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Senior Menu: Salisbury steak with gravy, baked potato, coleslaw, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread.

Olive Grove: Ferney Open

30

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m.

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

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

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

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

31

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, broccoli, garlic toast, orange sherbet.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study at 6:30 a.m.

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons

Official Notices

- Brown County (Updated 7-26)**
- Groton City Book (updated 7-26)**
- Groton Area School (updated 7-26)**
- Frederick Area School Book (updated 7-26)**
- Westport Town Book (updated 7-26)**
- Frederick Town (updated 7-18)**
- Other Official Notices Book**
- Claremont Town Official Notices 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**

Removal, Grinding, Chipping, Trimming

605-725-WOOD

Mason Dinger: 605-216-6098

Trevor Zeck: 605-216-8910



**DAKOTA TREE
COMPANY**

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TO ME, EVERY HOUR OF
THE LIGHT AND DARK IS A
miracle.

EVERY CUBIC INCH OF
SPACE IS A
miracle.

-Walt Whitman

State Treasurer Sattgast Reports a Record \$27.5m in Unclaimed Property Returned Last Year

(Pierre) – South Dakota State Treasurer Rich Sattgast announced a record \$27.5 million in Unclaimed Property was returned last year.

“Our purpose is to reunite South Dakotans with their lost property,” said Sattgast. Even with a banner year, 1 in 4 South Dakotans still has Unclaimed Property. The Treasurer strongly encourages all residents to check the state’s database to see if they are owed money. It’s easy, free and only takes a minute to search online at www.sdtreasurer.gov.

Most people don’t even realize the state is holding their money because it comes from a variety of sources dating back many years. Unclaimed property includes money from inactive bank accounts, uncashed paychecks or unclaimed utility deposits from a previous residence. Once these accounts become stale, it is up to the State Treasurer to try to return the money to its rightful owner.

“This is money that belongs to average citizens and never reverts to the state,” Sattgast said. “Out-reach is so important. If I can return this money, it eventually enters the local economy which is good for all of South Dakota.”

The South Dakota Unclaimed Property program has returned \$62 million over the past three years. The State Treasurer’s office works to return the money by advertising in newspapers and at fairs and events across the state. There is no time limit to claim property and since new properties are added all of the time, Treasurer Sattgast encourages everyone to routinely check the Unclaimed Property website at www.sdtreasurer.gov or call toll free in South Dakota at 1-866-357-2547.

Road Construction Update

The weekly meeting on the road construction in Groton revealed several important items.

The damage that was done last Saturday to the freshly poured concrete set back the opening date of US12 by a week. US12 is expected to be reopened next Thursday or Friday. Also, as a result of that damage, Webster Scale, Inc., is incurring fines, even though it was not their problem. John Shoemaker of Webster Scale said fines will be around \$8,000. Also, when US12 is reopened, the temporary signal lights will be removed. This is because they are not big enough to control two lanes of traffic. Work is progressing rapidly on the permanent signal lights.

Also next week, Burlington Northern Railroad will begin on the replacement of the railroad cross on SD37 in Groton. When that begins about midweek, traffic will be disrupted. Single lane traffic will be controlled by flaggers.

The City of Groton is incurring charges from having to lower four or five sewer service lines along SD37. The state is installing new, much larger storm sewer pipe and are having to dig them down further. As a result, the individual sewer lines had to be lowered by about 18 inches to accommodate the storm sewer line.

HOW TO FREEZE YOUR FISH

Eating freshly caught fish is always the best but if you've caught so many you need to freeze some it's important to do it right.

Once cleaned, put them in a freezer safe Ziploc bag but make sure to remove as much air as possible.

You can also wrap your fish in aluminum foil and then wrap again in freezer paper to give double protection.

Air tight sealing machines are great too. They remove all air from the package as they are sealed, preventing the fish from losing its flavor.

Another way is to freeze fish in a solid block of ice. Place fish into a refrigerator container using only enough water to just cover them.

To thaw your fish, put in the refrigerator overnight or place the wrapped fish in cold water. Thawing fish in a microwave cooks part of the fish before other parts are thawed. If you thaw fish at room temperature bacteria will grow before you cook it.

Freezing and thawing properly will help keep the flavor of those fish you worked so hard to catch.

For more outdoor tips go to basspro.com and click on 1Source News & Tips.

Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World Tips presents free, seasonal how-to advice from Larry Whiteley, host of the award-winning Outdoor World Radio show. Each weekly tip offers practical advice to improve your skills.



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Today in Weather History

July 28, 1986: Very intense thunderstorms developed in South Dakota and Nebraska and moved into Iowa. The first of these storms produced a tornado that crossed into Iowa south of Sioux City and slammed into a coal-burning power plant. This storm caused between 25 and 50 million dollars damage to the plant. The tornado continued across farmland, then damaged a store and flattened a motel in Sloan before lifting up.

1819 - A small but intense hurricane passed over Bay Saint Louis, MS. The hurricane was considered the worst in fifty years. Few houses were left standing either at Bay Saint Louis or at Pass Christian, and much of the Mississippi coast was desolate following the storm. A U.S. cutter was lost along with its thirty-nine crew members. The storm struck the same area that was hit 150 years later by Hurricane Camille. (David Ludlum)

1898: A severe thunderstorm produced considerable hail (some stones to 11 ounces) in Chicago, Illinois business district. Some people were hurt, not by hail, but by several hundred runaway horses spooked by the hailstones.

1930 - The temperature at Greensburg, KY, soared to 114 degrees to set a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1934 - The temperature at Grofino, ID, climbed to 118 degrees to establish a record for Idaho. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - A severe storm with hail up to an inch and a half in diameter broke windows, ruined roofs, and stripped trees of leaves near Benson, AZ. The temperature dropped to 37 degrees, as hail was three to four inches deep, with drifts 46 inches high. (The Weather Channel)

1976: At 3:42 AM, an earthquake measuring between 7.8 and 8.2 magnitudes on the Richter scale flattens Tangshan, a Chinese industrial city with a population of about one million people. An estimated 242,000 people in Tangshan and surrounding areas were killed, making the earthquake one of the deadliest in recorded history, surpassed only by the 300,000 who died in the Calcutta earthquake in 1737, and the 830,000 thought to have perished in China's Shaanxi province in 1556

1986 - Severe thunderstorms moving out of South Dakota across Iowa produce high winds which derailed eighteen piggyback trailer cars of a westbound freight train near Boone, IA. Sixteen of the cars fell 187 feet into the Des Moines River. The thunderstorms also spawned a number of tornadoes, including one which caused twenty-five to fifty million dollars damage at Sloan, near Sioux City, IA. (Storm Data)








1987 - Thunderstorms in Nevada produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Searchlight, reducing visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Thunderstorms in Montana drenched Lonesome Lake with 3.78 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms drenched Wilmington, NC, with 3.33 inches of rain, bringing their monthly total 14.46 inches. Seven cities in Michigan and Minnesota reported record high temperatures for the date. Marquette, MI, hit 99 degrees, and the record high of 94 degrees at Flint MI was their tenth of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Massachusetts. Early evening thunderstorms over Florida produced wind gusts to 68 mph at Fort Myers, and evening thunderstorms in South Dakota produced nearly two inches of rain in twenty minutes at Pierpoint. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny	Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 85 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 86 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 88 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 88 °F

Isolated Showers and Storms West & Central

Highs: 80s & Low 90s

Very High Fire Danger
Thanks To Breezy South Winds



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 7/28/2017 3:48 AM Central

Published on: 07/28/2017 at 3:50AM

High pressure to the east and low pressure to the west will result in a breezy south wind with temperatures around average. We cant rule out an isolated weak storm or two as well...

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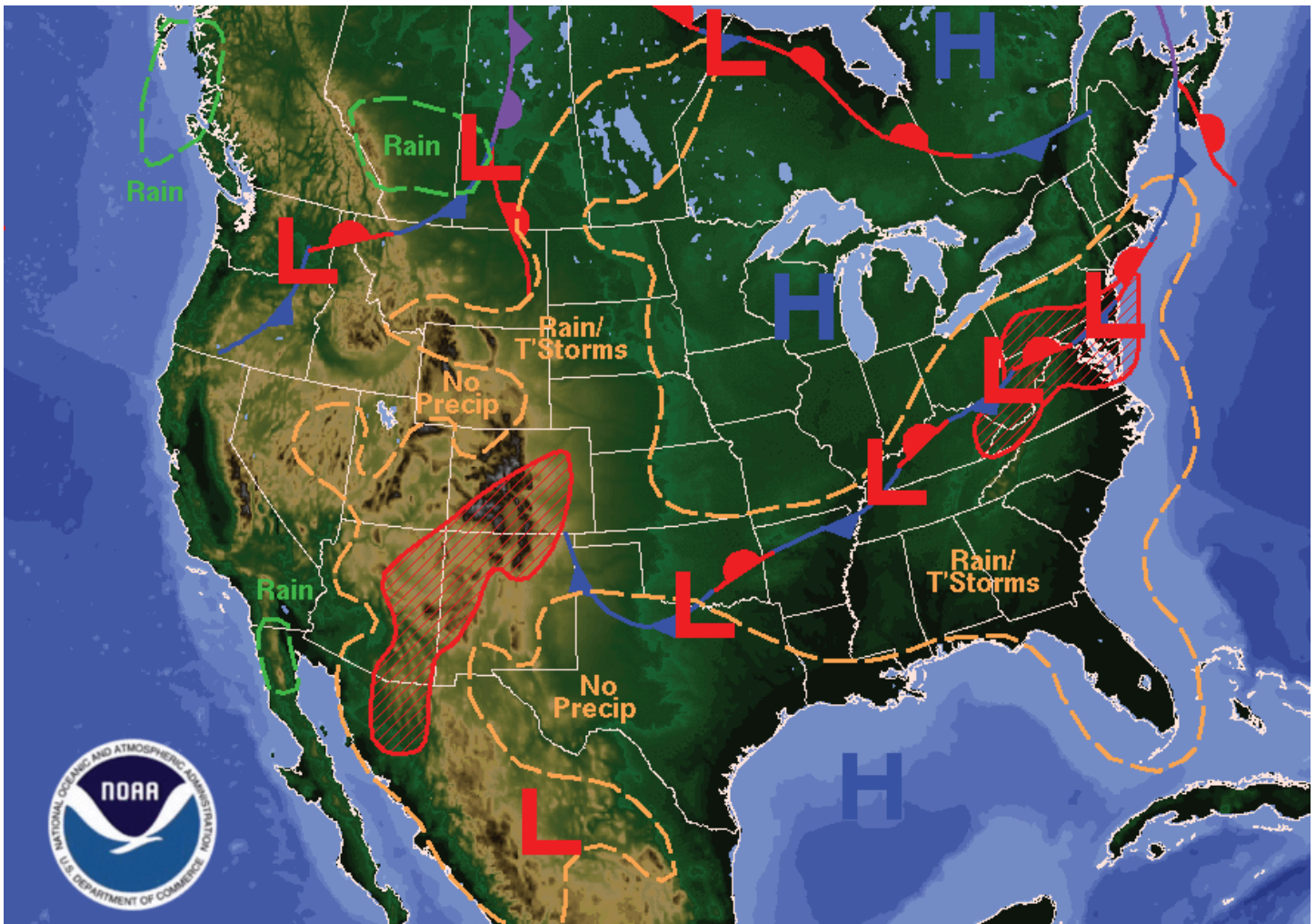
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 84.5 F at 6:08 PM
Low Outside Temp: 55.1 F at 5:47 AM
High Gust: 12.0 Mph at 2:34 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 109° in 1975
Record Low: 40° in 2013
Average High: 84°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July: 2.77
Precip to date in July: 1.47
Average Precip to date: 13.61
Precip Year to Date: 7.24
Sunset Tonight: 9:06 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:14 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jul 28, 2017, issued 4:38 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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OUR SOURCE OF SECURITY

Life is unpredictable. Rarely does a day pass without someone or something interrupting our best laid plans. We look forward to days without worry and nights that are peaceful. Then, suddenly and without our permission, we are jolted into the realm of the unknown and the unexpected. We strive to be safe and secure but we have no assurance that tragedy will not strike without warning.

Psalm 23 is no doubt the world's most loved psalm. The helpless image of sheep who want to stray from the flock and their need for protection by an ever present and always watchful shepherd gives us comfort and calmness. We all need and want that kind of Shepherd. It gives hope and assurance that we will never be left alone during the dark hours of life and that we will never have to face dangerous valleys or dimly lit pathways by ourselves.

In this psalm David presents a picture of God that reveals His love, His loyalty and His presence. As long as we live we can say He is "my" shepherd – not "a" shepherd or "someone else's shepherd" but "my" very own shepherd who watches over me and every step we take.

And finally, when we are face to face with the certainty of death after the uncertainties of life, we know that He is – not might be – but actually is with us as we "pass through" the dark valley of death and enter into eternity where we will enjoy His presence forever!

Prayer: We are grateful to You, Lord, for giving us Your peace, presence and protection, today and every day and that You, our Creator, are also our Shepherd. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

News from the Associated Press

Report: Nebraska worst performing economy in country

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The economies of Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota logged the worst performance in the U.S. in the beginning of 2017, with economic output declining in all three states, according to a report from a federal commerce bureau.

Data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that from January through March, Nebraska's economic output declined by 4 percent from the final quarter of the previous year, making it the worst of any state. South Dakota ranked second-worst with a 3.8 percent decline, followed by Iowa with a 3.2 percent decline.

The bureau is a federal agency from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Omaha World-Herald reported. It measures a state's "real" gross domestic product, which is the market value of goods and services produced in-state.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss conducted a survey of rural bankers earlier this month that shows a dimming outlook for the broader region as the year continues.

The bureau's report said that economies most closely tied to agriculture are suffering the worst. It said that 43 states and Washington, D.C., saw growth in the first three months of the year when compared with the last three months of 2016.

National GDP data for the second quarter will be released Friday. Economists who were surveyed by Dow Jones expect 2.7 percent growth from the previous quarter.

[—]This story has been corrected to show the name of the Creighton University economist is Ernie Goss, not Gross.

[—]Information from: Omaha World-Herald, <http://www.omaha.com>.

Supporters hope to try again with redistricting amendment

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Supporters of a constitutional amendment that would take control of redistricting from South Dakota legislators and give it to an independent commission hope to put the amendment before voters in 2018, a key supporter said Thursday.

Attorney General Marty Jackley this week filed an explanation of the amendment with the secretary of state's office, a step required before petition gatherers can spread out across the state. Supporter Rick Weiland, a former Democratic U.S. Senate candidate, said the plan — a reprise from 2016 — would make elections fairer in South Dakota.

"Why would we allow elected politicians, why would we afford them the opportunity to draw their legislative district?" Weiland said. "It just doesn't make any sense. When you have complete one-party domination, you're going to get one-party dominated redistricting efforts."

Redistricting is the process of redrawing electoral district boundaries every 10 years to account for population changes. When the process is carried out by elected officials, it often sparks lawsuits and claims of gerrymandering — attempting to draw the districts for political advantage.

Republicans control every statewide office and hold supermajorities in the state Legislature.

The amendment calls for switching control of the legislative redistricting process from legislators to an independent commission of nine people, with no more than three from any one political party. It mirrors a constitutional amendment that South Dakota voters rejected last year.

Political considerations get no mention in redistricting guidance provided by the state constitution. It just says each legislative district must consist of "compact, contiguous territory and shall have population as nearly equal as is practicable." The amendment specifies that party registration and voting history must be excluded from redistricting and that the home of any incumbent or candidate can't be identified or considered.

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Under the plan, the commission would redistrict in 2021 and every decade after.

Supporters would have to submit nearly 28,000 valid signatures to the secretary of state by November 2017 for the new amendment to appear on the 2018 ballot. Passage of the amendment requires a simple majority.

The South Dakota Republican Party opposed the unsuccessful 2016 amendment. GOP Sen. Jim Bolin said the measure would give away power to non-elected officials to decide on something the Legislature did well in 2011.

"It's the most bogus, unnecessary thing that is out there," Bolin said. "It was defeated decisively last time, and I hope it's defeated decisively this time."

Redistricting will not affect federal races in South Dakota because the entire state is one congressional district.

In South Dakota, it's pols 2, rattlers nothing

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Tough enough to serve in Congress? Both of South Dakota's Republican House candidates have checked that box — by killing rattlesnakes.

Dusty Johnson's congressional campaign tweeted a video Thursday of him dispatching a snake at a youth camp with "courage and a dull axe!" The move causes onlookers to scream and then cheer and chant his name.

Johnson, a former public utilities commissioner, says he last killed a rattler in high school.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs last year shot a rattlesnake with a pistol because it got too close for comfort. Krebs says that was the first time she killed one.

Tim Bjorkman is a Democrat in the 2018 contest, while George Hendrickson plans to run as an independent.

Worsening drought conditions in parts of US stressing crops

By DAVID PITT, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Drought conditions worsened in several states over the past week from extreme heat and weeks with little rain, raising the prospect that grocery staples such as bread and beans could cost more as the region that produces those commodities is hardest hit.

Drought conditions have begun to stress corn, soybeans, wheat and livestock in some areas, according to the weekly U.S. Drought Monitor released Thursday by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Nearly 11 percent of the continental United States is in moderate drought or worse, said Richard Heim, a meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in this week's drought summary. The report is compiled weekly using data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and NOAA.

"Much of Montana and parts of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas had no rain this week; some areas have been drier than normal for the last two to three months; and some drought indicators reflect dryness for the last 12 months," Heim wrote.

About half of the nation's spring wheat, 13 percent of winter wheat, 15 percent of corn and 14 percent of the soybeans are in drought, the report said.

Consumers could see the price of bread at the grocery counter rise, said Doug Goehring, agriculture commissioner for North Dakota, the nation's largest producer of spring wheat and second largest grower of wheat generally after Kansas.

"There have been people in this business for five decades who have said they have never seen conditions like this," Goehring said.

North Dakota farmers also lead the nation in production of navy beans, pinto beans and canola used for vegetable oil, and prices of those products also could be affected, Goehring said.

USDA has designated numerous counties in the three states as natural disasters, paving the way for emergency loans for producers, and governors of some states including Montana, Nebraska and North Dakota have declared some counties disasters to provide state aid.

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Iowa, Oklahoma and Texas also have areas of drought with stressed crops and livestock beginning to surface.

Corn and soybean conditions in Iowa deteriorated slightly over the previous week although 68 percent of the state's corn and 62 percent of soybeans remained in good or excellent condition, a USDA crop update released Monday said.

This version of the story corrects that North Dakota is the second largest producer of wheat generally, not winter wheat.

Blake Nicholson contributed to this report from Bismarck, North Dakota.

Sign up for the AP's weekly newsletter showcasing our best reporting from the Midwest and Texas: <http://apne.ws/2u1RMfv>

Construction to begin on \$150M ethanol plant in South Dakota

ONIDA, S.D. (AP) — Construction is scheduled to begin next month on a \$150 million ethanol plant in central South Dakota after three years of development and fundraising.

Construction on the Ringneck Energy plant ran into numerous delays due to legal, financial and regulatory hurdles. The company had fought hard to attract investors, holding dozens of meetings across the region and outside the state.

President and CEO Walt Wendland also hired attorneys to battle a handful of Onida residents who didn't want the plant across the road from their homes.

Wendland said those battles are in the past and that the project's equity drive ends Friday. He said the drive has raised \$85 million, enough capital to attract financing to get the plant built and operating.

Wendland said that Onida originally was chosen as the facility's location due to the availability of natural gas, water, electricity and the railroad as well as the potential for abundant corn.

City and Sully County officials said the plant will bring great economic benefits, as well as more people, to the community.

The plant will use 25 million bushels of corn per year to produce ethanol as well as the by-product of distillers' grain that can be used as valuable livestock feed.

Construction is scheduled to begin Aug. 14, with the work expecting to up late next year.

3rd person dies after car hits pedestrians outside center

ALCESTER, S.D. (AP) — A third person has died of injuries suffered when an 81-year-old woman drove a car into a group of residents and an employee outside a care center in southeast South Dakota, the state Department of Public Safety said Thursday.

Pearl "Tex" Sowell, 95, was a resident at the Alcester Care and Rehab Center and died Thursday of his injuries, officials said. He was among seven people hit outside the center Monday when Patricia Berg, of Alcester, unintentionally hit the gas pedal instead of the brakes when she pulled into the driveway, investigators said.

Another resident, Marcene Gabel, 79, and a center employee, Jenna Benzel, 31 were also killed. Berg and another center resident, Lois Sundstrom, 86, remained hospitalized. No charges have been filed against Berg. Three others who were injured have been released from hospitals, public safety officials said.

Cindy Gabel tells the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2u1jQ0I>) her mother was someone who always took care of others before herself. She worked in patient care and rehab at the center for about 25 years before becoming a resident in 2015, Cindy Gabel said.

"My mom was a reserved woman and was a hard worker. She never took much time for herself," said Gabel. "She was always taking care of everything and everyone."

A funeral service for Benzel, a wife and mother of three, was held Thursday at Trinity Lutheran Church

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in Vermillion. An obituary said Benzel was an activities coordinator at the care center and took pride in bringing joy to the residents. Her children are ages 11, 8 and 3, the obituary said.

Friends who spoke at a vigil for the family Tuesday in Harrisburg described Benzel as always happy and smiling. Her oldest child, Bram, told those gathered at the vigil that his mother was always helping others, even in her last moments.

"We went to the care center, where it happened," he said. "We met the person who was with her when she died."

His voice breaking, he relayed what that person had told him about his mother.

"She pushed people out of the way. She saved people's lives," he said.

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

Drought conditions mostly unchanged in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Drought conditions in South Dakota haven't changed much over the past week. The latest U.S. Drought Monitor map shows 80 percent of the state in some stage of drought, down from 82 percent last week.

However, 15 percent of the state is now listed in extreme drought, up from 11 percent last week. Those pockets are in the central and northwest regions.

Nearly all of the state remains in some stage of drought or abnormally dry.

Farmers and ranchers in several counties are eligible for aid due to disaster declarations in the Dakotas by the federal government.

Authorities ID Belle Fourche motorcyclist killed in crash

HILL CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Highway Patrol has identified a motorcyclist from Belle Fourche who died in a crash last weekend.

Authorities say the motorcycle driven by 54-year-old Julia Myers collided with a car at a U.S. Highway 385 intersection northeast of Hill City on Sunday afternoon. Myers was pronounced dead at a Rapid City hospital.

The 82-year-old Rapid City woman driving the car wasn't injured. Charges are pending against her.

Sioux Falls man gets lengthy prison term on child sex charge

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man who had sex with a teenage girl and recorded it on his cellphone has been sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Authorities arrested 38-year-old Terance Highbull in February 2015 after discovering evidence of the assault against a 13-year-old girl. He pleaded guilty last April to sexual exploitation of a child.

U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says Highbull will be on supervised release for 15 years following his prison term.

Scaramucci tirades ignite smoldering White House tensions

By JULIE BYKOWICZ and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's new communications director exploded the smoldering tensions at the White House into a full-fledged conflagration Thursday, angrily daring Trump's chief of staff to deny he's a "leaker" and exposing West Wing backstabbing in language more suitable to a mobster movie than a seat of presidential stability.

In a pull-no-punches, impromptu CNN interview that he said was authorized by the president, Anthony Scaramucci went after chief of staff Reince Priebus in graphic terms. "The fish stinks from the head down," he said. "I can tell you two fish that don't stink, and that's me and the president."

Not even a week into his new job, Scaramucci accused unidentified senior officials of trying to sabotage

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him and committing a felony by leaking information. But the personal financial information that he said someone had "leaked" about him had simply been obtained through a public records request.

Then in an expletive-laden interview published by The New Yorker late Thursday, an angry Scaramucci accused Priebus of being a "f----- paranoid schizophrenic" and White House chief strategist Steve Bannon of trying to burnish his own reputation.

He also threatened to fire White House staffers who leaked news about a dinner he had with the president. "They'll all be fired by me," Scaramucci told the magazine. "I fired one guy the other day. I have three to four people I'll fire tomorrow. I'll get to the person who leaked that to you. Reince Priebus — if you want to leak something — he'll be asked to resign very shortly."

By day's end Scaramucci sounded calmer, though not regretful.

"I sometimes use colorful language. I will refrain in this arena but not give up the passionate fight for @realDonaldTrump's agenda. #MAGA," he tweeted. The tag at the end stands for Trump's "Make America Great Again."

He also blamed the reporter, Ryan Lizza, for reporting the conversation. "I made a mistake in trusting in a reporter," he added later. "It won't happen again."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders referred reporters to the first tweet.

The president's senior counselor, Kellyanne Conway, had earlier speculated in a Fox News interview that unnamed forces were out to get Scaramucci, saying: "Somebody is trying to get in his way and scare him off."

"There are leaks and then there are people using the press to shiv each other in the ribs," she said.

Meanwhile, no one in the White House took up for Priebus — including Priebus himself. Sanders avoided giving a direct answer when asked whether Trump has confidence in Priebus.

The past 24 hours provided the clearest evidence yet that Scaramucci and Trump, both brash New Yorkers, are cut from the same cloth. One of their shared techniques: publicly shaming members of their own team.

Scaramucci's goading of Priebus came as Trump continued to fume publicly and privately about his attorney general. Trump has been critical of Attorney General Jeff Sessions for recusing himself from the Justice Department investigation into whether the president's campaign had anything to do with Russian interference in the election last fall.

"It hasn't been my best week ... for my relationship with the president," Sessions acknowledged in an interview with The Associated Press in El Salvador, where he was on a mission to increase international cooperation against gangs.

He said he would stay in his post and fight for Trump's agenda "as long as he sees that as appropriate."

Newt Gingrich, a former House speaker and frequent outside adviser to Trump, said in an interview that Scaramucci's attacks on Priebus are problematic. "They've got to get this sorted out between the two of them, and it would be nice if they didn't do it in public," he said.

Yet after Scaramucci's call-in CNN performance — a move lifted from his boss' playbook — it was difficult to see how the two could mend fences.

"I don't know if this is repairable or not — that will be up to the president," Scaramucci said on air. He compared their relationship to that of brothers who are "rough on each other," invoking the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Cain murdered Abel.

The bad blood stems from Scaramucci's view that Priebus was insufficiently supportive of Trump at the end of the election campaign and his belief that Priebus persuaded the president to keep him out of the White House in January. Six months later, Scaramucci's close relationship with the president trumped opposition to his hiring from Priebus and Bannon.

Scaramucci's arrival in the West Wing last Friday marked the first in a series of falling dominoes that seemed to be leading toward Priebus. Press secretary Sean Spicer, a close ally of Priebus, resigned last week. Scaramucci then forced out another communications aide close to Priebus.

Scaramucci then tweeted that someone had illegally leaked financial information about him, conspicuously mentioning Priebus' Twitter handle. Scaramucci later deleted that tweet and said he had only mentioned Priebus to show that all senior leaders are taking leaks seriously.

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"In light of the leak of my financial disclosure info which is a felony, I will be contacting @FBI and the @JusticeDept #swamp @Reince45," his since-deleted tweet read.

Scaramucci's financial disclosure form wasn't leaked at all. It was released after a public records request by a Politico reporter.

In the CNN interview, Scaramucci said he'd be reaching out to his "buddies" in the FBI about the matter.

If Scaramucci tries to direct the FBI to conduct a leak investigation, that could brush up against the Justice Department's obligation to function independently from the White House, said Mark Zaid, a national security lawyer in Washington.

"It starts to potentially smell and approach an inappropriate line," Zaid said.

Brad Gerstman, a New York lobbyist and public relations executive, said it probably doesn't matter to Trump that Scaramucci and Priebus don't get along. Gerstman has done projects for the Trump Organization and is a neighbor and longtime friend of Scaramucci's.

"In my experience, he's of the belief that sometimes a little friction in the ranks is how you surface the best ideas," Gerstman said of Trump.

But another rule of thumb in Trump's inner circle is that it's never wise to outshine the president.

Trump has reacted angrily when certain aides — including Bannon and, briefly, son-in-law Jared Kushner — received outsized media attention.

Ari Fleischer, who served as press secretary under George W. Bush, said, "Ask Steve Bannon what happens if you get too much publicity and go too far."

"It reminds me of Icarus flying too close to the sun."

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Vivian Salama, Eric Tucker and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

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. 'IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON'

A dejected Majority Leader Mitch McConnell urges his Senate colleagues to move on after the chamber narrowly rejected a measure to repeal parts of "Obamacare."

2. 'I SOMETIMES USE COLORFUL LANGUAGE'

Trump aide Anthony Scaramucci explains his profanity-laced tirade directed at colleagues Reince Priebus and Steve Bannon after it was published in its entirety in The New Yorker magazine.

3. SHARIF OUSTED IN PAKISTAN

The country's Supreme Court disqualifies the three-term prime minister from holding office over allegations of corruption against him and his family.

4. ISRAELI POLICE ON HIGH ALERT FOR PRAYERS AT JERUSALEM SITE

Men under 50 are barred from the site near the Al-Aqsa Mosque following security assessments indicting Palestinians plan protests there.

5. TRUMP SEEKING FUNDS TO COMBAT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, VIOLENT CRIME

The president heads to Long Island to give a speech close to where the street gang MS-13 has committed a string of murders.

6. WHAT AWAITS TRUMP'S SIGNATURE

The Senate has approved a new package of stiff financial sanctions against Russia, Iran and North Korea.

7. HOW NORTH KOREA IS EVADING INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS

An AP investigation finds that U.S.-allied Persian Gulf nations are hosting thousands of North Korean laborers whose wages help Pyongyang build the missiles now threatening the U.S. and its Asian partners.

8. WHO IS GOING AFTER RUSSIAN HACKERS

The U.S. has orchestrated the arrest of five suspected Russian cybercriminals across Europe in the past

nine months, AP learns.

9. TESLA'S NEW VEHICLE WILL COST HALF AS MUCH AS PREVIOUS MODELS

The electric car company's newest vehicle lists for \$35,000 and has a range of 215 miles, which could take it from a niche luxury brand to the mainstream.

10. WHERE EXPECTATIONS HAVE FALLEN SHORT

One year after the Rio Olympics, Brazil's most famous city remains wracked by violence amid the country's deepest economic downturn in 100 years.

Lawyer says client unaware she had poison that killed Korean

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

SHAH ALAM, Malaysia (AP) — A chemist's report that shows the banned VX nerve agent was used to kill the half brother of North Korea's leader needs further scrutiny, a lawyer for one of the two women accused of poisoning the man said Friday as he examined evidence ahead of a trial set for October.

High Court Judge Azmi Ariffin set an Oct. 2 trial date for Indonesian Siti Aisyah and Vietnamese Doan Thi Huong, who are accused of smearing Kim Jong Nam's face with banned VX nerve agent at a crowded airport terminal in Kuala Lumpur on Feb. 13. He died about 20 minutes later.

The women, who face a possible death penalty if convicted, say they were duped into thinking they were playing a harmless prank for a hidden-camera TV show.

Prosecutor Muhamad Iskandar Ahmad said he plans to call up to 40 witnesses, including 10 experts and a few foreigners.

The women appeared in court wearing traditional Malay dresses, smiling at their lawyers and embassy officials. They were handcuffed as they were led to the dock.

But after the judge left the room, Aisyah was in tears as her lawyer debriefed her.

The two women are the only suspects in custody in a killing that South Korea's spy agency said was part of a five-year plot by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to kill a brother he reportedly never met. Malaysian police have said four North Korean suspects fled the country the same day Kim Jong Nam was killed.

Gooi Soon Seng, Aisyah's lawyer, told reporters that "traces of precursors of VX and degrading products of VX" were found on Kim's face and the women's clothing based on government documents. He said the defense has to engage expert opinion to establish if this meant that the poison used was VX or some other chemical.

VX is supposed to be very potent and even 0.1 milliliters is enough to kill a person. "But we can say that there were no side effects on the two women," Gooi said.

"We have doubts over the accuracy of the report. We are seeking evidence that VX is used. The burden of proof is on the prosecution," Gooi said.

Whether VX or not, Gooi said their core defense was that Aisyah didn't know she had poison on her hand at the time.

"A crime constitutes an act and a guilty intention. There was no guilty intention on her part. She didn't know what she was applying," he added.

Earlier, prosecutors provided airport camera footage to the defense. Gooi said it included a video of a prank played by Aisyah on someone else at the airport. He didn't give further details.

North Korea has a history of ordering killings of people it views as threats to its regime. While Kim Jong Nam was not thought to be seeking influence, his status as eldest son in the current generation of North Korea's founding family could have made him appear to be a danger to his half brother's rule.

Pyongyang has denied any role in the killing and has not even acknowledged that the dead man was Kim Jong Nam.

Pakistani court disqualifies PM on allegation of corruption

By MUNIR AHMED and ZARAR KHAN, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A five-judge panel of Pakistan's Supreme Court on Friday disqualified thrice-elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from holding office over allegations of corruption against him and his family.

The court in a unanimous decision said Sharif was disqualified for not remaining "truthful and honest" after considering evidence against him. It also ruled Sharif could no longer serve as a member of the National Assembly, a powerful lower house of the parliament.

General elections are to be held in Pakistan next year and the Supreme Court ruling ensures he won't be in the running.

The court asked the Election Commission of Pakistan to issue notification of Sharif's removal. But Sharif quickly stepped down, saying he did it to show his respect for the country's judiciary.

Sharif's resignation created a murky legal mess with constitutional experts at a loss to explain who is in charge in Pakistan until his successor is nominated. It wasn't immediately clear when that would be or who it would be.

The court also directed the country's anti-corruption body to file corruption charges against Sharif, his two sons and daughter in the next six weeks for concealing their assets.

Sharif's party expressed its disappointment over the court order.

"This decision is not surprising but we are disappointed," Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb told reporters shortly after the ruling. She said their Pakistan Muslim League ruling party will issue a detailed reaction after consulting Sharif's advisers.

Legal experts say Sharif will now nominate a lawmaker of his choice to replace him under the provisions of the constitution. They say Sharif's nominee would be elected by the National Assembly, where the ruling party enjoys majority.

"The Supreme Court has disqualified Nawaz Sharif for concealing his assets," Hashmat Habib, a legal expert said. He said the court's order was binding and Sharif and his family may not challenge it.

It was not the first time the judiciary has ordered the dismissal of an elected prime minister. In 2012, the court convicted the then-Premier Yusuf Raza Gilani in a contempt case, forcing him to step down.

The current case against Sharif and his family dates back to 2016, when documents leaked from a Panama-based law firm indicated that Sharif's sons owned several offshore companies.

Sharif's son Hussain Nawaz at the time acknowledged owning offshore companies but insisted they used legal money to set up businesses abroad.

However, the court-appointed investigators in July concluded a significant disparity existed between the Sharif family's declared wealth and its known sources of income.

Opposition lawmakers, who petitioned the court for disqualification of Sharif, welcomed the court decision, saying it was a victory for justice.

Sirajul Haq, who heads Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami party, told reporters that he had been fighting a legal battle to ensure the accountability of the "corrupt ruling elite."

'Obamacare' repeal reeling after Senate defeat

By ERICA WERNER and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dealing a serious blow to President Donald Trump's agenda, the Senate early Friday rejected a measure to repeal parts of former President Barack Obama's health care law after a night of high suspense in the U.S. Capitol.

Unable to pass even a so-called "skinny repeal," it was unclear if Senate Republicans could advance any health bill despite seven years of promises to repeal "Obamacare."

"This is clearly a disappointing moment," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "I regret that our efforts were not enough, this time."

"It's time to move on," he said. The vote was 49-51 with three Republicans joining all Democrats in voting 'no.'

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McConnell put the health bill on hold and announced that the Senate would move onto other legislation next week.

Trump responded on Twitter: "3 Republicans and 48 Democrats let the American people down. As I said from the beginning, let ObamaCare implode, then deal. Watch!"

A key vote to defeat the measure was cast by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who returned to the Senate this week after receiving a diagnosis of brain cancer. In an impassioned speech the day he returned, McCain had called for bipartisanship on major issues of national concern, and a return to the "regular order" of legislating by committee.

Two other Republicans — Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine — joined McCain and all Democrats to reject the amendment, which would have repealed a mandate that most individuals get health insurance and would have suspended a requirement that large companies provide coverage to their employees. It would have also suspended a tax on medical devices and denied funding to Planned Parenthood for a year.

On Twitter, McCain said the repeal bill "fell short of our promise to repeal & replace Obamacare w/ meaningful reform," adding, "I hope we can rely on humility, cooperation & dependence on each other to better serve the people who elected us."

The amendment was a last resort for Senate Republicans to pass something — anything — to trigger negotiations with the House.

"It's time to turn the page," said Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer of New York. "We are not celebrating. We are relieved."

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price said in a statement that the Trump administration would pursue its health care goals through regulation. "This effort will continue," Price said. But insurers, hospitals, doctors, and consumer groups are pressing the administration to guarantee billions of dollars in disputed subsidies to help stabilize insurance markets around the country.

Buoyed by a signal from House Speaker Paul Ryan, McConnell had introduced a pared-down health care bill late Thursday that he hoped would keep alive Republican ambitions to repeal "Obamacare."

McConnell called his measure the Health Care Freedom Act. It was not intended to become law, but to open a path for a House-Senate conference committee to try to work out comprehensive legislation Congress could pass and send to Trump.

The Congressional Budget Office said the amendment would have increased the number of uninsured people by 16 million, the same problem that vexed all the "repeal and replace" measures Republicans have offered. Obama's law extended coverage to some 20 million people, reducing the nation's uninsured rate to a historic low of around 9 percent.

Still, Ryan, R-Wis., had seemingly opened a path for McConnell earlier Thursday by signaling a willingness to negotiate a more comprehensive bill with the Senate. Some Republican senators had been concerned that the House would simply pass McConnell's "skinny bill" and send it to Trump. That would have sent a shock wave through health insurance markets, spiking premiums.

Ryan sent senators a statement saying that if "moving forward" requires talks with the Senate, the House would be "willing" to do so. But shortly afterward, his words received varied responses from three GOP senators who'd insisted on a clear commitment from Ryan.

"Not sufficient," said McCain, who returned to the Capitol Tuesday. The 80-year-old McCain had been home in Arizona trying to decide on treatment options for brain cancer.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., initially said "not yet" when asked if he was ready to vote for the scaled-back Senate bill. But later, he told reporters that Ryan had assured him and others in a phone conversation that the House would hold talks with the Senate.

"I feel comfortable personally. I know Paul; he's a man of his word," said Graham.

As the convoluted developments played out, the slender 52-48 GOP majority was divided among itself over what it could agree to. Democrats were unanimously opposed.

After a comprehensive "repeal and replace" bill failed on the Senate floor, and a straight-up repeal failed

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too, McConnell and his top lieutenants turned toward the "skinny repeal."

It was to have been the ticket to negotiations with the House, which had passed its own legislation in May. Opponents mobilized quickly against McConnell's new strategy.

The insurance company lobby group, America's Health Insurance Plans, wrote to Senate leaders Thursday saying that ending Obama's requirement that people buy insurance without strengthening insurance markets would produce "higher premiums, fewer choices for consumers and fewer people covered next year."

And a bipartisan group of governors including John Kasich of Ohio and Brian Sandoval of Nevada also announced against it. So did the American Medical Association.

Numerous polls had shown little public support for the GOP's earlier proposals to repeal and replace Obama's law. A recent AP-NORC poll found only 22 percent of the public backing the Republican approach, while 51 percent were opposed.

In the end the misgivings of a few Republican senators derailed the GOP's seven-year quest to roll back "Obamacare." It remains to be seen whether a bipartisan deal can now be reached to stabilize insurance markets that have been rattled by rising premiums and insurer exits.

The dizzying series of legislative maneuvers this week left even veteran senators puzzled.

"We're in the twilight zone of legislating," said Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Stephen Ohlemacher and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Pentagon, border wall covered in \$788B House spending bill

By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House has passed a \$788 billion spending bill that combines a \$1.6 billion down payment for President Donald Trump's controversial border wall with Mexico with a whopping budget increase for the Pentagon.

The 235-192 vote both eases a large backlog of unfinished spending bills and gives Trump and his House GOP allies political wins heading into the August recess. Challenging hurdles remain because the measure will meet with more powerful Democratic opposition in the Senate.

The 326-page measure would make good on longtime GOP promises to reverse an erosion in military readiness. It would give veterans programs a 5 percent increase and fund a 2.4 percent military pay raise.

GOP leaders used the popularity of the Pentagon and veterans programs to power through money for Trump's border wall.

"Every single dime the President requested to start building a wall on our southern border he's going to get," said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "Most importantly, we're sending more to the VA to fix veterans' health care and reform outdated VA systems."

Still, a potential government shutdown battle over the U.S.-Mexico wall looms with Senate Democrats this fall. The generous defense spending increases also run afoul of strict spending limits set by an earlier budget law, and there's been no progress on a bipartisan budget deal that would be a prerequisite for the higher spending to take full effect.

The House added Trump's wall funding by a 230-196 procedural vote that denied angry Democrats an up-or-down vote. The wall gets low marks in public opinion polls and is opposed by many of the GOP's more moderate lawmakers.

Trump promised at nearly every rally and campaign event that Mexico would pay for the wall. Mexico said no, and U.S. taxpayers will have to provide the money.

"The president has promised this funding, the American people want this funding, and today the House is making good on that promise," said Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Miss.

Critics say that existing fencing is more than enough and that the portions of the border without it are too remote for crossings and that tribal law, environmental requirements, and personal property rights have blocked fencing for most of the rest.

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"Nobody would know it from the President's hysterical rhetoric, but there are already 700 miles of fence down there on the border — vehicular fencing, pedestrian fencing," said Rep. David Price, D-N.C. "I know about it because most of that fencing was built when I was chairman of the homeland security appropriations subcommittee."

At issue are the spending bills passed by Congress each year to fund the day-to-day operations of federal agencies. Trump is pushing for a sweeping increase for the Pentagon and commensurate cuts of more than \$50 billion, or 10 percent, from domestic agencies and foreign aid. House Republicans are responding by adding even more for defense but have significantly scaled back Trump's cuts to domestic programs like community development grants and medical research.

GOP leaders had hoped to advance a broader "omnibus" package that would have included each of the 12 individual spending measures. But the GOP rank and file balked, so Republicans devised a smaller bill anchored by the Pentagon budget, funding for veterans programs, and money for the wall.

But most of the sweeping Pentagon increases — which total about \$60 billion above current levels and almost \$30 billion higher than Trump's budget — would evaporate next year unless there's a bipartisan agreement to raise budget "caps" set by a 2011 budget pact. A two-year agreement that eased those "sequestration" spending limits expires in September.

Both Democrats and Republicans in the Senate want additional funding for domestic programs. Democrats have lots of leverage because their votes are needed to pass the funding measures. For now, the Senate is working in a bipartisan fashion on a sharply different set of bills that, on average, are frozen at current levels.

Earlier this year, Congress and Trump came together on spending bills for the current budget year that largely stuck to work done last year under former President Barack Obama. Trump reluctantly signed a \$1.2 trillion catchall spending bill in May after his demand for border wall money looked like it would stall the measure.

The current bill, however, reflects the changed balance of power in GOP-controlled Washington. Weapons procurement is a top priority, including two additional littoral combat ships above Trump's request and 14 unrequested next-generation F-35 fighters.

Democrats said the big gains for now are illusory since automatic budget cuts known as sequestration remain in place.

"We do not give certainty to our defense or confidence to our troops when we legislate with phony numbers, when we refuse to make honest choices about our Defense budget," said Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. "Instead of giving certainty to our heroes in uniform, this bill would breach the sequester spending limit by more than \$70 billion, forcing a mandatory 13 percent cut to all defense accounts."

GOP dealt stiff blow in Senate's bid to repeal 'Obamacare'

By ERICA WERNER and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dealing a serious blow to President Donald Trump's agenda, the Senate early Friday rejected a measure to repeal parts of former President Barack Obama's health care law after a night of high suspense in the U.S. Capitol.

Unable to pass even a so-called "skinny repeal," it was unclear if Senate Republicans could advance any health bill despite seven years of promises to repeal "Obamacare."

"This is clearly a disappointing moment," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "I regret that our efforts were not enough, this time."

"It's time to move on," he said.

McConnell put the health bill on hold and announced that the Senate would move onto other legislation next week.

Trump responded on Twitter: "3 Republicans and 48 Democrats let the American people down. As I said from the beginning, let ObamaCare implode, then deal. Watch!"

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A key vote to defeat the measure was cast by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who returned to the Senate this week after receiving a diagnosis of brain cancer. In an impassioned speech the day he returned, McCain had called for bipartisanship on major issues of national concern, and a return to the "regular order" of legislating by committee.

Three Republicans joined with all Democrats to reject the amendment, which would have repealed a mandate that most individuals get health insurance and suspended a requirement that large companies provide coverage to their employees. It would have also delayed a tax on medical devices and denied funding to Planned Parenthood for a year.

The final vote was 49-51. Republicans Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine joined McCain in voting no.

The amendment was a last resort for Senate Republicans to pass something — anything — to trigger negotiations with the House.

"It's time to turn the page," said Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer of New York. "We are not celebrating. We are relieved."

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price said in a statement the Trump administration would pursue its health care goals through regulation. "This effort will continue," Price said.

Buoyed by a signal from House Speaker Paul Ryan, McConnell had introduced a pared-down health care bill late Thursday that he hoped would keep alive Republican ambitions to repeal "Obamacare."

McConnell had called his measure the Health Care Freedom Act. It was not intended to become law, but to open a path for a House-Senate conference committee to try to work out comprehensive legislation Congress could pass and send to Trump.

The measure would have repealed the unpopular Affordable Care Act requirement that most people have health insurance or risk a fine from the IRS. A similar requirement on larger employers would be suspended for eight years.

Additionally it would have denied funding to Planned Parenthood for a year, and suspended for three years a tax on medical device manufacturers. States could seek waivers from consumer protections in the Obama-era law, and individuals could increase the amount they contribute to tax-sheltered health savings accounts for medical expenses.

Ryan, R-Wis., seemingly opened a path for McConnell earlier Thursday evening by signaling a willingness to negotiate a more comprehensive bill with the Senate. Some Republican senators had been concerned that the House would simply pass the "skinny bill" and send it to Trump. That would have sent a shock wave through health insurance markets, spiking premiums.

Ryan sent senators a statement saying that if "moving forward" requires talks with the Senate, the House would be "willing" to do so. But shortly afterward, his words received varied responses from three GOP senators who'd insisted on a clear commitment from Ryan.

"Not sufficient," said McCain, who returned to the Capitol Tuesday. The 80-year-old McCain had been home in Arizona trying to decide on treatment options for brain cancer.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., initially said "not yet" when asked if he was ready to vote for the scaled-back Senate bill. But later, he told reporters that Ryan had assured him and others in a phone conversation that the House would hold talks with the Senate.

"I feel comfortable personally. I know Paul; he's a man of his word," said Graham.

The convoluted developments played out as a divided Senate debated legislation to repeal and replace the Obama-era law. With Democrats unanimously opposed, the slender 52-48 GOP majority was divided among itself over what it could agree to.

After a comprehensive "repeal and replace" bill failed on the Senate floor, and a straight-up repeal failed too, McConnell and his top lieutenants turned toward the "skinny repeal."

It would have been the ticket to negotiations with the House, which passed its own legislation in May.

But that strategy caused consternation among GOP senators after rumors began to surface that the House might just pass the "skinny bill," call it a day and move on to other issues like tax reform after frit-

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tering away the first six months of Trump's presidency on unsuccessful efforts over health care.

Ryan responded not long after with a far from definitive statement that blamed the Senate for being unable to pass anything, but said, "if moving forward requires a conference committee, that is something the House is willing to do."

"The reality, however, is that repealing and replacing Obamacare still ultimately requires the Senate to produce 51 votes for an actual plan," he said.

The insurance company lobby group, America's Health Insurance Plans, wrote to Senate leaders Thursday saying that ending Obama's requirement that people buy insurance without strengthening insurance markets would produce "higher premiums, fewer choices for consumers and fewer people covered next year."

And a bipartisan group of governors including John Kasich of Ohio and Brian Sandoval of Nevada also announced against it.

On their own, the changes in the skinny bill could roil insurance markets. Yet the scenario at hand, with senators trying to pass something while hoping it does not clear the House or become law, was highly unusual.

"We're in the twilight zone of legislating," said Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Stephen Ohlemacher and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Israeli police on high alert for prayers at Jerusalem site

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police were on high alert Friday ahead of Muslim prayers at a major Jerusalem shrine at the center of recent tensions.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said men under 50 would be barred from the site Friday following security assessments indicting Palestinians plan protests there. There are no restrictions on women.

Rosenfeld said some Palestinians barricaded themselves inside Al-Aqsa Mosque overnight in order to join protests later. Police removed them after they refused to leave, he said.

Friday prayers are the highlight of the Muslim religious week. Thousands of Muslims from around Israel and Palestinian areas typically worship at the holy compound in Jerusalem's Old City.

Tensions have been running high at the site Arab gunmen killed two police officers on July 14, prompting Israel to install metal detectors and other security devices.

The move outraged Muslims who claimed Israel was trying to expand its control over the site. Israel emphatically denied the allegations insisting the security measures were needed to prevent more attacks.

The issue sparked some of the worst street clashes in years and threatened to draw Israel into conflict with other Arab and Muslim nations.

Under intense pressure, Israel removed the metal detectors and said it planned to install sophisticated security cameras instead.

Muslims had been praying in the streets outside the shrine to protest the security measures since they were installed. They turned to pray at the sacred site Thursday after Israel removed them.

However, violence resumed as Palestinians gathering for prayers at the compound clashed with police.

Palestinian factions Fatah and the Islamic militant group Hamas both issued calls earlier this week for mass protests on Friday.

Man killed in fair thrill ride wreck joined Marines week ago

By JULIE CARR SMYTH, Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A high school student who dreamed for years of joining the military and had just enlisted in the Marines was killed when a spinning and swinging thrill ride broke apart and sent several of its passengers tumbling onto the midway at the Ohio State Fair.

The 18-year-old's girlfriend was among seven who were badly injured when the Fire Ball flung riders —

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some still strapped in their seats — through the air.

A few people on the midway were hit by debris.

The ride's Dutch manufacturer on Thursday told operators of the same attraction at fairs and festivals worldwide to stop using it until more is learned about what caused the malfunction.

Federal and state investigators have begun working to find what caused the wreck on Wednesday, the fair's opening day.

Video taken by a bystander of the swinging, spinning Fire Ball ride in action captured a crashing sound. A section holding four riders came apart, and screams could be heard as at least two people were ejected and plunged toward the ground. Other riders were still in their seats as they fell.

Tyler Jarrell, of Columbus, was thrown about 50 feet (15 meters) and pronounced dead on the midway. The Marine Corps and school officials said Jarrell enlisted last week and was going to begin basic training after his high school graduation next year.

"That was just this past Friday. Then he goes to the state fair and he is involved in this horrible tragedy. It's just devastating," said Capt. Gerard Lennon Jr., a naval science instructor in the Junior ROTC program at Jarrell's high school.

Lennon said the teenager had been interested in going into the service or law enforcement for quite a while.

The injured ranged in age from 14 to 42. At least two were listed in critical condition.

Jarrell's girlfriend, Keziah Lewis, doesn't remember the accident and has pelvis, ankle and rib injuries, her mother told The Columbus Dispatch.

Lewis, a University of Cincinnati student, underwent one surgery and faces a second.

"She kept asking for her boyfriend," Clarissa Williams said. "I had to tell her he was the one who was deceased."

Inspectors looked over the ride while it was assembled and signed off on it hours before it flew apart, according to authorities and records released Thursday.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich shut down all rides at the fair and ordered them inspected again. He said it was too early to say whether inspectors missed something that led to the tragedy.

"It's a nightmare. It's a terrible situation," he said.

The ride's manufacturer, KMG, said the one at the Ohio fair was built in 1998. Forty-three of the rides, also known as the Afterburner, are in use around the world, 11 of them in the U.S., according to KMG. None has had a serious malfunction before, the company told the AP.

The Fire Ball swings 24 riders back and forth like a pendulum 40 feet (12 meters) above the ground while they sit facing each other in four-seat carriages that spin at 13 revolutions a minute, according to the company's website.

Records show that inspections on Fire Ball were up to date and a state permit was issued for the ride on Wednesday, the fair's opening day.

Ohio Department of Agriculture records provided to The Associated Press showed passing marks on inspections of about three dozen items, including possible cracks, brakes, proper assembly and installation.

All rides at the fair are checked several times when they are being set up to ensure the work is done the way the manufacturer intended, said Agriculture Director David Daniels.

Michael Vartorella, Ohio's chief inspector of amusement ride safety, said the Fire Ball was inspected three or four times before the fair opened.

Amusements of America, the company that provides rides to the state fair, said its staff also had inspected the ride before it opened.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is also investigating. It estimates there were 30,900 injuries associated with amusement attractions last year that required an emergency room visit.

It said there have been at least 22 fatalities associated with amusement attractions since 2010.

The Ohio State Fair, which remained open Thursday, is one of the biggest state fairs in the U.S. It drew 900,000 people last year.

"Our hearts are heavy for the families of those involved in last night's tragic accident," fair officials said on Twitter.

AP writers John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio; Dan Sewell in Cincinnati; Mark Gillispie in Cleveland; Denise Lavoie in Boston; Mike Corder in Brussels; and news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this story.

White House aide's tirade tests editors and producers

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A presidential aide's explosion of profanity while talking to a reporter about his new White House colleagues tested newsroom leaders Thursday, forcing decisions about whether to use the graphic language or leave much of what he said to the imagination of readers and viewers.

Anthony Scaramucci, the incoming White House communications director, aimed his tirade at chief of staff Reince Priebus and chief strategist Steve Bannon. An account of his conversation late Wednesday with Ryan Lizza of The New Yorker was published in graphic detail Thursday afternoon on the magazine's website, complete with expletives and anatomical references.

Scaramucci used the language in suggesting to Lizza that Priebus had leaked information about him, and that Bannon was more interested in advancing his own agenda than President Donald Trump's.

Following The New Yorker's lead, The New York Times printed all of Scaramucci's words. Times editors, including executive editor Dean Baquet, first discussed whether it was appropriate to do so, Clifford Levy, the newspaper's deputy editor, said on Twitter.

Levy said the Times concluded that it was newsworthy that a top Trump aide would use such language, and its readers shouldn't have to search elsewhere to find out what Scaramucci said.

The Washington Post similarly published the expletives Scaramucci used in reference to Priebus, but avoided the very graphic descriptor of self-love he used in reference to Bannon. Post analyst Aaron Blake called Scaramucci's outburst "vulgar, vindictive and volatile."

Julie Bykowitz and Jonathan Lemire of The Associated Press wrote that Scaramucci was "exposing West Wing backstabbing in language more suitable to a mobster movie than a seat of presidential stability." The service referred to Scaramucci's description of Priebus as a "f----- paranoid schizophrenic," using the dashes instead of spelling out the word. That was the AP's only direct reference to a profanity.

The AP's rules prohibit use of obscenities, racial epithets or other offensive slurs "unless they are part of a direct quotations and there is a compelling reason for them." Scaramucci's words satisfied the first part of that restriction, but editors concluded there wasn't a compelling reason to use the profanity.

Television networks, knowing they would have to say the words out loud, generally stayed away from them. Anderson Cooper, in an interview with Lizza, let him describe the reference to Bannon.

"You're going to make me read this one?" Lizza asked.

"Use your judgment," Cooper replied.

Although CNN wouldn't use the words on the air, they were printed on the network's website, along with a stern warning that an article contained graphic language. In a column dissecting the remarks, CNN's Chris Cillizza, wrote that Scaramucci's phone call to Lizza was "bananas."

TV anchors used variations of "expletive" and "bleeping" in reading the words.

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow said the reference to Bannon said that he "performs an anatomically difficult but not impossible act of a kind that suggests he is more interested in serving his own self than the president."

Fox News' Laura Ingraham called it a "stunning attack" that has "gotten everybody's attention tonight."

On NBC's "Nightly News," reporter Kristen Welker said Scaramucci attacks Bannon in such vulgar terms they cannot be repeated on television.

Major Garrett quoted the phrases used to describe both Priebus and Bannon on the "CBS Evening News," substituting the word "expletive." He said Scaramucci used language "more fit for the outhouse than the

White House.”

AP Explains: What is Venezuela’s constituent assembly?

By **CHRISTINE ARMARIO, Associated Press**

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has provoked international criticism and enraged his political opponents by pushing for a special assembly to rewrite the troubled South American nation’s constitution.

Sunday’s election of delegates to the assembly comes after nearly four months of political upheaval that have resulted in more than 100 deaths and left thousands injured and detained.

Few specifics have been disclosed on what constitutional changes might be in store. But allies of the socialist president say the assembly will target opposition leaders, stirring warnings Maduro will use the assembly to install an autocratic regime.

Maduro’s mentor, the late President Hugo Chavez, similarly called for a constitution rewrite shortly after taking office in 1999, but unlike Maduro he held a referendum first to get Venezuelans’ blessing. Even some “Chavistas” have rejected the drive to change the constitution, which has further polarized an already deeply divided country.

HOW WILL DELEGATES BE CHOSEN?

Venezuela’s government-stacked National Electoral Council created an unorthodox voting system that opponents say heavily favors the ruling party.

A total of 364 delegates will be selected according to geography: In each of Venezuela’s 23 states, one delegate will be allotted per municipality while state capitals get two.

But some of the most populated states have relatively few municipalities, while some smaller ones have many. That means a state like Miranda, population nearly 3 million, will get four fewer delegates than Falcon, which is home to about 1 million people.

Critics say that unfairly favors rural areas where Maduro is more popular over opposition-friendly cities such as Caracas, the capital.

An additional 173 delegates will come from various categories of social groups including laborers, students, farmers and fishermen. Eight slots are reserved for indigenous communities. How the government determined who qualifies in each category has not been disclosed, but all of those sectors traditionally have strong ties to Chavez and Maduro’s leftist political movement.

The opposition is boycotting the election, so the majority of candidates represent the ruling socialist party.

WHAT CHANGES HAS THE GOVERNMENT VOWED TO MAKE?

Maduro has talked about the constituent assembly only in fuzzy terms, characterizing it as a lofty solution for Venezuela’s long list of political and economic woes. But some of his closest associates have provided a hint at what might come.

On Wednesday, first lady Cilia Flores, who Maduro calls Venezuela’s “First Combatant,” said the assembly will create a peace and justice commission that will ensure those responsible for the current political upheaval “pay and learn their lesson.”

Diosdado Cabello, first vice president of Venezuela’s socialist party, says the assembly will strip legislators in the opposition-controlled National Assembly of their immunity from prosecution. He adds that the office of Venezuela’s chief prosecutor, who has recently become one of Maduro’s most outspoken critics, will be “turned upside down.”

The assembly is certain to continue the socialist policies first installed by Chavez.

Aside from rewriting the constitution, the National Constituent Assembly could function as a sort of super-body that assumes the powers of the National Assembly, the only government branch not controlled by Maduro.

WHAT DO VENEZUELANANS THINK OF THE PLAN?

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A June survey by Venezuelan polling firm Datanalisis said just 23 percent favor the constituent assembly. Only 19 percent said they thought a new constitution would "guarantee the peace of stability of the country," as Maduro has asserted. Nearly half said they believe the purpose of the assembly is to ensure Maduro stays in power.

Earlier this month, more than 7.5 million Venezuelans voted in an unofficial opposition referendum rejecting the constitution rewrite.

But those numbers do not mean Venezuelans are unlikely to show up at polling stations Sunday. Aside from government loyalists, groups of state workers and government organization are being mobilized and pressured to cast ballots.

Luis Vicente Leon, president of Datanalisis, said that because the government has access to data showing who does and does not vote, many people are likely to feel obligated to participate or risk losing their jobs in a country with severe food shortages and triple-digit inflation.

"If this was a free election, without pressure, about a third of the number that participated in the popular consult would vote," he said, referring to the opposition referendum.

WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR THE GOVERNMENT?

Its survival.

Recent breaks with Maduro by high-level officials including longtime government loyalist Luisa Ortega Diaz, the chief prosecutor, and a string of former Cabinet ministers under Chavez indicate discord already exists within the ruling party.

Radical changes in the 1999 constitution, which was crafted by Chavez and considered one of his crowning legacies, could cause even greater division, said John Magdaleno, director of the Caracas-based consulting firm POLITY.

"It's not just a matter of whether the constituent assembly is put in place or not," he said. "It's what impact its creation could have."

Foreign governments including the United States have threatened to further isolate the government.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. will take "strong and swift economic actions" if the constituent assembly election proceeds. That could potentially include reducing U.S. imports of Venezuelan oil, a move that could cripple the economy. The government relies heavily on the U.S. as a source of hard currency, because its oil exports to other major trade partners like China are paying off debts.

HOW IS THE OPPOSITION LIKELY TO RESPOND?

The conflict between the government and the opposition won't end Sunday.

A coalition of Venezuelan opposition parties proposed but then appeared to back away from its call to form an alternative "government of national unity." Nonetheless, a recent move by the opposition-controlled National Assembly to appoint 33 magistrates to replace the government-stacked Supreme Court again raised the specter of a potential parallel government.

"The question is whether that parallel government could govern," said Leon, the pollster.

For now, any alternative officials named by the opposition remain purely symbolic. Three of the 33 opposition-appointed magistrates have been detained, while the others have been threatened with arrest and are unable to fill their posts.

A prolonged conflict appears increasingly likely. Third parties have sought unsuccessfully to forge negotiations between the administration and its foes.

The next presidential election is now set for next year, but the constituent assembly could change that and further anger the opposition.

"We're talking about a conflict that will last until there are elections," said Benigno Alarcon, director of the Center of for Political Students at Andres Bello Catholic University in Caracas.

Brazil church rejects abuse claims detailed in AP stories

By PETER PRENGAMAN, Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — One of Word of Faith Fellowship's two churches in Brazil has rejected claims made by former members that they were subjected to physical and verbal abuse at the hands of ministers and that young congregants were sent to the mother church in North Carolina and forced to work without pay.

The allegations were detailed in investigative stories published by The Associated Press this week.

In a statement released late Wednesday, pastors of the Ministerio Evangelico Comunidade Rhema church in Franco da Rocha, Brazil, called the former members' accusations "many lies and distorted facts."

The statement, published in the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper, said the church had maintained a strong relationship with pastors at the Word of Faith Fellowship in Spindale, North Carolina, for 30 years. "They are good people, they live God's love and in trying to help people they have been slandered," it read.

The statement also said the church in Brazil did "not tolerate or permit any form of abuse in our ministry."

Word of Faith Fellowship is an evangelical church founded in North Carolina in 1979 by Jane Whaley, a former math teacher, and her husband, Sam. It has branches in Brazil and Ghana, along with affiliations in other countries.

This week's AP stories — based on accounts of dozens of former members, a review of police reports and interviews with authorities in Brazil and the United States — also detailed how the North Carolina church took over its two Brazilian congregations over the course of many years, instilling its rigid doctrine in Ministerio Evangelico Comunidade Rhema and Ministerio Verbo Vivo church in Sao Joaquim de Bicas.

Many former members said they were beaten during sessions aimed at expunging devils, suffered psychological domination by pastors and were cut off from family members upon leaving the church.

Leaders of the Word of Faith Fellowship and both churches in Brazil did not respond to numerous requests for comment made by the AP before publication of the stories.

Scaramucci reports more than \$50m in assets

By BERNARD CONDON, AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — He vows to be a fresh voice in the Trump administration, but in one way he is like many of the others: He is wealthy, with a vast and complicated array of assets.

New White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci owns property and businesses worth more than \$50 million, according to a financial disclosure report filed with the government's chief ethics agency. The biggest source of his wealth is an ownership stake in an investment fund he founded, SkyBridge Capital.

The fund is in the process of being sold to a division of Chinese company HNA Group, a deal that has drawn scrutiny and helped dash Scaramucci's hopes to move to the White House much earlier in the year. He was turned down as chief liaison to the business community in February.

"In any administration there are always some really extraordinary wealthy individuals, but in this White House, there are so many," said Don Fox, who stepped down as general counsel at the Office of Government Ethics in 2013. "Their finances, their potential conflicts, become exponentially more complicated to manage."

Scaramucci joins a long list of former Goldman Sachs employees in the administration, including economic adviser Gary Cohn, chief strategist Steve Bannon and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

SkyBridge accounted for a bulk of his income. In the nearly 18 months from the start of last year through June 27, Scaramucci took in about \$10 million in salary and other income from the investment fund.

The financial disclosure also shows Scaramucci earned \$88,461 as a contributor to Fox Business Network.

Scaramucci expressed frustration on Thursday with the scrutiny of his personal holdings, and the conflict they may pose.

"I sold SkyBridge. I don't work there anymore," he told CNN's "New Day" on Thursday morning. "There's residual profits that once the sale occurs I am going to receive, but I am not on salary. I do not have a W2 there. What do you want me to tell you?"

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SkyBridge announced it struck a deal to sell to HNA Capital and RON Transatlantic in January. A call to SkyBridge's spokesperson was not immediately returned.

Another issue raised by Scaramucci's holdings involves the treatment of taxes on gains from the SkyBridge sale. Federal officials are allowed to file a so-called certificate of divestiture to defer paying taxes if they are being forced to sell an asset because of potential conflicts with their public job.

Since Scaramucci announced the SkyBridge sale long before he took his job, that raises the possibility he will fail to qualify, putting in doubt perhaps millions of dollars of profit for him.

Walter Shaub, the former head of the Office of Government Ethics and a big critic of the Trump administration, has tweeted that Scaramucci should have waited for a ruling about whether he needed to sell before entering into a deal to do so.

He tweeted on Tuesday, "U don't qualify for employee tax relief by entering into a deal & then go looking for a job that may or may not necessitate closing the deal."

But Richard Painter, former chief White House ethics lawyer to President George W. Bush, isn't so sure. He said that Scaramucci may be able to qualify if owning SkyBridge is deemed a conflict before the sale is complete.

"They don't take away the certificate of divestiture because you thought about selling before," Painter said.

Scaramucci's lawyer, Elliot Berke, said in an email Thursday that his client had been advised to sell SkyBridge to avoid conflicts before he struck a deal to do so. "Throughout the review, career nonpartisan officials have recommended he be granted a certificate of divestiture, as has the White House Counsel's office," Berke wrote.

Scaramucci has vowed to shake up the administration in part by rooting out those who leak information to press, and the release of his personal finance report on Politico on Wednesday stoked his anger.

He took the Twitter with a vow to contact investigators.

"In light of the leak of my financial disclosure info which is a felony," he tweeted, "I will be contacting @FBI and the @JusticeDept #swamp @Reince45."

In fact, the report wasn't leaked. It was released after a public records request by a Politico reporter to the Export-Import Bank, where Scaramucci had been employed at a senior level since mid-June.

The Associated Press subsequently obtained the same financial disclosure Thursday. A reporter filled out a publicly available form, turned it in at the bank's office and was emailed a copy of Scaramucci's financial disclosure about 30 minutes later.

The report shows that Scaramucci owns several residential properties and businesses. A stake in the New York Mets and property in the Hamptons on Long Island are each worth at least \$1 million.

AP writer Daniel Trielli contributed to this report from Washington.

Thrill ride was OK'd hours before deadly state fair accident

By JULIE CARR SMYTH, Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Inspectors repeatedly looked over a thrill ride while it was assembled at the Ohio State Fair and signed off on it hours before it flew apart in a deadly accident that flung passengers into the ground, according to authorities and records released Thursday.

Investigators worked to find out what caused the opening day wreck, which killed a high school student who had just enlisted in the Marines. Seven other people were injured, including four teenagers.

The ride's Dutch manufacturer told operators of the same attraction at fairs and festivals around the world to stop using it until more is learned about what caused the malfunction.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich shut down all rides at the state fair and ordered them inspected again. He said it was too early to say whether inspectors missed something that led to the tragedy Wednesday night.

"It's a nightmare. It's a terrible situation," the Republican governor said.

Video taken by a bystander of the swinging, spinning Fire Ball ride in action captured a crashing sound. A section holding four riders came apart, and screams could be heard as at least two people were ejected

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and plunged toward the ground. Other riders were still in their seats as they fell.

Tyler Jarrell, 18, of Columbus, was thrown about 50 feet and was pronounced dead on the midway. The Marine Corps and school officials said Jarrell enlisted last week and was going to begin basic training next summer after his high school graduation.

"That was just this past Friday. Then he goes to the state fair and he is involved in this horrible tragedy. It's just devastating," said Capt. Gerard Lennon Jr., a naval science instructor in the Junior ROTC program at Jarrell's high school.

The injured ranged in age from 14 to 42. At least two were listed in critical condition. Some people were hit by debris.

Jarrell's girlfriend was among those seriously injured, her mother told The Columbus Dispatch. Keziah Lewis, a University of Cincinnati student, doesn't remember the accident and has pelvic, ankle and rib injuries, Clarissa Williams said.

"She kept asking for her boyfriend," Williams said. "I had to tell her he was the one who was deceased."

Kaylie Bellomy was in the next group waiting to board the Fire Ball.

"It was going for a minute and it was at its highest point and I saw somebody fall on the ride, and then a minute later the whole like row of seats fell off and hit the ground," Bellomy told WCMH-TV.

She said it was chaos afterward: "Everybody was running. I got ran over trying to get out of the way."

Records show that inspections on Fire Ball were up to date and a state permit was issued for the ride on Wednesday.

Ohio Department of Agriculture records showed passing marks on inspections of about three dozen items, including possible cracks, brakes, proper assembly and installation.

All rides at the fair are checked several times when they are being set up to ensure the work is done the way the manufacturer intended, Agriculture Director David Daniels said.

Ohio's chief inspector of amusement ride safety, Michael Vartorella, said the Fire Ball was inspected three or four times before the fair opened. He said some work on all the rides was delayed by heavy rains last week but the inspections were completed and not rushed.

State Highway Patrol Col. Paul Pride said inspectors are "basically going to do an autopsy on that machine" to figure out why it malfunctioned.

Amusements of America, the company that provides rides to the state fair, said it is committed to working with investigators to determine the cause. It said Fire Ball had been checked by its staff and independent inspectors before the fair opened.

Fire Ball swings 24 riders back and forth like a pendulum 40 feet above the ground while they sit in four-seat carriages that spin at 13 revolutions a minute, according to the company's website.

The ride's manufacturer, KMG, said the one at the Ohio fair was built in 1998 in the Netherlands. Forty-three of the rides, also known as the Afterburner, are in use around the world, 11 of them in the U.S., KMG said. None has had a serious malfunction before, it said.

After the accident, fairs in California, New Jersey and Canada shut down similar rides before the company issued its order.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission also is investigating. It estimates there were 30,900 injuries associated with amusement attractions that required emergency room visits last year. It said there have been at least 22 deaths associated with amusement attractions in the U.S. since 2010.

The Ohio State Fair, which remained open Thursday, is one of the biggest state fairs in the U.S. It drew 900,000 people last year.

"Our hearts are heavy for the families of those involved in last night's tragic accident," fair officials said on Twitter.

AP writers John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio; Dan Sewell in Cincinnati; Mark Gillispie in Cleveland; Denise Lavoie in Boston; Mike Corder in Brussels; and news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this story.

AP EXCLUSIVE: Sessions not leaving unless pushed

By SADIE GURMAN and MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — His loyalty to the boss severely tested but seemingly intact, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said Thursday he will stay in the job for as long as President Donald Trump wants him to serve.

Sessions told The Associated Press he and Trump have a “harmony of values and beliefs” and he intends to stay and fight for the president’s agenda “as long as he sees that as appropriate.” This, after a week of being berated by Trump in the most public fashion as weak and ineffective.

“If he wants to make a change, he has every right,” Sessions said in an interview outside the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador during a mission to increase international cooperation against the MS-13 gang. “I serve at the pleasure of the president. I’ve understood that from the day I took the job.”

Congressional Republicans have rallied around Sessions, a former senator from Alabama, and expressed mortification at the humiliation visited on him by Trump in several interviews and a series of tweets.

Trump is upset that Sessions recused himself months ago from the investigation into interactions between Russian officials and the Trump campaign, and that he has not taken a tougher line against his defeated Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina warned Thursday there would be “holy hell” to pay if Trump fired Sessions.

After meeting his Salvadoran counterpart, Sessions told AP he was “thrilled” with the support he’s received, presumably from lawmakers.

“I believe we are running a great Department of Justice,” he said. “I believe with great confidence that I understand what is needed in the Department of Justice and what President Trump wants. I share his agenda.”

He acknowledged, with considerable understatement, “it hasn’t been my best week for my relationship with the president.” The two have not spoken recently, he said. “But I look forward to the opportunity to chat with him about it.”

In Congress, Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska went to the Senate floor Thursday to discourage Trump from making a so-called recess appointment while the Senate is away at the end of August — should that be the president’s intention. A recess appointment would allow Trump to appoint anyone of his choosing and bypass Senate confirmation until 2019 if the Senate recesses for 10 days or more in August.

“If you’re thinking of making a recess appointment to push out the attorney general, forget about it,” Sasse said. “The presidency isn’t a bull, and this country isn’t a china shop.”

The previous evening, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, tweeted that he wouldn’t be holding a confirmation hearing for a new attorney general if Trump decided to go that route.

Although largely deferential to a president who seemed bent on tormenting him, Sessions stood his ground on his decision to recuse himself from the Russia investigation. He had bowed out of any involvement in that probe after acknowledged meeting with Russia’s ambassador during the campaign.

“Knowing the integrity that’s required of the attorney general, I believe I made the right decision,” he told Fox News. He said his recusal was in keeping with the rule of law “and an attorney general who doesn’t follow the law is not very effective in leading the Department of Justice.”

The White House of late has appeared to be trying to tamp down the notion that Trump wants Sessions out — without offering a rousing endorsement of him, however.

“The president wants him to do his job, do it properly,” the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said Thursday. “He wants him to be tough on the intelligence leaks and he wants him to move forward.”

In San Salvador, Sessions met his Salvadoran counterpart, Douglas Melendez, and congratulated him on charges laid over the last two days against more than 700 gang members, many of them from MS-13, said the Justice Department.

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He also met members of an international anti-gang task force at an event where an FBI agent described MS-13 as a highly coordinated and well-organized gang whose imprisoned leaders order violence in the U.S. from their prisons in El Salvador.

MS-13 is an international criminal enterprise with tens of thousands of members in several Central American countries and many U.S. states. The gang originated in immigrant communities in Los Angeles in the 1980s then entrenched itself in Central America when its leaders were deported.

It's known for hacking and stabbing victims with machetes, drug dealing, prostitution and other rackets. Its recruits are middle- and high-school students predominantly in immigrant communities, and those who try to leave risk violent retribution, law enforcement officials have said.

MS-13 members have been accused in a spate of bloodshed that included the massacre of four young men in a Long Island, New York, park and the killing of a suspected gang rival inside a deli. The violence has drawn attention from members of Congress and Trump, who has boasted about efforts to arrest and deport MS-13 members across the United States.

For Sessions, the anti-gang mission was a way to show his priorities are Trump's priorities after days of being upbraided by the president in the most public fashion.

In Washington, lawmakers from both parties moved on efforts to prevent the dismissal of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, a development that might be made easier if Sessions were moved aside.

Graham is working on legislation that would block the firing of special counsels without judicial review. Democrat Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, among several senators involved in the effort, said the bill would protect Mueller and other special counsels. He said firing Mueller "would precipitate a firestorm that would be unprecedented in proportions."

Sessions recused himself from the investigation into election meddling after he acknowledged meeting with Russia's ambassador during the campaign.

Jalonick reported from Washington

On anniversary of war, young North Koreans talk of tensions

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Are the United States and North Korea moving closer to another war? Though often referred to as the "Forgotten War" in the United States, it is anything but forgotten in North Korea. The July 27 anniversary of the Korean War armistice is celebrated as a major national holiday called "Victory in the Fatherland Liberation War Day" and is the culmination of "Anti-American Imperialist Month," which begins on June 23, the day the 1950-53 Korean War began.

As young North Koreans took to plazas and public spaces across the capital on Thursday to join in mass dancing and other celebrations, The Associated Press asked several university students what they thought of the possibility that another war could break out in their lifetime.

Not surprisingly, their answers closely reflect the North Korean government's official statements.

From one, the suggestion that peace talks might work.

From another, a vow to kill every last American imperialist.

Kim Hyo Sim, 21, student at Pyongyang City Commercial College:

"The U.S. is always putting sanctions on our country and is always trying to isolate us. But just as we won a victory under the leadership of our generalissimos (in the Korean War), we will win under the wise leadership of Marshal Kim Jong Un. I'd say our two countries are now under the same conditions of war as in the past, so I think the situation then and now isn't so different. Even though we don't want to have a war with anyone, if the U.S. provokes a war with our country we will surely win."

"Our country's national defenses have been strengthened and the U.S. has been viciously clinging to sanctions, so I think there is much more of a possibility of the U.S. provoking us now. But I'm also very confident of victory."

Jo Kwang Song, 29, an information technology major at Kim Il Sung University:

"As we are the young generation growing up, I don't think there will be a war because we have the supreme leader Kim Jong Un and strong national defense. The U.S. will not provoke a war against us. I'm not concerned at all because if a war is provoked against our country we will win.

"If war breaks out, I will take up a gun myself.

"Of course, we wish for peace. But, if the U.S. clings to provoking our country, peace will never come. The U.S. should come out for peaceful negotiations. Whatever, though, we will follow the marshal and we will always win. The U.S. should put an end to its hostile policy toward our country."

Ri Su Jong, 18, also a student at Pyongyang City Commercial College:

"We will follow the orders of supreme leader Kim Jong Un. We have launched our ICBM and we will be fully prepared. If another war breaks out, we will be celebrating another great victory just like the one we are celebrating today."

"If the U.S. never touches us, then everything will be OK."

Jon Kuk Chol, 31, student at the Pyongyang Printing and Publishing University:

"Because our country possesses nuclear weapons and ICBMs, war won't break out. But if a war does break out, we will kill all the imperialists so that there won't even be anyone left alive to sign the papers of surrender."

Deaths in Venezuela unrest hit 102 as polarizing vote nears

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** and **CHRISTINE ARMARIO**, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Days before a polarizing vote to start rewriting its constitution, Venezuela is convulsing to a rhythm of daytime strikes and nocturnal clashes. The most recent violence drove the death toll from nearly four months of unrest above 100 Thursday.

Most of the dead in anti-government protests that began in early April have been young men killed by gunfire. The toll also includes looters, police allegedly attacked by protesters and civilians killed in accidents related to roadblocks set up during demonstrations.

The count by the county's chief prosecutor has been highly politicized, with the opposition and other government agencies reporting varying tolls and causes of death that focus blame on the other side.

When Neomar Lander, 17, was rushed bloody and lifeless to a hospital in early June, officials came out within hours to say he had been killed by a homemade bomb he was carrying. Opposition leaders maintained he was hit by a canister of tear gas fired by National Guard troops standing above the bridge where he was found dead.

"They try to question the humanity of the other side as a political tactic, and I think that ends up discouraging and dismaying people," said David Smilde, a Tulane University expert on Venezuela.

The protests began following a Supreme Court ruling that stripped the opposition-controlled National Assembly of its remaining powers. Though quickly reversed, the decision ignited a protest movement against socialist President Nicolas Maduro fueled by anger over triple-digit inflation, hours-long lines to buy basic food items and deadly medical shortages.

Addressing a multitude of government supporters dressed in red Thursday, Maduro called on Venezuelans to vote in Sunday's controversial election for delegates to an assembly that is to rewrite the constitution.

He posed the vote as a choice that Venezuelans must make between being either "a free country or a colony of the empire" — Maduro's term for the United States.

Earlier, officials announced a host of security measures that were being enacted including an order that no political protests be held between through Tuesday. The opposition called for a mass demonstration in Caracas on Friday, raising the potential for further clashes amid the rising tensions. Washington ordered relatives of U.S. diplomats to leave the Venezuelan capital ahead of the divisive vote.

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Opposition leaders are urging Venezuelans to boycott the vote, saying the election rules were rigged to guarantee Maduro a majority and arguing that a new constitution could replace democracy with a single-party authoritarian system.

The mounting deaths of demonstrators have now become a separate source of outrage for the young people who march during the day and assemble nightly to fight police officers and national guardsmen at improvised barricades across the country.

"The ones who have fallen fighting repression motivate us to keep fighting," said Sandra Fernandez, a 21-year-old university student.

The country's chief prosecutor reported Thursday on Twitter that a 16-year-old was killed at a protest in the capital overnight and a 23-year-old man died at a demonstration in Merida state. A 49-year-old man in Carabobo, west of Caracas, was reported killed during a protest Thursday afternoon, and a 16-year-old died from a head wound suffered Wednesday at a protest in the capital.

The four killings pushed the death toll of the political crisis to 102. The oil-rich South American country, which was in the second day of a two-day general strike that shuttered businesses nationwide, has also seen thousands of injuries and arrests.

The chief prosecutor's office has released little information about the victims of the unrest, but at least 44 are believed to have been shot while participating in protests. Many of those deaths are blamed on armed motorcycle gangs of government supporters known as "colectivos" who are often seen shooting indiscriminately at protesters while police and soldiers stand by.

"The level of impunity is extremely high, and that continues on to a situation like this," Smilde said.

Compared to a spate of protests that left 43 dead on both sides in 2014, Smilde said, "This time around most of it is coming from government forces, either National Guard and police or 'colectivos' that are aligned with the government."

Security forces have been accused of excessive force but have used mostly non-lethal arms, a tactic that has kept protest deaths relatively low in comparison with the overall level of violence in a country with one of the world's highest homicide rates. An average of 78 people a day died violently last year in this country of 31.5 million, according the non-governmental Venezuelan Violence Observatory.

According to an Associated Press review of prosecutors' reports, the victims of the political unrest have overwhelmingly been male, with only six women killed. They are also mostly young, averaging 27 years old. The youngest was 14 and the oldest 54. At least 22 were students. A handful were police or soldiers. Sixty-nine of the deaths were from gunshots.

Just 21 of the killings have resulted in an arrest or orders for apprehension issued, with nearly half those coming against security forces.

Lander's mother, Zugeimar Armas, who has kept her son's room intact since his death in early June, said that regardless of whether her son was killed by the National Guard or an improvised bomb, she blames the government.

"What need does a 17-year-old boy have to be in the streets?" she asked.

Associated Press writer Fabiola Sanchez reported this story in Caracas and AP writer Christine Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia. AP writers Jorge Rueda in Caracas and Josh Lederman in Washington contributed to this report.

Rust Belt Wisconsin looks to fill high-skill jobs at Foxconn

By IVAN MORENO and SCOTT BAUER, Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — A Rust Belt state that built a manufacturing legacy through assembly-line jobs will have to quickly transition to a more highly skilled workforce now that Foxconn has selected Wisconsin as the site of its coveted U.S. electronics plant.

"This will not be your grandfather's factory," said Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council. "This will be a high-tech facility that will attract workers of various skill levels to produce products that will

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really define where the economy is going to go for years to come.”

Foxconn is best known for making iPhones and other Apple products in China. It entered into a memorandum of understanding Thursday to build its first U.S. manufacturing plant in Wisconsin — a decision cheered for its potential to transform the state’s economy. But many questions remain, including the type of jobs the Taiwan-based electronics giant will offer and whether it will follow through on its plans.

The deal calls for finalizing terms of the agreement — which will require a special legislative session to approve a \$3 billion incentive package — no later than Sept. 30. Gov. Scott Walker and Foxconn CEO Terry Gou signed the memorandum inside Milwaukee’s art museum, a white, winged-shaped structure by Santiago Calatrava that sits on Lake Michigan. The project to bring Foxconn to Wisconsin was called “Flying Eagle,” they said.

Foxconn said its \$10 billion factory — at a yet-to-be-determined site in southeastern Wisconsin — will initially bring 3,000 jobs and eventually employ 13,000 workers. It would be a substantial gain for a state that currently has 472,000 manufacturing jobs and is still recovering from factory layoffs — including the closure of a General Motors plant after the 2008 financial crisis.

Foxconn has not said what type of jobs it will offer in order to produce liquid-crystal display panels that are used in televisions and computer screens. But the average salary for the jobs will be nearly \$54,000, suggesting some of the higher-end positions will be engineers, software developers and people proficient in computer-assisted design, Still said.

Economists elsewhere note highly skilled postings aren’t always easy to fill.

“For an indicator I would look at Michigan. There’s lots of workers in Michigan and there’s lots of advanced manufacturing jobs in Michigan, and most of them are difficult to fill,” said Stefanie Lenway, dean of the Opus College of Business at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis.

Lenway also said that making LCD screens doesn’t involve people “because people create defects on the glass and that’s expensive,” so it’s unclear how many of the jobs will be for assembly workers.

Still said worker shortages for higher-skilled jobs are common around the country and it’s a challenge that Foxconn could’ve faced with any of the other states it was considering — Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas.

But Wisconsin officials say the state’s higher education system is capable of producing enough employees by the time the plant opens in 2020. However, it’s a process that needs to start now.

Walker said part of wooing Foxconn to Wisconsin included meetings with chancellors from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW-Milwaukee and the president of Gateway Technical College to talk about training opportunities so graduates would be prepared to work at the plant.

“For something of this magnitude we’re going to have to quite literally start training people now for jobs that will be open over the next couple of years,” Walker said Thursday during an interview on WTMJ-AM. “We’re going to start doing programs specifically targeted towards getting the workforce they’re going to need.”

To close the Foxconn deal, state lawmakers still have to approve a \$3 billion worth of tax credits for the company. The incentive package, which lawmakers could take up in a special session next month, will be pro-rated on how many jobs the company creates and how much it spends.

Walker and other state officials have said the trade-off for the incentives will pay off in the long run, noting that Foxconn’s presence will create thousands of other jobs through the hundreds of suppliers it will rely on for materials.

Walker said Democrats who were skeptical of the deal were “cynics.”

But the full impact of Foxconn’s planned factory may still be too early to measure, according to an economics expert at the UW-Milwaukee.

“It’s difficult to assess how this factory, if in fact it comes to be, will affect the labor market without knowing what the jobs are,” said Marc Levine, senior fellow and founding director of UWM’s Center for Economic Development.

Critics have also cautioned that Foxconn has made promises before to invest in the U.S. and not followed through. Foxconn promised in 2013, for example, to invest \$30 million and hire 500 workers for a new,

high-tech factory in Pennsylvania that was never built.

"So I think there's some question about the modus operandi of Foxconn on these sorts of things," Levine said.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin.

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Russia sanctions bill exposes Trump's legislative tug of war

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is likely to sign a tough new sanctions bill that includes proposed measures targeting Russia — a remarkable concession that the president has yet to sell his party on his hopes for forging a warmer relationship with Moscow.

Trump's vow to extend a hand of cooperation to Russian President Vladimir Putin has been met with resistance as skeptical lawmakers look to limit the executive power's leeway to go easy on Moscow over its meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

The Senate voted decisively on Thursday to approve the new package of financial sanctions against Russia, Iran and North Korea two days after the House pushed the measure through by an overwhelming margin.

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., had said he wanted to re-examine the bill's North Korea portion, potentially delaying it before legislators take their August recess. But late Wednesday he announced that he sees "a path forward on legislation to sanction Iran, Russia and North Korea" following "very productive discussions."

The proposed measures target Russia's energy sector as part of legislation that prevents Trump from easing sanctions on Moscow without congressional approval.

Two administration officials say that Trump is likely to sign the bill, despite last-minute wrangling over language and bureaucracy. Faced with near-unanimous bipartisan support for the bill in both the House and Senate, the president finds his hands are tied, according to two administration officials and two advisers with knowledge of the discussions.

The officials added that the president has been reluctant to proceed with the bill, even after it was revised last week to include some changes that American and European companies sought to ensure that business deals were not stifled by new sanctions. Trump has privately expressed frustration over Congress' ability to limit or override the power of the White House on national security matters, saying that it is complicating efforts to coordinate with allies — particularly those in Europe that have taken a different approach to sanctions.

The administration officials and advisers demanded anonymity to discuss the private sanctions deliberations. Trump's new communications director, Anthony Scaramucci, hedged the inevitability that Trump will sign, telling CNN's New Day on Thursday that the president "may sign the sanctions exactly the way they are or he may veto the sanctions and negotiate an even tougher deal against the Russians."

"There is a tremendous and unprecedented effort by Congress to assert its influence on Russia and foreign policy because it does not trust the president," said Elizabeth Rosenberg, senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and a former senior adviser at the Treasury Department.

"Lawmakers are so distrustful of the administration that they are imposing requirements to conduct congressional review of attempts by the president to roll back sanctions, and in some instances prevent him from doing so," Rosenberg said.

Lawmakers have been keen to implement a sturdy clampdown on North Korea's confrontational actions — most recently after its first test of an intercontinental ballistic missile. They've also traditionally favored a policy that keeps Moscow in check for its own aggressive measures in Eastern Europe and Syria, as well as its efforts to disrupt elections in the U.S. and across Europe.

"The message coming from Congress on a bipartisan basis is these are hostile regimes and sanctions

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are warranted — sanctions are called for,” Ryan told reporters Thursday. “And we want to make sure that they’re tough sanctions and that they’re durable sanctions. It took us a while to figure this out and come together to get the policy right . . . and we all agreed we believe these tough hostile regimes deserve sanctions and this is the bipartisan compromise that produces that.”

Trump hasn’t threatened to reject the bill even though Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and other senior administration officials had objected to a mandated congressional review should the president attempt to ease or lift the sanctions on Russia. They’ve argued it would infringe on the president’s executive authority and tie his hands as he explores avenues of communication and cooperation between the two former Cold War foes.

Russia’s ambitions to be on equal footing with the U.S. suffered a setback in 2014 when the Obama administration authorized sanctions against sectors of the Russian economy, including financial services, energy, mining and defense. The administration also sanctioned people in Putin’s inner circle accused of undermining peace in Ukraine. Add to that falling oil prices and a weak ruble, and Russia’s economy was shackled.

Sanctions relief is important to Russia’s broader objective of superpower status, shown by its bullish Syria policy. Syria’s Russian-backed military made major gains in rebel-held eastern Aleppo in recent days and rebel resistance appeared to be crumbling. While Moscow and Washington are continuously at odds over Syria, the Obama administration did not impose any Syria-related sanctions.

Trump’s positions on Russia are generally hard to assess because he’s often stepped away from his more controversial proposals. In his meeting this month with Putin on the sidelines of the Group of 20 leading rich and developing nations summit in Germany, Trump said he repeatedly addressed the topic of Russia’s meddling in the U.S. election. But he never directly answered questions about whether he believed Putin’s claims that Russia had nothing to do with it.

“There is a bipartisan consensus to confront Russia across the board — from its actions in Ukraine, Syria, cyber, its election meddling — you name it,” said Boris Zilberman, a Russia sanctions expert with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

“Russia is the driving force in the sanctions bill,” he added. “So we see the legislative branch now trying to send a clear message to the executive branch on where they stand on the issue.”

AP writer Richard Lardner contributed to this report.

Iran claims launch of satellite-carrying rocket into space

By AMIR VAHDAT and ADAM SCHRECK, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran successfully launched its most advanced satellite-carrying rocket into space, the country’s state media reported Thursday, in what is likely the most significant step yet for the launch vehicle.

A confirmed launch of the “Simorgh” rocket would mark another step forward for the Islamic Republic’s young space program, but is likely to raise alarm among its adversaries, who fear the same technology could be used to produce long-range missiles.

The U.S. State Department called the launch “provocative.”

Iranian state television said the rocket, whose name means “phoenix” in Persian, is capable of carrying a satellite weighing 250 kilograms (550 pounds). The report did not elaborate on the rocket’s payload. Other state-linked agencies including the semi-official Fars news agency also described the launch as successful.

Media reports did not say when the launch took place at the Imam Khomeini National Space Station in Semnan, some 220 kilometers (138 miles) east of Tehran.

Iran frequently announces technological breakthroughs that are difficult to independently verify. It has carried out multiple tests of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles as well as other domestically produced weapons over the years.

The Simorgh is a two-stage rocket first revealed in 2010. It is larger than an earlier model known as the

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Safir, or “ambassador,” that Iran has used to launch satellites on previous occasions.

The launch comes as the United States has criticized Iran’s ballistic missile tests, which American officials argue violate the spirit of the 2015 nuclear deal that Iran struck with world powers. Under the agreement, which does not expressly prohibit missile tests, Iran agreed to limit its uranium enrichment program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. The U.S. said Thursday that such a rocket is inherently designed to be able to carry a nuclear warhead.

Iran has pursued a satellite launch program for years. The U.S. and its allies worry that the same technology could be used to develop long-range missiles.

The country has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit over the past decade, and in 2013 launched a monkey into space. But it recently abandoned plans to potentially send humans into orbit, saying in late May that the cost of doing so was prohibitive.

The U.S. National Air and Space Intelligence Center said in a report released last month that the Simorgh could act as a test bed for developing the technologies needed to produce an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM.

“Tehran’s desire to have a strategic counter to the United States could drive it to field an ICBM. Progress in Iran’s space program could shorten a pathway to an ICBM because space launch vehicles (SLV) use inherently similar technologies,” the report said.

Iran’s satellite-launch program falls under the responsibility of the defense ministry, which has denied that the space program is a cover for weapons development.

The head of Iran’s space agency in October expressed for the first time interest in cooperating with NASA. Iran has offered to share its scientific findings and satellite data with other countries.

Iran’s most recent known successful satellite rocket launch was in February 2015, when it put an imaging satellite known as “Fajr” into orbit. That launch happened while Iran was negotiating the nuclear deal.

It is believed to have carried out at least a partial test of the Simorgh rocket last year, though the exact details of that attempt were never made public.

Iran’s decision to announce the rocket launch now likely serves as a test of America’s reaction, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior Iran analyst with the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative think tank long critical of the nuclear deal.

Taleblu said the launch announced Thursday had implications not only on Iran’s ability to launch satellites, but also in possibly building intercontinental ballistic missiles.

If Iran begins working on heat shields and other technology allowing for a rocket’s payload to re-enter Earth’s atmosphere, that would be a major warning sign, he said.

“This will take time, but the Iranian ballistic missile, nuclear, and space program shows that slow and steady always wins the race,” Taleblu said.

Asked about the Iran missile tests, China’s U.N. Ambassador Liu Jieyi, the current president of the U.N. Security Council, said that it was not “within the scope” of the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers.

“I think what’s important is that the agreement continues to be implemented and all the sides make constructive efforts to resolve whatever issues that still exist, and to completely and comprehensively implement the agreement,” Liu told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York.

Associated Press writer Amir Vahdat reported this story in Tehran and AP writer Adam Schreck reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. AP writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

US-backed Syrian fighters now control almost half of IS city

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

RAQQA, Syria (AP) — Heavy fighting broke out Thursday as U.S.-backed Syrian fighters captured almost half of the Islamic State group’s de facto capital of Raqqa. But the push into the city in northern Syria

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slowed due to stiff resistance and large amounts of explosives planted by the extremists, a spokeswoman for the fighters and monitors said.

The assault on Raqqa by the Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish-led fighting coalition, began June 6, backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes and U.S. troops advising the local forces.

Since then, the SDF has made steady advances from the eastern and western sides of the city, reaching the walled old quarter.

The fall of Raqqa, the extremist group's self-proclaimed capital, would be a huge loss for IS, which earlier this month lost the Iraqi city of Mosul. But much tougher fighting still lies ahead.

Army Col. Ryan Dillon, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group, said 45 percent of Raqqa was under the control of the SDF.

In a series of tweets, he said the SDF cleared about 9 square miles of terrain this past week fighting against "stiff, sporadic resistance" from IS militants entrenched in Raqqa.

Commanders on the western Raqqa front line said there were about 800 meters left before SDF forces moving from east and west would connect — tightening the noose on IS.

The battlefield Thursday was busy with hundreds of SDF fighters taking cover inside destroyed buildings less than 500 meters from IS combatants. SDF troops lobbed dozens of mortar shells at the militants, who sent out armed drones above the SDF forces.

Meanwhile, senior U.N. humanitarian official Ursula Mueller told the U.N. Security Council by video from Jordan on Thursday that an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 people remained in Raqqa.

She said the city was encircled and "there is no way for them to get out."

Since April 1, over 200,000 people have fled their homes in the area around Raqqa, she said. The figure includes more than 30,000 displaced just this month as U.S.-backed Syrian fighters try to oust the extremists.

Nisreen Abdullah, the Kurdish spokeswoman, told The Associated Press that the pace of the advance into Raqqa had slowed because of huge amounts of explosives laid by IS fighters.

As the extremists become more surrounded, they have increased their suicide attacks on fighters of the SDF, she added.

"Raqqa has become a booby-trapped city and this shows their (IS') weakness," said Abdullah, of the Women's Protection Units or YPJ, speaking from northern Syria. "They are also using civilians as human shields and this is slowing the push as well."

She said the Syrian Democratic Forces, which includes the Kurdish YPJ women fighters, now controls 45 percent of Raqqa. She added that since the offensive began, SDF fighters have fully captured eight neighborhoods.

Plumes of smoke could be seen behind buildings in Raqqa a day earlier as the coalition pounded IS targets in the city. Syrian children looked on as U.S. armored vehicles drove by. One American soldier on a vehicle made the victory sign.

Mustafa Bali, who heads the SDF media center, confirmed on Thursday that the group now has half of Raqqa and said the most important areas liberated in the past four days were the Nazlet Shehadeh and Panorama Square neighborhoods — both on the southwestern part of the city.

But he said there are IS counterattacks, militant sleeper cells and tunnels in the area.

"It was not easy, we have casualties and martyrs," he said, adding that the fighting was ongoing.

In the eastern front, where SDF forces breached IS defenses on the edge of the old city about a month ago, fighters have now reached the old citadel, an SDF commander in charge of one sector in the front told the AP.

"As we move forward we find a tunnel every 100 meters," Jihad Khabat said. He said the enemy, "besieged and in distress," hides in deep and long tunnels under the city, from where they can hit Syrian fighters in daily counterattacks.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also said SDF fighters control half of Raqqa. The attacks on the city have claimed many casualties among the tens of thousands of civilians who are

still trapped in areas controlled by IS.

The Observatory said 29 people, including eight children, were killed in airstrikes on the city on Wednesday. The activist-operated Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently group said 36 people were killed and more than 50 wounded in airstrikes and shelling.

The reports could not be independently confirmed.

In central Syria, fighting edged closer to the IS stronghold of Sukhna, the last major town held by IS in the Homs province, according to the Observatory and the government-controlled Syrian Central Military Media.

SCMM said Syrian troops killed and wounded a number of IS fighters in battles near a mountain that overlooks the area. The Observatory said troops are now about 5 kilometers (3 miles) from Sukhna, which has been held by IS since the summer of 2015.

Near the border with Lebanon, a cease-fire went into effect between the militant Hezbollah group and al-Qaida-linked fighters on Thursday morning as negotiations were underway to reach a deal that would eventually lead to the evacuation of Syrian fighters to the northwestern rebel-held province of Idlib.

The truce followed a six-day offensive by Hezbollah and Syrian troops who besieged al-Qaida-linked fighters in a small border area.

Senior Lebanese security official, Gen. Abbas Ibrahim, who is leading the negotiations, told reporters in Beirut that the details of the deal will remain secret, adding that fighters and their families who decide to leave for Idlib will do it under the supervision of Lebanese authorities.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV said the deal will include the release of five members of the Shiite group who are held by insurgents in Syria.

Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue in Beirut and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Marine dog with cancer gets tear-filled farewell

MUSKEGON, Mich. (AP) — Hundreds of people in Michigan came together to say a tear-filled final goodbye to a cancer-stricken dog who served three tours in Afghanistan with the U.S. Marines.

Cena the 10-year-old black lab received a hero's farewell Wednesday before being euthanized at the USS LST 393, a museum ship in Muskegon, and carried off in a flag-draped coffin.

Cena, who was recently diagnosed with terminal bone cancer, was a bomb-sniffer for the Marines until his retirement in 2014. The celebration for Cena was organized by his owner, Lance Cpl. Jeff Young, who was paired with the dog in 2009 and 2010 while on a combat tour in Afghanistan and who adopted him in 2014. Cena then became DeYoung's service dog to help him with his post-traumatic stress disorder.

"My whole adult life I've had Cena," DeYoung said. "When I was 19 overseas learning how to be responsible, I had Cena. And now I'm 27 and I'm having to say goodbye to one of the biggest pieces of my life."

DeYoung said he has carried Cena across rivers and thrown his body over him while under heavy fire from the Taliban. He said Cena kept DeYoung's body warm during cold desert nights, and comforted him when he lost seven friends in three weeks.

As part of the celebration, DeYoung took his dog on one last ride in a topless Jeep that was decorated and named "Cancer Response Team."

"It started off with my basically wanting to go to a dealership and wanting to borrow a Jeep for a day and really small to a community tribute or a community parade for him and he's truly deserved it all," DeYoung said. "The support, all the love people are giving him, he can see it and he can feel it."

The ceremony was attended by the U.S. Marine Corps League, Michigan State Police, Muskegon County Sheriff's Office, Muskegon City Police, Muskegon Fire Department and officers from several other departments, including a canine officer named Rex. Attendees gave one final three-volley salute with "Taps" playing in the background for Cena, who was wearing a decorated blue Marine vest.

"Lord, it is with heavy hearts that we are sending another Marine to you today," said chaplain Wesley

Spyke as he addressed the crowd in prayer.

A GoFundMe page was set up for donations to help build a headstone for Cena.

"Any dog that served overseas deserves exactly what I've done for Cena, if not more," DeYoung said.

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In US first, scientists edit genes of human embryos

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE, AP Chief Medical Writer

For the first time in the United States, scientists have edited the genes of human embryos, a controversial step toward someday helping babies avoid inherited diseases.

The experiment was just an exercise in science — the embryos were not allowed to develop for more than a few days and were never intended to be implanted into a womb, according to MIT Technology Review, which first reported the news.

Officials at Oregon Health & Science University confirmed Thursday that the work took place there and said results would be published in a journal soon. It is thought to be the first such work in the U.S.; previous experiments like this have been reported from China. How many embryos were created and edited in the experiments has not been revealed.

The Oregon scientists reportedly used a technique called CRISPR, which allows specific sections of DNA to be altered or replaced. It's like using a molecular scissors to cut and paste DNA, and is much more precise than some types of gene therapy that cannot ensure that desired changes will take place exactly where and as intended. With gene editing, these so-called "germline" changes are permanent and would be passed down to any offspring.

The approach holds great potential to avoid many genetic diseases, but has raised fears of "designer babies" if done for less lofty reasons, such as producing desirable traits.

Last year, Britain said some of its scientists could edit embryo genes to better understand human development.

And earlier this year in the U.S., the National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Medicine said in a report that altering the genes of embryos might be OK if done under strict criteria and aimed at preventing serious disease.

"This is the kind of research that the report discussed," University of Wisconsin-Madison bioethicist R. Alta Charo said of the news of Oregon's work. She co-led the National Academies panel but was not commenting on its behalf Thursday.

"This was purely laboratory-based work that is incredibly valuable for helping us understand how one might make these germline changes in a way that is precise and safe. But it's only a first step," she said.

"We still have regulatory barriers in the United States to ever trying this to achieve a pregnancy. The public has plenty of time" to weigh in on whether that should occur, she said. "Any such experiment aimed at a pregnancy would need FDA approval, and the agency is currently not allowed to even consider such a request" because of limits set by Congress.

One prominent genetics expert, Dr. Eric Topol, director of the Scripps Translational Science Institute in La Jolla, California, said gene editing of embryos is "an unstoppable, inevitable science, and this is more proof it can be done."

Experiments are in the works now in the U.S. using gene-edited cells to try to treat people with various diseases, but "in order to really have a cure, you want to get this at the embryo stage," he said. "If it isn't done in this country, it will be done elsewhere."

There are other ways that some parents who know they carry a problem gene can avoid passing it to their children, he added. They can create embryos through in vitro fertilization, screen them in the lab and implant only ones free of the defect.

Dr. Robert C. Green, a medical geneticist at Harvard Medical School, said the prospect of editing embryos

to avoid disease "is inevitable and exciting," and that "with proper controls in place, it's going to lead to huge advances in human health."

The need for it is clear, he added: "Our research has suggested that there are far more disease-associated mutations in the general public than was previously suspected."

Hank Greely, director of Stanford University's Center for Law and the Biosciences, called CRISPR "the most exciting thing I've seen in biology in the 25 years I've been watching it," with tremendous possibilities to aid human health.

"Everybody should calm down" because this is just one of many steps advancing the science, and there are regulatory safeguards already in place. "We've got time to do it carefully," he said.

Michael Watson, executive director of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics, said the college thinks that any work aimed at pregnancy is premature, but the lab work is a necessary first step. "That's the only way we're going to learn" if it's safe or feasible, he said.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed at <http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP>

Troubled trucking firm faces scrutiny after Texas deaths

By RYAN J. FOLEY, Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — The trucking company linked to the recent deadly human smuggling case in Texas had promoted itself as an American success: a family firm whose hard-working drivers helped keep the U.S. economy running.

But behind that image was a cutthroat business that flouted federal laws for years, yet managed to stay afloat despite financial troubles and tangles with prosecutors, regulators and tax collectors, according to public records and interviews with former drivers.

Now, Pyle Transportation faces the biggest threat to its survival yet after one of its contract drivers was charged Monday in the deaths of 10 immigrants found in a sweltering Pyle trailer in San Antonio's 100-degree heat. Investigators are scrutinizing Pyle's claim that it knew nothing about an operation that federal authorities have described as sophisticated and possibly linked to a Mexican cartel. Federal regulators have launched an investigation into the company's safety record.

The driver, 60-year-old James "Bear" Bradley Jr., has told investigators that he was unaware any immigrants were in the trailer, saying he heard their pleas after stopping Sunday at a Walmart to urinate. Investigators say dozens of immigrants were packed into the dark trailer after being smuggled across the border.

Company owner Brian Pyle has denied any knowledge of human smuggling, but declined to comment Monday on the company's operations and did not return additional messages left Thursday seeking comment. On its website, which has since been taken down, Pyle Transportation advertised its fleet of high-end rigs and boasted of delivering refrigerated shipments of meat and produce on time to customers from its rural Iowa base. Playing upbeat music and flashing photos of smiling truckers, the site touted love of country, faith in God and the company's slogan: "Keepin' it Cool Since 1950."

Yet former drivers told The Associated Press that the company routinely pushed them to violate federal safety rules. They say they were pressured to drive too many hours without rest, to falsify their logs to conceal those violations and to transport overweight loads on unrealistic deadlines. They said they faced retaliation if they complained and that Pyle refused to pay wages they were owed when they quit.

Two of Bradley's former Pyle colleagues were stunned to learn about the deaths and struggling to understand what happened.

"Knowing Bear, the pieces don't fit," said Paul Terry, 68, of Denver. "I believe Bear was set up. He is a country boy and he don't know that much. No way in the world could he orchestrate something like that. I will say that on my kids' grave."

Former driver Tim Moffitt said Thursday that he believed the company had to have some knowledge of the operation, calling it a good place to work only "if you don't like rules."

"They are always looking for ways to save money and make money," said Moffitt, who has known Bradley

for 30 years.

Brian Pyle told the AP on Monday that the company had sold the trailer and hired Bradley as a contractor to drive it to the border city of Brownsville, Texas, to deliver it to the buyer, whom he refused to identify. He showed a reporter what he said was a bill of sale dated May 10 that had no price.

Bradley told investigators he was unaware of the trailer's contents, adding that he knew its refrigeration system didn't work, according to the complaint against him. He described taking a looping route with stops in Laredo and San Antonio, several hours west of Brownsville.

Pyle said Bradley was given an address and told to deliver the trailer last Friday, disputing Bradley's claim to investigators that he had been given neither a location nor a time to make the delivery.

The company's relationship with Bradley was reflected on its now-defunct website, where he was pictured smiling with Pyle in its "Hall of Fame" of workers.

Pyle Transportation has long been an influential company in Schaller, a northwest Iowa town of 750 that doesn't have a police officer. Residents say it was run by the late Don Pyle before facing troubles in the 1990s after it was passed to his son, Michael.

The son and his Pyle Truck Lines pleaded guilty in 2001 to falsifying Department of Transportation records and were put on probation. Michael Pyle's children took control of the business a few years later when Pyle Transportation formed, but he remained involved. Michael Pyle declined comment, hanging up on a reporter who called Thursday.

The IRS alleged in 2015 that Pyle Transportation refused to pay employment and highway use taxes for years, racking up \$150,000 in liabilities.

The company has also been ordered to pay penalties for falsifying records on drivers' hours and has been operating with a "conditional" safety rating, meaning it had been out of compliance with regulations.

Bradley went to work for the company in 2010 in response to an internet ad, and later recruited Terry and Moffitt to join him, they recalled. Terry said at first they made good money delivering pork from Iowa slaughterhouses to Texas and returning with loads of produce and steel. But Terry and Moffitt left after employment disputes.

"They will run you to death and you have to falsify your logs to make it work," said Terry, who according to court records has been unable to collect a \$2,000 judgment for unpaid wages that he obtained after quitting in 2014.

Cody Winters, 29, of Charles City, Iowa, said he would be stunned if Pyle was complicit in smuggling even if the company was "crooked" in other ways. He sued the company to collect \$3,300 in unpaid wages after he was fired and left stranded at a truck stop in 2015.

"They appeal to drivers by keeping big Peterbilts to drive. But then you get there and it's not good at all. It's just a show," he said. "I thought, 'How is this place even staying in business?'"

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Transgender troops: A presidential tweet is not an order

By **ROBERT BURNS, AP National Security Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unmoved by President Donald Trump's proclamation-by-Twitter, top Pentagon leaders declared on Thursday they'll allow transgender troops to remain in uniform until Defense Secretary Jim Mattis receives an authoritative directive to remove them.

For now, "there will be no modifications" to current policy, Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an internal memo to all military service chiefs, commanders and enlisted leaders. That was despite Trump's announcement Wednesday on Twitter that he will not "accept or allow" transgender people to serve in the U.S. military.

By late Thursday, the Pentagon still had nothing more to go on than the tweets, a highly irregular circumstance that put Mattis and others in the chain of command in a position of awkward unease, if not

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paralysis. A commander in chief normally works out policy changes of this magnitude in advance in order to preserve order and morale.

Trump's tweets drew quick, sometimes scathing criticism from many lawmakers, both Democratic and Republican, as well as many military troops and retirees. But social conservatives applauded. Protesters demonstrated in several cities as well as outside the White House.

Dunford began his memo to the nation's military leaders: "I know there are questions about yesterday's announcement." He said nothing would change until the president's direction had been received and developed by Mattis into written "implementation guidance."

"In the meantime, we will continue to treat all of our personnel with respect," Dunford wrote. "As importantly, given the current fight and the challenges we face, we will all remain focused on accomplishing our assigned missions." That last statement appeared to reflect a concern that confusion over Trump's tweets might distract troops, who are engaged in dangerous operations around the world, including shooting wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said guidance on how to "fully implement this policy" is still to be worked out. Asked whether Trump realized he could not change the transgender service policy via Twitter, Sanders said, "I think he was making the announcement of the policy change," even though no specifics had been worked out.

Mattis has been on vacation this week and has been publicly silent. Sanders has said Trump informed Mattis of his decision after he made it on Tuesday. It was Trump's judgment, she said, that transgender individuals are an unacceptable cost and distraction for the military and should not be allowed.

Dunford was not aware that Trump was going to announce the ban, a U.S. official said. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter and so spoke on condition of anonymity.

The top Air Force officer, Gen. David Goldfein, sent a note internally to his entire force Thursday citing Dunford's memo and saying that he and Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson "emphasize that all airmen will be treated with dignity and respect as we work through the potential policy changes" coming from the White House.

Together, the Dunford and Goldfein notes illustrate that military leaders did not equate Trump's tweets with legal orders.

Gen. Mark Milley, the Army chief of staff, made similar points during a speech at the National Press Club. "I have yet to receive implementation guidance" from Mattis, Milley said. "We'll act when we receive directives through the proper chain-of-command channels." Until then, nothing changes, he added, citing the Dunford memo.

Trump's announcement caught the Pentagon flat-footed in a way rarely seen in the recent history of civil-military relations. The Pentagon has not released data on the number of transgender people currently serving, but a Rand Corp. study has estimated between 1,320 and 6,630, out of 1.3 million active-duty troops.

"Please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military," Trump tweeted, even as hundreds, if not thousands were already serving. The implication of the pronouncement was that those now in uniform would be forced to leave.

Trump wrote that he had consulted with "my generals and military experts," but the White House has not identified them and none have come forward. Just last week, when asked about the transgender issue at a Senate hearing, Gen. Paul Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "I am an advocate of every qualified person who can meet the physical standards to serve in our uniformed services to be able to do so."

Transgender service members have been able to serve openly since 2016 — a policy applied only to those already in uniform. The Obama administration began a review of the costs and benefits of allowing transgender individuals to enlist, and less than a month ago Mattis extended that review for another six months. Mattis said then that this "does not presuppose the outcome of the review," but Trump's tweets appeared to have done just that. There had been no presumption that the extra six months was a prelude to a total ban.

The American Civil Liberties Union said its chances of getting a court to block Trump's proposed ban might depend on the details of the plan.

AP National Writer David Crary contributed to this report.

Clashes, tensions flare at sacred site in Jerusalem

By ILAN BEN ZION and MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Violence returned Thursday to a sacred site in Jerusalem as Palestinians gathering for prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound clashed with Israeli police nearly two weeks after a deadly attack there.

Earlier in the day, Palestinians had celebrated as Israel rolled back security measures and thousands of worshippers heeded a call by Muslim authorities to assemble for prayers at the mosque for the first time in 11 days.

But as crowds pushed at one of the gates to the compound in the Old City, police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse them, with dozens reported wounded.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered police reinforcements in Jerusalem following the latest unrest, and police were weighing limiting entry of younger men in anticipation of mass protests for Friday prayers — the highlight of the Muslim religious week.

Israeli troops in the West Bank were put on high alert and prepared for more violence Friday, a military official said.

Tensions have been running high at the site sacred to both Muslims and Jews since three Israeli Arab gunmen killed two police officers on July 14, prompting Israel to install metal detectors and other security devices.

Israel said the measures were needed to prevent more attacks. Palestinians claimed Israel was trying to expand its control over the site, which Israel denied.

The security measures outraged Muslims and triggered protests, and low-level clashes have continued in and around Jerusalem since then, highlighting the deep distrust between Israel and the Palestinians over the holy site.

In protest, Palestinians have prayed in Jerusalem's streets outside the shrine since the July 14 attack. Israel removed the devices Thursday and the crisis appeared to be easing as Muslim leaders told the faithful to return to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Droves of Palestinians entered for afternoon prayers. A handful scaled the roof the mosque and planted Palestinian flags above the entrance. Police later removed them.

Just before worship began, police shot tear gas and rubber bullets at the massing crowd. The Red Crescent said tensions rose as Israeli troops closed one of the gates to the compound as large numbers of worshippers tried to enter, and that 96 people were wounded in the melee. Police said officers were struck by stones and responded with riot dispersal methods, and a spokesman said at least two officers were wounded.

More clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces erupted after nightfall, with the Red Crescent saying at least eight people were hurt.

In addition, a 26-year-old Palestinian who was wounded earlier this week outside Jerusalem in a confrontation with Israeli troops has died, said Dr. Ahmad Betawi, head of a West Bank hospital. At least four other Palestinians have died in the past week in violent clashes with Israeli security forces.

Rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas both issued calls earlier this week for mass protests on Friday.

The fate of the shrine is an emotional issue at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even the smallest perceived change to delicate arrangements pertaining to the site sparks tensions.

Jews revere the hilltop compound as the Temple Mount, site of the two Jewish biblical temples. It is the holiest site in Judaism and the nearby Western Wall, a remnant of one of the temples, is the holiest place where Jews can pray.

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The walled compound is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. It is Islam's third-holiest site after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe the site marks the spot where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.

Israel had faced intense pressure over the security devices and said it plans to install sophisticated cameras instead. Palestinian leaders and Muslim clerics had insisted Israel restore the situation at the shrine to what it was before the attack.

The simmering crisis has sparked some of the worst street clashes in years and threatened to draw Israel into conflict with other Arab and Muslim nations.

King Abdullah of Jordan, which is the Muslim custodian of the shrine, urged Israel to "respect the historical and legal situation in the holy shrine to prevent the recurrence of these crises."

Abdullah criticized Israel's handling of a deadly altercation last weekend at its embassy in Amman involving an Israeli security guard, calling Netanyahu's conduct "provocative."

He blasted Netanyahu for praising an Israeli security guard who killed two Jordanians at the embassy after a 16-year-old attacked the guard with a screwdriver.

"Such unacceptable and provocative behavior at all levels infuriates all of us, leads to insecurity and fuels extremism in the region," Abdullah said.

Abdullah told senior officials that Netanyahu needs to take legal measures that "guarantee the trial of the murderer."

He said the incident "will have a direct impact on the nature of our relations."

The Islamic militant group that rules Gaza had praised the Israeli rollback of security at the sacred site. Izzat Rishq, a senior Hamas leader, tweeted that Palestinians achieved a "historic victory."

Netanyahu is trying to halt a wave of unrest while not appearing to his hard-line base as capitulating.

He sought to fend off the criticism. He took a hard line against Palestinian violence by saying Thursday "the time has come for the death penalty for terrorists in extreme cases."

A senior member of Netanyahu's coalition government criticized Israel's dismantling of the security devices, saying it could bring more violence.

Naftali Bennett, leader of the Jewish Home party, told Army Radio that "every time the state of Israel folds in a strategic way, we get hit with an Intifada. You seemingly benefit in the short term, but in the long term you harm deterrence."

US attorney general presses on with mission to El Salvador

By **SADIE GURMAN, Associated Press**

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Though his future may be in doubt, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions forged ahead Thursday with a tough-on-crime agenda that once endeared him to President Donald Trump, opening a mission in El Salvador to step up international cooperation against the violent street gang MS-13.

Sessions arrived in San Salvador for a series of meetings with law enforcement officials about a transnational anti-gang task force aimed against MS-13. He planned to meet his Salvadoran counterpart as well as an ex-gang member, and tour a prison.

Back in Washington, lawmakers sized up the fallout over a week of public scorn heaped on Sessions by his boss, Trump, even as the White House suggested the president prefers that his attorney general stay on the job. U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Thursday that there would be "holy hell" to pay if Trump were to fire Sessions, a former Alabama senator and early Trump supporter.

Sessions told The Associated Press Thursday that he'll continue to serve as long as the president wants him to.

Sessions told AP in El Salvador that Trump has every right to find another attorney general. He says: "I serve at the pleasure of the president. I've understood that from the day I took the job."

As the Trump administration tries to build support for its crackdown on illegal immigration, it has increasingly tried to make the gang with Central American ties the face of the problem. Recent killings tied to its

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members have stoked the U.S. debate on immigration.

Trump praised Sessions when Sessions announced his mission to eradicate the gang in April. But the attorney general has since fallen out of favor with his onetime political ally.

In day after day of publicly humiliating Sessions, Trump said he rued his decision to choose Sessions for his Cabinet. Trump's intensifying criticism has fueled speculation that the attorney general may step down even if the president stops short of firing him. But Sessions is showing no outward signs that he is planning to quit, and on Wednesday, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said that Trump "wants him to lead the department."

"Look, you can be disappointed in someone and still want them to continue to do their job," she said.

MS-13 is an international criminal enterprise with tens of thousands of members in several Central American countries and many U.S. states. The gang originated in immigrant communities in Los Angeles in the 1980s then entrenched itself in Central America when its leaders were deported.

MS-13 is known for hacking and stabbing victims with machetes, drug dealing, prostitution and other rackets. Its recruits are middle- and high-school students predominantly in immigrant communities and those who try to leave risk violent retribution, law enforcement officials have said.

Its members have been accused in a spate of bloodshed that included the massacre of four young men in a Long Island, New York, park and the killing of a suspected gang rival inside a deli. The violence has drawn attention from members of Congress and Trump, who has boasted about efforts to arrest and deport MS-13 members across the United States.

Law enforcement officials believe some of the recent violence has been directed by members of the gang imprisoned in El Salvador.

Officials in El Salvador, as well as Guatemala and Honduras, have expressed concern about increased deportations of the gangsters back to their countries. Transnational gangs such as MS-13 already are blamed for staggering violence in those so-called Northern Triangle countries.

Both Trump and Sessions have blamed Obama-era border policies for allowing the gang's ranks to flourish in the U.S., though the Obama administration took unprecedented steps to target the gang's finances. Federal prosecutors have gone after MS-13 before but say they've recently seen a resurgence.

Thursday's trip was planned before Trump's broadsides against his attorney general, and it remains to be seen whether his work in El Salvador will help mend their fractured relationship. Their shared view, rare among the American political class, that illegal immigration was the nation's most vexing problem was what united Sessions and Trump.

Fox News spends bucks to poke fun at The New York Times

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News Channel gave The New York Times more than \$100,000 to poke fun at the newspaper.

Fox ran a full-page advertisement in the Times on Thursday, blurring a recent review in the newspaper that called the "Fox & Friends" morning show "the most powerful TV show in America."

Television critic James Poniewozik's review wasn't exactly complimentary, as it traced the show's close relationship with the nation's tweeter-in-chief, President Donald Trump.

In addition to the Times, Fox News ran the same full-page ad in the Washington Post and New York Post. The network wouldn't say how much it spent. The Times' ad rates say a full-page ad with color generally runs around \$130,000.

"They've decided to move upmarket and support our journalism with their money," said Mark Thompson, the Times' CEO, president and director. "So we're very pleased to have them."

Trump, and by extension many Fox News viewers, generally don't look kindly at the Times. The three hosts of "Fox & Friends" held up newspapers with the ad clearly visible at the top of their show on Thursday.

"For The New York Times to say that, it must have been tough," said Brian Kilmeade, one of the show's hosts.

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In his review, Poniewozik called the show an "interactive magic mirror" for Trump.

"For years, it was a nontaxing mix of news, lifestyle and conservative couch gab, a warm-up before Fox's day of politics and commentary," Poniewozik wrote. "Suddenly, for no other reason than its No. 1 fan, it is the most powerful TV show in America."

Poniewozik outlined how Trump has frequently tweeted out material from "Fox & Friends," illustrating that he's watching in the morning, and the show reports on his tweets.

"Diagraming the feedback loop between 'Fox & Friends' and the president requires a very small bulletin board and maybe six inches of yarn," he wrote.

As if to prove his point, the president tweeted at 6:48 a.m. on Thursday: "Wow, the failing @NYTimes said about @foxandfriends '...the most powerful TV show in America.'"

AP Interview: Yemen factions said to have pledged easing aid

By KARIN LAUB, Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Warring sides in Yemen's civil war promised visiting U.N. agency chiefs to clear obstacles to aid delivery in a nation where cholera is spreading rapidly and hundreds of thousands of children are severely malnourished, the head of the U.N. child welfare agency said Thursday.

The growing suffering of Yemen's civilians, including millions of children, is the result of fighting that erupted in September 2014 and is driven by regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran. The U.S. has backed a Saudi-led coalition with intelligence, satellite imagery and billions of dollars in weapons sales.

The way to end the entirely man-made disaster is clear, said Anthony Lake, the executive director of UNICEF. "Stop the war," he said, addressing those involved in the civil war, both inside and outside Yemen.

Lake said ordinary people around the world should feel "immense pity, even agony, for all of these children and others who are suffering, and they should feel anger, anger that this, our generation, is scarred by the irresponsibility of governments and others to allow these things to be happening."

In Yemen, he stood by the bedside of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition, accompanied by mothers who had struggled to get them to the hospital.

"What stays with you is their eyes," he said of the children. "Their eyes are looking up at their mothers with this look of trust, and we won't know for how many that trust will be fulfilled and they live, and (how many) others will die."

The suffering among Yemen's 27 million people, reflected in statistics, is staggering.

— Nearly 2 million children are acutely malnourished, which makes them more susceptible to cholera.

— More than 60 percent of the population don't know where their next meal will come from, pushing the country to the brink of famine.

— Four out of five children need humanitarian aid.

— Half the population lacks adequate health care.

— About 400,000 cases of suspected cholera and close to 1,900 deaths linked to the disease have been recorded since April, with the number expected to rise during the current rainy seasons.

More than 600 rehydration centers treating acute watery diarrhea and suspected cholera have been set up, with plans to increase the number of centers to more than 1,000, Lake said.

The main obstacle to ramping up the fight against cholera is lack of resources, he said.

"In the areas where we are working effectively, both the number of cases and the fatality rate are going down," Lake told The Associated Press in the Jordanian capital of Amman.

"So it's a race between us and the rains and the continuing destruction and the fighting — and of course, you always hope you will win," he said.

Lake was joined by the heads of the World Food Program and the World Health Organization during the Yemen tour. The trio met with officials from the rival governments to win assurances that obstacles to aid delivery would be removed.

Their demands included getting access to hard-to-reach areas, being able to bring in more supplies,

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including medical aid, and reducing delays.

"They said, yes, they would try to speed things up," Lake said of the rival sides. "They made a commitment and we will now hope that it is met."

He said the U.N. agency chiefs failed to win assurances though on a key demand — that the governments pay health workers and teachers who haven't received their salaries for months.

Lake said aid agencies have been paying per diems to health workers, as part of efforts to restore minimal care, but that this is not a solution.

He said he tried to appeal to the self-interest of the political rivals.

Whoever emerges victorious will "inherit a disaster, a catastrophe that is constantly getting worse," he said. "They need to think about what kind of Yemen it is that they will someday need to rule."

The conflict began after Shiite Houthi rebels swept into the capital of Sanaa in 2014 and overthrew President Abed-Rabbo Mansour Hadi's internationally recognized government. In March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition began a campaign in support of Hadi's govern and against the Houthis, allied with ousted President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Since then, the Iranian-backed Houthis have been dislodged from most of the south, but remain in control of Sanaa and much of the north.

In the southern part of the country, the United Arab Emirates, which is part of the Saudi-led coalition, has set up its own security forces, running virtually a state-within-a-state and fueling the south's independence movement.

Lake said it is "strategically incredibly stupid" for the leaders on both sides and regional actors to keep the fighting going. The conflict today is going to be perpetuated in the next generation, as children grow up with hate and deprivation.

The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, meanwhile, urged the international community to step up political pressure to end the fighting.

The world must "wield influence over the behavior of warring parties as a matter of urgency," said ICRC president Peter Maurer in a statement.

Records: Child's body decomposing on arrival at hospital

WYOMING, Mich. (AP) — The body of a 6-month-old western Michigan boy had already started to decompose by the time his mother took him to a hospital after she had basically ignored him for two days in her sweltering home with no air conditioning, according to court records.

The temperature in Lovily Johnson's Wyoming apartment was about 90 degrees (32 degrees Celsius) a few hours after Noah Johnson was pronounced dead on arrival July 19 at a Grand Rapids hospital.

The child weighed 12 pounds (5.5 kilograms) and also had a severe diaper rash after being left mostly unsupervised and strapped in a car seat upstairs in the home since the morning of July 17 while his mother smoked marijuana and visited friends, MLive.com and WOOD-TV reported.

Johnson, 22, is jailed on first-degree murder and child abuse charges. She faces an Aug. 2 probable cause hearing.

Court records allege that on July 17 Noah was given a bottle around 10 a.m. and then was left alone for nearly 12 hours. The boy's diaper was not changed during that time. The following day he was left alone from about 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and then until 5 a.m. the next day.

MLive.com reported Johnson didn't call 911 when she returned home and found her son unresponsive. She called her father, who also didn't call emergency services but did drive them to the hospital.

Johnson had previous contacts with the state that involved Noah and his older sister.

Child Protective Services filed a complaint in March 2015 after Johnson's newborn daughter tested positive for marijuana. Johnson told authorities that she had smoked marijuana during her pregnancy.

Earlier this month, another complaint was filed after Noah was left in an unlocked vehicle parked outside a video rental shop.

Johnson's daughter, now 2 years old, was placed in state care last week.

Putin in Finland on centenary of independence from Russia

By **MATTI HUUHTANEN, Associated Press**

HELSINKI (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday tried to calm regional anxiety over joint Russian-Chinese naval maneuvers in the Baltic Sea, where tensions have grown in recent years with an increased show of military force by both Moscow and NATO.

Speaking to reporters after talks with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, Putin said Russia had joined China in military exercises before and that they were not aimed at any third party.

"The cooperation of Russia and China, in its totality including the military component, is one of the most important elements of security and stability in the world. Furthermore, it is not directed against any third countries," Putin said at a news conference. "In this case, our militaries are simply polishing their skills."

In an apparent allusion to nonaligned Finland and Sweden, Putin said he respected the neutrality of nations in the Baltic Sea region, saying Russia was willing to cooperate with them.

When asked about Russian-U.S relations and the probe into possible collusion between President Donald Trump's associates and Russian officials in the 2016 U.S. election, Putin downplayed the issue.

"I do not think that this is an investigation, because investigation involves finding out the completeness of all the circumstances with study, with listening to various parties. We are simply seeing the growth of anti-Russian hysteria, most likely the use of Russo-phobic instruments in a domestic political struggle," he said. "It is unfortunate that Russian-American relations are being sacrificed in the course of solving domestic political issues in the U.S."

Putin arrived for a one-day visit in Finland by helicopter at an airport near the southeastern town of Savonlinna for talks with Niinisto in the country's picturesque lake district. Afterward, the two leaders took a cruise on Lake Saimaa in a steam boat to Olavinlinna Castle, where they dined before attending Tchaikovsky's opera "Iolanta," performed by the visiting Bolshoi Theater as part of the annual Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Putin noted that Finland was celebrating its centenary of independence from Russia, with which it shares a 1,400-kilometer (800-mile) border. The small Nordic nation has had a precarious relationship with its huge eastern neighbor, including two bitter wars against Stalin's Red Army.

Finland was ruled by Sweden for 700 years before falling to czarist Russia in 1809 when the Swedes were defeated in the Russo-Swedish wars. It declared independence in 1917 in the wake of the Russian Revolution.

Jim Heintz contributed to this report from Moscow.

Summer treat: Polar bears frolic in donated load of snow

HELSINKI (AP) — Polar bear mom Venus has gotten a summer treat — a chance to frolic in the snow with her eight-month-old cub despite the heat enveloping Finland's northern Lapland.

A pile of snow has been dumped onto their home at Ranua Wildlife Park, 760 kilometers (470 miles) north of Helsinki. It was donated by the Ruka ski center to help cool down the polar bears, who were suffering in unusual temperatures of 24 degrees Celsius (75 Fahrenheit).

Venus' cub, who has not been named yet, took his fledgling steps out of hibernation in March when he jumped out into the fresh Arctic snow. On Wednesday he enjoyed the new snow.

Ranua is home to 200 animals, including 50 other Arctic species such as arctic foxes, geese, cranes, minks, buzzards, owls, otters, reindeer and wolverine.

Isolated Qatar hires firm founded by Trump aides amid crisis

By JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Qatar has hired a Washington influence firm founded by former top campaign aides to President Donald Trump and another specialized in digging up dirt on U.S. politicians, signaling it wants to challenge Saudi Arabia's massive lobbying efforts in America's capital amid a diplomatic dispute among Arab nations.

Hiring a firm once associated with former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, who left it in May over a dispute with his partners, shows Qatar wants access to a White House with close ties to Saudi Arabia. The firm retains Barry Bennett, a Trump campaign adviser, as well as others with ties to the president.

But matching Saudi Arabia, which scored a diplomatic coup by hosting Trump's first overseas trip, could be a tough battle for Qatar, even if it does boast the world's highest per-capita income due to its natural gas deposits.

"The Qataris are belatedly working up to the scale of the challenge they face," said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University who lives in Seattle. "This whole crisis, now that it's kind of settled down into a prolonged confrontation or standoff, it's become almost a struggle to win the hearts and minds in D.C."

The Gulf rift already has seen slogan-plastered taxicabs in London, television attack ads in the United States and competing messages flooding the internet and state-linked media on both sides since the crisis began on June 5.

Qatar, in the midst of building stadiums for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, isn't afraid to spend its money. Since the crisis began, Qatar paid \$2.5 million to the law firm of former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft to audit its efforts at stopping terrorism funding — one of the allegations levied by the Saudi-led quartet of nations.

According to documents newly filed to the U.S. Justice Department, Qatar has hired Avenue Strategies Global for \$150,000 a month to "provide research, government relations and strategic consulting services." The contract also says that activity "may include communications with members of Congress and Congressional staff, executive branch officials, the media and other individuals."

Lewandowski founded Avenue Strategies just after the November election that put Trump in the White House. Lewandowski resigned from the firm only months later, saying he was troubled by a firm-related project he hadn't sanctioned. Others tied to Avenue Strategies had started a firm of their own, pitching Eastern European clients with promises of access to Trump and high-ranking White House officials.

The firm, which includes a former chief of staff to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

Qatar also signed a three-month, \$1.1 million renewable contract with the opposition research firm Information Management Services, according to a Justice Department filing.

The firm, run by Jeff Klueter, a former researcher for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, did not respond to requests for comment. It advertises itself as doing so-called "oppo," which includes digging into political opponents' past and comments for incriminating or simply embarrassing material.

Qatar did not respond to a request for comment about the lobbying contracts. But it may serve as recognition that while Qatar has had success in speaking with the State Department and the Pentagon, it needs to make inroads to the Trump White House, Ulrichsen said.

Despite hosting a major U.S. military base, Qatar has been a target of Trump over its alleged funding of extremists, something Doha denies. Saudi Arabia enjoys close relations to Trump, as well as his son-in-law Jared Kushner.

In Washington, Saudi Arabia spends millions of dollars on lobbying, including a most-recent push to oppose a law allowing Sept. 11 victims' families to sue the ultraconservative Muslim nation in U.S. courts. Its lobbying firms have been putting out memos on Qatar.

Meanwhile, an organization called the Saudi American Public Relation Affairs Committee launched an

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online campaign called the Qatar Insider highlighting material critical of Doha. The committee also paid \$138,000 to air a 30-second anti-Qatar attack ad on a local Washington television station during "Meet the Press" and the British Open, according to filings to the Federal Communications Commission.

"Our aim is to show the American people that Qatar has been employing a foreign policy that harms its neighbors and contributes to regional instability," said Reem Daffa, the executive director of the committee, known by the acronym SAPRAC.

But while Daffa said SAPRAC does no lobbying, it has registered as a lobbying firm with Congress and tweeted a Qatar attack ad at Trump . It also has not filed paperwork with the Justice Department despite the committee being listed as entirely owned by a Saudi national .

The Foreign Agents Registration Act, first put in place over concerns about Nazi propagandists operating in the U.S. ahead of World War II, requires those working on behalf of other countries or their citizens to file regular reports to the Justice Department.

There are no similar rules in Britain, though the crisis recently could be seen on the streets of London. Pro-Qatar ads appeared on the city's famous black taxis, bearing the message: "Lift the Blockade Against the People of Qatar." Al-Jazeera Arabic even did a story about them.

But whether any of it will sway policy makers remains unclear.

"The prevailing view is that there are no perfect allies," recently wrote Steven A. Cook, a senior fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations. "So whatever money the Gulf countries are spending in Washington, they should know it is not very well spent."

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jongambrellAP> . His work can be found at <http://apne.ws/2galNpz> .

Mainstream Model 3 holds promise _ and peril _ for Tesla

By DEE-ANN DURBIN, AP Auto Writer

FREMONT, Calif. (AP) — For Tesla, everything is riding on the Model 3.

The electric car company's newest vehicle is set to go to its first 30 customers Friday evening. Its \$35,000 starting price — half the cost of Tesla's previous models — and 215-mile range could bring hundreds of thousands of customers into the automaker's fold, taking it from a niche luxury brand to the mainstream.

Those higher sales could finally make Tesla profitable and accelerate its plans for future products like SUVs and pickup trucks.

Or the Model 3 could dash Tesla's dreams.

Potential customers could lose faith if Tesla doesn't meet its aggressive production schedule, or if the cars have quality problems that strain Tesla's small service network. The compact Model 3 may not entice a global market that's increasingly shifting to SUVs, including all-electric SUVs from Audi and others that are going on sale soon.

Limits on the \$7,500 U.S. tax credit for electric cars could also hurt demand. Once an automaker sells 200,000 electric cars in the U.S., the credit phases out. Tesla has already sold more than 126,000 vehicles since 2008, according to estimates by WardsAuto, so not everyone who buys a Model 3 will be eligible.

"There are more reasons to think that it won't be successful than it will," says Karl Brauer, the executive publisher for Cox Automotive, which owns Autotrader and other car buying sites.

The Model 3 has long been part of Palo Alto, California-based Tesla's plans. In 2006 — three years after the company was founded — CEO Elon Musk said Tesla would eventually build "affordably priced family cars" after establishing itself with high-end vehicles like the Model S, which starts at \$69,500. This will be the first time many Tesla workers will be able to afford a Tesla.

Tesla started taking reservations for the Model 3 in March 2016. Within a month, 373,000 customers had put down a \$1,000 refundable deposit. Since then, Tesla has refused to say how many people have reserved a Model 3, but its website says people making reservations now should expect to get their car in the middle of 2018.

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Lisa Gingerich, a Milwaukee-based attorney, reserved a Model 3 within minutes of the order bank's opening. She doesn't know when she'll get to choose from the limited number of options, including color and wheel size, or when her car will arrive. She's borrowing a friend's Chevrolet Volt plug-in hybrid while she waits.

Gingerich thought about getting a Model S, but found it too expensive and flashy for the charities she often works with. She could get an all-electric Chevrolet Bolt, which is the same price as the Model 3 and has more range. But she wants access to Tesla's fast-charging Supercharger stations, which are strategically placed along U.S. highways.

She also wants to support Musk's bold vision. Musk, the billionaire founder of PayPal, also runs rocket maker Space Explorations Technologies Corp. and dabbles in artificial intelligence research and high-speed transportation projects.

"It's kind of like organic food. The more people buy it, the more it becomes accessible for everybody," Gingerich says.

But car-making has proved a challenge to Musk. Both the Model S and the Model X SUV were delayed and then plagued with pesky problems, like doors that don't work and blank screens in their high-tech dashboards.

Tesla's luxury car owners might overlook those problems because they liked the thrill of being early adopters. But mainstream buyers will be less forgiving.

"This will be their primary vehicle, so they will have high expectations of quality and durability and expect everything to work every time," said Sam Abuelsamid, a senior researcher with Navigant Research.

The Model 3 was designed to be much simpler to make than Tesla's previous vehicles. But already it doesn't appear to be sticking to its schedule. Musk said earlier this month Tesla should be making 20,000 Model 3s per month by December; that's half the number of his previous estimates.

Musk aims to make 500,000 vehicles next year at Tesla's Fremont factory, a number that could help Tesla finally make money. The company has only had two profitable quarters since it went public in 2010. But even at that pace, Tesla will remain a small player. Toyota Motor Corp. made more than 10 million vehicles last year.

Abuelsamid said even if it doesn't meet its ambitious targets, Tesla has done more than anyone to promote electric vehicles.

"A decade ago they were a little more than golf carts. Now all of a sudden, EVs are real, practical vehicles that can be used for anything," he said.

Asian shares slide as Wall St tech swoon weighs on sentiment

By **KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian shares slid Friday as investors evaluated the latest raft of corporate earnings, including those from tech stocks, which had a poor day on Wall Street and weighed on overall investor sentiment.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index sank 0.4 percent to 19,994.54 and South Korea's Kospi slumped 1.2 percent to 2,414.08. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 0.5 percent to 26,995.76 while the Shanghai Composite index in mainland China dipped 0.1 percent to 3,245.77. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 tumbled 1.3 percent to 5,709.70. Benchmarks in Southeast Asia were mixed.

EARNINGS SEASON: A swoon in technology stocks on Wall Street was setting the tone for trading in markets more broadly. Twitter plunged 14 percent after it reported no growth in users while Amazon fell 1 percent as profit missed expectations. Investors were also assessing other earnings reports, including by Japanese automaker Nissan Motor Co., which reported trading quarterly profit dipped 1 percent on rising costs and slowing growth in China.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: Orders for long-lasting U.S. factory goods posted their biggest gain in nearly three years last month. The uptick in orders are a good sign for the U.S. economy, though the figures aren't as impressive as they first appear because most of the increase comes from a big jump in aircraft orders, which are typically volatile. Looking ahead, markets are expecting the estimate of U.S. second-quarter GDP growth later Friday followed by the latest China and U.S. monthly purchasing managers' indexes and

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a U.S. jobs report, all of which the Fed will take into account when deciding on interest rates.

MARKET VIEW: "We're just in one of those patches where there's a lot of conflicting signals coming through the markets and we're stuck in the cross currents," said Stephen Innes, senior trader at OANDA. "People are really having a tough time coming to grips and obviously the data points are going to be the key pivot points" for market sentiment, he added.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks had a mixed finish. The Standard & Poor's 500 index retreated from its record set a day earlier, down 0.1 percent to close at 2,475.42. The Nasdaq composite likewise fell from a record, down 0.6 percent to 6,382.19. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 0.4 percent to 21,796.55 to set another all-time high.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude dipped 5 cents to \$48.99 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 29 cents to settle at \$49.04 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, slipped 5 cents to \$51.47 a barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 111.14 Japanese yen from 111.27 yen late Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.1685 from \$1.1679.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 28, the 209th day of 2017. There are 156 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On July 28, 1945, a U.S. Army B-25 bomber flying in heavy fog crashed into the 79th floor of New York's Empire State Building, killing all three people in the plane and 11 people in the building. The U.S. Senate ratified the United Nations Charter by a vote of 89-2.

On this date:

In 1540, King Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, was executed, the same day Henry married his fifth wife, Catherine Howard.

In 1794, Maximilien Robespierre, a leading figure of the French Revolution, was sent to the guillotine.

In 1821, Peru declared its independence from Spain.

In 1914, World War I began as Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

In 1932, federal troops forcibly dispersed the so-called "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans who had gathered in Washington to demand payments they weren't scheduled to receive until 1945.

In 1959, in preparation for statehood, Hawaiians voted to send the first Chinese-American, Republican Hiram L. Fong, to the U.S. Senate and the first Japanese-American, Democrat Daniel K. Inouye, to the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he was increasing the number of American troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 "almost immediately."

In 1976, an earthquake devastated northern China, killing at least 242,000 people, according to an official estimate.

In 1977, Roy Wilkins turned over leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to Benjamin L. Hooks.

In 1984, the Los Angeles Summer Olympics opened.

In 1995, a jury in Union, South Carolina, rejected the death penalty for Susan Smith, sentencing her to life in prison for drowning her two young sons (Smith will be eligible for parole in 2024).

In 2002, nine coal miners trapped in the flooded Quecreek (KYOO'-kreek) Mine in Somerset, Pennsylvania, were rescued after 77 hours underground.

Ten years ago: Vice President Dick Cheney, with a history of heart problems, had surgery to replace an implanted device that was monitoring his heartbeat.

Five years ago: Syria's government launched an offensive to retake rebel-held neighborhoods in the nation's commercial hub of Aleppo. At the London Olympics, Chinese swimmer Ye Shiwen set the first world

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record, winning the women's 400-meter individual medley in 4:28.43. Ryan Lochte of the U.S. won the men's 400-meter individual medley in 4:05.18.

One year ago: Hillary Clinton accepted the Democratic presidential nomination at the party's convention in Philadelphia, where she cast herself as a unifier for divided times as well as an experienced leader steered for a volatile world while aggressively challenging Republican Donald Trump's ability to do the same.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Darryl Hickman is 86. Ballet dancer-choreographer Jacques d'Amboise is 83. Musical conductor Riccardo Muti is 76. Former Senator and NBA Hall of Famer Bill Bradley is 74. "Garfield" creator Jim Davis is 72. Singer Jonathan Edwards is 71. Actress Linda Kelsey is 71. TV producer Dick Ebersol is 70. Actress Sally Struthers is 70. Actress Georgia Engel is 69. Rock musician Simon Kirke (Bad Company) is 68. Rock musician Steve Morse (Deep Purple) is 63. Former CBS anchorman Scott Pelley is 60. Alt-country-rock musician Marc Perlman is 56. Actor Michael Hayden is 54. Actress Lori Loughlin is 53. Jazz musician-producer Delfeayo Marsalis is 52. Former hockey player turned general manager Garth Snow is 48. Actress Elizabeth Berkley is 45. Singer Afroman is 43. Country musician Todd Anderson (Heartland) is 42. Rock singer Jacoby Shaddix (Papa Roach) is 41. Country singer Carly Goodwin is 36. Actor Jon Michael Hill is 32. Actor Dustin Milligan is 32. Actor Nolan Gerard Funk is 31. Rapper Soulja Boy is 27. Pop/rock singer Cher Lloyd (TV: "The X Factor") is 24.

Thought for Today: "All youth is bound to be 'misspent'; there is something in its very nature that makes it so, and that is why all men regret it." — Thomas Wolfe, American author (1900-1938).