says New York City's placement of the girl changes the dynamic of his work.

### 10. FOUNDER OF THE J. GEILS BAND HAS DIED

John Warren Geils Jr. died in his Massachusetts home at 71. His band was known for the rock hits "Love Stinks" and "Centerfold."

## Trump taps lawyer involved with Trump U case for federal job

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and GARY FINEOUT, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As a top aide to Florida's attorney general, Carlos G. Muniz helped defend the office's decision to sit out legal action against Trump University. Now the president is naming him to be the top lawyer in the U.S. Education Department.

President Donald Trump has announced his intent to nominate Muniz to serve as general counsel to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. The Senate would then consider the nomination of the Republican lawyer.

Emails reviewed by The Associated Press show that in 2013 Muniz, who served as Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi's chief of staff for three years, was included in discussions about student complaints alleging fraud with Trump's namesake real-estate seminars.

Muniz, now in private practice, has also been the lead attorney defending Florida State University in a



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lawsuit by a former student who said the school failed to investigate after she said she was sexually assaulted by the star quarterback of the Seminoles' 2013 national championship football team. The player was never charged with a crime by police in Tallahassee, and the state attorney's office declined to pursue a criminal case against him.

An investigation by the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights is still underway, presenting a potential conflict of interest if Muniz is confirmed.

Both Muniz and the White House declined to comment Tuesday, referring all questions to the Education Department.

The Education Department said in a statement to The Associated Press late Tuesday that its ethics officer will work with Muniz on identifying any potential conflict of interest "so that Mr. Muniz may recuse himself as appropriate if confirmed."

"This effort will include a review of Mr. Muniz's representation of Florida State University in any Title IX complaint or investigation," the statement said.

The department declined to answer questions about Muniz's role in the review of Trump U.

AP reported last year that Bondi personally solicited a \$25,000 political contribution from Trump as her office was weighing how to respond to questions from the Orlando Sentinel newspaper about whether she would join New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman in suing the billionaire businessman.

Though both Trump University and the Florida-based Trump Institute had stopped offering classes by the time Bondi took office in 2011, more than 20 consumer complaints had been filed by former students who said they were swindled.

Emails from August 2013 obtained under Florida's public records law showed that Muniz was copied on discussions about how to respond to the newspaper's request for comment, though he did not actively weigh in.

Emails show Muniz did help direct Bondi's public defense on the issue, including rewriting an October 2013 fact sheet distributed to reporters.

Days after Bondi's office said it was reviewing the Trump U case, a political committee supporting her re-election received a \$25,000 check from Trump's charitable foundation. His daughter, Ivanka Trump, also added \$500 more to support Bondi.

Bondi, who endorsed Trump's bid for president right before the Florida Republican primary, said she was unaware her staff had been asked about the New York lawsuit until a Florida newspaper columnist highlighted the 2013 donation from Trump.

Bondi has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and defended her decision to accept the contribution, saying her office never seriously considered suing Trump.

Trump's 2013 check, drawn on an account in the name of the Donald J. Trump Foundation, violated a federal prohibition against charities giving money to political groups. The issue garnered national media coverage last year during Trump's presidential campaign, and his foundation paid a \$2,500 fine to the IRS.

The illegal donation prompted a Massachusetts attorney last year to file a state bribery complaint against Bondi and Trump. A Florida prosecutor assigned to review the case informed Republican Gov. Rick Scott last week of his office's conclusion that there was not enough evidence to move forward.

A memo about the complaint against Bondi said it was "insufficient on its face to conduct a criminal investigation" and was based almost entirely on media coverage. The assistant state attorney who wrote the memo said the complaint was based on insinuation and there was no evidence Bondi asked for the money in exchange for any official act. There was no indication she interviewed Trump or Bondi before reaching her decision.

Though Bondi's office took no action against Trump, the president later agreed to settle the class-action case filed by New York and private lawyers, paying his former students \$25 million in damages.

After leaving Bondi's office, Muniz became a partner at the Jacksonville, Florida, office of a large law and lobbying firm. He defended Florida State University in a Title IX lawsuit filed by Erica Kinsman, a former student who said she was raped by quarterback Jameis Winston in 2012.

Kinsman sued Winston in April 2015 in federal civil court, alleging sexual battery and assault, and Winston countersued her one month later, alleging her accusations were false and defamatory. Both civil cases were settled in December under confidential terms. Winston, the No. 1 pick in the 2015 NFL draft, now plays for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Title IX is a federal law that bans discrimination at schools that receive federal funding. The Education Department warned schools in 2011 of their legal responsibilities to immediately investigate allegations of sexual assault, even if a criminal investigation has not been concluded.

Last year, FSU agreed to pay Kinsman \$950,000, the largest settlement ever for claims regarding a university's indifference to a student's reported sexual assault.

Fineout reported from Tallahassee, Florida. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Maria Danilova contributed to this story.

Follow Associated Press reporter Michael Biesecker at [www.Twitter.com/mbieseck](http://www.Twitter.com/mbieseck)

## Germany: Pregame blasts rock soccer team bus; player injured

By MARTIN MEISSNER, Associated Press

DORTMUND, Germany (AP) — Three explosions went off near the team bus of Borussia Dortmund, one of Germany's top soccer clubs, as it set off for a Champions League quarterfinal match on Tuesday evening. One of Dortmund's players was injured.

Police said they were working on the assumption that the blasts were directed at the Dortmund team and caused by "serious explosive devices," which may have been hidden in a hedge near a car park.

The explosions happened as the team was departing its hotel for a first-leg match against Monaco. The game was called off shortly before kickoff and rescheduled for Wednesday.

A letter claiming responsibility was found near the site of the blasts, prosecutor Sandra Luecke told a late evening news conference. She said investigators are examining the authenticity of what was written in the letter, but wouldn't reveal more about its contents, citing the ongoing investigation.

The case is being investigated as attempted homicide, Luecke said.

"We had to assume, and assumed right from the start, that this was a targeted attack against the team of Borussia Dortmund," Dortmund Police Chief Gregor Lange. Investigators are not excluding any possible angles in their investigation, while the "concrete background" to the blasts remains unclear, he said.

There were three explosions near the Dortmund bus as the team left the L'Arrivee Hotel and Spa on the outskirts of the western city of Dortmund for the stadium, around 10 kilometers (6 miles) away, at 7.15 p.m. local time (1715 GMT), police said.

A window on the bus was damaged and Spanish defender Marc Bartra was injured. Club spokesman Sascha Fligge said Bartra was operated on late Tuesday for a broken bone in his right wrist and to remove "foreign objects" from his arm.

Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Buerki said the team bus had just pulled out of the hotel driveway when an explosion — a "huge bang" — happened and sent glass flying. Buerki, who is from Switzerland, told Swiss daily Blick that he was sitting in the last row of the bus, next to Bartra.

Bartra was hit by shards from the broken back window, he added. Players ducked for cover, wondering whether there would be more explosions.

"We're all shocked — nobody thought about a football match in the minutes after that," Buerki said.

Lange said a further "suspicious object" was found at the scene, but it does not appear to have been another explosive device.

Inside the packed stadium, supporters of Monaco, which plays in the French league, chanted "Dortmund, Dortmund" in sympathy for the German side. Dortmund residents, for their part, used social media to offer accommodation to stranded Monaco supporters ahead of their rescheduled match in Europe's premier soccer club competition.

"The team is totally shocked, that's clear. It's our task now to digest this somehow because it's only 24

hours before we have to play. That's our job," Dortmund Chief Executive Officer Hans-Joachim Watzke said.

Watzke added that there was "no alternative" to rescheduling the match for Wednesday, as Monaco also has to play over the weekend and the return Champions League match is scheduled for next week.

"It's a very unfortunate situation, but there was no other way," he said.

Stadium spokesman Norbert Dickel informed fans already inside the venue of the cancellation, saying that "there is no reason for panic here at the stadium." Police said fans left the stadium without problems.

Police chief Lange made clear that authorities will put heavy security in place for Wednesday's match, though there was no threat to the stadium on Tuesday.

"We are preparing for a major operation tomorrow, and we will do everything humanly possible to ensure that the match tomorrow can occur safely," he said.

The president of European soccer governing body UEFA, Aleksander Ceferin, said he was "deeply disturbed by the explosions" and that the teams had made the correct call by postponing their match.

"The thoughts of every one of us at FIFA are with the people of Dortmund, and the fans of both Borussia Dortmund and Monaco following today's troubling events," said world governing body FIFA's president, Gianni Infantino. He wished Bartra a "speedy recovery" and condemned the explosions.

Germany has seen matches postponed over security concerns before.

In November 2015, Germany's international soccer friendly against the Netherlands in Hannover was canceled just before kickoff because police feared an explosive device might be detonated at the stadium.

It came days after devices were detonated outside the Stade de France in Paris as France was playing Germany as part of a coordinated attack on the French capital.

Geir Moulson, Frank Jordans and Ciaran Fahey contributed from Berlin.

## United faces public-relations fiasco over dragged passenger

By DAVID KOENIG, AP Airlines Writer

United is getting pummeled on late-night TV. Online, jokers are proposing new corporate slogans such as "We'll drag you all over the world" and "We have red eye and black eye flights available." On Wall Street, the airline briefly lost nearly \$1 billion in market value before its stock regained much of the loss.

Cellphone videos of airport police yanking a 69-year-old passenger out of his seat and dragging him down the aisle have become a public-relations nightmare for United. Travel and PR experts say the airline fumbled the situation from the start and made matters worse with a tone-deaf apology from the CEO.

It's too soon to know whether Sunday night's incident at Chicago's O'Hare Airport will cause lasting harm. United frequent flyers won't easily give up their miles. Many travelers aren't attached to a particular airline and just take the cheapest fare.

Then again, there are those videos.

"That is the craziest act I've ever seen. Who drags a ticketed passenger off an airplane?" said Bruce Rubin, a longtime practitioner of crisis public relations in Miami. "Because it's so visual and it's so unnecessary, it's the kind of thing that can hurt United long-term."

Lawyers for the passenger in the videos, David Dao, a doctor from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, said Tuesday that he was being treated in a Chicago hospital. They gave no further details on his injuries.

Just two weeks ago, United was at the center of another PR furor after a gate agent in Denver barred two girls from boarding a flight because they were wearing leggings.

United CEO Oscar Munoz apologized on Monday for the latest incident but also blamed the passenger for not obeying when airline employees asked him to leave. Munoz called the man "disruptive and belligerent."

On Tuesday, Munoz offered a stronger mea culpa for the "truly horrific event," saying, "No one should ever be mistreated this way." He promised a review of airline policies by April 30 and vowed to "fix what's broken so this never happens again."

Jim Corridore, an airline analyst for CFRA Research, said after "poorly handling a PR disaster," United's CEO "is finally saying the right things."

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Dao and three other passengers had been told to give up their seats so that four employees of the company operating the flight for United could board. Dao was the only one to refuse.

To make room on the plane, United had tried to entice volunteers with travel vouchers worth \$800 and a hotel room. When there were no takers, a United manager went on board and announced that four people would be removed.

Big mistake, say the crisis-management experts. Everyone wondered why United didn't simply sweeten the offer until four passengers agreed to get off.

"A few dollars could have solved this problem," said Allen Adamson, founder of Brand Simple Consulting in New York. "Instead, the damage of the brand will be millions of dollars."

United said passengers were already seated when the four employees of Republic Airline showed up at the gate and insisted on boarding the plane to Louisville, Kentucky, so that they could operate a flight the next morning.

United is "within their rights to take someone off the plane, but this problem is totally the creation of United," said Charles Leocha, a passenger-rights advocate in Washington. "For them to wait after the (passengers) boarded before they say, 'Sorry, you have to get off'" is inexcusable.

The online storm began immediately after the first video was posted online. Memes mocking United sprouted like flight delays during a thunderstorm. Some jokers created images of a bat-wielding villain from "The Walking Dead" patrolling the aisle on a United plane.

Munoz, who just last month was named PR Week's "Communicator of the Year," was vilified.

On ABC, comedian Jimmy Kimmel launched his show with a five-minute takedown of United, mocking Munoz for saying the airline had to "re-accommodate" customers — industry jargon for putting people on later flights. Kimmel showed the dragging video and likened the man's "re-accommodation" to the capture and extradition of Mexican drug lord El Chapo.

"That is such sanitized, say-nothing, take-no-responsibility, corporate BS speak," Kimmel said.

Munoz is a former railroad CEO who took the top job at United in September 2015 but was sidelined for months by a heart attack and transplant. After returning, Munoz set out to improve an airline that had lagged behind its rivals financially and disappointed passengers with computer outages and canceled flights.

United has made progress at repairing labor relations and is rebuilding its route network. Still, United ranked eighth out of the 12 biggest U.S. airlines — behind Delta, JetBlue and Southwest among others — in 2016 on-time performance, customer complaints and other measures.

The stock of parent United Continental Holdings Inc. plunged 4.4 percent Tuesday morning but recovered and closed down 81 cents, or 1.1 percent, at \$70.71.

Richard Levick, a crisis-PR consultant in Washington, said Munoz and his airline responded poorly once the story dominated social media, just as they seemed to do during the leggings incident.

"It doesn't matter if United Airlines followed their rules," Levick said. "They are really beginning to become the brand that people think we should not fly."

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Business Writer Joseph Pisani in New York contributed to this report.

David Koenig can be reached at: <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

## Tillerson in Moscow: Pushing on Syria where Obama failed

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Trump administration veered toward deeper conflict with Russia Tuesday as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson arrived in Moscow, gambling that an unpredictable new president armed with the willingness to threaten military action gives the U.S. much-needed leverage to end Syria's carnage.

Yet there were no guarantees Tillerson's arguments would prove any more successful than the Obama administration's failed effort to peel Russia away from its Syrian ally. Tillerson's mission, coming days after 59 Tomahawk missiles struck a Syrian air base, also carries serious risks: If Russia brushes off the warnings, President Donald Trump could be forced into another show of force in Syria or see his credibility wane.



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"I hope that what the Russian government concludes is that they have aligned themselves with an unreliable partner in Bashar al-Assad," Tillerson said before flying to the Russian capital, referring to Syria's embattled leader.

"The reign of the Assad family is coming to an end," he confidently predicted.

But Tillerson's claim is one President Barack Obama, too, argued for years, only to see Assad outlast his own term in office. And the Trump administration's nascent Syria policy seems to be increasingly centering on the same tactic Obama unsuccessfully employed: persuading Russia, Assad's staunchest ally, to abandon him.

The parallels haven't gone unnoticed by Russian President Vladimir Putin as U.S. officials have accused his military of knowing about Assad's recent chemical weapons attack ahead of time and trying to help cover it up. Calling for a U.N. investigation, Putin held to his claim that it was actually Assad opponents who introduced chemical weapons into Syria's harrowing civil war.

"We have seen it all already," Putin said. Jabbing at U.S. credibility, the Russian leader reminded reporters about unfounded U.S. claims of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, used to justify America's 2003 invasion.

The escalating dispute over last week's events in the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun has thrust Washington and Moscow into a level of tension rarely seen since the end of the Cold War. The animosity is especially striking given widespread speculation that Trump, who lavishly praised Putin during his campaign, would pursue rapprochement with Moscow.

Even on Syria, the positions appeared to be hardening. Only a week ago, top Trump officials had spoken off deprioritizing past U.S. efforts to remove Assad from office and accepting the "reality" that 18 months of Russian military intervention had secured him in power. Since last Thursday's cruise missile strike, Tillerson and other U.S. officials appear to have reverted to the past administration's rhetoric of insisting that Assad is on the way out, without outlining any strategy for making that happen.

The Trump administration's change of heart, apparently spurred in part by the president's emotional response to the images of chemical weapons victims, also is serving another purpose: defanging the perception of coziness between Trump and Moscow. As the FBI and multiple congressional committees investigate potential collusion between Russia and Trump's campaign, the president can point to his hard-line stance on Assad as fresh evidence he's willing to stand up to Putin.

Asked about Putin possibly skipping a meeting with Tillerson, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said, "There is a bit of irony that for all of these talks that have been perpetuated about back channels and direct links, that now it's they won't meet with you." At a minimum, Tillerson will meet Wednesday with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and the two are expected to take questions from reporters.

As Tillerson landed in Moscow, senior White House officials briefed reporters on declassified U.S. intelligence they said disproved Russia's claim that rebels were responsible for the chemical weapons. In an accompanying four-page memo, the U.S. accused Russia of a disinformation campaign and aiding Syria in covering up the gruesome attack, which killed more than 80 people.

"Russia's allegations fit with a pattern of deflecting blame from the regime and attempting to undermine the credibility of its opponents," the report read.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon, "It is very clear who planned this attack, who authorized this attack and who orchestrated this attack."

Putin's government has been incensed by the Trump administration's public accusations, and even more so by U.S. military intervention in Syria. The retaliatory strikes, which Obama declined to approve after blaming Assad for an even deadlier chemical weapons attack in 2013, hit an air base where Russian troops were also present, although none are believed to have been killed.

Meeting allies earlier Tuesday in Italy, Tillerson delivered an ultimatum to Russia: Side either with the U.S. and its dozens of coalition partners or face the isolation of a partnership with Assad, Iran and Hezbollah. That may hardly be punishment for the Kremlin, which dismissed many of Obama's similar warnings about Russia being sucked into a quagmire in Syria with no way out while tarnishing its international reputation.

Trump may not have much to offer Russia currently. Even if Moscow cooperates, the allegations of election

meddling have weakened the U.S. leader's hand to deliver on any significant carrot, such as a loosening of the U.S. and European economic sanctions stemming from Russia's actions in Ukraine.

And wielding the stick of potential military action is risky. Trump's cruise missile order restored the believability of Washington using its military might in Syria.

But if Moscow ignores Trump's entreaties or if Assad uses chemical weapons again, bad options await Trump. He can order more military action, with the danger of an escalating America involvement in a war that has killed hundreds of thousands of people. Or he can hold back and risk losing face like Obama.

Putin seems undeterred. Hours after Tillerson's warning, his office announced Russia would host Syria and Iran's foreign ministers for a three-way meeting Friday, the day after Tillerson departs.

Associated Press writer Vivian Salama in Washington contributed to this report.

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

## Alabama solid red for now despite Republican scandals

By **KIM CHANDLER** and **JAY REEVES**, Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — The resignation of the governor, the ouster of the House speaker and the suspension of the chief justice have left Alabama Republicans to restore order after nine months of chaos. But one thing is for certain: The GOP is in no danger of losing its grip on state politics.

No Democrat has held a statewide office since 2012, and Republicans have firm majorities in both legislative houses. And the state Democratic Party's structure is a skeleton operation compared with the GOP in Alabama.

"It's one of the most politically conservative places and one of the most politically corrupt," said Wayne Flynt, professor emeritus at Auburn University.

Democratic Party Chairman Nancy Worley said Republican corruption "has spread like kudzu throughout our state," and longtime party activist Doug Jones said the door is open for Democrats to make gains.

But do the math and it's doubtful Gov. Robert Bentley's departure amid allegations he had an affair with a female aide almost 30 years younger will have much effect at election time. Alabama's population is nearly 70 percent white, and an overwhelming majority of them are conservative Christians who solidly vote Republican.

"Sooner or later maybe there will be an opportunity for Democrats, but in the current environment if a Republican messes up that person will probably be replaced by another Republican," said former Democratic congressman Glen Browder.

True enough: Republican Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey was sworn in as governor just minutes after Bentley pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor campaign finance charges and quit.

When former House Speaker Mike Hubbard was forced from office last summer after his conviction on charges of soliciting business from lobbyists and corporate executives, he, too, was replaced by a Republican. GOP Chief Justice Roy Moore is currently suspended after being convicted on judicial ethics charges linked to a gay marriage order. Moore is fighting to return to active service on the all-Republican Supreme Court.

Bentley, 74, was embroiled in controversy ever since recordings surfaced last year of him making sexually charged comments to political adviser Rebekah Caldwell Mason, 45. He acknowledged wrongly using campaign money to pay almost \$9,000 for her legal bills and failing to properly report a \$50,000 loan he made to his campaign.

One of the new governor's first acts was to fire Mason's husband, Jon Mason, who ran Bentley's volunteerism office.

Republican Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, one of the state's most powerful politicians, said Alabama was ready to move forward. "We want to show the people we've got things in order. We've cleaned house if you will," he said.

GOP political consultant David Azbell said Alabama's historical makeup leads to characters, some of whom

are prone to political scandal. Montgomery was the birthplace of the Confederacy, after all, and the state motto is the defiant "We dare defend our rights."

"Our citizens are also largely drawn to candidates who are outsiders, fighters, and populists," Azbell said in an email. "That's perhaps why we've never had the stereotypical 'New South' governor that most liberals and egghead editorial writers crave."

Browder, the former Democratic congressman, legislator and secretary of state, said Alabama was first established as a safe haven for commercial plantations, and effective governance has rarely been a priority.

"Alabama has a traditionally cynical political culture in which the people seem to neither think much of nor expect much from their leaders," he said. "I hate to use the term 'culture of corruption,' but we seem to have more than our share of these things."

Two of Bentley's predecessors in the past three decades were also convicted of crimes: Republican Guy Hunt in the 1990s, for misusing funds, and Democrat Don Siegelman, who was convicted of bribery in 2006.

Former Alabama Republican Party Chairman Marty Connors noted that it was the GOP attorney general's office opened the investigation against Hubbard and it was Republican lawmakers who threatened Bentley with impeachment.

"We had a couple of bad apples," he said. "We have 70 percent of the damn government."

Reeves reported from Birmingham, Alabama. AP writer Anthony Izaguirre contributed to this report.

## **Q&A: Why unseating Assad risks unleashing even more chaos**

**By ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press**

BEIRUT (AP) — The statement by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that the reign of President Bashar Assad's family "is coming to an end" suggests the U.S. is taking a much more aggressive approach about the Syrian leader.

The remark Tuesday came after a U.S. airstrike in Syria and threats of more punitive action.

Any attempt to unseat Assad faces huge hurdles and risks unleashing chaos. It could also relieve the suffering of nearly 1 million Syrians living under constant siege and bombardment.

Despite six years of civil war, Assad is firmly entrenched in his seat of power, Damascus, largely thanks to powerful allies Russia and Iran who continue to prop up his government politically and militarily.

Taking him out of the equation without a clear transition plan would be a major gamble with consequences that would likely resonate far beyond the Syrian borders and raises the following questions:

**WHAT IS THE U.S. POSITION ON ASSAD?**

The past week has brought about an almost seismic shift in the U.S. administration's position on Syria. Only weeks earlier, U.S. officials, including President Donald Trump, were signaling a willingness to work with Russia and saying that Assad's status was not a priority for the time being.

The April 4 chemical weapons attack that killed more than 80 people in an opposition-held town in northern Syria appears to have completely altered Trump's calculus, triggering the first direct U.S. airstrike on Assad's forces in the conflict.

The Trump administration continues to offer mixed messages about its ultimate goal in Syria and whether Assad must surrender power — and when.

"It is clear to all of us that the reign of the Assad family is coming to an end," Tillerson said. "But the question of how that ends and the transition itself could be very important in our view to the durability, the stability inside of a unified Syria."

**WHAT IS THE ASSAD FAMILY'S POWER BASE?**

The Assad family has ruled Syria for nearly five decades. So entrenched is the dynasty that die-hard supporters label the country as "Assad's Syria." In battle zones, loyal fighters have sprayed "Assad, or we burn the country."

Despite the spectacular devastation he has presided over, Assad has managed to retain a level of support. He maintained, from the beginning, that his war is one against terrorism, and through a deft policy

of divide and conquer, he has made the war a choice between him and the Islamic extremists.

Among his supporters are members of his Alawite sect, as well as other minority sects such as the Christians and Druze who fear reprisals by extremists in case they take over the country. Many in the powerful business community also support Assad and see him as a source of stability compared to other, opposition-held parts of Syria that are run by scores of rebel factions and warlords. Syria's powerful security agencies, notorious for human rights abuses, also will back Assad until the end.

#### WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO ASSAD?

There is no obvious replacement. Assad's term has been an extension of the rule by his father and his father's predecessor, both of which stifled any form of dissent for decades. Following the uprising, which began in March 2011, opposition figures have either been jailed, exiled or killed. Some analysts say the only replacement could be an Alawite army general, since the presence of such a leader would serve as a guarantee to Syria's minorities.

Such a figure is not apparent for the time being. Thus, finding an alternative to Assad has bedeviled foreign policy experts for years. More recently, as Russia helped reverse his military fortunes and left him in control of most of the country's major population centers, much of the West had appeared to come to terms with the conclusion that Assad could stay on for the time being.

#### COULD ASSAD BE REMOVED BY FORCE?

The U.S. can take any number of measures against Assad to degrade and ultimately remove him from power. That includes bombing command and control centers, grounding his warplanes and significantly increasing weapons support for rebels fighting to topple him.

Any such action risks igniting a confrontation with Russia and Iran. Such flagrant action may also become counterintuitive and risk a backlash from rebel factions who may not welcome U.S. bombing of Syria even though they want Assad out.

#### WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HE WAS OUSTED?

Europeans and the previous U.S. administration have been very clear that they don't want a collapse of the regime similar to what happened elsewhere, including neighboring Iraq. The concern is that a sudden unseating of Assad would lead to a collapse of state institutions, unleashing sectarian massacres and facilitating the spread of militant groups, such as the Islamic State group, al-Qaida and the Shiite militias who have fueled violence in Iraq.

Russian officials often cite the U.S. failures in Iraq and Libya, where state institutions disintegrated following Western military intervention, to illustrate the perils of forced regime change in Syria.

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Associated Press writer Bassem Mroue contributed.

## Prostate cancer tests are now OK with US panel, with caveats

By LINDSEY TANNER, AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — An influential U.S. government advisory panel is dropping its opposition to routine prostate cancer screening in favor of letting men decide for themselves after talking with their doctor.

The new draft guidelines released Tuesday echo those of several leading medical groups, but they don't make the decision any easier for men: With their doctor's help, they have to decide whether to take an imperfect PSA test that has a small chance of detecting a deadly cancer and a larger chance of triggering unneeded worry and treatment with serious side effects.

"This isn't a one-size-fits-all" recommendation, said the panel's chair Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, a San Francisco internist who already follows the advice and discusses the potential pros and cons with her patients.

Men whose greatest concern is reducing their chances of dying from cancer are sometimes willing to face the consequences and choose testing. "Other men will realize the likely benefit is small and aren't willing to risk the harms," she said.

PSA screening to detect the most common male cancer is among the most heated topics in men's



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health. It involves a simple blood test for elevated levels of a protein that may signal cancer but also can be caused by less serious prostate problems. It can find cancer that frequently doesn't need treatment because it's too small and slow growing to become deadly. Doctors say there's no good way to tell which early cancers might become lethal. The next step is often radiation or surgery to remove the prostate, which may result in impotence and incontinence.

The new recommendations come from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, a government-appointed volunteer panel of experts. The group says the change is based on new evidence indicating that routine PSA blood tests can slightly reduce some men's chances of dying from prostate cancer and that drastic treatment can sometimes be avoided with close monitoring when cancer is detected.

The shift shelves the panel's 2012 guidance, which prompted criticism from some urologists — specialists who treat the disease — and angered some prostate cancer patients certain that PSA screening had saved their lives.

The new advice published Tuesday closely aligns the panel with medical groups that also support shared decision-making. The biggest remaining difference is timing. The task force draft says screening conversations should begin at age 55. Other groups say start earlier, depending on family history of prostate cancer and other factors. It recommends against testing men aged 70 and older.

The panel leaves open how often men should be screened. It does not recommend earlier testing for blacks and those with a family history but says they should know their risks are higher.

Dr. Meir Stampfer, a Harvard University cancer expert, called the new advice "a more reasoned approach." He said PSA tests make sense if they do not lead to overly aggressive treatment. His research suggests that more than 1 in 5 men worldwide have undetected prostate cancer, including more than 40 million Americans, but that most will die of other causes.

The task force's 2012 advice against screening said there was little evidence that PSA screening was reducing deaths. Since then, PSA screening rates have declined by as much as 10 percent, and now fewer than one-third of U.S. men get the tests. Fewer men are being diagnosed with early-stage disease, when it is more treatable, while more are being diagnosed with more aggressive harder-to-treat cancer.

The panel says its new advice stems from long-term research indicating that for every 1,000 men offered PSA screening, one to two will avoid death from prostate cancer and three will avoid prostate cancer spreading to other organs.

Newer research also has shown benefits from "active surveillance" of men whose initial PSA tests and biopsies indicate slow-growing cancer that hasn't spread, the panel said. This approach includes repeated PSA tests and close monitoring, which can delay or even avoid the need for treatment.

The task force's recommendations influence U.S. government policy and are widely followed by primary care physicians. Medicare and many private insurers have continued to pay for the screening. The panel reviews evidence and issues advice for a variety of screenings and treatments.

"It sounds like cooler heads have prevailed," said Dr. Jim Hu, a urologist and prostate cancer specialist at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center who called the old advice "draconian."

The draft prostate cancer recommendations, announced online in the Journal of the American Medical Association, are open for public comment on the task force website until May 8. Final guidance will come months later but the panel's guidelines typically echo its draft advice.

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at <http://www.twitter.com/LindseyTanner>. Her work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/lindsey-tanner>

## Asian stocks slip, yen and gold rise as global risks weigh

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Most Asia stock markets retreated Wednesday as rising geopolitical risks kept investors on edge, with Japanese shares leading the decline after the strengthening yen crossed a key level.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 stock index tumbled 1.2 percent to 18,516.04 after

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the dollar fell under 110 yen for the first time in five months, pressuring the country's exporters. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.2 percent to 24,049.17 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China lost 0.4 percent to 3,275.12. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dipped 0.2 percent to 5,918.90 but South Korea's Kospi rose 0.1 percent to 2,126.68. Shares in Southeast Asia were mostly lower.

**GLOBAL GLOOM:** Investors are cautious as world events this week complicate the investment outlook. Tensions are rising over North Korea, which threatened the U.S. against making any military moves after it sent aircraft carrier to the divided Korean Peninsula. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson arrived in Moscow with the aim of persuading Russia to ditch its ally Syria following last week's chemical attack. France's election later in the month is also giving investors a reason to hunker down and avoid taking any big risks.

**QUOTEWORTHY:** "Safe havens had obviously gained attractiveness amid the tensions surrounding geopolitics," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG. "North Korean (and) Syrian tensions and the upcoming French election appear to be topping the list of reasons to seek the flight to safety at the moment."

**TROUBLED TOSHIBA:** Shares of the Japanese electronics maker extended losses, falling more than 2 percent after it raised doubts about its ability to survive as a company. In an unaudited financial report, the company said there are "material events and conditions" that make it questionable whether it can continue as a going concern.

**CURRENCIES:** The dollar fell to a five-month low against the yen as investors seeking security amid global uncertainty piled into the Japanese currency, which is traditionally seen as a haven. The dollar weakened to 109.51 yen from 110.94 yen late Monday, the first time it has broken past the 110 level since mid-November. The euro slipped to \$1.0600 from \$1.0604.

**PRECIOUS METAL:** Gold, another asset sought by nervous investors, continued to gain, rising \$4.80, or 0.4 percent, to \$1,274.20 an ounce, its highest in more than five months.

**WALL STREET:** Major U.S. benchmarks ended with little change. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 0.1 percent to 2,353.78. The Dow Jones industrial average slipped 0.03 percent to 20,651.30. The Nasdaq composite index slipped 0.2 percent to 5,866.77.

**ENERGY:** Benchmark U.S. crude extended its rally. Oil rose 19 cents to \$53.58 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract added 32 cents to close at \$53.40 a barrel on Thursday, its sixth gain in a row. Brent crude, the standard for international oil prices, added 19 cents to \$56.42 a barrel.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, April 12, the 102nd day of 2017. There are 263 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 12, 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia, at age 63; he was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman.

On this date:

In 1606, England's King James I decreed the design of the original Union Flag, which combined the flags of England and Scotland.

In 1776, North Carolina's Fourth Provincial Congress authorized the colony's delegates to the Continental Congress to support independence from Britain.

In 1861, the American Civil War began as Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

In 1934, "Tender Is the Night," by F. Scott Fitzgerald, was first published in book form after being serialized in Scribner's Magazine.

In 1955, the Salk vaccine against polio was declared safe and effective.

In 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly in space, orbiting the earth once before making a safe landing.

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In 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested and jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, charged with contempt of court and parading without a permit. (During his time behind bars, King wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail.")

In 1975, singer, dancer and civil rights activist Josephine Baker, 68, died in Paris.

In 1981, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off from Cape Canaveral on its first test flight. Former world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, 66, died in Las Vegas, Nevada.

In 1985, Sen. Jake Garn, R-Utah, became the first sitting member of Congress to fly in space as the shuttle Discovery lifted off.

In 1990, in its first meeting, East Germany's first democratically elected parliament acknowledged responsibility for the Nazi Holocaust, and asked the forgiveness of Jews and others who had suffered.

In 1992, after five years in the making, Euro Disneyland (now called Disneyland Paris) opened in Marne-La-Vallee, France, amid controversy as French intellectuals bemoaned the invasion of American pop culture.

Ten years ago: A suicide bomber breached security in Iraq's parliament and blew himself up in the dining hall; a Sunni parliament member was killed. CBS fired Don Imus from his radio program for insulting the Rutgers women's basketball team on the air; in the evening, Imus met with team members at the New Jersey governor's mansion in Princeton (Gov. Jon S. Corzine (KOHR'-zyn), who was en route to that meeting, was seriously injured when his official vehicle crashed).

Five years ago: Jury selection began in Greensboro, North Carolina, for the corruption trial of former Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, charged with six counts of campaign finance fraud. (The jury ended up acquitting Edwards of accepting illegal campaign contributions while deadlocking on the other five counts; federal prosecutors later dropped the remaining charges.)

One year ago: Navy Secretary Ray Mabus (MAY'-buhs) told 1,500 Marines and sailors at Camp Pendleton, California, that the Pentagon's decision to let women compete for all military combat positions was as irreversible as earlier edicts to integrate blacks and allow gays and lesbians to openly serve. A man convicted of killing his neighbor during a burglary in 1996 became the fourth person put to death in Georgia in 2016. Al-Jazeera America, which failed in its attempt to establish another TV news network, signed off after more than 2 1/2 years on the air. Actress Anne Jackson, who often appeared onstage with her husband, Eli Wallach, in comedies and classics, died in New York at age 90. David Gest, a music producer and Liza Minnelli's former husband, died in London at 62.

Today's Birthdays: Children's author Beverly Cleary is 101. Actress Jane Withers is 91. Opera singer Montserrat Caballe is 84. Playwright Alan Ayckbourn (AYK'-bohrn) is 78. Jazz musician Herbie Hancock is 77. Rock singer John Kay (Steppenwolf) is 73. Actor Ed O'Neill is 71. Actor Dan Lauria is 70. Former talk show host David Letterman is 70. Author Scott Turow is 68. Singer David Cassidy is 67. Actor-playwright Tom Noonan is 66. Rhythm-and-blues singer JD Nicholas (The Commodores) is 65. Singer Pat Travers is 63. Actor Andy Garcia is 61. Movie director Walter Salles (SAL'-ihs) is 61. Country singer Vince Gill is 60. Actress Suzanne (cq) Douglas is 60. Model/TV personality J Alexander is 59. Rock musician Will Sergeant (Echo & the Bunnymen) is 59. Rock singer Art Alexakis (al-ex-AH'-kis) (Everclear) is 55. Country singer Deryl Dodd is 53. Folk-pop singer Amy Ray (Indigo Girls) is 53. Actress Alicia Coppola is 49. Rock singer Nicholas Hexum (311) is 47. Actor Nicholas Brendon is 46. Actress Shannen Doherty is 46. Actress Marley Shelton is 43. Actress Sarah Jane Morris is 40. Actress Jordana Spiro is 40. Rock musician Guy Berryman (Coldplay) is 39. Actor Riley Smith is 39. Actress Claire Danes is 38. Actress Jennifer Morrison is 38. Actor Matt McGorry is 31. Contemporary Christian musician Joe Rickard (Red) is 30. Rock singer-musician Brendon Urie (Panic! at the Disco) is 30. Actress Saoirse (SUR'-shuh) Ronan is 23.

Thought for Today: "Rules are not necessarily sacred, principles are." — President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945).