

Thurs., Aug. 10, 2017

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Friday, Aug. 11

Senior Menu: Meat loaf, baked potato with sour cream, California blend veggies, fruited Jell-O salad, whole wheat bread.

12

4 p.m.: Girls soccer hosts Garretson

13

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: No Worship.

Official Notices

Groton City (updated 8-8)

Other Notices (updated 8-8)

Groton Area School (updated 8-7)

Brown County (updated 8-7)

Frederick Area School Book (updated 7-26)

Westport Town Book (updated 7-26)

Frederick Town (updated 7-18)

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**



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“TO GET THE FULL
VALUE OF JOY, YOU
MUST HAVE SOMEBODY
TO DIVIDE IT WITH.”

MARK TWAIN



Weisenburger is new SPED at Groton Area Elementary

Carrie Weisenburger is the new special education teacher at the Groton Area Elementary School.

Weisenburger is a 1995 Aberdeen Central graduate and she graduated from Northern State University in 2000 with a degree in elementary and special education and she earned her Masters in Teaching degree from NSU in 2014.

Weisenburger was a special education teacher at the Frederick Area School District from 2000 to 2005, the special education teacher in a Resource Room, Self-Contained Classroom and Autism Facilitator for Aberdeen Public School District from 2005 to 2016, and was the Family Life Educator for Sanford Children's Child Services from 2016-17. She said that she wanted to work in a small school district and that is why she applied for the position at Groton Area.

Her second grade teacher, Mrs. Frederickson, was someone that she looked up too and inspired her to go into teaching. "I have always worked in some capacity with children," Weisenburger said., "so it was just natural for me to go into teaching.

She is married to Jamie Weisenburger who works with Helms and Associates in Aberdeen as a survey crew chief. They have two children, Michael, 11 years old, and Andrew, 7 years old.

In her words, her hobbies, are, "Driving my kids to their sporting events. My family and I are in the Aberdeen Aqua Addicts during the summer and then during the winter my children are part of the Aberdeen Hockey association where I am a coordinator."

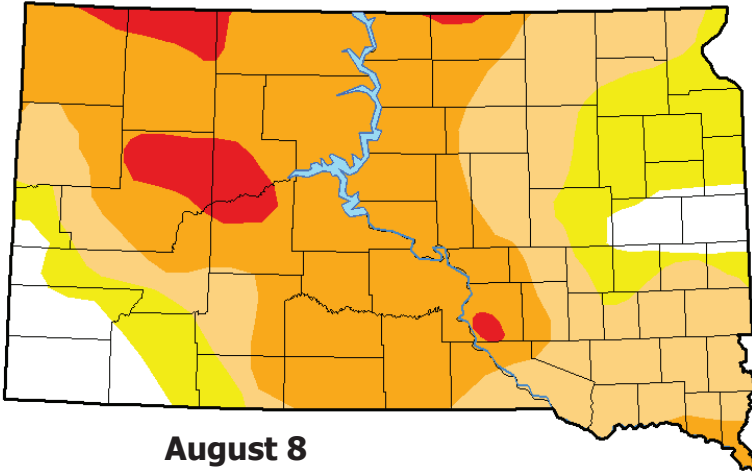


Pictured are Carrie and Jamie Weisenburger with their children Andrew on the left and Michael on the right.

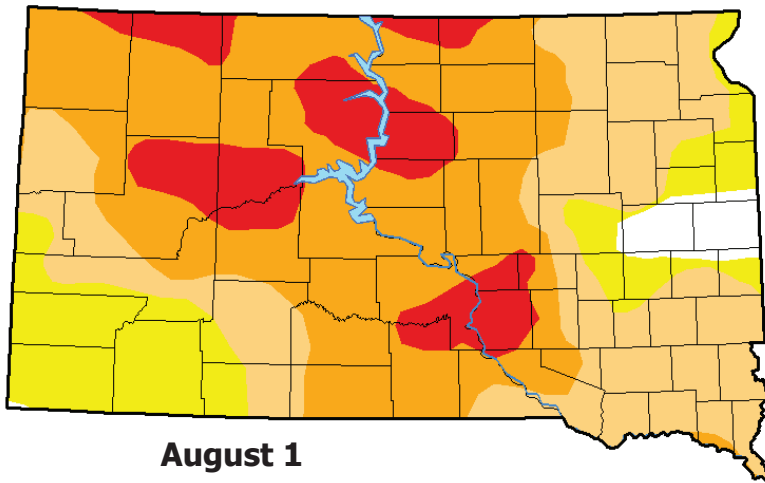
Drought Monitor

Hit-and-miss rainfall throughout the High Plains brought changes in this week's Drought Monitor to every state. In east central North Dakota, abnormally dry conditions (D0) were expanded because of continued rainfall deficits and reports of crops showing signs of drought stress. While other parts of the state received beneficial rainfall, it was typically just enough to "string crops along" and keep drought conditions from further deterioration in these areas. The only exception was a small area of improvement to the extreme drought (D3) conditions in the south central part of the state along the South Dakota border. This area has consistently received above-average rainfall and has 30-day totals in excess of 200 percent of normal.

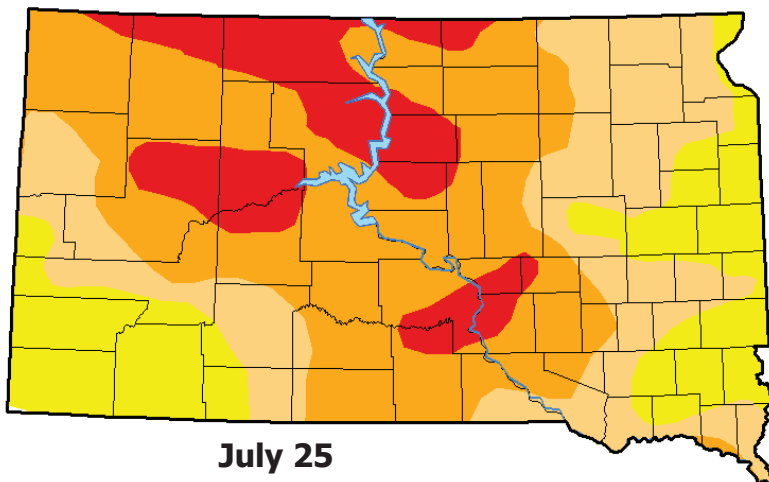
South Dakota also saw a mix of improvements and degradations due to the spotty nature of last week's rains. Locally heavy rainfall brought a full category improvement to an approximate one-to-two county wide band extending from northeast to central South Dakota. Counties along the southwestern edge of South Dakota's drought-afflicted region missed out on the rains and saw an expansion of moderate and severe drought. The tri-state area of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa also saw an expansion of severe drought (D2) conditions as rainfall deficits grew and crops began to see stress. However, Nebraska saw improvements on this week's map. Locally heavy rainfall of 3-plus inches brought improvements to the abnormally dry (D0) areas in the northwest and southeast part of the state and the moderate (D1) and/or severe drought (D2) in the southwest and north central regions. Counties in eastern Kansas received a month's worth of precipitation in one week, erasing abnormally dry conditions. Central Kansas saw an expansion of moderate drought (D1) as continued rainfall deficits dried out soils, lowered streamflow, and stressed vegetation.



August 8



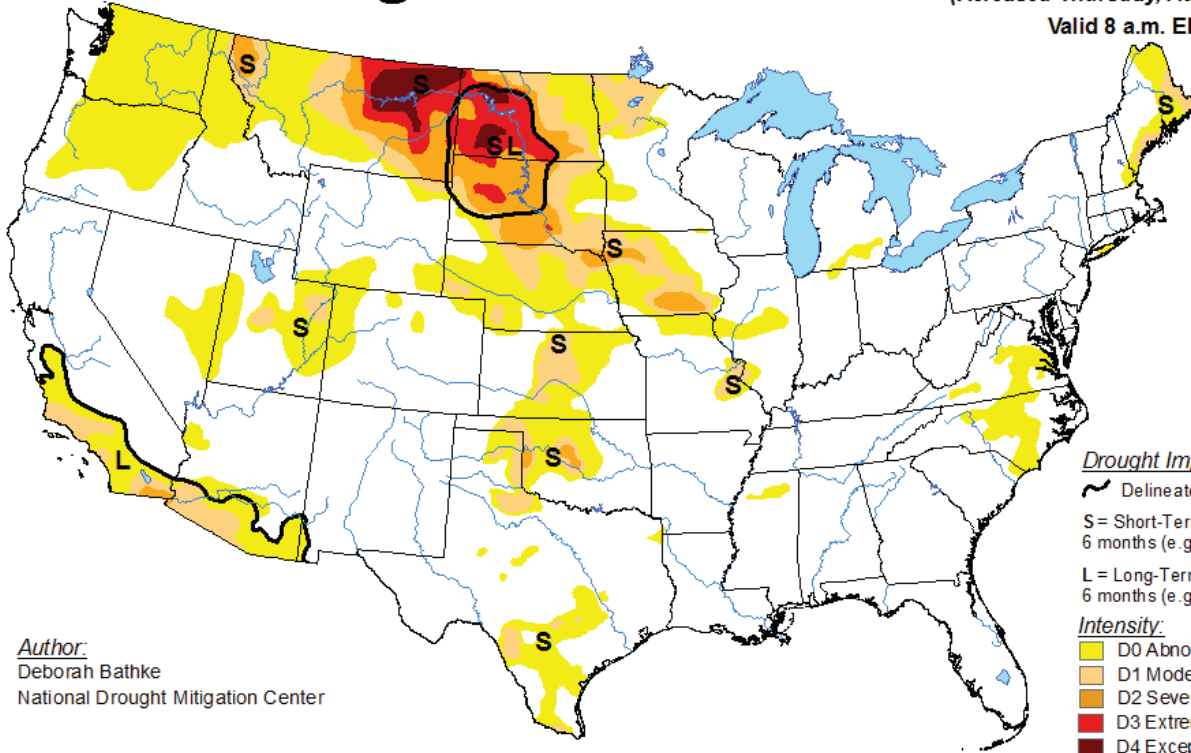
August 1



July 25

U.S. Drought Monitor

August 8, 2017
(Released Thursday, Aug. 10, 2017)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Impact Types:

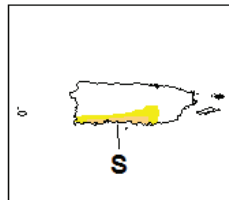
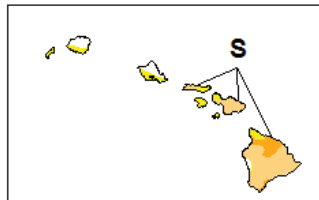
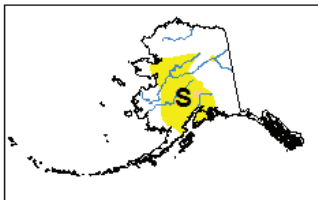
- ~ Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
Deborah Bathke
National Drought Mitigation Center



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Home for Sale



**Comfortable, efficient and great location
2006 home (28X44) with spacious deck and garage.
\$95,000**

Open House August 12th and 13th, 1:00 to 3:00

Contact Bob Walter 605-380-6804.

16 E 4th Ave., Groton

I-29 Rest Area South of Brookings Reopens

BROOKINGS, S.D. – South Dakota Department of Transportation officials say the Ward Road rest area on Interstate 29 south of Brookings reopened today (Aug. 10) at 4 p.m. CDT.

This rest area was closed in May of this year to allow a contractor to make necessary Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades to the facilities as outlined in the "South Dakota Interstate Rest Area Revitalization Plan" developed by the departments of Tourism and Transportation in 2016.

ADA and other upgrades were also completed earlier this summer at the White Lake rest area on Interstate 90.

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Customer Appreciation Days

Aug. 22 through Aug. 24

Specials All Week! Daily Drawings!

Tuesday is Coffee, cookies and cheese samples

Wednesday is bring your pet in for a treat

Thursday is beef sandwiches, beans and drink
served from noon to 7 pm.

Ritchie Waterer rep Curt Weyh available
to speak with on Thursday

Come let us show you **OUR
appreciation for your business**

Concealed Carry Weapon Permits decline

Pierre, SD – Secretary of State's office has seen a decline in concealed carry weapon permits issued. Secretary of State Shantel Krebs stated, "In the last 6 months the Secretary of State's office has noticed a significant decline in pistol permits being processed. We have also heard from Sheriff's offices that they have seen a decrease in applications."

Below are the figures for the past 6 months:

February – 5,833

March – 2,921

April – 2,022

May – 1,939

June – 1,599

July – 1,331

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Today in Weather History

August 11, 1975: A line of thunderstorms moved rapidly across portions of central and eastern South Dakota during the early morning hours. Winds gusted to 70 mph, causing considerable damage to trees. At Canton, in Lincoln County, the winds were estimated as high as 70 mph. In Sioux Falls, the peak wind gust measured 69 mph. Wind damage was also reported in Miller and Ree Heights in Hand County, as well as in Selby and Mobridge in Walworth County.

August 11, 1985: Lightning set off eleven fires in the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation area. Twenty acres of grassland were burned two miles northeast of Bear Creak. About 600 acres of grassland were burned 8 miles southwest of Lantry. About 3,000 acres of grassland burned near Eagle Butte.

August 11, 2011: Severe thunderstorms brought hail up to the size of ping pong balls and damaging winds up to 90 mph to parts of central South Dakota. Jones and Lyman Counties received the brunt of the strong winds with eighty mph winds downing several grain bins along with knocking a few semis off of Interstate-90 near Murdo. The winds also downed some power lines and poles along with destroying a hanger. The two planes in the hanger were damaged at the Murdo Airport. Near Kennebec in Lyman County, eighty mph winds took shingles off the house and also damaged the deck. A barn was also destroyed with a horse being injured. Many tree branches were also downed.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1940: A Category 2 hurricane struck the Georgia and South Carolina coast. A 13-foot storm tide was measured along the South Carolina coast, while over 15 inches of rain fell across northern North Carolina. Significant flooding and landslides struck Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia during the system's slow trek as a weakening tropical storm, and then as an extratropical cyclone, through the Southeast. The landslides which struck North Carolina were considered a once in a century event. Damages relating to the storm totaled \$13 million (1940 USD) and 50 people perished.

1999: An F2 tornado touched down in the metropolitan area of Salt Lake City. The tornado lasted ten minutes and killed one person, injured more than 80 people, and caused more than \$170 million in damages. It was the most destructive tornado in Utah's history, and awakened the entire state's population to the fact that the Beehive State does experience tornadoes.

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)


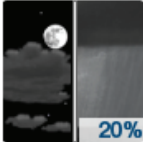

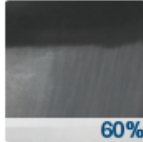



1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

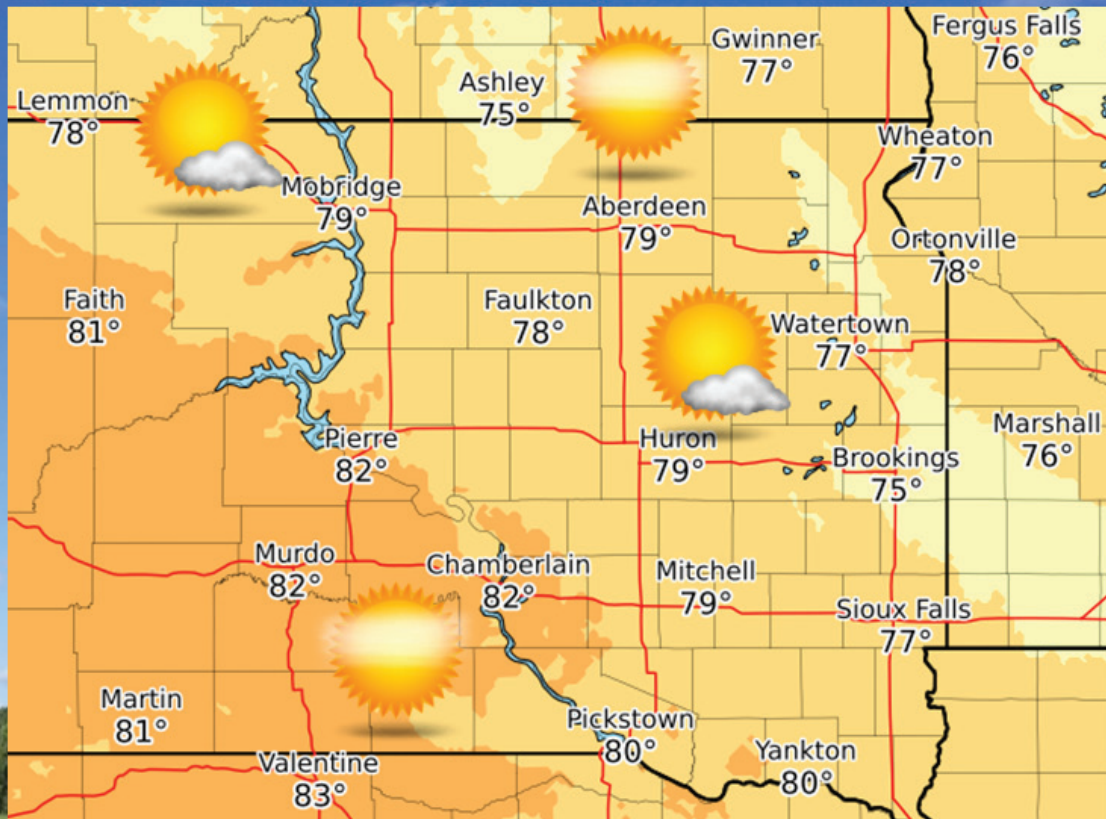
1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin and northern Illinois to New England, with 103 reports of large hail and damaging winds through the day. Thunderstorms in Wisconsin produced hail three inches in diameter near Oshkosh, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Germantown. (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Patched Fog then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance Showers	Showers Likely	Showers Likely	Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers	Mostly Sunny
High: 78 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 73 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 78 °F

Dry Today – Showers Tonight/Storms Saturday



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, South Dakota

www.weather.gov/abr



NWSAberdeen

Created: 8/11/2017 5:07 AM



@NWSAberdeen



Published on: 08/11/2017 at 5:09AM

Dry conditions with pleasant temperatures can be expected today. We will see increasing clouds tonight with light showers moving into the region. Saturday, showers will move into eastern South Dakota, with thunderstorms possible to the west. Rain chances continue into Sunday.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 76.1 F at 5:25 PM

Low Outside Temp: 55.4 F at 3:33 AM

High Gust: 16.0 Mph at 8:26 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 103° in 1965

Record Low: 34° in 1902

Average High: 83°F

Average Low: 58°F

Average Precip in Aug: 0.87

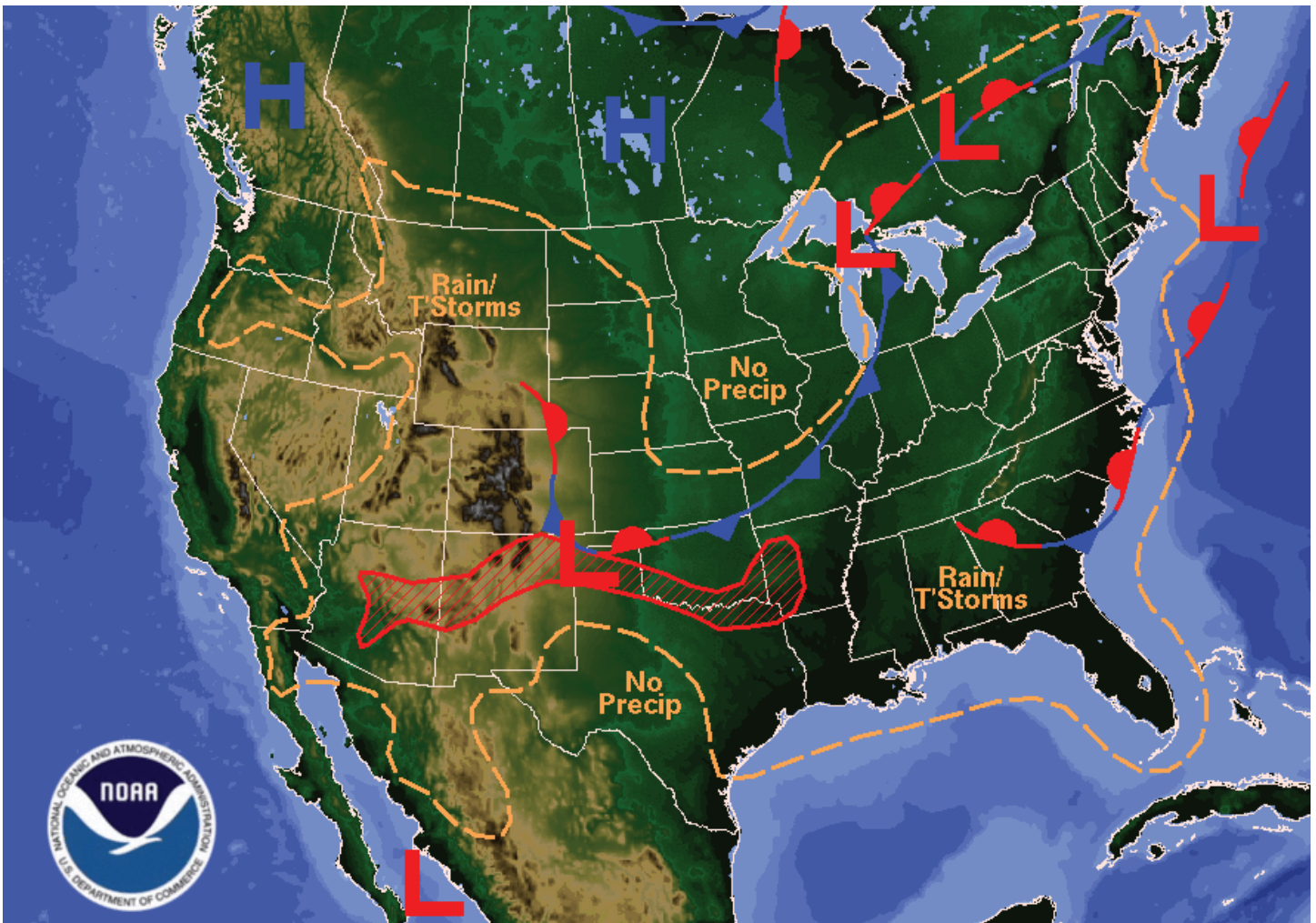
Precip to date in Aug: 0.78

Average Precip to date: 14.73

Precip Year to Date: 8.13

Sunset Tonight: 8:46 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:31 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Aug 11, 2017, issued 4:54 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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A TEN-STRINGED INSTRUMENT

A wealthy gentleman was known for having an extensive violin collection. When Fritz Kreisler heard of the collection he went to see the instruments and meet the person who owned them.

When he saw them he was overcome with joy. Turning to their owner, he pointed at one of the instruments and said, "May I play that one?"

"I'm sorry," said the owner, "but I will not allow you to touch that violin. It is too costly."

Kreisler visited the gentleman once again and made the same request. On this occasion, however, the man relented and gave him permission to play the violin. Gently and lovingly Kreisler removed the violin from the case and played it as only a master could.

With tears in his eyes the owner said, "Take it – it's yours. It must be owned by someone who can play it as you can."

Make "music to Him on the ten-stringed lyre," said David. Every string on that harp was to be used to proclaim the glory of God in worship!

Someone has said that "the body is to be used as that ten-stringed" instrument. We have two ears, two eyes, two feet, two hands, one tongue and one heart. But as the owner had to give permission to Kreisler to play the violin, we too must "offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him." It's only "reasonable," says Paul, in view of all that God has done for us. Reasonable, indeed, but the choice is ours.

Prayer: Lord, may we be an instrument of beauty and wonder in Your hands as we willingly surrender to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 33:2 Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

News from the Associated Press

Fatal crashes at Sturgis Motorcycle Rally rise to 5

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — The number of fatal crashes at this year's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in the Black Hills has risen to five.

The state Department of Public Safety says the crashes have killed people from South Dakota, Texas, Maryland, Utah and Indiana.

There were two fatal accidents in the same time period at last year's rally.

The 10-day rally ends Sunday.

Oglala Sioux official pleads guilty to stealing from tribe

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — An Oglala Sioux district vice chairman has pleaded guilty to embezzling from the tribe. Fifty-seven-year-old Charles Cummings, of Martin, admitted in federal court earlier this month to stealing from the tribe between December 2015 and January 2016.

U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says Cummings has agreed to pay \$2,500 in restitution.

He also faces up to a year in prison and a \$100,000 fine. A sentencing date wasn't immediately scheduled.

Major 'bathroom bill' supporter to focus on 2019 Legislature

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A major supporter of restricting which facilities transgender students could use in South Dakota schools plans to pause its effort at the Capitol and instead wait until the 2019 session when a new, potentially more favorable governor will be in office, a top official said Thursday.

Family Heritage Alliance Action won't bring a "student privacy act" next session in part because of GOP Gov. Dennis Daugaard's past opposition, said Ed Randazzo, the nonprofit's director of political operations.

Daugaard broke with legislative Republicans last year in rejecting the so-called bathroom bill, saying it didn't address "any pressing issue" and that such decisions were best left to local schools. He threatened to veto a similar proposal during the 2017 session before it was ultimately scuttled, averting another bitter fight over the issue.

"We don't see any reason why the governor would have changed his mind since he's already vetoed it once and said he would veto it a second time," Randazzo told The Associated Press.

But Randazzo said he's buoyed because the two top Republicans vying to succeed Daugaard — Attorney General Marty Jackley and U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem — have offered support for the idea. Daugaard can't run again next year because of term limits and leaves office in 2019.

Jackley said in a statement this week that kids shouldn't be in a locker room or bathroom with children of the opposite birth gender. Jackley said that, as governor, he would sign legislation that "protects student privacy and allows local school districts to provide reasonable accommodations."

Noem told the AP that she thinks locker rooms and restrooms should be "girls in girls' restrooms, boys in boys' restrooms," but said she would want to review specific language before committing her support.

"I think that we certainly can work to provide other accommodations for other individuals, but I know it's a big concern in the state of South Dakota," Noem said.

State Sen. Billie Sutton, a Democrat running for governor, voted against the 2016 bill. He didn't immediately return a telephone message requesting comment.

Randazzo said supporters aim to protect the privacy of all students. But critics argue that such measures are discriminatory.

Terri Bruce, a transgender man who fought against the bill last year, said such a law would hurt transgender people and South Dakota's critical tourism industry.

"Whenever it comes up, I'll be there, and so will a lot of other people," Bruce said. "We're not going to

back down from any of this.”

Family Heritage Alliance Action is also charting a course apart from a proposed ballot measure that would require transgender students to use bathrooms corresponding with their sex at birth.

The status of the plan is unclear, and sponsor Jack Heyd hasn't returned telephone messages requesting comment from the AP. Supporters haven't yet completed the steps necessary to start gathering signatures, according to the Secretary of State's office.

The initiative would require people to use the public school bathrooms, locker rooms, shower rooms and changing facilities matching their sex at birth. Schools would be allowed upon request to provide alternative accommodations, such as single-occupancy restrooms.

Randazzo said that the last he'd heard, the initiative was going to be withdrawn. He said it's an issue for the Legislature, not the ballot.

“The reason for that is: I think you invite outside forces, outside money, outside interests ... influencing the laws of South Dakota, and we don't particularly like that,” Randazzo said.

South Dakota teen attacker to get psychiatric treatment

HARRISBURG, S.D. (AP) — A former South Dakota high school student who shot his principal two years ago has pleaded guilty to attempted murder.

Mason Buhl, 18, pleaded Wednesday at the Lincoln County Courthouse in Canton. He'll be committed to a mental health treatment program as long as he meets conditions of his probation, the Argus Leader reported.

“I intend to show with my actions that I wish that never happened, that I'm not my mistakes, that I'm sorry to the community, Lincoln County and everyone involved,” Buhl said.

Judge Brad Zell suspended all 25 years of Buhl's sentence because of his mental health and the belief among attorneys that Buhl can be rehabilitated.

“If you exhibit any, any violent behavior whatsoever, I will be quick from any judgment to remove you from society,” Zell told Buhl.

Authorities said Buhl was 16 when he brought a gun to Harrisburg High School in September 2015 and shot then-Principal Kevin Lein in the right arm. Buhl was allegedly carrying more than 50 bullets that day, but his firearm malfunctioned. Two other school officials tackled and restrained him.

Lein, now a central Iowa school administrator, said he thinks Buhl was a “victim of circumstances” and wished he interacted more with Buhl before the shooting.

“I don't even think, for him, it was necessarily me he was attacking,” Lein said. “He was attacking the fact that he wasn't getting help.”

Lein hopes there's a positive outcome for Buhl, who sat in jail for nearly two years until the verdict. He also said there needs to be more progress in addressing the mental health needs of teenagers.

“Most people are pretty black and white about this. He did something, and he should receive punishment. I'm not that way. I can tell you for sure in that moment Mason wasn't thinking about punishment,” Lein said. “I don't believe in evil. I believe in the good of everybody, and maybe I saw (evil) that day, but I think it was imprinted on him. I don't think he's an evil person.”

Lein said he plans to visit Buhl in prison after his sentencing to find out what he can do to help the teen “get a good future.”

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

Refuge center for trafficking victims opens in South Dakota

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A refuge center for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence has opened in central South Dakota.

The Pathfinder Center is a long-term shelter for women and children that officially opened its doors last week. The specific city and location are being withheld from the public for the women's safety, the Daily

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Republic reported .

Executive Director Lisa Heth said the center is the first of its kind in the state, with 13 bedrooms uniquely decorated to meet women's various needs.

"These women should come into these rooms and feel the love that went into decorating them," Heth said of the rooms, which were decorated by sponsors. "To know that someone out there cares about them."

Heth is also the executive director of Wiconi Wawokiya, a nonprofit victim services organization on the Crow Creek Reservation. She has been working with victims of trafficking and domestic violence for 25 years, and initially thought of the idea to open a center in 2015.

In addition to housing, the center also will provide group activities, GED classes and a dedicated room for law enforcement interviews if the victims choose to report the trafficking.

Women who are accepted into the center must commit to staying a minimum of six months with the ideal stay being 12 to 18 months. When they're ready to leave the center, women will be provided a resource book that offers information on churches or organizations that can assist victims with transitioning back to life outside the facility.

"We are trying to ensure these women can be successful outside the center," Heth said.

Heth said she intends to work with the state's more than 30 domestic violence shelters to provide a list of referrals for potential acceptance into her center.

"This should be where these women can find their place in life," she said.

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

Treasurer to have unclaimed property booth at county fair

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — The State Treasurer's office is setting up a booth at the Brown County Fair to give unclaimed property back to its rightful owners.

The State Treasurer's Unclaimed Property Division will open the booth Tuesday.

Unclaimed property refers to accounts in financial institutions, businesses and government agencies that have had no activity for three years or longer.

The division has more than \$379 million in unclaimed funds. The state holds the money until it can be returned to the rightful owners.

Treasurer Rich Sattgast says the office's goal is to put money back into South Dakotans' hands. He says that money ultimately makes its way into the economy, which is good for the state.

Report shows South Dakota crops feeling effects of drought

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The latest crop production report from the federal Agriculture Department indicates drought is hampering crop production in South Dakota.

The state's winter wheat crop is forecast at 24.7 million bushels, down 61 percent from last year. The spring wheat crop is projected to be down 36 percent, to 30.1 million bushels.

The soybean crop is forecast to be down 14 percent to 220 million bushels, and the corn crop down 19 percent to 672 million bushels.

Other projected drops are sorghum, down 10 percent, alfalfa hay, down 13 percent and oats, down 30 percent.

Ellsworth Air Force Base has a new commander

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Ellsworth Air Force Base has a new commander.

Col. John Edwards comes from the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida, where he served as the commander for the 439th Training Group. He replaces Colonel Gentry Boswell, who's moving to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.

Edwards says he's ready for the challenge of commanding the largest B-1 combat wing in the United

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States Air Force. He says upcoming challenges, both in the Asian Pacific as well as in the Middle East, will be critical fights for the country.

Information from: KOTA-TV, <http://www.kotatv.com>

Jet lands safely in western Nebraska after losing an engine

SCOTTSBLUFF, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say a passenger jet has landed safely in western Nebraska after losing power in one of its two engines on a flight to South Dakota.

Aerodynamics Inc. says Flight 217 carrying 46 passengers and three crew members set down at Western Nebraska Regional Airport in Scottsbluff around 6:40 p.m. Wednesday, 70 minutes after its Denver takeoff. The Embraer 145 aircraft was headed for Pierre and then Watertown, South Dakota.

Aerodynamics Chief Operating Officer Mickey Bowman said Thursday that all the passengers used ground transportation to continue their journeys. He says the plane remains at the Scottsbluff airport for repairs.

Aerodynamics is based in Kennesaw, Georgia. Bowman says the flight was operating under an affiliation with Great Lakes Airlines.

Overall drought conditions improve in South Dakota over week

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Overall drought conditions have improved in South Dakota, though spotty rain over the past week led to improvements in some areas and worsening conditions in others.

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor map shows 77 percent of the state in some stage of drought, down from 82 percent last week.

The Drought Monitor says there was improvement in a one-to-two-county-wide band from northeast to central South Dakota. However, counties along the southwestern edge of South Dakota's drought-afflicted region missed out on the rains and saw an expansion of moderate and severe drought.

There are still no areas of exceptional drought in the state, as there are in neighboring North Dakota.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, Aug. 8

Suicide: The act of reaching out

There may be no issue that is either more painful or more stigmatizing than suicide. It creates — and leaves behind — nothing but victims, and it often festers in silence.

Suicide is a growing problem, touching practically every community. And yet, it remains a taboo issue, so much so that most media outlets still do not report on these cases out of concern of inspiring someone else to commit a similar, or copycat, act.

But in the Yankton area, at least, efforts have been made to confront the issue head-on. Two groups — the Anchoring to Hope Paul Taggart Foundation for Suicide Awareness and Aftercare, and Bridging Yankton, Pathways to Hope, Help & Healing — have formed in the last year or so to deal with suicide issues and to reach out to anyone anywhere who might be contemplating it. The groups also offer support to the survivors, providing help to light the path forward.

Yes, there are two different groups, who in recent weeks have held their own fundraising events. For whatever reasons, they function separately toward a common goal. That may appear perplexing to some, but that's the reality of the situation.

But, in a way, it doesn't even matter.

The real point is, there are more options available — more people to reach out to — if you are contemplating suicide.

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We can't pretend to understand the motives someone may have for taking their own life. No one who hasn't been there can really grasp it fully. We can only surmise that it's a lonely, hurting place — a state of mind so fragile and hopeless that ending it all looms at some distorted point as a preferable solution. In the process, all else — including the lasting impact the act has on friends and loved ones — is rendered secondary, and one's own death actually comes to look like a solution.

It may be lonely, but a suicide victim is not alone. South Dakota has the 14th highest rate of suicides in the country, according to the group South Dakota Suicide Prevention. Two counties rank among the top 1 percent in the nation in the category. Suicide is also the second leading cause of death for teens and young adults in this state.

And what's arguably the most painful part of this issue is that it is completely avoidable. If people could be reached, if help were sought, if the tools were there to offer intervention and assistance .

Suicide is a plague with too many ifs and not enough answers.

At least now, there are two more groups in Yankton working to reach potential suicides before they make a fateful, fatal decision. These groups can be the eyes and ears of the community. They can sponsor programs that can reach people and allow them to help themselves.

And that's the great puzzle in all this. Ultimately, the people who need to be reached must want to be reached; they must be willing to ask for help and to want to live.

As we said, it's a difficult issue to understand, and in a way, even people who battle suicidal thoughts probably don't completely understand it either.

But they need to know there is help and hope available.

Please reach out to one of these groups, or to someone — anyone — who can offer assistance.

The creation of these two groups should tell you the one thing you need to know: You're not alone in your struggle. And there are those who dearly want to help.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Aug. 7

Hisses and cheers

HISSES to a crumbling building near Mitchell's Main Street.

City officials have closed a portion of Third Avenue near Main Street due to a 109-year-old structure's potentially unsafe nature.

A large hole in the building has left the structure's interior exposed while its owner attempts to repair it. While it's annoying enough that an often-used avenue is closed and the demolition is embarrassing cosmetically, the situation bothers us most because it shouldn't take something this urgent to put action in motion.

Main Street businesses and building owners should want to spruce up the downtown on their own accord. We need a successful downtown to be a strong community.

We applaud city officials for ensuring a solution is found for this problem and hope other Mitchell building owners take notice.

CHEERS to these outstandingly comfortable temperatures.

After what seemed to be a never-ending hot, dry July, we're seeing some great August weather that's unseasonably cool.

We'll take the highs in the mid-70s with spotty rains to enjoy evening campfires and postseason baseball. It's a great changeup from what we've been battling all summer.

The long-term forecast shows this weather is here to stay for a while, which also helps alleviate some of the worries of the severe drought that much of South Dakota remains in.

August typically brings heat, so let's enjoy this weather while it lasts.

HISSES to the news that finalized the closing of a longtime rural restaurant.

The Tyndall Dairy Queen auctioned off its remaining equipment recently. While it was a seasonal business, we're sad to see the franchise close its doors as it is one fewer option for local residents to utilize.

CHEERS to the group in Mount Vernon working to preserve the town's history.

The newly formed Mount Vernon Historical Society is looking to establish a permanent museum to help

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gather memorabilia such as news and photos.

We applaud this group for its efforts as each town deserves to have its story told. Because of the work from this historical society, Mount Vernon residents will have that opportunity forever.

Capital Journal, Pierre, Aug. 9

County governments need some financial help

Nobody likes paying taxes.

And, here in South Dakota, we've done a pretty darn good job of making sure that we pay as little as possible into the public coffers. It's a well-earned point of pride among South Dakotans that we don't pay any state income tax. Our politicians continually tout the state's balanced budget that routinely ends its fiscal years with surpluses, even, as was the case this year, when tax revenue comes in below projections.

To go along with our distaste for taxes is, quite responsibly, an aversion to spending public money. Should the spectre of a tax hike rear its ugly head anywhere in our state, there's a contingent of voters that can always be counted on to show up to fight tooth and nail against any new school, municipal swimming pool, or pay raise for their own employees.

Our state legislature has been particularly adept at ensuring that county governments are hamstrung when it comes to finding the money needed to pay for the things for which they're legally mandated to pay. Among those mandates are criminal prosecution, criminal detention and roads.

There are consequences to our state government's zeal to ensure that property owners aren't overly burdened with the costs of maintaining the essential infrastructure upon which they rely.

The signs of strain have been showing for several years now at the county level. In Hughes County, for example, money hasn't been available to help programs such as 4-H. There's barely enough money to make all the needed road repairs. And, on Monday, Hughes County Sheriff Mike Leidholt expressed his concerns about being underpaid.

The jail that Leidholt oversees as sheriff is the third largest in the state and actually generates about \$3 million in revenue for the county, thanks to federal detainees and the holding of inmates for other counties. Leidholt oversees more than 50 employees between the jail and his deputies.

Still, Leidholt is paid less than the county's highway superintendent, who oversees about 12 people. That's why, Leidholt said, he asked for a pay raise in his latest budget request.

The problem is that there's not enough money to go around. Largely, this is because counties are restricted by state law from monkeying with their main source of revenue — property taxes. This on its surface seems like a small-government idea. It's not. In fact, it encourages big government by forcing counties to use more state and federal dollars to make their ends meet.

As the cost of law enforcement and road repairs continue to rise, counties will find themselves falling further and further behind on their revenues. South Dakota needs to reevaluate how it treats its county governments and what they're allowed to do to raise money. This does not need to result in an overall tax increase but counties need to be able to raise the money they need to fund the essential services upon which we all rely.

Officials find missing man's body at swimming spot

ROCKERVILLE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say the body of a 23-year-old man who was reported missing has been found at a popular swimming spot near Rockerville.

Officials found Benjamin Authier dead Wednesday in the water at Hippie Hole. The Rapid City Journal reports that Authier was a chemical engineering major at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

Authier was reported missing Tuesday evening, and his car was found at a parking spot used by visitors of the swimming spot. Authorities searched until it was too dark, and officials found Authier after resuming Wednesday morning.

Tony Harrison is patrol division captain for the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. He tells the newspaper that it appears Authier was alone and came to the area to snorkel or swim.

Harrison says there weren't signs of foul play, but authorities are investigating.

Scientists on research vessel spot rare whale in Bering Sea

By DAN JOLING, Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Federal researchers studying critically endangered North Pacific right whales sometimes go years without finding their subjects. Over the weekend they got lucky.

A research vessel in the Bering Sea photographed two of the animals Sunday and obtained a biopsy sample from one, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Thursday.

NOAA Fisheries research biologist Jessica Crance was on board the Yushin Maru 2, when the whales were spotted. The ship is part of the Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research program, a collaborative effort headed by the International Whaling Commission. Using an acoustic recorder, and between sounds of killer whales and walrus, Crance picked up faint calls of a right whale east of Bristol Bay, Alaska.

The sounds came from an estimated 10 to 32 miles (16 to 51 kilometers) away and the ship headed west, she said in a blog entry. After four and a half hours, despite the presence of minke and humpback whales, and only a few calls from the right whales, the rare animals were spotted.

The two right whales are part of the eastern stock that number just 30 to 50 whales, said Phillip Clapham, head of the cetacean program at NOAA's Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle.

A French whaling ship recorded the first kill in 1835 and reported seeing "millions" of others. That claim was exaggerated but it drew hundreds of other whalers to the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea, Clapham said.

Within 14 years, Clapham said, the overharvest of the slow, buoyant animals sent many whalers through the Bering Strait to hunt bowhead whales instead.

A modest comeback of right whales in the 20th Century was derailed when Soviet whalers in the 1960s ignored critically low numbers and illegally killed eastern stock right whales in the Gulf of Alaska, Clapham said.

The right whale sampled Sunday had been seen eight times before, Clapham said. The last time was a decade ago.

A biopsy sample, he said, can positively identify the animal, reveal its gender, indicate whether it's pregnant and reveal information on diet and reproductive hormones.

Studying North Pacific right whales is complicated by the expense of reaching their habitat in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea. Critical data remains unknown, including their winter habits and many of their preferred summer feeding areas for copepods, a tiny crustacean plankton.

"We don't know what habitats continue to be important to the species," Clapham said.

The biggest threats to the animals are fishing gear entanglements and ship strikes, Clapham said.

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. TRUMP'S LATEST WARNING TO NORTH KOREA

The president tweeted 'Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely.'

2. TRUMP 'VERY DISAPPOINTED' IN MCCONNELL

The president's scathing criticism of the Senate majority leader over stalled legislation may work against the Republican agenda. AP's Julie Bykowicz and Erica Werner report.

3. MOST FAVOR FIXING, NOT SCRAPPING, 'OBAMACARE'

A new poll shows that people want Trump and congressional Republicans to try making the Obama health care law more effective and stop trying to scuttle it.

4. 'IT WAS A DEFINITE GRAB. A VERY LONG GRAB'

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Four years after Taylor Swift accused a radio station DJ of groping her before a concert in Denver, the pop superstar tells her story on the witness stand, calling the encounter shocking.

5. DECADES LATER, AN ACT OF RECONCILIATION

A U.S. Marine who served in the Pacific during World War II is traveling to a remote Japanese village to return a flag he took from the body of a dead enemy soldier 73 years ago.

6. CNN CUTS TIES WITH CONSERVATIVE COMMENTATOR

The break with Jeffrey Lord, an indefatigable on-air Trump supporter, comes after he tweeted a Nazi salute at a critic.

7. WHY GOOGLE GATHERING WAS CALLED OFF

The company's CEO cancels an internal town hall meant to address gender discrimination after employee questions for management began to leak online from the company's internal messaging service.

8. FUND LAUNCHED TO HELP BIG CATS REBOUND

Lions are threatened across Africa. The situation is particularly dire in the country's west, where only about 400 lions remain out of the total 20,000 worldwide.

9. WHICH COLLECTIBLES MUSICIAN CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF

Metallica lead guitarist Kirk Hammett has amassed a vast collection of classic horror and sci-fi movie posters that are on display at a Massachusetts museum.

10. JORDAN SPIETH REBOUNDS FROM ROCKY START

The golfer, chasing the career Grand Slam, bogies three of the first six holes but settles down to score a respectable 72 in the opening round of the PGA Championship.

Trump warns US 'locked and loaded' as North readies missiles

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — President Donald Trump tweeted that military solutions are "locked and loaded" as officials said Friday they plan to move ahead with large-scale U.S.-South Korea exercises later this month that North Korea, now finalizing plans to launch a salvo of missiles toward Guam, claims are a rehearsal for war.

The exercises are an annual event, but come as Pyongyang says it is readying a plan to fire off four Hwasong-12 missiles toward the tiny island, which is U.S. territory and major military hub. The plan would be sent to leader Kim Jong Un for approval just before or as the U.S.-South Korea drills begin.

Called Ulchi-Freedom Guardian, the exercises are expected to run from Aug. 21-31 and involve tens of thousands of American and South Korean troops on the ground and in the sea and air. Washington and Seoul say the exercises are defensive in nature and crucial to maintaining a deterrent against North Korean aggression.

The exercises were scheduled well before tensions began to rise over Trump's increasingly fiery rhetoric and North Korea's announcement of the missile plan, which if carried out would be its most provocative launch yet. Along with a bigger set of maneuvers held every spring, the exercises are routinely met by strong condemnation and threats of countermeasures from North Korea.

Trump tweeted Friday: "Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely. Hopefully Kim Jong Un will find another path!"

While tensions typically spike around the dates of the exercises — North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test just days after last year's maneuvers — the situation generally calms afterward as the North needs to focus on its farms and the approach of the fall harvest.

The heightened military activity on the peninsula this time is a concern because it could increase the possibility of a mishap or an overreaction of some sort by either side that could spin into a more serious escalation. North Korea has been increasingly sensitive to the exercises lately because they reportedly include training for "decapitation strikes" to kill Kim Jong Un and his top lieutenants.

Pyongyang is also switching its propaganda machine into high gear by bringing in a large number of foreign journalists to ensure it gets global attention for an event next week in honor of its ruling Kim fam-

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ily on Mount Paektu, a dormant volcano that straddles the Chinese border and is something of a spiritual home for the regime.

Defense officials in Seoul confirmed Friday that the exercises are expected to begin without any delays, but refused to provide further details. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, Ulchi-Freedom Guardian involves about 40,000 troops, along with civilian South Korean government personnel who train their civil defense responses.

The possibility of escalation is made even more acute by the lack of any means of official communication across the Demilitarized Zone, though there has been no easing of the barrage of inflammatory comments in the U.S. and the North since new sanctions against North Korea were announced last week.

Keeping up his tough talk from his New Jersey golf resort where he is on a working vacation, Trump warned Kim Jong Un's government to "get their act together" or face extraordinary trouble, and suggested his earlier threat to unleash "fire and fury" on North Korea was too mild.

Trump declined to say whether the U.S. is considering a pre-emptive military strike as he spoke to reporters before a briefing with his top national security advisers.

The president insisted the North had been "getting away with a tragedy that can't be allowed."

"North Korea better get their act together, or they are going to be in trouble like few nations have ever been in trouble," Trump said, flanked by Vice President Mike Pence. Accusing his predecessors of insufficient action, Trump said it was time somebody stood up to Kim Jong Un.

Though tensions have been building for months amid new missile tests by the North, including the launch of its first intercontinental ballistic missile, the pace has intensified since the U.N. Security Council on Saturday passed sweeping new sanctions Trump had requested.

According to its reported plan, North Korea would fire four Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missiles over Japan and into waters around Guam, home to about 7,000 troops and 160,000 people.

North Korea said its military would finalize the plan by mid-August, then wait for Kim's order. U.S. allies Japan and South Korea quickly vowed a strong reaction if the North were to follow through.

Trump echoed that threat Thursday, insisting if North Korea took any steps to attack Guam, its leaders would have reason to be nervous.

"Things will happen to them like they never thought possible, OK?" Trump said. He did not specify what they might be.

Associated Press writers Jonathan LeMire in Bedminster, New Jersey, and Josh Lederman and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

What does North Korea really want? Its playbook offers clues

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Threatening to fire a volley of missiles toward a major U.S. military hub — and the home to 160,000 American civilians — may seem like a pretty bad move for a country that is seriously outgunned and has an awful lot to lose.

But pushing the envelope, or just threatening to do so, is what North Korea does best.

By announcing a plan to send four "Hwasong-12" intermediate range missiles over Japan and into waters near the Pacific island of Guam, Pyongyang has significantly upped the ante despite threats from U.S. President Donald Trump.

The North has made it clear Kim Jong Un still has to sign off on the plan and give the execution order. But it says it could be ready to go within days — or just before the U.S. and South Korea are set to begin their annual Ulchi-Freedom Guardian military maneuvers.

So what, ultimately, is Pyongyang trying to accomplish?

A lot of things, actually.

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FIRST, BUILD UP THE CRED

North Korea sees the United States as an existential threat.

It knows that if it is going to be taken seriously, it needs to have a credible military deterrent. Its strategy for years, if not decades, has been to attain that by building long-range missiles that can carry nuclear warheads to targets on the U.S. mainland. It's not good enough just to claim to have that capability — it must be demonstrated.

Successful tests provide the data needed to make technical advances and valuable training for ground troops. They also dispel doubts about whether those advances are being made.

Provocative testing or training also is a way of gauging where Washington's red lines are. That can be used to decide when to push more aggressively or when to ease off.

SECOND, CLAIM A NEW NORM

North Korea has said many times it has no intention of giving up its nuclear weapons. It doesn't want to use them as a bargaining chip — or in a war it could not possibly survive. It wants them as a status-booster.

Pyongyang wants to force the United States to accept that it is a nuclear power, as it did with Pakistan and India, and treat it with commensurate respect. But while there is little remaining doubt about North Korea's nuclear capabilities, the U.S. has not accepted it as a nuclear power and is not likely to do so any time soon.

Pyongyang continues to push Washington's buttons in hopes of changing that attitude.

THIRD, USE THE LEVERAGE

Though Trump is taking a very hard-line approach, at least in his rhetoric, growing concerns over Kim Jong Un's accelerated missile launches have added strength to the camp in the United States calling for a diplomatic resolution. That would likely involve some "carrots" — compromises that would be attractive in North Korea's eyes. This is Pyongyang's potential payoff.

Just forcing the U.S. to talk would in itself be a success for North Korea. Especially if it gives the appearance of talks between equals.

Of course, pushing the envelope with moves like the potential missile volley toward Guam has a lot of risks. One or more of the launches could fail. And if a missile actually hit the island, the consequences could be catastrophic. But having merely floated the idea sets a sort of precedent the North can use as a new baseline. And if it goes through with the launch and there are no consequences, it can use that too.

FINALLY, PUSH FOR WHAT YOU REALLY WANT

What North Korea wants most is security. Its regime wants to survive.

It wants assurances it won't be attacked, or suffocated by economic sanctions.

It wants a peace treaty formally replacing the armistice that ended the shooting war phase of the 1950-1953 Korean War. Getting any of those things would require a sea change in relations with not only Washington, but also Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo and possibly Moscow.

The good news, for everyone involved, is that North Korea isn't likely to get what it really wants by starting another war.

But the bad news is that it's not at all clear the North's actions will help it achieve its goals. Indeed, they've helped create a risky situation that could spiral into something nobody wants.

Eric Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Twitter at [EricTalmadge](#) or on Instagram at [@erictalmadge](#).

Spieth hopes to cut into deficit at PGA Championship

By **DOUG FERGUSON, AP Golf Writer**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Jordan Spieth wasn't overly worried about being five shots behind after one round of the PGA Championship. He just wants to make sure the deficit is a little smaller after the next round.

Spieth, who needs this major to complete the career Grand Slam, will know the target by the time he tees off at Quail Hollow on Friday afternoon.

Kevin Kisner, who shared the 18-hole lead at 4-under 67 with Thorbjorn Olesen, was among the early starters on another calm morning with a few gathering clouds.

Rory McIlroy let a good round get away from him and shot 72, the same score as Spieth. McIlroy also plays Friday morning and is hopeful the slightly smoother greens will allow him to make more putts.

EU: 17 nations get tainted eggs, products in growing scandal

BRUSSELS (AP) — EU officials say 15 European Union members plus China and Switzerland have reported receiving contaminated eggs or egg products in a growing food scandal.

Several producers in the Netherlands and Belgium are under investigation after eggs there were found to have been treated with a product containing pesticide Fipronil. EU trade and agriculture spokesman Daniel Rosario said Friday that farms have also been blocked in France and Germany.

He named 13 other countries that have received products from affected farms.

The semi-autonomous Chinese territory of Hong Kong was the only non-European place mentioned. Rosario said the others are Sweden, Britain, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Denmark and non-EU member Switzerland.

[—]This story has been corrected to show that Hong Kong is a semi-autonomous Chinese territory, not a country.

Trump-McConnell feud does little to jumpstart stalled agenda

By **JULIE BYKOWICZ and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has spent much of the week feuding with his top Senate partner, suggesting that Majority Leader Mitch McConnell might have to rethink his future if he doesn't deliver on the president's agenda of health care, taxes and infrastructure.

Trump on Thursday called McConnell's failure to pass an "Obamacare" repeal last month "a disgrace." Asked if McConnell should consider stepping aside or retiring, an outcome some conservatives are openly clamoring for, the president's response was far from a vote of confidence.

"Well, I tell you what, if he doesn't get repeal-and-replace done and if he doesn't get taxes done, meaning cuts and reform, and if he doesn't get a very easy one to get done, infrastructure, if he doesn't get them done, then you can ask me that question," the president told reporters in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he is in the midst of a 17-day break from Washington.

Trump later added that he is "very disappointed in Mitch" but would be the first to praise him if legislation begins moving, once again presenting himself as a passive observer in the process rather than a dealmaker with the presidential pulpit.

There was no immediate response from McConnell's office.

A sitting president openly turning on a Senate majority leader of his own party in such a fashion is practically unheard of — yet another norm destroyed since Trump's rise on the political scene. And while the fighting words might elate Trump's core supporters, they can only hurt broader Republican efforts to move major legislation this fall on taxes and spending while preparing for congressional elections next year against energized Democrats who are rallying to retake the House. Republicans control both chambers, but the Trump factor in many races remains a mystery.

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Trump's comments came after he spent two days slamming McConnell on Twitter, writing Thursday morning that after "screaming" about repealing and replacing Obamacare for seven years, McConnell "couldn't get it done." Several hours later, the president's tone took a motivational turn as he exhorted McConnell to "get back to work" and pass bills. "You can do it!"

The presidential megaphone amplified the McConnell-bashing that's been snaking through conservative media: Breitbart News, Fox News' Sean Hannity and radio host Rush Limbaugh are among those who have vilified the leader after the Senate's failure on health care. They represent a segment of the Republican electorate, including some major donors, who are out to punish what they see as a "do-nothing Congress" that has hampered the president's work.

McConnell is "a coward who leads from behind," "spineless," and a lifelong "political animal" of the sort Trump wants to eject from Washington, said Doug Deason, a major donor based in Texas. Deason said he decided months ago not to give money to any Republicans up for re-election next year unless they can pass Trump's priorities.

Trump and his supporters love such political brawls, and the McConnell tussle potentially shores up the president's base at a time when it is showing signs of weakening support. After all, he is picking on a part of government with lower approval ratings. But other Republicans saw Trump's moves as counterproductive.

Even Newt Gingrich, a Trump backer and informal adviser who formerly served as speaker of the House, criticized the dispute.

"You saw Mitch McConnell say something, you saw Trump say something, when it's obviously better for them to learn not to do that," Gingrich said. "They have to work together. Governing is a team sport."

After the failure on health care, McConnell and other Republican leaders, including top White House economic officials, are determined to move on to overhauling the tax code with the hope of passing cuts by the end of the year — a daunting challenge. McConnell has made clear he has little interest in revisiting the health care fight.

Trump, 71, and McConnell, 75, have never been easy allies, even though the senator's wife, Elaine Chao, is the president's transportation secretary. McConnell only met Trump for the first time in 2013, when he made a pilgrimage to Trump Tower in New York to ask the businessman for campaign money.

But McConnell quickly boarded the Trump train once the mogul secured the GOP nomination, and unlike House Speaker Paul Ryan and others, he never wavered. He's paid numerous visits to the White House and traveled with Trump in March to Louisville. That Trump rally predated all of Congress' attempts to redo health care, and the president urged the crowd to "be nice" to McConnell.

Fast forward to August, with the Senate on recess after the collapse of the GOP health care bill.

McConnell touched a nerve by telling an audience in his home state that Trump had "not been in this line of work before" and had "excessive expectations about how quickly things happen in the democratic process."

What followed was a "tense" phone call between the two men, according to a person familiar with the exchange but not authorized to speak publicly about a private discussion, and then a presidential Twitter screed.

Brent Bozell, a longtime McConnell detractor and president of the conservative social media group ForAmerica, said the Senate leader had made a ridiculous argument that will haunt him.

"By calling President Trump a political neophyte, McConnell is saying that Trump doesn't understand that Congress doesn't keep its promises," Bozell said. "This is exactly why Trump won — to shake up Washington, and that includes Republicans."

And yet, in opening a door he might want to try to shove McConnell out of, Trump once again demonstrated his naivete in Washington's ways. A Senate majority leader is elected by members of his own conference, and McConnell has plenty of support within his, regardless of anything Trump may say about it.

Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, a senior lawmaker and vocal Trump backer, said on Twitter that McConnell "has been the best leader we've had in my time in the Senate, through very tough challenges. I fully support him."

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire in Bedminster, New Jersey, and Bob Christie in Phoenix contributed to this report.

School choice program raises questions about accountability

By SALLY HO, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — More than a third of U.S. states have created school voucher programs that bypass thorny constitutional and political issues by turning them over to nonprofits that rely primarily on businesses to fund them. But the programs are raising questions about transparency and accountability at a time when supporters are urging that they be expanded into a federal program.

Unlike traditional school vouchers, which are directly funded by the states or in the case of Washington, D.C., the federal government, these programs don't use any public money. Instead, those who contribute to the voucher program get tax credits. Seventeen states now have the so-called tax-credit scholarships.

Both President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos have promoted the scholarships as a way to give parents greater choice in deciding where their children will go to school. Supporters are pushing the administration to launch a federal program extending the tax credit scholarships nationwide.

Asked whether such a proposal might be included as part of a tax overhaul, DeVos said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press: "It's certainly part of our discussion."

Depending on who you ask, the programs are either another avenue for school choice drawing on the generosity of taxpayers, or a workaround to existing bans on giving public money to religious organizations — in this case schools — with a set-up that's ripe for abuse. It's hard to know who's right, given that the states purposefully limit their fingerprints on their own programs.

For Mayra Puentes of Las Vegas, it was simply a way to get her children a better education. Her son, she said, was struggling in public school, in a state that is ranked at or near the bottom of national lists on the quality of public education.

Puentes said would not have been able to afford the combined \$22,000 tuition for her three children at Mountain View Christian Schools.

In Nevada, scholarships are capped annually at about \$7,700 per child. They can be used at 86 private schools, not all of them accredited.

How the program works:

Nonprofits solicit contributions from businesses and others. The organizations distribute the funds to families that apply. They keep 5 percent to 10 percent of the donations for administrative costs.

Contributors can deduct the amount they gave, sometimes dollar-for-dollar, from their state tax bill.

Most states designate the vouchers programs for low-income families.

"They are this weird blend of tax policy and education policy, and in a lot of ways, they are treated more like tax policy," said Josh Cunningham of the National Conference of State Legislatures, which tracks the programs.

Nevada lawmakers secured a \$20 million boost for the scholarships this year, after Republicans suffered a crushing blow when they couldn't get money for their embattled Education Savings Accounts, a different type of school choice program.

Assemblyman Paul Anderson, a Republican, said government transparency laws do not and should not apply to the tax-credit scholarships because the tax component is confidential by nature, and the private sector is handling the rest. He said it was no different than a church asking its parishioners for donations — even though the state created the voucher program.

Supporters have on their side the U.S. Supreme Court, which has ruled that the contributed money is private funds because the cash is never touched by the state.

But government transparency watchdogs have warned that the set-up can be problematic, with abuses well-documented. In Alabama and Georgia, for example, groups advertised the programs as money-making for contributors. In Arizona, a lawmaker makes six figures annually by running a scholarship group in the

same system that he has supported.

Critics say under certain circumstances, wealthy contributors could even make a profit by claiming the "charitable" deduction multiple times over at the state and federal levels.

The AAA Scholarship Foundation Inc. which runs programs in Nevada and five other states, says it doesn't give tax advice but has, when asked, shared an IRS memo on the matter.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy say loopholes in the tax code would allow contributors to both eliminate their state tax bill and also get a charitable deduction off their federal taxes, and in some cases, also their state taxes. Carl Davis, the Washington-based think tank's research director, likened the system to a money-laundering tax scheme because the contributions are officially considered donations — even if the scholarship money goes to for-profit schools.

"That's not charity. That's just helping facilitate the movement of funds. These so-called donors are really like middlemen," Davis said. "They're not making a financial sacrifice."

The research firm estimates that states give away \$1 billion annually in tax credits for these voucher programs. Aside from closing the loophole, states could also rein it in by requiring contributors to show their federal tax return to prove that they aren't "double-dipping," Davis said.

EdChoice, a leading school choice advocacy group, defends the tax-credit program, saying it's accountable to parents who can choose to take their kids elsewhere if they don't like a school, even if there are, like in all government programs, some cases of abuse.

Acknowledging that there are things to address, EdChoice's policy director Jason Bedrick says his team has advised scholarship groups not to mischaracterize the system as a "get rich quick" scheme.

But he's not apologetic about the tax loophole, saying it's no different compared to tax credits for other charitable causes that in some states, though very rarely, is also a dollar-for-dollar contribution. And if there is tax code reform to address double-dipping, it should apply uniformly to all donor tax credits — not just for a highly political issue like vouchers.

"Some people might not like that, but they're acting within the letter of the law. I see no problem with that," Bedrick said. "Nobody's going to go to jail for this."

Follow Sally Ho at http://twitter.com/_sallyho

Trump doubles down on 'fire and fury' vow as wargames near

By ERIC TALMADGE and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Not backing down, President Donald Trump warned Kim Jong Un's government on Thursday to "get their act together" or face extraordinary trouble, and suggested he had been too mild when he vowed to unleash "fire and fury" on North Korea if it continued to threaten the U.S.

"Maybe that statement wasn't tough enough," Trump said, in the latest U.S. salvo in an escalating exchange of threats between the nuclear-armed nations.

A day after North Korea laid out plans to strike near Guam with unsettlingly specificity, there was no observable march toward combat, despite the angry rhetoric from both sides. Still, the stage is set for new confrontation soon.

U.S. and South Korean military officials plan to move ahead with large-scale exercises later this month that North Korea, now finalizing plans to launch a salvo of missiles toward Guam, claims are a rehearsal for war.

The exercises are an annual event, but come as Pyongyang says it is readying a plan to fire off four "Hwasong-12" missiles toward the U.S. island territory and major military hub. The plan would be sent to leader Kim Jong Un for approval just before or as the U.S.-South Korea exercises begin.

Called Ulchi-Freedom Guardian, the exercises are expected to run from Aug. 21-31 and involve tens of thousands of American and South Korean troops on the ground and in the sea and air. Washington and Seoul say the exercises are defensive in nature and crucial to maintaining a deterrent against North Korean aggression.

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The exercises were scheduled well before tensions began to rise over Trump's increasingly fiery rhetoric and North Korea's announcement of the missile plan, which would be its most provocative launch yet.

Trump declined to say whether the U.S. is considering a pre-emptive military strike as he spoke to reporters Thursday before a briefing with his top national security advisers at his New Jersey golf resort.

The president insisted the North had been "getting away with a tragedy that can't be allowed."

"North Korea better get their act together, or they are going to be in trouble like few nations have ever been in trouble," Trump said, flanked by Vice President Mike Pence. Accusing his predecessors of insufficient action, Trump said it was time somebody stood up to the pariah nation.

Though tensions have been building for months amid new missile tests by the North, the pace has intensified since the U.N. Security Council on Saturday passed sweeping new sanctions Trump had requested. The sanctions prompted the new heated volley of rhetoric.

After the North announced its plans to aim missile tests near Guam — home to about 7,000 troops and 160,000 people — U.S. allies Japan and South Korea quickly vowed a strong reaction if it followed through.

Trump echoed that threat Thursday, insisting if North Korea took any steps to attack Guam, Pyongyang's leaders would have reason to be nervous.

"Things will happen to them like they never thought possible, OK?" Trump said. He did not specify what they might be.

Trump also said he would soon announce a request for a budget increase of "billions of dollars" for anti-missile systems.

Military activity on the Korean Peninsula will rise in any case because of the U.S.-South Korean exercises. Officials in Seoul confirmed Friday that the exercises are expected to begin without any delays, but refused to provide further details.

Along with a bigger set of maneuvers held every spring, the exercises are routinely met by strong condemnation and threats of countermeasures from North Korea.

The country conducted its fifth nuclear test just days after last year's Ulchi-Freedom Guardian exercises concluded. While tensions typically spike around the dates of the exercises, the situation generally calms afterward.

The heightened military activity is a concern this time because it could increase the possibility of a mishap or an overreaction of some sort by either side that could spin into a more serious escalation. That possibility is made even more acute by the lack of any means of official communication across the Demilitarized Zone.

North Korea has been increasingly sensitive to the exercises lately because they reportedly include training for "decapitation strikes" to kill Kim Jong Un and his top lieutenants.

Pyongyang is also switching its propaganda machine into high gear by bringing in a large number of foreign journalists to ensure it gets global attention for an event next week in honor of its ruling Kim family on Mount Paektu, a dormant volcano that straddles the Chinese border and is something of a spiritual home for the regime.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, Ulchi-Freedom Guardian involves about 40,000 troops, along with civilian South Korean government personnel who train their civil defense responses.

The U.S. has a robust military presence in the region, including six B-1 bombers in Guam and Air Force fighter jet units in South Korea, plus other assets across the Pacific Ocean and in the skies above. Washington's vast military options range from nothing to a full-on conventional assault by air, sea and ground forces. Any order by the president could be executed quickly.

Current and former U.S. officials said if war did come, the U.S. and its allies would likely hit hard and fast, using air strikes, drone operations and cyberattacks aimed at military bases, air bases, missile sites, artillery, communications, command and control headquarters and intelligence gathering and surveillance capabilities.

Key threats would be North Korea's small but capable navy, including its submarines that can move quietly and attack. And Pyongyang also has significant cyber abilities, although not as sophisticated as

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America's. The North has also been preparing for ground war for decades, and would be a formidable force on the border.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday that while it is his responsibility to have military options, the U.S. effort is focused on diplomacy and the Trump administration is working with its allies on a diplomatic solution.

To that end, Trump said he "of course" would always consider negotiations with North Korea, but added that talks have failed for the last 25 years. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, in Asia this week, said North Korea could signal it was ready for such talks by halting any missile tests for an extended period.

North Korea's threat affecting Guam said it would involve the Hwasong-12, an intermediate-range ballistic missile first revealed at a military parade in April and believed to have a radius of more than 3,700 kilometers (2,300 miles). The North said four of the missiles would hit waters 30 to 40 kilometers (18 to 24 miles) from Guam.

"We keep closely watching the speech and behavior of the U.S.," read a military statement carried by official state-run media.

Guam lies about 2,100 miles (3,400 kilometers) from the Korean Peninsula, and it's extremely unlikely Kim's government would risk annihilation with a pre-emptive attack on U.S. citizens. It's also unclear how reliable North Korea's missiles would be against such a distant target, given that its military has struggled to target effectively in the past.

Lemire reported from Bedminster, New Jersey. Associated Press writers Josh Lederman and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

Venezuela's Maduro: 'Mr. Donald Trump, here is my hand'

By FABIOLA SANCHEZ, Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro said Thursday he wants a meeting with President Donald Trump — the same man he ridicules as a crass imperial magnate and blasts for U.S. sanctions against officials in his socialist administration.

In a lengthy address to the 545 members of a new, all-powerful constitutional assembly, Maduro instructed Venezuela's foreign minister to approach the United States about arranging a telephone conversation or meeting with Trump.

"Mr. Donald Trump, here is my hand," the socialist president said, adding that he wants as strong a relationship with the U.S. as he has with Russia.

The remarks came shortly after Maduro forcefully warned the U.S. president that Venezuela "will never give in."

The Trump administration has called Maduro a "dictator" and issued sanctions against him and more than two dozen other former and current officials, accusing Maduro's government of violating human rights and undermining the country's democracy amid an escalating political and financial crisis.

On Thursday, Credit Suisse bank banned the trading and use of Venezuelan bonds, citing "recent developments and the political climate" in the country.

The bank will no longer trade, nor accept as collateral, two specific types of Venezuelan securities as well as any bonds the country issued from June 1 going forward, according to a company spokeswoman who was not authorized to give her name. Further, any businesses who wish to do business with Venezuela and deal in any assets there will have to go through additional screening.

Venezuela is facing mounting international criticism over a crackdown on opponents and moves to consolidate power, including the selection of the all-powerful assembly controlled by Maduro.

It is also in the midst of a severe economic downturn caused by low oil prices and poor government policies. The country's bonds are one of the few ways the current government is able to raise money to support its collapsing economy.

But as the country's political crisis has worsened, the bonds issued by the government as well as the state-

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owned oil company PDVSA have become a point of contention and concern for investors who increasingly worry they are supporting an oppressive regime as well as a country that is a great risk of defaulting on its debts. Goldman Sachs came under political pressure earlier this year for buying a reported \$2.8 billion in Venezuelan bonds on the open market at a significant discount.

National Assembly President Julio Borges, leader of the country's opposition, has sent more than a dozen letters to leading global banks warning them of the risk to their reputations and bottom line if they throw a lifeline to Maduro.

On Wednesday, a fifth opposition mayor in Venezuela was removed from his post, part of what the opposition is calling a campaign to illegally remove anti-government mayors from their elected posts.

A small group of young people set up barricades of strewn metal objects in the eastern Caracas district of El Hatillo on Thursday to protest the Supreme Court decision to order Mayor David Smolansky imprisoned for 15 months for not obeying orders to shut down the protests.

We can't allow "the dictatorship to hunt down, imprison and treat our mayors like criminals," said Andres Paez, a lawyer who joined the protest.

Smolansky issued a video from an undisclosed location in which he called on residents of the El Hatillo to take to the streets to uphold their right to representation against what he called the government's "political firing squad."

"My commitment to restoring freedom in Venezuela remains intact," Smolansky said.

His arrest was ordered by the government-stacked Supreme Court less than 48 hours after it levied a similar sentence against Ramon Muchacho, another Caracas-area mayor.

Opposition leaders decried both rulings. According to their figures, about a third of the nation's opposition mayors have been removed from office or jailed or are under threat of arrest.

Gerardo Blyde, an opposition mayor of Baruta, a city of more than 350,000 near the capital, equated it to a sort of "Russian roulette."

"This is a continued coup against municipal public authority," he said.

Associated Press writers Joshua Goodman in Caracas, Christine Armario in Miami and Ken Sweet in New York contributed to this report.

2016 weather report: Extreme and anything but normal

By **SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Last year's global weather was far more extreme or record-breaking than anything approaching normal, according to a new report.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Thursday released its annual checkup of the Earth, highlighting numerous records including hottest year, highest sea level, and lowest sea ice in the Arctic and Antarctica.

The 299-page report, written by scientists around the world and published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, shows that 2016 was "very extreme and it is a cause for concern," said co-editor Jessica Blunden, a NOAA climate scientist.

Researchers called it a clear signal of human-caused climate change. A record large El Nino, the warming of the central Pacific that changes weather worldwide, was also a big factor in last year's wild weather.

"2016 will be forever etched in my brain as the year we crossed a new threshold of climate change — one that gave us a grim glimpse into our future," said Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb, who had no role in the report.

Scientists examined dozens of key climate measures and found:

— At any given time, nearly one-eighth of the world's land mass was in severe drought. That's far higher than normal and "one of the worst years for drought," said report co-author Robert Dunn of the United Kingdom Met Office.

— Extreme weather was everywhere. Giant downpours were up. Heat waves struck all over the globe, including a nasty one in India. Extreme weather contributed to a gigantic wildfire in Canada.

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— Global sea level rose another quarter of an inch (3.4 millimeters) for the sixth straight year of record high sea levels.

— There were 93 tropical cyclones across the globe, 13 percent more than normal. That included Hurricane Matthew that killed about 1,000 people in Haiti.

— The world's glaciers shrank — for the 37th year in a row — by an average of about 3 feet (1 meter).

— Greenland's ice sheet in 2016 lost 341 billion tons of ice (310 billion metric tons). It has lost 4400 billion tons (4000 billion metric tons of ice since 2002).

"2016 was a year in the Arctic like we've never seen before," said NOAA Arctic research chief Jeremy Mathis, who called it "a clear and more pronounced signal of warming than in any other year on record."

Many of the findings have been previously released, including that 2016 was the hottest year on record for the third consecutive year. A separate study based on modeling and weather patterns shows three hot years in a row is close to impossible to be a natural coincidence.

The odds of three years in a row setting heat records without man-made global warming is only 0.7 percent, compared to 30 to 50 percent with greenhouse gases according to a separate study published Thursday in the *Geophysical Research Letters*.

NOAA report co-editor Deke Arndt said the only notable normal global measure in 2016 was snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears . His work can be found here .

Trump suggests Senate GOP leader must deliver or step aside

By JULIE BYKOWICZ and ERICA WERNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump escalated a stunning feud against his top Senate partner Thursday, suggesting Majority Leader Mitch McConnell might have to think about stepping aside if he doesn't deliver on the president's agenda of health care, taxes and infrastructure.

Trump called McConnell's failure to pass an "Obamacare" repeal last month "a disgrace." Asked if McConnell should consider stepping aside or retiring, an outcome some conservatives are openly clamoring for, the president's response was far from a vote of confidence.

"Well I tell you what, if he doesn't get repeal and replace done and if he doesn't get taxes done, meaning cuts and reform, and if he doesn't get a very easy one to get done, infrastructure, if he doesn't get them done, then you can ask me that question," the president told reporters in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he is in the midst of a 17-day break from Washington.

Trump later added that he is "very disappointed in Mitch" but would be the first to praise him if legislation begins moving, once again presenting himself as a passive observer in the process rather than a dealmaker with the presidential pulpit.

There was no immediate response from McConnell's office.

A sitting president openly turning on a Senate majority leader of his own party in such a fashion is practically unheard of — yet another norm destroyed since Trump's rise on the political scene. And while the fighting words might elate Trump's core supporters, they can only hurt broader Republican efforts to move major legislation this fall on taxes and spending while preparing for congressional elections next year where energized Democrats are rallying to retake the House. Republicans control both chambers, but the Trump factor in many races remains a mystery.

Trump's comments came after he spent two days slamming McConnell on Twitter, writing Thursday morning that after "screaming" about repealing and replacing "Obamacare" for seven years, McConnell "couldn't get it done." Several hours later, the president's tone took a motivational turn as he exhorted McConnell to "get back to work" and pass bills. "You can do it!"

The presidential megaphone amplified the McConnell-bashing that's been snaking through conservative media: Breitbart News, Fox News' Sean Hannity and radio host Rush Limbaugh are among those who have vilified the leader after the Senate's failure on health care late last month. They represent a segment of

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the Republican electorate, including some major donors, who are out to punish what they see as a “do-nothing Congress” that has hampered the president’s goals.

McConnell is “a coward who leads from behind,” “spineless,” and a lifelong “political animal” of the sort Trump wants to eject from Washington, said Doug Deason, a major donor based in Texas. Deason said he decided months ago not to give money to any Republicans up for re-election next year unless they can pass Trump’s priorities.

Trump and his supporters love such political brawls, and the McConnell flare-up potentially shores up the president’s base at a time when it is showing signs of weakening support. But other Republicans saw Trump’s moves as counterproductive.

Even Newt Gingrich, a Trump backer and informal adviser who formerly served as speaker of the House, criticized the dispute.

“You saw Mitch McConnell say something, you saw Trump say something, when it’s obviously better for them to learn not to do that,” Gingrich said. “They have to work together. Governing is a team sport.”

After the failure on health care, McConnell and other Republican leaders, including top White House economic officials, are determined to move on to overhauling the tax code with the hope of passing cuts by the end of the year — a daunting challenge. McConnell has made clear he has little interest in revisiting the health care fight.

Trump, 71, and McConnell, 75, have never been easy allies, even though the senator’s wife, Elaine Chao, is the president’s transportation secretary. McConnell only met Trump for the first time in 2013, when he made a pilgrimage to Trump Tower in New York to ask the businessman for campaign money.

But McConnell quickly boarded the Trump train once the mogul secured the GOP nomination, and unlike House Speaker Paul Ryan and others, he never wavered. He’s paid numerous visits to the White House and traveled with Trump in March to Louisville. That Trump rally predated all of Congress’ attempts to redo health care, and the president urged the crowd to “be nice” to McConnell.

Fast forward to August, with the Senate on recess after the collapse of the GOP health care bill.

McConnell touched a nerve by telling an audience in his home state that Trump had “not been in this line of work before” and had “excessive expectations about how quickly things happen in the democratic process.”

What followed was a “tense” phone call between the two men, according to a person familiar with the exchange but not authorized to speak publicly about a private discussion, and then a presidential Twitter screed.

Brent Bozell, a longtime McConnell detractor and president of the conservative social media group For America, said the Senate leader had made a ridiculous argument that will haunt him.

“By calling President Trump a political neophyte, McConnell is saying that Trump doesn’t understand that Congress doesn’t keep its promises,” Bozell said. “This is exactly why Trump won — to shake up Washington, and that includes Republicans.”

And yet, in opening a door he might want to try to shove McConnell out of, Trump once again demonstrated his naivete in Washington’s ways. A Senate majority leader is elected by members of his own conference, and McConnell has plenty of support within his, regardless of anything Trump may say about it.

Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, a senior lawmaker and vocal Trump backer, said on Twitter that McConnell “has been the best leader we’ve had in my time in the Senate, through very tough challenges. I fully support him.”

AP writer Jonathan Lemire in Bedminster, New Jersey, contributed to this report.

Canadian diplomat in Cuba also suffered hearing loss

By **MATTHEW LEE, ROB GILLIES and MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Canadian government said Thursday that at least one Canadian diplomat in Cuba also has been treated for hearing loss following disclosures that a group of American diplomats in Havana suffered severe hearing loss that U.S. officials believe was caused by an advanced sonic device.

Global Affairs Canada spokeswoman Brianne Maxwell said Canadian officials "are aware of unusual symptoms affecting Canadian and US diplomatic personnel and their families in Havana. The government is actively working — including with US and Cuban authorities - to ascertain the cause."

Maxwell added that officials don't have any reason to believe Canadian tourists and other visitors could be affected.

Canada helped broker talks between Cuba and the United States that led to restored diplomatic relations.

In the fall of 2016, a series of U.S. diplomats began suffering unexplained losses of hearing, according to officials with knowledge of the investigation into the case. Several of the diplomats were recent arrivals at the embassy, which reopened in 2015 as part of President Barack Obama's reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Some of the U.S. diplomats' symptoms were so severe that they were forced to cancel their tours early and return to the United States, officials said. After months of investigation, U.S. officials concluded that the diplomats had been attacked with an advanced sonic weapon that operated outside the range of audible sound and had been deployed either inside or outside their residences.

It was not immediately clear if the device was a weapon used in a deliberate attack, or had some other purpose.

The U.S. officials weren't authorized to discuss the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said the U.S. retaliated by expelling two Cuban diplomats from their embassy in Washington on May 23. She did not say how many U.S. diplomats were affected or confirm they had suffered hearing loss, saying only that they had "a variety of physical symptoms."

The Cuban government said in a lengthy statement late Wednesday that "Cuba has never permitted, nor will permit, that Cuban territory be used for any action against accredited diplomatic officials or their families, with no exception."

The statement from the Cuban Foreign Ministry said it had been informed of the incidents on Feb. 17 and had launched an "exhaustive, high-priority, urgent investigation at the behest of the highest level of the Cuban government."

It said the decision to expel two Cuban diplomats was "unjustified and baseless."

The ministry said it had created an expert committee to analyze the incidents and had reinforced security around the U.S. embassy and U.S. diplomatic residences.

"Cuba is universally considered a safe destination for visitors and foreign diplomats, including U.S. citizens," the statement said.

U.S. officials told The Associated Press that about five diplomats, several with spouses, had been affected and that no children had been involved. The FBI and Diplomatic Security Service are investigating.

Cuba employs a state security apparatus that keeps many people under surveillance and U.S. diplomats are among the most closely monitored people on the island. Like virtually all foreign diplomats in Cuba, the victims of the incidents lived in housing owned and maintained by the Cuban government.

However, officials familiar with the probe said investigators were looking into the possibilities that the incidents were carried out by a third country such as Russia, possibly operating without the knowledge of Cuba's formal chain of command.

Nauert said investigators did not yet have a definitive explanation for the incidents but stressed they take them "very seriously," as shown by the Cuban diplomats' expulsions.

"We requested their departure as a reciprocal measure since some U.S. personnel's assignments in Havana had to be curtailed due to these incidents," she said. "Under the Vienna Convention, Cuba has an

obligation to take measures to protect diplomats.”

U.S. diplomats in Cuba said they suffered occasional harassment for years after the restoration of limited ties with the communist government in the 1970s, harassment reciprocated by U.S. agents against Cuban diplomats in Washington. The use of sonic devices to intentionally harm diplomats would be unprecedented.

Gillies reported from Toronto and Weissenstein reported from Havana.

Taylor Swift doesn't sugar-coat testimony in groping case

By JAMES ANDERSON and TATIANA FLOWERS, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A defiant and occasionally exasperated Taylor Swift insisted during a whirlwind hour of testimony Thursday that a Denver disc jockey grabbed her bare backside and held on for a long time during a meet-and-greet before a concert.

The pop superstar used explicit language that seemed designed to avoid sugar-coating what she said was a sexual assault when she posed for a picture with David Mueller in 2013.

“He stayed attached to my bare ass-cheek as I lurched away from him,” Swift testified in federal court during a trial over dueling lawsuits in the case.

“It was a definite grab. A very long grab,” she said at one point.

The singer-songwriter used the word “ass” dozens of times on the witness stand, sometimes sarcastically, in her testy exchange with Mueller’s attorney that occasionally elicited chuckles — even from the eight-member jury.

Swift got a laugh from people in the courtroom when she said her security guard, Greg Dent, saw Mueller “lift my skirt” but someone would have had to have been underneath her to see the actual groping — “and we didn’t have anyone positioned there.”

Swift was more serious when asked her reaction to Mueller being fired.

“I’m being blamed for the unfortunate events of his life that are a product of his decisions, not mine,” she told jurors.

“Do you think Mr. Mueller got what he deserved?” his attorney Gabriel McFarland asked.

“I don’t feel anything about Mr. Mueller. I don’t know him. ... I think what he did was despicable and horrifying and shocking.”

Mueller, his hair white compared to his image from the photo op, stared at a table while the singer-songwriter testified.

He denies groping Swift and claims in his lawsuit that he was falsely accused and lost his job because of the allegation.

His lawsuit seeks up to \$3 million in damages, though Mueller has said he’s not seeking a specific amount — just a chance to clear his name and salvage his career.

Swift countersued, alleging sexual assault. She is seeking a symbolic \$1 judgment that holds Mueller responsible.

Testimony ended for the day and will resume Friday.

After the photo was taken, Swift testified, she tried to get as far away Mueller as she could. She said she told him and his girlfriend, who was also in the photo, “thank you for coming” in a monotone voice before they left.

Swift said she was stunned and did not say anything to Mueller or halt the meet-and-greet after he left because she did not want to disappoint several dozen people waiting in line for photos with her.

Taylor Swift’s mother testified Wednesday that she and her daughter’s managers decided to tell Mueller’s bosses that he had assaulted the singer, hoping he would be fired but not asking them to do so.

Andrea Swift also said she didn’t contact police in order to protect her daughter, saying she didn’t want the incident to “define her life.”

Taylor Swift said Thursday that the photo sent by her liaison to the general manager of the radio station where Mueller worked showed the exact moment that he groped her.

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In the image, shown to jurors during opening statements but not publicly released, Mueller's hand is behind Swift, just below her waist. Both are smiling.

Mueller has testified that the photo was "weird and awkward," but he insisted that he touched Swift in the ribs, not in the rear.

He testified his hand was touching her skirt after he put his arm around her and their arms got crossed: "My hand was at rib-cage level and apparently it went down," he said.

Swift said she did not need the photo to remember Mueller.

"I want people to have a good time at my meet-and-greets at concerts," she said. "I don't want people to grab my ass at meet-and-greets at my concerts."

Evidently satisfied with Swift's testimony, her attorney, Douglas Baldrige, declined to question her after McFarland finished.

Thursday's final witness was Stephanie Simbeck, a photographer who works for Swift and took the picture of her and Mueller.

Simbeck said she knew something was wrong as she shot the photo.

She testified that Swift later told her what happened, looked at a photo and pointed out Mueller as the person responsible.

Earlier, Hershel Coomer, a supervisor at the country music station where Mueller worked, took the witness stand and denied a claim by Mueller that Coomer had said he groped Swift at an event for radio directors at Pepsi Center in Denver.

Coomer said he first heard about the claim two years after Mueller was fired from KYGO. Coomer called it a lie.

Associated Press writer P. Solomon Banda contributed to this report.

Trump administration urged to avoid salmon protection rules

By KEITH RIDLER, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A group that represents farmers is calling the costs of saving imperiled salmon in the largest river system in the Pacific Northwest unsustainable and is turning to the Trump administration to sidestep endangered species laws.

The Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association wants the government to convene a Cabinet-level committee with the power to allow exemptions to the Endangered Species Act. Known as the "God squad" because its decisions can lead to extinctions of threatened wildlife, it has only gathered three times — the last 25 years ago during a controversy over spotted owl habitat in the Northwest.

The irrigators association is frustrated with court rulings it says favor fish over people, claiming the committee could end years of legal challenges over U.S. dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers and bring stability for irrigators, power generators and other businesses that rely on the water.

Environmental groups call the request a publicity stunt and say it could hurt fishing companies and others that rely on healthy runs of federally protected salmon and steelhead.

The association sees hope in a series of pro-industry environmental decisions by President Donald Trump. His administration has rescinded an Obama-era rule that would shield many small streams and other bodies of water from pollution and development, enacted policies to increase coal mining on federal lands and proposed giving Western states greater flexibility to allow development in habitat of sage grouse, a threatened bird.

Darryll Olsen, association board representative, said the irrigators requested the committee during former President Barack Obama's tenure but got nowhere. He said the Trump administration has been encouraging during talks, leading to a formal request last month for a meeting with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

"What we're asking for is that the secretary give direction to the (Interior) Department to work with us to review the steps for implementing the God squad," Olsen said.

Zinke can gather the committee, which he would chair and would include other natural resource agen-

cies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency. It also would include representatives from Washington state, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

If five of the federal committee members agree, they could exempt U.S. agencies from Endangered Species Act requirements for one or more of the thirteen species of salmon and steelhead listed since the early 1990s.

The irrigators group, which has 120 members growing food crops in Washington state and Oregon, expects to meet with Zinke soon, Olsen said.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said in an email that the agency could not comment on a committee that had not been formed and that she had no information about Zinke's meetings.

Joseph Bogaard, executive director of a coalition of conservation, commercial, sport fishing and business groups called Save Our Wild Salmon, blasted the irrigation association's request.

"It's a terrible idea that will deliver great harm to the people and businesses of the Pacific Northwest," said Bogaard, whose coalition relies on the fish to produce millions of dollars of revenue.

A federal judge ruled last year that the government had not done enough to improve salmon runs despite spending billions of dollars and urged it to consider removing four dams on the lower Snake River.

Todd True, a lawyer with the environmental law firm Earthjustice who represented some plaintiffs in that 2016 ruling, said the God squad request should go nowhere.

"There isn't any basis to convene the committee because there are reasonable alternatives to save the fish," he said, pointing to the dam removal option. "Their removal would be a big step forward."

This year, fish counts at dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers have been well below the 10-year average, which biologists blame on droughts in 2014 and 2015 and warming ocean conditions.

Various results have emerged the three times the God squad has convened. It refused to grant an exemption for a Tennessee dam in the 1970s over a fish called the snail darter. Regarding crane protection in the Midwest, a settlement was reached before the panel offered a decision.

In 1992, it voted to sidestep protections for the northern spotted owl and allow the Interior Department to sell timber on land in Oregon.

Frustrated with Trump, McCain promotes his own Afghan plan

By RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a rebuke of President Donald Trump, Republican Sen. John McCain declared Thursday that "America is adrift in Afghanistan" as he promoted a war strategy that would expand the U.S. counterterrorism effort and provide greater support to Afghan security forces.

McCain, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said the U.S. needs to put strict conditions on continued assistance to Afghanistan, and require the Kabul government to demonstrate "measurable progress" in curbing corruption, strengthening the rule of law and improving financial transparency.

"Nearly seven months into President Trump's administration, we've had no strategy at all as conditions on the ground have steadily worsened," said McCain, a leading voice in Congress on national security matters. "The thousands of Americans putting their lives on the line in Afghanistan deserve better from their commander in chief."

McCain said bluntly, "We are losing in Afghanistan and time is of the essence if we intend to turn the tide."

The Arizona lawmaker said he'll seek a vote on his "strategy for success" in Afghanistan when the Senate returns in September and takes up the annual defense policy bill.

His plan calls for sending in more U.S. combat forces, although he doesn't say how many. But McCain wants them to be less constrained in carrying out missions against the Taliban, al-Qaida, a growing Islamic State affiliate and other extremists.

The plan, McCain said, is to "deny, disrupt, degrade, and destroy the ability of terrorist groups to conduct attacks against the United States, its allies, or its core interests."

Frustrated by his options, Trump has withheld approval of a long-delayed strategy as he searches for a plan that will end the stalemate and allow U.S. forces to pull out of America's longest war. It's been nearly

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16 years since the United States invaded the then Taliban-ruled country in response to the al-Qaida attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The United States has about 8,400 troops in Afghanistan. Trump has so far resisted the Pentagon's recommendations to send almost 4,000 more to expand training of Afghan military forces and bolster U.S. counterterrorism operations. The deployment has been held up amid broader strategy questions, including how to engage regional powers in an effort to stabilize Afghanistan.

These powers include U.S. friends and foes, from Pakistan and India to China, Russia and Iran. Pentagon plans aren't calling for a radical departure from the limited approach endorsed by former President Barack Obama, and several officials have credited Trump with rightly asking tough questions, such as how the prescribed approach might lead to success.

McCain, however, has grown increasingly impatient. During a committee hearing in June, he told Defense Secretary Jim Mattis that he had been confident the administration would deliver a plan for Afghanistan within a month or two after taking office.

"So all I can tell you is that unless we get a strategy from you, you're going to get a strategy from us," McCain said at the time.

Mattis said he understood the urgency and acknowledged, "We are not winning in Afghanistan right now."

The amendment he plans to propose adding to the defense policy bill calls for a "long-term, open-ended" U.S.-Afghanistan partnership that includes an "enduring U.S. counterterrorism presence."

He also recommends expanding U.S. training assistance to the Afghan security forces so they can capably fight the Taliban and other militant groups. McCain proposes longer-term support that will allow the Afghans to develop and expand their own intelligence, logistics, special forces and airlift operations.

McCain's approach envisions better harnessing U.S. military and civil strengths in pursuit of a negotiated peace process that leads to Afghan political reconciliation and eventual diplomatic resolution to the war.

He also proposes to punish neighboring Pakistan with graduated diplomatic, military and economic costs "as long as it continues to provide support and sanctuary to terrorist and insurgent groups, including the Taliban and the Haqqani network."

Among the Taliban's factions, the strongest is the Haqqani network, which has deep ties to Pakistan and its intelligence agency. The relationship dates to the 1980s Afghan war against the Soviet Union, which had sent in more than 100,000 soldiers to support the pro-communist Afghan government.

Contact Richard Lardner on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/rplardner>

Kenya election dispute intensifies with conflicting claims

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A dispute over Kenya's presidential election intensified Thursday when supporters of opposition leader Raila Odinga said an unofficial tally showed that he won — a claim that conflicted with a provisional official result that put incumbent Uhuru Kenyatta in the lead.

Although most of the East African nation was calm after Tuesday's vote, scattered clashes broke out between police and opposition supporters.

The uncertainty has left Kenya in political limbo, as its people await final results that they hope will dissipate tensions over vote-rigging allegations and preserve the long-term stability that has made the country a commercial hub.

Opposition official Musalia Mudavadi claimed to have "complete data" from election commission servers showing Odinga with a lead of several hundred thousand votes over Kenyatta, contrary to results on the commission's website that put the president more than 1 million votes ahead.

The opposition has received information from "confidential" sources in the election commission that indicates "the actual presidential election results contained in their database," Mudavadi said. He said there was a "serious attempt to try to either doctor or alter the final results."

Odinga, a former prime minister who has run unsuccessfully for president three times before, said hack-

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ers infiltrated the commission's computer system and manipulated results against him.

Commission chairman Wafula Chebukati said a hacking attempt was made but it failed. Election officials are painstakingly trying to confirm their provisional results showing Kenyatta in the lead with checks of documents from polling stations nationwide. The election commission has until Aug. 15 to release the final tally.

"The long wait is leading to tension," said political analyst Hezron Mogambi. "We are supposed by now to have had results, but the delay has been caused by the fact that the opposition had complaints about the system of transmitting results."

Clashes between police and opposition supporters erupted in a Nairobi slum. Police fired on rioters in Kawangware, a poor area of the capital, according to an Associated Press photographer. One wounded man was carried away by protesters who said police shot him. Demonstrators also burned tires in Kibera, another Nairobi slum.

Violence also broke out in Garissa county, where opposition supporters demonstrated against the announcement of a ruling party candidate as the winner of a gubernatorial race. Police tried to restore calm after part of the town's market was burned by arsonists, said a regional official, Mohamud Saleh.

On Wednesday, at least three people were shot and killed in confrontations between security forces and opposition supporters in several areas of Kenya.

The U.S. State Department urged Kenyans to refrain from violence and patiently await the election commission's announcement of the final results.

International observers said they have not noted any signs of interference with the vote and also urged calm.

"We affirm the conviction that the judicial process, the judicial system of Kenya, and the election laws themselves make full and adequate provision for accountability in this election. The streets do not," said former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, an election observer for The Carter Center, an international democracy promotion group led by former President Jimmy Carter.

Added Marietje Schaake, the Dutch head of the European Union mission observing the vote: "Elections should never be an issue of life or death."

She said Odinga's hacking allegations "should be seriously looked at" as part of the process of verifying the final tallies.

John Mahama, chief election observer for the Commonwealth and former president of Ghana, said the voting and counting system appeared "credible, transparent and inclusive."

There was no immediate comment on the latest developments from Kenyatta, 55, whose father was Kenya's first president after independence from British colonial rule.

Angry crowds jeered police patrolling in Kawangware, an opposition stronghold.

"People are demonstrating because of their rights," said Edwin Onyango, a supporter of the 72-year-old Odinga.

Odinga lost in a 2007 election that was followed by violence fueled by ethnic tensions that killed more than 1,000 people. He also lost the 2013 vote to Kenyatta and took allegations of vote-tampering to the Supreme Court, which rejected his case.

Some Nairobi residents said he should acknowledge another lost campaign.

"He has done a lot for this country," said James Maina Bajirane. "And at this particular time, at his age, he should concede defeat and the country goes on."

Associated Press journalists Ben Curtis and Tom Odula in Nairobi contributed.

Ex-Fox News star Bill O'Reilly launches daily online show

NEW YORK (AP) — Ousted Fox News Channel star Bill O'Reilly has launched an experimental video comeback with a daily online show.

The initial half-hour was posted on his website Wednesday for premium subscribers, originating from what he called a "new prototype studio." He requested input from viewers for what he characterized as

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a "sneak preview."

He said it would be made available to a non-paying audience on Thursday.

Among other topics, O'Reilly discussed President Trump's "fire and fury" comments about North Korea and a movement that calls for California to secede from the union. He spoke by Skype with political commentator Michael Smerconish.

O'Reilly has produced a daily podcast, which this video startup apparently builds upon, since he was fired from Fox News in April in the wake of allegations of sexual harassment.

Remnants of Hurricane Franklin dump rain in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The remnants of Hurricane Franklin soaked central Mexico Thursday, threatening mudslides and flash floods after the storm hit the country's Gulf coast overnight.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center downgraded the storm to a tropical depression as it broke up over the mountains of central Mexico.

Franklin was centered about 20 miles (35 kilometers) north-northwest of Mexico City Thursday morning, with sustained winds of 30 mph (45 kph), with a steady rain falling in the nation's capital and winds picking up. It was moving westward at 20 mph (31 kph).

Franklin became the first hurricane of the Atlantic season on Wednesday and hit north of Veracruz city as a Category 1 storm. Earlier, as a tropical storm, Franklin made a relatively mild run across the Yucatan Peninsula.

Authorities in Veracruz state cancelled public schools as a precautionary measure. Schools are frequently used as storm shelters in Mexico.

There were no initial reports of deaths, but authorities in a number of states were closely monitoring the rains.

Mexican officials said the storm did less damage than feared as it rolled across the Yucatan early in the week, but there was concern it could bring flooding to the mountainous territory east of Mexico City.

Forecasters said Franklin could drop four to eight inches (10 to 20 centimeters) of rain, with localized amounts of up to 15 inches (38 centimeters).

Suspended Fox host suing reporter over alleged lewd texts

By VERENA DOBNIK, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Suspended Fox News host Eric Bolling on Wednesday sued the reporter who broke the story that he had allegedly sent lewd text messages to colleagues.

Bolling filed a \$50 million defamation lawsuit in state Supreme Court in Manhattan against Yashar Ali, a Huffington Post contributing writer. The cable news host said Ali damaged his reputation through what the court papers call the "highly reckless publication of actionable false and misleading statements about the plaintiff's conduct and character."

Bolling was suspended over the weekend pending an internal investigation that a Fox spokesperson said is underway.

Ali wrote last week that Bolling is accused of sending unsolicited photos of male genitalia to co-workers over several years.

On Wednesday, the reporter tweeted that he stands by his story and will protect his sources. Ali also wrote that he is not going to stop reporting on Bolling "or anyone else. I've had family members killed/jailed in Iran, a lawsuit isn't going to scare me."

Huffington Post editor in chief Lydia Polgreen, a former top New York Times editor, tweeted in support of Ali Tuesday night. "Yashar Ali is a careful and meticulous reporter," Polgreen wrote, adding that the publication stands by his reporting and that it has "no hesitation about standing by him financially in this case." Huffington Post is owned by Verizon thanks to its 2015 purchase of AOL.

Bolling's lawyer, Michael J. Bove, said in a statement: "This anonymously sourced and uncorroborated

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story is false, defamatory, and obviously intended to destroy this good man's career and family. We will defend Eric aggressively in court, where actual facts, based on evidence, testimony, and cross-examination, will belie these anonymous accusations."

Bolling tweeted that he "will continue to fight against these false smear attacks! THANK YOU FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT."

Huffington Post is not involved in the legal action.

AP Technology Writer Tali Arbel contributed to this report.

Guam's residents concerned but have faith in US military

By GRACE GARCES BORDALLO and AUDREY McAVOY, The Associated Press

HAGATNA, Guam (AP) — The tiny U.S. territory of Guam feels a strong sense of patriotism and confidence in the American military, which has an enormous presence on the Pacific island. But residents are increasingly worried over Washington's escalating war of words with North Korea.

The people of Guam woke up Thursday to another pointed threat from Pyongyang, which vowed to complete a plan to attack waters near the island by mid-August — adding a timeline to a threat from a day earlier that North Korea would create an "enveloping fire" around Guam.

Like other U.S. territories, Guam has a sometimes complicated relationship with the U.S. mainland but many across the island say despite the threats and concerns they feel reassured and protected by the military — especially in times of tense, geopolitical sparring.

About 160,000 people live on the island, which extends about 12 miles (19.31 kilometers) at its widest. The American military presence on Guam consists of two bases — Andersen Air Force Base in the north and Naval Base Guam in the south — which are home to 7,000 U.S. troops.

"I feel that the presence of the military on Guam will help us a lot," said Virgie Matson, 51, a resident of Dededo, Guam's most populated village. "They are here to protect the islands, just in case something happens."

The possibility of a nuclear confrontation is considered remote but international alarm has been escalating in recent days. In the latest development, Gen. Kim Rak Gyom, who heads North Korea's rocket command, said in a statement carried by state media that his country was "about to take" military action near Guam. He said the North would finalize a plan by mid-August to fire four mid-range missiles hitting waters 19 to 25 miles (30 to 40 kilometers) away from the island.

It's not the first time North Korea has threatened Guam, which is a crucial, strategic hub for U.S. forces in the Pacific.

Andersen Air Force Base houses a Navy helicopter squadron and Air Force bombers that rotate to Guam from the U.S. mainland, including the B-2 stealth bomber, B-1 and B-52. Their location in a U.S. territory means its military is just hours from potential flashpoints in the western Pacific.

Naval Base Guam is an important outpost for U.S. fast-attack nuclear powered submarines that are a key means for gathering intelligence in the region, including off the Korean peninsula and in the South China Sea where China has been building military bases on man-made islands that have stirred tension across Asia.

The U.S. military has said it plans to increase its presence on Guam and will move thousands of U.S. Marines currently stationed in Japan to the island between 2024 and 2028.

"I'm pro military buildup," said resident Gus Aflague, 60, whose grandfather and brother both joined the U.S. Navy.

"North Korea has always threatened other countries. They threatened U.S., other countries, and they threaten Guam. It's a propaganda, that's how I feel," he said but added that the military offered an extra reassurance. "I feel safe with our military presence here — Andersen and the Navy."

There's a sense of patriotism among those who cite the island's history of Guam residents serving in the U.S. military. The U.S. took control of Guam in 1898, when Spanish authorities surrendered to the U.S. Navy.

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During the Vietnam War, the Air Force sent 155 B-52 bombers to Guam to hit targets in Southeast Asia. Guam was also a refueling and transfer spot for people heading to Southeast Asia, and many refugees fleeing Saigon were evacuated through Guam.

But there's also some resentment about not being able to vote in the general election for U.S. president. Guamanians have served in all major U.S. wars since World War II and see military service as a source of pride. A huge red, white and blue ribbon is outside the airport terminal.

Resident Isaac Camacho, 19, says he feels Guam's relationship with the U.S. mainland is "a little misunderstood on their part."

"They believe that we are not true U.S. citizens, when we do have plenty of Chamorro people going into the U.S. military and serving for their country and dying for their country," he said. Chamorros are the indigenous people of Guam. "And not a lot of Americans know that."

Guam is about 2,100 miles (3,380 kilometers) southeast of Pyongyang and 3,800 miles (6,115 kilometers) west of Honolulu in the Pacific Ocean. For years, North Korea has claimed Guam is within its missiles' striking distance, making furious statements each time when the U.S. flew powerful bombers from the island's air base to the Korean Peninsula.

In August last year, the North's Foreign Ministry warned that all U.S. military bases in the Pacific including Guam would "face ruin in the face of all-out and substantial attack" by the North's military. In 2013, state media cited leader Kim Jong Un as having ordered his military to prepare plans on launching strikes on U.S. military bases in Guam, Hawaii and South Korea as well as the American mainland.

Guam is armed with the U.S. Army's defense system known as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, which can intercept missiles.

McAvoy reported from Honolulu. Jennifer Sinco Kelleher in Honolulu and Jocelyn Gecker in San Francisco contributed reporting.

For electric cars to take off, they'll need place to charge

By DEE-ANN DURBIN, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Around the world, support is growing for electric cars. Automakers are delivering more electric models with longer range and lower prices, such as the Chevrolet Bolt and the Tesla Model 3. China has set aggressive targets for electric vehicle sales to curb pollution; some European countries aim to be all-electric by 2040 or sooner.

Those lofty ambitions face numerous challenges, including one practical consideration for consumers: If they buy electric cars, where will they charge them?

The distribution of public charging stations is wildly uneven around the globe. Places with lots of support from governments or utilities, like China, the Netherlands and California, have thousands of public charging outlets. Buyers of Tesla's luxury models have access to a company-funded Supercharger network. But in many places, public charging remains scarce. That's a problem for people who need to drive further than the 200 miles or so that most electric cars can travel. It's also a barrier for the millions of people who don't have a garage to plug in their cars overnight.

"Do we have what we need? The answer at the moment is, 'No,'" says Graham Evans, an analyst with IHS Markit.

Take Norway, which has publicly funded charging and generous incentives for electric car buyers. Architect Nils Henningstad drives past 20 to 30 charging stations each day on his 22-mile (35-kilometer) commute to Oslo. He works for the city and can charge his Nissan Leaf at work; his fiancée charges her Tesla SUV at home or at one of the world's largest Tesla Supercharger stations, 20 miles away.

It's a very different landscape in New Berlin, Wisconsin, where Jeff Solie relies on the charging system he rigged up in his garage to charge two Tesla sedans and a Volt. Solie and his wife don't have chargers at their offices, and the nearest Tesla Superchargers are 45 miles (72 kilometers) away.

"If I can't charge at home, there's no way for me to have electric cars as my primary source of trans-

portation," says Solie, who works for the media company E.W. Scripps.

The uneven distribution of chargers worries many potential electric vehicle owners. It's one reason electric vehicles make up less than 1 percent of cars on the road.

"Humans worst-case their purchases of automobiles. You have to prove to the consumer that they can drive across the country, even though they probably won't," says Pasquale Romano, the CEO of ChargePoint, one of the largest charging station providers in North America and Europe.

Romano says there's no exact ratio of the number of chargers needed per car. But he says workplaces should have around 2.5 chargers for every employee and retail stores need one for every 20 electric cars. Highways need one every 50 to 75 miles, he says. That suggests a lot of gaps still need to be filled.

Automakers and governments are pushing to fill them. The number of publicly available, global charging spots grew 72 percent to more than 322,000 last year, the International Energy Agency said. Navigant Research expects that to grow to more than 2.2 million by 2026; more than one-third of those will be in China.

Tesla Inc. — which figured out years ago that people wouldn't buy its cars without roadside charging — is doubling its global network of Supercharger stations to 10,000 this year. BMW, Daimler, Volkswagen and Ford are building 400 fast-charging stations in Europe. Volkswagen is building hundreds of stations across the U.S. as part of its settlement for selling polluting diesel engines. Even oil-rich Dubai, which just got its first Tesla showroom, has more than 50 locations to charge electric cars.

But there are pitfalls. There are different types of charging stations, and no one knows the exact mix drivers will eventually need. A grocery store might spend \$5,000 for an AC charge point, which provides a car with 5 to 15 miles of range in 30 minutes. But once most cars get 200 or 300 miles per charge, slow chargers are less necessary. Electric cars with longer range need fast-charging DC chargers along highways, but DC chargers cost \$35,000 or more.

That uncertainty makes it difficult to make money setting up chargers, says Lisa Jerram, an associate director with Navigant Research. For at least the next three to five years, she says, deep-pocketed automakers, governments and utilities will be primarily responsible for building charging infrastructure.

There's also the question of who will meet the needs of apartment dwellers. San Francisco, Shanghai and Vancouver, Canada, are now requiring new homes and apartment buildings to be wired for EV charging.

But without government support, plans for charging stations can falter. In Michigan, a utility's \$15 million plan to install 800 public charging stations was scrapped in April after state officials and ChargePoint objected.

Solie, the electric car owner in Wisconsin, likes Europe's approach: Governments should set bold targets for electric car sales and let the private sector meet the need.

"If the U.S. were to send up a flare that policy was going to change... investments would become very attractive," he says.

AP Writers David McHugh in Frankfurt, Joe McDonald in Beijing and Aya Batrawy in Dubai contributed.

US company offers to take financial risk of new MH370 search

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — U.S. seabed exploration company Ocean Infinity said Friday it had offered to take the financial risk of a renewed search for the missing Malaysian airliner, as victims' families urged the Malaysian government to agree to a private sector hunt for Flight 370's wreckage.

Malaysia, Australia and China suspended a nearly three-year search in the southern Indian Ocean in January after scouring 120,000 square kilometers (46,000 square miles) of remote seabed and failing to find any trace of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370.

Ocean Infinity, based in Houston, Texas, said it remained hopeful that Malaysia would accept its offer to continue the search using a team of advanced, fast-moving deep-sea drones fitted with sonar equipment.

"The terms of the offer are confidential, but I can ... confirm that Ocean Infinity have offered to take on

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the economic risk of a renewed search," company spokesman Mark Antelme said in an email.

"We're in a constructive dialogue with the relevant authorities and are hopeful that the offer will be accepted," he added.

Voice370, a support group for families of the 239 people on board, said under the terms of the offer made in April, Ocean Infinity "would like to be paid a reward if and only if it finds the main debris field."

"Why hasn't Malaysia accepted this win-win offer?" Voice370 asked in a statement.

Malaysia did not immediately respond to the families' question Friday.

An international board of experts has concluded, based on analysis of Boeing 777 debris that drifted and washed up on western Indian Ocean beaches, the flight most likely crashed in a 25,000-square-kilometer (9,700-square-mile) area of ocean on the northern boundary of the last search zone, far southwest of Australia.

But Malaysia, Australia and China agree that the newly identified area is too big to justify resuming the publicly funded search, which has already cost \$160 million.

Australia has coordinated the search on Malaysia's behalf because Flight 370 crashed in Australia's zone of search and rescue responsibility on March 8, 2014, after flying far off course on a journey from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Beijing.

Transport Minister Darren Chester declined to comment on the possibility of a private search.

"Malaysia, as the state of registry for the aircraft, retains overall authority for any future search and any questions regarding possible future search efforts should be directed there," his office said in a statement.

"Australia stands ready to assist the Malaysian government in any way it can," it added.

Ocean Infinity's website says the company uses the world's most advanced fleet of autonomous vehicles to make high-resolution seabed surveys of unmapped locations.

Asian stocks slump on profit-taking after US-NKorea tensions

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stock markets slumped on Friday following overnight losses on Wall Street as U.S. President Donald Trump's bellicose remarks prompted investors to unload shares in companies that have been on the rise in recent months.

KEEPING SCORE: South Korea's Kospi sank 1.8 percent to 2,316.88 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.5 percent to 27,041.83. Shanghai Composite Index fell 0.7 percent to 3,238.53. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dropped 1.1 percent to 5,696.80. Stocks in Taiwan, Singapore and other Southeast Asian countries were also lower. Japan was closed on a public holiday.

FIRE AND FURY: Keeping up his tough talk, Trump told reporters that Kim Jong Un's government should "get their act together" or face extraordinary trouble, and suggested his earlier threat to unleash "fire and fury" on North Korea was too mild. The remarks, following North Korea's earlier revelation of a plan to launch a salvo of ballistic missiles toward the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, gave investors a reason to pocket profit in the sectors, such as technology, that have been the biggest gainers in recent months, analysts said.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "The tensions between North Korea and the U.S. is an excuse for profit-taking," Seo Sang Young, an analyst at Kiwoom Securities. "Had investors believed a real war was on the horizon, all sectors would have declined." He added that in China, the U.S. and South Korea, stocks that are showing the biggest declines since the rise of tensions between the U.S. and North Korea are the companies that have risen most since June.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks closed lower on Thursday led by technology companies. The Standard & Poor's 500 index dropped 1.4 percent to 2,438.21. The Dow Jones industrial average slid 0.9 percent to 21,844.01. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite lost 2.1 percent to 6,216.87. The Russell 2000 index gave up 1.7 percent to 1,372.54.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude lost 12 cents to \$48.47 per barrel on the on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 97 cents, or 2 percent, to close at \$48.59 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude,

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used to price international oils, declined 23 cents to \$51.67 per barrel in London. It slid 80 cents, or 1.5 percent, to close at \$51.90 per barrel on Thursday.

CURRENCIES: The dollar slipped to 109.05 yen from 109.20 while the euro weakened to \$1.1763 from \$1.1773.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Aug. 11, the 223rd day of 2017. There are 142 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On August 11, 1997, President Bill Clinton made the first use of the historic line-item veto, rejecting three items in spending and tax bills. (However, the U.S. Supreme Court later struck down the veto as unconstitutional.)

On this date:

In 1860, the nation's first successful silver mill began operation near Virginia City, Nevada.

In 1909, the steamship SS Arapahoe became the first ship in North America to issue an S.O.S. distress signal, off North Carolina's Cape Hatteras.

In 1934, the first federal prisoners arrived at Alcatraz Island (a former military prison) in San Francisco Bay.

In 1942, during World War II, Pierre Laval, prime minister of Vichy France, publicly declared that "the hour of liberation for France is the hour when Germany wins the war."

In 1954, a formal peace took hold in Indochina, ending more than seven years of fighting between the French and Communist Viet Minh.

In 1956, abstract painter Jackson Pollock, 44, died in an automobile accident on Long Island, New York.

In 1962, Andrian Nikolayev became the Soviet Union's third cosmonaut in space as he was launched on a 94-hour flight.

In 1965, rioting and looting that claimed 34 lives broke out in the predominantly black Watts section of Los Angeles.

In 1975, the United States vetoed the proposed admission of North and South Vietnam to the United Nations, following the Security Council's refusal to consider South Korea's application.

In 1984, during a voice test for a paid political radio address, President Ronald Reagan joked that he had "signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes."

In 1992, the Mall of America, the nation's largest shopping-entertainment center, opened in Bloomington, Minnesota.

In 2014, Academy Award-winning actor and comedian Robin Williams, 63, died in Tiburon, California, a suicide.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush welcomed French President Nicolas Sarkozy to his family's estate in Kennebunkport, Maine. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney won an easy and expected victory in a high-profile Iowa Republican Party Straw Poll. Funerals were held in Newark, New Jersey, for three college or college-bound students shot to death in a schoolyard. Big Ben's bongos fell silent as workers began a month of maintenance work on the iconic London clock and its world-famous bell.

Five years ago: Republican presidential contender Mitt Romney announced his choice of Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin to be his running mate. Usain Bolt capped his perfect London Olympics by leading Jamaica to victory in a world-record 36.84 seconds in the 4x100 meters. Allyson Felix won her third gold medal as the Americans rolled to an easy victory in the women's 4x400 relay. The heavily favored U.S. women's basketball team won a fifth straight gold medal with an 86-50 victory over France.

One year ago: The Obama administration said it had decided marijuana would remain on the list of most dangerous drugs, rebuffing growing support across the country for broad legalization, but said it would allow more research into its medical uses. Michael Phelps won his fourth gold medal of the Rio Olympics and 22nd overall with a victory in the 200-meter individual medley. Simone Manuel became the

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first African-American woman to win a gold medal in swimming with her win in the 100-meter freestyle, upsetting world-record holder Cate Campbell and tying with Penny Oleksiak of Canada. Simone Biles of the U.S. soared to the all-around title in women's gymnastics.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Arlene Dahl is 92. Songwriter-producer Kenny Gamble is 74. Rock musician Jim Kale (Guess Who) is 74. Magazine columnist Marilyn Vos Savant is 71. Country singer John Conlee is 71. Singer Eric Carmen is 68. Computer scientist and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak is 67. Wrestler-actor Hulk Hogan is 64. Singer Joe Jackson is 63. Playwright David Henry Hwang is 60. Actor Miguel A. Nunez Jr. is 58. Actress Viola Davis is 52. Actor Duane Martin is 52. Actor-host Joe Rogan is 50. Rhythm-and-blues musician Chris Dave is 49. Actress Anna Gunn is 49. Actress Ashley Jensen is 49. Actress Sophie Okonedo is 49. Rock guitarist Charlie Sexton is 49. Hip-hop artist Ali Shaheed Muhammad is 47. Actor Nigel Harman is 44. Actor Will Friedle is 41. Actor Rob Kerkovich is 38. Actress Merritt Wever is 37. Actor Chris Hemsworth is 34. Rock musician Heath Fogg (Alabama Shakes) is 33. Singer J-Boog is 32. Rapper Asher Roth is 32. Actress Alyson Stoner is 24.

Thought for Today: "A pessimist is a man who looks both ways when he's crossing a one-way street."
— Laurence J. Peter, Canadian-born educator and author of "The Peter Principle" (1919-1990).