

Groton Daily Independent

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City Council Agenda May 17 5:30pm

City Hall

- 1) Exe Session- Personnel 1-25-2 (1)

City Council Agenda May 18 6pm

City Hall

- 1) Exe Session – Personnel 1-25-2 (1)

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

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Open**
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Wednesday, May 17

Groton Schools: Elementary Track and Field Day from 12:30 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.

School Lunch: Hot dogs/brats, baked beans, baked chips, rice crispy bar.

Senior Menu: Ham, baked potato with sour cream, green beans, fruited Jell-O salad, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Wednesday Coffee at 9 a.m.; Ad Council at 7:15 p.m.

Thursday, May 18

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

Regional Track at Milbank, noon.

School Lunch: Sack Lunch.

Senior Menu: French dip sandwich, macaroni salad, seasoned cabbage, Waldorf salad.

United Methodist: UMW at 1:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Quilting at 9 a.m.

Friday, May 19

Faculty Inservice

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, tomato spoon salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Saturday, May 20

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court.

Sunday, May 21

Graduation at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, May 23

Girls Golf at Sioux Valley



The following is a reprint of the city council story, clarifying the WEB water rate increase to the city.

Water restriction are on!

It's only the middle of May, but the City of Groton has already put on water restrictions as daily usage is near the level of Groton's daily allocation. Groton is allocated 266,155 gallons per day and the usage has been at 230,000. There will be no outdoor watering from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. And speaking of water, WEB Water system has notified the city that its water rate will see an increase in its water rate effective with the October 31, 2017 statement. The new minimum rate will be \$4,127.25, up from the current \$3,757.59, with the usage of \$2.20 per 1,000 gallons increasing to \$2.70 per 1,000 gallons. The city's minimum rate is based on 185 gallons per minute and that is increasing from \$20.31 per gallon per minute to \$22.31 per gallon per minute (185 gallons per minute x \$22.31 = \$4,127.25) Any water used over the contracted amount will increase from \$4.90 per 1,000 gallons to \$5.40 per 1,000 gallons. The council directed Finance Officer Anita Lowary to do water rate review and present it to the council.

Charity Hinman is the successful bidder for the surplus playground equipment from the baseball complex. Her bid was \$250 and was accepted by the council. Other bidders were Sarah Sigestad for \$125, Doug Hamilton for \$105, Greg Clocksene for \$100 and Roger Johnson for \$52.

The old tables from the community center were declared as surplus at a rate of \$5 each and will be sold AS IS.

The City of Groton received the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) drinking water award for the 16th consecutive year.

There was discussion of having an additional pesticide applicator. Currently Shawn Labertz and Paul Kosel have these certificates and Lambertz said Dan Sunne should also have the license since he is placing herbicide in the substations. The council decided that two is enough. Kosel does the mosquito application and Lambertz does the weed kill application. It was also noticed that Anita Lowary has been certified as an International Governmental Finance Officer for 30 years.

The council directed the finance officer to reissue delinquent outstanding checking. There are five checks that have not been cashed - Schuring Farms, Don Donley, Korbin Blackmun and Garrett Schroeder. They should contact City Hall about getting a new check if they are unable to find their old one.

Malt Beverage Licenses were approved for Ken's Food Fair and MJ's Sinclair.

Good Bye Old Highway 37



One pass the length of SD37 was milled up Tuesday. SD37 will be undergoing a transformation with new storm sewer, new curb and gutter, new street lights, a new road and new sidewalk from Railroad Avenue to US12 on the east side and from Railroad Avenue to Sixth Avenue West on the west side. SD37 will be out of commission for most of the summer.

Water Restrictions

Groton City Residents



Please

No Outdoor Watering

between

11am and 5pm

Effective immediately

& until further notice

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Today in Weather History

May 17, 1902: An estimated F3 Tornado moved northeast from 6 miles southwest of Mina to just south of Westport, a distance of about 25 miles. A four-year-old girl was killed in one of two farm houses blown apart in Edmunds County. Three more homes were damaged in Brown County. There were probably two if not three separate tornadoes involved.

May 17, 1937: A complex of tornadoes and downbursts skipped southeast from near Roslyn and Greenville. This storm also caused \$50,000 in damage in downtown Waubay and damaged farm property to about 4 miles west of Gray, Minnesota. About 20 barns were destroyed. Sheep and horses were killed. These events traveled a distance of about 70 miles. The strongest tornado was estimated at F2 strength.

May 17, 1996: An F1 tornado touched down 20 miles southeast of Wilmot or 5 miles northwest of Ortonville, Minnesota at Schmidts Landing on Big Stone Lake. The roof was ripped off of a house, and a garage wall was blown off its foundation. Three RV's were demolished, and a trailer was overturned and destroyed. This tornado moved into Big Stone County and intensified. An F3 tornado crossed Big Stone Lake from Roberts County, South Dakota destroying on a cabin at the Meadowbrook Resort. It also blew the roof off another cabin, and the third cabin was demolished when a tree fell onto it. Several boats on Big Stone Lake were overturned. Approximately 150 buildings sustained damage or were destroyed as the tornado moved northeast across Big Stone County. Southwest of Clinton, a pontoon boat, and a camper were destroyed. East of Clinton, a farm lost all buildings with severe damage to their home. Estimated property damage was listed at \$1.5 million.

A wind gust of 90 mph blew two garage roofs off, destroyed an antenna, blew large trees down, and also a grain dryer was blown down near Dumont, Minnesota.

1883 - A three day flood in the Black Hills of western South Dakota resulted in a million dollars damage at Rapid City. (David Ludlum)

1896: An estimated F5 tornado tracked 100 miles through northeastern Kansas and extreme southeastern Nebraska. Seneca, Oneida, Sabetha, and Reserve, Kansas sustained severe damage. While passing through Reserve, the tornado was 2 miles wide. 25 people were killed, and 200 were injured. Damage was estimated at \$400,000.

1979: A reading of 12 degrees at Mauna Kea Observatory established an all-time record low for the state of Hawaii.

1983 - A golfer playing the Fox Meadows Course in Memphis TN was struck by a bolt of lightning that went through his neck, down his spine, came out a pocket containing his keys, and went into a nearby tree. Miraculously, he survived! (The Weather Channel)

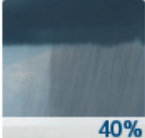




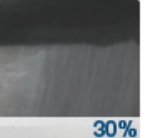
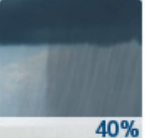
1987 - A summer-like weather pattern continued, with warm temperatures and scattered thunderstorms across much of the nation. A cold front in the north central U.S. produced a sharp contrast in the weather across the state of Minnesota during the afternoon. At the same time Duluth was 50 degrees with rain and fog, Mankato was 95 degrees with sunny skies. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds over the Carolinas during the afternoon and evening. A "thunderstorm of a lifetime" in northern Spartanburg County, SC, produced hail for forty-five minutes, leaving some places knee-deep in hail. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms ravaged the south central U.S. with severe weather for the third day in a row. Thunderstorms spawned another nineteen tornadoes, for a total of fifty tornadoes in three days. A strong (F-2) tornado injured 14 persons and caused two million dollars damage at Apple Springs TX. Baseball size hail was reported at Matador TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Chance Showers and Breezy	Breezy. Chance Showers then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers	Chance Showers	Chance Showers
High: 59 °F	Low: 43 °F	High: 60 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 56 °F	Low: 41 °F	High: 55 °F



Cool With Rain South & East



**Temperatures Struggle
To Reach Upper 50s/Low 60s**

**Rain Across South Central And Eastern
South Dakota/Western Minnesota
Dry Across North Central South Dakota**

**More Rain Chances Friday
Continued Cool Through The Weekend**

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 5/17/2017 5:36 AM Central

Published on: 05/17/2017 at 5:39AM

A storm system will bring rain to the southern and eastern parts of the state while north central South Dakota will probably remain dry - along with very cool temperatures. Another system will bring rain to the region Friday, and temperatures will remain below average through the weekend.

Groton Daily Independent

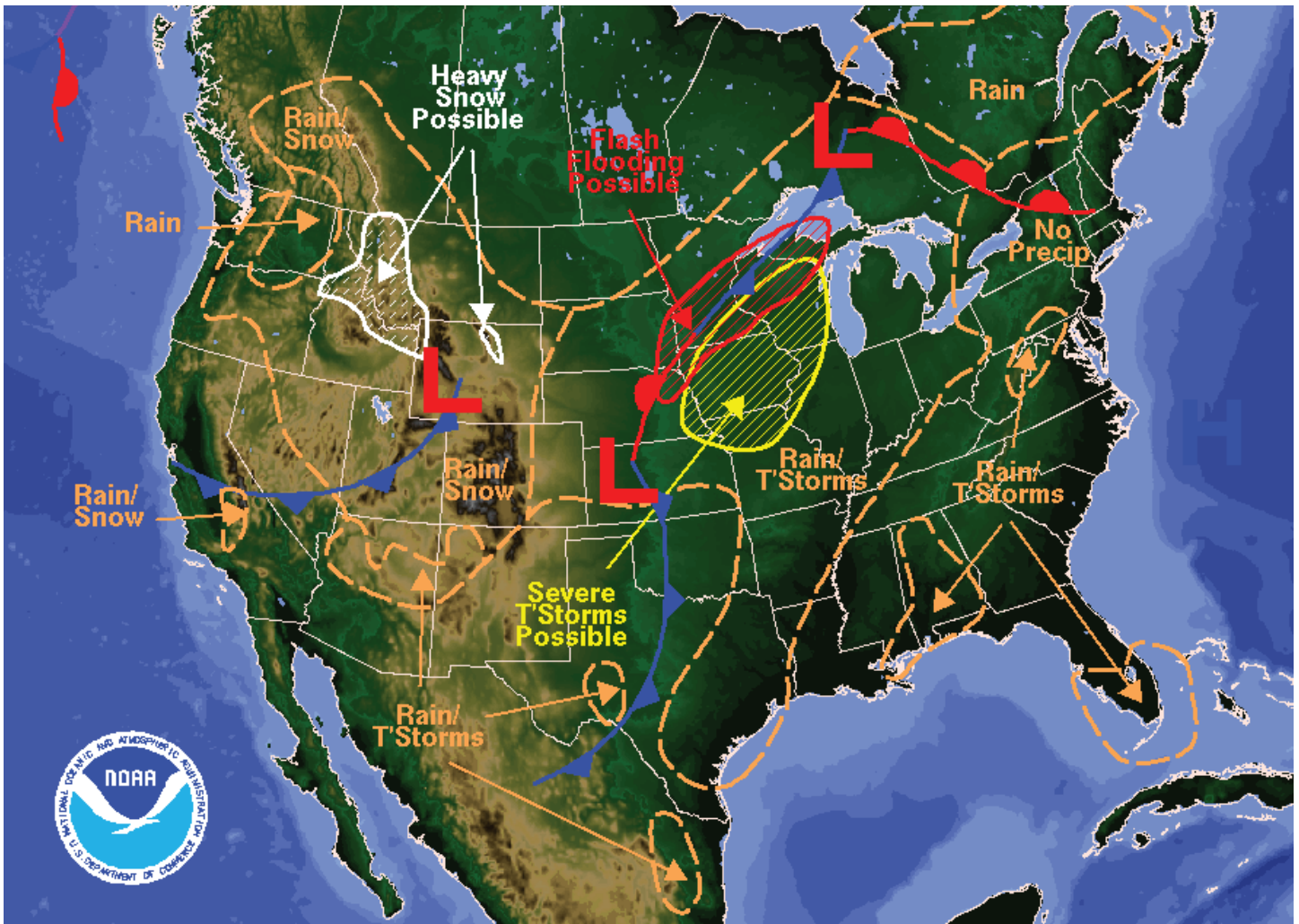
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 73.5 F at 5:39 PM
Low Outside Temp: 57.8 F at 11:59 PM
High Gust: 20.0 Mph at 3:21 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 103° in 1934
Record Low: 27° in 1925
Average High: 69°F
Average Low: 45°F
Average Precip in May: 1.75
Precip to date in May: 0.63
Average Precip to date: 5.78
Precip Year to Date: 2.61
Sunset Tonight: 9:00 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:59 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Wed, May 17, 2017, issued 4:34 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Mcreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



ARE YOU LISTENING HARD, LORD?

Eight-year-old Greg was having a difficult time with his prayers one evening. It seemed the more he prayed the less God listened. Finally, in desperation he said, "OK God, when is the best time I can talk to You? I know You are always listening, but when will You be listening hard for someone who lives in Augusta, Georgia?"

God is always "listening hard" no matter where we are. And He is never so busy caring for His creation that He forgets where you are or what you need. He is always thinking about us and is aware of every need we have or ever will have.

We may talk to Him for a minute or a moment, an hour or two, or an entire day and night. But there is one important matter about prayer that we must never forget.

It is always good to begin everything with God in prayer. If we go to Him before we begin a plan, make a decision, attempt to solve a problem or try to manage our finances, the best He has to offer us will be ours.

"Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You; show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my voice."

This is obviously a very important key to success. It is a comforting fact to know that when we awaken in the morning God's unfailing love is there waiting for us. And when we put our trust in Him and ask Him to show us the way He has planned for us, we can be certain that He will do just that because of His unfailing love! If we would only lift up our voice to Him, He will give us all we need.

Prayer: Lord, You offer us so much, and we ask for so little. Help us to look more to You for everything we need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 143:8 Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

04-35-39-56-72, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 5

(four, thirty-five, thirty-nine, fifty-six, seventy-two; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$36 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$204 million

Warm weather impacting soil moisture, crops in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A second consecutive week of warmer-than-average weather has reduced soil moisture supplies and affected crop conditions in South Dakota.

The Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that topsoil moisture supplies statewide are rated 60 percent adequate to surplus, and subsoil moisture is 62 percent in those categories.

South Dakota's winter wheat crop is rated only 40 percent in good to excellent condition.

Spring wheat planting in the state is wrapping up, with about half of the crop in good to excellent condition.

In the ranching community, pasture and range conditions are rated 43 percent good to excellent, and stock water supplies are 80 percent adequate to surplus

White named top executive at Sanford Health in Fargo

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Nate White has been named to the top post of Sanford Health in Fargo.

White has been the chief operating officer for Sanford since 2012. He takes over as executive vice president for longtime administrator Paul Richard, who will retire later this year.

White graduated from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 2000 and went on to earn a law degree from the University of Kansas. He became associate general counsel for Sanford in 2006.

Sanford Health is based in Sioux Falls and Fargo. It bills itself as one of the largest health systems in the nation, with 45 hospitals and nearly 300 clinics in nine states and four countries.

Court OKs plan for \$380M in Native American farmer lawsuit

By BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — An appeals court panel on Tuesday approved a lower court's plan for distributing \$380 million left over from the U.S. government's loan discrimination settlement with American Indian farmers and ranchers six years ago.

The decision wasn't unanimous, however, with one of the three judges arguing that Congress should have had a say.

President Barack Obama's administration agreed in 2011 to pay \$680 million to settle a class-action lawsuit filed in 1999 by Indian farmers who said they were denied loans for decades because of government discrimination. The lead plaintiffs were George and Marilyn Keepseagle, ranchers on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, which straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border.

Only about half of the 10,000 expected claims came in. In April 2016, a judge approved a plan for the leftover money devised by the two sides in the lawsuit that included an additional payment of \$21,275 to

each claimant and about \$300 million to groups that help Indians.

Two of the claimants appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, arguing that the entire \$380 million should be divvied up among the class members. A three-judge panel on Tuesday voted 2-1 to uphold the district court's finding that the plan was "fair, reasonable and adequate."

"We look forward to putting this money to work to support farming and ranching among America's first farmers," said Joseph Sellers, lead lawyer for the plaintiffs. "Native American farmers and ranchers who have been fighting for themselves and their families for nearly a decade can finally bring this case to a close."

Circuit Judge Janice Brown disagreed with her colleagues, Judges Robert Wilkins and Harry Edwards, saying the matter "should be the decision of the people and their elected representatives." She equated the plan to "the executive branch raiding hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars out of the Treasury, putting them into a slush fund disguised as a settlement, and then doling the money out to whatever constituency the executive wants bankrolled."

William A. Sherman, attorney for the two men who appealed the plan, said Brown's dissent "reaffirms our position that the judgment fund cannot be used in the manner contemplated" and that "there are plenty of issues for appeal."

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Oldest South Dakota drive-in theater to get new projector

GREGORY, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's oldest drive-in movie theater will install a new digital projector to replace equipment that has been in place since the theater was built in 1947.

The Hilltop Drive-In Theatre in Gregory will install a \$45,000 projector this summer as part of a project that's being funded largely through donations from movie-goers, The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2qMYS8D>) reported.

"We had no choice, we had to replace it if we wanted to stay open, as our other equipment got completely outdated," said drive-in owner Cecil Harsin.

The project has raised about \$20,000 and will continue fundraising through the summer, The Daily Republic reported.

The projector will allow the drive-in to show films in higher resolution, better clarity and brighter pictures. Harsin said the new projector will help the theater stay open for several years as long as interest remains high. Harsin said between 40 and 50 people attend shows each night the theater is open, and he hopes the new projector will attract more movie-goers.

The theater only shows movies that are less than two weeks old, Harsin said.

"I think the outdoor theater is kind of a nostalgic thing, people want to be outside, under the stars," Harsin said. "It's been open each day since 1947, so we sure plan on keeping that going as long as we can."

Harsin started working at the theater in 1945 in a part-time job running the projector. He bought the theater in 1989, when the previous owners threatened to close it.

Hilltop Drive-In Theatre is one of about six drive-in theaters in South Dakota.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

This story has been corrected to show the projector costs \$45,000, not \$71,000.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

Democrats take first steps of 50-state strategy

By **BILL BARROW**, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — National Democrats are taking the first, modest steps toward their promised 50-state strategy, lending help to state and local parties as they try to harness opposition to President Donald

Trump and the Republican monopoly in Washington.

Dubbing the effort "Resistance Summer," the Democratic National Committee plans to distribute about \$1 million — with promises of more later — through a matching grant program for local Democrats to organize voters. It's the party's first concrete expansion plan since Tom Perez took over as chairman, and party leaders bill it as a recognition they must do more to get actual votes out of the anti-Trump groundswell.

The amount is a fraction of the billions spent nationwide each election cycle and shows what the party is up against alongside liberal grassroots organizations and even a new political organization, Onward Together, by 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison, Perez's opponent for chair and now his top deputy, said the intent is to help local Democrats manage everything from rallies, town halls and neighborhood meetings to registration drives and voter database improvements.

"We're asking them to engage neighbors not just in this whole mess about Trump ... but on what kind of vision we have for our country," Ellison said, adding that he and Perez are talking regularly to many of the independent groups on the left.

Initial recipients include Arizona, Massachusetts, Michigan, Kansas and South Dakota. Those states span the spectrum of Democratic fortunes: Massachusetts is a liberal bastion; Michigan is a presidential battleground; Arizona is nearing swing-state status; Kansas and South Dakota are Republican strongholds.

Nationally, Democrats face a power deficit they've not seen in nine decades. Republicans control the White House and Congress, hold 33 governorships and run about two-thirds of state legislatures.

Michigan Democratic Chairman Brandon Dillon said he'd use the national money to help pay the six new field organizers he's hired since November, when Clinton lost to Trump by fewer than 11,000 out of more than 4.5 million votes. Those workers are updating individual voter information the party gives its candidates.

"Our voter file isn't as good as it should be, and we haven't been doing the kind of organizing we should," Dillon said.

In Republican-run Kansas, Chairman John Gibson has only one organizer based outside the capital. His goal is hiring one for each of the state's four congressional districts, including a Wichita-based district where Democrats just lost a surprisingly close special House election.

"It's up to Democratic candidates to make that argument" for "a better way of governing," Gibson said, "but it's the job of the party to build the infrastructure candidates can use to win campaigns."

Follow Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>.

Sen. Rounds concerned over reports of Trump's intel sharing

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds says he's concerned about reports that President Donald Trump revealed classified information to Russian officials.

The Republican senator said Tuesday that the president has the legal right to declassify documents. But based on the information he has, Rounds says he's "concerned that it may not have been done with sufficient care."

A spokesman for Sen. John Thune says the White House must be straightforward with the American people to get beyond "this latest distraction" so lawmakers can devote time to health care and taxes.

A spokeswoman for Rep. Kristi Noem says Noem hopes for an explanation that clears up "distractions" and lets lawmakers focus on tax, regulatory and health care overhauls.

White House National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster says Trump's disclosures were "wholly appropriate."

Seeking clemency in South Dakota? Pick up the smartphone

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard says South Dakota has launched a pardon website for people to go online to seek clemency.

The Republican governor said Tuesday that South Dakota is the first state to have an online, paperless

pardon process. The governor's office says the tool is part of Daugaard's efforts to make government more efficient.

The new website offers a guided, interactive process to assist applicants in determining eligibility, completing an application and submitting their request online.

Daugaard's office says the website is mobile-friendly, so people seeking clemency can apply on their phones.

Online: <https://doc.sd.gov/pardon/>

Authorities search for man charged in eagle trafficking case

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The U.S. Attorney's Office in South Dakota says authorities are searching for a Pine Ridge man who is among 15 indicted for illegally trafficking eagles and other migratory birds.

Office spokeswoman Ace Crawford said Tuesday that 14 people have pleaded not guilty in federal court to charges resulting from the two-year undercover operation.

Crawford says officials are still looking for 39-year-old Juan Mesteth, who has been charged with conspiracy to commit wildlife trafficking and violations of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Mesteth's indictment says he sold fans and eagle feathers to an informant. It says that Mesteth in 2015 discussed having connections who would take the informant hunting for eagles.

Court records don't list an attorney for Mesteth who could comment for him.

Tribes in US, Canada unite against Keystone XL oil pipeline

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Tribes representing tens of thousands of indigenous people in the U.S. and Canada will be signing a declaration against the planned Keystone XL oil pipeline.

Leaders of the Blackfoot Confederacy in Canada and the Great Sioux Nation and Ponca tribe in the U.S. plan to sign their declaration at a ceremony Wednesday at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, the city where pipeline developer TransCanada Corp. is based.

"There is a historic union between first Americans in Canada and Native Americans in the United States," said Casey Camp-Horinek, a councilwoman with the Ponca tribe in Oklahoma. "Long before a border ever existed on a map, a fictitious line on a map, we were a united peoples in our approach to care of Mother Earth."

The 16-page declaration highlights the tribes' treaty rights and their opposition to the proposed \$8 billion pipeline, which would move Canadian crude south to Nebraska, where the pipeline would connect with an existing Keystone pipeline network that would take the oil to Texas Gulf Coast refineries.

"Greed knows no limits, and those in the way are simply collateral damage to corporate profits," said Brandon Sazue, chairman of the Crow Creek Sioux in South Dakota and one of the leaders of the event.

TransCanada, which has both a Native American Relations Policy and an Aboriginal Relations Policy, maintains the pipeline will be environmentally safe and will create jobs and boost the economy.

"We understand and respect that there are some who might have different views about this project," spokeswoman Jacquelynn Benson said. "TransCanada is always interested in the views of our stakeholders along the right of way."

President Barack Obama rejected the project in 2015, but the Trump administration overturned that decision this year.

The project still faces hurdles. A coalition of environmental groups has challenged the federal permit in court, saying more environmental study is needed. Nebraska regulators also haven't decided whether to approve the proposed route through that state.

Tribes plan to use Wednesday's document to draw attention to their cause — possibly sending it to the United Nations — while they also consider other opposition, including protest camps along the pipeline

route, Camp-Horinek said.

Months of demonstrations against the recently completed Dakota Access oil pipeline drew hundreds and sometimes thousands of protesters to a North Dakota camp.

"There will be that kind of resistance" to Keystone XL, Camp-Horinek said. "Those thoughts are in place, where those camps will be best suited."

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

Pine Ridge man pleads guilty in reservation shooting death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Pine Ridge man has pleaded guilty in the shooting death of another man on the reservation.

The Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2qN3j3A>) reports that 26-year-old Thomas Brewer this month pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and discharge of a firearm during the commission of a crime of violence as part of an agreement with federal prosecutors.

Brewer has admitted to shooting Shawn Stevens with a pistol in the early morning hours of Nov. 30, 2016, during an argument in Pine Ridge. Stevens later died from his injuries.

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

South Dakota woman accused of stealing from funeral fund

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota woman is accused of stealing thousands of dollars raised to pay funeral expenses for a friend's daughter.

Thirty-three-year-old Stephanie Lea Blaine of Sioux Falls is charged with grand theft, a felony that carries a maximum five years in prison. Court documents say Blaine raised about \$3,900 online to help her friend with expenses. The mother checked with the funeral home and hospital where her daughter was treated and discovered no payments had been made. She informed the online fundraising website gofundme.com.

The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2qnBqO4>) reports court documents say gofundme.com froze the account after discovering that Blaine had made nine withdrawals.

The website reimbursed the grieving mother.

No phone listing for Blaine could be found.

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

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. MEMO: TRUMP ASKED COMEY TO DROP FLYNN PROBE

The U.S. president personally appealed to the FBI director to abandon the bureau's investigation into the fired national security adviser, prompting a furious denial from the White House.

2. WHO IS SLATED FOR EARLY RELEASE

Pvt. Chelsea Manning, the transgender soldier convicted of giving classified government materials to WikiLeaks, is set to be freed from a Kansas military prison after seven years.

3. US, EUROPE TO DISCUSS LAPTOP BAN

The move would create logistical chaos for millions on the world's busiest corridor of air travel, many of them business travelers who rely on their electronics to work during the flight.

4. IRANIANS TELL AP WHAT VOTE MEANS TO THEM

The upcoming presidential election is largely seen as a referendum on the Islamic Republic's sputtering economy and the nuclear deal with world powers.

5. SEND OUT THE CLOWNS

Performers for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus allow AP extensive access to one traveling unit, witnessing the last circus baptism and their final times goofing around on "Clown Alley."

6. DEADLY TORNADOES STRIKE HEARTLAND

Two people are dead and dozens injured when tornadoes flatten a mobile home park in Wisconsin and a housing subdivision in Oklahoma.

7. GEORGIA EXECUTES FIRST OF YEAR

J.W. Ledford was convicted of stabbing to death Dr. Harry Johnston, a 73-year-old neighbor in 1992.

8. WOMEN IN 30S NOW HAVING MORE BABIES THAN YOUNGER MOMS IN US

Health experts say the shift is due to more women waiting longer to have children and the ongoing drop in the teen birth rate.

9. FOX NEWS HOST COULD REPLACE SEAN SPICER

Kimberly Guilfoyle says becoming White House press secretary has been "raised by a number of people" in the Trump administration.

10. LUCK OF THE IRISH WITH THE CELTICS

Boston earns the right to choose first in next month's NBA draft with the pick they received in the 2013 trade that sent Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett to the Nets.

Tornadoes in Wisconsin, Oklahoma leave 2 dead

CHICAGO (AP) — Two people died and dozens were injured when tornadoes flattened a mobile home park in Wisconsin and a housing subdivision in Oklahoma during powerful spring storms that battered an area from the South Plains of Texas to the Great Lakes.

The storms hit late in the afternoon Tuesday and into the evening, leveling the Prairie Lake Estate Mobile Park near Chetek, Wisconsin, about 110 miles (177 kilometers) northeast of Minneapolis. When first responders arrived at the scene, they could hear the people crying for help in the rubble, Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald told KMSB-TV.

One person died at the mobile home park, the Wisconsin Emergency Operations Center said in a statement late Tuesday. No details of the fatality were given. More than 25 people were injured, the state said, without giving their conditions. Helicopter video from WCCO-TV and KARE-TV shows extensive damage at the trailer park, with several homes reduced to rubble.

"It's a mess," Fitzgerald told the Leader-Telegram of Eau Claire. "We have at least one deceased so far and we're still in a search pattern."

A mobile home is a particularly dangerous place to be during a tornado, according to the National Weather Service. The high winds during a tornado can rip a mobile home, which frequently would not have a foundation, from its moorings. In 2011, when devastating tornadoes struck in Joplin, Missouri, and in Alabama and Mississippi, 111 of the 551 people killed nationwide in tornadoes, or 20 percent, were in mobile homes, according to the Storm Prediction Center website.

In Oklahoma, another tornado damaged much of a subdivision on the southern fringe of Elk City, Oklahoma, about 110 miles west of Oklahoma City. Fire Chaplain Danny Ringer told reporters at the scene late Tuesday that one person was known dead from the twister, although details were lacking. He also said the storm destroyed 40 homes and damaged 50 to 75 others severely. It was not immediately known if there were injuries.

More than two dozen tornado sightings were reported to the National Weather Service Tuesday night across the five states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and Wisconsin. The storm also brought numerous reports of large hail and strong winds.

Devin Feuerhelm told KMSB-TV that his sister, Lenna Samuelson, lives in the Wisconsin trailer park with her two daughters, Ashley and Brenna. He said his sister also had a 2-month-old grandson, Nolan, in the home when the storm hit, and they had nowhere to go but the bathtub.

Amazingly, the infant grandson escaped with just a couple of scratches, he said. Samuelson's daughters suffered minor injuries, and the mother suffered a gash on her head, but he said all are expected to be fine.

While their home was flattened, the SUV next to it was untouched.

Q&A: Would Trump request to end Flynn probe have broken law?

By SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some lawmakers are accusing President Donald Trump of obstruction of justice after revelations that FBI Director James Comey wrote a private account of the president asking him to shut down an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Congressional Democrats were already concerned that Trump was trying to stifle a probe into possible coordination between his campaign and Russia's election meddling by firing Comey last week. The latest development only heightened their outrage, renewing calls for a special prosecutor. And Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal said in a statement that "we are witnessing an obstruction of justice case unfolding in real time."

But obstruction of justice is a tricky issue both criminally and politically. And legal experts say it could be difficult to prove the president crossed a line.

Some questions and answers about obstruction of justice:

WHAT IS OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE?

Simply put, it's preventing authorities — such as police or prosecutors — from doing the work of investigating and applying the law.

WHAT IS TRUMP ACCUSED OF DOING?

Comey wrote that Trump asked him to end an investigation into Flynn during a February meeting in the Oval Office. Comey, who was known to keep a paper trail of sensitive meetings, chronicled the president's request in a memo he produced soon after the conversation, according to a Comey associate who reviewed the document and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity. Flynn had just been forced to resign after lying about the nature of his contacts with the Russian ambassador.

The White House disputed the account of the Comey memo.

IS SUCH A REQUEST OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE?

Criminally speaking, obstructing justice applies to a variety of scenarios — like threatening a juror, retaliating against a witness, or impeding a grand jury proceeding — and Trump's alleged request would not fit neatly into any of them, legal experts said.

"No one would write a federal statute with this situation in mind because it's such an extraordinary situation," said Jens David Ohlin, a dean at Cornell University Law School.

Meddling in a federal investigation could qualify as impeding a judicial proceeding under the obstruction statute. But to bring an obstruction charge, a prosecutor would have to show the president was trying to "corruptly" influence the investigation, and proving an improper intent can be hard.

Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University, said Trump would have some lines of defense.

"The president can claim he was raising an issue of concern for a longtime associate," Turley said. "That doesn't mean that the question was not wildly improper, and frankly, would border on the moronic."

BUT ISN'T THERE EVIDENCE?

Comey's memos could be valuable in any obstruction investigation.

"What you have is contemporaneous documentation of Comey's recollection of what the president said," said Bob Bauer, who served as White House counsel under President Barack Obama. "That's obviously a very powerful piece of evidence."

But barring recordings, a memo still becomes a case of "he said, she said," said former prosecutor Jonathan Lopez.

Still, there's also a witness: Comey.

"He's around and the best evidence of what happened in that meeting would be to call him as a witness," said Barbara McQuade, former U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

ARE THERE OTHER POSSIBLE ACTIONS?

Even if this didn't lead to a criminal conviction, such a request could add to the basis for impeachment for obstruction of justice.

"It's the whole pattern here, it's firing Comey and also directing him to end the investigation against Flynn, all of these things are done because he wants to stop an investigation from reaching the highest echelons of the administration and possibly him personally," Ohlin said. "It's the type of political self-dealing that is intolerable."

But Turley said that may not be enough.

"What we have is a memo of a president asking highly inappropriate questions of an FBI director," he said. "This would be pretty thin soup for even an impeachment proceeding."

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Catherine Lucey and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Embattled White House lurches from crisis to crisis

By ERIC TUCKER, CATHERINE LUCEY and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump personally appealed to FBI Director James Comey to abandon the bureau's investigation into National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, according to notes Comey wrote after the meeting.

The White House issued a furious denial after the notes were disclosed late Tuesday, near the end of a tumultuous day spent beating back potentially disastrous news reports from dawn to dusk.

The bombshell Comey news came as the beleaguered administration was still struggling mightily to explain Monday's revelation that the president had disclosed highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and the country's ambassador to the United States.

Defending Trump's actions, officials played down the importance and secrecy of the information, which had been supplied by Israel under an intelligence-sharing agreement, and Trump himself said he had "an absolute right" as president to share "facts pertaining to terrorism" and airline safety with Russia. Yet U.S. allies and some members of Congress expressed concern bordering on alarm.

As for Comey, whom Trump fired last week, the FBI director wrote in a memo after a February meeting at the White House that the new president had asked him to shut down the FBI's investigation of Flynn and his Russian contacts, said a person who had read the memo. The Flynn investigation was part of a broader probe into Russian interference in last year's presidential election.

Comey's memo, an apparent effort to create a paper trail of his contacts with the White House, would be the clearest evidence to date that the president has tried to influence the investigation.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Republican chairman of the House oversight committee, sent a letter to the FBI on Tuesday requesting that it turn over all documents and recordings that detail communications between Comey and Trump. He said he would give the FBI a week and then "if we need a subpoena, we'll do it."

The panel's top Democrat, Elijah Cummings of Maryland, a constant Trump critic, called the allegation of Trump pressure on Comey "explosive" and said "it appears like a textbook case of criminal obstruction of justice."

John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said late Tuesday that the developments had reached "Watergate size and scale."

Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader of the Senate, said simply, "It would be helpful to have less drama emanating from the White House."

The person who described the Comey memo to the AP was not authorized to discuss it by name and spoke on condition of anonymity. The existence of the memo was first reported Tuesday by The New York Times.

The White House vigorously denied it all. "While the president has repeatedly expressed his view that General Flynn is a decent man who served and protected our country, the president has never asked Mr. Comey or anyone else to end any investigation, including any investigation involving General Flynn," a White House statement said.

Trump fired Flynn on Feb. 13, on grounds that he had misled Vice President Mike Pence and other officials about his contacts with Russians.

The intensifying drama comes as Trump is set to embark Friday on his first foreign trip, which had been optimistically viewed by some aides as an opportunity to reset an administration floundering under an inexperienced president.

When Trump fired Comey, he said he did so based on Comey's very public handling of the Hillary Clinton email probe and how it affected his leadership of the FBI. But the White House has provided differing accounts of the firing. And lawmakers have alleged that the sudden ouster was an attempt to stifle the bureau's investigation into Trump associates' ties to Russia's meddling in the campaign.

Mark Warner of Virginia, top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, said he would ask Comey for additional material as part of that panel's investigation. "Memos, transcripts, tapes — the list keeps getting longer," he said.

According to the Times, Comey wrote in the February memo that Trump told him Flynn had done nothing wrong. Comey said he replied that "I agree he is a good guy" but said nothing to Trump about limiting the investigation.

The newspaper said Comey was in the Oval Office that day with other national security officials for a terrorism threat briefing. When that ended, Trump asked everyone to leave except Comey, and he eventually turned the conversation to Flynn.

The administration spent the first half of Tuesday defending Trump's disclosure of classified information to senior Russian officials. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said the president's comments were "wholly appropriate." He used that phrase nine times in his briefing to reporters.

The White House has grown suspicious about the volume and timing of the seemingly never-ending stream of leaks about the president, said one senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to reflect on the feeling inside the West Wing. The official questioned why — if Comey had concerns about his conversations with the president — the FBI director hadn't shared them with the deputy director, the Department of Justice and Congress at the time.

The highly classified information about an Islamic State plot was collected by Israel, a crucial source of intelligence and close partner in the fight against some of the America's fiercest threats in the Middle East. Trump's disclosure of the information threatened to fray that partnership and piled pressure on the White House to explain the apparently on-the-spot decision to reveal the information to Russian diplomats in the Oval Office.

A U.S. official who confirmed the disclosure to The Associated Press said the revelation potentially put the source at risk.

In a statement, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., Ron Dermer, said the partnership between the U.S and Israel was solid.

Associated Press writers Vivian Salama and Jill Colvin contributed.

'Living memorial': Putting Kennedy back into Kennedy Center

By **BEN NUCKOLS**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trivia question: Where is the memorial to President John F. Kennedy in Washington? If you said the Kennedy Center — not just the bronze bust of Kennedy inside but the entire building and all that happens there — you'd be correct. You'd also be better-informed than most Washingtonians.

This year, in honor of the 100th anniversary of JFK's birth, leaders of the performing arts behemoth are trying to put the Kennedy back into the Kennedy Center. They are reemphasizing its role as a "living

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memorial" to the slain 35th president.

"Most people, even the people who've lived in this city all their lives, not all of that group understand that it's a memorial," Kennedy Center president Deborah Rutter said in an interview. "It doesn't necessarily click for people that a performing arts center would be a memorial to a president."

After Kennedy's 1963 assassination, turning the center into a memorial made perfect sense. Kennedy, who served at the height of the Cold War and pushed the U.S. space program forward with his bold pledge to put a man on the moon, was also a strong advocate for the arts. He actively raised money for the center, which initially was to have been called the National Cultural Center.

Congress renamed it the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and designated it as a memorial two months after Kennedy's death. His successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, broke ground at the site along the Potomac River using the same gold-plated spade used to launch construction of the Lincoln Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial.

The center opened in 1971 with a requiem Mass in Kennedy's honor, composed by Leonard Bernstein.

With its cavernous concert hall, opera house and multiple stages, the building quickly became the focal point of Washington's cultural life. And over the years, the Kennedy connection became less important than the Broadway musicals, opera, dance and music it hosted every day, along with major cultural events like the Kennedy Center Honors.

Besides the bust in the grand foyer, the Kennedy Center has inscriptions of Kennedy's statements on the outer wall facing the Potomac River. Rutter said there are plans to attach more quotations to new buildings in the center's expansion, set to be completed next year.

There also have been discussions about replacing a dated touch-screen display about Kennedy with a permanent exhibition honoring him, although nothing has been announced.

"We used to be about selling a show," Rutter said. "Now we're about telling the story of the full identity of the Kennedy Center."

Kennedy spoke eloquently about the arts and their capacity for truth-telling. In an emailed statement, his granddaughter, Rose Kennedy Schlossberg, said she "can't think of a better memorial" than a place where people experience art together.

"He did not fear criticism from media or the arts," Schlossberg wrote. "He was a great supporter of the liberties of both, which inspires me today as we must rise to support the independent voices of dissent in our country."

In recent months, the center has been hosting performances reflecting five ideals from Kennedy: courage, freedom, justice, service and gratitude. With the centennial approaching, there will be a series of performances, including a National Symphony Orchestra concert honoring JFK's legacy and headlined by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who first gained fame when he played for Kennedy at age 7 at a fundraiser for the future center.

"It will be deeply meaningful," Ma told The Associated Press. "He was my president when I arrived in this country, and so I embrace the ideals that he promoted."

On May 29, the center will host a "JFK Centennial Celebration" with performers including soprano Renee Fleming, actor Finn Whitrock and the New York City Ballet's principal dancers.

Rutter also wants to make the Kennedy Center more appealing to visitors. The center was recently added to the itinerary for Big Bus, one of the companies that shuttles tourists around must-see Washington destinations. The \$120 million expansion project, with three new pavilions by architect Steven Holl, will make room for more diverse arts and educational programming. The new construction, the first since the center opened, is also intended to make the famously foreboding building more pedestrian-friendly.

A selection of photos of Kennedy affixed to a wall in the Hall of States last year also has been a hit. It's one of the first things school groups see when they tour the center. The photos were meant to be temporary.

"I said, 'If you take them down, I'll kill you,'" Rutter said. "Just those pictures alone, which is vinyl adhered to the marble, is changing what it feels like to be here."

Warriors, Spurs will try to use break to rest and heal again

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Sports Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Still unbeaten, the Golden State Warriors have a few days to heal up again. Gregg Popovich's time will be spent working to get his San Antonio Spurs to wake up, before it's too late. And determine whether injured superstar Kawhi Leonard might be healthy enough to return from an ankle injury, too.

Sure, the Warriors just pulled off a 36-point thrashing of the Spurs two days after squeaking out a 113-111 victory in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals — their second-largest postseason win behind a game from 1948 when the Philadelphia Warriors won by 39 at St. Louis.

Draymond Green, for one, doesn't believe the Warriors will get anything easy when they arrive in San Antonio for Saturday's Game 3.

"They're going to play as hard as they can until it's over. So, we know we're not taking their heart," he said after Tuesday's 136-100 rout. "At the end, all we did was what we were supposed to do, we took care of home court. Now the real challenge is going on the road and trying to get some wins."

Starting center Zaza Pachulia was scheduled for an MRI exam Wednesday on his bruised right heel after an X-ray was negative. Key reserve and 2015 NBA Finals MVP Andre Iguodala's status was unclear after he missed Game 2 with soreness in his left knee.

"The schedule comes in and helps us out," guard Shaun Livingston said. "We miss him out there, but he'll get healthy and in the meantime it's up to the rest of us to stay ready."

They certainly did Tuesday.

Stephen Curry, Kevin Durant and Golden State's starters got plenty of rest in the fourth quarter on a night the bench delivered a season-best 63 points.

Popovich was left perplexed and downright disgusted that his team got dominated in such embarrassing fashion without Leonard, who re-injured his tender left ankle in Game 1 after stepping on Pachulia's foot.

"Tonight, it's not what I expected. I'm disappointed," Popovich said. "The only way I can process this is I think it's not about O's and X's or rebounds or turnovers or anything like that. I think we've maybe felt it too much, Kawhi being gone, in the sense that I don't think — as I watched — I don't think they believed.

"And you have to believe. I don't think as a group they really did, which means probably a little bit feeling sorry for themselves psychologically, subconsciously, whatever psycho-babble word you want to use."

Popovich had no guess about Leonard's status for Game 3, saying it would likely be decided as late as Friday or Saturday.

San Antonio isn't ready to let this best-of-seven series get away as it shifts home.

"It's tough, but it's a long series," guard Patty Mills said. "Two games, now we're going back home so there are still a lot of reasons to believe. We're just going to keep pounding on that. There's nothing else to do."

The Warriors should get another nice boost from coach Steve Kerr, who is well enough that he plans to travel with the team to San Antonio on Thursday. Golden State has planned a day off Wednesday, then will practice in the Bay Area on Thursday before flying to Texas.

Kerr is recovering from a May 5 procedure at Duke University to repair a spinal fluid leak and Mike Brown has been coaching during his absence, but the reigning NBA Coach of the Year has been attending practices again and addressing the team in the locker room while watching games behind the scenes.

The Warriors just want to keep the momentum that has them at 10-0 this postseason. Both Kerr and Brown emphasized a better start on both ends in Game 2 to control the tempo from the opening tip.

"You just want to continue to build good habits, sustain the level of play. I don't know how much it will carry over Game 2 to Game 3 going back to their place," Curry said. "But for us mentally, we just know what we need to do to be successful against this team, even with Kawhi back in there, probably on Saturday. You've got to understand exactly the things that we did better tonight. That's just being a lot more alert defensively to start and just making them work."

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/tag/NBAbasketball>

Georgia carries out first execution of the year

By KATE BRUMBACK, Associated Press

JACKSON, Ga. (AP) — Georgia on Wednesday carried out its first execution this year, putting to death a man convicted of killing his 73-year-old neighbor 25 years ago.

J.W. Ledford's time of death was 1:17 a.m., after an injection of compounded barbiturate pentobarbital at the state prison in Jackson, Warden Eric Sellers told witnesses. Ledford, 45, was convicted of murder in the January 1992 stabbing death of Dr. Harry Johnston in Murray County, northwest Georgia.

Ledford smiled broadly as witnesses entered the execution viewing area. When given a chance to make a final statement, he appeared to quote from the movie "Cool Hand Luke."

"What we have here is a failure to communicate. Some men you just can't reach," he said, later adding, "I am not the failure. You are the failure to communicate."

"You can kiss my white trash ass," he added, continuing to smile.

As the warden exited the execution chamber at 1:09 a.m., Ledford began talking again, but the microphones had been cut off so his words weren't audible to witnesses.

Records from past executions show that the lethal drug generally starts flowing within a couple of minutes of the warden exiting the execution chamber. Ledford raised his head to look at his right arm right after the warden left and about a minute later appeared to speak to a guard to his right.

He then rested his head, closed his eyes and appeared to take several deep breaths before falling still within two or three minutes of the warden leaving the room.

Ledford told police he had gone to Johnston's home on Jan. 31, 1992, to ask for a ride to the grocery store. After the older man accused him of stealing and smacked him, Ledford pulled out a knife and stabbed Johnston to death, according to court filings. The pathologist who did the autopsy said Johnston suffered "one continuous or two slices to the neck" and bled to death.

After dragging Johnston's body to another part of Johnston's property and covering it up, Ledford went to Johnston's house with a knife and demanded money from Johnston's wife, according to court filings. He took money and four guns from the home, tied up Johnston's wife and left in Johnston's truck. He was arrested later that day.

Ledford told police he had a number of beers and smoked a couple joints in the hours before the killing.

Ledford's lawyers had asked the parole board to spare him, citing a rough childhood, substance abuse from an early age and his intellectual disability. After holding a hearing Monday, the board declined to grant clemency. Following its normal practice, the board did not give a reason for its denial.

Ledford's lawyers also tried to get the courts to stop his execution. The challenges were appealed all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, which rejected them shortly after 12:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Because of changes in brain chemistry caused by a drug Ledford has been taking for chronic nerve pain for more than a decade, there was a high risk that the pentobarbital Georgia planned to use to execute him would not render him unconscious and devoid of sensation or feeling, his lawyers wrote in a federal lawsuit filed Thursday. That would violate the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment enshrined in the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the lawsuit said.

When challenging an execution method on those grounds, a U.S. Supreme Court precedent requires inmates to propose a known and available alternative. Ledford's lawyers, therefore, proposed that he be executed by firing squad, a method that is not allowed under Georgia law.

Ledford's lawyers also asked a state court judge to halt the execution because he was only 20 and his brain wasn't done developing when he killed Johnston. Just as juvenile offenders are considered less culpable and not the "worst of the worst" for whom the death penalty is reserved, the execution of those under 21 is also unconstitutional, Ledford's lawyers argue.

Ledford was the first inmate executed this year in Georgia. The state executed nine inmates last year,

more than any other state and the most Georgia had executed in a single calendar year since the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the death penalty to resume 40 years ago.

US admiral: North Korea's actions 'recipe for disaster'

By KAORI HITOMI, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The top American military officer in the Pacific said Wednesday that North Korea's recent military actions are "a recipe for a disaster" and warned against a sense of complacency in the face of increasing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Adm. Harry Harris Jr. made the remarks at a lecture for a Tokyo think tank after meeting with Japanese leaders that he said focused on North Korea's missile and nuclear programs.

North Korea test-launched a missile on Sunday that many experts believe could be its most advanced yet, flying higher and longer than any previous missile.

"Combining nuclear warheads with ballistic technology in the hands of a volatile leader like Kim Jong Un is a recipe for a disaster," Harris said. "Kim Jong Un is not afraid to fail in public and every test he makes is a success because it takes North Korea one step closer to being able to deliver a nuclear-equipped missile anywhere in the world."

The missile on Sunday was deliberately fired on a "lofted" trajectory — reaching more than 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles), which is higher than satellites in low Earth orbit — to test re-entry capabilities and place its "splash zone" in the open Pacific.

Harris, head of the United States Pacific Command, based in Hawaii, said North Korea is "closer to being able to deliver a nuclear-equipped missile anywhere in the world" and called for further coordination between the U.S., Japan and South Korea to deal with the threat.

He also obliquely criticized China for throwing up obstacles to the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, where Beijing has constructed island bases in the disputed waters, saying "we should fly, be able to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows."

While in Tokyo, Harris met Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Defense Minister Tomomi Inada.

Contradictions by Trump create credibility gap for aides

By KEN THOMAS and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the report burst forth alleging that President Donald Trump had revealed highly classified information to Russian diplomats, the White House quickly dispatched Trump's national security adviser to declare that the story "as reported is false."

By the next morning, however, H.R. McMaster's pronouncement was undercut by Trump himself, making the aide the latest to face a public conflict with the boss in a White House where credibility problems are becoming an occupational hazard.

Yes, the president said, he had given information to the Russians. But there was nothing wrong with that, he insisted. In two tweets, Trump said the conversation with the diplomats was an acceptable way to provide facts related to airline safety and terrorism, and he declared he had "the absolute right" to share the details.

Still, the day-after accounts prompted questions about McMaster's earlier comments on the story that was first reported by The Washington Post.

These types of conflicts are a near-constant in the Trump administration, which has tangled over accounts involving issues ranging from the size of Trump's inaugural crowd to the firing of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn and Trump's claims that President Barack Obama wiretapped Trump Tower.

On Tuesday, the White House denied reports that Trump had asked FBI Director James Comey to shut down an FBI investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn. Democrats and some Republicans greeted those denials skeptically.

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Trump has frequently tasked aides and surrogates with delivering apparently false or misleading statements or to aggressively argue points that the president later contradicts.

The conflicted information has made it harder for aides to effectively advocate for the president.

"It's always a hard job, but there's no question in my mind the president has made it harder for his immediate staff, which is there to support him," said Ari Fleischer, press secretary to Republican President George W. Bush.

Trump himself has raised doubts about the credibility of what his representatives say. He tweeted last week that since he's a very active president, it's not always possible for his surrogates to speak with perfect accuracy. He also suggested "maybe the best thing to do would be to cancel all future 'press briefings' and hand out written responses for the sake of accuracy???"

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer got off to a rocky start with beat reporters on the second day of the administration when he delivered a tirade about reporting on the Inauguration Day crowds. Trump had already blasted the media over its reports — accurate — about the numbers.

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, has also tangled with the media over the believability of her statements, saying earlier this year in a television appearance that Flynn had Trump's full confidence, hours before Trump fired him. She also referred to a "Bowling Green Massacre" that never occurred.

And Vice President Mike Pence insisted Flynn had not discussed Obama-era Russian sanctions with the Russian ambassador to the U.S., Sergey Kislyak. That was untrue, something the White House blamed on Flynn when Trump fired him a month later.

Asked Tuesday if he is concerned about White House credibility being undermined, Spicer said "no one would ever want that."

But the loose accounting of facts has raised alarms among both Republicans and Democrats. They note that the administration has yet to face a national or international crisis comparable to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Hurricane Katrina or the Sandy Hook school shootings.

"Lacking credibility makes dealing with crises infinitely more difficult," said Alex Conant, a Republican communications strategist who advised the presidential bid of Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a Trump rival. "This White House has wasted credibility by arguing things like crowd size."

"This is not business as usual. And the president is truly creating chaos," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., in a speech Tuesday to the Center for American Progress' Ideas Conference.

The reliability of White House statements was again questioned after the firing of FBI Director James Comey last week and then in this week's intelligence flap.

When Comey was ousted by Trump, White House officials said the decision came only after the president consulted with Attorney General Jeff Sessions and his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, who laid out a case for Comey's dismissal in a memo.

But in an interview with NBC News' Lester Holt two days later, Trump said he had long planned to sack his controversial FBI director. "I was going to fire Comey," Trump said.

The White House made another pivot after Trump disclosed information about an Islamic State terror threat in his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Kislyak. That disclosure included highly classified information, the Post reported. A senior U.S. official told AP the same thing, saying the threat involved laptop computers on aircraft.

The information had been shared with Trump by an ally, so his passing it along to Russia violated the confidentiality of an intelligence-sharing agreement with that country, the official said.

Hours after the story broke, McMaster stood in front of a bank of cameras, saying that the Post story, "as reported, is false." He added that, "at no time were intelligence sources or methods discussed," an allegation that was not made in the story, and that Trump "did not disclose any military operations that were not already publicly known."

On Tuesday, McMaster said Trump's actions were "wholly appropriate," adding, "The president wasn't even aware of where this information came from. He wasn't briefed on the source and method of the information either."

For Trump staffers, there have been warnings they could be undercut by their boss. Trump, in a May

2016 tweet, offered this piece of advice.

"Don't believe the biased and phony media quoting people who work for my campaign. The only quote that matters is a quote from me!"

Associated Press Television Writer David Bauder contributed to this report.

Grisly 24-hour period leaves 4 dead in Venezuela unrest

By HANNAH DREIER and CHRISTINE ARMARIO, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Business owners shuttered shops, a burned police station stood charred black and a state officer in western Venezuela was under arrest Tuesday following a spasm of violence that resulted in at least four deaths in anti-government protests.

An especially grisly 24 hours of turmoil coming after nearly two months of political unrest had nervous residents staying indoors in restive cities like San Cristobal near the border with Colombia.

Authorities announced Tuesday that four men ranging in age from 17 to 33 had died from gunshot wounds at separate protests over the preceding day. Diego Hernandez, 33, and Luis Alviarez, 18, were killed in Tachira, while Yeison Mora Castillo, 17, died near a protest farther east in the state of Barinas on Monday. Diego Arellano, 31, died during surgery Tuesday after being shot at a demonstration south of Caracas.

Friends and relatives of Arellano gathered outside the clinic where he died and sang the national anthem as his body was removed from the facility.

The nation's chief prosecutor said it was charging a 27-year-old state police officer in Hernandez's death, whose final moments were purportedly captured in a video circulating on social media. The footage shows a bystander ripping open Hernandez's blue T-shirt as he lay lifeless on the pavement, his eyes open and fixed, revealing a bloody wound underneath. "They killed him!" someone screams.

The weeks of protests were set off by the socialist government's move to nullify the opposition-controlled congress in late March, but demonstrations have escalated into a vehicle for airing grievances against the government for triple-digit inflation, food shortages and a rise in crime.

The flare-up of violence outside Venezuela's capital this week added to a grim and growing list of casualties from unrest. More than three dozen people have died, most of them young men shot at protests or killed during looting. Hundreds more have been injured in near-daily demonstrations by the opposition that frequently end with state security unleashing tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets at protesters.

Arrests have been made in seven homicides. In four of those cases, state or national police officers have been charged. Civilians were charged in three others, but no details released on their motives.

The opposition blames the bloodshed on state security forces using excessive force and on groups of armed, pro-government civilians known as "colectivos." President Nicolas Maduro says far-right extremists are working with criminal gangs to foment the violence.

International pressure on the troubled South American nation has been increasing.

Diplomats at the United Nations said U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenca would brief the council Wednesday on the situation in Venezuela. The diplomats, who agreed to discuss the planned session only on condition of anonymity, said the closed meeting would focus on efforts by regional organizations to solve the crisis.

On Monday, the Organization of American States voted to hold a rare foreign ministers' meeting later this month to discuss the crisis. The Washington-based group's secretary, Luis Almagro, issued a statement Tuesday renewing his call for Venezuela to hold an early presidential election.

Almagro singled out the leader of Venezuela's national guard, Antonio Jose Benavides Torres, and Interior Minister Nestor Reverol, saying they "lead the two institutions charged with the use of force in Venezuela. In this sense, they are both responsible for every aggression, every shot and every death."

Both men stood by their officers on Twitter, repeating earlier accusations that right-wing "terrorists" are responsible for the violence, questioning whether protesters are peaceful while sharing photos of burned buildings and buses. Videos of the violence in Tachira on Monday showed protesters throwing rocks and

in one case setting an armored truck on fire.

Venezuela's embattled president is pledging to resolve the nation's crisis by convening a special assembly to rewrite the constitution, a proposal the opposition is refusing to participate in. An official gazette circulated Tuesday showed Maduro is extending a previously declared state of emergency, which the document states permits the restriction of certain civic rights.

Opposition leaders called on Venezuelans to gather in the streets in protest again Wednesday evening.

Associated Press writer Hannah Dreier reported this story in Caracas and AP writer Christine Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia.

Hannah Dreier is on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/hannahdreier> . Christine Armario is on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/cearmario> . Read more of AP's Venezuela coverage here: <https://www.ap.org/explore/venezuela-undone> .

White House's repeated falsehoods lead to credibility gaps

By **JULIE BYKOWICZ, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House has been two-stepping with the truth.

Starting with press secretary Sean Spicer insisting inaccurately that President Donald Trump drew record-setting inauguration crowds, top presidential advisers have provided information that is provably false or contradicted by others in the White House, including Trump himself. The pattern continued this week, with national security advisers giving one account of what Trump told Russian officials in the Oval Office only to have the president himself revise it.

On Tuesday, the White House denied reports that Trump had asked FBI Director James Comey to shut down an FBI investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn. Democrats and some Republicans greeted those denials skeptically.

A look at some of the most credibility-damaging episodes:

WHAT TRUMP SHARED WITH THE RUSSIANS

The Washington Post reported Monday that Trump shared highly classified information with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak about an Islamic State terror threat involving laptop computers on aircraft. Other outlets, including The Associated Press, later confirmed that report.

Version One: White House aides initially disputed the premise of the reporting. "This story is false," deputy national security adviser Dina Powell said Monday in a written statement.

Version Two: Trump weighed in Tuesday by indicating he had the authority to disclose whatever he'd like. He did not deny discussing classified information. "As President I wanted to share with Russia (at an openly scheduled W.H. meeting) which I have the absolute right to do, facts pertaining ...to terrorism and airline flight safety. Humanitarian reasons, plus I want Russia to greatly step up their fight against ISIS & terrorism," Trump wrote in a pair of tweets.

WHY COMEY WAS FIRED

With no notice, Trump last week fired Comey, who had been leading an investigation of possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election. At first, the White House pinned the decision on Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who'd written a scathing memo about Comey's handling of a probe into Hillary Clinton's use of email.

One: "People in the Justice Department made a very strong recommendation, the president followed it and he made a quick and decisive action to fire James Comey. He took the recommendation seriously. And he made a decision based on that," deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told MSNBC.

Two: "He had made a recommendation. But regardless of recommendation, I was going to fire Comey, knowing there was no good time to do it. And in fact, when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said,

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"You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story." Trump told NBC.

PENCE DEFENDS FLYNN

Vice President Mike Pence insisted that Flynn had not discussed Obama-era Russian sanctions when he and Kislyak spoke during Trump's transition to power. That assertion was untrue, something the White House blamed on Flynn when it fired him a month later.

One: "They did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose censure against Russia," Pence said Jan. 15 on CBS.

Two: Trump and senior White House advisers learned Jan. 26 that Flynn had discussed sanctions with Kislyak; Trump fired Flynn on Feb. 13 for lying to Pence, after news reports described the Flynn-Kislyak talks.

BOWLING GREEN TERRORIST ATTACK?

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway raised eyebrows when she seemed to invent a terrorist attack in Kentucky as she justified the necessity of Trump's controversial travel ban executive order.

One: "President Obama had a six-month ban on the Iraqi refugee program after two Iraqis came here to this country, were radicalized, and they were the masterminds behind the Bowling Green massacre," Conway said Feb. 3 on MSNBC. "Most people don't know that because it didn't get covered."

Two: Shortly thereafter on Twitter, she wrote that she had meant to say "Bowling Green terrorists." In May 2011, two men in Kentucky were charged with plotting to send weapons and money to al-Qaida operatives abroad, prompting the Obama administration to slow down processing of Iraqi refugees seeking Special Immigrant Visas. Conway never corrected her misstatement about refugees being banned.

TRUMP'S INAUGURATION CROWD SIZE

Spicer made his debut at the podium Jan. 21 by reading a five-minute statement about the size of Trump's inauguration crowd a day earlier.

One: "This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe," Spicer said. Explaining why white areas were viewable through the crowds, Spicer added: "This was the first time in our nation's history that floor coverings have been used to protect the grass on the Mall."

Two: Days later, Spicer distanced himself from those statements, saying he had been told to make them. Photographs from Barack Obama's first inauguration show a substantially larger in-person gathering, and Nielsen data showed fewer viewers for Trump's inauguration than for Obama's, as well-as for actual TV record-holder Ronald Reagan's. And Mall covering were used in 2013 for Obama's second inauguration.

FBI chief's unceremonious ouster boomerangs on president

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Firing FBI Director James Comey is already coming back to haunt President Donald Trump.

In dismissing Comey last week, Trump created the very real possibility that a respected law enforcement official known for an outspoken nature and willingness to buck political convention could resurface in public.

And while Comey himself has been silent, his associates have been exposing intriguing details of his encounters with Trump.

On Tuesday, an associate revealed that Comey had written a memo in which he described Trump asking him to shut down an FBI investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Comey, who was known to keep a paper trail of sensitive meetings, chronicled the president's request soon after the February Oval Office meeting with the president, an associate who has seen the memo told The Associated Press. The associate was not authorized to discuss the memo by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The FBI and Justice Department declined to comment Tuesday on accounts of the memo, which was

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first reported by The New York Times. The White House disputed the account.

The conversation occurred weeks after the FBI interviewed Flynn regarding his contacts with the Russia ambassador to the United States and after the acting attorney general, Sally Yates, warned the White House that Flynn had misled them about those conversations and could be vulnerable to blackmail.

Flynn was forced to resign Feb. 13 after reports of the Yates-White House conversation.

News Tuesday of Trump's request of Comey immediately renewed concerns from congressional Democrats that Trump was trying to obstruct an investigation that's been examining potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign.

"We are witnessing an obstruction of justice case unfolding in real time," Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Judiciary Committee member and former federal prosecutor, said in a statement. He called for the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate.

Some Republicans also called for action, asking Comey to speak to Congress and demanding that any memos or recordings of his conversations with the president be presented to them.

Comey, appointed as FBI director in 2013 by President Barack Obama, spoke often about his desire to be as transparent as possible about FBI actions and about proving to the public that his agency was independent, competent and thorough.

"We're not on anybody's side, ever," he said in a March speech. "We're not considering whose ox will be gored by this action or that action, whose fortunes will be helped by this or that — we just don't care and we can't care."

He riled administrations of both parties with his moral certitude and decisions that critics said strayed from ordinary protocol, such as his public announcement — without the involvement of the Justice Department — that the FBI would not recommend criminal charges against Hillary Clinton for her email use.

Testifying before Congress is familiar to Comey, a former Justice Department official in the George W. Bush administration.

As FBI director, he was accustomed to hours-long oversight hearings before Congress covering a wide range of topics. In 2007, years before his appointment as FBI director, he recounted to a rapt congressional audience a dramatic hospital room clash three years earlier with fellow Bush administration officials over the approval of a domestic surveillance program.

The associate who described the memo said Comey is willing to testify but wants to do it in public to ensure a full airing of events. Comey created several memos of encounters with Trump to ensure that a record would exist of conversations he found odd or troubling, according to the person.

Comey was abruptly fired May 9 and learned of the dismissal as he was giving a talk in Los Angeles. While the White House initially cited a Justice Department recommendation and Comey's very public handling of the Clinton email investigation as reasons, those explanations quickly shifted.

Trump later admitted in a television interview about Comey's firing that he was bothered by "this Russia thing" and said he would have fired Comey regardless of the Justice Department recommendation. He also tweeted a veiled threat last Friday warning the ex-director against leaking information.

Soon after the firing, a Comey associate told the AP that Comey recounted being asked by Trump at a January dinner if he would pledge his loyalty. The White House has denied that report.

The associate also confirmed an account from the Times that Trump vented about media leaks during his conversation with Comey, and that the president expressed support for seeing reporters in prison.

The associate also confirmed that Trump asked Vice President Mike Pence and Attorney General Jeff Sessions to leave the room before speaking privately with Comey about Flynn, and that the president told Comey he believed Flynn was a "good guy" and asked if the FBI could end the investigation into him.

After Tuesday's revelation, the White House said in a statement, "While the President has repeatedly expressed his view that General Flynn is a decent man who served and protected our country, the President has never asked Mr. Comey or anyone else to end any investigation, including any investigation involving General Flynn."

There is no sign the FBI's Russia investigation is closing. Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe told Congress last week the investigation is "highly significant" and said Comey's dismissal would do nothing to

impede the probe.

Associated Press writers Sadie Gurman, Julie Pace, Chad Day and Stephen Braun contributed to this report.

GOP runoff to replace SC's Mulvaney too close to call

By MEG KINNARD, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The runoff election for the Republican GOP nomination to replace Mick Mulvaney in South Carolina's 5th District was too close to call Tuesday night, with the slightest of margins separating the contenders.

The difference in votes between former lawmaker Ralph Norman and state legislator Tommy Pope was less than 1 percent, meaning a recount is automatic.

Norman, who held a slight lead with all precincts reporting, was claiming victory, and the Club for Growth, whose political arm backed Norman, sent out an email message congratulating him.

In a statement provided to The Associated Press, Pope said he would let the automatic recount process play out, thanking his supporters and saying he was "humbled and thankful" for their trust.

Mulvaney vacated the 5th District seat to become White House budget director. The runoff was required when voters in the Republican-leaning district gave Norman and Pope roughly equal support while rejecting the flamethrowers and outsiders in a seven-way GOP primary.

Both candidates selectively align with President Donald Trump, supporting his proposed border wall with Mexico as well as favoring his efforts to promote U.S. economic growth by loosening federal regulations. Both also pledged to get rid of President Barack Obama's health care law.

Although Pope, a former prosecutor, had the support of several high-profile state Republicans, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy, Norman got backing from conservative organizations from outside the state. That vein of support includes Ted Cruz, who stumped with the real estate developer Monday, as well as Jim DeMint, the former senator and recently departed chief at The Heritage Foundation.

That backing was big for some voters in the 5th District on Tuesday. David L. O'Neal, a retired Army officer and paratrooper from Tega Cay, said that he supported Cruz's 2016 presidential bid and was glad to see him back Norman.

"I'm excited about what he's going to do for veterans," O'Neal said of Norman. "And just rebuilding the military in general."

County election boards will meet Thursday to certify results. The State Election Commission meets on Friday and could order a recount to begin by midmorning, according to agency spokesman Chris Whitmire. Any paper ballots and electronic ballots would be scanned and read again, with results available on the commission's website.

Results could be certified a few hours later, Whitmire said.

The congressional district spans 11 mostly rural counties as it stretches north from Columbia, through Charlotte suburbs and then west to pick up more rural areas. It had been in Democratic hands for more than 100 years until state Republicans redrew the map, changing the boundaries to draw it more safely under their party's control.

It's the same district held by the fictional Democratic politician Frank Underwood in the first season of "House of Cards" on Netflix and had been in Democratic hands for more than 100 years until Mulvaney's victory in 2010 over longtime U.S. Rep. John Spratt.

The eventual winner will go up against Democrat Archie Parnell on June 20.

Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>. Read more of her work at <https://apnews.com/search/meg%20kinnard>

Besieged White House denies, defends as new bombshells hit

By ERIC TUCKER, CATHERINE LUCEY and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump personally appealed to FBI Director James Comey to abandon the bureau's investigation into National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, according to notes disclosed late Tuesday that Comey wrote after the meeting. The White House issued a furious denial near the end of a tumultuous day spent beating back potentially disastrous news reports from dawn to dusk.

The bombshell Comey news came as the beleaguered administration was still struggling mightily to explain Monday's revelation that the president had disclosed highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and the country's ambassador to the United States.

Defending Trump's actions, officials played down the importance and secrecy of the information, which had been supplied by Israel under an intelligence-sharing agreement, and Trump himself said he had "an absolute right" as president to share "facts pertaining to terrorism" and airline safety with Russia. Yet U.S. allies and some members of Congress expressed concern bordering on alarm.

As for Comey, whom Trump fired last week, the FBI director wrote in a memo after a February meeting at the White House that the new president had asked him to shut down the FBI's investigation of Flynn and his Russian contacts, said a person who had read the memo. The Flynn investigation was part of a broader probe into Russian interference in last year's presidential election.

Comey's memo, an apparent effort to create a paper trail of his contacts with the White House, would be the clearest evidence to date that the president has tried to influence the investigation.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Republican chairman of the House oversight committee, sent a letter to the FBI on Tuesday requesting that it turn over all documents and recordings that detail communications between Comey and Trump. He said he would give the FBI a week and then "if we need a subpoena we'll do it."

The panel's top Democrat, Elijah Cummings of Maryland, a constant Trump critic, called the allegation of Trump pressure on Comey "explosive" and said "it appears like a textbook case of criminal obstruction of justice."

Republicans weren't going that far. But John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the Trump-Russia reports were "deeply disturbing" and could impede allies' willingness to share intelligence with the U.S.

Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader of the Senate, said simply: "It would be helpful to have less drama emanating from the White House."

The person who described the Comey memo to the AP was not authorized to discuss it by name and spoke on condition of anonymity. The existence of the memo was first reported Tuesday by The New York Times.

The White House vigorously denied it all. "While the president has repeatedly expressed his view that General Flynn is a decent man who served and protected our country, the president has never asked Mr. Comey or anyone else to end any investigation, including any investigation involving General Flynn," a White House statement said.

Trump fired Flynn on Feb. 13, on grounds that he had misled Vice President Mike Pence and other officials about his contacts with Russians.

The intensifying drama comes as Trump is set to embark Friday on his first foreign trip, which had been optimistically viewed by some aides as an opportunity to reset an administration floundering under an inexperienced president.

When Trump fired Comey, he said he did so based on Comey's very public handling of the Hillary Clinton email probe and how it affected his leadership of the FBI. But the White House has provided differing accounts of the firing. And lawmakers have alleged that the sudden ouster was an attempt to stifle the bureau's investigation into Trump associates' ties to Russia's meddling in the campaign.

Mark Warner of Virginia, top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, said he would ask Comey for additional material as part of that panel's investigation. "Memos, transcripts, tapes — the list keeps getting longer," he said.

According to the Times, Comey wrote in the February memo that Trump told him Flynn had done nothing wrong. Comey said he replied that "I agree he is a good guy" but said nothing to Trump about limiting the investigation.

The newspaper said Comey was in the Oval Office that day with other national security officials for a terrorism threat briefing. When that ended, Trump asked everyone to leave except Comey, and he eventually turned the conversation to Flynn.

The administration spent the first half of Tuesday defending Trump's disclosure of classified information to senior Russian officials. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said the president's comments were "wholly appropriate." He used that phrase nine times in his briefing to reporters.

The White House has grown suspicious about the volume and timing of the seemingly never-ending stream of leaks about the president, said one senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to reflect on the feeling inside the West Wing. The official questioned why — if Comey had concerns about his conversations with the president — the FBI director hadn't shared them with the deputy director, the Department of Justice and Congress at the time.

The highly classified information about an Islamic State plot was collected by Israel, a crucial source of intelligence and close partner in the fight against some of the America's fiercest threats in the Middle East. Trump's disclosure of the information threatened to fray that partnership and piled pressure on the White House to explain the apparently on-the-spot decision to reveal the information to Russian diplomats in the Oval Office.

A U.S. official who confirmed the disclosure to The Associated Press said the revelation potentially put the source at risk.

In a statement, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., Ron Dermer, said the partnership between the U.S and Israel was solid.

Associated Press writers Vivian Salama and Jill Colvin contributed.

Dad tries to fathom why son allegedly decapitated his mother

By GILLIAN FLACCUS and STEVEN DUBOIS, Associated Press

ESTACADA, Ore. (AP) — An Oregon father is struggling to try to understand why his adult son allegedly decapitated his mother on Mother's Day and then showed up at a grocery store with her head, stabbing a clerk there until workers overpowered the man and police arrested him.

David Webb said his 36-year-old son, Joshua Lee Webb, had vision problems and received Social Security payments but never showed any signs that he might be capable of the crime. Police described him as "catatonic" after his arrest.

"I never foresaw a problem. If I had I would have stopped it," David Webb told The Associated Press before bursting into sobs during a telephone interview.

Joshua Lee Webb decapitated 59-year-old Tina Marie Webb Sunday afternoon at the family's rural home in the once-significant logging town of Colton, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of Portland, the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office said.

He then showed up at about 12 miles (19 kilometers) away at a small grocery store covered in blood with a large kitchen knife and carrying her head, authorities said.

A judge ordered Webb held without bail during his arraignment Tuesday, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported (<http://bit.ly/2qpNuOL>).

Webb is charged with murder, attempted murder, first-degree abuse of a corpse and first-degree aggravated animal abuse. Judge Jeffrey Jones set a preliminary hearing for Webb on May 23.

The mother had told David Webb that she believed their son was depressed, but the father said he never saw any indications of that when he spoke with his son. The parents recently bought him a dog because he wanted one.

"I just can't believe I lost my wife and son in one day...I wish I had some answers, but I don't. I waited

all my life to retire with my wife, and now I can't. That's all I know."

After arriving at the store, Joshua Lee Webb stabbed the store employee but was quickly subdued by other employees who held him until officers arrived, authorities said.

The suspect told police only that he was thirsty, said Ernie Roberts, the interim police chief of nearby Sandy, Oregon, which provides police services for Estacada, population about 2,500.

"He was in like a catatonic state, wasn't speaking to anybody," Roberts said.

The grocery store checkout clerk was hospitalized and expected to survive.

Customers on Monday placed balloons as tribute in front of the store, lit candles near its parking lot and signed a large get-well poster for the worker.

At Lew's Drive-In restaurant next door, where the supermarket's customers took refuge during Sunday's crime, owner Marvin Flora said the event was "traumatic, but it happened so fast that nobody really saw what was going on."

"One lady came in this morning and said she actually saw somebody come in with something that was bloody and was carrying something with his arm," Flora said.

Dubois reported from Portland.

Follow Gillian Flaccus at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>.

Sharapova's popularity doesn't earn a French Open wild card

By JEROME PUGMIRE, AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Maria Sharapova's popularity and past success did not earn her the wild-card invitation she needed to get into the French Open after serving a 15-month doping ban.

"I'm very sorry for Maria, very sorry for her fans. They might be disappointed; she might be very disappointed," French Tennis Federation president Bernard Giudicelli said Tuesday in a live broadcast via Facebook. "But it's my responsibility, it's my mission, to protect the game and protect the high standards of the game."

Giudicelli said he personally told Sharapova of his ruling during a phone call on Tuesday. The French Open begins May 28.

Three other tournaments, including the Italian Open this week, have given her wild cards since her suspension ended last month.

"While there can be a wild card for return from injury, there can't be a wild card for return from doping," Giudicelli said.

A tournament may grant a wild card to any eligible player. WTA CEO Steve Simon said he disagreed with the French federation's reasoning.

"She has complied with the sanction imposed," Simon said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press. "There are no grounds for any member of the (tennis anti-doping program) to penalize any player beyond the sanctions set forth in the final decision resolving these matters."

Sharapova did not comment on Tuesday's announcement. She skipped a news conference after pulling out of a second-round match in Rome on Tuesday because of a left thigh injury.

She is a two-time champion at Roland Garros, the owner of a total of five major titles, a former No. 1-ranked player and one of the world's most recognizable athletes. She returned to the WTA tour last month after testing positive for the newly banned heart drug meldonium at the Australian Open in January 2016.

Giudicelli acknowledged that plenty of fans would have wanted to see Sharapova play in Paris, where the French Open starts May 28.

"I read the results of several polls and I could see that about two-thirds were in favor of Maria being granted a wild card. Of course I felt some pressure," he said. "We did not want to treat Maria Sharapova differently."

He felt that offering Sharapova a short cut into the main draw would send the wrong message in the

fight against doping in sports.

"I know that a lot of people might be disappointed by this decision," he said. "But nevertheless Roland Garros invests a lot — along with the other Grand Slams, the ATP, and the WTA — into the fight against doping. It was inconceivable to take a decision that would have been the opposite of this."

Sharapova, who has titles at all four majors, won at Roland Garros in 2012 and 2014.

Thanks to results via wild-card entries at her first two tournaments, she lifted her world ranking to outside the top 200 this week. But that wasn't good enough to make the cut even for the qualifying field at Roland Garros, so she will miss the tournament for a second straight year.

Sharapova initially was given a two-year suspension after testing positive for the banned heart drug meldonium at last year's Australian Open.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport reduced the ban on appeal, ruling she bore "less than significant fault" in the case and she could not "be considered to be an intentional doper." Sharapova had been taking meldonium for many years, but overlooked announcements by WADA that it added the drug to its banned list on Jan. 1, 2016.

"The Court of Arbitration reduced her suspension but also recognized that Maria was the sole person responsible for her misfortune," Giudicelli said. "It's not down to me to question that decision and, I repeat, we must respect decisions that were taken."

Top-ranked players Angelique Kerber and Andy Murray spoke out against Sharapova receiving wild cards, while Eugenie Bouchard openly called her a "cheater" who should be banned for life.

Many players believed Sharapova should have had to start in bottom-rung tournaments to improve her ranking, rather than receive free passes into events on the main tour.

She was given wild cards at Stuttgart and Madrid before the Italian Open this week. She was a past champion at all three.

"Must be tough for her, but it's the way it is," Novak Djokovic said in Rome about the French Open ruling. "In some tournaments, she's going to get that help in wild card and invitation; some not. Unfortunately, it's (a) Grand Slam, which is, for sure, for her, a big one."

White House insists Trump's disclosures 'wholly appropriate'

By VIVIAN SALAMA and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House on Tuesday defended President Donald Trump's disclosure of classified information to senior Russian officials as "wholly appropriate," as Trump tried to beat back criticism from fellow Republicans and calm international allies increasingly wary about sharing their secrets with the new president.

The highly classified information about an Islamic State plot was collected by Israel, a crucial source of intelligence and close partner in the fight against some of the America's fiercest threats in the Middle East. Trump's disclosure of the information threatened to fray that partnership and piled pressure on the White House to explain the apparently on-the-spot decision to reveal the information to Russian diplomats in a meeting last week.

In a series of morning tweets, Trump declared he has "an absolute right" as president to share "facts pertaining to terrorism" and airline safety with Russia. Although top aides on Monday had declared reports about Trump's discussions false, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster on Tuesday sought instead to downplay the significance of the information Trump revealed. The president had been engaging in "routine sharing" with foreign leaders, he said, arguing that some of the information was publicly available.

Still, the revelations sent a White House accustomed to chaos reeling anew. It is extraordinary for a president to share such information without consent of the country that collected it, apparently violating the confidentiality of an intelligence-sharing agreement with Israel. It was, perhaps, even more remarkable that Trump chose to confide in representatives of an adversary, who could use the information to find its source.

A U.S. official who confirmed the disclosure to The Associated Press said the revelation potentially put

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the source at risk.

The U.S. official told AP that Trump shared details about an Islamic State terror threat related to the use of laptop computers on aircraft with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak. The official said the disclosure came as Trump boasted about his access to classified intelligence. An excerpt from an official transcript of the meeting reveals that Trump told them, "I get great intel. I have people brief me on great intel every day."

The official said the information was provided to the U.S. by Israel.

The extraordinary leak of Trump's private conversations in the Oval Office appeared to be a direct consequence of the president's combative relationship with the U.S. spy agencies. The White House vowed to track down those who disclosed the information.

The president's action drew rare criticism from some Republicans, who are desperate to get the White House refocused on health care and tax changes. Coming days before Trump's first trip abroad, it also raised questions about his standing with world leaders and led some countries to start second-guessing their own intelligence-sharing agreements with the U.S.

In a statement, Israel's ambassador to the U.S. Ron Dermer said the partnership between the U.S and Israel was solid.

"Israel has full confidence in our intelligence sharing relationship with the United States and looks forward to deepening that relationship in the years ahead under President Trump," Dermer said.

But other nations appeared to be reconsidering. A senior European intelligence official told the AP his country might stop sharing information with the United States if it confirms that Trump shared classified details with Russian officials. Such sharing "could be a risk for our sources," the official said. The official spoke only on condition that neither he nor his country be identified, because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The revelation was first reported by the Washington Post.

After he spoke with the Russians, Trump was informed that he had broken protocol and White House officials placed calls to the National Security Agency and the CIA looking to minimize any damage. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly. The New York Times first reported that Israel was the source of the information.

On Tuesday, McMaster, in a White House briefing, cast some of Trump's revelations as information that was available from publicly available "open-source reporting" and added that the president did not know the precise source of the intelligence he had shared. He appeared to be suggesting that Trump had not knowingly compromised a confidential source, but the statement also indicated that the president had not asked his advisers for detailed information about the intelligence report he'd received.

"In the context of that discussion, what the president discussed with the foreign minister was wholly appropriate to that conversation and is consistent with the routine sharing of information between the president and any leaders with whom he is engaged," McMaster said.

On Capitol Hill, Democrats and Republicans alike expressed concern. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., called the reports "deeply disturbing" and said they could affect the willingness of U.S. allies and partners to share intelligence with the U.S.

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called for Congress to have immediate access to a transcript of Trump's meeting with the Russians, saying that if Trump refuses, Americans will doubt that their president is capable of safeguarding critical secrets.

Trump ignored reporters' questions about whether he disclosed classified information. Following a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Trump said only that his meeting last week with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was "very, very successful."

CIA Director Mike Pompeo was to brief members of the House intelligence committee late Tuesday.

The new controversy left White House staffers, already under siege following last week's botched handling of FBI Director James Comey's firing, on edge. The communications team, in particular, has come in for sharp criticism from the president, as well as his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner. Trump has told advisers he's aware of a need to make changes to his White House team, though it was unclear

what those moves might be or whether any were imminent.

Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann, Nancy Benac, Catherine Lucey, Jill Colvin and Ken Thomas contributed to this report from Washington. AP writer Paisley Dodds contributed from London. AP writer Jan M. Olsen also contributed.

What we currently know about the global cyberattack

By ANICK JESDANUN, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — As danger from a global cyberattack that hit some 150 nations continues to fade, analysts are starting to assess the damage.

Hard-hit organizations such as the U.K.'s National Health Service appear to be bouncing back, and few people seem to have actually paid the ransom. But the attack has served as a live demonstration of a new type of global threat, one that could encourage future hackers.

Here's what we currently know about the ransomware known as WannaCry, which locked up digital photos, documents and other files to hold them for ransom.

WHERE IT CAME FROM

Researchers are still puzzling out how WannaCry got started. Figuring that out could yield important clues to the identity of its authors.

The malware spread rapidly inside computer networks by taking advantage of vulnerabilities in mostly older versions of Microsoft Windows. That weakness was purportedly identified and stockpiled for use by the U.S. National Security Agency; it was subsequently stolen and published on the internet.

But it remains unclear how WannaCry got onto computers in the first place. Experts said its rapid global spread suggests it did not rely on phishing, in which fake emails tempt the unwary to click on infected documents or links. Analysts at the European Union cybersecurity agency said the hackers likely scanned the internet for systems that were vulnerable to infection and exploited those computers remotely.

Once established, WannaCry encrypted computer files and displayed a message demanding \$300 to \$600 worth of the digital currency bitcoin to release them. Failure to pay would leave the data scrambled and likely beyond repair unless users had unaffected backup copies.

RANSOM PAYMENTS

Investigators are closely watching three bitcoin accounts associated with WannaCry, where its victims were directed to send ransom payments. The digital currency is anonymized, but it's possible to track funds as they move from place to place until they end up with an identifiable person.

So far, there have been no withdrawals from those accounts.

Given the scope of the attack, relatively few people appear to have actually paid the ransom. According to a Twitter account that monitors those accounts, they've received only about 250 payments worth a total of slightly more than \$72,000.

NORTH KOREA

Several sets of investigators have now reported tentative findings that suggest hackers linked to North Korea might have been involved with WannaCry. But they could all be drawing conclusions from a very small set of clues.

On Monday, the Russian security firm Kaspersky Lab said portions of the WannaCry program use the same code as malware previously distributed by the Lazarus Group, a hacker collective behind the 2014 Sony hack. Another security company, Symantec, related the same findings, which it characterized as intriguing but "weak" associations, since the code could have been copied from the Lazarus malware.

Two law enforcement officials likewise said U.S. investigators suspect North Korea based on code similarities; the officials called that finding preliminary. The officials spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they aren't authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation.

But WannaCry remains a puzzle, in part because some of its elements seemed amateurish. Salim Neino, CEO of the Los Angeles-based security firm Kryptos Logic, said the WannaCry worm was "poorly designed"

— patched together and consisting of a “sum of different parts” with an unsophisticated payment system. Typical ransomware also generates a unique bitcoin account for each payment to make tracing difficult. That wasn’t done here.

DIGGING OUT

One of the organizations hardest hit by WannaCry — the U.K.’s National Health Service — appears to be recovering. On Friday, many NHS hospitals had to turn away patients after WannaCry locked up computers, forcing the closure of wards and emergency rooms.

NHS Digital, the body that oversees cybersecurity in Britain’s health system, said that as of now, it has “no evidence that patient data has been compromised.” The agency told hospitals to disconnect all infected computers, apply a Microsoft patch that closes the vulnerability, then “roll back” the infected computers and restore them from backed-up files.

U.K. hospitals are supposed to back up data frequently and at multiple locations. It’s possible that some data that wasn’t backed up could be lost.

SIGN OF HACKS TO COME

WannaCry could also serve as a kind of template for future cyberattacks.

Neino of Kryptos Logic, for instance, said the leak of the NSA hacking tools have significantly narrowed the gap between nations and individuals or cyber gangs.

“The concern has always been, when are the real bad guys, the ones that don’t care about rules of engagement, the ones who are really out to hurt us, will they become cyber-capable?” he said in an interview Monday night with The Associated Press. “I think today we found out that those who really want to hurt us have begun to, because they became cyber-capable the moment that the NSA cybertools were released.”

Jill Lawless and Sheila Norman-Culp in London and Michael Balsamo in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Jailhouse videos show quirks of Charleston church gunman

By JEFFREY COLLINS, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — A week before the sentencing phase of his trial, Dylann Roof got a visit in jail from his mother, who pleaded with him to reconsider his decision to act as his own lawyer in the fatal shootings of nine black worshippers at a South Carolina church.

But Roof was more concerned with the clothes he would wear to court. Since he could not have his first choice of his comfortable jail jumpsuit, he wanted two-tone gray pants, inseam 29, not 30, so they wouldn’t hang over his shoes. He also wanted thicker sweaters. And he wanted his lawyers at the defense table for one reason.

“So I can abuse them,” Roof said with an awkward laugh in one of four jailhouse videos released Tuesday by federal court officials.

In the nearly three hours of footage from family visits, Roof laughed at his dad’s jokes, tried to trick his mom into thinking he had tinsel and a stocking in his cell for Christmas and told his half-sister he would invite her to his execution. He also upbraided his mom for feeding his cats too many treats and told his dad not to believe all of Donald Trump’s promises now that he’s president.

He even cried, convinced he had syphilis despite extensive examinations by doctors. Recently released court papers indicate that the 23-year-old told a psychologist that he never had a girlfriend.

On the videos, Roof did not mention anything about the nine people he killed in the 2015 massacre at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, where he fired 77 shots in the fellowship hall after spending 45 minutes in a Bible study.

He was sentenced to death in January on federal hate-crime and obstruction-of-religion charges. He did not want the recordings made public and fired his lawyers to prevent them from presenting the videos to a jury as part of his defense.

The conversations took place at the Charleston County jail on a video conferencing system similar to a

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Skype call. Roof could see his family and they could see him on small screens. They spoke into a phone receiver.

In the footage, Roof never mentioned any fear or anxiety about death row. Instead, he raved about the grits for breakfast and the chicken breast for dinner and complained that he got the high-protein tray for dinner and had to eat meatballs for 40 days in a row.

The tapes were presented by Roof's attorneys in a closed hearing as they unsuccessfully argued that he was not competent to stand trial.

U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel ruled they could be watched at the courthouse in Charleston, but he did not allow copies to be made for viewing outside the courthouse.

The videos reinforced Roof's quirks — his abrupt changes in conversation topics, jokes made with no changes in tone or facial expression to indicate he was kidding and his insistence there was something physically wrong with him even after doctors ruled it out.

The videos also show Roof's struggles with empathy.

During a visit just before his trial began, Roof told his father he was thinking about doing something even worse than the church massacre. His dad, who mostly joked about the government wasting money and the media coverage of the case, teared up.

"Please don't do anything stupid. You've already done enough," he said, walking away from the video camera. He stepped back, adding "You know that everything you've done is a reflection on us as a family. Don't be a (expletive) dumbass."

Psychiatrist Donna Maddox, in one of four evaluations of Roof, noted that he turned to the internet to solve his problems and shape his worldview. In his confession to the FBI, Roof said typing "black on white crime" into Google changed his life, leading within 18 months to the massacre.

Roof shared his racist ideas at first with friends and family, but quickly learned to keep them to himself because of negative reactions, Maddox said.

All four people who evaluated Roof said he could never give a good answer to why he felt killing black people in a church was necessary. Roof's lawyers spoke to black inmates, who said he was always polite to them. In his FBI confession, he gave specific details about the gun and the room but could not recall anything about the people he killed beyond their race.

Roof smiled during one visit when his dad told him that Roof's suspicions that a family friend had an autism-related disorder were correct. "Who could not have known it if you've seen him? He's weird," Roof said.

But Roof told a judge during his competency hearing he would rather die by lethal injection than let his lawyers tell the jury he had been diagnosed behind bars with autism.

"I don't have autism. Nerds and losers have autism," Roof told one of his examiners.

Most of the videos show Roof's parents and then-16-year-old sister trying to make small talk.

Roof asked his sister what she wanted to do as a career, scoffing at the unoriginality of her dream to be a nurse. He told her that he no longer had to worry about making a living because he was in prison.

Roof's sister smiled back. "You're a professional dumbass," she said.

Follow Jeffrey Collins on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/JSCollinsAP> . His work can be found at <https://apnews.com/search/jeffrey%20collins> .

Asian stocks mostly lower amid political uncertainties

By YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stock markets were mostly lower on Wednesday as a rise in political uncertainties dented risk sentiment with investors keeping their eyes on developments in the White House.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.5 percent to 19,822.19 and South Korea's KOSPI dipped 0.3 percent to 2,288.98. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index slipped 0.3 percent to 25,256.98. Shanghai Composite Index edged down 0.04 percent to 3,111.72. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 sank 1 percent to 5,791.80. Taiwan's

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benchmark index was lower but markets in Singapore and other Southeast Asian markets were mixed.

US POLITICS: Analysts said investors were concerned by the course of U.S. administration after revelations that FBI Director James Comey wrote in a memo that President Donald Trump asked him to shut down an FBI investigation into ousted national security adviser Michael Flynn. The allegation followed the U.S. president's tweets that he had disclosed classified information with the Russian foreign minister and ambassador to the U.S.

ANALYST'S VIEWPOINT: "As reporting intensifies on Trump's potential mishandling of classified information, and renewed speculations on the rationale of his dismissal of Comey, markets are becoming concerned whether key legislation on tax reforms could be deferred or derailed," Mizuho Bank said in a daily commentary.

WALL STREET: Most U.S. stock markets closed slightly lower in subdued trading on Tuesday. The Standard & Poor's 500 index dipped 0.1 percent to 2,400.67. The Dow Jones industrial average slid 0.01 percent to 20,979.75. But the Nasdaq gained 0.3 percent to 6,169.87, another record high.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude fell 48 cents to \$48.18 per barrel on New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract slipped 19 cents to close at \$48.66 a barrel on Tuesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, dropped 43 cents to \$51.22 per barrel in London. It lost 17 cents to settle at \$51.65 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: In currency trading, the dollar declined to 112.45 yen from 113.11 yen. The euro gained to \$1.1112 from \$1.1085.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 17, the 137th day of 2017. There are 228 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 17, 1792, the New York Stock Exchange had its beginnings as a group of brokers met under a tree on Wall Street and signed the Buttonwood Agreement.

On this date:

In 1875, the first Kentucky Derby was run; the winner was Aristides, ridden by Oliver Lewis.

In 1937, Teddy Hill and His Orchestra recorded "King Porter Stomp" for RCA Victor's Bluebird label in New York; making his recording debut was trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie.

In 1940, the Nazis occupied Brussels, Belgium, during World War II.

In 1954, a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court handed down its Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision which held that racially segregated public schools were inherently unequal, and therefore unconstitutional.

In 1957, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his first national speech, titled "Give Us the Ballot," during the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in Washington, D.C.

In 1961, Cuban leader Fidel Castro offered to release prisoners captured in the Bay of Pigs invasion in exchange for 500 bulldozers. (The prisoners were eventually freed in exchange for medical supplies.)

In 1973, a special committee convened by the U.S. Senate began its televised hearings into the Water-gate scandal.

In 1977, the Chuck E. Cheese's fast food and family entertainment chain had its start as the first Chuck E. Cheese's Pizza Time Theatre opened in San Jose, California.

In 1980, rioting that claimed 18 lives erupted in Miami's Liberty City after an all-white jury in Tampa acquitted four former Miami police officers of fatally beating black insurance executive Arthur McDuffie.

In 1987, 37 American sailors were killed when an Iraqi warplane attacked the U.S. Navy frigate Stark in the Persian Gulf. (Iraq apologized for the attack, calling it a mistake, and paid more than \$27 million in compensation.)

In 1992, orchestra leader Lawrence Welk died in Santa Monica, California, at age 89.

In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to allow legal same-sex marriages.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush and retiring British Prime Minister Tony Blair held a joint news conference at the White House, during which Blair allowed not a single regret about the Iraq war alliance.

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World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz announced he would resign at the end of June 2007, following controversy over his handling of a pay package for his girlfriend, bank employee Shaha Riza. Trains crossed the border dividing the two Koreas for the first time in more than half a century.

Five years ago: Washington's envoy to Israel, Dan Shapiro, told the Israel Bar Association the U.S. had plans in place to attack Iran if necessary to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. Donna Summer, 63, the "Queen of Disco," died in Naples, Florida. Frank Edward "Ed" Ray, the California school bus driver hailed as a hero for helping 26 students escape after three kidnappers buried them underground in 1976, died at age 91.

One year ago: Bernie Sanders won Oregon's Democratic presidential primary while Hillary Clinton eked out a razor-thin victory in Kentucky. Federal investigators concluded that a speeding Amtrak train that crashed in Philadelphia in May 2015, killing eight people, most likely ran off the rails because the engineer was distracted by word of a nearby commuter train getting hit by a rock. One of the Chibok girls kidnapped by Boko Haram extremists from a Nigerian boarding school in April 2014 was found with a baby and was reunited with her mother. Guy Clark, the Grammy-winning musician who mentored a generation of songwriters, died in Nashville at age 74.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Peter Gerety is 77. Singer Taj Mahal is 75. Rock musician Bill Bruford is 68. Singer-musician George Johnson (The Brothers Johnson) is 64. TV personality Kathleen Sullivan is 64. Boxing Hall of Famer Sugar Ray Leonard is 61. Actor-comedian Bob Saget is 61. Sports announcer Jim Nantz is 58. Singer Enya is 56. Talk show host-actor Craig Ferguson is 55. Rock singer-musician Page McConnell is 54. Actor David Eigenberg is 53. Singer-musician Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails) is 52. Actress Paige Turco is 52. Rhythm-and-blues musician O'Dell (Mint Condition) is 52. Actor Hill Harper is 51. TV personality/interior designer Thom Filicia is 48. Singer Jordan Knight is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer Darnell Van Rensalier (Shai) is 47. Actress Sasha Alexander is 44. Rock singer-musician Josh Homme (HAHM'-ee) is 44. Rock singer Andrea Corr (The Corrs) is 43. Actor Sendhil Ramamurthy (SEN'-dul rah-mah-MURTH'-ee) is 43. Actress Rochelle Aytes is 41. Singer Kandi Burruss is 41. Actress Kat Foster is 39. Actress Ayda Field is 38. Actress Ginger Gonzaga is 34. Folk-rock singer/songwriter Passenger is 33. Dancer-choreographer Derek Hough (huhf) is 32. Actor Tahj Mowry is 31. Actress Nikki Reed is 29. Singer Kree Harrison (TV: "American Idol") is 27. Actress Leven Rambin is 27. Actress Samantha Browne-Walters is 26. Actor Justin Martin is 23.

Thought for Today: "I always have a quotation for everything — it saves original thinking." — Dorothy L. Sayers, English author (1893-1957).