

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 1 of 48

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Treeline Tree Service Ad
- 1- Home Gym for sale
- 1- Death Notice: Ronald Spencer
- 2- Chicken Soup for the Soul image
- 3- Birth: Hudson Justice Kroll
- 3- Groton Kiwanis News
- 4- Summary of widespread storms
- 5- Climate update
- 6- Transit annual fundraiser
- 8- Rondell Robins 4-H
- 8- Mesonet at SD State
- 9- Drought Monitor
- 10- Today in Weather History
- 11- Today's Forecast
- 12- Yesterday's Weather
- 12- Today's Weather Info
- 12- National Weather Map
- 13- Daily Devotional
- 14- News from the Associated Press

FOR SALE

MARCY MWM900 Home Gym for sale. Asking \$100. Contact Brian at 397-7180.

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**

Friday, June 16

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

U8 Blue: hosts Webster for 1 game, 6 p.m., Nelson Field

U8 Red: hosts Webster for 1 game, 7 p.m., Nelson Field

Olive Grove: SDSU Alumni tourney, 18 holes, Noon shotgun.

17

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

Olive Grove: Triathlon.

18

FATHER'S DAY

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sarah Circle serves at nursing home, 3 p.m.

United Methodist Church: Conde worship, 9 a.m.; coffee fellowship time, 10 a.m., Groton worship, 11 a.m.

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

First Presbyterian: Bible Study at 9 a.m., Worship at 10 a.m.

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


Death Notice: Ronald Spencer

Ronald Spencer, 68, of Houghton passed away Thursday, June 15, 2017 at home, surrounded by his family.

Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.



Sperry Stump Removal Tyler: 605/216-8431
Over 30 Years of Combined Experience!
TJ: 605/380-7915 **TreeLine Tree Service**

A photograph of two children in superhero costumes holding hands. The child on the left is wearing a red cape and a pink wristband with a gold emblem. The child on the right is wearing a blue cape and a blue wristband with a gold emblem. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“Sometimes being
a brother is even
better than being
a superhero.”

-Marc Brown

Chicken Soup
for the Soul



Birth: Hudson Justice Kroll

Jordan and Julia Kroll are happy to announce the birth of their son, Hudson Justice Kroll, who was born June 1, 2017 in Aberdeen. He weighed 6 pounds 11 ounces and was 19 3/4 inches long. His grandparents are Terry and Wanda Kroll of Kalispell, Mont., and Dale and Joyce Grenz of Groton. Great Grandparents are Elmer and Ruby Ketterling of Aberdeen.

Groton Kiwanis Club

Twelve members and two guests were present for the weekly Kiwanis dinner meeting, last Wednesday. Roger Rix was program chairman, and introduced Amy Crawford, who gave many facts of Habitat for Humanity. Next week's program leader is Orville Schaller, followed by Larry Schelle and Lee Schinkel.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 4 of 48

Summary of June 13th, 2017 Widespread Severe Storms

On the afternoon of Tuesday, June 13th, a warm and very humid airmass had set up across eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota in advance of a cold front. During the mid afternoon hours storms rapidly developed over central and eastern South Dakota, between Pierre and Aberdeen. These storms quickly strengthened and produced large hail, damaging winds, and eventually tornadoes across the region. The storms evolved into mainly a wind and tornado event around 7pm CDT. Widespread wind damage occurred across northeastern South Dakota and into west central MN as the storms formed a line and moved northeast. Storms quickly exited through Traverse and Big Stone Counties by 10 pm CDT. Several tornadoes were reported to have briefly touched down, causing EF-0 and EF-1 damage.

National Weather Service storm survey crews were in the field yesterday assessing damage. However, more information and reports continue to come into the office, so the data is still considered preliminary.

Tornado - 4 S Groton, SD

Brown

Date	6/13/2017
Time (Local)	6:05 PM CDT
EF Rating	0
Est. Peak Winds	70 mph
Path Length	0.1 mile
Max Width	10 yards
Injuries/Deaths	0
Summary:	Trained spotters confirmed a brief tornado to the south of Groton.

Track Map

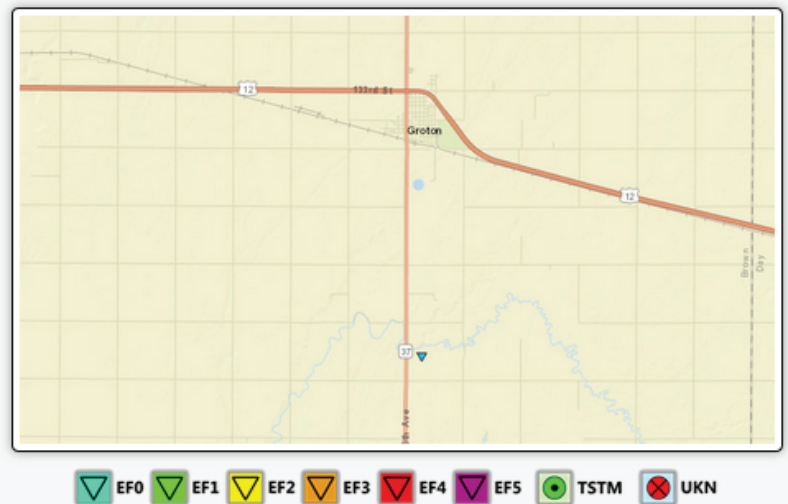


Photo by Amanda Hill



Photo by Tina Urhdal

Climate Update Predicts Rainfall Delays Drought Expansion and Warm July

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Recent rainfall throughout South Dakota has put drought expansion on hold and offers hope for the summer-season crops and gardens.

"After some record warmth in early June and several weeks of dry weather, rainfall finally came to the region this week," said Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension State Climatologist.

According to data, most of eastern South Dakota received about 2 inches of rain. Some areas in the northeastern portion of the state are reporting more than 4 inches for the week of June 12, 2017. Much of western and central South Dakota received between 1 and 2 inches.

"The rains brought welcome relief to dry soils that were affecting crop growth, as well as gardens and yards," Edwards said.

Despite some severe weather and thunderstorm winds, she added that early damage reports show that there were relatively few losses.

"Most corn and soybeans were small enough to avoid significant hail or wind injury," Edwards said.

U.S. Drought Monitor & NOAA update

The U.S. Drought Monitor, updated June 15, shows some expansion of severe drought conditions (D2) in central South Dakota, which now includes 13 percent of the state.

Moderate drought (D1) was slightly reduced due to weekly rainfall totals, primarily in the south central and east regions. Forty-five percent of the state is now in moderate drought or worse.

"Climatologists and others will be watching drought closely over the next couple of weeks, however, as the forecast appears to turn dry and warm again," Edwards said. "Drought conditions are severe. Recent rains will not be able to sustain crops and gardens for very long."

The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center released their update on June 15 as well.

The temperature outlook for July 2017 indicates higher likelihood of warmer than average conditions in the month ahead.

"Almost the entire country is leaning towards warmer climate in July, with the exception of the northwest states," Edwards said.

The precipitation outlook for July does not show a clear signal for either wet or dry conditions in South Dakota.

"Wetter conditions are favored to our northwest, and drier to our southwest, so we could be in a transition from a drier to wetter pattern in the month ahead," she said.

Obviously, if drier conditions persist, Edwards said this will be challenging for South Dakota's farmers.

"Corn acres are pollinating in early to mid-July - it's a critical period for corn - a time when farmers do not want their corn acres impacted by heat or drought stress because those stresses have a negative impact on yields at harvest," Edwards explained.

Northern Plains long range outlook

The long-range outlooks for the Northern Plains continue to favor wetter than average conditions for the months of July through September.

"Much of this year, we have seen strong swings from dry to wet, cold to warm and back again," Edwards said. "The climate computer models may be picking up on a transition to a wetter, warmer period in late summer, which could be beneficial for soybean growers especially."

Although agriculture acres benefit from recent rains, the moisture brings with it increased weed and pest pressures.

"Now that there is sufficient moisture in the topsoil layers in most areas; hayland, pastures and grasses will show some short term growth and green-up as well, but the climate outlook remains challenging for long-term growth through the summer," Edwards said.

Wildfire

Wildland fire will continue to be a concern in the weeks ahead, Edwards said, pointing to the fact that there are a lot of dry or dormant grasses that can burn easily.

Most counties in the state have burn bans in place to help prevent large fires from occurring in the driest areas.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 6 of 48



The annual Arlis Doeden Bus Stop, AKA Groton Community Transit, had a large turnout at its annual fundraiser held Thursday. The event was also suppose to be a retirement party for Arlis Doeden, who was responsible for getting the transit started in Groton, but she is currently in the hospital in Aberdeen. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Some of the servers and cooks were (right to left) were Larry Harry, David McGannon, Lori Westby and Karyn Babcock. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 7 of 48



Elizabeth Doeden and Pam Hanson were putting out extra tables and chairs. The two are now running the transit with Arlis Doeden's retirement. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



There are lots of volunteers that help make the Groton Community Transit possible. An average of 52 kids ride the transit each day during the summer so far. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Joel Guthmiller making fry-bread. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 8 of 48

Rondell Robins 4-H

The May Meeting of the Rondell Robins 4-H club was held on the 25th of May in Stratford at the community hall.

Roll call was answered by Chandler Pullman, Jessica Pullman, Ashley Crouch, Christine Crouch, Dawson Frink, and Aspyn Frink. The question was "What are we doing for Memorial Day".

Flag pledges were led by Dawson Frink and Christine Couch.

Old Business: None

New Business: We discussed and decided to participate in the 4th of July parade again this year. Ashley Crouch made a motion and Christine Crouch 2nd the motion.

Leaders report: bow peep bingo tickets were handed out we should have them turned in by August 1st. Aspyn Frink made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Chandler Pullman 2nd the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Following the meeting we cleaned up around the dumpster area in Stratford before the Memorial Day Services.

Minutes submitted by Aspyn Frink, Secretary

Mesonet at SD State: Live Tracking of Severe Weather and Seasonal Tracking of Drought

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Numerous severe thunderstorms brought high rain rates, strong winds and nine confirmed tornadoes to the state June 13, 2017.

Throughout the storms, meteorologists across the state relied on the South Dakota Mesonet, a community-supported network of live weather stations operated by South Dakota State University to keep them up to date on the storm so they could warn South Dakotans of impending danger.

"The Mesonet keeps the public, agriculture producers, utility companies, emergency managers and the National Weather Service informed of weather developments as they happen," said Nathan Edwards, Manager of the Mesonet. "Some of the state's top wind gusts Tuesday - which trigger National Weather Service issuance of warnings - were reported by the Mesonet."

Edwards explained that the Mesonet's unique capabilities to monitor water balance helped the U.S. Drought Monitor accurately reflect drought conditions last week and will help determine the level of relief these areas saw with the storms' rainfall.

"Improved evaporation calculations along with new soil moisture maps are critical to getting a complete view of drought that just can't be had looking at rainfall alone," Edwards said.

Weather highlights from June 13, 2017

With nearly 80 percent of the state ranging from "abnormally dry" to "severe drought," Edwards said the June 13 storms brought welcomed rainfall to some - others dealt with power outages or structural damage from wind.

Live and archived data are available from the state's 26 Mesonet stations can be found online at mesonet.sdstate.edu. June 13 storms drove more traffic to the website than any other day in the site's history.

Mesonet@SDSTATE reports for June 13, 2017-

Rainfall totals greater than 1 inch:

Webster* - 3.34

South Shore - 2.51

Groton* - 1.69

Redfield* - 1.49

Britton* - 1.47

Sioux Falls Landfill - 1.30

Pierre* - 1.19

Gettysburg** - 1.19 *moderate drought as of June 6

**severe drought as of June 6

Peak wind gusts greater than 40 miles per hour:

Parkston - 62

Webster - 60

Beresford - 61

Colton - 56

Britton - 51

Flandreau - 45

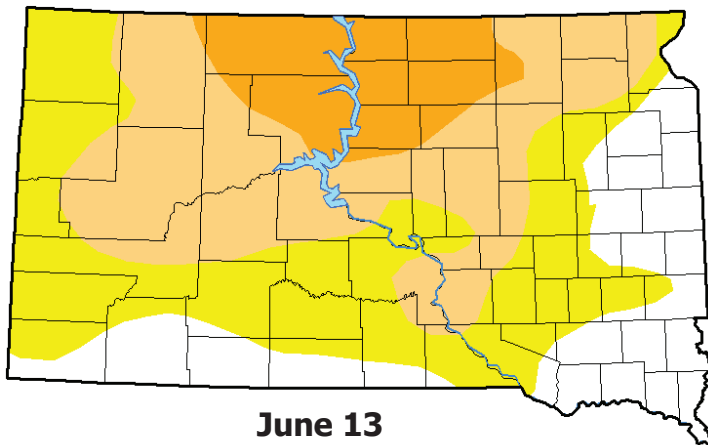
Gettysburg - 44

White Lake - 44

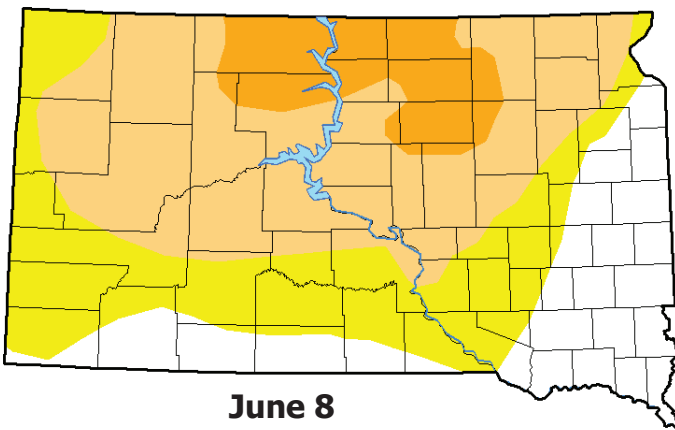
Groton - 43

South Shore - 43

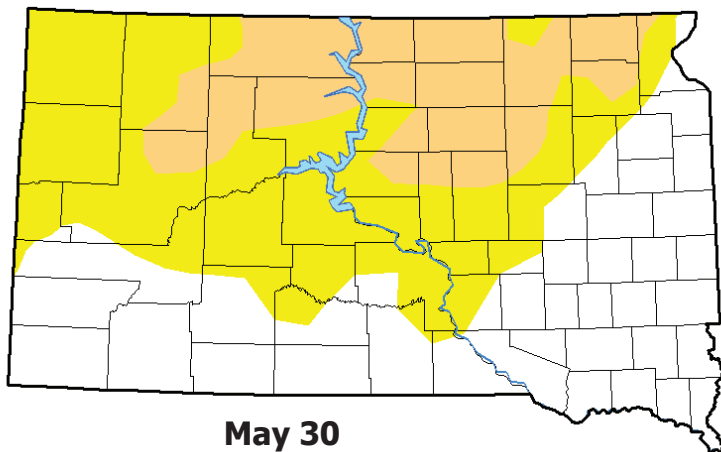
Drought Monitor



June 13



June 8



May 30

After a dry and hot (highs in the 90s and 100s degF) early June, a system finally tracked across the northern Plains, somewhat lowering temperatures but finally bringing rain (1-3 inches) to parts of the Dakotas by the end of the week. For the most part, the rains were not great enough to make sizeable improvements to the drought, but where 1.5 or more inches fell, especially in eastern sections of the Dakotas, drought was reduced. For example, 2-4 inches of rain fell on portions of Spink, Clark, and Codrington counties in South Dakota, allowing for a 1-category improvement there. D1 was also slightly trimmed in south-central South Dakota and southeastern North Dakota where bands of 1.5-2.5 inches of rain fell. D0 was removed in extreme southeastern Montana and northeastern Wyoming where short and long-term SPIs were close to normal or even wet. In contrast, downgrades were made in northeastern Montana where April-June are normally the wettest months of the year. D0 and D1 were expanded westward, and D2 was added to encompass locations such as Glasgow, Circle, Fort Peck, Jordan, Brockway, and Saco that reported their first or second driest April 1-June 12 period on record. Totals ranged from 0.8-1.31 inches, or 14-29% of normal. In the central Dakotas, lower totals (0.2-0.5 inches) plus the heat (weekly anomalies +6 to 10 degF) did little to halt deterioration as the existing D2 area expanded westward and northward in ND and southward into SD. D0 also pushed into extreme northern Nebraska and southeastern South Dakota. Even with the rainfall (and additional rains that fell after the 12Z Tuesday cutoff), it will take a while for the vegetation to respond to the moisture. Until then, cattle producers were waiting in line to reduce herd sizes, and a ND hotline for hay has been busy. Crop-wise, spring wheat conditions in the June 11 USDA/NASS report was rated poor or very poor in MT (31%), ND (17%), and SD (57%). Similarly, ND (53%), SD (45%), and MT (22%) pasture and range conditions were in similar poor to very poor shape. Elsewhere, 30-day percentages below 50% were found in eastern Kansas, hence D0 was added, based upon the criteria for short-term flash dryness as depicted in the Midwest and South.

Today in Weather History

June 16, 1915: A tornado swept over a narrow path in Hughes, Hyde, and Hand counties during the afternoon hours. This tornado caused several thousands of dollars in property damage and seriously injured a number of people. Luckily there were no fatalities reported.

June 16, 1992: An F3 tornado caused major destruction as it moved northeast across the northwestern side of Ft. Thompson. The tornado virtually destroyed the Lake Sharpe Visitor Center. In Ft. Thompson, the tornado destroyed at least 4 homes and 15 mobile homes were damaged, leaving about 55 persons homeless. Eight people were injured, two of them seriously. The storm also destroyed other buildings, six 50,000 bushel grain bins, and four high voltage towers from Big Bend Dam. At the Shady Bend campground, 19 campers and several boats were destroyed.

Also, heavy rains fell over a three day period beginning on the 15th. The hardest hit area was in Clear Lake where the three day total was 11.53 inches. As a result, wall of water up to 15 feet high swept down creeks in the Clear Lake area. The resultant flash flooding went through first floors of many houses and even filled basements of houses on hills. The wave of water hit a car that was occupied by a woman and her son. The water spun them around as they floated about 200 yards. The car finally grounded without any reported injuries. All roads into Clear Lake were cut off as the town became completely surrounded by water. Officials in Deuel County estimated at least 37 bridges and culverts were destroyed. Other three day rainfall totals include; 6.35 inches in Conde; 5.99 in Castlewood; 4.91 inches 2NW of Big Stone City; 4.90 in Redfield; and 4.65 inches at Artichoke Lake.

June 16, 2009: A strong upper low pressure area brought several supercell thunderstorms which produced severe weather across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. Large hail up to 2 inches in diameter, several tornadoes, along with flash flooding occurred with these storms. Slow moving thunderstorms brought very heavy rains of 2 to 4 inches in and around Aberdeen causing extensive road flooding throughout the city. Dozens of basements were flooded and damaged along with some sewer backups. Many vehicles became stalled with the police sent out to direct traffic. There were also some power outages. A tornado touched down briefly northwest of Lebanon in Potter County with no damage occurring. A tornado touched down southeast of Polo in Hand County, in an open field. No damage occurred. Heavy rains of 3 to over 5 inches caused flash flooding of several roads and crops in north central and northeast Spink County. Heavy rains from 3 to 6 inches fell across southeast Brown County bringing flash flooding. Many roads were flooded and damaged along with many acres of cropland. A tornado touched down in southeast Hand County and remained on the ground for nearly 15 minutes before lifting. No damage occurred with this tornado as it remained in open country.




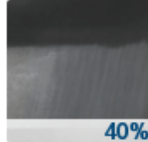



June 16, 2010: Very strong winds were observed during the evening hours in Dewey County, South Dakota. Three weather stations near Lantry observed winds from 101 to 142 mph. One station recorded a 101 mph wind before it was destroyed. The other two stations recorded 131 mph and 142 mph winds. The winds destroyed an airplane hangar and badly damaged another one. Several semi-trailers were also tipped over and damaged by the very high winds.

1806: Great American total solar eclipse occurred from California to Massachusetts with nearly five-minute in duration. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

1896: A tsumami ravages the coast of Japan killing between 22,000 and 27,000 people. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 11 of 48

Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
30%	20%	70%	40%	30% 30%		
Chance Showers	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Showers Likely	Chance Showers	Chance Showers then Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 83 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 71 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 78 °F

Inclement Weather Through the Weekend



Today:

Highs: Low/ Mid 80s

Saturday:

Highs: Mid/ Upper 70s

Sunday:

Highs: Low/ Mid 70s

Daily Chance For
Showers & Storms

Best Chance For Rain:
Saturday



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Aberdeen, SD

Published on: 06/16/2017 at 5:29AM

We are looking at several days of showers and storms-the best opportunity for moisture is Saturday-though we are only looking at light amounts of precipitation. Severe weather also looks unlikely through the weekend.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 12 of 48

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 83.9 F at 5:59 PM

Low Outside Temp: 55.6 F at 5:17 AM

High Gust: 23.0 Mph at 2:48 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 109° in 1933

Record Low: 34° in 1903

Average High: 78°F

Average Low: 54°F

Average Precip in June: 1.94

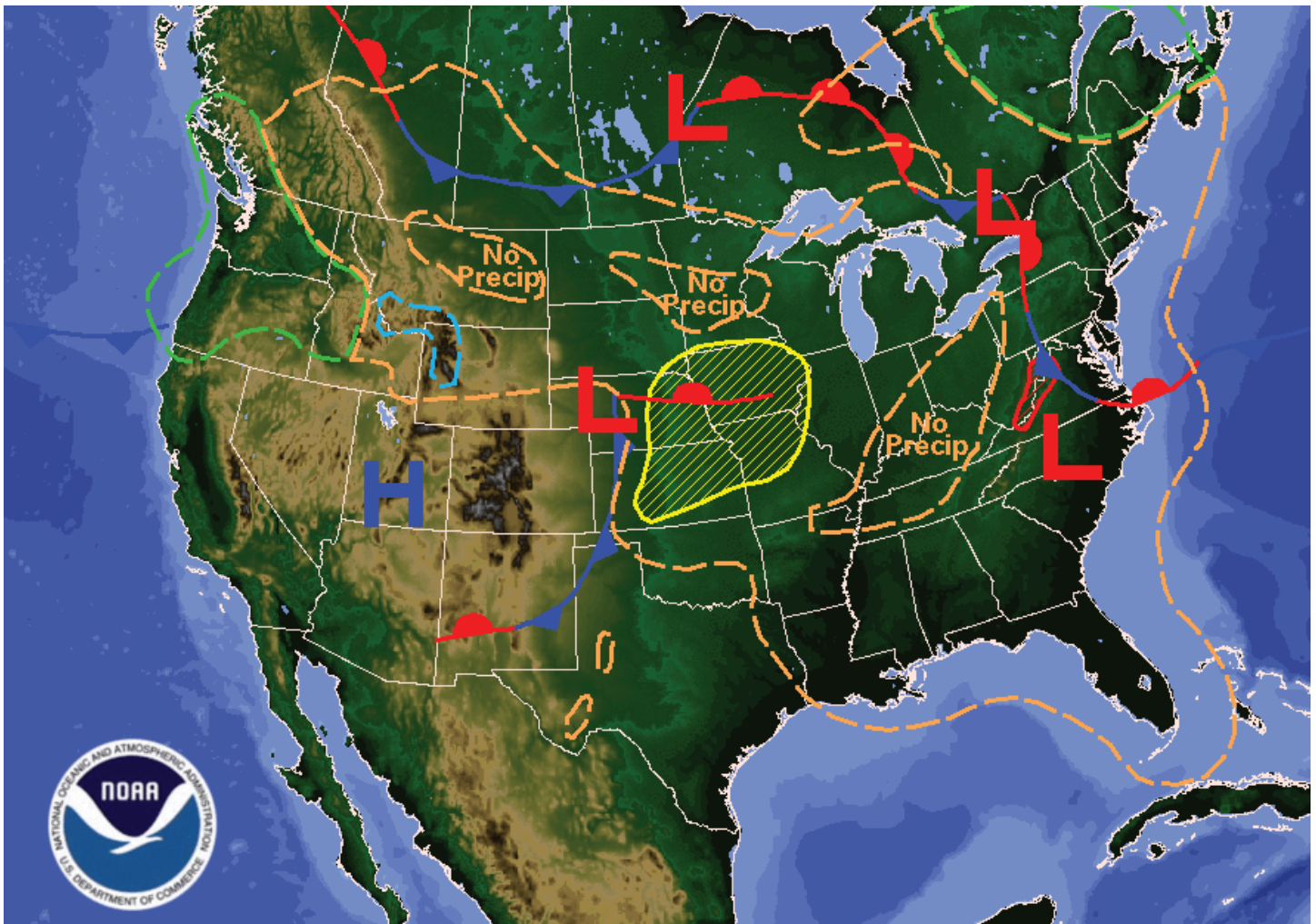
Precip to date in June: 2.02

Average Precip to date: 9.08

Precip Year to Date: 5.21

Sunset Tonight: 9:24 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jun 16, 2017, issued 7:18 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)
Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)
Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)
Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 13 of 48



INNOCENT!

David's boldness is dramatic. He goes before God with confidence and conviction – not fearing what God may uncover in his heart. "Hear me, O Lord – my plea is just and my prayer does not rise from deceitful lips." Most of us, when we go to God in prayer, begin with a plea for forgiveness, knowing that our lives fall short of God's expectations and our best efforts.

David, in this psalm, had no fear of God. He said that "You, God, have probed my heart, examined me at night, have tested me and found no evil plans within me!" That's boldness that we can actually see! Few of us would stand before God and make such statements! How was it that David could ask God to put him under His magnifying glass and have no fear? Was he a favorite of God's? Did he do something that gave him special privileges in God's sight? Or was he so aware of God's love, mercy and grace that he could stand before God and say, "Judge me! I've been cleansed of my sin!"

David prayed for God's presence to be with him and His eyes to be upon him. And we, as David, can make that same claim! Not because we have a clear conscience or a just plea. Not because God has examined us and found us faultless.

We can ask for God's presence and His favors because we have a Savior Who cleanses us from all unrighteousness and Who pleads our cause before His Father. "In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence," said Paul.

Prayer: Your greatness and grace, Heavenly Father, are more than we deserve but not greater than our needs. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 17:1 Hear me, LORD, my plea is just; listen to my cry. Hear my prayer—it does not rise from deceitful lips.

News from the Associated Press

Tip helps nab wanted polygamous sect leader Lyle Jeffs

By JAMES NORD and BRADY McCOMBS, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Polygamous leader Lyle Jeffs' one-year run from justice was ended by pliers, sharp-eyed pawn shop workers and an astute off-duty detective in a small town in South Dakota.

The events leading to Jeffs' capture Wednesday in a lakeside area near the South Dakota-Nebraska state line where he was living out of his truck started a day earlier when a pawn shop owner called police about a man who had come to his shop twice acting nervous and fidgety.

After Jeffs sold two pairs of Leatherman pliers for \$37 and provided his ID on Tuesday, a suspicious employee at River City Treasures and Pawn in Yankton looked up online the name he had been given and realized the man was wanted by the FBI, owner Kevin Haug said in an interview Thursday.

Haug said Jeffs re-arranged his name during the transaction, going by Jeffs Lyle Steed.

"That was his shot at fooling everybody," Haug said.

Haug alerted police and his employee called the FBI — providing authorities with store video of Jeffs, pawn paperwork bearing his information and the vehicle Jeffs was driving: A silver Ford-F-150 pickup truck.

"Every once in a while, when someone's weird, we look into them for no apparent reason other than we're just bored sometimes," Haug said.

The tip proved to be the break the FBI had been craving since Jeffs used olive oil to slip out of his ankle monitor and escape home confinement in Utah on June 18, 2016, ahead of his trial in an alleged multimillion-dollar food stamp fraud scheme.

Authorities ramped up their search for Jeffs based on the tip, and an off-duty Yankton police detective spotted Jeffs going into a bathroom at a marina-resort area next to picturesque Lewis and Clark Lake and then as Jeffs drove through the marina, Yankton County Chief Deputy Sheriff Michael Rothschadl said.

Jeffs complied with officers when he was arrested and acknowledged he was the fugitive they had been searching for, said Eric Barnhart, FBI special agent in charge for the Salt Lake City Division.

Authorities believe he had been in the area for about two weeks, running low on resources and struggling without the help of fellow sect members, Barnhart said. A falling out with his brother Warren Jeffs, who runs the sect while serving a life prison sentence in Texas for sexual assault of underage brides, led to the lack of support, the FBI has said.

Their group, known as the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is based in a small community on the Utah-Arizona border. Members of the sect believe polygamy brings exaltation in heaven. The group is an offshoot of mainstream Mormonism, which disavowed polygamy more than 100 years ago.

The group also has a small compound in far west South Dakota that was established more than a decade ago. Known to the faithful as "R23," the compound sits along a gravel road, secluded by tall pine trees, a privacy fence and a guard tower.

Lyle Jeffs was some six hours from that compound when he was captured. Barnhart said they do not know yet if he spent time there during his year on the lam.

He said the FBI is working to determine if the unidentified tipster will get paid the \$50,000 reward. Haug said if he gets a reward, he would take a vacation.

"That's not why I did it, but if they're going to offer it we kind of gave them the tip that he was here," Haug said. "That would be nice."

Jeffs will likely face at least one new felony charge connected to his time on the run, U.S. Attorney for Utah John Huber said.

In a federal court appearance Thursday in Sioux Falls, Jeffs waived a detention hearing until he returns to Utah in coming days to face the pending food stamp fraud charges, said Melodie Rydalch, spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Utah.

Jeffs was the last of the defendants in the food stamp fraud case still behind bars when U.S. District

Judge Ted Stewart last year in June reversed an earlier decision and granted his release. Prosecutors argued Jeffs was a flight risk.

"You have those times when you don't want to say, 'I told you so,' but that's kind of where we're at," Huber said Thursday. "We had very serious concerns."

McCombs reported from Salt Lake City.

Pawn shop workers help nab polygamous sect leader Lyle Jeffs

By JAMES NORD and BRADY McCOMBS, Associated Press

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Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 16 of 48

In a federal court appearance Thursday in Sioux Falls, Jeffs waived a detention hearing until he returns to Utah in coming days to face the pending food stamp fraud charges, said Melodie Rydalch, spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Utah.

Jeffs was the last of the defendants in the food stamp fraud case still behind bars when U.S. District Judge Ted Stewart last year in June reversed an earlier decision and granted his release. Prosecutors argued Jeffs was a flight risk.

"You have those times when you don't want to say, 'I told you so,' but that's kind of where we're at," Huber said Thursday. "We had very serious concerns."

McCombs reported from Salt Lake City.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, June 12

Speed Limits And Our Own Limits

When it comes to speed limits on our roadways, speed itself can become relative.

A study reported by the Sioux Falls Argus Leader last week showed that raising the speed limit on interstate highways, which South Dakota lawmakers approved in 2015, did not function simply as an adjustment of the law to match the speed at which motorists were already driving. It was also an invitation to drive even faster.

Two years ago, lawmakers decided to raise the limit to 80 miles per hour (mph), which was seen as a means of accommodating what drivers were already doing. Research showed that, at the former limit of 75 mph, motorists were driving an average 86 mph.

Now, with the 80 mph zones in place, the average speed has ticked up to 88 miles per hour.

Citations for speeding have risen. This includes an alarming spike in the number of citations issued for motorists driving faster than 100 mph.

Another statistic to note is that the number of highway fatalities went up slightly last year after years of steady decline.

So, the conclusions that can be drawn from this seem clear.

When a law is charged to accommodate existing behavior that is straining at the boundaries of legality, existing behavior tends to adjust to the new legal normal in order to push those boundaries again. In other words, when the speed limit on interstates was raised to more closely match the average speed people were driving, the motorists made a corresponding acceleration.

The fact that more motorists are being busted for exceeding 100 mph is worrisome. At that speed, there is far less room for error and more opportunity for disaster. And if more than one vehicle is involved in a crash involving a motorist driving in the triple digits, it's not likely to end well for a lot of people.

To be fair, the rise in fatalities must be kept in perspective. For one thing, the overall rate last year was still the second lowest in 55 years, although the reversal of the downward trend is worth noting. Also, it must be acknowledged that the rise in distracted driving may have exerted some influence on the statistic (although, the image of a motorist driving 88 mph — or faster — AND fiddling with a smartphone is genuinely disturbing).

The results of this survey are a cause for alarm, according to an official from the group Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. The organization notes that higher speeds decrease the chances of motorists surviving crashes. That fact would seem obvious, although it didn't prevent lawmakers in 2015 from pursuing the course anyway.

But they're being aided and abetted by motorists, who are proving to be their own worst enemies when it comes to expanded speed limits on the interstates. While it's probably too soon to draw any concrete conclusions on the impact of the speed limit change, the trend certainly isn't promising.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 17 of 48

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, June 13

Sweet news on new playoff format

A positive change has arrived for prep sports in South Dakota, specifically with the postseason.

The South Dakota High School Activities Association Board of Directors last week approved changing the state qualifying format for Class AA basketball and volleyball. Mitchell and the rest of the state's largest schools play in Class AA.

It was in part due to the success of the Class A "Sweet 16" format that pushed more schools to consider a change after years of discussion without action. While support wasn't unanimous in Class A at first, a competitive playoff season both on the local and state-qualifying level emerged.

The Class AA ranks could use more of that, as well. In the approved format, 16 of the 18 Class AA schools will qualify for postseason play, trimming the field before the bracket begins. They will then seed the teams one through 16 and play eight games at the high seed's site, with the winners advancing to the state tournament.

We think this is a change for the better. The likelihood of improving the state tournament field and the level of competition in each sport has increased with this format.

Regular-season performances are rewarded with a home-court advantage and those teams need one win to advance to the state tournament, getting rid of an archaic double-elimination format that sometimes required one team to beat another twice to win a state title.

The format is also blind to geography and allows teams, regardless of region, to advance to the state tournament. There are no loopholes with a "win and you're in" bracket. If there's an upset or two in the Sweet 16, those teams rightfully earned their slots, too.

Some have already complained about a loss of regional representation and rivalries, along with a loss of revenue from fewer playoff games. But if schools can't get excited to host a game that would send their team to the state tournament, that's not the fault of the format. Excitement should also help drive ticket sales, which should at least lessen a possible budget shortfall.

Our state is covering new ground on how state champions should be determined. It won't always be perfect but South Dakota is giving it a worthwhile test drive.

American News, Aberdeen, June 14

Diversity coalition should step up

The Aberdeen Area Diversity Coalition is losing in the local court of public opinion and awareness.

The group, which is working to help integrate new citizens — refugees, immigrants and other newcomers — into our community has let other groups fill the conversational void, to the detriment of Aberdeen.

That's not to say what the coalition is doing is not worthwhile; far from it. But we would like to see a greater engagement in the conversation at large.

Until now, only one local group, calling itself "Americans First, Task Force," has had a high public profile in the discussion of refugees and immigrants in Aberdeen and South Dakota. The loosely affiliated outfit — essentially just a Facebook group, with no one admitting ownership — is anti-refugee.

What that group has done — what the Aberdeen Area Diversity Coalition has failed at — is dominated the local discussion of refugees and immigrants and their place in our community.

The group has done this by being incredibly active on Facebook, with more than 1,140 "likes" as of this writing, reaching audiences of users with strong opinion and links.

It has parlayed that audience into a seemingly successful string of anti-refugee, anti-Islam speakers in Aberdeen. The next event is 7 p.m. Friday at the Dakota Event Center: "Understanding the Threat: Strategic and operational training and consulting on the the threat of the global Islamic movement."

The task force posed a question in its Facebook announcement: "With all the jihadist terrorism in the news these days, would you like to know more than what's fed to us in cherry-picked local and national media headlines?"

Hundreds have been attending these events.

Meanwhile, the Aberdeen Area Diversity Coalition has been meeting every other Thursday at the Ab-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 18 of 48

erdeen Recreation and Cultural Center, at an inopportune mid-morning time. Though the meetings are open to the public, only about a dozen folks gather, mostly those who are sympathetic to their cause. The group has no web or social media presence; it has not sponsored any events on par with other groups, or hosted any speakers. Its visible outreach to the community has been minimal.

Part of the coalition's effort has been put toward securing a \$35,000 grant from the Knight Foundation to create a newcomers section at the new Aberdeen library, especially for those learning to speak English. That's a good thing, but still months away from realization.

Today, we implore the Aberdeen Area Diversity Coalition — like the other task force, a self-appointed group, but with true nonprofit status — to go where the people are. Get a Facebook page going with links to accurate news stories, and talk about the real challenges facing Aberdeen.

The coalition should look toward local, regional and national speakers and programs who can turn the talking points away from hate, fear and mistrust and closer to understanding, working together and what it all means.

Yes, there will always be online trolls. Yes, there will always be rude people in crowds.

But that should not deter members of the Aberdeen Area Diversity Coalition from trying to reach those outside of their circle.

Rapid City man accused of killing infant back behind bars

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a Rapid City man accused of killing a 5-month-old girl he was babysitting is back behind bars after violating terms of his house arrest.

Twenty-eight-year-old Kristopher Houchin is charged with second-degree murder in the June 2015 death of L'Naya White. Preliminary autopsy results indicated she died from brain bleeding as a result of blunt force trauma.

The Rapid City Journal reports (<http://bit.ly/2rBgj8s>) that Houchin was granted house arrest in December after spending almost a year and a half in the Pennington County Jail.

A bond hearing has not been scheduled.

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

Ruling on Dakota Access pipeline surprises oil industry

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A judge's ruling that might open the door for at least a temporary shutdown of the disputed Dakota Access pipeline surprised the industry that hailed the project as a "game changer" for North Dakota oil.

But shippers said Thursday that they aren't concerned that there will be any long-term disruption to service on the \$3.8 billion pipeline that on June 1 began moving crude from the Bakken oil patch to a distribution point in Illinois, from which it's shipped to the Gulf Coast and potentially high-paying markets abroad.

"It's business as usual today," said Ron Ness, president of the North Dakota Petroleum Council, which represents nearly 500 energy companies including Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, which built Dakota Access.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg ruled Wednesday that the Army Corps of Engineers "largely complied" with environmental law when approving the pipeline but didn't adequately consider some matters important to the Standing Rock Sioux. The tribe draws its water from Lake Oahe and is opposed to the pipeline crossing beneath the Missouri River reservoir in North Dakota.

"Obviously, we don't know how all that plays out," Ness said. "But clearly the pipeline is running. It's a critical element of the nation's energy infrastructure."

The pipeline — whose completion was pushed through earlier this year by the Trump administration — has the capacity to move half of North Dakota's daily oil production. Ness just a few weeks ago called it a "game-changer that opens up everything."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 19 of 48

But the Standing Rock Sioux and other tribes are fighting the project in federal court in Washington, D.C., and they've hailed Boasberg's ruling as a victory.

Boasberg said the Corps didn't adequately consider how an oil spill under Lake Oahe might affect tribal fishing and hunting rights, or whether it might disproportionately affect the tribal community. He will rule later on whether the pipeline should be shut down while the Corps reconsiders those matters, though he acknowledged such a move "would carry serious consequences that a court should not lightly impose."

ETP in a Thursday statement to The Associated Press said, "Dakota Access believes the record supports the fact that the Corps properly evaluated both issues, and that the record will enable the Corps to substantiate and reaffirm its prior determinations."

"Pipeline operations can and will continue as this limited remand process unfolds," the company said.

Corps spokeswoman Catalina Carrasco said the agency was still reviewing Boasberg's decision and couldn't immediately comment on a potential timeline for the additional review, or on whether a possible outcome might be requiring that the pipeline at Lake Oahe be dug up and moved.

Standing Rock attorney Jan Hasselman said Boasberg's decision "resets the clock to where we were last fall," when the tribe was pushing for a more thorough environmental study and consideration of alternate routes.

"The Corps could decide that it's safe enough and just grant the same permit. Or it could say we need to look at something different, either a different route or different safety/mitigation options," he said. "There will be a lot of advocacy around those options in the weeks and months ahead."

The lawsuit has dragged on nearly a year. Grow America's Infrastructure Now, a pro-pipeline coalition of businesses, trade associations and labor groups, expressed confidence that Boasberg's ruling will "do nothing to impact the ongoing operation of the pipeline."

The pipeline runs through the Dakotas and Iowa to Illinois. In Iowa Thursday, the Sierra Club Iowa Chapter and the Science and Environmental Health Network asked the Iowa Utilities Board to revoke the state permit that authorized pipeline construction there.

The board granted the permit in March 2016 based on ETP obtaining "all necessary and required permits and authorizations." The environmental groups contend Boasberg's ruling nullifies the Corps' permit and therefore makes the Iowa permit void.

The board declined to comment, but a spokesman said members will act on the motion at some point after Dakota Access and the other parties have had an opportunity to respond.

The Sierra Club and a group of landowners have sued the board over its approval of the pipeline in Iowa and their appeal is before the Iowa Supreme Court.

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

Associated Press writer David Pitt contributed to this story from Des Moines, Iowa.

Hotel owner enters plea in alcohol case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The owner of a hotel in South Dakota reached a plea deal with prosecutors that reduces the number of court cases pending against him.

Mark Arend, 52, pleaded no contest earlier this month to knowingly letting an underage employee sell alcohol in 2015 at The Lodge at Mount Rushmore. Arend was sentenced to pay a fine and court costs totaling more than \$260, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2rvJE8R>) reported. In exchange for the plea, the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office dropped two other cases against Arend and his company, Winona Inn Limited Partnership, regarding violations of county laws pertaining to septic systems.

Public complaints about The Lodge's septic system brought government inspectors to the hotel multiple times over the past several years. Some inspectors would note a stench coming from the system and would see raw sewage surfacing from an underground drain field.

A third septic-related case against Arend's company is still pending but has been on hold since March,

when Arend agreed to close the hotel until he obtains local, state and federal permits.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced in February it intended to deny the hotel's application for an underground injection control permit pending a public comment period. That period has passed, but the EPA said it's still mulling its decision.

An amended judgment and decree of foreclosure for the hotel also was filed in May. The filings are the latest in foreclosure proceedings that started in 2012 but were interrupted while Winona Inn went through bankruptcy.

The document says Arend and his company owe about \$2.6 million to Umpqua Bank in Oregon. It also orders the Pennington County Sheriff's Office to conduct a public foreclosure auction at which the bank can bid a minimum of \$1.7 million.

The foreclosure auction hasn't been scheduled.

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

Proposed hog operations spark concern in Yankton County

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Residents in southeast South Dakota are raising concerns about seven proposed hog operations that have been recommended for conditional-use permits.

About 100 people attended a six-hour session Tuesday where the Yankton County Planning Commission approved all seven permit requests. The requests now head to the Yankton County Commission for approval, the Yankton Press & Dakotan (<http://bit.ly/2rAgn8d>) reported.

The permits would allow the barns to each house 2,400 animals in a concentrated animal feeding operation that confines animals in areas that don't produce vegetation.

Opponents argued that the farms threaten environmental quality because of large amounts of manure that can contaminate water. They also say the large operations could lead to diseases like MRSA, a contagious staph infection.

"Happiness and health are (two) of the biggest quality of life things that you are supposed to watch for us," Dan Grant, who lives near the site of one proposed barn, told board members. "Would any of you be willing to live at my house for six months after these (barns) go in?"

Farm supporters said the operations wouldn't harm neighbors, and are efficient and profitable.

"Do you really believe (the three producers) would jeopardize their neighbors, families and friends?" said Glen Muller, executive director of the South Dakota Pork Producers Council.

A group made up of local residents, Citizens Fighting for Quality of Life, is trying to stop the development of the factory farms.

"We have to live with this, and we have to deal with it," said Grant, who is part of the group. "It doesn't seem like the quality of life that we are striving for is being fought for at the appropriate levels of our government, so this is why we want to get together and get the word out there."

The county's planning commission gave approval for the construction of three barns for Karl and Nancy Schenk, one for Craig Johnson and three for Jay Cutts.

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

Bed company to open customer service center in Louisiana

ELMWOOD, La. (AP) — A Minneapolis company that makes adjustable-firmness beds plans a phone and live chat service and sales center that it says will bring 225 jobs to Jefferson Parish.

The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission, or JEDCO, says in a news release Thursday that the Select Comfort Corp. has begun hiring with starting salaries of \$30,000 a year.

Officials say they plan to hire 50 people before opening the center in August.

The \$1 billion company makes Sleep Number beds, with factories in South Carolina and Utah. Its headquarters and existing service center are in Minneapolis.

JEDCO says it offered a performance-based grant of up to \$800,000 for lease assistance, infrastructure costs and relocation expenses.

The space was formerly occupied by Stewart Enterprises, a funeral home bought a few years ago by Service Corp. International of Houston.

Bankers don't expect much economic growth in rural areas

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Bankers continue to expect little economic growth in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states because of weak commodity prices.

The overall economic index for the region slipped to the neutral score of 50 in June from May's 50.1.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss says grain prices remain below the breakeven point for most farmers, but commodity prices have stabilized and improved a bit.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

For advocates of gay adoption, progress but also obstacles

By DAVID CRARY, AP National Writer

With tens of thousands of children lingering in foster care across the United States, awaiting adoption, Illinois schoolteachers Kevin Neubert and Jim Gorey did their bit. What began with their offer to briefly care for a newborn foster child evolved within a few years into the adoption of that little boy and all four of his older siblings who also were in foster care.

The story of their two-dad, five-kid family exemplifies the potential for same-sex couples to help ease the perennial shortfall of adoptive homes for foster children. Yet even as more gays and lesbians adopt, some politicians seek to protect faith-based adoption agencies that object to placing children in such families.

Sweeping new measures in Texas and South Dakota allow state-funded agencies to refuse to place children with unmarried or gay prospective parents because of religious objections. A newly introduced bill in Congress would extend such provisions nationwide.

For those who support gay adoption, it's a good news/bad news story. Gays and lesbians have ever-expanding opportunities to adopt, and a strong likelihood of finding community support if they do so. Yet bias against prospective gay adoptive parents remains pervasive, whether it's overt or subtle, and experts in the field say many thousands of gays and lesbians are dissuaded from adopting for fear of encountering such bias.

"Some of these agencies are quite clear that they don't work with certain sorts of people," said Currey Cook of the LGBT-rights group Lambda Legal.

Some would-be gay adopters seek out other agencies, Cook said. "But some people think, 'I'm not going to risk being stigmatized and turned away, so I'm not going to step up at all.'"

There's no official, up-to-date count of gay and lesbian adoptive parents, but the number is on the rise.

Same-sex couples are nearly three times as likely to adopt as heterosexual couples, says Gary Gates, a specialist in LGBT demography. His latest analysis of Census Bureau data indicates that in 2015, the year same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide, 44,000 adopted children were being raised by 28,000 same-sex couples. That number of children was double his estimate from 2013.

For gays and lesbians able to afford the \$20,000 to \$40,000 cost of a typical private adoption, the odds are good.

"If you have financial means, you can find providers who are welcoming and inclusive and help you through that process," said Ellen Kahn, who oversees youth and family programs for the Human Rights Campaign, a national LGBT-rights group.

She says problems often arise when gays and lesbians seek the less costly option of adopting out of foster care, given that many placements are handled by faith-based agencies under contract with child-welfare departments.

Kevin Neubert and Jim Gorey avoided such problems when they pursued adoption out of foster care

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 22 of 48

after calculating that a private adoption might be too costly.

Following night classes to qualify as foster parents, they agreed in December 2011 to provide a temporary home for a newborn baby. A stay intended to last only a few days was extended into several months, and Neubert and Gorey learned that the baby had four older siblings in foster care.

Initially, the two men considered adopting three of the children, and eventually decided to adopt all five, a process finalized in June 2014. The youngest, Derek, is 5; the eldest, Luke, is 12. There are two other brothers, 10 and 7, and a middle sister aged 9.

Neubert and Gorey, who married in 2010 and live in the Chicago suburb of Naperville, said the family has enjoyed strong community support, though shopping trips could be a spectacle. "We didn't know if people were looking at us because we're two guys with kids, or because we had so many kids in tow," said Gorey.

The path to adoption was bumpier for Dr. Christopher Harris, though by some measures he was an ideal candidate when he first pursued that goal 17 years ago in Nashville, Tennessee. He was a pediatrician and faculty member at Vanderbilt University, but also was single and openly gay.

For more than a year, he worked with a church-affiliated adoption agency, taking parenting classes, submitting to home visits. Yet his application never progressed, and he finally deduced it was because he was gay. He reached a similar dead end with a second agency, which took fees from him and only later said it wouldn't place children with single men.

"It was frustrating for me to get passed over," Harris said. "As a pediatrician, I look at the science and see there are no data that children raised by gay and lesbian parents don't do well."

He persisted, finally finding an agency that connected him with a woman open to having her soon-to-be-born child adopted by a gay man. The baby, Maria, was born in November 2002, and soon adopted by Harris. Father and daughter now live in Los Angeles; Maria recently completed her first year of high school.

More than 100,000 U.S. foster children are waiting to be adopted, and child welfare officials struggle to find enough qualified adoptive families. Some jurisdictions recruit gays and lesbians to adopt, but agencies that shun gay clients operate in most states.

Catholic Charities, which does child-welfare work nationwide, says it seeks to ensure that the children it places in adoptive homes "enjoy the advantage of having a mother and a father who are married."

In some jurisdictions, authorities have said Catholic Charities must serve same-sex couples. Rather than comply, Catholic Charities shut down adoption services in Massachusetts, Illinois, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Bethany Christian Services, which provides adoption and foster-care services in more than 30 states, says its religious principles preclude serving same-sex couples directly, but it routinely refers them to LGBT-supportive agencies.

"When we meet with them, we're very respectful," said Bethany's president, Bill Blacquiere. "We want them to have all the rights any citizen has, including the right to be adoptive or foster parents."

Follow David Crary on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/CraryAP>

Drones give North Dakota farmers a new tool to grow crops

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Drone technology is helping some farmers in North Dakota keep tabs on their livelihood like never before by giving them an aerial perspective on field conditions and crops.

Jeremy Wilson has been planting corn, soybeans and wheat in the Fargo area for nearly two decades and has seen his share of advancements in technology.

"Neat seeing things that work and how it works. And some things that don't work that well but was a valiant effort," said Wilson. The drones have provided a new vantage point for farmers, saving them time and money.

"Pretty cheap, simple and fast," Wilson told WDAY-TV (<http://bit.ly/2rz8Vue>).

Agricultural companies, including Peterson Farms Seed, are also exploring the ways drones can be used in crop development.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 23 of 48

Rather than walking into a field or taking a look from a pickup truck, drones provide a whole new perspective on field conditions, said Peterson spokesman Nolan Berg.

"(They're) really opening some farmers' eyes to things they normally couldn't see," Berg said. "You can see stand issues, whether there are wet spots in your field or fertility issues."

Berg said it's another tool for farmers in their collection of agricultural resources.

"It's not an end-all situation. But it does help us get better at what we're already doing within the field," said Berg.

Information from: WDAY-TV, <http://wday.com>

Air Force plans exercise in Northern Plains training area

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Air Force is holding another large-scale exercise in the Powder River Training Complex in the Northern Plains.

The training area covers nearly 35,000 square miles of airspace in the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming — the largest over the continental U.S.

Officials at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota say the Combat Raider exercise June 27-29 will involve various military aircraft. There is the potential for people on the ground to hear sonic booms.

The Air Force also cautions non-military aircraft to review the Federal Aviation Administration notice and avoid areas and altitudes where military planes will be practicing.

Scalise has more surgery as authorities track shooter's path

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Still in critical condition and undergoing repeated surgery, GOP House Whip Steve Scalise "will be in the hospital for some time," according to the facility where he is recovering from a gunshot. His House colleagues paid tribute to him at their annual charity baseball game, while law enforcement tracked the path the shooter traveled to his ballfield carnage.

Investigators studying Wednesday's attack at a suburban Virginia park said shooter James Hodgkinson had obtained his rifle and handgun from licensed firearms dealers. Capitol Police said they had "no evidence to suggest that the purchases were not lawful."

Hodgkinson, a Belleville, Illinois, home inspector who had been living out of his van near the park, had a social media page filled with criticism of Republicans and the Trump administration. He died after officers in Scalise's security detail fired back at him.

The FBI said it was investigating the shooter's "activities and social media impressions" in the months leading up to the attack. Authorities also were going over a cellphone, computer and camera taken from Hodgkinson's white van, which was parked near the ballfield.

So far, investigators have not linked Hodgkinson to any radical groups, said a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

As congressional Republicans and Democrats joined Thursday night in their annual baseball game, played this year in Scalise's honor, word came from the hospital that he remained in critical condition, but had "improved in the last 24 hours."

MedStar Washington Hospital Center said Scalise had surgery Thursday related to his internal injuries and a broken bone in his leg, and "will require additional operations."

Colleagues who visited Scalise sounded generally upbeat, but spoke more in terms of hopes than the confident predictions of the immediate aftermath a day earlier.

Democrat Cedric Richmond, a fellow Louisiana congressman, said as many others did that Scalise is a fighter. "I'm prayerful he will pull through, and I hope he does," he said.

Scalise was fielding ground balls at second base Wednesday when he was shot at a practice for the annual Republicans-Democrats baseball game. Richmond, who plays for the Democratic team, said he had visited the hospital multiple times.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 24 of 48

Scalise, 51, suffered a rifle wound in his left hip that shattered bones, tore organs and caused severe bleeding. He is the House's No. 3 GOP leader.

"He's in some trouble," said President Donald Trump, who had visited late Wednesday. "He's going to be OK. We hope."

Scalise was among five people wounded when a shooter sprayed rifle fire at congressional Republicans practicing on a diamond in suburban Alexandria, Va.

Also hurt but released from hospitals were two Capitol Police officers, David Bailey and Crystal Griner, and House GOP aide Zack Barth. Lobbyist Matt Mika was shot multiple times and critically injured and remained hospitalized.

Bailey received a hero's welcome from a record crowd of nearly 25,000 at Thursday's game when he threw out the first pitch. Unity was the theme of the spirited rivalry; Democrats won in an 11-2 blowout.

Following a day that saw most congressional business canceled, the House approved legislation offering health insurance tax credits to some veterans while committees pondered federal land management, cybersecurity and more. The Capitol's usual partisan combativeness, though not absent, was less pointed than usual, and warm words were exchanged between some lawmakers with starkly opposing political philosophies.

"There is so much you do that I disagree with," House Financial Services Committee Chairman Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, a staunch conservative, told his panel's top Democrat, unwavering liberal Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif. "But you have long since earned my respect, and you deserve to be heard, and you are an honorable individual."

Addressing Scalise, Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., said, "You are not alone. ... We love you." Lewis led a House floor Democratic sit-in last year when Republicans refused to consider gun control legislation.

Members of both parties said they needed to soften rhetorical attacks on each other, if only to set a better example for a public that seems increasingly divided into hostile political camps. It's a sentiment lawmakers frequently express after mass shootings or terrorist attacks, only to see their sharp oratorical elbows gradually return.

Underscoring the day's mood, the Rev. Patrick Conroy, the House chaplain, opened the day by seeking divine forgiveness "when we seem to forget that words matter and can become seeds that will bring bitter harvest."

Still, finger-pointing lingered as some on each side suggested the other had contributed more to the disparaging broadsides they've increasingly aimed at each other.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, said in a brief interview that Democrats would be reminded of "positions they've taken in the past that are not consistent with their voice for bipartisanship today."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., recounted candidate Trump's comments prodding supporters to pummel demonstrators at rallies and said Republicans were being "sanctimonious."

The shooting prompted talk of improving security for lawmakers, most of whom are unaccompanied by officers in their normal day-to-day pursuits. Some have suggested using federal money to provide security cameras in their offices, while others spoke of a need for protection when groups of them appear in public.

The House used a voice vote Thursday to approve a resolution lauding the Capitol Police for protecting lawmakers and stating that "violence has no place" in society. A reading of the measure received a standing ovation.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville, Sadie Gurman and Erica Werner contributed to this report.

Trump lashes out at 'bad,' 'conflicted' Russia investigators

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has lashed out at the investigators driving the Russia investigation as "very bad and conflicted people," responding angrily to reports that the special counsel is looking into whether Trump obstructed justice.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 25 of 48

In a series of statements on Twitter Thursday, Trump called special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 campaign a "WITCH HUNT" based on the "phony" premise of possible collusion between Russia and a cadre of Trump campaign associates.

The president complained the probe is unfair and wondered why his defeated Democratic opponent wasn't getting the same scrutiny.

"Why is that Hillary Clintons family and Dems dealings with Russia are not looked at, but my non-dealings are?" he asked.

"They made up a phony collusion with the Russians story, found zero proof, so now they go for obstruction of justice on the phony story. Nice," Trump wrote in his first tweet. "You are witnessing the single greatest WITCH HUNT in American political history - led by some very bad and conflicted people! #MAGA."

The Twitter attacks came as Vice President Mike Pence hired a personal lawyer to represent him in the intensifying investigation. Pence's office confirmed he had retained Richard Cullen, a former Virginia attorney general and U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, to assist "in responding to inquiries" from Mueller.

Mueller investigation appeared to be reaching a broadening circle of current and former officials. The Washington Post reported Wednesday that the investigators were looking into possible obstruction of justice. The newspaper noted Mueller had requested interviews with CIA Director Dan Coats, National Security Agency chief Michael Rogers and Richard Ledgett, the former NSA deputy director. Recent news reports have suggested Trump sought all three officials' help in pressuring FBI Director James Comey to drop his investigation into former National Security Adviser Mike Flynn.

Comey testified last week that he also felt pressured to drop the Flynn probe. Comey said he believes Trump ultimately fired him "because of the Russia investigation."

Coats met behind closed doors for more than three hours Thursday with the Senate intelligence committee, which is conducting a separate investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Trump's Twitter response followed days of intensifying criticism of Mueller from some conservatives who have charged the former FBI director and his team with political bias and have claimed his relationship to Comey and an earlier meeting with Trump amount to conflicts of interest.

A close Trump associate said this week the president was considering firing Mueller, although the White House later denied it.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Trump to announce plan to stop cash flow to Cuban military

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE** and **MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stopping short of a complete turnabout, President Donald Trump is expected to announce a revised Cuba policy aimed at stopping the flow of U.S. cash to the country's military and security services while maintaining diplomatic relations and allowing U.S. airlines and cruise ships to continue service to the island.

In a speech Friday at a Miami theater associated with Cuban exiles, Trump will cast the policy moves as fulfillment of a promise he made during last year's presidential campaign to reverse then-President Barack Obama's diplomatic re-engagement with the island after decades of estrangement.

Senior White House officials who briefed reporters Thursday on the coming announcement said Obama's overtures had enriched Cuba's military while repression increased on the island. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the policy before Trump announces it, despite the president's regular criticism of the use of anonymous sources.

The moves to be announced by Trump are only a partial reversal of Obama's policies, however. And they will saddle the U.S. government with the complicated task of policing U.S. travel to Cuba to make sure there are no transactions with the military-linked conglomerate that runs much of the Cuban economy.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 26 of 48

By restricting individual U.S. travel to Cuba, the new policy also risks cutting off a major source of income for Cuba's private business sector, which the policy is meant to support.

Under the expected changes, the U.S. will ban American financial transactions with the dozens of enterprises run by the military-linked corporation GAESA, which operates dozens of hotels, tour buses, restaurants and other facilities.

Most U.S. travelers to Cuba will again be required to visit the island as part of organized tour groups run by American companies. The rules also require a daylong schedule of activities designed to expose the travelers to ordinary Cubans. But because Cuban rules requires tour groups to have government guides and use state-run tour buses, the requirement has given the Cuban government near-total control of travelers' itineraries and funneled much of their spending to state enterprises.

Obama eliminated the tour requirement, allowing tens of thousands of Americans to book solo trips and spend their money with individual bed-and-breakfast owners, restaurants and taxi drivers.

The U.S. Embassy in Havana, which reopened in August 2015, will remain as a full-fledged diplomatic outpost. Trump isn't overturning Obama's decision to end the "wet foot, dry foot" policy that allowed most Cuban migrants who made it onto U.S. soil to stay and eventually become legal permanent residents.

Also not expected are any changes to U.S. regulations governing what items Americans can bring back from Cuba, including the rum and cigars produced by state-run enterprises.

More details about the changes are expected to be released Friday, when the new policy is set to take effect. But none of the changes will become effective until the Treasury Department issues new regulations, which could take months. That means that any U.S. traveler currently booked on a flight to Cuba in the next few weeks, or even months, could go ahead and make the trip.

Critics said the changes would only hurt everyday Cubans who work in the private sector and depend on American visitors to help provide for their families. Supporters expressed appreciation for Trump's emphasis on human rights in Cuba.

Obama announced in December 2014 that he and Cuban leader Raul Castro were restoring diplomatic ties between their countries, arguing that the policy the U.S. had pursued for decades had failed to bring about change and that it was time to try a new approach.

The U.S. severed diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961 after Fidel Castro's revolution. It spent subsequent decades trying to either overthrow the Cuban government or isolate the island, including toughening an economic embargo first imposed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The embargo remains in place and unchanged by Trump's policy. Only the U.S. Congress can lift the embargo, and lawmakers, especially those of Cuban heritage, like Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., have shown no interest in doing so.

The son of a Cuban immigrant, Rubio opposed Obama's re-engagement with Cuba, saying Obama was making concessions to an "odious regime."

Trump aides said Thursday that Rubio was "very helpful" to the administration as it spent months reviewing the policy. The senator, who challenged Trump for the Republican presidential nomination, was expected to travel with the president aboard Air Force One and appear with him at Friday's announcement.

The change in the U.S. posture toward Cuba under Trump marks the latest policy about-face by the president.

While campaigning last year in Miami, which is home to a large Cuban-American population, Trump pledged to reverse Obama's efforts to normalize relations with Cuba unless it met certain "demands," including granting Cubans religious and political freedom, and releasing all political prisoners. He said he would "stand with the Cuban people in their fight against communist oppression," and went on to win about half the Cuban vote in Florida in the presidential election.

Trump had previously said he supported restoring diplomatic relations but wished the U.S. had negotiated a better deal.

For the announcement, the White House chose to have Trump speak at the Manuel Artime Theate in Miami. The theater is named for an exile leader of the Bay of Pigs veterans' association that endorsed Trump last October.

Weissenstein reported from Havana.

Follow Darlene Superville and Michael Weissenstein on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap> and <http://www.twitter.com/mweissenstein>

Russia verifying whether it killed IS leader in airstrike

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Russia said Friday it was verifying whether it had killed the leader of the Islamic State group in an airstrike targeting a meeting of IS leaders just outside the group's de facto capital in Syria, dealing a potentially severe blow to the extremist group as it fights to hang on to its strongholds in Syria and Iraq.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a Russian strike in late May along with other senior group commanders, adding that the information about his death was still "being verified through various channels."

Asked later about that claim at a news conference in Moscow, however, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said: "I don't have a 100-percent confirmation of the information."

There had been previous reports of al-Baghdadi being killed but they did not turn out to be true. The IS leader last released an audio on Nov. 3, urging his followers to keep up the fight for Mosul as they defend the Iraqi city against a major offensive that began weeks earlier.

The spokesman for the U.S.-led anti-IS coalition said in a statement Friday he could not confirm the Russian claim.

The report of al-Baghdadi's death comes as IS suffers major setbacks in which they have lost wide areas of territory and both of their strongholds — Mosul in Iraq and Syria's Raqqa. Both are under attack by various groups who are fighting under the cover of airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition.

As the militants take a pounding in their eroding strongholds, U.S. officials and Syrian activists say many commanders have fled Mosul and Raqqa in recent months for Mayadeen, a remote town in the heart of Syria's IS-controlled, Euphrates River valley near the Iraqi border. Their relocation could extend the group's ability to wreak havoc in the region and beyond for months to come.

Most recently, the group claimed responsibility for attacks in Iran's parliament and a shrine to revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Tehran, killing at least 17 people and injuring more than 50. It also claimed responsibility for the June 3 London attack that killed eight people. Both attacks would have taken place after al-Baghdadi's alleged killing.

Lavrov, at the press conference, added on a cautious note that if al-Baghdadi's death is confirmed, its importance mustn't be overestimated. Lavrov said that "past examples of similar actions to strike the leadership of terrorist groups were presented with much enthusiasm and pomp, but the experience shows that those structures later regained their capability."

The claim of al-Baghdadi's possible demise also comes nearly three years to the day after he declared himself the leader of an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria, from a historic mosque in Mosul.

If confirmed, al-Baghdadi's death would mark a major military success for Russia, which has conducted a military campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar Assad since September 2015.

It is not clear who would replace al-Baghdadi if he was killed — the group has lost many of its senior commanders, killed in U.S.-led airstrikes, including Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali, said by U.S. officials to be the No. 2 leader of the group. Al-Hayali was killed in an August 2015 airstrike by the U.S. in Iraq. Another top figure was Abu Ali al-Anbari, the extremist group's leading finance official who was killed in 2016.

One of the Islamic State's best known commanders, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the IS spokesman who frequently releases audio messages calling for stepped-up attacks, was also killed last year.

The Defense Ministry said the air raid on May 28 that targeted an IS meeting held on the southern outskirts of Raqqa in Syria also killed about 30 mid-level militant leaders and about 300 other fighters.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 28 of 48

The ministry said the IS leaders were gathered to discuss the group's withdrawal from Raqqa, the group's de facto capital. It said the military began planning the hit after getting word that the group's leadership was to meet in order to plan IS's exit to the south.

The Russian military sent drones to monitor the area and then dispatched a group of Su-34 bombers and Su-35 fighter jets to hit the IS gathering.

"According to the information that is being verified through various channels, IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi also attended the meeting and was killed in the airstrike," the military said in a statement.

The Defense Ministry added that it had warned the U.S. of the coming strike.

Syrian opposition activists reported airstrikes on May 28 south of Raqqa that killed more than a dozen people.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which tracks Syria's war, said airstrikes on the road linked the villages of Ratla and Kasrat killed 18 people while the activist-operated Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently said 17 civilians were killed in the airstrike on buses carrying civilians.

The Observatory said the dead included 10 Islamic State group members. It did not elaborate at the time.

The Russian ministry said that among other militant leaders killed in the raid were IS leaders Abu al-Khadji al-Mysri, Ibrahim al-Naef al-Khadj and Suleiman al-Shauah.

Al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate in Syria and Iraq in June 2014 days after his fighters captured Mosul, the largest city they ever held. The group has since horrified the world with its atrocities in areas they held as well as attacks they claimed around the world that killed hundreds.

Al-Baghdadi is a nom de guerre for a man identified as Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai. The U.S. is offering a \$25 million reward for information leading to his death or capture.

Alexei Pushkov, the head of the committee for information policies at the upper house of the Russian parliament tweeted that "if confirmed, al-Baghdadi's death will be a powerful blow to the IS. It has been retreating on all fronts, and the death of its leader will accelerate its demise."

Isachenkov reported from Moscow. Associated Press writer Zeina Karam contributed reporting.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. WHO IS VERIFYING IF IT KILLED ISLAMIC STATE LEADER

Russia says Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi could have been killed in a Russian airstrike outside Raqqa in Syria — although he has been reported killed before.

2. US OFFICIAL: PENTAGON TO SEND 4,000 MORE TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN

It stands to be the largest deployment of American forces in Donald Trump's young presidency.

3. TRUMP TO ANNOUNCE REVISED CUBA POLICY

Under the expected changes, the U.S. will ban American financial transactions with the dozens of enterprises run by the Cuban military-linked corporation GAESA.

4. TRUMP CALLS RUSSIA PROBE 'A WITCH HUNT'

The U.S. president lashes out at officials driving the Russia investigation as "very bad and conflicted people."

5. 'WE WILL ALL BE TEAM SCALISE'

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi joins ranks with GOP lawmakers at the Congressional Baseball game, one day after a shooting rampage during a practice session seriously injures Rep. Steve Scalise.

6. HOW TWO ESCAPED INMATES WERE SNARED

Donnie Rowe and Ricky Dubose, accused of killing two prison guards, are held at gunpoint by a rural Tennessee homeowner whose vehicle they were trying to steal, authorities say.

7. GRIEF OVER DEADLY LONDON BLAZE UNITES DIVERSE BOROUGH

"The community is just rallying. People have just shown up to help," says Sinead O'Hare, a volunteer

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 29 of 48

working at a donation point for people left homeless by the Grenfell Tower fire.

8. WHAT'S BEHIND A SPIKE IN HOUSING PRICES

A diminished supply of available homes is swelling prices in large U.S. metro areas from New York to Los Angeles

9. JUDGE ADVISES COSBY JURORS TO KEEP DELIBERATING

The panel had deliberated about 30 hours before telling the judge that they couldn't reach a unanimous decision in the actor's sexual assault trial.

10. SURVIVOR DIES IN SECOND NIAGARA FALLS PLUNGE

Kirk R. Jones, who went over the falls unprotected in 2003, died after another attempt, this time in an inflatable ball.

Escaped Georgia prison inmates recaptured in Tennessee

By KATE BRUMBACK and ERIK SCHELZIG, Associated Press

SHELBYVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Two escaped inmates sought in the killings of two guards on a Georgia prison bus were captured after a chase and being held at gunpoint by a rural Tennessee homeowner whose vehicle they were trying to steal, authorities said.

Donnie Rowe and Ricky Dubose were apprehended Thursday in the rural community of Christiana, Tennessee, ending a multi-state manhunt that began Tuesday morning.

"True bravery is what's caused us to stand before you tonight to talk about a successful capture instead of a tragic incident," Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Director Mark Gwyn said at a news conference. "So I'm totally grateful to everyone involved."

Earlier in the day, police in nearby Shelbyville had responded to a call about a home invasion, where a couple had been held captive, Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokeswoman Nelly Miles said.

The suspects fled in the couple's vehicle and fired on sheriff's deputies chasing them on Interstate 24 about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of Nashville, Tennessee Highway Patrol spokesman Lt. Bill Miller said. Rutherford County Sheriff Michael Fitzhugh said his deputies did not return fire and none of them was injured.

Rowe and Dubose crashed the car and bailed out, running into the woods, Miller said. They then came across a home set back on a long driveway.

The trooper said the homeowner looked outside and saw the two allegedly trying to steal his car. The man held the two at gunpoint with a neighbor he called for help until the sheriff's department could get there to arrest the fugitives.

The two were being held at the Rutherford County jail.

Georgia Department of Corrections Commissioner Greg Dozier said in a news release that he was relieved the two inmates were captured and no longer a threat to the public.

"They will be brought to justice swiftly for their heinous crime against our officers," he said, also expressing gratitude to all of the law enforcement officers who provided support and assistance in the search for the two men.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal applauded the "tireless efforts" of law enforcement but also turned his thoughts to the families of the two officers, saying their pain remains.

"We will do everything in our power to support their loved ones, and we will not forget their sacrifice and service," Deal said.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation spokesman Josh DeVine said the bureau's agents will take part in processing the scene.

The two men had been on the run since early Tuesday, when they are accused of having killed Sgt. Christopher Monica and Sgt. Curtis Billue.

The two inmates overpowered and disarmed the guards on a bus about 6:45 a.m. Tuesday as 33 inmates were being driven between prisons, authorities have said. One of them fatally shot both guards, and then they jumped out of the bus and carjacked a driver who happened to pull up behind them on state Highway 16 in Putnam County, southeast of Atlanta, authorities said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 30 of 48

The two inmates then fled in the stolen Honda Civic and drove about 25 miles (40 kilometers) north to Madison, where they ransacked a home, stealing food and clothes and leaving their prison uniforms behind around 10:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Late Tuesday night, about 12 hours after the home burglary, the pair stole a Ford pickup truck from a rock quarry about 9 miles (14.5 kilometers) from the burglarized home when the trail had gone cold.

The FBI announced a tip line and said pictures of the men and information about a \$130,000 reward would appear on billboards in multiple states. TBI's Gwyn said Thursday he wasn't sure who would collect the reward.

Authorities warned that the men, who had escaped with the guards' 9 mm pistols, were considered very dangerous. Gwyn said investigators believe both weapons have been found at the site where the men crashed the vehicle.

Monica and Billue were transfer sergeants at Baldwin State Prison. Monica had been with the Georgia Department of Corrections since October 2009 and Billue since July 2007.

Putnam County Sheriff Howard Sills said the escaped inmates had been inside a secured area of the bus. He said he didn't know how they got through the locked cage to overpower the guards.

Protocol is to have two armed corrections officers on the bus, but the officers don't wear bullet-proof vests during transfers, Dozier said.

Both escapees were serving sentences for armed robbery and other crimes. The Department of Corrections said Rowe, 43, had been serving life without parole since 2002, and Dubose, 24, began a 20-year sentence in 2015.

Associated Press writers Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, and Adrian Sainz in Memphis, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

China police: Bomb behind kindergarten blast; suspect dead

By MATTHEW BROWN and CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — A 22-year-old man made the bomb that exploded at the front gate of a kindergarten in eastern China, killing eight people, including himself, investigators said Friday, apparently closing the case on one of the worst school attacks in the country in recent years.

Police said the suspect was identified primarily using security camera footage and DNA collected at the scene of the blast, which struck Thursday as relatives were waiting to pick up students at the end of the school day. Only the suspect's surname, Xu, was released and no motive was provided.

Investigators found bomb-making materials at Xu's nearby residence in the city of Xuzhou in Jiangsu province. Emblazoned on its walls were the Chinese characters for death, disaster and other related dark themes.

Xu had left school because of a nervous system disorder, whose symptoms can include depression, anxiety, dizziness, vision problems and problems with basic bodily functions, the police said at a news conference. He had since moved to a rented accommodation in the neighborhood and was working as a casual laborer, the city's deputy police chief, Pei Jun, told reporters.

Two people died at the scene and six died after being taken to a hospital. Sixty-five people were injured, including eight listed in critical condition.

The disorder Xu was described as having is not itself a mental illness. Rather, it suggests he suffered symptoms that could have stemmed from an undiagnosed or untreated mental illness, said Dr. Michael Phillips, a psychiatry professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Emory University in the United States.

Xu could have been influenced by the widespread public attention received by similar past attacks on schools, Phillips said.

"That could influence somebody who wanted their death to mean something in a lot of ways," Phillips said, adding that severity of mental illnesses typically peak at about Xu's age.

The blast at the Chuangxin Kindergarten in Xuzhou's Fengxian county occurred at 4:50 p.m. before school had let out for the day and no students or teachers from the kindergarten were among the injured, ac-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 31 of 48

ording to a statement from local authorities.

However, videos purportedly from the scene showed children — possibly relatives of the kindergartners or passers-by — among the casualties.

A witness identified only by the surname Shi said the force of the blast sent people flying several meters (yards) into the air, according to the state-run Global Times.

Videos posted by the People's Daily showed a chaotic scene, with children and adults lying on the ground, some of them motionless, their clothes blown off them, and others struggling to get up. Clothing, shoes and other items were strewn across the area beside pools of blood.

The videos showed ambulances arriving, medics wheeling people into an emergency room and medical personnel treating what appeared to be a child.

Kindergartens, elementary schools and students in China have been attacked several times before by suspects authorities have said were mentally ill or bore grudges against their neighbors and society.

Last month, a driver angry over the loss of overtime pay set fire to his school bus in the eastern city of Weihai, killing 13 people, including 11 children from China and South Korea.

In 2010, nearly 20 children were killed in attacks on schools, prompting a response from top government officials and leading many schools to beef up security by posting guards and installing gates and other barriers. Last year, a knife-wielding assailant injured seven students outside a primary school in a northern city.

China maintains tight control over firearms and most attacks are carried out using knives, axes or home-made explosives.

APNewsBreak: About 4,000 more US troops to go to Afghanistan

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and ROBERT BURNS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon will send almost 4,000 additional American forces to Afghanistan, a Trump administration official said Thursday, hoping to break a stalemate in a war that has now passed to a third U.S. commander in chief. The deployment will be the largest of American manpower under Donald Trump's young presidency.

The decision by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis could be announced as early as next week, the official said. It follows Trump's move to give Mattis the authority to set troop levels and seeks to address assertions by the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan that he doesn't have enough forces to help Afghanistan's army against a resurgent Taliban insurgency. The rising threat posed by Islamic State extremists, evidenced in a rash of deadly attacks in the capital city of Kabul, has only fueled calls for a stronger U.S. presence, as have several recent American combat deaths.

The bulk of the additional troops will train and advise Afghan forces, according to the administration official, who wasn't authorized to discuss details of the decision publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. A smaller number would be assigned to counterterrorism operations against the Taliban and IS, the official said.

Asked for comment, a Pentagon spokesman, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, said, "No decisions have been made."

Daulat Waziri, spokesman for Afghanistan's defense ministry was reluctant to comment on specifics Friday but said the Afghan government supports the U.S. decision to send more troops. "The United States knows we are in the fight against terrorism," he said. "We want to finish this war in Afghanistan with the help of the NATO alliance."

An Afghan lawmaker, Nasrullah Sadeqzada, however, was skeptical about additional troops and cautioned that the troop surge should be coordinated with the Afghan government and should not be done unilaterally by the United States. "The security situation continues to deteriorate in Afghanistan and the foreign troops who are here are not making it better," he said.

Although Trump has delegated authority for U.S. troop numbers in Afghanistan, the responsibility for America's wars and the men and women who fight in them rests on his shoulders. Trump has inherited America's longest conflict with no clear endpoint or a defined strategy for American success, though U.S. troop levels are far lower than they were under Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush. In 2009,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 32 of 48

Obama authorized a surge of 30,000 troops into Afghanistan, bringing the total there to more than 100,000, before drawing down over the rest of his presidency.

Trump has barely spoken about Afghanistan as a candidate or president, concentrating instead on crushing the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq. His predecessors both had hoped to win the war. Bush scored a quick success, helping allied militant groups oust the Taliban shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, before seeing the gains slip away as America's focus shifted to the Iraq war. In refocusing attention on Afghanistan, Obama eliminated much of the country's al-Qaida network and authorized the mission that killed Osama bin Laden, but failed to snuff out the Taliban's rebellion.

Mattis' deployment of more troops will be far smaller than Obama's.

While military leaders have consistently said more forces are needed, a decision had been tied up in a lengthy, wider debate about America's long-term military, diplomatic and economic strategy for ending the war. Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander there, has said the troops are necessary to properly train and advise the Afghan military and perform work handled at greater cost by contractors. Afghan leaders endorse the idea of more U.S. troops, having lost significant ground to the Taliban in recent months.

But despite repeated questions from Congress this week, Mattis wouldn't reveal his thinking on a troop increase. He said that while counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan are making progress in weakening al-Qaida and IS, "their defeat will come about only by giving our men and women on the ground the support and the authorities they need to win."

Obama set a cap a year ago of 8,400 troops in Afghanistan after slowing the pace of what he hoped would be a U.S. withdrawal.

Nevertheless, there are at least another 2,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan not included in the official count. These include forces that are technically considered temporary even if they've been in the war zone for months.

Trump's decision Tuesday to give Mattis authority to set force levels in Afghanistan mirrored similar powers he handed over earlier this year for U.S. fights in Iraq and Syria. The change was made public hours after Sen. John McCain, the Senate Armed Services Committee's Republican chairman, blasted Mattis for the administration's failure to present an overarching strategy for Afghanistan. McCain said the U.S. is "not winning" in Afghanistan, and Mattis agreed.

The finality of the decision isn't entirely clear. While Trump has handed over the troop level decision-making, there is nothing preventing him from taking it back.

Mattis has repeatedly stressed that increasing the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan would take place within a broader, long-term strategy for stabilizing Afghanistan. In congressional testimony this week, he said the strategy will take into account regional influences, such as Pakistan's role as a Taliban sanctuary. Regional powers Iran, India and China, which all have political stakes in the fate of Afghanistan, also must be considered.

While the new troops could raise fears of mission creep, Mattis told lawmakers this week he didn't envision returning to the force levels of 2010-11, when Obama thought he could pressure the Taliban into peace talks. Despite heavy losses, the Taliban fought on.

"Reconciliation" remains the goal, Mattis told a House Appropriations panel Thursday, along with reducing Afghan government corruption.

"We're not looking at a purely military strategy," he said. "All wars come to an end. Our job is to end it as quickly as possible without losing the very mission that we've recognized, through several administrations, that was worth putting those young Americans on the line for."

There have been almost 2,400 U.S. military deaths in Afghanistan since 2001. Three U.S. soldiers were killed and another was wounded in eastern Afghanistan this weekend in an attack claimed by the Taliban.

Scalise has more surgery as authorities track shooter's path

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Still in critical condition and undergoing repeated surgery, GOP House Whip Steve Scalise faces a “much more difficult” struggle to recover from his gunshot wound than first thought, President Donald Trump said Thursday. The House lurched back to business in a somber mood as law enforcement tracked the path the shooter traveled to his ballfield carnage.

Investigators studying Wednesday's attack at a suburban Virginia park said shooter James Hodgkinson had obtained his rifle and handgun from licensed firearms dealers. Capitol Police said they had “no evidence to suggest that the purchases were not lawful.”

Hodgkinson, a Belleville, Illinois, home inspector who had been living out of his van near the park, had a social media page filled with criticism of Republicans and the Trump administration. He died after officers in Scalise's security detail fired back at him.

The FBI said it was investigating the shooter's “activities and social media impressions” in the months leading up to the attack. Authorities also were going over a cellphone, computer and camera taken from Hodgkinson's white van, which was parked near the ballfield.

So far, investigators have not linked Hodgkinson to any radical groups, said a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

As congressional Republicans and Democrats joined Thursday night in their annual baseball game, played this year in Scalise's honor, word came from the hospital that he remained in critical condition, but had “improved in the last 24 hours.”

MedStar Washington Hospital Center said Scalise had surgery Thursday related to his internal injuries and a broken bone in his leg, “will require additional operations, and will be in the hospital for some time.”

Colleagues who visited Scalise sounded generally upbeat, but spoke more in terms of hopes than the confident predictions of the immediate aftermath a day earlier.

Democrat Cedric Richmond, a fellow Louisiana congressman, said as many others did that Scalise is a fighter. “I'm prayerful he will pull through, and I hope he does,” he said.

Scalise was fielding ground balls at second base Wednesday when he was shot at a practice for the annual Republicans-Democrats baseball game. Richmond, who plays for the Democratic team, said he had visited the hospital multiple times.

Scalise, 51, suffered a rifle wound in his left hip that shattered bones, tore organs and caused severe bleeding. He is the House's No. 3 GOP leader.

“He's in some trouble,” said Trump, who had visited late Wednesday. “He's going to be OK. We hope.”

Scalise was among five people wounded when a shooter sprayed rifle fire at congressional Republicans practicing on a diamond in Alexandria.

Also hurt but released from hospitals were two Capitol Police officers, David Bailey and Crystal Griner, and House GOP aide Zack Barth. Lobbyist Matt Mika was shot multiple times and critically injured and remained hospitalized.

Bailey received a hero's welcome from a record crowd of 25,000 at Thursday's game when he threw out the first pitch. Unity was the theme of the spirited rivalry; Democrats won in an 11-2 blowout.

Following a day that saw most congressional business canceled, the House approved legislation offering health insurance tax credits to some veterans while committees pondered federal land management, cybersecurity and more. The Capitol's usual partisan combativeness, though not absent, was less pointed than usual, and warm words were exchanged between some lawmakers with starkly opposing political philosophies.

“There is so much you do that I disagree with,” House Financial Services Committee Chairman Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, a staunch conservative, told his panel's top Democrat, unwavering liberal Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif. “But you have long since earned my respect, and you deserve to be heard, and you are an honorable individual.”

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 34 of 48

Addressing Scalise, Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., said, "You are not alone. ... We love you." Lewis led a House floor Democratic sit-in last year when Republicans refused to consider gun control legislation.

Members of both parties said they needed to soften rhetorical attacks on each other, if only to set a better example for a public that seems increasingly divided into hostile political camps. It's a sentiment lawmakers frequently express after mass shootings or terrorist attacks, only to see their sharp oratorical elbows gradually return.

Underscoring the day's mood, the Rev. Patrick Conroy, the House chaplain, opened the day by seeking divine forgiveness "when we seem to forget that words matter and can become seeds that will bring bitter harvest."

Still, finger-pointing lingered as some on each side suggested the other had contributed more to the disparaging broadsides they've increasingly aimed at each other.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, said in a brief interview that Democrats would be reminded of "positions they've taken in the past that are not consistent with their voice for bipartisanship today."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., recounted candidate Trump's comments prodding supporters to pummel demonstrators at rallies and said Republicans were being "sanctimonious."

The shooting prompted talk of improving security for lawmakers, most of whom are unaccompanied by officers in their normal day-to-day pursuits. Some have suggested using federal money to provide security cameras in their offices, while others spoke of a need for protection when groups of them appear in public.

The House used a voice vote Thursday to approve a resolution lauding the Capitol Police for protecting lawmakers and stating that "violence has no place" in society. A reading of the measure received a standing ovation.

House Republicans met privately earlier to discuss the shootings, pray and sign oversized cards for the wounded.

Associated Press writers Darlene Superville, Sadie Gurman and Erica Werner contributed to this report.

A ballgame of unity, spirit, friendly rivalry, won by Dems

By ERICA WERNER and KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans and Democrats joined in a spirited, friendly rivalry Thursday at their annual Congressional Baseball game, many fresh from the penetrating horror of the ballfield shooting rampage a day earlier and all playing in honor of their grievously wounded colleague.

The game at Nationals Park carried on a century-old bipartisan ritual, this one tinged with worry about Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise and the players' determination to answer the attack by coming together in sport. Democrats won in an 11-2 blowout.

In a final flourish of bipartisan camaraderie for the night, Democratic Rep. Mike Doyle of Pennsylvania, his team's manager, accepted the trophy, then gave it to his GOP counterpart, Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, to put in Scalise's office on behalf of the Democrats. After accepting it gracefully, Barton cracked, "Next year we won't be so nice."

A huge ovation came from the crowd, which swelled to a record 24,959, when Special Agent David Bailey, one of the Capitol Police officers injured in the attack on Republicans at their ball practice in Virginia, threw out the first pitch. "ONE FAMILY," proclaimed a sign in the crowd. The announcer's mention of Scalise, the House majority whip who was critically wounded in the attack Wednesday, brought the masses to their feet.

Scalise remained listed in critical condition Thursday night after multiple surgeries, though word came from the hospital during the game that he had improved.

"By playing tonight we are showing the world that we will not be intimidated by threats, acts of violence or assaults on our democracy," said President Donald Trump, appearing on the park's giant screen but not attending. "The game will go on."

When the president intoned three words he said have brought Americans together for generations — "Let's play ball" — cheers rang out. But despite the unifying nature of the event, there were boos for the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 35 of 48

president, too, from the section for Democratic fans on the third base side.

Before the event, House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi told reporters, "Tonight we will go to the game, play our hardest, but we will all be Team Scalise."

Republican Rep. Chuck Fleischmann of Tennessee scored in the first inning, enjoying a different sort of adrenaline than the one he experienced Wednesday when he passed by the shooter over bloodied ground to take shelter in a dugout — confessing later that "the fear factor was horrific."

On that day, a man later identified as the attacker approached Rep. Jeff Duncan of South Carolina in the parking lot of the Alexandria, Virginia, ballfield, asking him, "Excuse me, sir, who's practicing today, Democrats or Republicans?" as Duncan recalls the encounter. He said Republicans were on the field, shortly before the gunman began shooting at them.

Duncan found that memory hard to shake Thursday night as he stood in for Scalise at second base.

"That was tough for me," Duncan said. "That was humbling in a way. It was never off my mind when I ran out there ... the reason I was going to second base was Steve Scalise, my colleague, was fighting for his life in the hospital right now."

Rep. Roger Williams of Texas, taken away in a stretcher with an injured ankle from the chaos in Virginia, hobbled around the third-base box Thursday night, coaching the GOP team as planned, with his crutches set aside. He wore a purple boot. His aide, Zack Barth, who was shot by the Virginia assailant, walked across the field on crutches. Both had appeared on the House floor earlier Thursday.

There was plenty of amateur-hour baseball in the event, but also some breakout play.

As in the past several years, Rep. Cedric Richmond, a Democrat from Louisiana, a close friend of his wounded Republican colleague and a player in his college days, dominated much of the night, from the mound and the plate. Democrats opened an 11-2 lead in the fifth inning on the strength of his pitching, and by then he had scored every time he was up. That lasted until the end of the seven-inning game.

Despite the bipartisan motivation behind the game, especially this year, partisanship was hardly abandoned as Democrats and Republicans faced off, each side seriously itching for a win. Republicans and Democrats sat in different parts of the park — fans could state their party preference when buying tickets. Baseball cards handed out as fans entered the park identified the players' partisan voting percentages.

And even as the fans rose as one to cheer Scalise's name and the Capitol Police, there was no mistaking the lusty cheers for their own side as the game progressed. Still, the divide was good-natured, for once.

From the stands, Vince Wetzell, a resident of Sacramento, California, who is visiting Washington and decided to take in the game, said, "It's just a good call to put aside political differences and just play some baseball."

Luce Laursen of La Crosse, Wisconsin, interning in the capital for a nonprofit, said, "It's showing that we might have differences in political spheres but we come together for a good cause."

Scalise was fielding balls at second base during the practice Wednesday when he was shot in the hip, and sustained serious injuries as the bullet traveled through his pelvis and injured internal organs.

The congressional game, which dates to 1909 and is a summertime tradition on Capitol Hill, is a rare example of bipartisanship in an increasingly polarized Washington. Long-ago Little Leaguers now in Congress don their spikes and dust off their gloves in a game played for claiming top dog status and to benefit several charities.

The charities are the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington, Washington Literacy Center, the Washington Nationals Dream Foundation and, after Wednesday's shooting, the Capitol Police Memorial Fund.

Once a relatively cozy affair, played at a minor league ballpark in Maryland, the game has gone big time in recent years and has been played at Nationals Park, just a few blocks from the Capitol.

Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred offered his thoughts and prayers after the shooting and endorsed the decision to play ball. He said he hoped the game would help heal emotional wounds.

With Thursday's game, Democrats have won 40 of the contests over the years. Republicans have won 39, and they tied once.

Democrats bounced back from a loss last year, when the game was played the night after they held an all-night session on the House floor to protest Republican inaction on gun legislation.

Associated Press writer Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

US official's 'quiet diplomacy' led to Warmbier's release

By **JOSH LEDERMAN** and **MATTHEW PENNINGTON**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It took months of "quiet diplomacy," a change in U.S. presidents and an American diplomat's extraordinary, secret visit to Pyongyang to bring Otto Warmbier home.

U.S. special envoy Joseph Yun was a household name to almost no one before Warmbier's return to Ohio on Tuesday, yet he joins an exceedingly short list of U.S. officials to set foot in furtive North Korea in recent years. The last such visit is believed to have been in November 2014, when former National Intelligence Director James Clapper brought home two other jailed Americans.

New details that emerged Thursday about Yun's brief visit to the North Korean capital illustrate the deep level of estrangement between the U.S. and North Korea, two countries that don't have diplomatic relations and have technically been in a state of war for more than half a century, despite the armistice that ended the Korean War.

When Yun finally laid eyes on the comatose Warmbier in a North Korean hospital, it was the first time the U.S. could verify his condition in person since his sentencing more than a year earlier, the State Department said.

For Yun, a longtime Asia hand who joined the foreign service in 1985, the trip was the culmination of a series of delicate and rare conversations between the U.S. and North Korean officials that transpired since President Donald Trump took office. They started in Norway, playing the role of neutral third party, and moved to New York, where North Korean diplomats are accredited at the United Nations.

Warmbier, 22, spent almost a year-and-a-half in captivity after being arrested in January 2016. The North accused the University of Virginia student of entering the country under the guise of a tourist and plotting against the nation's unity with "the tacit connivance of the U.S. government."

Paraded before the media a month later in Pyongyang, he tearfully apologized for attempting to steal a political banner from a staff-only section of his hotel. The Swedes, who represent U.S. interests in North Korea, managed to visit him in March 2016, a few weeks before he was sentenced to 15 years hard labor.

What happened next, and how Warmbier ended up in a coma, is still unclear. Warmbier's family said North Korea insists the coma was the result of botulism and a sleeping pill. But the family has dismissed that explanation. Doctors treating him in the U.S. said they found no evidence of botulism, but did find severe brain damage consistent with losing oxygen to the brain.

Though Warmbier supposedly had been in a coma for more than a year, the U.S. didn't learn the full extent of his condition until Yun and the doctors saw him in a Pyongyang hospital.

The "quiet diplomacy," as the State Department put it, came at a time of North Korean missile tests and increasing U.S. pressure on Kim Jong Un's totalitarian government. In February, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson briefed Trump on the Americans held in North Korea. Trump directed him to do everything possible to secure their release, officials said.

Then in May, Yun met in the Norwegian capital of Oslo with senior officials from North Korea's Foreign Ministry. The North Koreans agreed to let Swedish diplomats visit the U.S. detainees, including Warmbier. Shortly after the Swedish visits, the North reached out to the U.S. with an urgent request to meet in person.

Yun met with the North Korean ambassador to the U.N. in New York on June 6 and was told of Warmbier's medical status. Over the next days, officials said, Tillerson and Trump discussed the case. Tillerson then dispatched Yun to North Korea "with the intent of bringing Otto back to the United States," according to a White House timeline.

It's unclear if Yun knew as he set off for North Korea that he'd be allowed to bring Warmbier home.

"I know the answer to that," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said — but then she wouldn't say. "Some of these, as I hope you can try to understand, are sensitive, diplomatic matters."

Yun boarded a private aircraft along with two doctors and arrived Monday in Pyongyang, where they

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 37 of 48

were met by North Korean officials and saw Warmbier in a hospital. Yun demanded his release, the White House said. The next day, Warmbier was flown to a U.S. base in Japan before making the longer journey to Ohio to be reunited with his family.

U.S. officials didn't say whether Yun met with other North Korean diplomats while in the country or conducted more extensive diplomacy. He hasn't spoken to the media since returning and U.S. officials have referred most questions to Warmbier's family.

But Yun managed to see the other three detained Americans while in Pyongyang, providing the U.S. with much-sought information about their condition. The U.S. wouldn't publicly describe their condition.

Though former President Barack Obama's administration tried, too, to secure Warmbier's release, it wasn't enough, Warmbier's father said Thursday.

Fred Warmbier said he and his wife grew frustrated with the lack of progress and with the Obama administration's instructions not to talk about their son's case publicly out of concern it would upset the North and make a release less likely. In an emotional news conference in Ohio, the father did not demur when asked if Obama could have done more.

"I think the results speak for themselves," he said.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshlederman> and Matthew Pennington at https://twitter.com/mattpenn_99

Rickie Fowler leads US Open on day of highs and lows

By DOUG FERGUSON, AP Golf Writer

ERIN, Wis. (AP) — Erin Hills played like a pushover for a U.S. Open.

Check out the score of Rickie Fowler, who matched the U.S. Open scoring record to par for the opening round with a 7-under 65. Right behind him were 43 other players who broke par, breaking a championship record that had stood for 27 years. Adam Hadwin tied a U.S. Open record with six straight birdies.

Erin Hills also played like a beast.

Look no further than Rory McIlroy, the No. 2 player in the world, who didn't hit a fairway after the 10th hole, shot 42 on the back nine and posted a 78, his worst score in 27 rounds at the U.S. Open. Jason Day made two triple bogeys and closed with a birdie to avoid the indignity of shooting 80. He still had his worst score in a U.S. Open.

There were as many amateurs who broke par as players in the top 10 in the world — two each.

On a wild day of highs and lows — and even a commercial blimp that crashed and caught fire outside the golf course during the round — Fowler emerged with a one-shot lead over Paul Casey and U.S. Open rookie Xander Schauffele in a most peculiar debut for the 11-year-old golf course.

"Definitely not U.S. Open-like," Marc Leishman said.

Defending champion Dustin Johnson made only one birdie in his round of 75. Taking the long walk to sign his card, he looked back at the rain-softened course and mild breeze and said wistfully, "You won't get a better day for scoring."

No one took advantage like Fowler.

Fowler, who shared the 36-hole lead at the Masters in April, never came seriously close to bogey because he was never in trouble. He kept it in the short grass, the secret to Erin Hills that wouldn't appear to be that difficult with some of the widest fairways for this major.

"You don't get many rounds at the U.S. Open that are stress-free," Fowler said.

Fowler's seven birdies were from no more than 12 feet, including three in a row around the turn. His 7-under par tied the record to par for the first round of a U.S. Open held by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf, who each shot 7-under 63 at Baltusrol in 1980. He also joined McIlroy (2011 at Congressional) and Tiger Woods (2000 at Pebble Beach) as the only players to shoot 66 or better in the opening round without a bogey.

"It is always cool to be part of some sort of history in golf," Fowler said. "But I'd rather be remembered

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 38 of 48

for something that's done on Sunday."

The 44 sub-par rounds broke the first-round mark of 39 at Medinah in 1990.

Day fell back when it took him three chips from behind the green at No. 4 to get it on the putting surface, leading to the first of his two triple bogeys.

"I just played bad golf, man," Day said.

McIlroy joked earlier in the week that anyone who couldn't hit such wide fairways "might as well pack your bags and go home." He spent all day in the knee-high fescue.

"You cannot play this golf course if you're not in position off the tee, and I wasn't in position," McIlroy said. "Obviously, I paid the price for it today."

Casey started eagle-birdie and finished with two birdies over the final four holes for his 66.

"I was just trying to have half as good a round as Rickie had," said Casey, who played in the afternoon. "The scoring was so good this morning. I was happy it stayed benign for us, and I capitalized on it."

Schauffele had a chance to tie Fowler for the lead until his 12-foot birdie putt on the par-3 ninth slid by on the right.

The opening round was without Phil Mickelson for the first time since 1993. He was in California for his daughter's high school graduation, hopeful for enough of a weather delay to jet across the country to Wisconsin. But as the sun rose over Erin Hills, and the forecast was for no rain, Mickelson withdrew.

More startling than the low scores was smoke rising from about a half-mile away when a commercial blimp, not affiliated with the tournament, crashed into a field and burst into flames. The pilot, the only one aboard the blimp operated by Florida-based AirSign, was being treated for injuries.

"I was teeing off and I looked up and saw it on fire, and I felt sick to my stomach," Jamie Lovemark said.

On the golf course, there was only a barrage of birdies.

Hadwin made his six straight birdies from No. 18 through No. 5. The Canadian was 100 feet away for birdie on No. 6 and burned the edge of the cup on that one, except that it ran by some 7 feet and he three-putted for bogey.

"You don't often see that in a U.S. Open," Hadwin said.

The course was set up at 7,845 yards, the longest of any major. Length wasn't the issue. It was sporadic storms earlier in the week that has softened the greens. One example of that was Fowler hitting 3-wood into the green on the 632-yard 18th hole, with a breeze at his back. His ball landed on the green and only rolled out about 10 feet. On typical U.S. Open greens, that would have run all the way off the back of the green.

Still to be determined is what kind of test Erin Hills can present the rest of the week, especially with more rain on the way Friday and Saturday afternoon.

Deadlocked jury in Cosby trial wraps up for the night

By MARYCLAIRE DALE and MICHAEL R. SISAK, Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (AP) — Four days after getting the case, deadlocked jurors in Bill Cosby's sexual assault trial struggled to end their impasse Thursday on charges he drugged and molested a woman in 2004, the prospect of a mistrial growing larger even as the judge directed them to keep talking.

Still undecided, they wrapped up after 9 p.m. and will resume their work Friday morning.

The jurors had deliberated about 30 hours before telling Judge Steven O'Neill they couldn't reach a unanimous decision on any of the counts against the 79-year-old comedian. The judge told them to try again for a verdict.

The sequestered panel of seven men and five women complied, pondering the charges for nine more hours before asking to go back to their hotel.

Jurors who have appeared stressed and even angry seemed more upbeat than on previous nights, despite enduring another marathon session in a case that has already helped torpedo Cosby's career and nice-guy reputation.

Several jurors smiled or nodded approvingly when the judge said they must be exhausted and should

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 39 of 48

start fresh Friday.

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done," O'Neill told them.

Cosby left the courthouse shortly afterward.

The charges involve Cosby's sexual encounter with Andrea Constand, 44, at his suburban Philadelphia home. Constand says Cosby gave her pills that made her woozy, then violated her. His lawyer says Cosby and Constand were lovers sharing a consensual moment of intimacy.

Cosby's spokesman maintained the impasse showed that jurors doubted Constand's story.

"They're conflicted about the inconsistencies in Ms. Constand's testimony," spokesman Andrew Wyatt said. "And they're hearing Mr. C.'s testimony, and he's extremely truthful. And that's created this doubt."

Constand's lawyer, Dolores Troiani, said only that the "jury is apparently working very hard." The district attorney's office declined to comment.

Constand passed the time by shooting hoops in a hallway outside the district attorney's office. She tweeted a video that shows her shooting a mini-basketball into a net to the tune of "Sweet Georgia Brown," the theme song of the Harlem Globetrotters. It ended with a phrase scrolling down the screen reading: "ALWAYS FOLLOW THROUGH."

Constand won a national title with the University of Arizona and played in a pro league in Europe before landing a job with the Temple University women's basketball team. It was at Temple she met Cosby, a member of the board of trustees.

With the jury struggling to find common ground, some of the other women who have accused Cosby of sexual assault confronted sign-waving Cosby supporters gathered on the courthouse steps to await the outcome. But the atmosphere remained calm, with accusers and supporters even holding hands at times.

Cosby's spokesman Wyatt invited a family of four supporters to meet with the comedian inside the courthouse Thursday night. Wyatt said he believed a chat with the couple and their 14-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter would brighten Cosby's spirits.

Dozens of women have come forward to say Cosby had drugged and assaulted them, but this was the only case to result in criminal charges.

The 12-member jury must come to a unanimous decision to convict or acquit. If the panel can't break the deadlock, the judge could declare a hung jury and a mistrial. In that case, prosecutors would get four months to decide whether they want to retry the TV star or drop the charges.

University of Pennsylvania law professor David Rudovsky, a criminal lawyer in Philadelphia, said Thursday that the jurors' inability to agree on a verdict didn't surprise him, given the nature of a case that boiled down to Cosby's word against his accuser's and the legal meaning of consent.

He added a hung jury would be a victory for Cosby.

"In most criminal cases, anything short of a conviction is a win for the defense," said Rudovsky, who isn't involved in the case. "It doesn't surprise me that this jury is split. The prosecution had a strong case, but the defense was able to show a lot of inconsistencies."

The jurors have appeared increasingly tired and upset as deliberations dragged on for nearly 40 hours over four days. Some of them looked defeated as the judge sent them back to the jury room. One, more upbeat, nodded along.

The jury, bused in from the Pittsburgh area, has paused a half-dozen times to revisit key evidence, including Cosby's decade-old admissions that he fondled Constand after giving her pills.

Each of the three counts of aggravated indecent assault against Cosby carries a maximum 10-year prison term, though the counts could be merged at sentencing if he is convicted.

The case has already helped demolish his image as America's Dad, cultivated during his eight-year run as kindly Dr. Cliff Huxtable on the top-rated "The Cosby Show" in the 1980s and '90s.

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they grant permission, which Constand has done.

For more on Cosby, including trial updates, historical photos, videos and an audio series exploring the

case, visit <http://www.apnews.com/tag/CosbyonTrial>.

Pilot injured when blimp goes down near US Open in Wisconsin

By JAY COHEN, AP Sports Writer

ERIN, Wis. (AP) — A small blimp crashed near the U.S. Open on Thursday, seriously injuring the pilot and grabbing the attention of fans and golfers alike as they watched the fiery, smoking craft fall from the sky into an open field.

Sheriff's officials said the pilot was the only one on board. He had some burns, but was in stable condition, according to Pamela S. Sullivan, a senior air safety investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

"I was teeing off and I looked up and saw it on fire, and I felt sick to my stomach," Jamie Lovemark said after his opening round in one of golf's four majors. "I had the shakes. I felt terrible for the people inside. I didn't know what was going on. It was a horrible sight."

Golfer Brandt Snedeker said he spotted something while on the course at Erin Hills, about 35 miles northwest of Milwaukee.

"My caddie made a comment on the ninth hole. He said the blimp is not looking good," Snedeker said. "I guess it was nose down. I saw a puff of black smoke. I didn't know it was the blimp. It's not good. Glad everybody is OK."

Sullivan said the pilot had been interviewed by detectives from the Washington County Sheriff's Office, but the NTSB had not talked to him yet. He had just taken off on his second flight of the day in a hybrid of a typical blimp and a balloon envelope when he decided it was too windy and planned to return to a private airstrip.

He encountered an updraft on his way down and vented some of the air from the envelope so he could drop back down.

"When he was doing that he heard a sound similar to some of the panels ripping on the balloon," Sullivan said. "A couple seconds later he said he heard another rip sound. The airship pitched nose down."

"He turned off the manifold, the fuel to the burners. However, the envelope started collapsing and the burners were still burning the residual fuel. The envelope caught fire."

Sullivan said it's her understanding the pilot was able to crawl away from the burning wreckage. He was wearing a protective suit and gloves.

"He did have some burns, but that, we're assuming, probably was a huge factor in protecting him," she said.

The blimp, operated by Florida-based AirSign, was being used for advertising as it floated above the tournament.

A deputy at a security post reported seeing the aircraft on fire or smoking and rapidly descending about 11:15 a.m., authorities said. Rescue crews used utility vehicles to reach the crash site, about a half mile from the golf course.

Aerial video from a television news helicopter showed pieces of the flattened blimp on the field along with charred metal and grass. A handful of fans at the U.S. Open also posted video on Twitter of the craft's descent.

"It was a horrific scene," Lovemark said. "I've never seen a plane crash, blimp crash, anything like that. So it was pretty awful. I thought they might stop play."

Justin Maynard, a sales manager for AirSign, said the company's operations team on the ground in Erin had no definitive information on the pilot's condition, other than the pilot was expected to be OK.

Mary Ruediger, 45, was visiting her parents who live along an access road to the golf course and spotted the blimp going down.

"It was kind of floating and was deflating and I could see flames. Then it went behind the trees," Ruediger said. She said she drove toward the site where the blimp hit the ground.

"You could see the black smoke and then there were three big fireballs as it exploded," she said.

Associated Press photographer Charlie Riedel and AP writers Gretchen Ehlke, Doug Glass and Genaro C. Armas contributed to this report.

Doctors say US student freed by North Korea has brain damage

By **DAKE KANG** and **DAN SEWELL**, Associated Press

WYOMING, Ohio (AP) — An American college student who emerged from prison in North Korea in a coma has severe brain damage, but doctors don't know what caused it, a medical team treating him in Ohio said Thursday.

The doctors described Otto Warmbier as being in a state of "unresponsive wakefulness" but declined to discuss his outlook for improvement, saying such information would be kept confidential.

"He has spontaneous eye opening and blinking," said Dr. Daniel Kanter, director of neurocritical care for the University of Cincinnati Health system. "However, he shows no signs of understanding language, responding to verbal commands or awareness of his surroundings. He has not spoken."

Warmbier, 22, is in stable condition at the UC Medical Center, where he was taken after his arrival in Ohio late Tuesday after more than 17 months in North Korean captivity. The reclusive country accused the University of Virginia student of anti-state activities.

His father, Fred Warmbier, said the family was proud of him, calling him "a fighter."

The elder Warmbier said he didn't believe North Korea's explanation that the coma resulted from botulism and a sleeping pill. U.S. doctors said they found no evidence of active botulism, a rare, serious illness caused by contaminated food or a dirty wound.

He said there was no reason for North Korea to keep his son's condition secret for more than a year and to deny him top medical care. Warmbier's condition apparently deteriorated shortly after he was sentenced for subversion in March 2016.

Kanter said the young man suffered "extensive loss of brain tissue in all regions of the brain." Doctors said his injuries are consistent with respiratory arrest cutting off oxygen to the brain, but they don't know what caused it.

Doctors said they examined Warmbier's body and saw no evidence of fractures that might be evidence of severe beatings.

The family feels "relief that Otto is now home in the arms of those who love him and anger that he was so brutally treated for so long," his father said at Wyoming High School, where Warmbier graduated in 2013 as class salutatorian and played soccer.

Blue-and-white ribbons in the school's colors were tied around trees and utility poles all the way along the city's main road in a show of support.

To honor his son, Fred Warmbier wore the jacket the son wore when North Korea presented him before the media on Feb. 29, 2016, at an event at which he tearfully confessed that he tried to steal a propaganda banner while visiting the country. Otto Warmbier was sentenced the following month to 15 years in prison with hard labor.

Fred Warmbier said that he doesn't know why North Korea released his son but that the country doesn't do anything out of "the kindness of their hearts." He called on the country to release three other Americans held there.

In its first official comment since Warmbier was returned home, North Korea said it released him for humanitarian reasons. The state-run Korean Central News Agency on Thursday didn't comment on his medical condition.

Warmbier's father also accused North Korea of luring Americans to the country with a Chinese tour company making the false promise they will never be detained.

He said he received "a very nice phone call" Wednesday from President Donald Trump, who said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson worked hard to bring Otto home. Warmbier said the family was "extremely grateful for their efforts and concern."

He said he and his wife grew frustrated with the lack of word about their son from former President

Barack Obama's administration, which they said instructed them to keep a low profile to avoid upsetting the North Koreans.

Asked whether he thought the previous administration could have done more, Fred Warmbier replied: "I think the results speak for themselves."

One of Obama's advisers, Ned Price, said the Obama administration had "no higher priority" than securing the release of Americans detained overseas but North Korea's isolation "posed unique challenges." He said Obama "worked through every avenue available" to try to secure Warmbier's release.

Bill Richardson, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, called for an investigation into what happened to Warmbier.

Richardson, a Democrat who has made several trips to North Korea, said a forceful response from the U.S. government would be required "if it's determined that there was a cover-up and Otto's condition was not disclosed and he didn't get proper treatment."

Such detentions in the totalitarian nation have added to tensions between Washington and Pyongyang. The U.S. government accuses North Korea of using such detainees as political pawns. North Korea accuses Washington and South Korea of sending spies to overthrow its government.

Associated Press Writer Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that Otto Warmbier was presented to media for his confession in North Korea in 2016, not 2015, and on Feb. 29, not in March.

Australian prime minister says he 'channels' Trump in speech

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's prime minister on Friday denied he was impersonating President Donald Trump during an off-the-record speech he gave at Parliament House, describing his performance as "lighthearted and affectionate channeling."

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has attempted to limit any diplomatic fallout from the speech he gave on Wednesday night at an annual charity ball hosted by the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery after an Australian television network on Thursday broadcast excerpts recorded with a phone.

Turnbull made fun of both Trump and the Australian government's dismal opinion polls in an animated performance.

"Donald and I, we are winning and winning in the polls. We are winning so much. We are winning like we have never won before," Turnbull said in a speech that has now attracted international attention.

"We are winning in the polls. We are, we are — not the fake polls, not the fake polls — they're the ones we're not winning in. We're winning in the real polls, you know, the online polls. They are so easy to win," he added.

"Did you know that? I know that, did you know that? I kind of know that. I know that. They are so easy to win. I have this Russian guy, believe me it's true, it's true," he said.

Turnbull told Seven Network television on Friday that he was making fun of his own poor polling performance since his conservative coalition barely scraped back into government in elections last July.

"I don't actually do impersonations, that was not an impersonation. I was speaking on my own behalf, but perhaps a little bit of lighthearted and affectionate channeling," Turnbull said.

"I was sending up my own singular performance in opinion polls and I was the butt of my own jokes," he added.

Turnbull's relationship with Trump has been a subject of speculation. Turnbull's first telephone conversation with Trump in January over a refugee resettlement deal was, in Trump's words, "testy." But the two leaders made a public show of solidarity and friendship when they met for the first time in New York in May.

Turnbull is rarely critical of Trump in public and says they share a bond as wealthy businessmen who entered politics late in life.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 43 of 48

Unnamed government lawmakers have told The Australian newspaper that Turnbull's speech could damage the bilateral relationship and demonstrated the prime minister's lack of judgment.

Turnbull said on Friday the speech had to be seen in its Australian cultural context.

"We are all larrikins," Turnbull said, using an Australian term for an unconventional and lovable troublemaker.

"We don't take ourselves too seriously," he added.

Turnbull said his speech got mixed reviews. "I don't think it demonstrates that I'm up for 'Saturday Night Live' yet," Turnbull said, referring to the U.S. television show in which Alec Baldwin won acclaim through his Trump impersonations.

Asked if he followed Trump on Twitter and was checking Trump's feed for reaction to the speech, Turnbull replied: "I think the whole world follows him on Twitter."

U.S. charge d'affaires to Australia, James Carouso, was among the 600 who attended the ball.

The U.S. Embassy said in a statement: "We understand that last night's event is equivalent to our White House Correspondents' Dinner. We take this with the good humor that was intended."

Pitino outraged at NCAA penalties, Louisville will appeal

By GARY B. GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The NCAA didn't feel Louisville went far enough with its self-imposed sanctions following a sex scandal investigation, so the governing body Thursday handed down a few more.

An outraged Rick Pitino feels the NCAA went too far.

After completing its investigation of Katina Powell's allegations that she and other escorts were hired to have sex parties and strip for Louisville recruits and players, antics the NCAA described as "repugnant," it benched the Cardinals men's basketball coach for five games and imposed several other penalties.

Pitino's suspension is less than Jim Boeheim and Larry Brown recently received for NCAA violations.

Still, Louisville said it is appealing the NCAA's decision, and even that wasn't enough for Pitino. He fired a few salvos at the NCAA after reviewing the report.

"Not only was this unjust and over the top in its severity," the coach said at a news conference, "but I've lost a lot of faith in the NCAA."

Pitino, who has repeatedly denied any knowledge of former assistant Andre McGee's interactions with Powell, wasn't done.

"We are devastated by the news, all of us are," the Hall of Fame coach added. "But moving forward we believe we will win the appeal because it's right and it's just, and what went on was unjust and inconceivable."

The NCAA suspended Pitino for five Atlantic Coast Conference games; Boeheim and Brown each served nine-game suspensions for their indiscretions.

Louisville had self-imposed several sanctions, including a postseason ban in 2015-16.

The NCAA accepted those, and tacked on more. The other penalties Louisville received include vacating wins in which ineligible players participated, placing the basketball program on four years' probation, and issuing a 10-year show-cause order for McGee, Louisville's former basketball operations director.

The NCAA has not vacated the Cardinals' 2013 national championship — yet. And that might be one reason Pitino and Louisville officials are adamant about appealing the decision.

The NCAA said the school must determine which games ineligible players participated in, and that might include the Cardinals title game. Players deemed ineligible would be those involved in the sex parties, which are considered impermissible benefits.

Compliance consultant Chuck Smrt, hired by Louisville when the allegations surfaced, estimated that 108 regular season games and approximately 15 NCAA wins could be impacted — including the Cardinals' third national championship.

"The additional penalties imposed by the committee were the ones that surprised us," Smrt said during a news conference that included Pitino, athletic director Tom Jurich and Louisville interim President Greg

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 44 of 48

Postel.

Postel issued a statement saying the school believes the additional "severe" penalties are excessive and plans to appeal. The university, which self-imposed several sanctions, has 45 days to respond.

"The entire UofL community is saddened by what took place. It never should have happened, and that is why the school acted to severely penalize itself in 2016," Postel said. "Today, however, the NCAA Division I Committee on Infractions went beyond what we consider to be fair and reasonable.

"We intend to appeal all aspects of the penalties."

The long-awaited NCAA announcement reiterated its original view that Pitino should have known about McGee's activities with Powell, who alleged in a 2015 book that staffer McGee paid her \$10,000 for 22 shows at the Cardinals' dormitory from 2010-14, a period that includes their NCAA title run.

The NCAA's release included statements by the panel on its decision, saying: "The types of activities that occurred in this case were repugnant and threaten the integrity of the NCAA Collegiate Model, regardless."

Chief hearing officer Carol Cartwright also dismissed the idea that the amount of money involved — estimated by the NCAA to be at least \$5,400 — was relatively small.

"In this case, we felt that any of the acts, on their own, would be Level 1 and be inappropriate," Cartwright said in a conference call.

Other penalties prescribed by the panel also include men's basketball scholarship reductions and recruiting restrictions; a fine of \$5,000, plus the university must return money received through conference revenue sharing for its appearances in the 2012 to 2015 NCAA men's basketball championships.

The panel had harsh comments about McGee's actions in its decision.

"The former operations director, the individual entrusted to keep order at Minardi Hall, created an environment that has no place on a college campus and was directly at odds with college athletics and higher education," the panel said.

Pitino has maintained during the investigation he had no knowledge of the activities described in Powell's book, "Breaking Cardinal Rules: Basketball and the Escort Queen." The NCAA had said it in an earlier response to the school that Pitino didn't seem to want to know what his assistant was doing.

Postel repeated his support of Pitino on Thursday.

"This ruling is also unfair to Coach Pitino," Postel said, "who we believe could not have known about the illicit activities."

The NCAA, once again, disagreed.

"He essentially placed a peer of the student-athletes in a position of authority over them and visiting prospects and assumed that all would behave appropriately in an environment that was, for all practical purposes, a basketball dormitory," the report stated.

"Further, he delegated responsibility for monitoring the former operations director to his assistant coaches, who later stated they were unaware it was their job."

There are references throughout the report to similar cases involving a lack of appropriate coaching oversight at other big-name schools — Miami, Syracuse and Indiana among them. Boeheim, the veteran Syracuse coach, SMU's then-coach Brown, were each suspended for failing to keep track of how their players were receiving academic help.

McGee did not cooperate with the NCAA investigation, a fact Postel emphasized in his statement.

"The person responsible for these activities, Andre McGee, long ago left the university, and he has yet to cooperate with investigating officials. We are disappointed that he was not cooperative," Postel said. "In contrast, UofL did cooperate. ... We have been open and transparent throughout this process."

More AP college basketball at www.collegebasketball.ap.org and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Malaysia rejects US claims over assets said stolen from 1MDB

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A Malaysian sovereign wealth fund has rejected U.S. Justice Department allegations over money laundering and alleged theft of a treasure trove of assets including diamonds, a yacht and private jet and penthouse apartments.

The Malaysian government-controlled fund known informally as 1MDB and other officials in Kuala Lumpur insisted Friday that there was no proof linking the fund to such crimes.

On Thursday, the U.S. Justice Department filed a civil case seeking recovery of \$540 million in assets that it says were stolen from 1MDB, a fund intended to promote economic development projects. Overall, the Justice Department alleges that more than \$4.5 billion has been stolen from the fund.

In a 250-page filing for the U.S. District Court in Central California, the Justice Department outlined in detail the allegations of a complex money laundering scheme intended to enrich top-level officials of the fund, including some close to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak.

The 1MDB case is the largest single action the Justice Department has taken under its Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, which seeks to recover foreign bribery proceeds and embezzled funds. Several other countries including Singapore and Switzerland are conducting probes.

Last summer, prosecutors moved to recover more than \$1 billion diverted from the fund to pay for properties in New York and California, a \$35 million jet, art by Vincent Van Gogh and Claude Monet and other wealth used to help finance the movies, "Dumb and Dumber To" and "The Wolf of Wall Street," which was produced by Red Granite Pictures, a studio co-founded by Najib's stepson.

The Justice Department filing drew vehement objections from Malaysia, where Attorney General Mohamed Apandi Ali said there was no evidence that money was misappropriated from 1MDB.

Apandi also expressed "strong concerns" over suggestions Najib, who has not been named in civil cases related to 1MDB, engaged in criminal acts. The attorney general said Malaysia will uphold the "rule of law" and take action if there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing.

1MDB likewise said there was no documentary proof or witnesses' statements to support the Justice Department's claim.

"1MDB highlights that it is not a party to the civil lawsuit nor has it been contacted by the DOJ in relation to this matter," the fund said in a statement.

Najib's press secretary Tengku Sariffuddin separately voiced concern that the Justice Department didn't seek cooperation from the Malaysian government or 1MDB.

"We are also concerned by the unnecessary and gratuitous naming of certain matters and individuals that are only relevant to domestic political manipulation and interference. This suggests a motivation that goes beyond the objective of seizing assets," he said, without elaborating.

The Justice Department's court filing shows much of the wealth in question was moved through offshore dealings and bank accounts in Singapore, Switzerland, Luxembourg and the U.S. The evidence cited includes details of wire transfers of hundreds of millions of dollars.

It says the wife of an unnamed person identified as "Malaysian Official 1," who has been widely inferred to be Najib, received a 22-carat pink diamond necklace worth \$27.3 million in 2014 purchased with funds stolen from 1MDB.

Other assets included diamonds given to Australian model Miranda Kerr, movie posters and artwork given to Leonardo DiCaprio, as well as rights to the movies "Dumber and Dumber To" and "Daddy's Home" from Red Granite.

Some of the items at issue were provided to the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation for a charity auction. A DiCaprio spokesperson said that those items and an Academy Award won by Marlon Brando which was given to Mr. DiCaprio as a set gift by Red Granite to thank him for his work on "The Wolf of Wall Street" were voluntarily returned.

Red Granite released a statement saying it is trying to resolve the case and is fully cooperating with the Justice Department.

In announcing the Justice Department's filing, Sandra R. Brown, acting U.S. attorney for the Central

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 46 of 48

District of California, said the wealth alleged to have been stolen "should have been used to help the people of Malaysia, but instead was used by a small number of individuals to fuel their astonishing greed."

"We simply will not allow the United States to be a place where corrupt individuals can expect to hide assets and lavishly spend money that should be used for the benefit of citizens of other nations," she said.

Asian shares mixed as Wall St tech dive weighs on sentiment

By **KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian stocks were mixed Friday as a tech sell-off overnight on Wall Street shaded sentiment among investors who continued to focus on central bank policies, including Japan's decision Friday to keep its ultra-lax monetary stance intact.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 stock index rose 0.6 percent to 19,940.56 but South Korea's Kospi dipped 0.1 percent to 2,358.94. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rebounded 0.4 percent to 25,662.27 after dropping more than 1 percent the day before while the Shanghai Composite lost 0.2 percent to 3,127.72. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.3 percent to 5,780.80.

BANK OF JAPAN: The Bank of Japan opted Friday to keep its lax monetary policy intact, while noting signs of improvement in the world's third largest economy. A BOJ statement said it expected demand to accelerate, supporting a "moderate expansion." The central bank kept its key interest rate at minus 0.1 percent.

GREENBACK STRENGTH: The dollar maintained its recent gains, helped by the Federal Reserve's decision this week to raise its key interest rate for the third time in half a year and trim its bond holdings on signs that the U.S. economy continues to improve. The dollar rose to 111.15 yen from 110.92 yen in late trading Thursday while the euro eased to \$1.1152 from \$1.1147.

QUOTEWORTHY: "Market distortions ultimately lead to market failures, so perhaps the Federal Reserve and other global central banks are growing concerned with investors' hubris and signaling it's time to reign in risk," said Stephen Innes, senior trader at OANDA. "The market is now wondering which central bank will be next to drain the punch bowl. BOJ?"

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks ended lower. The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 0.2 percent to 2,432.46. The Dow Jones industrial average dipped 0.1 percent to 21,359.90 after Wednesday's record high close. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite dropped 0.5 percent to 6,165.50.

ENERGY: Oil futures were steady after sliding to a seven-month low. Benchmark U.S. crude slipped 2 cents to \$44.44 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 27 cents to settle at \$44.46 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, climbed 2 cents to \$46.94 a barrel in London.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 16, the 167th day of 2017. There are 198 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 16, 1967, the three-day Monterey International Pop Music Festival, a major event of the "Summer of Love," opened in northern California; among the featured acts were Jefferson Airplane, The Who, the Grateful Dead, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Janis Joplin, Otis Redding and Ravi Shankar.

On this date:

In 1567, Mary, Queen of Scots, was imprisoned in Lochleven Castle in Scotland. (She escaped almost a year later but ended up imprisoned again.)

In 1858, accepting the Illinois Republican Party's nomination for the U.S. Senate, Abraham Lincoln said the slavery issue had to be resolved, declaring, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

In 1903, Ford Motor Co. was incorporated.

In 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act became law with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signature.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 47 of 48

(The Act was later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.) The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. was founded as President Roosevelt signed the Banking Act of 1933.

In 1942, a second four-man team of Nazi saboteurs landed in Florida, three days after another group arrived on Long Island, New York. (The plot was foiled when two members of the first team agreed to betray their comrades.)

In 1944, George Stinney, a 14-year-old black youth, was electrocuted by the state of South Carolina for the murders of two white girls, Betty June Binnicker, 11, and Mary Emma Thames, 7.

In 1956, poets Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes were married in London.

In 1963, the world's first female space traveler, Valentina Tereshkova (teh-ruhsh-KOH'-vuh), 26, was launched into orbit by the Soviet Union aboard Vostok 6; she spent 71 hours in flight, circling the Earth 48 times before returning safely.

In 1977, Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev was named president, becoming the first person to hold both posts simultaneously. Business software maker Oracle Corp. had its beginnings as Larry Ellison, Bob Miner and Ed Oates founded Oracle's precursor, Software Development Laboratories.

In 1987, a jury in New York acquitted Bernhard Goetz of attempted murder in the subway shooting of four youths he said were going to rob him; however, Goetz was convicted of illegal weapons possession. (In 1996, a civil jury ordered Goetz to pay \$43 million to one of the persons he had shot.)

In 1996, Russian voters went to the polls in their first independent presidential election; the result was a runoff between President Boris Yeltsin (the eventual winner) and Communist challenger Gennady Zyuganov. Sportscaster Mel Allen died in Greenwich, Connecticut, at age 83.

In 2015, real estate mogul Donald Trump launched his successful campaign to become President of the United States with a speech at Trump Tower in Manhattan.

Ten years ago: A North Carolina State Bar disciplinary committee said disgraced prosecutor Mike Nifong would be disbarred for his disastrous prosecution of three Duke University lacrosse players falsely accused of rape. Six people were killed when a car driven by Australian-born professional drag racer Troy Critchley went out of control and plowed into a parade crowd in Selmer, Tennessee. (Critchley later pleaded guilty to reckless assault, thereby avoiding jail time.) U.S. astronaut Sunita "Sunni" Williams set a then-record aboard the international space station for the longest single spaceflight by any woman, surpassing the record of 188 days set by astronaut Shannon Lucid at the Mir space station in 1996. (Williams spent a total of 195 days aboard the station; her record was eclipsed in 2015 by Samantha Cristoforetti of the European Space Agency, who spent 199 days in spaceflight.)

Five years ago: Egyptians began going to the polls for a two-day runoff to choose their first freely elected president; Islamist candidate Mohammed Morsi emerged the winner. China launched its most ambitious space mission to date, carrying its first female astronaut, Liu Yang, and two male colleagues on a 13-day mission to an orbiting module that ended safely.

One year ago: President Barack Obama traveled to Orlando, Florida, the scene of a deadly nightclub shooting that claimed 49 victims; the president embraced grieving families and cheered on Democrats' push for new gun control measures. Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, in a livestream to his supporters from Vermont, said he would work with Hillary Clinton to transform the Democratic Party, adding that his "political revolution" had to continue and ensure the defeat of Republican Donald Trump. Walt Disney Co. opened Shanghai Disneyland, its first theme park in mainland China.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Eileen Atkins (TV: "The Crown"; "Doc Martin") is 83. Actor Bill Cobbs is 83. Author Joyce Carol Oates is 79. Country singer Billy "Crash" Craddock is 79. Songwriter Lamont Dozier is 76. Rhythm-and-blues singer Eddie Levert is 75. Actress Joan Van Ark is 74. Actor Geoff Pierson is 68. Rhythm-and-blues singer James Smith (The Stylistics) is 67. Boxing Hall of Famer Roberto Duran is 66. Pop singer Gino Vannelli is 65. Actress Laurie Metcalf is 62. Actor Arnold Vosloo is 55. Actor Danny Burstein is 53. Model-actress Jenny Shimizu is 50. Actor James Patrick Stuart is 49. Rapper MC Ren is 48. Actor Clifton Collins Jr. is 47. Golfer Phil Mickelson is 47. Actor John Cho is 45. Actor Eddie Cibrian is 44. Actor Fred Koehler is 42. Actress China (chee-nah) Shavers is 40. Actor Daniel Bruhl is 39. Bluegrass musician Caleb Smith (Balsam Range) is 39. Actress Sibel Kekilli is 37. Actress Missy Peregrin (PEH'-rih-grihm) is

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, June 16, 2017 ~ Vol. 24 - No. 337 ~ 48 of 48

35. Actress Olivia Hack is 34. Singer Diana DeGarmo (TV: "American Idol") is 30. Pop-rock musician Ian Keaggy (Hot Chelle (SHEL)) is 30.

Thought for Today: "Not to know is bad. Not to want to know is worse. Not to hope is unthinkable. Not to care is unforgivable." — Nigerian saying.