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Official Notices

Groton City Book (updated 7-11)
Brown County Book (Updated 7-10)
Groton Area School Book
Other Official Notices Book
Claremont Town Official Notices Book
Frederick Area School Book

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

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

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12

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlet with gravy, scalloped potatoes, corn O'Brien, pear slices, whole wheat bread.

Legion Region in Groton: 11 a.m., Claremont/Britton vs. Mobridge; 1:30 p.m., Northville vs. Redfield; 4 p.m., Groton plays winner for Claremont/Britton-Mobridge game; 6:30 p.m., Warner plays winner for Northville/Redfield game.

Outdoor Story Time: at the Little Free Library located south of the Methodist Church, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Wednesday coffee time, 9 a.m.; Finance Meeting, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Joint circles potluck at 6 p.m. (bring salad or dessert)

U12: host Kusler, 6 p.m., DH, Nelson Field.

U10 W/R: host Andover, 7 p.m., 1 game, Nelson Field

T-Ball: Black hosts Andover, 6 p.m., Falk Field

Olive Grove: Men's League, 6 p.m.

13

Senior Menu: Hamburger gravy over mashed potatoes, broccoli, Acini De Pepe fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Legion: Regions in Groton

Softball: at Redfield (U8 at 5:30 p.m., U10 at 6:30 p.m., U12 at 7:30 p.m.)

Amateurs: at Aberdeen, 6 p.m.



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“ISN'T IT COOL WHEN
THE DAYS THAT ARE
SUPPOSED TO FEEL
GOOD, ACTUALLY DO?”

- Jim Carrey

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

Save on Your Summer Road Trip Adventure

By Nathaniel Sillin

Are you packing up your car and hitting the road this summer? You're not alone. According to a survey conducted by AAA, road trips are the most popular type of vacation for families in the U.S. in 2017. In fact, 10 percent more families are expected to take road trips this year than last.

From driving to the tip of Cape Cod, to seeing the Great Lakes all the way to a drive through the Yosemite Valley in California, there are limitless ways to explore on the road. Whether you're going to visit family or taking off on an epic adventure, a road trip can be a great way to make travel about the journey rather than the destination.

Before you hit the road, make sure your car can handle the trip. Before you pack up your car, it's a good idea to take your car to a mechanic and ensure that it's ready for the drive. Having your car inspected and serviced by a mechanic before a road trip can be a worthwhile investment that could both save you money and prevent an untimely breakdown. Looking into a rental car is an alternative you may want to consider if you're hoping to avoid wear and tear that might depreciate your car's value. Consider your options carefully and choose what makes most financial sense for you.

Pack for bumps along the way. A flat tire or dead battery can put a serious damper on your road trip, especially if you're not prepared. Keeping a spare tire in your car and checking your tire pressure and tread should be on your pre-trip checklist. Along with your bags, bring a few items for preventive maintenance measures on the road. Having jumper cables, coolant and engine oil handy can save you time and money.

Map out your trip ahead of time. While just jumping in the car and driving without a set destination can be an enticing idea, the spontaneity will likely result in more expenses. Knowing when and where you'll stop ahead of time, especially for hotels and outings, will help you stick to a budget. If you still crave the more adventurous aspects of a road trip, you can make a general plan for your major excursions and routes, while stopping for unexpected attractions and views as you go.

Comparison shop to keep hotel prices under control. Booking ahead of time and using comparison shopping websites will save you from driving around to find the best hotel deal when you're already tired from a long drive. If you do have to book last-minute, consider using hotel coupon books, hotel-booking apps, group coupon sites or reward points to save a little more. Camping could be another alternative to booking a hotel, which can be particularly cheap if you already have gear like tents and sleeping bags.

Managing your mileage could add up to major savings. Though fuel prices may generally be down, the cost of filling up your tank can still add up. To make this cost more manageable, you can take advantage of apps that help you find the best gas prices in your area. In certain cases, you may also want to consider renting a more fuel-efficient car. You can save even more by mapping your trip ahead of time to avoid road tollways and construction that might slow you down.

Keep kids entertained to avoid unnecessary stops. Kids tend to get antsy in the back seat, which can lead to more frequent stops and a few impulse buys if you're not prepared. Packing snacks and meals ahead of time can help you avoid making extra purchases at the gas station, and will often be cheaper.

Also have a plan for keeping your kids entertained. Let them choose a few activities ahead of time, like preparing a road trip playlist or making a game like road trip bingo with sights you'll be seeing along the way. If you have a tablet or phone, downloading free games, podcasts or movies can be another great option.

Protect your home while you are away. One other way to save on your road trip is to ensure that your home is protected while you're gone. If you can, ask a trusted neighbor, friend or family member to keep an eye on your house. If you can't find someone to help, you can call US Postal Service to hold your mail while you're away. Double check that you've locked all doors and windows, including the garage door, and that you've set your alarms and put your lights on a timer.

Bottom line: Road trips can be an adventurous and inexpensive way to see the country, but costs can add up if you're underprepared. Planning your stops and packing to anticipate your needs could help you enjoy the ride rather than worry about the expenses.

USDA Approves Another Request to Help Drought-Stricken Livestock Producers

"I'm grateful that Secretary Perdue has taken such quick action on these requests to help livestock producers through a difficult time, and I know they are, too." - Sen. John Thune

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), a longtime member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, today issued the following statement after the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) granted a request to allow emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres beginning July 16, which is more than two weeks ahead of schedule. These CRP-enrolled acres are typically not available to haying and grazing until August 1. Today's authorization includes any county with any part of its border that is located within 150 miles of a county that has been approved for emergency CRP haying. USDA's announcement also means that no CRP rental payment will be assessed for CRP emergency haying or grazing.

"Two weeks might not sound like a long time, but when faced with conditions as severe as they currently are, every single day matters," said Thune. "When I most recently spoke with USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue this weekend, I was traveling through a hard-hit drought area in South Dakota. I was able to give him as close to a first-hand account as possible of what folks are dealing with in the state. I'm grateful that Secretary Perdue has taken such quick action on these requests to help livestock producers through a difficult time, and I know they are, too."

On June 29, USDA approved Thune's common-sense recommendation to reverse an earlier decision that would have forced ranchers to destroy useable hay on CRP-enrolled acres that are subject to CRP mid-contract management. As a result of USDA's decision, that hay can now be used as feed for livestock in areas that are suffering from drought conditions.

USDA also granted Thune's request to allow immediate access to emergency grazing on CRP-enrolled acres for any county in which any part of its border lies within 150 miles of a county that has been approved for emergency grazing of CRP. That means all of South Dakota and North Dakota, two-thirds of Montana, half of Wyoming and Nebraska, and portions of Iowa and Minnesota are now available for emergency grazing on certain CRP land.

Thune is still working with USDA to make nearly 500,000 CRP acres in South Dakota that are categorized as "environmentally sensitive" and currently off limits available for emergency haying and grazing.

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CRAZY SALE

Don't Miss Out!!!!

LOWEST prices EVER!!!

Almost EVERYTHING is
on sale!

July 13-14-15

Sidewalk
SALE!



101 N Main St, Groton SD
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
Saturday - 9am-3pm (July 9th only)



"Always Being Made New"

Ladies' Luncheon & Program

Wednesday, July 19 – Noon

Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol

Silent Auction at 11 a.m. – Door Prizes
Pastor Rhia Strohm, Bethlehem Lutheran
Church – speaker

Advance tickets please: \$10

Call Kay Espeland 492-3507

Alice Jean Peterson 492-3351

or contact any WELCA member

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Death Notice: John Pulfrey

John Pulfrey, 98, of Claremont passed away July 11, 2017 at Wheatcrest Hills in Britton. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

GDI News/Clean/Fit

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the E-Weekly
Groton Independent
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for 5¢

Crazy Days

July 13th and 14th: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sign up for membership to
the fitness center.

If you sign up for auto pay,
you will get one free month!

Wash a load of clothes,
wash a load FREE!
(Limit of 2 per person)

Main Office: 21 N Main
605/397-NEWS (6397)

THE PRAY FOR RAIN CAMPAIGN

To end South Dakota's Drought

At 7:00 PM this Wednesday night, July 12, 2017, South Dakotans across the state are being asked to stop whatever they are doing and unite in prayer to God for rain. Conditions range from abnormally dry to extreme drought in our state, and our livestock and crop producers are in desperate need of rain. A public prayer gathering will be held on Wednesday at 7:00 PM at the John Witherspoon College (4021 Range Rd. Rapid City, home of BigHorn Canyon Community Church).

Today in Weather History

July 12, 1993: A thunderstorm dumped up to four inches of rain in 30 minutes, 25 miles west of Pierre. This storm washed hay into big blocks up to five feet high. The heavy rains also caused water to spill over an irrigation dam. Another severe thunderstorm occurred over Dewey County and produced strong winds, damaging hail, and flooding rains which destroyed crops and hay fields. The storm knocked out windows and screens in the Lantry area. Runoff from the storm rushed through the streets of Eagle Butte causing water damage to homes and businesses. Water was reported flowing four to five feet deep through a cafe. High winds also tipped over a house trailer.

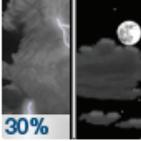
July 12, 2004: Hail up to the size of softballs fell in and around Onaka, in Faulk County, damaging vehicles, farm equipment, and homes. Lightning struck a home in Britton starting a fire in the attic, which resulted in significant damage to the home. High winds along with hail up to the size of baseballs caused some structural, vehicle, crop, and tree damage in and around Astoria and Toronto in Deuel County.

1995: An intense heat wave affected much of the Midwest for a 4-day period beginning on this day. The worst effects of the heat were noted in the Chicago metropolitan area, where 583 people died from the heat. Temperatures across the area reached as high as 104 degrees, overnight lows on falling to the upper 70s to low 80s. Dew point temperatures in the upper 70s to low 80s created heat indexes peaking at 125 degrees. Electricity and water usage reached record levels, causing periodic outages.

1996: Hurricane Bertha makes landfall near Wrightsville Beach, NC with maximum winds of 105 mph, but the storm surge dealt the most devastation. The U.S. Virgin Islands, along with North Carolina, were declared federal disaster areas. Surveys indicate that Bertha damaged almost 2,500 homes on St. Thomas and St. John. For many, it was the second hit in the ten months since Hurricane Marilyn devastated the same area. The primary effects in North Carolina were to the coastal counties and included storm surge flooding and beach erosion, roof damage, piers washed away, fallen trees and damage to crops. Over 5,000 homes were damaged, mostly from storm surge. Storm total rainfall amounts ranged from 5 to 8 inches along a coastal strip from South Carolina to Maine. Overall, as many as 12 deaths resulted with 8 in the U.S. and territories.

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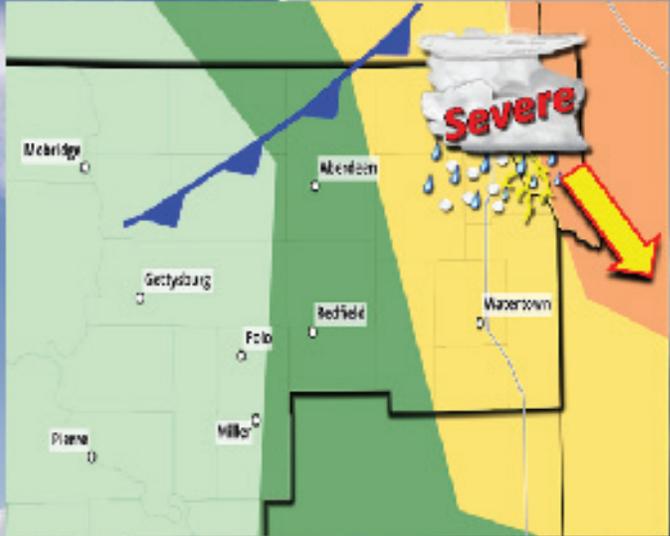
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Severe Thunderstorms	Severe Thunderstorms then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Hot
High: 96 °F	Low: 65 °F	High: 86 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 86 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 96 °F

Heat Advisory 2pm – 7pm



High Heat & Humidity
Heat Index 95-105°F

Afternoon/Evening Storms



Main Risk:
Hail & High Winds



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

 NWSAberdeen

Created: 7/11/2017 5:30 AM

 @NWSAberdeen
 

Published on: 07/11/2017 at 5:37AM

Mid clouds and light showers/sprinkles will move from western to central South Dakota through the day though with little moisture. Otherwise, with afternoon sun we should see temperatures a few degrees above average. A steady warming trend starts Thursday with another round of very hot temperatures Friday into next week.

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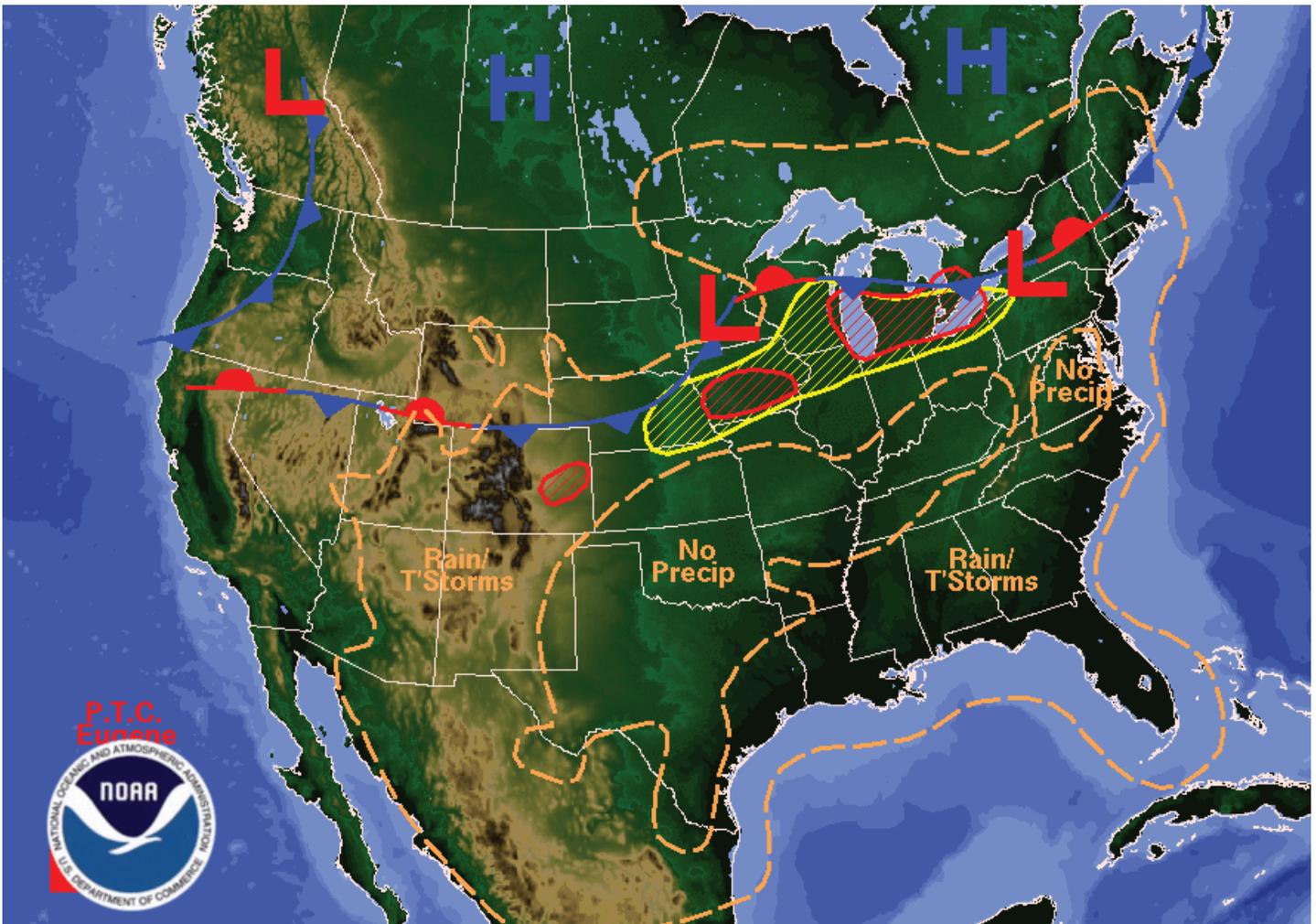
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 98.7 F at 4:41 PM
Heat Index: 109.0 at 7:50 PM
Low Outside Temp: 68.2 F at 1:35 AM
High Gust: 23.0 Mph at 10:10 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1936
Record Low: 40° in 1941
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July: 1.28
Precip to date in July: 0.17
Average Precip to date: 12.12
Precip Year to Date: 5.94
Sunset Tonight: 9:21 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Jul 12, 2017, issued 4:40 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds 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)

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GOD'S MERCY

February 14 is a day that has been set aside as a day to express love and affection. Cards and candy, gifts and flowers are given freely and are usually intended to make a statement of appreciation to someone who has a special place in our heart.

We read in Psalm 23 that the "goodness and mercy of God will follow us all the days of our lives." But the word mercy is best translated "love" – a love that is not readily visible in our world but is vitally needed by each of us. It is God's love that we can only know and experience through His promises.

Rather than being pursued and punished by a god who is angry with us for breaking his laws, we have a God who pursues us and promises to provide for our every need from His limitless love and grace. It is this God that David knew and trusted. It is this God that David knew that he could go to for hope and help, love and forgiveness. It is this God that David knew could be trusted to protect him in times of trouble. It is this God that David knew.

And, we too can come to know this God as David knew Him. And, we too can come to trust Him as David trusted Him.

When we speak of God's love, we speak of a love that comes first from loyalty – He will never leave us nor abandon us. We know that it is a love that will surround us with care and compassion. We know that this love will be available to meet our every need every day.

Prayer: We thank You, loving Father, for a love that is never ending, always available and freely given. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 23:6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

07-18-24-55-74, Mega Ball: 10, Megaplier: 2

(seven, eighteen, twenty-four, fifty-five, seventy-four; Mega Ball: ten; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$202 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$155 million

State investigating short-term lender's new loan product

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Division of Banking is investigating whether a short-term lending company's new loan product complies with an interest rate cap voters passed in the 2016 election, the financial regulatory office said Tuesday.

Voters limited interest rates charged by businesses such as payday and auto title lenders to 36 percent annually. The Banking Division said in a statement that Dollar Loan Center is offering short-term loans in Rapid City and Sioux Falls with a 36 percent annual interest rate, charging late fees if they're not repaid in one week.

The voter initiative caused many short-term lenders to leave South Dakota. Dollar Loan Center renewed at least two state licenses for 2017, declining to renew eight others, according to information the division released in January.

Dollar Loan Center CEO Chuck Brennan said in a statement to the Argus Leader that the new loan product conforms specifically to the voter-approved measure. Brennan didn't immediately return a telephone message from The Associated Press.

Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba, who helped lead the rate cap campaign, said the product violates the spirit of the law and is a move to evade the cap.

"I'm disappointed and angry that 76 percent of South Dakota voters said they wanted a 36 percent rate cap and here is a local businessperson who says he loves this community that is ignoring the will of the people," Nesiba said.

Dollar Loan Center's new "signature loans" come in \$250 increments up to \$1,000, according to the company's website, www.dontbebroke.com. Someone who borrowed \$250 would be charged a \$25 late fee each week until the loan is paid off, while a \$1,000 loan would incur a \$70 weekly late fee.

Diane Standaert, director of state policy at the Center for Responsible Lending, said the product warrants investigation. South Dakota's law has a provision that protects against attempts to evade the rate cap, she said.

"Looking at the terms, it appears to be a loan product intended to be difficult to repay and then make money off of the inability to repay those loans," she said.

The Banking Division will review the terms of the loan in conjunction with state law to determine if the product is in compliance, Director Bret Afdahl said in the statement.

7 hog facility permit applications withdrawn in South Dakota

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Seven hog facility permit applications in the southeastern part of South Dakota have been withdrawn after recent backlash.

The applications were submitted by Karl Schenk, Craig Johnson and Jay Cutts for concentrated animal feeding operations in Yankton County. They withdrew their requests Monday, the Press & Dakotan (<http://bit.ly/2sM2DsC>) reported.

The applications were originally approved during a Yankton Planning & Zoning board meeting in June. But the County Board of Adjustment tabled them last Wednesday after a lawyer representing opponents said a number of items usually completed before reaching the adjustment board hadn't been completed.

"My clients indicated that they wanted to reevaluate their options," said Ross Den Herder, attorney for the three applicants. "They were fairly unhappy with last Wednesday's meeting."

County Commission Chairman Don Kettering said he wasn't aware of the decision and is disappointed in the outcome. He said he respects the developers' decision to look at other options.

"It's unfortunate if they did, but that's certainly their option, and I can understand why they would (given) the amount of backlash they got for trying to do something that would help the economy and help the community," Kettering said.

The proposals received a lot of publicity, with large anti-facility crowds gathering at the board meetings and opposition organizations forming, including the group Citizens Fighting for Quality of Life. Many residents opposing the facilities said the hog farms would affect the community's quality of life.

Each proposed facility was expected to house a 2,400-head operation. That's less than the number of animal units requiring a state permit.

Kettering said it would be a loss if the developers move the operation elsewhere.

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

Microsoft eyes buffer zone in TV airwaves for rural internet

By MATT O'BRIEN, AP Technology Writer

Microsoft wants to extend broadband services to rural America by turning to a wireless technology that uses the buffer zones separating individual television channels in the airwaves.

Microsoft plans to partner with rural telecommunications providers in 12 states stretching from Washington to Maine to get about 2 million rural Americans connected to high-speed internet over the next five years.

It's also calling for regulatory cooperation from the Federal Communications Commission and broader support from the public sector to expand rural broadband to the more than 20 million people who don't have it.

Microsoft's initiative, unveiled Tuesday, comes as policy makers struggle to extend high-speed internet services to rural areas, which cable and phone companies have often shunned as cost prohibitive. Getting more people connected in rural areas has been a priority of President Donald Trump's administration.

Brad Smith, Microsoft's president and chief legal officer, said the company won't make money on the operations, but could benefit from serving rural users with its services, many of which run ads or require paid subscriptions.

The project still faces several challenges, including the costs of setting up antennas and service base

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stations, as well as the devices individual homes will need. Those costs are expected to decline over time, though.

Microsoft has tried using the TV buffer zones, or white space, to provide broadband internet in several countries. But the idea is "still in its infancy," said Parmesh Ramanathan, an engineering professor at the University of Wisconsin.

Ramanathan said this technology could prove cheaper than existing methods, such as laying down fiber-optic cables, but telecom companies will still need subsidies to make it economical.

"It requires a sustained effort," he said. "It's not something where you can show profit in a quarter. They have to have longer-term vision."

The initiative also faces objections from the National Association of Broadcasters, which said it was the "height of arrogance" for Microsoft to "demand free, unlicensed spectrum after refusing to bid on TV airwaves" in a recent FCC auction. The group said the buffer zones, though currently unused, are important for preventing adjacent channels from interfering with each other.

That's less of a problem in most rural areas, said Doug Brake, a telecommunications policy analyst with the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a think tank that includes Microsoft among its donors.

"In rural areas, there aren't that many television broadcasters so there's a lot of unused spectrum," Brake said. "The real challenge is getting the number of users, the scale. Is there enough of a market for the device manufacturers to build these devices?"

To make it work, Microsoft said the FCC will have to guarantee that these buffer zones remain available nationwide — and make even more such zones available in rural areas. Other companies, including Google, have made similar requests.

Of the three TV channels that Microsoft wants the FCC to free up around the country for what it describes as "public" use, the biggest controversy has centered around one used by low-power television broadcasters that often provide niche programming to small communities. Brake said some of those stations "might get bumped off in a few markets" if those airwaves are reserved for broadband internet service.

Microsoft is already piloting its idea in a sparsely populated region of southern Virginia, where it's providing \$250,000 to the Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corp. The South Boston, Virginia-based telecommunications provider will contribute another \$250,000 and use a \$500,000 grant from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. The project is providing free internet for local students to access educational websites, and charging customers who want expanded service.

Mid-Atlantic's chief executive, Ted Deriso, said he reached out to Microsoft several years ago after seeing the Redmond, Washington, company deploy the technology in other parts of the world.

"We said, 'Wow, the problems they're trying to solve in rural parts of Africa are the same we have in rural Virginia, on the technology side,'" Deriso said.

He said the use of television white spaces is great for rural areas with lots of trees, hills and other obstacles.

"You need a type of technology that can go longer distances and has better penetration," he said. "You're trying to reach more customers without using a ton of equipment."

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai visited Deriso's southern Virginia office on Tuesday to talk about the project, around the same time Smith was unveiling Microsoft's plan to industry and political leaders at a Washington hotel near the White House.

Microsoft said it will pilot its initiative in rural communities in Arizona, Georgia, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

Ethics amendment backers to start push to get on 2018 ballot

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Supporters of a constitutional amendment that would replace a voter-imposed government ethics overhaul that South Dakota lawmakers repealed this year plan to start building support to put the amendment before voters in 2018, the sponsoring group said Tuesday.

Events will be held in seven cities to train volunteers who will circulate petitions, starting Saturday in Madison, Rapid City and Sioux Falls, Represent South Dakota said in a statement. The amendment would tighten campaign finance and lobbying restrictions, create an independent ethics commission and require that laws changing the ballot question process pass a public vote, among other provisions.

"While the repeal of a law passed by the voters was troubling, seeing the continued outpouring of support from people of all political stripes has been refreshing," Darrell Solberg, a former Democratic lawmaker and co-chairman of Represent South Dakota, said in the statement.

Represent South Dakota bills itself as conservative, progressive and independent state residents working together to fight corruption. It started as a local offshoot of Represent.Us, a Massachusetts-based organization working to reduce the influence of money in politics that helped fund the 2016 South Dakota ballot measure campaign.

A little over 51 percent of voters supported that government ethics initiative last year, but Republican lawmakers scrubbed the initiative from law just months later citing constitutional concerns. Initiative supporters accused lawmakers of overturning the will of the voters.

Lawmakers passed bills intended to replace provisions of the initiative, but supporters of the ethics overhaul say that the Legislature's replacements fall short of what the voters approved.

If passed, the new constitutional amendment would largely be protected from legislative changes.

The new amendment would create a seven-member state government accountability board with broad powers to serve as a citizen ethics commission of voters. It would require lawmakers to put \$389,000 annually indexed to inflation into a fund administered by the board.

The panel would investigate allegations of corruption and violations of lobbying, campaign finance and government ethics regulations. It would also have the authority to conduct audits of disclosures including for lobbying and campaign finance and impose sanctions such as fines on public officials.

Under current law, a less powerful state watchdog board can investigate statewide officeholders and executive branch employees.

The wide-ranging new amendment would lower campaign donation limits. For example, it would decrease the contribution limit for a state representative from \$1,000 a year from individuals to \$500 per election cycle. It would also ban donations from corporations and labor unions to candidates or political parties, although they could still donate to other political committees. It also would bar gifts from lobbyists to many public officials.

Currently, there's an annual \$100 limit on gifts that legislators and other public officials can accept from lobbyists, but gifts don't include food, beverage or entertainment for immediate consumption, among other things.

The new proposed amendment also prevents the Legislature from altering or rejecting laws approved by voters without returning to the ballot. At least 10 states, but not South Dakota, have provisions to protect citizens' initiatives from state lawmakers.

"At its core, the Anti-Corruption Amendment is about returning power to the people and giving voters the final say," Represent South Dakota spokesman Doug Kronaizl said in the statement.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs has approved the amendment petition for signature gathering. The campaign events will be used to teach volunteers how to safely and effectively circulate petitions in

their areas, according to group. Supporters would have to submit nearly 28,000 valid signatures to the secretary of state by November 2017 for the amendment to appear on the 2018 ballot.

A different group is proposing a separate constitutional amendment that would also make it harder for the Legislature to tamper with voter initiatives.

Woman's death in Platte ruled accidental

PLATTE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a woman found dead in her Platte home last week died accidentally.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley and Charles Mix County Sheriff Randy Thaler issued a statement Tuesday saying an autopsy shows 66-year-old Janet Strickland-Collins had a laceration to her shin and died of blood loss, as well as other underlying health issues. Her body was found Friday.

The statement did not explain how Strickland-Collins was injured.

Oglala Sioux official pleads not guilty to embezzlement

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — An official accused of stealing from the Oglala Sioux tribe has pleaded not guilty. Fifty-seven-year-old Charles Cummings, of Martin, faces theft and embezzlement charges in federal court. U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says Cummings entered his plea late last week.

Cummings is accused of embezzling more than \$1,000 from the tribe while serving as a district vice chairman. He faces up to five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and restitution if convicted.

Seized herd of cattle in Spink County to be sold by state

REDFIELD, S.D. (AP) — A herd of 75 neglected and starving cattle seized from an Ashton man's property will be sold by the state.

Spink County Sheriff Kevin Schurch tells the American News (<http://bit.ly/2v843y9>) that livestock owner Rex Spear didn't appear for a court hearing Monday to contest the move.

Authorities seized the animals late last month and charged Spear with felony animal abuse and misdemeanor animal neglect. He doesn't have a listed phone number. He's due in court July 17.

Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

Former hospital CEO indicted for failing to disclose gift

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former Pine Ridge Indian Health Service administrator is due in court next week on charges she failed to disclose a \$5,000 gift from a pediatrician.

Wehnona Stabler was the hospital's CEO from 2011 to 2013. She has been indicted on charges of making a false statement to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2t0bjzD>) reports Stabler said on a disclosure report that she hadn't accepted a gift of more than \$350 from any one source.

The indictment says Stabler accepted \$5,000 from Stanley Patrick Weber, a pediatrician who once worked at the Pine Ridge hospital. He is facing charges of sexually abusing Native American children he treated at the hospital between 1998 and 2011.

A phone number for Stabler was unlisted.

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

CRP haying allowed in drought-stricken South Dakota counties

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The federal government is allowing emergency haying of Conservation Reserve Program acres in South Dakota counties dealing with drought.

Certain CRP acres earlier were opened to grazing. Haying is now being added, starting Sunday.

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor map shows more than half of South Dakota in some stage of drought. Some areas in the north are in extreme drought.

The Latest: Trump lawyer says Trump Jr. did not violate law

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on the controversy surrounding a meeting last summer between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer promising damaging information on Hillary Clinton (all times local):

7:30 p.m.

President Donald Trump's lawyer is defending the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., saying he did not violate any laws in his meeting with a Russian lawyer.

Attorney Jay Sekulow says that the president was not aware of Trump Jr.'s June 2016 meeting and didn't find out about his son's email exchange until "very recently."

Sekulow says the president is not being investigated by special counsel Robert Mueller.

The attorney is defending Trump, his son and their associates in the aftermath of the revelation of Trump Jr.'s meeting — along with former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Trump son-in-law and top adviser Jared Kushner — to discuss allegedly compromising information about Hillary Clinton.

Sekulow spoke on ABC's "Good Morning America" and NBC's "Today."

7:20 a.m.

The Kremlin has denied reaching out to a Moscow-based property developer and his son who arranged a meeting between a Russian lawyer and Donald Trump Jr. to discuss allegedly compromising information about Hillary Clinton.

The emails published by Trump Jr. show publicist Rob Goldstone telling Trump that singer Emin Agalarov and his father, developer Aras Agalarov, had "helped along" the Russian government's support for Trump. In his email, Goldstone said that the "Crown prosecutor of Russia" offered to provide the information on Clinton to the Trump campaign in a meeting with Aras Agalarov.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday in Moscow, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov, insisted that the Kremlin has not spoken to Agalarov and has no ties to the Russian lawyer who was at the meeting.

7 a.m.

President Donald Trump is defending son Donald Trump Jr. in regards to the Russia investigation, writing on Twitter that his son was "open, transparent and innocent."

The president is again calling the investigation the "greatest Witch Hunt in political history."

Trump took to Twitter on Wednesday morning in the aftermath of his son's defense of a meeting he had last June with a Russian lawyer. According to emails released by Trump Jr., he appeared eager to accept information from the Russian government that would have damaged Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign.

The incident has raised questions of whether members of Trump's campaign coordinated with Russia to hurt Clinton and help Trump.

2:45 a.m.

Donald Trump's eldest son has revealed he was eager to hear damaging information about Hillary Clinton from the Russian government, disclosing a series of emails that marked the clearest sign to date that Trump's campaign was willing to consider election help from a longtime U.S. adversary.

The email exchange posted to Twitter Tuesday by Donald Trump Jr. showed him conversing with a music publicist who wanted him to meet with a "Russian government attorney" who supposedly had dirt on Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump." The messages reveal that Trump Jr. was told the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

"I love it," Trump Jr. said in one email response.

Kremlin denies reaching out to Trump Jr. via developer

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin has denied reaching out to a Moscow-based property developer and his son who arranged a meeting between a Russian lawyer and Donald Trump Jr. to discuss allegedly compromising information about Hillary Clinton.

The emails published by Trump Jr. show publicist Rob Goldstone telling Trump that singer Emin Agalarov and his father, developer Aras Agalarov, had "helped along" the Russian government's support for Trump. In his email, Goldstone said that the "Crown prosecutor of Russia" offered to provide the information on Clinton to the Trump campaign in a meeting with Aras Agalarov.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday in Moscow, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov, insisted that the Kremlin has not spoken to Agalarov and has no ties to the Russian lawyer who was at the meeting.

Scientists say massive iceberg has broken off in Antarctica

LONDON (AP) — Scientists say a vast iceberg has broken off from a key floating ice shelf in Antarctica. Scientists at the University of Swansea in Britain said Wednesday the iceberg broke off from the Larsen C ice shelf. The iceberg, which is likely to be named A68, is described weighing 1 trillion tonnes (1.12 trillion U.S. tons) — or having twice the volume of Lake Erie.

The process, known as calving, occurred in the last few days. Researchers are watching closely to see whether climate change is affecting the phenomenon.

Adrian Luckman of Swansea University says the event has been anticipated for months and that researchers will continue to monitor "the fate of this huge iceberg."

As Russia scandal touches his son, Trump privately rages

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JULIE PACE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The snowballing revelations about Donald Trump Jr.'s meeting with a Russian lawyer during last year's presidential campaign have broadsided the White House, distracting from its agenda as aides grapple with a crisis involving the president's family.

The public has not laid eyes on the president since his return from Europe Saturday. But in private, Trump has raged against the latest Russia development, with most of his ire directed at the media, not his son, according to people who have spoken to him in recent days. The only comment from Trump on the matter for much of the day came in a brief statement via spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who said Tuesday that the president believes his son is "a high-quality person."

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On Wednesday morning, Trump tweeted that his son was "open, transparent and innocent," again referring to the investigation as "the greatest Witch Hunt in political history." The president also questioned the sources of the media reporting on the story.

The bombshell revelation that Trump Jr. was eager to accept information from the Russian government landed hard on weary White House aides. While staff people have grown accustomed to a good news cycle being overshadowed by the Russia investigations, Trump aides and outside advisers privately acknowledged that this week's developments felt more serious.

Trump Jr. released four pages of emails Tuesday in which he communicates with an associate trying to arrange a meeting with a Russian lawyer. In the emails, the intermediary says the attorney has negative information about Democrat Hillary Clinton that is part of the Russian government's efforts to help Trump in the campaign. The then-candidate's son responds: "I love it."

This new setback raises new questions about whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Moscow during the election, a charge the president has denied for months. And it points those questions more directly at the inner circle of Trump's own family.

As has been the pattern for Trump's White House, the controversy has sparked a new round of re-criminations among the president's team. Nearly a dozen White House officials and outside advisers spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss the mood in the West Wing.

The president, in conversations with confidants, has questioned the quality of advice he has received from senior staff, including chief of staff Reince Priebus. However, Priebus has been a frequent target of criticism for months and even those taking aim at him now said it did not appear as though a shakeup was on the horizon.

There has also been a difference of opinion within the West Wing as to how to handle the crisis, with some aides favoring more transparency than others. Some of the unhappiness centers on Trump's legal team, which is led by New York attorney Marc Kasowitz.

An unusual statement Saturday night from the legal team's spokesman Mark Corallo appeared to claim Trump Jr., Kushner and Manafort were duped into meeting with the Russian lawyer, and was viewed as particularly unhelpful by senior White House officials.

The revelations come at a pivotal moment for Trump and the Republican Party, as GOP senators race to finish work on a health care overhaul that has divided the party. Trump has largely stayed on the sidelines of the policy negotiations on the measure, but has still publicly pressed GOP senators to wrap up work on legislation this summer and fulfill one of the party's central promises to voters.

On Capitol Hill, some Republican lawmakers cast the snowballing Russia controversy as a distraction from the health care debate.

"We ought to be disciplined and not be distracted by things that may be legitimate but not right now in our lane," said Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

The matter has also distracted from a brief stretch in which some White House advisers believed they were finding their footing.

Trump aides, who view clashes with the media as central to the president's agenda, were emboldened when three journalists from CNN resigned after the network withdrew a story about a Trump ally. Trump's allies were also heartened by his trip to Europe last week, feeling that his speech saluting national pride in Poland was a high point of his presidency and believing that he held his own during meetings with foreign leaders at an international summit in Germany.

But the afterglow of Trump's trip quickly vanished, replaced once again with questions about the swirling federal and congressional investigations into Russia's election meddling.

And Trump allies took notice Tuesday when Vice President Mike Pence distanced himself from the

revelation by the president's son. In a statement, Pence spokesman Marc Lotter said the vice president "was not aware of the meeting," adding Pence was "not focused on stories about the campaign especially those pertaining to the time before he joined the campaign."

Pence was named Trump's running mate in the middle of July 2016, several weeks after the meeting involving the president's son.

Trump Jr, who is running the family business with his brother, huddled with friends and close business associates after the first stories dropped, his mood shifting from worry to defiance over the story's lifespan, according to confidants. He has told those close to him that while he realizes the optics of the meeting aren't ideal, he has echoed his father in believing that the media have overblown the matter and, despite some opposition among his allies, has said he wants to publicly fight back.

But White House aides struggled with bringing forth a strong defense against the scandal that also touched Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser who attended the 2016 meeting. Though Sanders called charges of collusion "ridiculous," the White House press briefing remained off-camera for the second consecutive day, limiting the power of her pushback.

And the president himself was slated to stay out of sight. He had no public events scheduled for Wednesday until he departs for another overseas trip, this time to France.

The story has been corrected to reflect a reference to the singular lawyer instead of lawyers in the 9th paragraph, which begins ` ... An unusual...

Lemire reported from New York.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Pace at <http://twitter.com/@JPaceDC>

Officials comb fields for clues after military plane crash

By ROGELIO V. SOLIS and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS, Associated Press

ITTA BENA, Miss. (AP) — With debris scattered for miles across the flat countryside of the Mississippi Delta, federal and local officials combed soybean fields for clues in a military plane crash that killed 15 Marines and a Navy sailor.

Six of the Marines and the sailor were from an elite Marine Raider battalion at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and were headed for pre-deployment training in Yuma, Arizona, the Marine Corps said Tuesday.

Several bouquets were left at the main gate of Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, where the plane was based. Officials said some of those killed were from the base, but Stewart was closed to reporters and did not issue a statement.

"We're feeling the pain that everybody else is," Robert Brush said after dropping off three pots of red, white and blue petunias. He works for a landscaping company that serves the base.

Military officials continued to withhold the names of the dead, saying they were notifying family members.

Witnesses said they heard low, rumbling explosions when the plane was still high in the sky Monday, saw the aircraft spiraling toward the flat, green landscape and spotted an apparently empty parachute floating toward the earth. It was the deadliest Marine Corps air disaster since 2005, when a transport helicopter went down during a sandstorm in Iraq, killing 30 Marines and a sailor.

The crash happened outside the small town of Itta Bena about 85 miles (135 kilometers) north of the

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state capital of Jackson. Bodies were found more than a mile from the plane.

The Marine Corps said the cause was under investigation and offered no information on whether the plane issued a distress call.

With the investigation underway, Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant warned people not to remove debris from the area and said that anyone taking something could be prosecuted.

Bryant, in statements Tuesday on Twitter, said law enforcement authorities have received reports that items are being taken from the crash site. Debris from the KC-130 is scattered for miles.

Sheriff's deputies and state troopers have been trying to control access to sites, but the broad area and number of roads makes that difficult. Bryant asked people to stay away and turn debris over to authorities.

FBI agents joined military investigators, though Marine Maj. Andrew Aranda told reporters no foul play was suspected.

"They are looking at the debris and will be collecting information off of that to figure out what happened," Aranda said. The county coroner, meanwhile, ferried more body bags into fields to remove remains.

The KC-130 is used to refuel aircraft in flight and transport cargo and troops.

Will Nobile, a catfish farmer, was inside his office Monday afternoon when he heard an unusually loud rumble in the sky.

"It sounded like a big thunderstorm," Nobile said. "Not one big explosion, but a couple of second-long explosions. ... A long, steady rumble is what it was."

He walked outside to see what was making the noise in the cloudless afternoon and saw a "gray streak" disappear behind trees, and then black smoke rising.

Andy Jones said he was working on his family's catfish farm just before 4 p.m. when he heard a boom and looked up to see the plane spiraling downward with one engine smoking.

"You looked up and you saw the plane twirling around," he said. "It was spinning down."

Jones said that by the time he and others reached the crash site, fires were burning too intensely to approach the wreckage. The force of the crash nearly flattened the plane, Jones said.

"Beans are about waist-high, and there wasn't much sticking out above the beans," he said.

Jones said a man borrowed his cellphone to report to authorities that there were bodies across a highway, more than a mile away.

Nobile said he drove to the site and as he and others stood by a highway, they saw an open parachute wafting down from the sky: "It didn't look like anybody was in it." Another catfish farmer found an empty, open parachute later near a fish pond, Nobile said.

Jones said firefighters tried to put out the blaze but were forced back by an explosion. The Marines said the plane was carrying personal weapons and small-arms ammunition — equipment that may have contributed to the explosion and the popping that could be heard as the wreckage burned.

Pettus reported from Jackson, Mississippi. Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Jackson, Mississippi; and Michael Hill in Newburgh, New York; contributed to this report.

Hospital: Jailed Nobel laureate's condition life threatening

By GERRY SHIH, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Liu Xiaobo, is in life-threatening condition with multiple organ failure and his family has opted against inserting a breathing tube needed to keep him alive, the hospital treating him said Wednesday.

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Liu, who has advanced liver cancer, is suffering from respiratory and renal failure as well as septic shock, the First Hospital of China Medical University said on its website.

It said doctors informed Liu's family of the need for a tracheostomy to keep him alive, but they declined. Liu and his family, who are being closely guarded in the hospital, could not immediately be reached for comment.

China's most prominent political prisoner was diagnosed with late-stage liver cancer in May and was transferred to the hospital in the northeastern city of Shenyang.

Liu's declining health has become the subject of international attention, with supporters and several foreign governments calling for him to be freed to go abroad for treatment.

On Tuesday, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert again urged China to parole Liu so he can receive medical care at a location of his choosing. Two foreign doctors, one German and one American, reported Sunday after visiting Liu that he wanted to leave for the West and it would be possible to evacuate him safely — but it needed to happen soon.

Beijing has rebuffed the calls, saying Liu is too sick to travel and is already receiving the best care possible. China has accused other countries of politicizing the writer's case and interfering in China's internal affairs.

Liu was convicted in 2009 of inciting subversion for his role in the "Charter 08" movement calling for political reform. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a year later while in prison.

Earlier on Wednesday, the hospital released the results of two tests that showed weak liver function. Liu is receiving dialysis and plasma transfusions.

Liu's supporters and international human rights groups have questioned whether Chinese authorities provided Liu with adequate care during his imprisonment.

Chinese prisons are notorious for their harsh conditions, and it's common for released prisoners to return to society in a dangerously weakened state.

China has in the past released high-profile dissidents on medical grounds and immediately exiled them to the U.S., notably veteran democracy campaigner Wei Jingsheng in 1997 and a leader of the 1989 student pro-democracy protests, Wang Dan, in 1998.

However, the government of President Xi Jinping has been considerably tougher in such matters, forbidding many of its critics to travel abroad while it pursues a sweeping campaign against dissent.

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. 'IN RETROSPECT I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE DONE THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY'

Donald Trump Jr. tells Fox News that he blames a decision for taking a meeting with a Russian lawyer with potentially damaging information on Hillary Clinton on the "million miles per hour" pace of a presidential campaign.

2. TRUMP'S FBI PICK TO FACE QUESTIONS ABOUT INDEPENDENCE

Christopher Wray faces a Senate confirmation hearing that will undoubtedly focus on the political tumult surrounding his nomination.

3. GOP PLANNING NEW REPEAL OF 'OBAMACARE'

Sen. John Cornyn of Texas says the measure will likely keep a pair of tax hikes on wealthier Americans that Obama's statute imposed to help finance its expanded coverage.

4. KIM ACCELERATES NORTH KOREA'S MISSILE DEVELOPMENT

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The reclusive leader vowed in his New Year's address this would be year of the intercontinental ballistic missile, and launched his first on July 1. And there's more to come.

5. LIFE GOES ON IN QATAR DESPITE REGIONAL POWER PLAY

It's been more than a month since four Arab nations cut land, sea and air routes to the country, but in the gas-rich Gulf nation's glimmering malls and luxury hotels there is little sign of hardship.

6. EARLY TRAUMA LINKED TO ADULT HEALTH ISSUES

Researchers are discovering that ongoing stress during early childhood — from poverty, neglect and parental substance abuse — can lead to some of the major causes of death and disease in adulthood.

7. DETAINED IRANIAN CANCER RESEARCHER SENT HOME

Mohsen Dehnavi, holding a J-1 visa for visiting scholars, had arrived in the U.S. to start work at a prominent Boston hospital. The hospital says the reasons for the detention were unclear.

8. SOLDIER STAYED IN ARMY DESPITE SUPPORT FOR ISLAMIC STATE GROUP

The case of Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika Kang highlights the challenges investigators face with protecting the public from potential danger and gathering sufficient evidence to enable prosecution on the other.

9. JOE SCARBOROUGH LEAVING GOP

The MSNBC host, former Republican Congressman and frequent Trump critic tells late-night talk show host Stephen Colbert: "I've got to become an independent."

10. NEW-LOOK ALL-STAR GAME ENDS WITH OLD-TIME SCORE

Seattle's Robinson Cano homers off Cubs closer Wade Davis leading off the 10th inning and the American League beat the National League 2-1.

US-led coalition: Amnesty report on Mosul 'irresponsible'

By SUSANNAH GEORGE, Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — The U.S.-led coalition said Wednesday that an Amnesty International report accusing its forces of violating international law during the fight against the Islamic State group in Mosul is "irresponsible."

The report released Tuesday said Iraqi civilians were subjected to "relentless and unlawful attacks" by the coalition and Iraqi forces during the grueling nine-month battle to drive IS from Iraq's second largest city. It said IS militants had carried out mass killings and forcibly displaced civilians to use them as human shields.

"War is not pleasant, and pretending that it should be is foolish and places the lives of civilians and soldiers alike at risk," Col. Joe Scrocca, a coalition spokesman, told The Associated Press.

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared "total victory" in Mosul on Monday, but clashes along the edge of the Old City continued into the evening Tuesday.

In all, 5,805 civilians may have been killed in the fight for western Mosul by coalition attacks, Amnesty said, citing data from Airwars, an organization monitoring civilian deaths caused by the anti-IS coalition in Iraq and Syria.

Amnesty said the fighting generated a "civilian catastrophe."

IS swept into Mosul in the summer of 2014 when it conquered much of northern and western Iraq. The extremists declared a caliphate and governed according to a harsh and violent interpretation of Islamic law. The militants rounded up their opponents and killed them en masse, often documenting the massacres with video and photos.

U.S.-backed Iraqi forces have gradually retaken much of that territory, but at a staggering cost, with hundreds of thousands of people displaced and entire neighborhoods reduced to rubble.

Trump's FBI pick to face questions about independence

By SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's pick to lead the FBI faces a confirmation hearing Wednesday that will undoubtedly focus on the political tumult surrounding his nomination, with both Democrats and Republicans seeking assurances of his independence from the White House.

Christopher Wray, 50, would inherit the nation's top law enforcement agency at a particularly challenging time. Trump abruptly fired predecessor James Comey, who was widely admired within the agency, during its investigation into Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election and potential coordination with the Trump campaign.

Wednesday's hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee could delve into Wray's lengthy legal career that included a stint as a top Justice Department official in the Bush administration and white collar work at an international law firm with several major corporations and banks as clients.

But lawmakers are more likely to drill into Wray's leadership style and how he would operate under a president who is said to have demanded loyalty from Comey and who has appeared insensitive to the traditionally bright boundary between the White House and the FBI.

Announced as the nominee in a curt, early morning tweet by Trump, and without the pageantry of a Rose Garden ceremony, the hearing will offer the first public, close-up look at Wray's background.

Those close to him say he's the right man for the job. Attorneys and FBI agents who have worked with Wray describe him as a steady hand, dedicated and low-key, seemingly impervious to political influence.

An association representing the majority of FBI agents on Monday voiced its support for Wray, saying "he understands the nature of investigative work and the centrality of special agents to the mission of the FBI."

Bill Mateja, a Dallas attorney who worked with Wray in the Justice Department, said "he has a great moral compass and he's no one's minion."

He also might face questions about his relationships with Comey and Robert Mueller, the former FBI director who's now serving as special counsel in charge of the Russia investigation. Trump allies have said Mueller's closeness to Comey shows he can't lead an unbiased probe. But Trump nominated Wray despite his having worked alongside both men in the Justice Department.

Wray was at the department in 2004 when Comey, then the deputy attorney general, and then-director Mueller threatened to resign during a dispute with the White House over the reauthorization of a domestic surveillance program. Wray stopped Comey in the hallway one night amid resignation rumors with a particular request, according to the 2011 book, "The Threat Matrix."

"Look, I don't know what's going on, but before you guys all pull the rip cords, please give me a heads-up so I can jump with you," Wray is quoted as saying.

Those who know him say that unlike the outspoken Comey, Wray would be a more reserved leader. His reserve could bode well for the agency at a time when its work has been thrust into the center of a political maelstrom.

He has deep experience in Washington, having served as head of the Justice Department's criminal division in the Bush administration, a position that had him overseeing major criminal prosecutions — such as the special task force investigating the Enron collapse — and also developing the U.S. government's legal response to terrorism and national security threats.

Civil liberties advocates have urged senators to press him on his involvement in national security matters during that period, when the government authorized harsh interrogation techniques and routinely

shipped terrorism suspects captured on foreign battlefields to Guantanamo Bay. Redacted emails to and from him are included in an ACLU database of memos on the interrogation and detention of terror suspects.

He also could be grilled about his work over the last decade in private practice at King & Spalding in Atlanta, where he's defended large corporations and financial institutions in criminal and civil cases. He provided legal services to Johnson & Johnson, Wells Fargo, Credit Suisse and fantasy sports providers DraftKings and FanDuel, among other big-name clients, according to ethics documents released Monday. If confirmed, he'll have to step aside for a year from matters involving those clients and the firm. He also assisted New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie during the so-called Bridgegate scandal.

Still, Mateja predicted "smooth sailing" for Wray.

"Chris is a Republican but he doesn't wear his politics on his sleeve. He keeps things close to his vest," Mateja said in a statement. "The public can rest easy that Chris will not be a lackey for Trump."

Yellen words to be parsed for clues to rates and her future

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER, AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Janet Yellen delivers her testimony on the Federal Reserve's semiannual report to Congress on Wednesday, investors may listen as much for clues to her own future — and the Fed's — as they will to what she says about interest rate policy.

The Fed chair is likely to repeat a message she has been sending about rates: That further gradual increases will follow the three rate hikes the Fed has made since December. She is expected to say that even though inflation has slowed further below the Fed's target level, the job market appears healthy enough to justify slightly higher borrowing costs.

But lawmakers may prod Yellen about her own plans and about the potential reshaping of the Fed itself resulting from a forthcoming influx of new board members selected by President Donald Trump. During last year's presidential campaign, Trump was critical of the central bank for its low-rate policies, which he said were helping Democrats, and for its efforts to enact tougher regulations on banks in response to the 2008 financial crisis.

On Monday, the administration announced that it had chosen Randal Quarles, a Treasury Department official under two Republican presidents, to serve as vice chairman for supervision, the Fed's top bank regulatory post.

Including the post Quarles would fill, the Fed has three vacancies on the seven-member board. Trump has yet to announce his other choices, though at least one person — Marvin Goodfriend, an economist, a former staffer at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond and now a professor at Carnegie Mellon University — is considered a leading candidate for one of the spots. All of Trump's nominations will require Senate approval.

Yellen so far has deflected questions about whether she would accept a second four-term term as chairman if Trump asked her to remain after her term ends in February. But lawmakers may try to glean some insight into her own wishes and about how the Fed could potentially change under the influence of Trump's nominees.

On Wednesday, Yellen will address the House Financial Services Committee and on Thursday the Senate Banking Committee. She will be testifying on the Fed's Monetary Policy Report, with one wrinkle this time: For the first time, the Fed released the report five days before Yellen's testimony. In the past, the two had occurred the same day.

The central bank explained the change by saying Fed officials wanted to give lawmakers more time to

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review the semiannual monetary report before Yellen addressed questions about it.

The report said the Fed "expects that the ongoing strength of the economy will warrant gradual increases in the federal funds rate," referring to its benchmark short-term rate.

The Fed had slashed that rate to a record low near zero in December 2008 to combat the worst economic downturn since the 1930s — and kept it there for seven years until nudging it up modestly in December 2015. It then left the rate unchanged for another year until raising it again in December of last year, followed by increases in March and June this year. Even so, the rate remains in a still-low range between 1 percent and 1.25 percent.

The Fed's report noted that officials had affirmed at their June meeting that they foresee a total of three rate increases in 2017, if the economy performs as they expect. If so, that would mean one additional increase before year's end. The Fed also expects to raise rates three times in 2018 if economic conditions evolve as they expect.

This week, Yellen will surely face questions about sticking to that pace, given that while job growth has been solid, inflation has slowed this year rather than edging closer to the Fed's 2 percent target.

In a speech Tuesday, Lael Brainard, a Fed board member who has often argued for a go-slow approach to rate hikes, said she wanted to "monitor inflation developments carefully and to move cautiously on further increases" in the Fed's key rate.

Brainard suggested that she would support a move soon to begin paring the Fed's \$4.5 trillion balance sheet, which swelled to five times its previous size after the Fed bought Treasury and mortgage bonds to hold down long-term borrowing rates in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

At its June meeting, the Fed signaled that it could begin shrinking its balance sheet later this year, a step that could put gradual upward pressure on longer-term rates for such items as home mortgages.

Emails show Trump Jr. embraced help said to be from Kremlin

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's eldest son revealed Tuesday that he was eager to hear damaging information about Hillary Clinton from the Russian government, disclosing a series of emails that marked the clearest sign to date that Trump's campaign was willing to consider election help from a longtime U.S. adversary.

The email exchange posted to Twitter by Donald Trump Jr. showed him conversing with a music publicist who wanted him to meet with a "Russian government attorney" who supposedly had dirt on Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump." The messages reveal that Trump Jr. was told the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

"I love it," Trump Jr. said in one email response.

As the emails reverberated across the political world, Trump Jr. defended his actions in an interview with Fox News, blaming the decision to take the meeting on the "million miles per hour" pace of a presidential campaign and his suspicion that the lawyer might have information about "underreported" scandals involving Clinton. Trump Jr. said the meeting "really went nowhere" and that he never told his father about it because there was "nothing to tell."

"In retrospect I probably would have done things a little differently," Trump Jr. said.

Democrats in Congress voiced outrage and insisted the messages showed clear collusion, with California Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, declaring that "all of the campaign's previous denials obviously now have to be viewed in a different context."

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Yet Republicans — who stand the most to lose politically from Trump's Russia ordeal — did not join in the condemnation. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was confident Senate investigators would "get to the bottom of whatever happened." And Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican on the intelligence committee, cautioned that the emails were "only part of the picture."

Trump Jr., who was deeply involved in his father's presidential campaign, portrayed his decision to release the emails as an effort "to be totally transparent." In fact, they had already been obtained by The New York Times.

Hours after the son posted the emails, the father rose to his defense.

"My son is a high quality person and I applaud his transparency," the president said in a statement read to reporters by White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Although Sanders declined to answer questions about the emails, she stood by the White House's longstanding insistence that no one in Trump's campaign colluded to influence the election.

The messages were the latest disclosure to roil the ongoing investigation into Russia's interference in the election and potential collusion with Trump's campaign. U.S. intelligence agencies have said the Russian government meddled in the election through hacking to aid Trump.

As congressional committees and Special Counsel Robert Mueller investigate, the emails will almost certainly be reviewed for any signs of coordination with the Kremlin, which the White House and Trump Jr. have repeatedly said did not take place. A spokesman for Mueller, the former FBI director, declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

In the emails — dated early June 2016, soon after Trump secured the GOP nomination — music publicist Rob Goldstone wrote to Trump Jr. to connect him to Russian attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya. Goldstone wrote that the information "would be very useful to your father."

"If it's what you say I love it especially later in the summer," Trump Jr. replied in one of the emails. Days later, Veselnitskaya met with Trump Jr. on June 9 at Trump Tower in New York. Veselnitskaya has denied ever working for the Russian government.

The emails show Goldstone telling Trump that singer Emin Agalarov and his father, Moscow-based developer Aras Agalarov, had "helped along" the Russian government's support for Trump. The elder Agalarov was involved with Trump in hosting the 2013 Miss Universe pageant in Moscow. The two men once also had preliminary discussions about building a Trump Tower in Moscow, but they fell through. Trump also appeared in a music video with the younger Agalarov.

In his email, Goldstone said that the "Crown prosecutor of Russia" offered to provide the information on Clinton to the Trump campaign in a meeting with Aras Agalarov. There is no such royal title in the Russian Federation, but Goldstone — who is British — may have been referring to the title given to state prosecutors in the United Kingdom.

In Russia, the top justice official is Prosecutor General Yury Chaika, the equivalent of the attorney general in the United States. Chaika is longtime confidant of Russian President Vladimir Putin and was directly appointed by him.

Representatives for the Agalarovs didn't respond to requests for comment on Tuesday. Attempts to reach Chaika at his office were unsuccessful.

In one email, Goldstone said he could send the information about Clinton to Trump's father first directly "via Rhona" — an apparent reference to Rhona Graff, the elder Trump's longtime assistant from his days at the helm of the Trump Organization.

Though the emails weren't posted in full until Tuesday, word of their existence had emerged on Monday. In an interview with The Associated Press on Monday, Goldstone described the information as purported evidence of illegal campaign contributions to the Democratic National Committee. It's unclear

what proof, if any, Veselnitskaya provided during the meeting.

Trump Jr.'s account of the meeting, its nature and purpose has evolved over the past several days, giving further fuel to critics who say the president and those around him have not been forthcoming as the Russia saga has unfolded.

On Saturday, in his initial description of the encounter, Trump Jr. said it was a "short introductory meeting" focused on the disbanded program that had allowed American adoptions of Russian children. Moscow ended the adoptions in response to Magnitsky Act sanctions created in response to alleged human rights violations in Russia.

A day later, Trump Jr. changed his account, acknowledging that he was told beforehand that Veselnitskaya might have information "helpful" to the Trump campaign, and was told by her during the meeting that she had something about Clinton.

In his most recent description of what occurred, on Tuesday, Trump Jr. said he had believed the information he would hear about Clinton would be political opposition research.

"The woman, as she has said publicly, was not a government official," Trump Jr. said in the Tuesday statement. "And, as we have said, she had no information to provide and wanted to talk about adoption policy and the Magnitsky Act."

Associated Press writers Nekesa Mumbi Moody in New York, Julie Bykowicz, Mary Clare Jalonick, Michael Biesecker, Stephen Braun and Matthew Daly in Washington, and Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow contributed to this report.

Detained Iranian researcher sent back to home country

By PHILIP MARCELO, Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — An Iranian cancer researcher who was detained at Boston's Logan International Airport has been sent back to his home country.

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol spokeswoman Stephanie Malin said Mohsen Dehnavi and his family were put on a return flight shortly after 9 p.m. Tuesday.

Dehnavi was arriving in the U.S. to start work at a prominent Boston hospital.

Boston Children's Hospital said in a statement earlier Tuesday that Dehnavi was prevented from entering the country with his wife and three young children despite holding a J-1 visa for visiting scholars. They arrived at the airport Monday.

The hospital said the reasons for the detention were unclear.

"Boston Children's hopes that this situation will be quickly resolved and Dr. Dehnavi and his family will be released and allowed to enter the U.S.," hospital spokesman Rob Graham said in the statement. "The hospital is committed to doing its utmost to support Dr. Dehnavi and his family."

Malin said the Dehnavis family's detention was for "reasons unrelated" to President Donald Trump's executive order on travelers from six predominantly Muslim countries. She said the stop was based on information discovered during the agency's review. She didn't elaborate.

But Malin noted that visa applicants "bear the burden of proof" to meet all requirements and can be denied entry for a range of reasons, including health-related issues, criminality or security concerns.

The Supreme Court recently ruled the Trump administration could largely enforce its temporary ban on travelers from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. But the court said the ban can't block people with a "credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States."

Some advocacy groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Iranian American Council, suggested the detention might be a violation of the Supreme Court order.

"The family is very worried," said Shayan Modarres, a lawyer for the D.C.-based council, which has been in contact with the family. "If it is a minor paperwork issue, then something needs to be told to the family so they can resolve it."

At the very least, the incident shows how the administration's political priorities are leading to "overzealous enforcement" of immigration laws, said Gregory Romanovsky, chair of the New England chapter of the American Immigration Lawyer's Association.

"Exercising discretion is not what they're comfortable doing anymore, especially if they're dealing with someone from one of the six banned countries," he said of local customs officials. "The travel ban and the whole anti-immigrant mood coming from the very top of this administration certainly affects their ability."

Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, a Democrat, told reporters he was waiting to hear more about the Dehnavis' circumstances, but also suggested the case was an example of concerns with the travel ban.

"Many people, doctors and nurses and people who are students working in the world-class institutions that we have are going to be boxed out or left out of the country," he said.

AP writer Bob Salsberg contributed to this report.

How severe, ongoing stress can affect a child's brain

By LINDSEY TANNER, AP Medical Writer

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP) — A quiet, unsmiling little girl with big brown eyes crawls inside a carpeted cubicle, hugs a stuffed teddy bear tight, and turns her head away from the noisy classroom.

The safe spaces, quiet times and breathing exercises for her and the other preschoolers at the Verner Center for Early Learning are designed to help kids cope with intense stress so they can learn. But experts hope there's an even bigger benefit — protecting young bodies and brains from stress so persistent that it becomes toxic.

It's no secret that growing up in tough circumstances can be hard on kids and lead to behavior and learning problems. But researchers are discovering something different. Many believe that ongoing stress during early childhood — from grinding poverty, neglect, parents' substance abuse and other adversity — can smolder beneath the skin, harming kids' brains and other body systems. And research suggests that can lead to some of the major causes of death and disease in adulthood, including heart attacks and diabetes.

"The damage that happens to kids from the infectious disease of toxic stress is as severe as the damage from meningitis or polio or pertussis," says Dr. Tina Hahn, a pediatrician in rural Caro, Michigan. She says her No. 1 goal as a physician is to prevent toxic stress. Hahn routinely questions families about stresses at home, educates them about the risks and helps them find ways to manage.

Mounting research on potential biological dangers of toxic stress is prompting a new public health approach to identifying and treating the effects of poverty, neglect, abuse and other adversity. While some in the medical community dispute that research, pediatricians, mental health specialists, educators and community leaders are increasingly adopting what is called "trauma-informed" care.

The approach starts with the premise that extreme stress or trauma can cause brain changes that may interfere with learning, explain troubling behavior, and endanger health. The goal is to identify affected children and families and provide services to treat or prevent continued stress. This can include parenting classes, addiction treatment for parents, school and police-based programs and psychotherapy.

Many preschoolers who mental health specialist Laura Martin works with at the Verner Center have

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been in and out of foster homes or they live with parents struggling to make ends meet or dealing with drug and alcohol problems, depression or domestic violence.

They come to school in "fight or flight" mode, unfocused and withdrawn or aggressive, sometimes kicking and screaming at their classmates. Instead of adding to that stress with aggressive discipline, the goal is to take stress away.

"We know that if they don't feel safe then they can't learn," Martin said. By creating a safe space, one goal of programs like Verner's is to make kids' bodies more resilient to biological damage from toxic stress, she said.

Many of these kids "never know what's going to come next" at home. But at school, square cards taped at kids' eye level remind them in words and pictures that lunch is followed by quiet time, then a snack, then hand-washing and a nap. Breathing exercises have kids roar like a lion or hiss like a snake to calm them. A peace table helps angry kids work out conflicts with their classmates.

The brain and disease-fighting immune system are not fully formed at birth and are potentially vulnerable to damage from childhood adversity, recent studies have shown. The first three years are thought to be the most critical, and children lacking nurturing parents or other close relatives to help them cope with adversity are most at risk.

Under normal stress situations — for a young child that could be getting a shot or hearing a loud thunderstorm — the stress response kicks in, briefly raising heart rate and levels of cortisol and other stress hormones. When stress is severe and ongoing, those levels may remain elevated, putting kids in a persistent "fight or flight" mode, said Harvard University neuroscientist Charles Nelson.

Recent studies suggest that kind of stress changes the body's metabolism and contributes to internal inflammation, which can raise risk for developing diabetes and heart disease. In 2015, Brown University researchers reported finding elevated levels of inflammatory markers in saliva of children who had experienced abuse or other adversity.

Experiments in animals and humans also suggest persistent stress may alter brain structure in regions affecting emotions and regulating behavior. Nelson and others have done imaging studies showing these regions are smaller than usual in severely traumatized children.

Nelson's research on neglected children in Romanian orphanages suggests that early intervention might reverse damage from toxic stress. Orphans sent to live with nurturing foster families before age 2 had imaging scans several years later showing their brains looked similar to those of kids who were never institutionalized. By contrast, children sent to foster care at later ages had less gray matter and their brains looked more like those of children still in orphanages.

Toxic stress is not the same as post-traumatic stress disorder. PTSD is a distinct mental condition that can result from an extremely traumatic event, including combat, violence or sexual abuse. Experts say it can occur in adults and children who live with persistent toxic stress, including children in war-torn countries, urban kids who've been shot or live in violence-plagued neighborhoods, and those who have been physically or sexually abused.

The toxic stress theory has become mainstream, but there are skeptics, including Tulane University psychiatrist Dr. Michael Scheeringa, an expert in childhood PTSD. Scheeringa says studies supporting the idea are weak, based mostly on observations, without evidence of how the brain looked before the trauma.

The American Academy of Pediatrics supports the theory and in 2012 issued recommendations urging pediatricians to educate parents and the public about the long-term consequences of toxic stress and to push for new policies and treatments to prevent it or reduce its effects.

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In a 2016 policy noting a link between poverty and toxic stress, the academy urged pediatricians to routinely screen families for poverty and to help those affected find food pantries, homeless shelters and other resources.

"The science of how poverty actually gets under kids' skin and impacts a child has really been exploding," said Dr. Benard Dreyer, a former president of the academy.

Some pediatricians and schools routinely screen children and families for toxic stress, but it is not universal, said John Fairbank, co-director of the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress. "That's certainly an aspiration. It would be a big step forward," said Fairbank, a Duke University psychiatry professor.

Much of the recent interest stems from landmark U.S. government-led research published in 1998 called the Adverse Childhood Experiences study. It found that adults exposed to neglect, poverty, violence, substance abuse, parents' mental illness and other domestic dysfunction were more likely than others to have heart problems, diabetes, depression and asthma.

A follow-up 2009 study found that adults with six or more adverse childhood experiences died nearly 20 years earlier than those with none.

Some children seem resistant to effects from toxic stress. Harvard's Nelson works with a research network based at Harvard's Center on the Developing Child that is seeking to find telltale biomarkers in kids who are affected — in saliva, blood or hair — that could perhaps be targets for drugs or other treatment to prevent or reduce stress-related damage.

That research is promising but results are likely years off, says Dr. Jack Shonkoff, the center's director.

Alvin and Natalie Clarke brought their young grandchildren into their Cass City, Michigan home after their parents jailed on drug charges. The 6-year-old grandson hits, yells, breaks toys, misbehaves in school. His 4-year-old sister used to have nightmares and recoil in fear when her baby doll was left alone on the floor — signs her therapists say suggest memories of neglect.

The Clarkes had never heard the term "toxic stress" when they were granted guardianship in 2015. Now it's a frequent topic in a support group they've formed for other grandparent-guardians.

Their grandson's therapists say he has PTSD and behavior problems likely stemming from toxic stress. Around strangers he's sometimes quiet and polite but the Clarkes say he has frequent tantrums at home and school and threatens his sister. He gets frightened at night and worries people are coming to hurt him, Natalie Clarke said.

Weekly sessions with a trauma-focused therapist have led to small improvements in the boy. The Clarkes say he needs more help but that treatment is costly and his school isn't equipped to offer it.

The little girl has flourished with help from Early Head Start behavior specialists who have worked with her and the Clarkes at home and school.

"Thank God she doesn't remember much of it," Natalie Clarke said. "She's a happy, loving little girl now."

Follow Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner on Twitter at @LindseyTanner . Her work can be found here .

California fires are early, unpredictable after winter rain

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Timber and brush parched from a years-long dry spell and thick grass that grew after drought-busting winter downpours are making for early and unpredictable wildfire behavior that California officials haven't seen for years, if at all.

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Dense layers of new grass are providing a "fine fuel" for flames that then gain speed and intensity by moving through "standing dead fuel" made up of vegetation and trees that shriveled during the state's six-year drought, said Kathleen Schori with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

"It's difficult to remember a year quite like this one," she said Tuesday. "There's such a mix of fuels that these large damaging fires are starting at least a month earlier than usual." The result, she said, could be a longer and more destructive fire season than California has experienced in a while.

Crews were making progress against dozens of wildfires across California, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico.

Authorities surveying the damage from a blaze in Northern California said Tuesday that at least 41 homes and 55 other buildings had been destroyed near the town of Oroville, about 150 miles (241 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco.

Residents had started to return home after fleeing a wildfire in the grassy foothills of the Sierra Nevada, about 60 miles (97 kilometers) north of Sacramento, but thousands were still evacuated. The blaze burned nearly 9 square miles (23 square kilometers) and injured four firefighters. It was 55 percent contained.

Schori said this year's conditions were similar to California's 1979 wildfire season, which came on the heels of a two-year dry spell and saw blazes blackening a total of 386 square miles (999 square kilometers) of grass, brush and timber and caused more than \$30 million in damage. However that year's major fires didn't kick off until well into August, she said, as did the destructive 1992 blazes that followed a drought that started five years earlier.

Major downpours last winter pulled the state out of years of drought but also brought a layer of grass that early-summer fires are greedily feeding on.

"That creates faster moving fires, hotter fires, it carries fire much more readily," said Santa Barbara County fire Capt. Dave Zaniboni, whose department was battling two large wildfires.

Older, dried out trees and vegetation are especially dangerous for wildland blazes, but enough new and drying grass can provide links between such tinderboxes.

With the dense grass as the "carrier," the firefight becomes much more challenging because "you have to make sure the water is getting all the way down to the smoldering areas below," Schori said. "It takes a lot more effort to extinguish grass fires."

Three new fires made trouble in the state Tuesday.

One of them, just east of San Jose, destroyed one home and damaged another before its growth was stopped. Eleven homes were under an evacuation order.

Another blaze broke out in San Diego County about 2 p.m. and quickly surged to over half a square mile (1.5 square kilometers). It temporarily closed Interstate 8 and forced 15 families to evacuate homes in Alpine, a town of 15,000 people about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northeast of San Diego.

In Northern California, the Placer County Sheriff's Office has issued mandatory evacuations along four roads near a 2-acre fire burning north of Auburn.

In Southern California's Santa Barbara County, at least 3,500 people remained out of their homes due to a pair of fires. The larger of the two charred more than 45 square miles (116 square kilometers) of dry brush and has burned 20 structures since it broke out. It was 60 percent contained. To the south an 18-square-mile (46-square-kilometer) wildfire that destroyed 20 structures is 48 percent contained.

In Colorado, crews were winding down the fight against a wildfire that temporarily forced the evacuation of hundreds of people near the resort town of Breckenridge. Firefighters built containment lines around at least 85 percent of the blaze.

Associated Press writers Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles and Kristin J. Bender in San Francisco contributed to this report.

The Latest: Trump Jr. calls charge of collusion 'ridiculous'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on the ongoing investigations into possible collusion between Trump campaign associates and Russia (all times local):

10:30 p.m.

Donald Trump Jr. is saying that his meeting with a Kremlin-connected lawyer is the extent of his formal contact with Russia officials and associates.

Trump Jr. said Tuesday night in an interview with Sean Hannity of Fox News Channel that "he has probably met with other people from Russia" but insisted that he did not attempt to coordinate to impact the election or try to damage Hillary Clinton.

He repeatedly suggested that the charges of collusion were "ridiculous" and "overplayed" and insisted that his father knew nothing about the June 2016 meeting.

"It was such a nothing there was nothing to tell" his father, said Trump Jr.

The younger Trump did the interview hours after he released an email chain in which he said he would "love" to receive damaging information about Clinton from the Kremlin-connected lawyer.

9:30 p.m.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is requesting information from the Departments of State and Homeland Security about a Russian lawyer who met with President Trump's eldest son last year.

Donald Trump Jr. has acknowledged the meeting with Natalia Veselnitskaya and posted a 2016 email exchange to Twitter on Tuesday that showed he was involved in setting up the meeting.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, wrote the departments to ask how Veselnitskaya was allowed to enter the United States. Grassley said that according to court documents, she was denied a visa to stay past January 2016, six months before the New York meeting.

The letter is part of a larger investigation Grassley has led into the Foreign Agent Registration Act. Grassley has expressed concerns that the law is not enforced.

8:50 p.m.

President Donald Trump has sent out an encouraging message on Twitter to his son, who had a harrowing Tuesday after releasing a chain of emails about his meeting with a Russian lawyer.

"My son, Donald, will be interviewed by @seanhannity tonight at 10:00 P.M. He is a great person who loves our country!"

Trump Jr. was on the hot seat all day after releasing details of communications that led to his meeting with a Russian lawyer with hopes of obtaining compromising information on Hillary Clinton.

Emails show that Trump Jr. had been told by music promoter Rob Goldstone that a Russian government attorney wanted to share information on Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump."

Trump had said little all day about the latest news about his son, but released a statement shared at the afternoon White House briefing: "My son is a high quality person and I applaud his transparency."

7:40 p.m.

In retrospect, maybe he would have done things differently.

That's the message from Donald Trump Jr. following revelations that he met with a Russian lawyer

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with hopes of obtaining compromising information on Hillary Clinton.

The president's oldest son is responding to the news in an interview with Fox News Channel personality Sean Hannity.

Emails show that Trump Jr. had been told that by music promoter Rob Goldstone that a Russian government attorney wanted to share information on Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump."

Trump Jr. says the meeting "went nowhere," but says: "In retrospect I probably would have done things a little differently."

The channel released excerpts from the interview before its 10 p.m. air time

7:30 p.m.

Donald Trump Jr. says he never told his father about a meeting he had with a Russian lawyer who promised him compromising information on rival Hillary Clinton.

The president's oldest son tells Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity that, "It was just a nothing. There was nothing to tell."

The person who arranged the meeting had told Trump Jr. that the lawyer had compromising information that was "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump."

Trump Jr. tells Hannity that he thought the information could prove useful.

He says: "Someone sent me an email. I can't help what someone sends me," adding: "I read it, I responded accordingly."

He says that no useful information was shared and that the meeting ended up being a waste of time.

5:40 p.m.

The top Democrat on a House oversight committee is requesting that President Donald Trump's eldest son, his son-in-law and his former campaign chairman turn over a wide array of documents regarding a meeting they had with a Russian lawyer who they were told had damaging information about Hillary Clinton.

Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., says in a letter that he's concerned that the decision to take the June 9, 2016, meeting raises questions about their "respect for the very principles that our democracy has been founded upon." Cummings addressed the letter to Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort.

Cummings request came just hours after Trump Jr. released emails showing he eagerly accepted help from what was described to him as a Russian government effort to aid his father's campaign.

3:55 p.m.

A Russian lawyer who met with Donald Trump Jr. during the 2016 presidential campaign insists she had no compromising information on Hillary Clinton to offer — in contrast to what the email exchange released by Trump's eldest son suggests.

Asked if she had compromising information on Hillary Clinton, Natalia Veselnitskaya told reporters Tuesday it is "not true" and Trump Jr. "was told so."

"I never had compromising information and could not have had," she says, adding that she does "not represent anyone other than myself."

The lawyer insists she was "offered to meet with Trump Jr." in a "private setting not connected to the fact that he is the son of the presidential candidate."

The lawyer also claims she was not even sure that Donald Trump had already won the Republican nomination by then.

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2:30 p.m.

President Donald Trump says he his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., is "a high-quality person," and he applauds "his transparency."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders read a brief statement from the president Tuesday in response to revelations that Trump Jr. agreed to hear damaging information on Hillary Clinton as part of the Russian government's effort to help his father.

Trump Jr. posted his emails with publicist Rob Goldstone on Twitter Tuesday. The emails with Goldstone show that Trump Jr. was told that the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

2 p.m.

The top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee says emails by President Donald Trump's eldest son show that a congressional investigation into Russian election meddling is "all that more important."

On Tuesday, Donald Trump Jr. released an email exchange in which he showed interest in what was described as a Russian government effort to aid his father's campaign with damaging information about Hillary Clinton.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner dismissed that Trump Jr.'s eager acceptance of help could just be naiveté: He said: "Lying is not a rookie mistake."

Warner also noted that Trump said in the exchange that the information could be good "especially later in the summer," and that Clinton's hacked emails were released around that time.

1:10 p.m.

Republican senators are downplaying revelations that the president's son agreed to hear damaging information on Hillary Clinton as part of the Russian government's effort to help his father.

Senior Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah calls the matter "overblown," describing Donald Trump Jr. as "a very nice young man."

Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina appeared at a news conference with seven other GOP senators, insisting that Republicans should not be "distracted" by the latest reports on Russia and instead stay focused on their agenda. None of the other attendees at the press conference responded to a question on the new emails released by Trump Jr.

Sen. David Perdue of Georgia says several congressional committees are already looking at the matter.

1:05 p.m.

Hillary Clinton's former campaign manager says the U.S. is facing a "serious national security crisis."

Robby Mook was responding to the latest revelation that Trump's eldest son met with a Russian lawyer after being promised damaging information on Clinton supplied by the Kremlin.

He told The Associated Press Tuesday: "They called us liars; They called us disgusting for suggesting Russians were behind this. Then they met the Russians and talked about information about Hillary Clinton."

1 p.m.

Vice President Mike Pence's office says the vice president was not aware of a meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian attorney who purportedly had dirt on then-Democratic presidential candidate

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Hillary Clinton.

Pence's spokesman Marc Lotter said Tuesday in a statement that the vice president wasn't focused "on stories about the campaign, especially those pertaining to the time before he joined the campaign."

Pence was named President Donald Trump's running mate in mid-July 2016, several weeks after the June meeting involving the president's son.

Pence's office says the vice president is "working every day to advance the president's agenda."

12:45 p.m.

A senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee says emails released Tuesday by Donald Trump Jr. show that his father's presidential campaign "sought to collude with a hostile foreign power to subvert America's democracy."

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden said "the question is how far the coordination goes." He called for lawmakers to "stand up and do their duty: protect and defend the Constitution."

In the 2016 email exchange, President Donald Trump's eldest son agrees to take a meeting involving what was described to him as a Russian government effort to aid his father's campaign with damaging information about Hillary Clinton.

The New York Times reports that it was about to publish the content of the emails and had sought comment from Trump Jr. when he released the emails on Twitter.

12:05 p.m.

A music publicist who promised President Donald Trump's eldest son damaging information on Hillary Clinton from the Russian government offered to send the information directly to his father's personal assistant.

Donald Trump Jr. posted his emails with publicist Rob Goldstone on Twitter Tuesday. The emails with Goldstone show that Trump Jr. was told that the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

Goldstone wrote that he was sending the "ultra sensitive" information to Trump Jr. first. But he noted "I can also send this info to your father via Rhona," an apparent reference to the elder Trump's longtime assistant Rhona Graff.

The Trump Organization has confirmed the authenticity of the emails, which Trump Jr. posted on Twitter.

11:55 a.m.

A music publicist who promised President Donald Trump's eldest son damaging information on Hillary Clinton said that a Russian singer and his father, a former Trump business associate, were helping a Russian government effort to aid Trump's campaign.

Rob Goldstone made the statement in an email posted by Donald Trump Jr. on Twitter Tuesday. The emails show Goldstone telling Trump that singer Emin Agalarov and his father, Moscow-based developer Aras Agalarov, had "helped along" the Russian government's support for Trump.

The elder Agalarov was involved with Trump in hosting the 2013 Miss Universe pageant in Moscow. The two men also had preliminary discussions about building a Trump Tower in Moscow that fell through. Trump also appeared in a music video with the younger Agalarov.

11:15 a.m.

President Donald Trump's son told a person promising him damaging information about Hillary Clinton.

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ton: "If it's what you say I love it."

Donald Trump Jr. posted his emails with publicist Rob Goldstone on Twitter Tuesday. The emails with Goldstone show that Trump Jr. was told that the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

Trump Jr. says in a statement that he released the exchanges "in order to be totally transparent."
The Trump Organization confirmed the authenticity of the posts.

11:10 a.m.

Donald Trump Jr. has released an email chain that shows him discussing plans to hear damaging information on Hillary Clinton.

In a statement Tuesday, Trump's eldest son said he was posting the emails "in order to be totally transparent."

The emails with music publicist Rob Goldstone show that Trump Jr. was told that the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Clinton and her dealings with Russia.

8:30 a.m.

The top Democrat on the House Intelligence committee says the report that Donald Trump Jr. met with a Russian lawyer last year in the expectation of getting damaging information on Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential campaign is "a very big deal."

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., told CNN Tuesday that his committee, which is investigating possible collusion between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia, would summon the meeting participants "to get to the bottom of it."

The New York Times reported late Monday that Trump Jr. was told ahead of time that the source of the information was the Russian government. Schiff said the report, if true, represents "an offer by the Russian government to help interfere in the American election on behalf of one of the candidates" and the first time "the inner circle of the Trump family...have direct contact with the Russians promising" information on Clinton.

In a statement, Trump Jr.'s New York-based attorney Alan Futerfas called the Times report "much ado about nothing."

7:30 a.m.

A Russian lawyer tells NBC's "Today" show that she was summoned to Trump Tower during last year's presidential campaign to meet with Donald Trump Jr. and asked if she had information on the Clinton campaign. The lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, told NBC she received a phone call from a man she didn't know and was told to meet with the Trump campaign. She says she didn't have information on the Clinton campaign and has never worked for the Russian government.

NBC's "Today" and MSNBC aired an interview of the lawyer on Tuesday. It's her first public comment since Donald Trump Jr. acknowledged that he made time for the meeting hoping to get information on Clinton, his father's Democratic presidential opponent.

Veselnitskaya says Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law, attended the meeting but left after a few minutes. Paul Manafort, then Trump's campaign chairman, also attended but never participated and spent much of the meeting on his phone. It wasn't clear from the NBC report who in the meeting asked her for information.

On damaging information on Clinton, she says through a translator: "They wanted it so badly."

3:30 a.m.

The man who organized a meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer during the presidential campaign says it occurred at the behest of a Moscow-based singer with family ties to Trump's businesses.

Trump Jr. acknowledges he made time for the meeting, organized by music publicist Rob Goldstone, hoping to get information about Hillary Clinton.

Meanwhile, The New York Times reports that Goldstone told Trump Jr. in an email ahead of the meeting that the Russian government was behind the information on Clinton. The Times cites three unnamed people with knowledge of the email.

Goldstone spoke to The Associated Press earlier Monday to confirm he had set up the meeting on behalf of his client, but he did not disclose the contents of the email described by The Times.

The Latest: Cano's homer in 10th gives AL a 2-1 All-Star win

MIAMI (AP) — The Latest on Major League Baseball's All-Star Game (all times local):

11:40 p.m.

Seattle's Robinson Cano hit a leadoff home run in the 10th inning off Wade Davis of the Chicago Cubs, and the American League topped the National League 2-1 in the All-Star Game on Tuesday night.

It was the first extra-inning home run in an All-Star Game since Tony Perez hit one exactly 50 years ago — July 11, 1967. Perez threw out one of the ceremonial first pitches before Tuesday's game.

The AL won the Midsummer Classic for the fifth straight time, pulling even in the all-time series — 43-43-2.

Cleveland's Andrew Miller allowed a two-out walk in the 10th, but retired the Dodgers' Cody Bellinger to end the game for the AL.

St. Louis' Yadier Molina homered for the NL.

So the AL gets pride and bragging rights, but no edge in October now. Major League Baseball no longer awards home-field advantage for the World Series based on the result of the All-Star Game, ending that policy this year after 14 seasons.

11:20 p.m.

Boston's Craig Kimbrel escaped a second-and-third, two-out jam in the bottom of the ninth, and the All-Star Game is going to extra innings tied at 1-1.

The NL had the winning run 90 feet from the plate after St. Louis catcher Yadier Molina led off the NL ninth by drawing a walk, went to second on a passed ball and advanced to third on a fly by Arizona's Paul Goldschmidt.

But Kimbrel got the New York Mets' Michael Conforto to strike out swinging, and the All-Star Game went to a 10th inning for the first time since 2008.

10:50 p.m.

Some fans have left Marlins Park, and all the starters have been pulled as well.

The outcome remains anyone's guess.

Through eight innings of the All-Star Game, the AL and the NL remain tied at 1. The majority of the fans remain — though there are plenty of sections where the seats are now empty.

For those curious, the last extra-inning All-Star Game was in 2008. That won was won by the AL, and

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the NL is 8-0-1 in the other nine Midsummer Classics to go into a 10th inning or beyond.

10:35 p.m.

Giancarlo Stanton now gets his All-Star break.

The Miami Marlins slugger was an ambassador for this All-Star Game — and essentially the face of the event. He was in the Home Run Derby on Monday on very little sleep after the Marlins played Sunday in San Francisco, then started at designated hitter for the NL on Tuesday night.

Stanton was 0 for 3 with two strikeouts.

“It was fun getting everything going, being around all these guys,” Stanton said. “I’m going to take these two days and hopefully don’t see anyone, don’t do a dang thing.”

Stanton isn’t due back at the ballpark until Friday, when the Marlins open the second half against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

10:30 p.m.

It’s nitty-gritty time in Miami.

It’s the AL 1, NL 1 after seven innings, and such things don’t usually happen in All-Star Games. It’s the first time since 2008 that an All-Star Game was tied after seven — that was 2-2 — and the first time since 1967 that it’s been knotted at 1-1 at this point in the Midsummer Classic.

Both of those games wound up going 15 innings.

The NL has seven hits, the AL six so far. And of the 12 pitchers used so far in the game, 10 have allowed at least one hit.

10:10 p.m.

A picture-perfect sixth inning for Yadier Molina.

And only one of his highlights will show in the boxscore.

Molina homered off Minnesota’s Ervin Santana in the bottom of the sixth, pulling the NL into a 1-1 tie with the AL at the All-Star Game. So in one inning, the St. Louis star was a catcher, a slugger and a photographer.

Earlier in the sixth, Nelson Cruz came to the plate for the AL with his phone in his pocket. He wanted a photo of himself at the plate with umpire Joe West, so Molina took the pic for Cruz.

9:50 p.m.

In this game, it’s American League 1, National League 0.

And all-time, it’s American League 360, National League 360.

Jonathan Schoop got the first extra-base hit of the night with a double in the fifth, and Miguel Sano’s bloop single that dropped between three converging Washington Nationals got him home as the AL took a 1-0 lead over the NL in the All-Star Game.

Sano’s end-of-the-bat special off Alex Wood of the Los Angeles Dodgers somehow found grass between Bryce Harper, Ryan Zimmerman and Daniel Murphy, and was more than enough for Schoop to jog home and give the AL the lead.

Sano’s Minnesota teammate Brandon Kirtzler pitched a scoreless fifth for the AL, which is trying to knot the all-time All-Star series at 43 wins apiece (with two ties).

MLB officials said the run by Schoop made the all-time score of 88 All-Star Games 360-360.

9:35 p.m.

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Still no one across the plate in Miami.

For the first time since 2010, the All-Star Game is scoreless through four innings. The NL has five hits, the AL has three — and Mookie Betts helped keep the game scoreless by starting an 8-4 double play from deep center field.

Nolan Arenado got his second hit of the night for the NL in the fourth off Jason Vargas, then was retired when he tried to advance on Ryan Zimmerman's fly ball to center. Betts' throw beat Arenado easily.

AL manager Brad Mills replaced three-fourths of his infield for the fourth inning, putting Jonathan Schoop at second, Miguel Sano at third and Yonder Alonso at first. All are first-time All-Stars.

Carlos Martinez pitched a second consecutive scoreless inning for the NL.

9:20 p.m.

Dellin Betances of the New York Yankees was wild for the second consecutive All-Star Game.

He escaped unscathed.

Betances was charged with a wild pitch in last year's ASG — and threw two more in the third inning Tuesday night, plus allowed a single and two walks. But even after all that, and loading the bases, the NL couldn't cash in and the Midsummer Classic remained scoreless.

The five pitchers used in the first three innings of this All-Star Game all gave up at least one hit. St. Louis' Carlos Martinez pitched the third for the NL.

For the AL, Cleveland's Jose Ramirez is 2 for 2 with a stolen base in his All-Star debut.

8:55 p.m.

Don't tell Bryce Harper this game doesn't count.

The Washington star made a sprawling catch out in right field to retire Salvador Perez and end the top of the second inning, and the NL and AL remained scoreless headed into the third at Marlins Park.

Chris Sale stayed in the game for the AL, working a second inning. He gave up singles to Daniel Murphy and Nolan Arenado to start the second, before getting Ryan Zimmerman to ground into a 4-6-3 double play. And Sale escaped by getting the Marlins' Marcell Ozuna to ground out.

Sale became the first All-Star starting pitcher since Matt Harvey in 2013 to throw two scoreless innings.

Pat Neshek of the Philadelphia Phillies pitched the second for the NL, relieving starter Max Scherzer. Neshek allowed one hit.

Still unclear if the AL or NL will lose — but one MLB star has already been beaten in this All-Star Game. The Freeze — the sprinting star of Atlanta Braves games — was outraced between innings.

8:40 p.m.

Boston's Chris Sale and Washington's Max Scherzer have the All-Star Game scoreless after one inning.

Both allowed one hit in the first inning, Scherzer giving his up to Cleveland's Jose Ramirez and Sale allowing a two-out single in the bottom half to Washington's Bryce Harper.

Sale struck out Giancarlo Stanton of the host Miami Marlins, setting him up with 83 and 78 mph offerings before fanning him on a 98 mph fastball.

AL catcher Salvador Perez was briefly shaken up when a foul tip from the Giants' Buster Posey caught him on the left hand, but remained in the game. Posey flied to center one pitch later to end the inning.

Scherzer started for the NL, allowing one hit and striking out two.

Jose Altuve grounded back to Scherzer for the first out of the night. Ramirez — one of 28 first-time

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All-Stars — followed with a single to right, but was stranded when Scherzer set down both Aaron Judge and George Springer on swinging strikeouts.

8:25 p.m.

Washington's Max Scherzer has thrown a swinging strike to Houston's Jose Altuve, and the 88th All-Star Game is underway.

Scherzer became the fifth pitcher to have an All-Star start for both leagues. He started for the AL in 2013, when he was with Detroit. The others to have at least one start for both leagues are Vida Blue, Roger Clemens, Roy Halladay and Randy Johnson.

The AL is trying for its fifth consecutive victory.

It's the first time the All-Star Game is being played in Florida. The game was preceded by a tribute to Latin American members in the Baseball Hall of Fame, including Tony Perez, Orlando Cepeda, Juan Marichal, Roberto Clemente, Pedro Martinez, Roberto Alomar, and former Marlins great Ivan Rodriguez — who takes his place in Cooperstown later this month.

7:25 p.m.

Some 300 items from Hall of Fame outfielder Roberto Clemente's personal collection were sold with winning bids that totaled more than \$3 million at the annual Major League Baseball All-Star FanFest.

Clemente's 1967 National League silver batting championship award brought a record price of \$493,500, Hunt Auctions said. The old record was \$313,500 for Mickey Mantle's 1956 American League silver bat award.

Clemente's 1960 and 1971 Pittsburgh Pirates World Series rings each sold Tuesday for more than \$350,000. His 1960 World Series uniform went for \$411,250, and the 1972 440 Magnum Charger car he won as the 1971 World Series MVP sold for \$105,750.

A 15-time All-Star, Clemente was killed on Dec. 31, 1972, in a plane crash while flying to Nicaragua to aid earthquake victims.

Proceeds from the two-day auction totaled \$7.5 million, Hunt Auctions said.

5:48 p.m.

Michael Jordan has joined the investment group led by Derek Jeter that is trying to buy the Miami Marlins.

Jordan's spokeswoman, Estee Portnoy, confirmed Jordan's involvement Tuesday. The NBA Hall of Famer owns the Charlotte Hornets and is expected to assume a minority ownership role if Jeter's group buys the Marlins.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria is soon expected to choose a winning bid from among three investment groups seeking to buy the team, and all have offered about the same amount of money. Manfred said the three groups are working on financial structuring, legal issues and due diligence in preparation for a purchase.

One investment group is led by Jeter, the former New York Yankees shortstop and a 14-time All-Star. A second group includes former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Massachusetts businessman Tagg Romney, and the third group is led by South Florida businessman Jorge Mas.

Loria on Tuesday declined to say when he expects to sell the team.

3:30 p.m.

Max Scherzer and Buster Posey have been teammates in the All-Star Game before, though they have

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never been pitcher-and-catcher at the same time.

That changes Tuesday night, when the Washington ace and the San Francisco catcher start for the NL at Marlins Park.

"I talked to him," Posey said. "He said he's going to throw all sliders. No, I'm looking forward to it. Obviously, he's a really tough at-bat. I'm looking forward to being back there and catching him."

He might be able to pick something up for future use, too.

Posey is 2 for 9 in his career against Scherzer — including a 1 for 3 night in San Francisco's title-clinching win over Detroit in Game 4 of the 2012 World Series. When Posey connects off Scherzer, it's a good rip: his two hits are that homer, and a double earlier this season.

2:45 p.m.

Miami slugger Giancarlo Stanton remembers having conversations with Jose Fernandez about the All-Star Game. And Stanton has no doubt that Fernandez would have been on the mound at Marlins Park on Tuesday night.

"His No. 1 thing to that point, besides winning Cy Young, was to start this game," Stanton said.

Clearly, Fernandez will weigh heavily on the minds of Stanton and Marcell Ozuna when they represent the Marlins in Fernandez's home park.

Fernandez was killed in September, and authorities concluded that the All-Star pitcher had cocaine and alcohol in his system when he and two of his friends died after Fernandez's boat crashed into a Miami Beach jetty at high speed.

Ozuna and Stanton have talked plenty this week about what it would mean to still have Fernandez with them, and what it would have been like for him to take the All-Star stage in Miami.

"We've had talks with him about this day and this week," Stanton said. "So it's going to be huge for us."

1:23 p.m.

Players' association head Tony Clark says the union is willing to talk with management to "see if some common ground can be found" on pace-of-play issues.

Major League Baseball proposed several initiatives last offseason, including a 20-second pitch clock, limits on mound visits by catchers and raising the bottom of the strike zone. The only change made was to allow intentional walks to be signaled without throwing pitches.

MLB has the right to unilaterally impose for 2018 the proposals made last offseason that were not accepted.

Clark says "we've talked to our guys and our guys are engaged in the dialogue."

1:14 p.m.

Major League Baseball could soon award multiple All-Star Games to host cities.

Next year's game will be at the Washington Nationals and the 2019 game will be in Cleveland. The Chicago Cubs and Los Angeles Dodgers are among the clubs hoping to host. The Cubs last had the game in 1990 and the Dodgers in 1980.

"I'll probably do three at once," Commissioner Rob Manfred said.

12:53 p.m.

No change will be made this season in the Cleveland Indians' use of the controversial Chief Wahoo logo.

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Just after the season started, Major League Baseball said there had been "productive discussions" about transitioning away from the logo.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said: "I think it's safe to see that you're not going to see any dramatic developments until we're through the 2017 season."

12:48 p.m.

Major League Baseball expects a rebound in the percentage of African-American players.

Of players on opening-day rosters this year, 7.7 percent were African-Americans, down from 18 percent in 1991, according to The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred says youth programs MLB has instituted will help and that, based on last month's amateur draft, "I'm very optimistic you will see an increase in the number of African-American players at the big league level."

12:38 p.m.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred says Aaron Judge is the kind of player "who can become the face of the game."

Speaking to the Baseball Writers' Association of America, Manfred called Judge "absolutely phenomenal."

He said: "I mean, there is no other word to describe it. He is a tremendous talent on the field, a really appealing off-the-field personality."

The New York Yankees rookie, who leads the major leagues with 30 home runs, won Monday night's All-Star Home Run Derby.

12:26 p.m.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred says there are "three viable bidding groups that are essentially in the same place in terms of price" in the Miami Marlins sale process.

The groups include Jeb Bush and Tagg Romney; New York Yankees captain Derek Jeter; and Jorge Mas.

Manfred says of a timeframe for resolution: "I'm pretty confident that that will happen in the relatively near future."

12:17 p.m.

The American League can pull even in Tuesday's All-Star Game.

If the AL wins the game at Marlins Park, it would be the fifth straight time it has topped the National League in the Midsummer Classic.

A win also would knot the all-time series: Going into Tuesday, the NL leads the series 43-42, with two ties.

The all-time All-Star series has been even only once before. The AL won the first three meetings, and it took until 1964 before the NL caught up — the teams were then 17-17-1 against one another.

That was during an eight-year run of NL wins, from 1963 through 1970.

Over the last two decades, though, the AL has had a mighty upper hand, going 16-3-1 in the last 20 games entering Tuesday.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/tag/MLBbaseball>

Long his father's attack dog, Trump Jr. now in eye of storm

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump Jr. has long been his father's id, the brawler who has helped fuel the president's pugilistic instincts and stood firm as one of his fiercest defenders. Now the president's eldest son is at the center of the firestorm over Russian connections swirling around his father's administration and trying to fight off charges that he was open to colluding with Moscow to defeat Hillary Clinton.

Offered Russian help in defeating Hillary Clinton last year, Don Jr. jumped at the offer: "I love it," he emailed.

That was in an email chain the younger Trump released Tuesday in which an associate arranging a June 2016 meeting between the president's son and a Kremlin-linked lawyer promised damaging information about Clinton.

Earlier this week, when news about the meeting first surfaced, Trump Jr. tweeted that he just "had to listen" when he was offered information about his father's Democratic opponent.

Trump Jr., 39, was one of his father's loudest defenders throughout the campaign, his role ascendant at the time of the meeting last summer.

But when his father was elected, Trump Jr. stayed in New York to run the family's sprawling business along with his brother, Eric. And from that vantage point, he has been a loud and constant defender of his father, firing off broadsides on Twitter and never shying away from a fight against the "fake news" media. Just Monday, he retweeted a video of a doctored clip in which the president's face is superimposed over a character shooting a Russian jet bearing a CNN logo.

"One of the best I've seen," Trump Jr. tweeted of the video.

In the email chain released Tuesday, Trump Jr. seemed receptive to receiving damaging information from a foreign government. He released a statement in which he denied any wrongdoing.

His father, conspicuously quiet as details of the meeting have rolled out over the last few days, issued a terse statement Tuesday in which he said: "My son is a high quality person and I applaud his transparency." Deputy White Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said she did not know when the president last spoke to his eldest son.

Trump Jr. has vowed to push back against the charges of collusion, believing that an anti-Trump media is trumping up accusations against him as a way to damage his father and is willfully ignoring his claim that he did not receive any information from the Russian lawyer, according to several of the real estate heir's confidants.

He has settled on a strategy out of his father's playbook: a strong counter-attack. He released the emails himself — although just minutes before they were set to be published by The New York Times — and appeared on Sean Hannity's program late Tuesday to defend himself in a typically Trump-friendly space.

Trump Jr. and his father were not always close: The younger Trump, who admits to a wild post-college period before he cut back on his drinking, didn't speak to his father for a year after Trump divorced his mother, Ivana. But he grew into an executive role at the Trump Organization, was a co-star on "The Apprentice" and during his father's campaign was an active campaign presence, criss-crossing the country to speak in small towns and delivering a well-received speech at the national convention in Cleveland.

An avid big game hunter, he also was seen as the campaign's emissary to Trump's most conservative followers, particularly those online, due to his aggressive pushbacks against Democrats and the media, as well as an embrace of the conservative fringe ethos of the alt-right.

Last fall, Trump Jr. tweeted images of Pepe the Frog, a cartoon character whose image has been used

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by white supremacists, as well as imagery which likened Syrian refugees to poisonous Skittles candy. And while he and his brother say they have instituted a firewall that separates his father's business from the White House, Trump Jr. has eagerly defended his father's presidency, live-tweeting attacks on ex-FBI Director James Comey's Senate testimony and amplifying his father's war on unfavorable news coverage.

"Don was an asset to the campaign, a sportsman, an entrepreneur, a guy's guy," said Sam Nunberg, a former Trump campaign adviser. "And Don is a true conservative who really understood the movement his father started and its messages."

The sprawling Russia investigation can only be a distraction to Trump Jr. as the Trump Organization is rolling out two new hotel chains in the U.S. that are a break from the opulent high-priced hotels the company now owns. With both new chains, the Trump Organization is neither building nor financing the hotels and so will need to partner with real estate developers and investors. That has drawn criticism from government ethics experts who worry these partners may be hoping to gain favor with the new administration on policy or regulation in cutting deals with the president's company.

Associated Press Business Writer Bernard Condon contributed reporting.

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China controls information about ailing Nobel Prize laureate

By GERRY SHIH, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — As China's government faces mounting international pressure to grant imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo his wish to leave the country for treatment of advanced liver cancer, it's fighting back with a familiar strategy: information control.

From coordinated leaks of hospital surveillance video to a near-total news blackout for Chinese-language media and social media, the Chinese government's sprawling propaganda apparatus has revved up efforts to contain the controversy surrounding its most prominent political dissident.

In an update Tuesday afternoon, the hospital treating Liu said he remains in critical condition and is now on dialysis and organ support.

Liu was convicted in 2009 of inciting subversion for his role in the "Charter 08" movement calling for political reform. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a year later while in prison.

Chinese media have hardly mentioned repeated calls by the U.S., the European Union and others for Beijing to let Liu leave on humanitarian grounds. On Tuesday, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert again urged China to parole Liu so he can receive medical care at a location of his choosing.

Chinese state media have provided extensive coverage this past week of President Xi Jinping's recent achievements, especially his travels to Russia and Germany, which they portrayed as a massive public relations triumph for China.

On Tuesday, state newspapers including the official People's Daily and the English-language China Daily trumpeted Xi's call to "unswervingly advance" China's judicial reform and improve the military. Meanwhile, the daily barrage of questions about Liu fired off by the international press at foreign ministry news briefings has been excised from the ministry's published transcripts, as if they were never asked.

The few mentions of Liu in the state media's overseas-oriented English editions in recent weeks contained denouncements and tough language aimed at foreign audiences.

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"It is probably out of politics that some people and forces are requesting Liu to be treated abroad," the nationalistic Global Times tabloid, published by the People's Daily, said in an editorial Tuesday headlined "Liu's cancer treatment mustn't be politicized."

"Today's China is stronger and more confident, and will not yield to Western pressure," it said, accusing unidentified overseas forces of "squeezing Liu for their political goals."

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang reiterated on Tuesday that China hopes other countries can "respect China's judicial sovereignty and not use such an individual case to interfere in China's domestic affairs."

The response is a reflection of the party's fear of showing weakness "either at home or abroad," said Andrew Nathan, an expert on Chinese history and politics at Columbia University.

Any sign of giving way "would only encourage domestic enemies and foreign critics," Nathan said, adding, "Been tough up to now, better continue being tough to the end."

A more subtle effort to shape the narrative came this week when a video from Liu's hospital room emerged just as the government was saying that he was too sick to be transported abroad and was already receiving world-class treatment in China.

Surveillance video from Saturday leaked to English-language Chinese state media showed two foreign doctors at Liu's bedside telling his wife, Liu Xia, that the medical team assembled by China's government was doing its "utmost" for her husband.

However, in a subsequent statement that was ignored by Chinese media, the German and American doctors said Liu was capable of traveling abroad, and the German Embassy in Beijing lashed out at China for "selectively leaking" the video to state media in a breach of doctor-patient confidentiality.

"It seems that security organs are steering the process, not medical experts," the embassy said. "This behavior undermines trust in the authorities dealing with Mr. Liu's case, which is vital to ensure maximum success of his medical treatment."

The hospital video leak followed a familiar pattern.

After Liu's diagnosis was made public in June, a jailhouse video montage quickly found its way onto YouTube that showed him playing badminton with a prison guard, chatting with his wife during a visit and sitting for a teeth cleaning — all intended to show a decent quality of life behind bars at Jinzhou Prison. At one point, he was shown remarking about the "great care" that prison authorities have shown for his health.

Watson Meng, who runs the overseas Chinese-language media site Boxun that reposted the video, told The Associated Press that he believed it must have been released by the authorities as part of their propaganda campaign.

Outside of official channels, unauthorized discussion of Liu has been swiftly punished. A police document that surfaced on the Internet this week described how a 38-year-old man in central Hunan province had been detained for seven days for discussing Liu's situation on WeChat, a social media messaging app.

Local police in the city, Zhangjiajie, said they could not respond to questions about the case and referred inquiries to the provincial propaganda and foreign affairs offices, which did not respond to queries.

News searches for Liu's name on Baidu, China's largest internet search engine, have turned up no hits since February. Searches on WeChat also turn up empty.

Many supporters of political reform inside China have instead taken to Twitter, which is inaccessible in China without special software, to circumvent government censors. Bao Tong, a 85-year-old former top Communist Party official who has been under house arrest for decades, began learning to tweet

this week because he has been forbidden from giving media interviews or publishing articles about Liu, according to his son, Bao Pu.

"China's state-run media ... won't even report relevant information," the elder Bao fumed in one tweet. In another, he commemorated Liu's calls for freedom, referring to the first line of China's national anthem, "Rise up, all those who don't want to be slaves."

Associated Press writer Josh Lederman in Washington contributed to this report.

Expansion plan highlights crowded West Bank city's plight

By ARON HELLER and MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH, Associated Press

QALQILIYA, West Bank (AP) — Last year, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government quietly passed one of its most significant concessions to the Palestinians: a plan to alter the West Bank map and turn over a small chunk of Israeli-controlled territory.

But after an uproar by Israeli settler leaders, the government appears poised to cancel the move — a decision that could upset nascent U.S. efforts to restart peace talks and take away a rare piece of relief for the residents of this overcrowded city.

As the West Bank's most densely populated Palestinian city, Qalqiliya has been eagerly awaiting implementation of the Israeli plan that would allow it to double its size by expanding into land that has until now been off-limits.

"We desperately need this plan because of the density," said Mayor Hashem al-Masri. "It will be a catastrophe if we can't expand. It will feel like someone is trying to drive us out of our city."

The fate of Qalqiliya, which lies along the de facto Israeli border and is surrounded on three sides by Israel's separation barrier, touches on one of the conflict's thorniest issues: the battle over the 60 percent of the West Bank known as Area C.

Under interim peace accords reached two decades ago, Area C remained under full Israeli control, and Israel has repeatedly rejected calls to allow large-scale Palestinian development there.

These restrictions have made life difficult for Qalqiliya's 53,000 residents, who live on just over 1.5 square miles (4 square kilometers) of land. Because of the separation barrier, the only way it can expand is east — into privately owned Palestinian lands in Area C where Israel has barred construction. The plan calls for building more than 14,000 new housing units, an industrial park, playgrounds, a waste management plant and a cemetery.

Qalqiliya has been among the quietest cities in the West Bank, and has even been singled out by Israel's nationalist defense minister, Avigdor Lieberman, as a model. Its planned expansion is one of the flagships of Lieberman's "carrot and stick" policy toward the Palestinians.

Qalqiliya was once a regular shopping destination for Israelis. Palestinians would cross into Israel freely for jobs, and some locals can still fondly recall leisurely riding their bikes to Israeli beaches on the Mediterranean. But all that changed after the second Palestinian uprising in 2000, when a campaign of suicide bombings in Israel prompted tougher security measures and eventually a barrier that cut the West Bank off with walls and sophisticated fences.

It's now a sleepy city that produces agriculture and not much else. It's mostly known for housing a popular West Bank zoo, a decrepit menagerie by Western standards that is famous for the taxidermy of its deceased animals. Earlier this year, a caged bear bit off the arm of a Palestinian child who apparently tried to feed it.

With the backing of the Israeli military, Israel's Cabinet approved the expansion plan last year. But once settlers, angry that their own housing construction permits had been limited under U.S. pressure,

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got wind of it they launched an angry campaign against Lieberman and Maj. Gen. Yoav Mordechai, who heads the Israeli defense body for Palestinian civilian affairs, accusing them of being soft on Palestinian violence and overstepping their authority.

Settler leaders have derided the plan as a "reward for terror." They also noted that Qalqiliya sits next to a major Israeli highway at the country's narrowest point, just 15 kilometers (nine miles) from the Mediterranean Sea, and could prove a launching ground toward Israel's heartland.

Several Cabinet ministers have since claimed they didn't know what they voted for, and Netanyahu has said he couldn't recall the details. He has ordered a new vote on the plan, which is expected soon. His office would not comment.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett, head of the pro-settler Jewish Home Party, said the Palestinians can build "unconstrained" in areas under their authority. But he said the plan involves Israeli-controlled land in a strategic location.

"I think it's a profound mistake," he said in an interview. "It just doesn't make sense." Bennett, a key power broker in Israeli politics, said he expects the plan to be rejected when it comes up again for a vote.

Under the interim Oslo Peace Accords, areas of the West Bank, which Israel conquered in the 1967 Mideast war, were divided into various categories. The vast majority of Palestinians live in areas A and B, which are under partial or full Palestinian control, but make up just 40 percent of the land.

All Israeli settlements are in Area C, and Israel has been reluctant to give Palestinians construction permits there, often demolishing what it calls illegally built structures. Meanwhile, Israeli settlers have been pushing to expand the settlements.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank as part of a future state and consider all settlements illegal, a view that is shared by most of the world.

As Qalqiliya officials await Israeli approval, antsy residents have already begun illegally building concrete structures in outlying farmlands overlooking Israeli communities, even at the risk of being demolished.

Nimmer Arif, 70, said he had already purchased a plot of land in Area C to build homes for his four sons and four daughters but could not begin construction because it remained under Israeli administration. "I have been waiting for a year and a half to document it and I don't know when this can happen," he said, sitting in a mobile phone shop.

Rassem Khamaisi, a professor of urban planning at Haifa University who drew up the planned expansion, says Israel must allow the city to breathe, with or without a peace deal.

"The years of occupation have not allowed for natural growth and it's an injustice to leave people locked in like this," he said. "Qalqiliya will not disappear."

Abdel-Momen Afaneh, a senior city administrator, said the city had a natural interest in maintaining calm since 4,000 residents have permits to work in Israel. But if strangled, he said, the tough conditions could breed violence.

He said the proposed expansion, already scaled back to address Israeli security concerns, is the absolute minimum needed for a city projected to reach 80,000 residents within 20 years. "If this is rejected, the city will not rise again," he said.

At City Hall, the mayor rejected any warnings that its expansion would harm Israel.

"Who is threatening whom?" al-Masri asked. "We just want our rights, our natural right to grow."

Soldier supported Islamic State but remained in military

By AUDREY McAVOY, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A U.S. soldier who was recently arrested on terrorism charges expressed support for the Islamic State group as early as 2011, but remained in the Army for years while the military and the FBI investigated to determine whether he posed a threat, authorities said.

Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika Kang was taken into custody over the weekend after the 34-year-old veteran of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan declared his loyalty to the terrorist group and exclaimed that he wanted to “kill a bunch of people,” according to authorities.

The case highlights the challenges investigators face with protecting the public from a potentially dangerous actor on one hand and gathering sufficient evidence to enable prosecution on the other.

Kang is on record making pro-Islamic State comments and threatening to hurt or kill other service members back in 2011, according to an FBI affidavit filed Monday in federal court.

The Army revoked his security clearance in 2012, but gave it back to him the following year. Last year, the Army called the FBI when it “appeared that Kang was becoming radicalized,” the affidavit said.

Retired Army judge and prosecutor Col. Gregory A. Gross said he was perplexed that the Army allowed Kang to remain a soldier even after his favorable comments toward the Islamic State group.

But Gross said the Army may have decided Kang was just mouthing off and was not a threat.

Gross served as the initial judge in the court martial of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist who killed 13 people and wounded more than 30 in a 2009 shooting at Fort Hood, Texas. He said Tuesday he was concerned by the similarities between Kang and Hasan’s case.

“He was making all these statements, and giving these presentations,” said Gross, who is currently a civilian defense attorney for military service members.

Lt. Col. Curtis J. Kellogg, a spokesman for the 25th Infantry Division, declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

Kang’s court-appointed lawyer, Birney Bervar, said his client may suffer from service-related mental health issues of which the government was aware but neglected to treat. He declined to elaborate.

Noel Tipon, an attorney in military and civilian courts, said there’s nothing in the Army manual on removing soldiers from the service that would address allegations like speaking favorably about a group like Islamic State.

He suspects the FBI wanted Kang to stay in the Army while they investigated whether he had collaborators.

“They probably said ‘let’s monitor it and see if we can get a real terrorist cell,’” said Tipon, who served in the Marine Corps.

The FBI said its investigation showed Kang was acting on his own.

Spokesman Arnold Laanui said the probe took nearly a year given the evidence that needed to be collected and the constitutional rights that needed to be protected.

“These tend to be very meticulous and time-consuming matters,” Laanui said. Public safety, he said, was at the forefront of the case, he said.

The FBI outlined its evidence against Kang in a 26-page affidavit filed Monday. It includes allegations Kang filmed a combat training video for Islamic State and bought a drone he believed would be sent to the Middle East to help the group’s fighters.

Agents said none of the military documents — classified and unclassified — Kang gave to people he believed were affiliated with Islamic State ever got to the group.

Kang’s father told Honolulu television station KHON and the Star-Advertiser newspaper his son may

have had post-traumatic stress disorder. Kang told the newspaper he became concerned after his son's return from Afghanistan. He said his son was withdrawn.

Kang enlisted in the Army in December 2001, just months after the Sept. 11 attacks. He served in South Korea from 2002 to 2003. He deployed to Iraq from March 2010 to February 2011 and Afghanistan from July 2013 to April 2014.

Kang was scheduled to appear in court Thursday for a detention hearing.

Cadaver dogs used, dirt sifted in search for 4 missing men

By MARYCLAIRE DALE and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE, Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Police used cadaver dogs, a backhoe and other construction equipment Tuesday to help search a sprawling farm for four missing men believed to be victims of foul play. A prosecutor, meanwhile, described a man who was held on an unrelated gun charge, but has since been released on bail, as a person of interest in the investigation.

District Attorney Matthew Weintraub said bail was set at \$1 million Monday for Cosmo DiNardo, whose family owns the farmland and another property that was searched, because he was considered a flight risk. But Weintraub did not call him a suspect and cautioned there is often a "chasm" between being called a "person of interest" in an investigation and being charged with a crime.

DiNardo, 20, is accused of illegally possessing a shotgun and ammunition in February. A court affidavit said he had suffered from mental illness and had been involuntarily committed to an institution for inpatient care. It did not say when the commitment had occurred. The charge had been dismissed by a judge but was refiled.

Late Tuesday, DiNardo was released after he posted 10 percent of his bail amount in cash, according to the Bucks County District Attorney's Twitter account.

A busload of police cadets also took part in the third day of the search of farmland in Solebury Township, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of Philadelphia.

Aerial TV footage on Tuesday showed law enforcement officers crowded around a deep trench — a backhoe parked next to it — as officers used shovels to dig deeper and passed up buckets of dirt that were then screened with sifters.

"We want to be careful not to miss the tiniest piece of evidence," Weintraub said at an earlier briefing.

The missing are 22-year-old Mark Sturgis, 21-year-old Tom Meo, 19-year-old Dean Finocchiaro and 19-year-old Jimi Tar Patrick, a student at Loyola University in Baltimore. Patrick disappeared on Wednesday, the other three on Friday.

Sturgis and Meo are longtime friends who work at the Sturgis family's construction business, and Finocchiaro is a mutual friend, Sturgis' father has said.

Police have received "a ton of leads" and are making progress, but the entire 90-acre (0.14-square-mile) property is of interest to investigators, Weintraub said. He said investigators were also working across the county.

The farm property is owned by DiNardo's parents, Antonio and Sandra DiNardo. Neither the DiNardos nor their son's lawyer could be reached for comment.

Peter Dragani, a Bensalem real estate agent who said he coached Cosmo DiNardo in a youth football league and has stayed in touch with the family over the years, described the jailed young man as a "model citizen."

"He comes from a good family, a strong, very strict family," he told The Associated Press. "I never met anybody that didn't like him."

Asked if the four missing men could still be alive, Weintraub said, "I think it's very important to hang on to hope."

The FBI, state police and at least five local law enforcement agencies were also taking part in the search.

This story has been corrected to show DiNardo's commitment was involuntary, not voluntary.

Ghoulish online game urges young people to end their lives

By CLAUDIA LAUER, Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The family of a Texas teen who hanged himself says their son was involved in a ghoulish online game that calls on participants to complete a series of tasks before taking their own lives, and some schools are warning parents about the so-called Blue Whale Challenge.

Jorge Gonzalez told San Antonio television station WOAI (<http://bit.ly/2ufDDhG>) that he wanted to caution others after his son, Isaiah, was found hanging in his bedroom closet Saturday in the family's home with his cellphone propped up on a shoe to record his death.

A report on the boy's death from the San Antonio Police Department does not mention the challenge. But Gonzalez' family said in the days after the teen died, they pieced together from his social media and communication with friends that he had participated in the game.

His sister, Alexis, told the TV station that a person behind the challenge had gathered personal information from Isaiah and had threatened to harm the family.

The police department did not return a message left by The Associated Press asking whether authorities were investigating the game as a factor in the case. Many parents and other authorities are skeptical that the game actually exists, citing a lack of suicides directly attributed to it.

Agent Michelle Lee of the FBI's San Antonio office said the agency is not assisting in the investigation, but urged parents to monitor their children's online activities.

"It's a reminder of one of the many dangers and vulnerabilities that children face using various social media and apps online every day," Lee said. "Parents must remain vigilant and monitor their child's usage of the internet."

Gonzalez is the second parent this week to tell news outlets about a child who died by suicide allegedly as a result of the game. A Georgia woman spoke Monday to CNN about her 16-year-old daughter killing herself as part of the challenge but asked that their names not be used.

Educators, law enforcement officers and parents across the country have reported rumors about the challenge for months. But until this week, there had been no allegations in the United States about a death directly linked to the game. Suicides in Russia, Brazil and a half dozen other countries were reportedly linked to the challenge in cases that usually involved teenagers or young adults.

Notes have been posted on school district social media pages and sent home to parents in school districts across the country, including Vacaville, California; Baldwin County, Alabama; Warwick, Rhode Island; and Denver.

In Connecticut, Danbury Public Schools Superintendent Sal Pascarella sent a short note to parents around May after administrators from the district's 19 schools started hearing about the challenge from kids as young as elementary schoolers.

"The elementary school principals started hearing their kids talk about this thing. Then the secondary principals started mentioning the same thing," he said. "We discovered on our school network content about the challenge had been looked at on YouTube. ... I decided I would rather err on the side of

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information with parents.”

Parents allege that teens reach out to game administrators called curators through various social media platforms. Those curators lead the players through 50 days of challenges including watching scary movie clips, cutting symbols into their arms and legs and taking pictures of themselves in dangerous positions such as on the edge of a roof or on train tracks.

The participants are allegedly required to take pictures of their challenges being completed and share them before being directed to end their lives on the 50th day. A search of related hashtags on Instagram shows users posting pictures of scars and cuts or memes that depict suicide, and a similar Twitter search shows users reaching out for curators to lead them through the game.

Instagram warns that some images tagged under some of the related phrases could be harmful and directs users to mental health resources. Twitter assesses reports of self-harm or suicide and also directs users to mental health or suicide-prevention resources.

The Center for Missing and Exploited Children is aware of the challenge and encourages parents to report it and similar activity to the center’s cyber tip line even if they feel like they do not have enough information to go to police, said Eliza Harrell, the group’s director of education and outreach.

Harrell said she had not heard about the use of threats and intimidation, but said it was particularly concerning.

“That really adds another level to this,” she said. “We do not tend to address specific apps or games when we give advice to parents.”

When parents talk to their children, “the underlying conversation needs to be about dealing with strangers online and putting themselves in a position of trust,” she added. “It’s an issue that a child is listening to someone anonymously and doing what they are told by a stranger to do.”

New GOP health bill likely keeping Obama tax boosts on rich

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A revised Senate Republican health care bill will likely retain a pair of tax boosts President Barack Obama imposed on wealthier Americans that have helped finance his law’s expansion of coverage, a leading Senate Republican said Tuesday.

The two levies — one on investment income and another on the payroll tax that helps finance the Medicare health insurance program for the elderly — are among the biggest that Obama’s 2010 statute imposed. Some of the money would be used to increase a fund the GOP bill would disperse to states to help insurers contain consumers’ premiums and deductibles, said No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Cornyn of Texas.

Preserving those taxes “seems to be where we’re headed,” Cornyn told reporters. He said the reworked bill will also provide \$45 billion over a decade to help states combat abuse of drugs including opioids, and make it easier for states to get federal waivers to decide how to spend money under their Medicaid health programs for the poor, elderly and nursing home patients.

Cornyn spoke after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., announced he will introduce his party’s altered health care bill Thursday and begin trying to muscle it through the Senate next week. The effort comes with the fate of the GOP measure in doubt, with internal divisions threatening to mortally wound their top-tier goal of repealing much of Obama’s overhaul.

“Hopefully everything we’re doing now helps another member get to ‘yes,’” Cornyn said. “There’s really no other reason to tweak this thing.”

In the face of unanimous Democratic opposition, the health care bill will crash if just three of the 52

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GOP senators oppose it. McConnell suddenly canceled a doomed vote last month on an initial version of the legislation, and at least a dozen Republicans have said they oppose the initial package or distanced themselves from it.

Since his June retreat, McConnell has been reshaping the measure in hopes of winning GOP votes. Even so, no GOP leaders were yet predicting passage.

McConnell also said he will delay the chamber's August recess for two weeks, a rare move he said would give lawmakers time to break logjams on health care, defense and executive branch nominations. Growing numbers of Republicans, chagrined at Congress' failure to send any major bills to President Donald Trump, had called on McConnell to make that move.

The GOP bill would ease coverage requirements Obama's 2010 statute placed on insurers, like paying for maternity services; erase his tax penalties on people who don't buy policies and cut Medicaid. The measure will also eliminate most of Obama's tax increases, including boosts on insurers, pharmaceutical manufacturers and medical device makers.

Obama's law has added around 20 million to the ranks of the country's people with health insurance. An analysis of McConnell's initial bill by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projected it would increase the number of people without coverage by 22 million by 2026.

The updated legislation is also expected to ease some of its earlier Medicaid cuts, a move aimed at assuaging GOP senators from states that expanded the program by millions of people under Obama's law.

According to Cornyn, the refashioned GOP measure will probably keep Obama's 3.8 percent tax boost on investment income for couples earning over \$250,000 annually. It would also retain a payroll tax increase of 0.9 percent on the same earners that helps finance Medicare.

Together, retaining the two levies would produce \$231 billion over the next 10 years, according to Congress' nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation.

Republicans generally oppose tax boosts, and it was unclear whether preserving those tax increases would threaten support by any conservatives for the health bill. But Cornyn said some of the money — perhaps around \$50 billion — would be used to buttress around \$100 billion already in the measure for states to help insurers hold down insurance costs, and he said the move might help defend against Democratic attacks that the GOP package will help the rich and hurt the poor.

"We're trying to take at least one sharp stick off the table," Cornyn said. "I don't think it will change the narrative."

A study released Tuesday by two bipartisan groups estimated that the country's poorest families would lose more than \$2,500 in average annual health care benefits once the GOP legislation was fully phased in. Families making more than \$1 million a year would get tax cuts averaging about \$50,000, according to the analysis by the Health Policy Center and the Tax Policy Center.

Still at issue is a plan by conservatives led by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, to let insurers sell low-price policies with bare-bones coverage — if the company also sells a policy covering a list of services like maternity care that Obama's law mandates.

It's received pushback from GOP moderates warning it would inflate premiums for sicker people buying generous plans because younger, healthier customers would flock to skimpier policies. To ease the price boosts people with serious illnesses might face, some Republicans said changes were being discussed that would link the premiums insurers would charge for both types of coverage.

Associated Press reporters Erica Werner, Andrew Taylor and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

The Latest: Retired judge perplexed soldier kept in Army

HONOLULU (AP) — The Latest on a Hawaii-based soldier being arrested on terrorism charges (all times local):

12 p.m.

A retired Army judge and prosecutor says he's perplexed that the Army allowed Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika (ee-ky-kah) Kang to remain a soldier even after he made pro-Islamic State group comments.

But retired Col. Gregory Gross says the Army may have decided Kang was just mouthing off and wasn't a threat. The Army later referred Kang's case to the FBI after it appeared the soldier was being radicalized.

Gross served as the initial judge in the court martial of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist who killed 13 people and wounded more than 30 in a shooting at Fort Hood, Texas in 2009.

Gross said Tuesday he's concerned by the similarities between Kang's and Hasan's cases.

The FBI arrested Kang in Hawaii over the weekend on terrorism charges after he declared allegiance to Islamic State and said he wanted to kill "a bunch of people."

4:09 a.m.

The father of a U.S. soldier arrested on terrorism charges says his son may have post-traumatic stress disorder.

Authorities say Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika Kang, 34 pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and said he wanted to "kill a bunch of people."

Clifford Kang tells KHON-TV that he became concerned after his son's return from Afghanistan and Iraq. He says he told his son "maybe he had PTSD."

Kang says his son had a Quran and had even given him one.

The FBI arrested Kang, in Hawaii over the weekend after a yearlong investigation. He made an initial appearance Monday in federal court.

Kang's court-appointed defense attorney, Birney Bervar, said it appears his client may suffer from service-related mental health issues of which the government was aware but neglected to treat.

11:10 p.m.

An active duty U.S. soldier is in custody on terrorism charges after authorities say he pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and said he wanted to "kill a bunch of people."

The FBI arrested Sgt. 1st Class Ikaika (ee-ky-kah) Kang in a suburb of Honolulu over the weekend after a yearlong investigation.

Kang made an initial appearance in court Monday.

A 26-page affidavit from an FBI Special Agent filed in court Monday detailed how Kang thought he was dealing with people working for Islamic State but who were actually undercover agents.

Kang's defense attorney says it appears his 34-year-old client may suffer from service-related mental health issues of which the government was aware but neglected to treat. Lawyer Birney Bervar declined to elaborate.

16 dead in Mississippi in worst Marine crash since 2005

By **ROGELIO V. SOLIS** and **EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS**, Associated Press

ITTA BENA, Miss. (AP) — Investigators picked through debris across a fire-blackened soybean field Tuesday to try to determine why a U.S. military plane slammed into the ground, killing all 16 people aboard in the deadliest Marine crash anywhere in the world in more than a decade.

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The KC-130 air tanker was carrying members of an elite Marine special operations unit cross-country for training in Arizona when it went down Monday afternoon in the Mississippi Delta, the military said. The fiery crash scattered wreckage for miles around and sent a pillar of black smoke rising over the countryside.

Witnesses said they heard low, rumbling explosions when the plane was still high in the sky, saw the aircraft spiraling toward the flat, green landscape and spotted an apparently empty parachute floating toward the earth.

Fifteen Marines and a Navy sailor were killed. Their identities were not immediately released.

The crash happened outside the small town of Itta Bena, about 85 miles (135 kilometers) north of the state capital of Jackson. Bodies were found more than a mile from the plane.

It was the deadliest Marine Corps air disaster since 2005, when a transport helicopter went down during a sandstorm in Iraq, killing 30 Marines and a sailor.

The Marine Corps said the cause was under investigation and offered no information on whether the plane issued a distress call.

FBI agents joined military investigators, though Marine Maj. Andrew Aranda told reporters that no foul play was suspected.

"They are looking at the debris and will be collecting information off of that to figure out what happened," Aranda said. The county coroner, meanwhile, brought in body bags to remove the dead.

The KC-130 is used to refuel aircraft in flight and transport cargo and troops.

The plane was based at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, and officials said some of those killed were from the base. Several bouquets were left at the main gate at Stewart, which was closed to reporters and issued no immediate statement.

Six of the Marines and the sailor were from an elite Marine Raider battalion at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the Marine Corps said. It said the seven and their equipment were headed for pre-deployment training at Yuma, Arizona.

The Marine Raiders are a special operations force that is part of the global fight against terrorism. They carry out raids against insurgents and terrorists, conduct deep reconnaissance and train foreign militaries.

Will Nobile, a catfish farmer, said he was inside his office Monday afternoon when he heard an unusually loud rumble in the sky.

"It sounded like a big thunderstorm," Nobile said. "Not one big explosion, but a couple of second-long explosions. ... A long, steady rumble is what it was."

He walked outside to see what was making the noise in the cloudless afternoon and saw a "gray streak" disappear behind some trees, and then black smoke rising.

Andy Jones said he was working on his family's catfish farm just before 4 p.m. when he heard a boom and looked up to see the plane spiraling downward with one engine smoking.

"You looked up and you saw the plane twirling around," he said. "It was spinning down."

Jones said that by the time he and others reached the crash site, fires were burning too intensely to approach the wreckage. The force of the crash nearly flattened the plane, Jones said.

"Beans are about waist-high, and there wasn't much sticking out above the beans," he said.

Jones said a man borrowed his cellphone to report to authorities that there were bodies across a highway, more than a mile away.

Nobile said he drove to the site and as he and others stood by a highway, they saw an open parachute wafting down from the sky: "It didn't look like anybody was in it." Another catfish farmer found an empty, open parachute later near a fish pond, Nobile said.

Greenwood Fire Chief Marcus Banks told the Greenwood Commonwealth that debris was scattered in a radius of about 5 miles (8 kilometers).

Jones said firefighters tried to put out the blaze but were forced back by an explosion. The Marines said the plane was carrying personal weapons and small-arms ammunition — equipment that may have contributed to the explosion and the popping that could be heard as the wreckage burned.

Pettus and Jeff Amy reported from Jackson, Mississippi.

Clashes shake west Mosul after victory over IS declared

By BRAM JANSSEN, Associated Press

MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — Airstrikes, shelling and other heavy clashes shook a small sliver of western Mosul on Tuesday in renewed fighting, a day after the government declared victory over Islamic State militants in Iraq's second-largest city.

Amnesty International, meanwhile, proclaimed the battle for Mosul to be a "civilian catastrophe," with more than 5,800 noncombatants killed in the western part of the city. The top U.S. commander in Iraq rejected the group's allegations, however, that the U.S.-led coalition violated international law.

In a sign that IS militants were still holding out in the shattered Old City, plumes of smoke rose as mortar shells landed near Iraqi troop positions and heavy gunfire rang out. Airstrikes pounded the edge of the neighborhood west of the Tigris River throughout the day.

On Monday, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared "total victory" in Mosul, flanked by his senior military leadership at a small base in the city's west.

The militants overran the northern city in summer 2014, when the extremists seized territory across Iraq and Syria. The campaign by Iraqi forces and the coalition to retake the city began in October 2016. The operation killed thousands of people, left whole neighborhoods in ruins and displaced nearly 900,000 from their homes.

A statement late Monday from IS said its fighters were still attacking Iraqi troops in the al-Maydan area of Mosul's Old City, purportedly killing and wounding many and seizing weapons and ammunition.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend said in a recorded video after al-Abadi's declaration that the victory in Mosul did not eliminate IS from Iraq and "there's still a tough fight ahead."

Townsend, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said the coalition will continue to support its Iraqi partners, and he urged Iraqis to unite and prevent a return of the conditions that allowed the rise of the extremists.

In Baghdad, Shiite politician Karim al-Nouri echoed those remarks, urging the government to review its policies in Sunni areas of Iraq to "avoid previous mistakes that led to the emergence" of IS.

The government needs to work on "removing fears of marginalization and terrorism affiliation in Sunni areas," said al-Nouri, a senior member of the Badr Organization. He said he believes Iraqi forces should stay in Mosul until it is fully secure before handing control to local forces.

Lawmaker Intisar al-Jabouri from Nineveh province, where Mosul is the capital, said uprooting IS' "extremism ideology" was the key to peace in Mosul, which reeled under the group's harsh rule for three years.

She urged Baghdad to invest in "good relations" between the residents and the security forces and take all "necessary measures to prevent terrorism groups from returning to Mosul."

In its report, Amnesty International alleged that all sides in the conflict violated international law in the battle for Mosul. IS fighters carried out forced displacement and summary killings, as well as using civilians as human shields.

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Iraqi forces and the coalition failed to protect civilians, the report said.

In all, 5,805 civilians may have been killed in the fight for western Mosul by coalition attacks, Amnesty said, citing data from Airwars, an organization monitoring civilian deaths due to the coalition against IS in Iraq and Syria.

"The scale and gravity of the loss of civilian lives during the military operation to retake Mosul must immediately be publicly acknowledged at the highest levels of government in Iraq and states that are part of the U.S.-led coalition," said Lynn Maalouf, the research director for the Mideast at Amnesty.

The report, which covered the first five months of 2017, noted how the militants moved civilians with them around Mosul, prevented them from escaping and created battle spaces with dense civilian populations, while Iraqi forces and the coalition "failed to adapt their tactics."

The Iraqi forces and the coalition "continued to use imprecise, explosive weapons with wide area effects in densely populated urban environments," Amnesty said, adding that some violations might constitute war crimes.

At a briefing Tuesday in Washington, Townsend rejected the allegation that international law was violated by the coalition.

"I reject any notion that coalition fires were in any way imprecise, unlawful or excessively targeted civilians," he said.

"I would challenge the people from Amnesty International or anyone else out there who makes these charges to first research their facts and make sure they're speaking from a position of authority," Townsend added.

He said the coalition went to "extraordinary measures to safeguard civilian lives, measuring every single time how many civilians may or may not be in the target area and what munition to employ and how can we strike that building and take out only that room and not the entire floor or the entire building."

In Geneva, U.N. human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein urged the Iraqi government to ensure that human rights will be respected in post-IS Mosul.

Zeid described Mosul's fall as the "turning point" in the conflict against IS, but warned that the group continues to subject people to "daily horrors" in its remaining strongholds of Tal Afar, west of Mosul, and in Hawijah, north of Baghdad.

"Horrific though the crimes of ISIL are, there is no place for vengeance," said Zeid, using another acronym for the Islamic State group.

He cited allegations of threats of collective punishment and forced evictions in Mosul by Iraqi security forces and their allies. He also cited three years of rights violations during IS' control of Mosul, including abuses like sexual slavery of women and girls that "have left deep scars on Iraqi society."

For more than two years before the Mosul operation began, Iraqi forces backed by coalition airstrikes slowly reclaimed territory that IS militants had seized as part of the group's self-described "caliphate."

Tens of thousands of Iraqi troops went through a coalition training program.

Associated Press writers Susannah George in Irbil, Iraq; Maamoun Youssef in Cairo; Jamey Keaten in Geneva; and Sinan Salaheddin and Muhanad al-Saleh in Baghdad contributed.

IOC to pick Los Angeles, Paris for 2024 or 2028 Olympics

By GRAHAM DUNBAR, AP Sports Writer

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Finally, Los Angeles and Paris have their Olympic hosting destiny in their own hands.

If they can agree who goes first, each city will be awarded either the 2024 or 2028 Summer Games in September.

International Olympic Committee members voted unanimously on Tuesday to seek a consensus three-way deal between the two bid cities and the IOC executive board. Talks will open with Paris widely seen as the favorite for 2024.

If a deal falls through, only the 2024 hosting rights will be voted on when the IOC next meets, on Sept. 13 in Lima, Peru.

However, an agreement seemed assured, judging by the reaction of the two mayors.

"I have full confidence that we will get there," LA Mayor Eric Garcetti said at a celebratory news conference for both candidates and IOC President Thomas Bach.

Garcetti and Anne Hidalgo, his friend and counterpart from Paris, had emerged on stage seconds after the vote, holding hands, to welcome the decision. They were joined by Bach, who raised an arm of each in a shared gesture of triumph.

The mood looked set to continue over dinner at the IOC's favored five-star hotel, the Lausanne Palace.

The Franco-American alliance continues later this week. U.S. President Donald Trump is due in Paris to join President Emmanuel Macron for Bastille Day on Friday, the national holiday.

Macron was in the Olympic capital city Tuesday to promoting the Parisian cause — in a closed-door session with IOC members to explain how they would host the 2024 Olympics, and a subsequent news conference.

The presidential push was judged necessary by Paris, which has failed with three recent Olympic bids.

"We lost three times, we don't want to lose a fourth one," Macron said at the news conference. "I'm here to convey the message that there's a strong unity to back this candidacy."

Minutes after Macron spoke, Trump wrote on Twitter: "Working hard to get the Olympics for the United States (L.A.). Stay tuned!"

Even without help from heads of state, LA and Paris are likely to reach a deal. A head-to-head fight for 2024 would create a loser that is unlikely to return four years later for a new 2028 bid contest.

"Both of us will find it more and more difficult to convince cities — whether it's Paris, Los Angeles or other American cities — to really go into this process if one of us gets turned down," Garcetti had said earlier Tuesday.

A deal to make both cities winners would fulfil a strategy that Bach set in motion last December to help safeguard a stable future for the signature Olympic event.

Asked when a 2024-2028 agreement could be sealed, Bach suggested: "If you ask me, I hope that in August we could be there."

The IOC approved the expected double award after hearing both cities present their 2024 hosting plans at a conference center in its home city.

Both cities used 45 minutes of videos and speeches in a closed-door session with IOC members to explain how they would host the 2024 Olympics.

At separate news conferences, the mayors said they could work toward a deal.

"We look forward to working together, maybe not in competition but collaboration with Paris," Garcetti said.

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Garcetti and Hidalgo have long touted their good relations, and on Tuesday noted their cities' common positions on issues such as climate change and welcoming refugees.

Hidalgo cited her friendship with Garcetti as potentially a "key element" in the expected deal.

The dual award can give the IOC a decade of stability with two world-class cities touting financially secure bids. LA plans to use only existing venues with zero risk of white elephants. This follows years of overspending by Olympic hosts and a series of political defeats that have sunk the campaigns of potential candidates.

It also avoids inflicting a third recent defeat on Paris — which lost with bids for the 2008 and 2012 Olympics — and the United States. New York and Chicago both lost heavily for 2012 and 2016, respectively.

Those losses deepened a rift between the U.S. Olympic Committee and the Swiss-based IOC that LA 2024 and a new team of American officials have worked hard to heal.

Paris also failed with a 1992 bid and pinned its hopes on hosting in 2024, exactly 100 years after its previous Summer Games.

Garcetti said the Olympic movement "can't afford to lose the United States."

The IOC's most valuable TV rights deal is with NBC and several of its top-tier sponsors are American.

Still, a 2028 Olympics in Southern California could be the first American-hosted games since 1996 in Atlanta.

Bach has said the idea of a double award was presented to him at a lunch last year by friends whom he declined to identify in a recent interview with French sports daily L'Equipe.

The LA bid team declined to comment Tuesday whether the suggestion came from its supporters, as some believe.

"He (Bach) has good friends who gave him good advice," LA bid chairman Casey Wasserman said.

Longtime GOP pessimistic about health care bill prospects

By ALAN FRAM and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A long-time Republican lawmaker said Tuesday he is "very pessimistic" that his party will push a health care bill through the Senate, even as a colleague warned leaders about retaliation by conservative voters should they react to a collapse of the measure by striking a deal with Democrats.

The downbeat assessments came with Republican leaders aiming toward a climactic Senate vote next week on their wounded legislation erasing much of President Barack Obama's health care law. The comments highlighted the divisions that top Republicans must heal to have a shot of pushing a bill through the chamber embodying one of the GOP's top priorities.

After abruptly canceling a vote last month on an initial bill for lack of support, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has been crafting changes aimed at nailing down GOP votes.

"I'm very pessimistic," Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, said on the Fox News Channel of the chances a bill will pass.

Grassley, first elected in 1980, said that Republicans have been promising for years to repeal Obama's 2010 statute and said, "There are consequences if you don't deliver on election promises, and there ought to be."

Over the weekend, Grassley tweeted that if Republicans don't complete a bill, "WE WILL GO FROM MAJORITY TO MINORITY."

With Democrats solidly against the effort, Republicans will lose if just three of their 52 senators oppose it. McConnell has said if the wide-ranging bill fails, he'd pursue a narrower measure aimed at

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propping up insurance markets — an effort that would likely require talks with Democrats.

“I think that’s the wrong strategy,” Paul said on the Fox News Channel about the possibility of a bipartisan deal on a smaller scale bill. “And I think Republicans will be very unhappy across the land if the Republican leadership gives up and goes and works with the Democrats.”

Paul, among several Republicans who’ve said they’ll oppose the initial GOP bill unless it’s changed, also suggested he wouldn’t support the legislation even if an amendment embraced by other conservatives is included.

Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Mike Lee, R-Utah, are pushing a revision to let insurers sell low-price policies with bare-bones coverage, as long as the company also sells a policy that covers a list of services like maternity care that Obama’s law mandates.

But the overall bill also contains more than \$100 billion that states could give to insurers to help them contain premiums. He said if the Cruz language is included in the bill in exchange for retaining that money, “this is a tradeoff that I’m not necessarily willing to take.”

He added, “That to me is not a pro-free market tradeoff.”

On Monday, No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Cornyn of Texas told reporters, “We need to start voting” on the GOP bill.” Some Republicans said a revised version of the bill could be introduced Thursday, and Cornyn said the “goal” was for a vote next week.

Cornyn cited seven years of unresolved Republican debate over how to replace the 2010 statute during which “we gain a vote, we lose a vote.” That underscored a sense among top Republicans that they had little to gain by letting their disputes drag on much further.

Republicans were hearing divergent messages from the White House Monday. President Donald Trump pressured GOP senators to pass the measure quickly, while Vice President Mike Pence suggested they might have to revert to a straightforward “Obamacare” repeal if they can’t agree on an alternative.

With at least a dozen Republicans opposing or challenging parts of McConnell’s bill, the leader has been working on revisions aimed at bringing more GOP senators on board. Final decisions remain to be made on how tightly to curb the growth of Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor; whether to let insurers sell low-cost policies with very limited coverage; and how much money to devote to making health care tax credits more generous, said No. 3 Senate Republican John Thune of South Dakota.

Congress is beginning a three-week sprint toward its traditional five-week August recess, and GOP leaders want to finish work on the measure by then. Some lawmakers have suggested the break should be shortened or canceled if they can’t get health care done first, though that’s unlikely to happen.

Too many Republicans oppose repealing Obama’s law without also enacting an alternative to give that tactic much chance of succeeding.

The House managed to pass health care legislation in May after plentiful struggles of its own to reach agreement. Both the House and Senate bills eliminate Obamacare’s mandates for people to buy insurance and individuals to provide it, gradually undo an expansion of Medicaid and reduce the size of the federal-state health care program for the poor and disabled. The measures would cut taxes for the wealthy.

This story was corrected to attribute quotation in 11th paragraph to Vice President Pence, not President Trump.

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Wiz Khalifa's 'See You Again' now most-viewed YouTube video

SAN BRUNO, Calif. (AP) — Move over, "Gangnam Style." YouTube has a new top-viewed video of all time.

Wiz Khalifa's video for "See You Again" featuring Charlie Puth became the site's most-watched video Monday and has more than 2.896 billion views as of Tuesday. That's about 2 million more than the video for Korean rapper Psy's 2012 smash "Gangnam Style," which held the most-viewed title for five years, YouTube said.

Justin Bieber's "Sorry" sits in third place, more than 250 million views behind the leaders.

Puth reacted with surprise on Twitter, noting that he joined YouTube in 2007 hoping to make a video that would hit 10,000 views. Puth also earned a congratulatory message from YouTube star Tyler Oakley, who called the feat "legendary & epic."

Wiz Khalifa said in a statement that he's happy the song has been able to "inspire and impact so many lives."

"See You Again" was released in 2015 as a tribute to late "Fast and the Furious" star Paul Walker.

FBI: US soldier pledged allegiance to Islamic State group

By AUDREY McAVOY and LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — An active duty soldier based in Hawaii pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State group, helped purchase a drone for it to use against American forces and said he wanted to use his rifle to "kill a bunch of people," according to an FBI affidavit.

Ikaika Kang, a sergeant first class in the U.S. Army, made an initial appearance Monday in federal court in Honolulu. He was arrested Saturday on terrorism charges.

Paul Delacourt, the FBI special agent in charge of the Hawaii bureau, said Kang gave military documents to people he believed would give them to Islamic State, but none of them got to the organization. He told reporters the FBI believes Kang was a lone actor and wasn't affiliated with anyone who poses a threat.

Kang's court-appointed defense attorney, Birney Bervar, said it appears his client may suffer from service-related mental health issues of which the government was aware but neglected to treat. Bervar declined to elaborate.

He said Kang was "a decorated veteran of two deployments" to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 26-page affidavit from FBI Special Agent Jimmy Chen details the yearlong investigation into the 34-year-old soldier, who thought he was dealing with Islamic State agents but were undercover agents or sources instead.

Among the charges was that Kang copied military secret documents in 2015 and wanted to provide them to the organization, according to the affidavit. It also Kang says admitted that he voluntarily pledged loyalty to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

The pledge occurred on Saturday at a home in Honolulu, where Kang thought he was meeting an actual member of the organization, the affidavit says. They made combat training videos he believed would be taken back to the Middle East to help prepare the group's soldiers to fight American forces, according to the affidavit.

Kang, who received extensive combat training, also helped purchase a drone Saturday that he believed would help Islamic State soldiers evade U.S. tanks in battle, explaining U.S. tank crews were highly trained and difficult to defeat. Kang told the undercover agents that the drone would allow Islamic State members to view the battlefield from above "to find tank positions and avenues for escape."

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Kang, a trained air traffic controller based at Hawaii's Wheeler Army Airfield, had his military clearance revoked in 2012 for making pro-Islamic State comments while at work and on-post and threatening to hurt or kill fellow service members.

His clearance was reinstated a year later after he completed military requirements.

However, the affidavit says the Army believed Kang was becoming radicalized in 2016 and asked the FBI to investigate.

Kang has two firearms registered in his name, an AR-15-style assault rifle and a handgun. After the shooting last summer at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, he told an undercover source that the "shooter did what he had to do and later said that America is the only terrorist organization in the world," according to the affidavit.

The document alleges he also later told the same source that "Hitler was right, saying he believed in the mass killing of Jews."

He told a confidential informant in March that he was angry at a civilian who had taken away his air traffic controller's license and that he wanted to torture him, the affidavit said.

"Kang said that if he ever saw him again, he would tie him down and pour Drano in his eyes," the affidavit said.

Kang enlisted in the Army in December 2001, just months after the Sept. 11 attacks. He served in Iraq from March 2010 to February 2011 and Afghanistan from July 2013 to April 2014. Kang was assigned to the headquarters of the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade.

At Kang's home, there was red "evidence" tape on his door and on his water heater storage door.

Pua Edayan, the office manager at Kang's condo complex in Waipahu, described Kang as "a quiet person."

"He gave me no trouble," she said.

He has one roommate and purchased the unit less than a year ago.

Kulana Knolls is popular with soldiers because it is near Schofield.

"I'm very shocked," Edayan said. "This is surprise news to me."

Baldor reported from Washington.

Asian markets mostly weaker before Fed chair speech

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian shares were mixed on Wednesday as investors eyed U.S. political risks and cues about the direction of monetary policy from the Federal Reserve chair.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.6 percent to 20,073.67 and South Korea's KOSPI lost 0.2 percent to 2,392.56. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index surged 0.8 percent to 26,089.42, while China's Shanghai Composite Index slipped 0.2 percent to 3,196.56. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.8 percent to 5,685.40. Stocks in Southeast Asia were mixed.

FED WATCH: Investors were refraining from making big moves ahead of Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen's testimony before the U.S. Congress on Wednesday and Thursday. Traders are watching for cues on the outlook for U.S. monetary policy and the Fed's plans to cut its balance sheet. The Fed is also scheduled to release its Beige Book, an economic snapshot used by the central bank to gauge U.S. economic trends.

TRUMP RISK: U.S. President Donald Trump's eldest son revealed Tuesday that he was eager to hear damaging information about Hillary Clinton from the Russian government and disclosed emails that marked the clearest sign to date that Trump's campaign was willing to consider election help from a

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longtime U.S. adversary. Democrats in Congress voiced outrage and insisted the messages showed clear collusion, as U.S. intelligence agencies investigate if Russia meddled in the 2016 election.

ANALYST'S VIEW: The soft opening in Tokyo "suggests that Asian markets are being a bit defensive in reaction to release of the Trump emails implying a preparedness to accept information from Russia to achieve electoral advantage," Ric Spooner of CMC Markets said in a commentary. He added, "there are concerns that the U.S. administration is becoming increasingly mired in day-to-day difficulties, limiting the political capital it needs to achieve difficult economic reform and stimulus."

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks finished with little changes on Tuesday. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 0.1 percent to 2,425.53. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 0.55 points to 21,409.07. The Nasdaq composite rose 0.3 percent to 6,193.30. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks added 4.58 points, or 0.3 percent, to 1,413.05.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude added 75 cents to \$45.79 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Tuesday, the contract rose 64 cents, or 1.4 percent, to settle at \$45.04 a barrel. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 73 cents to \$48.25 per barrel in London. On Tuesday, it rose 64 cents, or 1.4 percent, to finish at \$47.52 a barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 113.33 yen from 113.95 yen while the euro strengthened to \$1.1478 from \$1.1467.

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