

Groton Daily Independent

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Harry Implement
"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"



(605) 395-6421

Ferney

**City Council Meeting: 7 p.m. at
Groton Community Center**

Volleyball at Henry

Milbank Oral Interp Festival

Official Notices

Brown County (updated 8-31)
Frederick Area School (updated 8-29)
Groton City (updated 8-29)
Groton Area School (updated 8-29)
Westport Town (updated 8-21-17)
Other Notices (updated 8-21)
Frederick Town (Updated 8-15)
Groton Area School (updated 8-7)
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**

“I seldom end up where I wanted to go, but almost always end up where I need to be.”

-Douglas Adams



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Help Wanted

We are Hiring Nurses – RN or LPN,
Full or Part Time.

NEW WAGE PACKAGE!!!

Contact Jessica Lindskov or Nellie Peterson at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.

EOE/AA/M/F/V/D-Drug Free Workplace



GROTON

CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton
605-397-2365

Groton Area Help Wanted

The Groton Area School District is seeking qualified applicants for a part-time Assistant Business Manager. Job description and application materials can be found under the employment tab at www.grotonarea.com. Questions should be directed to Joe Schwan, Superintendent at 605-297-2351.



The Carroll (Spike) and Helen (Pat) Nehls residence at 905 N 3rd St., Groton, was chosen as last week's Yard of the Week by the Groton Garden Club members. This is the final Yard of the Week for the 2017. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Half-Staff Flag Notification

Honoring the Victims of the Tragedy in Las Vegas - Until Sunset October 6th 2017

As a mark of respect for the victims of the senseless act of violence perpetrated on October 1, 2017, the President has proclaimed that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff until sunset, October 6, 2017.

Fly the U.S. flag at half-staff until sunset, October 6th, 2017. For U.S. flags displayed on a short staff or for indoor flags that cannot be lowered to half-staff, place a Black Mourning Ribbon above the full staffed U.S. flag.

With a telescoping pole it is acceptable to put the U.S. flag on the second set of rings instead of the top set. In this case the top set would be left empty.

When the United States flag is flown at half-staff, state & other flags should be removed or flown at half-staff as well.

The correct procedure for displaying the flag at half-staff is to raise the flag to the top of the pole briskly, pause for a moment, and then slowly bring it down to where the top of the flag is at a position approximately halfway between the top and bottom of the pole. At the end of the day, the flag should be raised briskly to the top of the pole, then lowered slowly and ceremoniously retired for the day (unless illuminated at night).

Record Turnout for Annual Buffalo Roundup at Custer State Park

PIERRE, S.D. – Over 21,000 visitors attended the 52nd Annual Buffalo Roundup at Custer State Park, setting a new record for turnout at the event.

Custer State Park also hosted its three-day arts festival in conjunction with the Buffalo Roundup. Sizable crowds convened throughout the three-day celebration to enjoy entertainment such as Brulé, educational programs and the grand re-opening of the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center.

“What a great weekend at Custer State Park,” said park superintendent Matt Snyder. “The Roundup was a success, and I heard nothing but compliments from how well the park looked to the variety of vendors at the Arts Festival. It was truly a team effort to make this weekend happen.”

The annual Roundup serves as a tool to help manage the park’s buffalo herd. About 250 buffalo will be sold at the park’s annual auction on Saturday, Nov. 18. For information on the auction, contact the park at 605.255.4515 or email CusterStatePark@state.sd.us.

Upcoming Buffalo Roundups will be held on Friday, Sept. 28, 2018, and Friday, Sept. 27, 2019.

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings took on the Detroit Lions this past Sunday at U.S. Bank Stadium. The Vikings did not give their best effort, and the Lions took advantage of Minnesota's sloppy play, leaving Minnesota with a 14-7 win. Unfortunately for the Vikings, they lost more than just the game...

In the third quarter, with the Vikings moving the ball well, rookie running back Dalvin Cook was scampering up the middle to pick up a first down. He attempted to juke a Lions defender, when his knee simply gave out and he crumpled to the ground, losing the ball in the process. Cook was helped off the field and taken immediately to the training room. When he appeared later that day, he was using crutches and had a noticeable limp. It was initially feared, and subsequently diagnosed as a torn ACL, which will end his promising rookie season. We have seen running backs come back from this type of injury before, so it's possible Cook comes back next season and is the same, dynamic player he was before the injury. Only time will tell.

For now, though, the Vikings will turn to Latavius Murray and Jerick McKinnon to run the ball. The team thought highly enough of Murray to sign him to a big contract in free agency, which is a good sign. However, Murray had offseason surgery on his ankle, and he admitted on Sunday that he is still not 100%, but would be up for taking as many carries as the Vikings want to give him. McKinnon will also get some carries, and should be the team's third-down, pass catching RB. Both Murray and McKinnon are good players, but neither of them will be able to fill Cook's shoes in the backfield.

After coming out of the gates last week against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Case Keenum fell back to reality this week against the Lions. Keenum completed 16 of 30 passes for 219 yards, no touchdowns and no interceptions. The Vikings offensive line did pretty well against the Lions stout defense, only allowing two sacks and helping Dalvin Cook rush for 5.1 yards per attempt (13 carries, 66 yards). The Vikings offense also uncharacteristically lost three fumbles (Cook, Adam Thielen, Jerick McKinnon). Detroit is a good team, but the Vikings are better and could have won. Instead, they beat themselves with the turnovers and ineffective quarterback play.

The Vikings looked inept on offense, but were much better on defense. Lions QB Matthew Stafford was under constant pressure on Sunday, with the Vikings defense sacking him six times to go along with nine other quarterback hits. The secondary did their jobs for the most part and only gave up a couple big plays that were the result of miscommunication. Three Vikings players were able to get their hands on game-changing interceptions, but none were able to haul them in. At the end of the day, the Vikings defense held Detroit to 14 points, which should have been more than enough.

The Minnesota Vikings will have an extra day to prepare for the Chicago Bears, since the two teams will face off on Monday Night Football. The game will be in Chicago, and will start at 7:30 p.m. Central Time on October 9. There is a chance the Vikings will have Sam Bradford back for this game, although there are rumblings that the Vikings would prefer to let Bradford sit an extra week, since the field conditions at Soldier Field are inadequate at best.



All auto owners!
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& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;
*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices\locations.

***Farmers Union's
PSA: Courtesy Merle
Anderson (Merle is 94
year old founder of Ace
and legendary ethanol
supporter... "because it is
the right thing to do")**

Newton Hills State Park to host the 18th Annual FestiFall

CANTON, S.D. – Newton Hills State Park near Canton will host the 18th annual FestiFall on Oct. 7, from 1-5 p.m CDT. The event features arts and crafts, kid's activities and musical entertainment.

Kids of all ages can participate in "make and take" crafts, a mining sluice and more. An arts and crafts show will host over 30 craft vendors displaying unique crafts, home décor and other gift ideas. Food vendors will be on site throughout the afternoon.

As in years past, the pumpkin will take center stage with pumpkin catapulting, pumpkin carving demonstrations and decorated pumpkin contests. Visitors are encouraged to bring in their own decorated or carved pumpkins for judging.

Following the afternoon FestiFall celebration, the Candlelight Walk will lead visitors along 2.2 miles of candle-lit trail through the deep woods of Newton Hills. The trail will be solely lit by candles and carved pumpkins. Walkers will encounter many surprises along the trail, including musicians, colorful characters from the past, a magician and telescopes to view the evening sky. Walkers may begin the self-led adventure anytime between 7:15 and 8:30 p.m.

Throughout the weekend, campers are encouraged to decorate their campsites with a fall theme. Hay wagon rides will be available Saturday afternoon to take visitors through the campground to view and judge the decorated campsites.

There is no cost to participate in any of the events; however a park entrance license is required. For additional information, please contact Newton Hills at 605.987.2263, email newtonhills@state.sd.us, visit gfp.sd.gov or find Newton Hills State Park on Facebook.

As National Gas Price Average Holds Steady, October Brings Highest Pump Prices in Two Years

October 2, 2017 - At \$2.55, the national gas price average is just two cents cheaper on the week and the most expensive pump price seen at the start of October since 2015, when motorists were paying \$2.29 for a gallon of unleaded.

South Dakota's state gas price average is 3 cents lower on the week at \$2.47. The highest gas price average this year in South Dakota was recorded on September 11th at \$2.56.

"When fall arrives, motorists expect gas prices to be cheaper than they were in the summer. That's just not the case this year," said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA spokesperson. "Back-to-back hurricanes packed a punch to Gulf Coast refineries' gasoline production and inventory levels. As they play catch-up, gas prices are going to be higher than we'd like to see."

Today, Gulf Coast refineries are building toward resuming normal operations, but it could take some longer than others to return to pre-hurricane production rates. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports that Gulf Coast utilization rates are up nearly 12 percent to 85 percent of capacity since last week. As utilization rates increase and operations improve, gas prices will drop.

"While the market continues to be volatile, post-hurricanes, AAA expects gas prices to slowly, but steadily drop by up to ten cents in the coming month," added Buskohl.

Across the country, the majority of states saw prices at the pump drop as much as eight cents on the week – with the Northeast states benefiting the most. While five Great Lakes and Central States are paying up to 11 cents more for gas. Today, motorists can find gas for \$2.50 or less at 56 percent of gas stations in the country.

Quick Stats

The nation's top ten markets with the largest weekly changes are: Indiana (+11 cents), Ohio (+9 cents), Michigan (+9 cents), Delaware (-8 cents), Illinois (+7 cents), New Jersey (-6 cents), Maryland (-6 cents), Georgia (-6 cents), Florida (-6 cents) and Maine (-6 cents).

The nation's top ten most expensive markets are: Hawaii (\$3.11), California (\$3.10), Alaska (\$2.99), Washington (\$2.99), Oregon (\$2.83), Connecticut (\$2.78), Nevada (\$2.77), Washington, D.C. (\$2.77), Pennsylvania (\$2.76) and Idaho (\$2.76).

Midwest Region

Unlike any other region in the country, five Great Lakes and Central states are paying more for a gallon of gasoline on the week: Indiana (+11 cents), Ohio (+9 cents), Michigan (+9 cents), Illinois (+7 cents) and Wisconsin (+2 cent). Of note, last week Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Illinois saw gas prices drop almost as much as they increased this week. As stated in previous reports, the region often sees volatile drops and increases from week to week. All other states in the region are paying five to one cents less at the pump compared to one week ago.

Oil market dynamics

At the close of the NYMEX on Friday, WTI was up 11 cents to settle at \$51.67/bbl, having fluctuated but made strong gains on the week. Moving into this week, the market may stay above the \$50 mark if there are further indications that production is tightening, which will likely lead to reduced global inventories, while demand for products refined from oil is strong.

On the supply front, total gasoline output is strong. According to last week's EIA report, output registered at 9.679 million b/d, an increase of 139,000 b/d from last week. For the market, this could be a sign that oil demand is holding strong -- especially after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma caused disruptions to energy delivery systems in the U.S. – and can be an indicator that global inventories will continue declining (because of steady demand). However, overall fall gasoline demand may not be enough to drain high U.S. oil inventories.

Grants Available To Elevate Youth Ag Education in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Agricultural Foundation (SDAF) announces that grant funding is now available through two of its grant programs:

Building Rural Communities (BRC) grant program

Ag Innovators (AI) Youth Education grant program

As school is back in session across the state and families get back into their routines again, the SD Ag Foundation encourages South Dakotans to start thinking about projects in their schools and communities that can empower future ag leaders and professionals.

These grants were developed to demonstrate the importance of rural communities and the value of organizations that work together to improve rural life.

"The purpose of the SD Ag Foundation's grant efforts is to be a catalyst for innovation and change in our rural communities and in the ag industry in general."

Greg Von Wald, SD Ag Foundation board member/ED of SD Skilled Workforce Advisory Council

The Building Rural Communities (BRC) and Ag Innovators (AI) grants are designed to support ongoing agriculture-related community and safety projects along with innovative ideas in youth agricultural education. There are a number of new as well as existing creative solutions offering agriculture-related programs to younger generations. These new programs will support and expand these solutions to be more inclusive, collaborative, and resourceful.

Any 4-H club, FFA or FCCLA chapter in South Dakota can apply for the Building Rural Communities grant. Two types of BRC grants are available. The basic grant is used for community improvement projects and is limited to \$750 per project. The safety grant is used for projects that enhance public safety and is limited to \$200 per project. Applications must be submitted or postmarked no later than Nov. 15, 2017. Grant awardees will be announced by the end of December.

The Ag Innovators grant is meant to encourage the development of creative solutions within agriculture-related innovation and leadership programs for youth. These solutions should address an educational need or opportunity in a more innovative, effective, equitable, or sustainable way than existing approaches. Applicants should be a public, nonprofit organization as defined by IRS Publication 78, or an organization or individual working with a verified fiscal sponsor. This is a \$500-\$10,000 grant opportunity, with priority given to proposals with project budget sizes that are of appropriate scale to the applicant's capacity to execute the project.

Grant application forms and more information on the programs, including reporting requirements, are available at www.sdagfoundation.org.

Medicare Open Enrollment Period Begins Oct. 15

PIERRE, S.D. – Open enrollment for the 2018 Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D plan year begins on Oct. 15 and ends on Dec. 7.

During the open enrollment period, trained volunteers from the South Dakota Senior Health Information and Insurance Education Program (SHIINE) will offer free assistance to seniors seeking additional Medicare information.

To schedule a meeting with a volunteer in your community visit www.shiine.net or contact one of the following regional offices:

- Eastern Region: 1-800-536-8197
- Central Region: 1-877-331-4834
- Western Region: 1-877-286-9072

Individuals taking advantage of the free one-on-one counseling should bring their Medicare card and a current list of medications.

SHIINE is a federal program designed to help individuals with questions about Medicare and protecting their benefits.

SHIINE is funded through the Administration for Community Living and administered by the South Dakota Department of Human Services Division of Long Term Services and Supports.

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Today in Weather History

October 2, 1971: Heavy wet snow of over a foot fell in the northern Black Hills. The heavy snow was accompanied by high winds which caused extensive damage to trees and utility lines. The power company said it was one of the worst storms they had experienced.

1858: The only hurricane to impact California struck San Diego on this day. Two researchers with NOAA Michael Chenoweth and Christopher Landsea reconstructed the path of the storm using accounts from newspapers of the high winds. They estimated that if a similar storm were to have hit in 2004, it would have caused around \$500 million in damage.

1882 - An early season windstorm over Oregon and northern California blew down thousands of trees and caused great crop damage in the Sacramento Valley. (David Ludlum)

1959 - A tornado struck the town of Ivy, VA (located near Charlottesville). Eleven persons were killed, including ten from one family. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature at Blue Canyon, CA, soared to 88 degrees, an October record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - Severe thunderstorms raked Phoenix, AZ, with heavy rain, high winds, and hail up to an inch and a half in diameter, for the second day in a row. Thunderstorms on the 1st deluged Phoenix with .68 inch of rain in five minutes, equalling their all-time record. (The Weather Channel)


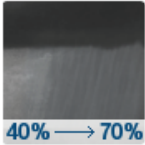





1987 - A fast moving cold front produced snow flurries from Minnesota to the Appalachian Mountains, and gale force winds behind the front ushered cold air into the Great Lakes Region. Valentine NE reported a record low of 25 degrees. Temperatures recovered rapidly in the Northern High Plains Region, reaching the lower 80s by afternoon. Jackson, WY, warmed from a morning low of 21 degrees to an afternoon high of 76 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Early morning thunderstorms in Georgia produced three inches of rain at Canton and Woodstock. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Flooding due to thunderstorm rains in the southeastern U.S. on the last day of September and the first day of October caused the Etowah River to rise seven feet above flood stage at Canton GA. Thunderstorms produced up to ten inches of rain in northeastern Georgia, with six inches reported at Athens GA in 24 hours. One man was killed, and another man was injured, when sucked by floodwaters into drainage lines. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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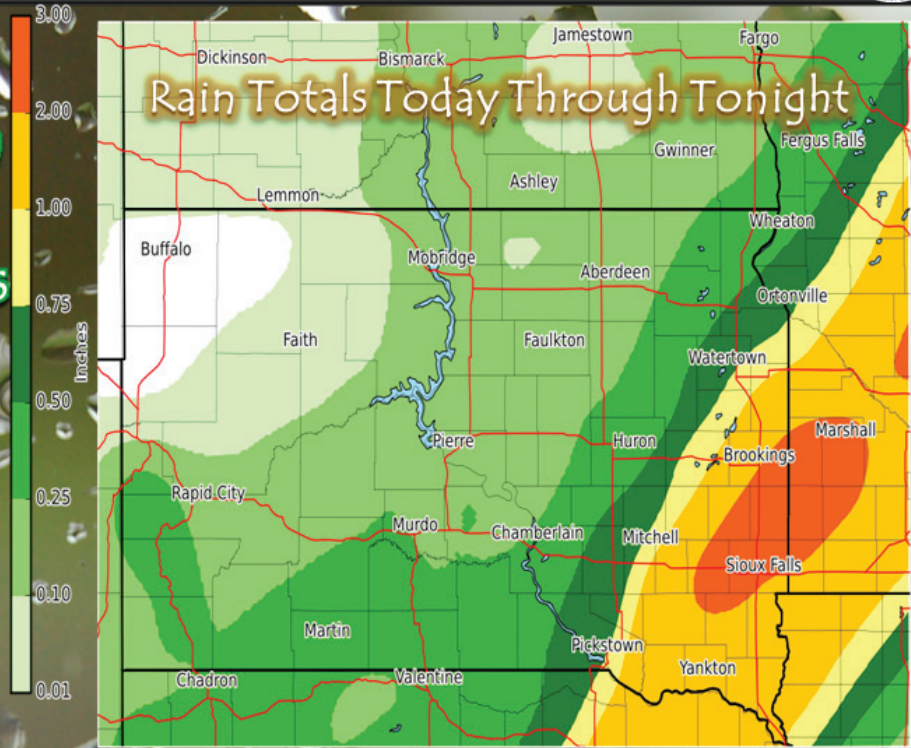
This Afternoon	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Cloudy	40% → 70% Chance Showers then Showers Likely	20% Slight Chance Showers	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	20% Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance Showers	Sunny
High: 65 °F	Low: 47 °F	High: 61 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 60 °F	Low: 43 °F	High: 64 °F



More Rain in the Forecast



Highs Today in the 60s. Mostly Dry this Morning, Rain Chances Increasing this Afternoon & Evening.



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 10/2/2017 3:59 AM Central

Published on: 10/02/2017 at 4:07AM

A frontal boundary extending from western Minnesota, southwest into Nebraska will become active again later today, and into tonight with showers and thunderstorms. The heaviest rainfall should fall over southeast South Dakota and northeast into Minnesota. This system should move east of the area by Tuesday morning.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 77.8

Low Outside Temp: 56.9

High Gust: 33

Precip: 0.06

Today's Info

Record High: 91° in 1897

Record Low: 17° in 1974

Average High: 65°F

Average Low: 38°F

Average Precip in Oct: 0.16

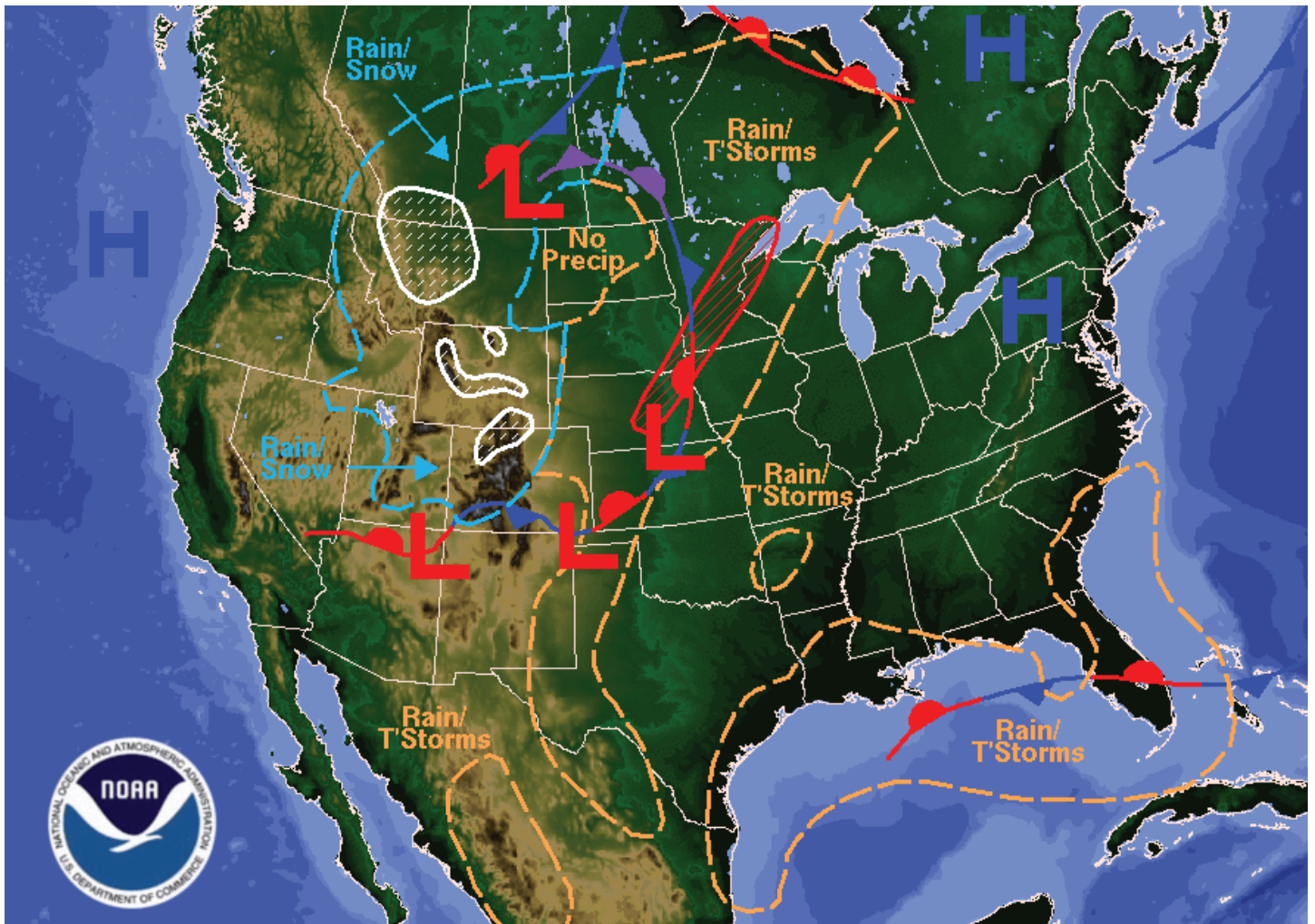
Precip to date in Oct: 0.06

Average Precip to date: 18.64

Precip Year to Date: 13.15

Sunset Tonight: 7:11 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:34 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Oct 02, 2017, issued 5:02 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Have you ever met someone who did not like their name? Perhaps it reminded them of a person who disturbed them in one way or another. Or it may have represented something that was offensive to them. Maybe it "sounded" like a girl's name or a boy's name or a sissy's name. Sometimes we are "given" names by the way we act or what we do or even how we look.

David knew there was something unique and special about a name that was above every other name. He knew that there was one name that represented the solution for the problems of life. He understood the significance of "that Name". He knew that the road for man to recover from destruction and death to happiness and heaven – was in that Name.

"Save me, O God, by Your name; vindicate me by Your might." In asking God to save him, David wanted God to deliver him from his sinful condition – even though the Savior had not come and completed His work on the cross. He was well aware of his sins and shortcomings and knew that there was nothing he could do to rescue or redeem himself. Only a gracious God who had rescued His children from times of destruction and death in the past could do the same for him in the present. He knew God's power from His-story in the past as He brought His children to their Promised Land.

When David called on God's name in prayer, he brought God into that moment in his life. He needed God to be with him, hear him, save him and deliver him. What about you?

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the power that Your name represents – power to deliver and save us from sin. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 54:1 Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meal- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 5/5/2018 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/28/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program at the Cemetery, Lunch to follow at the American Legion (Memorial Day)
- 6/14/2018 Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- 6/15/2018 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/16/2018 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2018 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/22/2018 Summer Fest (4th Sunday in July)
- 9/8/2018 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/6/2018 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/12/2018 Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota farmer ditch wheat plantings for corn, soybeans

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Corn and soybeans are supplanting wheat as the crop of choice among South Dakota farmers because of higher profitability.

This year's planted acres of spring and winter wheat in the state fell to just over 2 million, one of the lowest figures since the 1800s, the Capital Journal reported .

U.S. Department of Agriculture figures show South Dakota farmers seeded wheat on 4 million acres as early as the year 1900. But lower prices and profitability for wheat compared to corn and soybeans the past 10 to 20 years have convinced farmers to plant less wheat.

Wheat has become "a rotation crop," meaning it's planted more for the agronomic value between corn and soybean plantings rather than for the cash grain value, said Reid Christopherson, executive director of the South Dakota Wheat Commission.

South Dakota Corn Growers Association Vice President Doug Noem farms near Bryant in South Dakota's sweet spot for corn: near the border of Iowa and Minnesota.

"I used to grow wheat," Noem said. "I don't think we have grown wheat for seven, eight years. It's all corn and soybeans."

South Dakota farmers planted 950,000 acres of winter wheat in the fall of 2016. But drought conditions most of this year meant they harvested only about 650,000 acres, a more than 41 percent decrease from harvest in 2016, according to the USDA.

By contrast, soybean acres planted hit a record of 5.4 million in the state this year, doubling in the past 22 years and increasing from a small amount only 40 years ago.

The state's farmers decreased the corn acres they planted to 5.2 million this year. That number is down from the record 6.2 million acres in 2013 after prices hit record levels.

Survey suggests more economic growth ahead for Midwest

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A monthly survey of business leaders suggests economic conditions are still improving for nine Midwest and Plains states.

A report released Monday says the Mid-America Business Conditions Index rose to 58.2 in September from 57.5 in August and 56.1 in July. Creighton University economist Ernie Goss oversees the survey, and he says international sales, strong profit growth and low interest rates boosted the economic outlook among supply managers in the nine-state region.

The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth in that factor. A score below that suggests decline.

The survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

South Dakota unaffected by national gun sale decline

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — People in the arms industry say South Dakota is relatively unaffected by a nationwide dip in gun sales after a bump in interest before the 2016 election.

Some residents last year worried that if Hillary Clinton were elected, gun ownership rights would slip and certain models would be pulled. But those who track the gun industry in South Dakota say gun advocacy in the state remains strong, the Argus Leader reported .

Steve Naatjes, owner of Gary's Gun Shop in Sioux Falls, said assault rifle sales picked up before the election but have since scaled back. But he said handgun sales have remained consistent, a trend he said was likely spurred by local and national news involving robberies and shootings.

"Handgun sales are always strong," he said.

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The South Dakota Secretary of State's Office reports that the state's total pistol permit numbers climbed to more than 96,000 last year during the presidential election, a jump of about 8,600 compared with the beginning of 2016. After a slight decline, the number of permits as of July 31 was more than 95,000.

Annual new permits and renewals are at 14,400 so far this year, compared to 11,500 in 2007, according to state records.

Nationally, the decline in gun sales is more apparent. Outdoor retail chain Cabela's said store sales decreased nearly 10 percent nationwide in the most recent quarter compared to 2016. The retailer said firearms and shooting-related products were responsible for almost half of the decline.

South Dakota residents tend to respect guns, said Alex Lerdal, a Sioux Falls resident who was renewing his concealed carry permit.

"Around here, almost everyone has one," he said. "It doesn't have to be for self-defense. It doesn't have to be for hunting."

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

South Dakota Army Guard unit returns from Middle East

HURON, S.D. (AP) — Soldiers from a South Dakota Army National Guard unit are home after serving 10 months in the Middle East.

Family and friends welcomed home about 165 soldiers from the 153rd Engineer Battalion and its forward support company Saturday in Huron.

The Huron and Parkston-based units provided command and control of attached engineer units. Members of the unit served in 24 locations throughout the region, including Iraq and Syria.

U.S. Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem and Lt. Gov. Matt Michels were among officials at the event.

The 153rd's primary mission was to provide general engineering and maneuver support to the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command and Special Operations Task Force. The unit served as operational command of five attached units totaling 550 soldiers.

University of South Dakota sees increase of Iowa students

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Many northwest Iowa students have hoped to save several thousand dollars by enrolling at the University of South Dakota over the past two years.

The Sioux City Journal reports that the South Dakota Board of Regents began extending in-state tuition to new Iowa freshman and transfer students attending one of the state's four public universities in the 2016-17 school year.

The University of South Dakota's in-state tuition and fees is about \$8,700 for the 2017-18 year, which is about \$3,200 less than out-of-state tuition.

The university says the incentive has led to a nearly 70 percent increase in Iowa residents attending the university, with more than 300 students attending this academic year.

The university also offers the in-state tuition rate to the children of alumni.

Midwest economy: September state-by-state glance

By The Associated Press

The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates

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an expanding economy over the next three to six months.

Here are the state-by-state results for September:

Arkansas: The September overall index for Arkansas rose to 67.3 last month from August's 65.9. Components of the index were new orders at 72.9, production or sales at 76.7, delivery lead time at 66.6, inventories at 60.9 and employment at 59.6. "Over the past 12 months, Arkansas increased manufacturing employment by 2.1 percent, or approximately 3,300 manufacturing jobs. Losses for durable-goods producers were more than offset by gains for nondurable-goods manufacturers," Goss said.

Iowa: The state's overall index rose to 60.7 in September from 57.7 in August. Components of the index were new orders at 63.2, production or sales at 70.6, delivery lead time at 60.0, employment at 54.3 and inventories at 55.4. "Over the past 12 months, Iowa increased manufacturing employment by only 0.7 percent, or approximately 1,400 manufacturing jobs. Gains were experienced almost equally by durable-goods producers and nondurable-goods manufacturers," he said.

Kansas: Kansas' overall index increased to 43.6 last month, a regional low. The August figure was 42.8. Components of the index were new orders at 47.1, production or sales at 52.7, delivery lead time at 40.5, employment at 38.5 and inventories at 39.3. "Over the past 12 months, Kansas experienced a decline in manufacturing employment of 2.1 percent, or approximately 3,300 manufacturing jobs. Almost all of the loss was recorded by the state's durable-goods manufacturing sector," said Goss.

Minnesota: The state's overall index declined to a still healthy 59.4 from August's 61.8. Components of the overall September index were new orders at 64.3, production or sales at 68.6, delivery lead time at 57.9, inventories at 53.7 and employment at 52.5. "Over the past 12 months, Minnesota increased manufacturing employment by 1 percent, or approximately 3,100 manufacturing jobs. Most of the gains were recorded by nondurable-goods producers," he said.

Missouri: Missouri's overall index climbed to 63.9 last month from 61.1 in August. Components of the overall index were new orders at 69.3, production or sales at 69.2, delivery lead time at 66.2, inventories at 60.5 and employment at 54.3. "Over the past 12 months, Missouri increased manufacturing employment by 3.1 percent, or approximately 8,100 manufacturing jobs," Goss said. Gains were recorded by both durable- and nondurable-goods producers.

Nebraska: The September overall index for Nebraska rose to 59.3 from 57.9 in August. Components of the index were new orders at 65.4, production or sales at 64.2, delivery lead time at 59.0, inventories at 54.6 and employment at 53.4. "Over the past 12 months, Nebraska increased manufacturing employment by only 0.8 percent, or approximately 800 manufacturing jobs. Losses for durable-goods producers were more than offset by gains for nondurable-goods manufacturers," he said.

North Dakota: North Dakota's overall index declined to 63.9 from August's 69.1. Components of the overall index in September were new orders at 70.4, production or sales at 74.3, delivery lead time at 58.5, employment at 57.5 and inventories at 58.8. "Over the past 12 months, North Dakota experienced a 2.8 percent decline in manufacturing employment, or approximately 700 manufacturing jobs. However, additions by the state's large energy sector more than offset manufacturing losses," said Goss.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma's overall index climbed to a healthy 62.7 in September from 56.2 in August. Components of the overall index were new orders at 67.8, production or sales at 71.9, delivery lead time at 61.5, inventories at 56.6 and employment at 55.4. "Over the past 12 months, Oklahoma increased manufacturing employment by 2.8 percent, or approximately 3,600 manufacturing jobs. Contrary to the other eight states, Oklahoma's gains were driven by the state's durable-goods manufacturers," he said.

South Dakota: The state's overall index improved slightly, hitting 46.6 last month, compared with 45.5 in August. Components of the overall index were new orders at 50.4, production or sales at 55.7, delivery lead time at 43.8, inventories at 42.1 and employment at 41.2. "Over the past 12 months, South Dakota experienced a decline in manufacturing employment of 1 percent, or approximately 400 manufacturing jobs. Almost all of the loss was recorded by the state's durable-goods manufacturing sector," Goss said.

Major road projects near Mount Rushmore close to completed

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Crews are close to finishing highway projects to improve the well-traveled byways from Interstate 90 through Rapid City and on to Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

The Rapid City Journal reports workers this month are putting the final touches on a \$32 million project to rebuild a prime connector for tourists coming into downtown Rapid City.

A three-year, \$30 million rebuilding of Mount Rushmore Road is slated for completion early next year. That road is considered the gateway to the Black Hills and Mount Rushmore.

State Transportation Department Engineering Supervisor Steve Palmer says more big construction projects are set to begin in the near future, including repairs of an interstate bridge.

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

Man who killed NFL star's son taking case to high court

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The case of a man serving life in prison for killing the 2-year-old son of NFL running back Adrian Peterson in South Dakota is going before the state Supreme Court.

Joseph Patterson was convicted in September 2015 of second-degree murder in the October 2013 death of Tyrese Ruffin, the son of Patterson's girlfriend and Peterson.

Patterson appealed, and the Argus Leader reports the state Supreme Court will decide whether his jury trial was mishandled. Attorney arguments are scheduled Monday on several questions, including whether the trial court prejudiced the jury by allowing prosecutors to mention certain information.

Peterson was a longtime member of the Minnesota Vikings. He now plays for the New Orleans Saints.

Kyle mother pleads guilty to neglecting daughters

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Kyle woman has pleaded guilty to felony child abuse and neglect charged after her two of her children were found emaciated on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Thirty-four-year-old Darcel Featherman admitted to leaving her daughters, ages 2 and 3, with her mother and sister, knowing they wouldn't properly care for them due to alcohol and meth use.

Tribal police found the girls nearly starved to death in November 2016. Authorities say both weighed about 13 pounds and could barely move. Court documents show the older girl was later found to be blind due to "chronic non-accidental" brain trauma.

The children were placed in custody of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Sniper in high-rise hotel kills at least 58 in Las Vegas

By SALLY HO and REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A gunman perched on the 32nd floor of a Las Vegas hotel-casino unleashed a hail of bullets on an outdoor country music festival below, killing at least 58 people as tens of thousands of concertgoers screamed and ran for their lives, officials said Monday. It was the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

At least 515 others were injured in the Sunday night attack, authorities said.

SWAT teams using explosives stormed the gunman's hotel room in the sleek, gold-colored glass skyscraper and found he had killed himself, authorities said. The gunman, identified as Stephen Craig Paddock, a 64-year-old retiree from Mesquite, Nevada, had as many as 10 guns with him, including rifles, they said.

Asked about the motive for the attack, Sheriff Joseph Lombardo said: "I can't get into the mind of a psychopath at this point."

The sheriff said a check of federal and state databases showed Paddock was not on law enforcement authorities' radar before the bloodbath.

Aaron Rouse, the FBI agent in charge in Las Vegas, said investigators saw no immediate evidence connect-

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ing it to an international terror organization, despite a claim of responsibility from the Islamic State group.

Country music star Jason Aldean was performing at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in front of a crowd of more than 22,000 when the gunman in the 44-floor Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino apparently used a hammer-like device to smash out windows in his room and opened fire, the muzzle flashes visible in the dark, authorities said.

The crowd, funneled tightly into a wide-open space, had little cover and no easy way to escape. Victims fell to the ground while others fled in panic. Some hid behind concession stands, while others crawled under parked cars.

Kodiak Yazzie, 36, said the music stopped briefly after the first shots, then started up again before a second round of pops sent the performers ducking for cover and fleeing the stage.

"It was the craziest stuff I've ever seen in my entire life," Yazzie said. "You could hear that the noise was coming from west of us, from Mandalay Bay. You could see a flash, flash, flash, flash."

Monique Dumas, of British Columbia, Canada, said she was six rows from the stage when she heard what she thought was a bottle breaking, then a popping that sounded to her like fireworks.

Couples held hands as they ran through the dirt lot. Faces were etched with shock and confusion, and people wept and screamed. Some were bloodied, and some were carried out by fellow concertgoers. Dozens of ambulances took away the wounded, while some people loaded victims into their cars and drove them to the hospital.

The shooter appeared to fire unhindered for more than 10 minutes as Las Vegas police frantically tried to locate the man in one of the Mandalay Bay hotel towers, according to radio traffic. For several minutes, officers could not tell whether the automatic fire was coming from Mandalay Bay or the neighboring Luxor hotel.

In an address to the country, President Donald Trump called the attack "an act of pure evil" and added: "In moments of tragedy and horror, America comes together as one. And it always has." He ordered flags flown at half-staff.

Hospital emergency rooms were jammed with the wounded. Rep. Ruben Kihuen, a Democrat whose congressional district includes a portion of Las Vegas, visited a hospital and said: "Literally, every single bed was being used, every single hallway was being used. Every single person there was trying to save a life."

Las Vegas authorities put out a call for blood donations and set up a hotline to report missing people and speed the identification of the dead and wounded. They also opened a "family reunification center" for people to find loved ones.

The dead included at least three off-duty police officers from various departments who were attending the concert, authorities said. Two on-duty officers were wounded, one critically, police said.

"It's a devastating time," the sheriff said.

The sheriff said authorities believe it was a "lone wolf" attack but want to talk to Paddock's roommate, a woman Lombardo said was out of the country at the time of the attack.

Paddock's brother, Eric Paddock, who lives in Florida, told the Orlando Sentinel: "We are completely dumbfounded. We can't understand what happened."

Mayor Carolyn Goodman said the attack was the work of a "crazed lunatic full of hate."

In its claim of responsibility, the Islamic State group said the gunman was "a soldier" who had converted to Islam months ago. But it provided no evidence, and the extremist organization has been known to make unsubstantiated claims of responsibility for attacks around the world.

The Islamic State group also said it was responsible for a June attack on a Manila casino and shopping complex where 37 died, mostly from smoke inhalation — a claim rejected by authorities, who said the lone attacker was a heavily indebted Filipino gambling addict.

On Monday, the U.S. Homeland Security Department said there was no "specific credible threat" involving other public venues in the U.S.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions offered the support of the FBI and other federal agencies but noted that the investigation is being led by the sheriff in Las Vegas. That was seen as another possible sign the shooting was not believed to be an act of international terrorism.

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Interstate 15 was briefly closed after the attack, and flights at McCarran International Airport were suspended for a while.

Nearly every inch of the Las Vegas Strip is under video surveillance, much of it set up by the casinos to monitor their properties. That could yield a wealth of material for investigators as they try to piece together the attack.

Hours after the shooting, Aldean posted on Instagram that he and his crew were safe and that the shooting was "beyond horrific."

"It hurts my heart that this would happen to anyone who was just coming out to enjoy what should have been a fun night," the country star said.

Before Sunday, the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history took place in June 2016, when a gunman who professed support for Muslim extremist groups opened fire at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, killing 49 people.

Sunday's shooting came more than four months after a suicide bombing at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, that killed 22 people. Almost 90 people were killed by gunmen inspired by Islamic State at the Bataclan concert hall in Paris during a performance by Eagles of Death Metal in 2015.

This story has been corrected to give the right spelling for the last name of Kodiak Yazzie and show that the officer in critical condition was on duty at the time of the shooting.

Islamic State claims Las Vegas mass shooting

By SAMY MAGDY, Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Without providing any evidence to support the claim, the Islamic State group on Monday said the gunman in the mass shooting in Las Vegas was "a soldier" from its ranks who had converted to Islam months ago.

Authorities have yet to identify a motive for the shooting, and said initially there was no evidence of any connection to international terrorism.

The extremist group has a history of exaggerated or false claims, including earlier this year, when it claimed an attack on a casino in the Philippines that turned out to have been a botched robbery carried out by a heavily indebted gambling addict.

The group's Amaq news agency released two brief statements hours after the shooting at a country music concert that killed at least 58 people and wounded more than 500. It was the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

IS did not name the suspected shooter, but said he had "executed the operation in response to calls to target countries of the coalition" battling the extremist group in Iraq and Syria. The group later released Spanish language versions of the statements.

Police have identified the shooter as Stephen Craig Paddock, 64, of Mesquite, Nevada, and have said he killed himself after the shooting. Authorities have not commented on his religious background or said what might have motivated the attack.

Most IS attacks have been carried out by much younger men.

Sheriff Joseph Lombardo said authorities believe it was a "lone wolf" attack, and the U.S. Homeland Security Department said there was no "specific credible threat" involving other public venues in the U.S.

The extremist organization has suffered a string of major setbacks in Iraq and Syria, where it has lost much of the territory it once claimed as part of a self-styled Islamic caliphate. However, the group remains active in recruiting followers on social media, and has repeatedly called on its supporters to carry out attacks in Western nations.

The IS group often claims attacks by individuals inspired by its message but with no known links to the group.

Before Sunday, the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history took place in June 2016, when a gunman opened fire at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, killing 49 people. The shooter, Omar Mateen,

had pledged allegiance to IS and it claimed the attack.

IS claimed the attack on a casino in the Philippines that killed dozens of people, but police later identified the attacker as a Filipino gambling addict who was \$80,000 in debt, saying it was a botched robbery that was not terrorism-related.

Supreme Court term begins with case of workers' rights

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court opened a high-profile term Monday with a case about employees' rights that could affect an estimated 25 million workers.

Justice Neil Gorsuch, in his first full term on the bench, was silent during an otherwise lively argument in which the justices seemed closely divided.

The case is of considerable importance to employers and their workers because it involves how employees can complain about pay and conditions in the workplace.

The issue is whether businesses can force employees to individually use arbitration to resolve disputes. The case pits labor laws intended to allow workers to band together against an older law encouraging the use of arbitration, instead of the courts.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, seeming to speak for the court's liberal wing, said the importance of collective action is "there is strength in numbers. You have to protect the individual worker in a situation where he can't protect himself."

The conservative justices appeared to have a different view of the case.

Chief Justice John Roberts sounded concerned about a ruling for the workers, which he said "would invalidate contracts for 25 million employees." That's the estimated number of non-union workers who have contracts with the individual arbitration provision that is at the heart of the case.

One of the term's biggest cases, about partisan advantage in drawing electoral districts, is set for argument Tuesday. It has the potential to reshape American politics, if the court for the first time rules that political maps can be excessively partisan.

The justices took their seats just after 10 o'clock on the first Monday in October, the day prescribed in federal law as the start of the high court term. Roberts quickly declared the last term over and the new one, begun. Then he welcomed the nation's new solicitor general, Noel Francisco, who was confirmed by the Senate last month as the Trump administration's top Supreme Court lawyer.

Francisco's appearance was one of several signs of changes at or involving the court since Donald Trump's election as president.

Trump appointed Gorsuch to fill the seat that had been vacant since Justice Antonin Scalia's death. President Barack Obama had nominated Judge Merrick Garland for the vacancy, but Senate Republicans refused to act on Garland's nomination.

Another marker of change was in the administration's position in the employer-employee dispute. The Obama administration had sided with the workers, but Trump's Justice Department reversed that position.

The result was the rare appearance of two lawyers for governmental agencies on opposite sides of the same case. While the Justice Department contended the businesses should win, the National Labor Relations Board argued that the workers should be protected.

A decision is expected by the spring.

Facebook gives Russia-linked ads to Congress

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facebook announced Monday that the company is planning more measures to increase transparency in advertising as the company provides Congress with more than 3,000 ads linked to a Russian ad agency.

Joel Kaplan, the company's vice president of global policy, said in a blog post that Facebook is planning

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to hire more than 1,000 people to staff global ads review teams. Facebook will also update its policies to require better documentation from advertisers who want to run ads related to the U.S. election, including a requirement that the advertisers will have to confirm the business or organization they represent.

The moves come as the company is under pressure from multiple congressional committees that are investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election. Congress has recently focused on the spread of false news stories and propaganda on social media, putting pressure on Facebook and other social media companies to turn over more information and release any Russia-linked ads.

Facebook officials are turning over the ads they have discovered to the House and Senate intelligence committees and the Senate Judiciary Committee Monday. The company already has given similar material to Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into the Russian meddling.

Kaplan said in the post that all of the ads violated the company's policies because they come from inauthentic accounts. He said the ads "run counter to Facebook's mission of building community and everything we stand for."

Facebook announced last month that it had discovered the ads, which were linked to Facebook accounts that likely operated out of Russia and pushed divisive social and political issues during the U.S. presidential election. The company said it found 450 accounts and about \$100,000 was spent on the ads.

Kaplan said the company's policies already prohibit "shocking" content, direct threats and the promotion of the sale or use of weapons, but that "going forward, we are expanding these policies to prevent ads that use even more subtle expressions of violence."

Facebook plans also to strengthen enforcement against improper ads by boosting manual and automated review systems. In addition, the company will increase the requirements for documentation and share more information on bad actors with industry and government, according to Kaplan's post.

Twitter has said it found postings linked to the same Facebook accounts, and the House and Senate intelligence panels have asked both companies, along with Google, to testify publicly in the coming weeks. None of the companies have said whether they will accept the invitations.

It is unclear whether the Facebook ads turned over to Congress will eventually be released publicly. Several lawmakers — including Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence panel — have said they believe the American public should see them.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced on Sept. 21 that the company would provide the ads to Congress and also make changes to ensure the political ads on its platform are more transparent. He indicated that it was up to Congress and Mueller whether to release the ads.

"As a general rule, we are limited in what we can discuss publicly about law enforcement investigations, so we may not always be able to share our findings publicly," Zuckerberg said then. "But we support Congress in deciding how to best use this information to inform the public, and we expect the government to publish its findings when their investigation is complete."

Facebook has said the ads addressed social and political issues and ran in the United States between 2015 and 2017. The company said the ads appear to have come from accounts associated with a Russian entity called the Internet Research Agency.

Twitter said last week that it had suspended 22 accounts corresponding to the 450 Facebook accounts that were likely operated out of Russia.

Warner criticized Twitter for not sharing more information with Congress, saying the company's findings were merely "derivative" of Facebook's work. The company's presentations to staff last week "showed an enormous lack of understanding from the Twitter team of how serious this issue is, the threat it poses to democratic institutions," he said.

Associated Press writer Barbara Ortutay in New York contributed to this report.

Trump condemns 'act of pure evil' in Las Vegas

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday condemned the largest mass shooting in modern U.S. history as an “act of pure evil” and said the nation was “joined together in sadness, shock and grief” after more than 50 people were gunned down in Las Vegas.

He said he would be going to Las Vegas on Wednesday “on a very, very sad moment for me ... for everybody no matter where you are, no matter what your thought process.”

Speaking slowly and somberly from the White House, Trump declared that the nation would rally together in the face of the latest act of senseless violence.

“Our unity cannot be shattered by evil, our bonds cannot be broken by violence,” the president said. “We call upon the bonds that unite us: our faith, our family, and our shared values. We call upon the bonds of citizenship, the ties of community, and the comfort of our common humanity.”

In the measured statement, Trump did not describe the gunman in any way or suggest any possible motivation or affiliation. He praised the first responders who he said prevented further loss of life and said he would visit Las Vegas on Wednesday. He offered condolences to the families of those killed, saying “We cannot fathom their pain. We cannot imagine their loss.”

“We are praying for you,” he said. “We are here for you.”

He also ordered that the American flag at the White House and at all public buildings across the nation be flown at half-staff.

Trump spoke hours after a gunman on the 32nd floor of a Vegas Strip casino unleashed a hail of bullets on an outdoor country music festival below. The gunman killed at least 50 people as tens of thousands of concertgoers screamed and ran for their lives.

More than 400 other victims were taken to hospitals, and investigators spent Monday morning combing the debris-strewn concert site along the iconic Vegas Strip.

Trump, who quoted from Scripture and invoked God several times, said he prays for the day when the “innocent are safe from hatred and from fear.”

“At times such as these I know we are searching for some type of meaning in the chaos, some kind of light in the darkness. The answers will not come easy,” the president said.

Unlike his predecessor, Barack Obama, who used mass shootings to call for stricter gun control measures, Trump made no mention of firearms restrictions on Monday. But in the hours after the Las Vegas shooting, the familiar gun control debate emerged, once again breaking down along party lines.

Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut said it was time for Congress to end its inaction that followed other major incidents, including the one in Orlando and the 2012 school shooting in his home state. Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, an Iraq War vet, said he would not participate in a moment of silence for those lost because it “becomes an excuse for inaction.”

Other leading Democrats, including Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, also called for stricter gun control laws while Republicans largely ignored the subject. Both House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell offered sympathetic tweets for those lost but made no mention of guns.

During the presidential campaign, Trump cast himself as an ardent protector of the Second Amendment and proclaimed that if more “good guys” were armed with firearms there would be fewer gun tragedies. After the Orlando nightclub shooting last year, he suggested that if the club were not a gun-free zone, someone would have been able to stop the bloodshed.

“I was obviously talking about additional guards or employees,” he tweeted later.

Trump has long offered strong support for gun rights. He told the National Rifle Association this year that it had a “true friend” in the White House and signed a resolution passed by the GOP-led Congress blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people.

Trump has long-standing connections to Las Vegas. He owns a hotel just off the strip, about three miles from the shooting site, and has been supported by some of its biggest casino moguls, including Phil Ruffin and Sheldon Adelson.

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SWAT teams using explosives stormed the gunman's room in the Mandalay Bay hotel and found he had killed himself, authorities said. He had as many as 10 guns with him, including rifles, they said. The gunman was identified as Stephen Craig Paddock, 64, of Mesquite, Nevada. He had checked into the hotel room on Thursday, authorities said.

Since Trump's inauguration, there have been other mass shootings, including one in Texas last month, when a gunman killed eight and was fatally shot by police. But the Las Vegas attack is the deadliest in U.S. history.

The president offered a somber response in June, after a shooting at a congressional baseball practice that wounded five, including seriously injuring Rep. Steve Scalise. But Trump has drawn criticism for more inflammatory and self-referential reactions to other acts of violence.

After a shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando that left 49 dead in 2016, he tweeted, "Appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism." In the wake of a deadly terror attack in London in June, Trump targeted the city's mayor on Twitter, suggesting he wasn't taking the attacks seriously enough.

After the June 2016 Orlando shooting, Trump — a presidential candidate competing in the GOP primary — called for a travel ban targeting Muslim-majority countries. The Orlando shooter, Omar Mateen, was born in New York to Afghan immigrants. After becoming radicalized online, he pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State group.

"The bottom line is that the only reason the killer was in America in the first place was because we allowed his family to come here," Trump said.

And he drew sharp bipartisan criticism in August when he suggested there was blame "on both sides" during a violent clash in Charlottesville, Virginia between white supremacists and anti-racist demonstrators that left one person dead.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed reporting.

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

Las Vegas shooter was retired, had no criminal record

By KEN RITTER, Associated Press

MESQUITE, Nev. (AP) — The man who killed 58 people and injured at least 515 others at a Las Vegas concert was a retiree with no criminal history in the Nevada county where he lived, police said Monday.

The brother of Stephen Paddock, 64, said he's "completely dumbfounded" by the shooting at a country music concert Sunday night, the deadliest in modern U.S. history. Eric Paddock told the Orlando Sentinel newspaper that he can't understand what happened.

Stephen Paddock had no connection to an international terrorist group, the FBI said Monday. The announcement from Aaron Rouse, special agent in charge in Las Vegas, comes after the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack without providing evidence.

Nevada authorities say they believe Paddock acted alone and no motive was yet known.

Paddock owned a single-family home in Sun City Mesquite, a retirement community along the Nevada-Arizona border, Mesquite Police Chief Troy Tanner said.

He lived there with a 62-year-old woman, police said. Authorities said they don't believe she was involved and was out of the country at the time of the shooting but they wanted to speak to her when she returned.

Heavily armed police searched the home early Monday, hours after Paddock killed himself in a room at Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino where police believe he opened fire on a crowd of 22,000 people.

Paddock bought the one-story, three-bedroom home about 80 miles north of Las Vegas in 2015 for about \$370,000, according to property records that list him as a single man.

Authorities in Texas say he lived in a Dallas suburb from 2009 to 2012. Public records indicate Paddock may have lived in Mesquite, Texas, for longer, but police Lt. Brian Parrish said his department's review

shows the approximately three-year period.

A preliminary review of police records don't indicate that authorities had any contact with him but police are still investigating, Parrish said.

Trump welcomes Thailand's junta leader at White House

By **MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump welcomed Thailand's junta leader to the White House on Monday — a rare instance of a military ruler being feted in Washington before even a nominal return to civilian rule.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha was greeted at the South Portico by Trump and first lady Melania Trump as he arrived for talks and a working lunch. The visit comes three years after Prayuth seized power in a military coup, and days after the elected leader whose government he ousted was sentenced in absentia to five years in prison.

Human rights groups are outraged, but it gives a shot in the arm to U.S. relations with its oldest ally in Asia, which has moved more into China's orbit since Washington scaled back ties because of the military takeover.

The Trump administration, like the Obama administration before it, maintains that relations with Thailand will only be fully restored when democracy returns. But rolling out the red carpet for Prayuth reflects a shift in U.S. foreign policy priorities. Trump espouses a doctrine of "America First," prioritizing U.S. trade and strategic interests. He's more willing to engage with anti-democratic leaders and less troubled by their human rights records.

That's not been lost on observers in Thailand, whose diplomatic relations with Washington date back to 1833. Deep military ties were forged in the fires of the Vietnam War.

In an editorial, *The Nation*, a Thai newspaper, said the junta views the invite to Washington "as a nod to legitimacy in the absence of an electoral mandate." It contrasted that with President Barack Obama's disapproval of the coup, which "soured relations between our countries and forced the generals to lean heavily on China."

It's not that unusual for U.S. presidents to meet autocrats in the Oval Office, but coup leaders are more contentious.

Perhaps the closest recent comparison to Prayuth would be former Pakistani army chief Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who emerged as a close ally of President George W. Bush in the war on terror. Musharraf first visited the White House in 2002, three years after he seized power from an elected leader and before he'd rammed through a national referendum to endorse his presidency.

Trump has barreled through criticism about outreach to authoritarian foreign leaders as he looks to shore up America's long-standing alliances.

He praised Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte for his deadly war on drugs that has left thousands dead, according a leaked transcript of an April phone call. In the same month, Trump welcomed Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi to the White House — something that Obama avoided. El-Sissi had taken power in a 2013 coup and later was elected president.

Like el-Sissi, Prayuth has given up his military uniform. But he's still the head of a junta. The military took power in 2014 to restore order after violent political turmoil in Thailand. The unrest has abated, but human rights groups say that's come at a heavy price in what used to be one of the most vibrant democracies in Asia.

"Civil society, human rights and good governance in Thailand are under attack," said T. Kumar, Amnesty International USA's advocacy director for Asia. "The military government has restricted freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, creating an environment where people risk arrest and persecution for exercising their basic human rights. If these laws are not repealed, fear and repression could become the new normal in Thailand."

A new constitution that critics say was tailor-made for the military to retain effective control has been

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approved by popular referendum although without open debate. Elections have been repeatedly pushed back and are not expected before 2018. All political parties are restricted.

Prayuth's White House visit comes less than a week after a Thai court sentenced former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, whose government was ousted in the coup, to five years in prison for alleged negligence in a money-losing rice subsidy program. Yingluck fled the country before the verdict. She says she is innocent, and her supporters call the charges against her politically motivated.

A U.S. National Security Council spokesman, who was not authorized to speak publicly on planning for the visit and requested anonymity, said the U.S. will continue to urge Thailand to return to participatory democracy and restore civil liberties. He declined to say whether those points would be raised by Trump, but said the president could discuss how to strengthen U.S.-Thai relations.

After the coup, the United States stopped military assistance and training programs — a largely symbolic step but one that has gone down badly with Bangkok. Under Trump, the U.S. has authorized more arms sales.

John Sifton of Human Rights Watch predicted there wouldn't be substantial discussion on human rights on Monday. "Trump praises autocratic leaders the world over with little comment on their abuses," Sifton said.

Walter Lohman at the right-leaning Heritage Foundation said if Trump did raise democracy with Prayuth it would be behind the scenes, which he argued would be most effective with a country sensitive to foreign criticism.

"We need to be concerned about human rights and democracy, but it can't dictate our relationships with our allies," Lohman said.

Biological clock discoveries by 3 Americans earn Nobel prize

By JIM HEINTZ and DAVID KEYTON, Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Three Americans won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine on Monday for their discoveries about the body's biological clock, opening up whole new fields of research and raising awareness about the importance of getting enough sleep.

Jeffrey C. Hall, Michael Rosbash and Michael W. Young won the 9-million-kronor (\$1.1 million) prize for their work on finding genetic mechanisms behind circadian rhythms, which adapt the workings of the body to different phases of the day, influencing sleep, behavior, hormone levels, body temperature and metabolism.

They "were able to peek inside our biological clock and elucidate its inner workings," the Nobel citation said.

"Circadian dysfunction has been linked to sleep disorders, as well as depression, bipolar disorder, cognitive function, memory formation and some neurological diseases," according to a Nobel background report.

The awardees' work stems back to 1984, when Rosbash and Hall, both at Brandeis, along with Young isolated the "period gene" in fruit flies. Hall and Rosbash found that a protein encoded by the gene accumulated during the night and degraded during daytime. A decade later, Young discovered another "clock gene."

The work was done using fruit flies.

"I am very pleased for the fruit fly," Rosbash, a 73-year-old professor at Brandeis University, told The Associated Press. He said he got the call about the award just after 5 a.m.

"When the landline rings at that hour, normally it is because someone died," he said. "I'm still a little overwhelmed."

But he added "I stand on the shoulders of giants. This is a very humbling award."

Young is at Rockefeller University; Hall formerly was a visiting professor at the University of Maine but said his prize work was done at Brandeis.

Hall, 72, wryly noted that he was already awake when the call about the prize came around 5 a.m. because of age-related changes in his own circadian rhythms.

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"I said 'Is this a prank?'" he told the AP by telephone from Cambridge, Maine.

The winners have raised "awareness of the importance of a proper sleep hygiene" said Juleen Zierath of the Nobel Assembly at the Karolinska Institute, which chooses the laureates. Carlos Ibanez, another assembly member, said the research was important in understanding how humans adapt to shiftwork.

Michael Hastings, a scientist at the U.K. Medical Research Council, said the discoveries had opened up a whole new field of study for biology and medicine.

"Until then, the body clock was viewed as a sort of black box," Hastings told the AP. "We knew nothing about its operation. But what they did was get the genes that made the body clock, and once you've got the genes, you can take the field wherever you want to."

"It's a field that has exploded massively, propelled by the discoveries by these guys," he told the AP.

Hall said scientists have known about circadian rhythms since the 1700s but the research team looked at the mechanics and underpinnings of how it works. He said understanding that can give researchers a chance to address the circadian rhythm disorders that contribute to sleep problems.

Young said their research had disclosed "a beautiful mechanism" for how genes controlled body clocks.

Asked at a New York news conference about possible medical breakthroughs from the work, Young said "we're just starting with this." But he noted that a genetic mutation had been found in some people who have chronic trouble getting to sleep at night.

"Our wellbeing is affected when there is a temporary mismatch between our external environment and this internal biological clock, for example when we travel across several time zones and experience 'jet lag,'" the Nobel statement said, explaining the research. "There are also indications that chronic misalignment between our lifestyle and the rhythm dictated by our inner time keeper is associated with increased risk for various diseases."

That misalignment may be associated with diseases including cancer and degenerative neurological conditions.

"If you understand how the normal process works, that gives you a chance, not an inevitability, but a chance to influence the internal workings of the clock and possibly to improve a patient's wellbeing," Hall said.

"I think most of its practical applications lie ahead," said Rosbash.

Frank Jordans in Berlin, Malcolm Ritter in New York, Rodrique Ngowi in Newton, Massachusetts, David Sharp in Portland, Maine, and Bob Lentz in Philadelphia contributed to this story.

Follow the AP's coverage on the Nobels here: <https://apnews.com/tag/NobelPrizes>

AP-NORC poll: Americans want local leaders to fight warming

By SETH BORENSTEIN and EMILY SWANSON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans want their local officials to take on the challenge of battling global warming now that President Donald Trump is withdrawing the nation an international climate change agreement.

That's according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago. The poll finds 57 percent of Americans say they favor local governments picking up the slack to try and reduce greenhouse gas emissions on their own, with only 10 percent opposing it. About 55 percent of Americans say their own local and state governments should be doing more to address global warming, with only 10 percent saying they should be doing less.

And more Americans oppose than favor Trump's effort to pull the U.S. out of the 2015 Paris accord, in which nearly 200 nations agreed to self-imposed cuts or limits on emissions of heat-trapping gas pollution. Forty-two percent of those surveyed said they oppose getting out of the Paris agreement, while 28 percent favored the withdrawal and 28 percent had no strong opinion. Among Democrats 64 percent want to stay in the Paris agreement and 17 percent don't. More Republicans favored withdrawing, 46 percent, than staying in, 22 percent.

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Martha Oberman, an online businesswoman from Texas who sells collectibles, called Trump's decision to get out of the Paris agreement "horrible, short-sighted."

"If we're not going to get (action) from the top, you have to start at the bottom at the local level and work its way to the top," Oberman said.

Local governments can get things done, said Antonio Torres, a former chef in central Florida. He'd like to see local governments bring more solar energy use online.

That rings true with Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski, who co-chairs two committees of mayors who are fighting climate change. One of her groups has 115 cities committed to the goal of having their cities operating entirely on renewable energy by the year 2035. Salt Lake City is hoping to beat that goal by a few years.

"We're leading the conversation because we have to now," Biskupski said. "Here we are with the president coming out against supporting the Paris agreement. Now we really ramped things up with the mayors across the country."

Overall, 72 percent of Americans say they believe climate change is happening and 63 percent think human activity is at least partially responsible. Eighty-two percent of Democrats and 43 percent of Republicans say they believe in at least partially human-caused climate change. The poll was conducted before a spate of hurricanes battered Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

Eighty percent of Democrats and 43 percent of Republicans think it's a problem the U.S. government should be addressing.

Torres said in Florida he feels the heat of climate change and recently his house was banged up by Hurricane Irma.

"We definitely have climate change," Oberman said from Texas. "We've seen Houston. We've seen Puerto Rico. To say there is no climate change is crazy."

But not Ruth Acquaviva of Delaware, who retired from working in accounting.

"What are you going to do about it? It's a natural phenomenon," she said. "It's Mother Nature changing some things. It's not a big deal."

Around 90 percent of all scientific studies and nearly every major scientific organization in the world say climate change is real, at least partly caused by humans and a problem. But to that Acquaviva said those researchers "are absolutely bullcrap. There's no way in God's world they can prove to me it's man-made."

Acquaviva said there's no need "to spend money on climate change."

However, most Americans said they'd be willing to spend a little extra on their electricity bill to fight climate change, with the key words being "a little." Just over half — 51 percent — would be willing to pay an additional \$1 on each month's electricity bill, though just 4 in 10 would be willing to pay an additional \$10 a month. About 3 in 10 would even be willing to pay an additional \$20 to \$40 a month.

Just under half of Americans — 48 percent — called climate change a very or extremely important issue, while 54 percent said the same of energy policy. In contrast, at least two-thirds say health care, the economy and terrorism are important policy priorities.

In general, Americans were twice as likely to oppose as to favor the current direction of U.S. energy policy, 35 percent to 17 percent, but nearly half didn't state a preference either way.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,038 adults was conducted Aug. 17-21 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

The survey was paid for by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago.

Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods, and they were later interviewed online or by phone.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

Bizarre attacks in Havana hit US spy network in Cuba

By **MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN, JOSH LEDERMAN and MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press**

HAVANA (AP) — Frightening attacks on U.S. personnel in Havana struck the heart of America's spy network in Cuba, with intelligence operatives among the first and most severely affected victims, The Associated Press has learned.

It wasn't until U.S. spies, posted to the embassy under diplomatic cover, reported hearing bizarre sounds and experiencing even stranger physical effects that the United States realized something was wrong, individuals familiar with the situation said.

While the attacks started within days of President Donald Trump's surprise election in November, the precise timeline remains unclear, including whether intelligence officers were the first victims hit or merely the first victims to report it. The U.S. has called the situation "ongoing."

To date, the Trump administration largely has described the 21 victims as U.S. embassy personnel or "members of the diplomatic community." That description suggested only bona fide diplomats and their family members were struck, with no logical motivation beyond disrupting U.S.-Cuban relations.

Behind the scenes, though, investigators immediately started searching for explanations in the darker, rougher world of spycraft and counterespionage, given that so many of the first reported cases involved intelligence workers posted to the U.S. embassy. That revelation, confirmed to the AP by a half-dozen officials, adds yet another element of mystery to a year-long saga that the Trump administration says may not be over.

The State Department and the CIA declined to comment for this story.

The first disturbing reports of piercing, high-pitched noises and inexplicable ailments pointed to someone deliberately targeting the U.S. government's intelligence network on the communist-run island, in what seemed like a bone-chilling escalation of the tit-for-tat spy games that Washington and Havana have waged over the last half century.

But the U.S. soon discovered that actual diplomats at the embassy had also been hit by similar attacks, officials said, further confounding the search for a culprit and a motive.

Of the 21 confirmed cases, American spies suffered some of the most acute damage, including brain injury and hearing loss that has not healed, said several U.S. officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the investigation and demanded anonymity. They heard an unsettling sound inside and in some cases outside their Havana homes, described as similar to loud crickets. Then they fell ill.

Over time, the attacks seemed to evolve.

In many of the more recent cases, victims didn't hear noises and weren't aware an attack was occurring, identifying the symptoms only later. That has raised concerns among investigators that the attacks may be getting more sophisticated and harder to detect, individuals briefed on the investigation said.

Though the State Department has called all the cases "medically confirmed," several U.S. officials said it's unclear whether all of the victims' symptoms can be conclusively tied to attacks. Considering the deep sense of alarm among Americans working in the embassy, it's possible some workers attributed unrelated illnesses to attacks.

Almost nothing about what has transpired in Havana is perfectly clear. But this is Cuba.

For decades, Washington and Havana pushed their rivalry to unprecedented levels of covert action. The former enemies tracked each other's personnel, turned each other's agents and, in the case of the CIA, even mounted a failed attempt to overthrow the Cuban government in the 1961 "Bay of Pigs" invasion.

There were hopes, though, that the two nations were starting to put that bitter history behind them after renewing diplomatic relations in 2015. When the attacks first occurred, the U.S. and Cuban governments were hard at work on clinching new commercial and immigration agreements. No new spat among intelligence services was publicly known.

Eleven months on, the U.S. cannot guarantee the threat is over. Last week, the State Department warned Americans to stay away from Cuba and ordered more than half the embassy staff to leave indefinitely. The U.S. had previously given all embassy staff the option to come home, but even most of those struck

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by the mysterious attacks had opted to stay, individuals familiar with the situation said.

For those staying and new arrivals, the U.S. has been giving instructions about what to watch and listen for to identify an attack in progress. They're also learning steps to take if an attack occurs that could mitigate the risk, officials said.

But the U.S. has not identified whatever device is responsible for the harm. FBI sweeps have turned up nothing.

So to better identify patterns, investigators have created a map detailing specific areas of Cuba's capital where attacks have occurred, several individuals familiar with the matter said. Three "zones," or geographic clusters of attacks, cover the homes where U.S. diplomats live and several hotels where attacks occurred, including the historic Hotel Capri.

Since first disclosing the situation in August, the United States had generally avoided the word "attacks." It called them "incidents" instead until last Friday. Now, the State Department deems them "specific attacks" targeting Americans posted in Havana, without saying what new information, if any, prompted the newfound confidence they were indeed deliberate.

The most obvious motive for attacking Americans in Havana would be to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Cuba. If that's the case, the strategy appears to be succeeding.

Last week's embassy drawdown added to the growing friction between the nations. And an accompanying new travel warning deemed Havana's hotels unsafe for visitors, threatening to drive down tourism, a backbone of Cuba's economy.

In Havana, American diplomats are frantically selling off possessions — from mattresses to canned goods to children's toys — and hunting for jobs and places to live in the United States. Many have spent years overseas and don't have homes waiting for them in the United States.

"Heartbroken? Me too, but this will make you feel better," one seller posted in a chatroom for foreigners in Cuba, under a picture of a Costco artichoke hearts jar selling for \$6.

For Cubans, it may be no better. The U.S. has been providing 20,000 visas a year to Cubans moving to the United States. It has issued thousands more to Cubans wishing to visit family in America. The reduction in U.S. staff in Havana means visa processing there has been suspended indefinitely.

Cuba has vehemently denied involvement or knowledge of the attacks. Some in the U.S. government believe the Cubans may be telling the truth, officials said.

When President Raul Castro denied any culpability in February, he did so on the sidelines a meeting in Havana with five visiting U.S. members of Congress, the AP found. The U.S. had raised complaints about the attacks to Cuba just days earlier through diplomatic channels.

But the visiting lawmakers knew nothing of the attacks taking place in the country they were visiting.

Nor did they know that Castro had used the occasion of their meeting to pull aside Jeff DeLaurentis, then the top U.S. diplomat in Cuba, to say privately that his government was equally alarmed and willing to help.

The lawmakers all declined to comment. Cuban officials say they're disappointed in the U.S. retaliatory measures but will continue cooperating with the investigation.

Lederman and Lee reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Bradley Klapper in Washington contributed.

Trump closes WH event to highlight deregulation

By LAURIE KELLMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has set out to upend some of President Barack Obama's regulations, which the White House says circumvented Congress in the first place and cost American businesses and the economy billions of dollars.

Without any major legislative accomplishments to point to despite the advantage of a Republican-controlled Congress, Trump on Monday was to give a speech in the White House East Room highlighting his own directives to agencies. The White House said the president is no longer attending the event following

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the mass killing of at least 50 people Sunday in Las Vegas. Vice President Mike Pence will lead it, but the White House closed the event to press coverage, an official there said.

There was no sign whether Pence will talk about gun regulations. During the presidential campaign, Trump cast himself as an ardent protector of the Second Amendment and proclaimed that if more "good guys" were armed with firearms there would be fewer gun tragedies. After the Orlando nightclub shooting, he suggested that if the club hadn't been a gun-free zone, someone would have been able to stop the bloodshed.

Executive orders are less enduring than legislation because a president can overturn a predecessor's policy. Obama reversed some of President George W. Bush's executive orders, and Trump's will be reviewed by his successor.

Neomi Rao, administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, estimated that Trump's regulations will save about \$300 million annually, but she did not explain how Office of Management and Budget analysts came up with that number.

Critics of the effort say regulations exist to ensure safety and fairness in the workplace and elsewhere. Public Citizen, a watchdog group, says the rollback of government guidelines are Trump and the Republican Party's "craven attempt at self-enrichment and payback to corporate donors. In fact, robust regulation and enforcement are essential to economic prosperity."

Some of the major changes Trump has made since taking office in January:

YOUNG IMMIGRANTS

The latest Obama policy to fall is the program shielding from deportation hundreds of thousands of young people brought into the country as children and living here illegally. The Trump administration in September said the government would stop issuing new work permits while lawmakers debate whether the protections should be enshrined in law. In explaining his decision, Trump accused Obama of making "an end run around Congress" to protect those commonly referred to as "Dreamers." Obama retorted that Trump's action was a "cruel" and "self-defeating" decision tinged with politics. Democratic leaders and Trump said they have reached a deal to protect the immigrants, but Congress has since turned its focus to overhauling the tax code.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

Trump has vowed to pull the United States out of the landmark Paris climate agreement through which nearly 200 countries have committed to combat global warming by reducing polluting emissions. He's scrapped an Obama administration policy that let national parks ban the sale of bottled water to fight littering. He's moved to rip up Obama's Clean Power Plan, regulations that sought to reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants. His executive order on regulatory reform has been cited by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt as a reason to delay or roll back a raft of Obama-era environmental regulations, from cleaning up water pollution from coal mines to blunting limits on emissions of toxic mercury from power plant smokestacks. The EPA is not among the 10 agencies expected to hold public briefings after Trump's speech on Monday.

EDUCATION

The Trump administration in September scrapped Obama-era guidance on investigating campus sexual assault, replacing it with new instructions that allow universities to require higher standards of evidence when handling complaints. His administration also annulled Obama's accountability rules that were used to identify and help troubled schools and to evaluate teachers.

TRANSGENDER ISSUES

Trump's Education Department has lifted the Obama-era guidance to schools to allow transgender students to use the bathroom of their choice. The president also tweeted out word that transgender people would no longer be allowed to serve openly in the military, reversing an Obama administration provision

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and sending the Pentagon scrambling to draft new rules. In the meantime, any transgender troops now serving in the military can re-enlist in the next several months, the Pentagon said in September.

MUSLIM TRAVEL

His initial executive order temporarily banning travel to the U.S. from several Muslim-majority countries and suspending the U.S. refugee program hit roadblocks in the courts. On his second attempt, the Supreme Court allowed only a sharply scaled-back version of the order to go forward pending arguments scheduled for October. When that order expired on Sept. 24, Trump signed a measure imposing new restrictions on travelers from citizens of Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and North Korea. The Supreme Court then canceled the arguments and gave both sides time to explain whether the matter was now moot.

Follow Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

Google drops "first click free," loathed by many publishers

NEW YORK (AP) — Google will try to help newspapers and other publishers boost subscriptions by ending a decade-old policy that required them to provide a limited amount of free content before people were asked to pay for it.

The "first click free" policy at the world's biggest search engine was loathed by publishers because while the stories, videos and images appearing on Google have been free for its users, it is expensive to produce.

Publishers had been required to provide at least three free items under the search engine's previous policy.

Publishers will now be allowed to decide how many, if any, free articles they want to offer readers before charging a fee, Richard Gingras, vice president of news at Google Inc., wrote Monday in a company blog post.

For people who intentionally sought to skirt paywalls, the policy allowed readers to type a headline into Google and get free access to a story without having it count against a monthly free article limit, said Kinsey Wilson, an adviser to New York Times CEO Mark Thompson.

In months of testing with Google, reducing those free clicks from three to zero "generally improved" conversion to subscriptions, Wilson said. But he added the Times continues to assess whether to actually reduce the number of free clicks now that it can. He said it was "not simply a mechanical decision" because the Times' mission was in part to make sure its news was available to a wide audience and to set the news agenda.

Among the changes announced by Google:

—Click for free is over. Publishers decide what and if they want to provide for free.

—Google will produce a suite of products and services aimed at broadening the audience for publishers in an attempt to drive subscriptions and revenue.

—Streamline payment methods so that readers can tailor their own experience. That would include access to a publication's digital content with one click. That content could then be accessed anywhere — whether it's on a publisher's website or mobile app, or on Google Newsstand, Google Search or Google News.

Newspapers and magazines have shut down in droves or they have been forced to shrink operations drastically worldwide because of the influx of stories, images and video jettisoned across the internet, largely at no charge. Technological changes have fractured the advertising market and constrained revenues for almost all established media.

Much of the content, created and paid for by media companies, travels through Google's Chrome, which captured nearly 60 percent of all searches in September, according to NetMarketShare.

The change in Google policy was hailed immediately by major media companies.

"If the change is properly introduced, the impact will be profoundly positive for journalists everywhere and for the cause of informed societies," News Corp. CEO Robert Thomson said in a prepared statement. "Fake news has prospered on digital platforms which have commodified content and thus enabled bad actors to game the system for commercial or political gain."

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Shares of companies like New York Times Co., News Corp. E.W. Scripps and Tronc Inc., all rose when the market opened Monday.

The relationship between Google and publishers is complex. With readers opening tablets and phones rather than picking up a newspaper from the stoop or lawn, Google has vexed publishers as it gobbles up advertising dollars for content produced by those publishers.

But they need powerful search engines to spread their content and gain readers as they transition to digital.

A Pew Research Center analysis of data from AAM shows that total weekday circulation for U.S. daily newspapers - both print and digital - fell 8 percent in 2016, marking the 28th consecutive year of declines.

But digital subscriptions are rising rapidly for major established newspapers.

In July, news outlets sought permission from Congress for the right to negotiate jointly with Google and Facebook, given the duo's dominance in online advertising and online news traffic. The News Media Alliance, which represents, nearly 2,000 news organizations, say that because Google and Facebook are so dominant, news publishers are forced to "surrender their content and play by their rules on how news and information is displayed, prioritized and monetized."

Publishers want stronger protections for intellectual property, support for subscription models and a bigger share of the online advertising market. Google and Facebook combined will account for 60 percent of the US digital advertising market this year, according to the research firm eMarketer.

Google decided to offer more flexibility to publishers based on additional research, feedback from publishers, and extended experiments with The New York Times and Financial Times, Gingras said.

Google says it's working with publishers to streamline whatever payment form they would like to pursue so that it's easier for users to decide what they wish to pay for. The goal is to help publishers identify possible subscribers and build a better subscription model, Google said.

Catalonia calls for Spain mediation amid referendum dispute

By ARITZ PARRA and CIARAN GILES, Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Catalonia's leader on Monday called for international mediation and for the European Union "to stop looking the other way" in the region's bid to secede from Spain, a day after a violent crackdown by Spanish police trying to block referendum voting.

Carles Puigdemont also said that he would file a complaint against Spanish police after officers fired rubber bullets, smashed into polling stations Sunday and beat back protesters with batons. Puigdemont didn't give further details, but urged Spain's national police reinforcements to leave the northeastern region.

But Spanish authorities commended police, saying they acted professionally and that their response was proportionate. And Spain's interior minister said that the 5,000 extra officers deployed to Catalonia would stay as long as necessary.

Catalan officials say an overwhelming majority of voters supported independence from Spain, but the central government in Madrid has repeatedly condemned the referendum as illegal, unconstitutional and invalid.

The EU and most governments in the 28-nation bloc haven't backed Catalonia's independence movement, fearful that it could unleash a wave of secessionist movements on the continent.

But Puigdemont called for the EU to consider Catalonia's desire to break away from Spain as a regional problem, and urged Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's government to accept mediation.

"The European Union has to stop looking the other way," Puigdemont said. "This is not a domestic issue. The need for mediation is evident."

Earlier Monday, an EU statement implored both sides to pull back from confrontation in favor of dialogue. More than 890 people were injured, most of them not seriously, in confrontations with police trying to shut down the voting. More than 30 police officers were also injured.

The Catalan president said the regional parliament plans to declare independence in the next days. He spoke after a closed-door Cabinet meeting Monday.

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The referendum debacle brought Spain and Catalonia closer to a potentially disastrous showdown as each side said Sunday's events proved them right and neither looked prepared to cede ground.

Rajoy, meanwhile, will meet with Popular Party leaders before seeking a parliamentary session to discuss how to confront the country's most serious crisis in decades.

He also called an afternoon meeting with the leaders of the opposition Socialist and Ciudadanos (Citizens) parties to discuss Spain's options.

The impasse developed after Catalan authorities decided to go ahead with Sunday's referendum even after Spain's Constitutional Court suspended it. The Spanish central government denies the referendum even took place, while Catalan separatists say it was valid and justifies making a final break with Spain.

Catalonia said preliminary poll results showed 90 percent favored independence after less than half the electorate voted in a day that saw 893 people injured in clashes with riot police. Catalonia's health services said four people remained in the region's hospitals, two of them in serious condition. In addition, 33 police officers were injured.

Clashes broke out at a number of voting locations after riot police turned up to prevent people from voting and to confiscate ballot boxes.

Some Catalans said both sides were responsible for the mayhem.

"I am very annoyed for the both sides involved in what happened yesterday," said Eric Tigrá, 56. "I think both sides involved committed grave mistakes. But we must also highlight that if the people of Catalonia go out in the streets and you don't listen to them then something is not working right."

Catalan leaders accused Spanish police of brutality and repression while the Spanish government praised security forces for acting firmly.

Videos and photographs of the police actions featured on the front page of news media outlets around the world.

In an editorial, leading Spanish daily El País blamed the Catalan government for Sunday's "shameful" events but also criticized the Spanish government for its inability to tackle the crisis that began about seven years ago. The newspaper said the day was "a defeat for our country."

So far, the European Union, the U.S. and most international bodies have backed Spain in its stance against Catalan independence.

The EU on Monday urged all sides in Spain to move from confrontation to dialogue.

"These are times for unity and stability," EU spokesman Margaritis Schinas said.

Catalonia, with the vibrant city of Barcelona as its capital, represents a fifth of Spain's economy. Polls consistently show that while most of its 7.5 million inhabitants favored a referendum, they are roughly evenly split on independence from Spain.

Those in favor of secession argue that the region contributes more to the national government than it receives in return. Catalonians already enjoy a wide measure of autonomy but the central government still controls taxation and other financial levers, as well as infrastructure projects.

Ciaran Giles reported from Madrid.

US army chief says Russia war games broke observer rules

BRUSSELS (AP) — The U.S. Army's commander in Europe says Russia broke up its Zapad war games with Belarus into parts to avoid having international monitors watch the weeklong exercises last month.

Lieutenant General Ben Hodges said Monday that the two countries deployed "way over 12,700" personnel, the limit beyond which Europe's OSCE security organization should be allowed to send observers.

Hodges said: "My guess is that there probably were over 40,000 service members."

He told reporters at NATO headquarters that Russia and Belarus "broke it up into all these little exercises" but that "these were all connected, because this was a whole of government effort."

Russia's defense ministry said the Zapad exercises would involve 12,700 Russian and Belarusian troops, about 70 aircraft, up to 250 tanks, 200 artillery systems and 10 warships.

2 women plead not guilty in N. Korean scion's assassination

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

SHAH ALAM, Malaysia (AP) — Two women accused of smearing a banned nerve agent on the face of the estranged half brother of North Korea's leader pleaded not guilty as their trial began Monday in the Feb. 13 assassination at a crowded Malaysian airport terminal.

Siti Aisyah of Indonesia and Doan Thi Huong of Vietnam are suspected of using VX nerve agent to kill Kim Jong Nam at Kuala Lumpur's airport. The women say they thought they were playing a harmless prank for a hidden-camera TV show.

An airport doctor testified that Kim died rapidly, with his blood pressure and pulse first soaring and then plunging.

After the charges were read to the women in their native languages at Malaysia's High Court, they shook their heads "no" when asked if they were guilty.

The two women are the only suspects in custody in a killing that South Korea's spy agency said was part of a five-year plot by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to kill a brother he reportedly never met. Police say four North Koreans suspected of involvement left the country on the day of the attack. Three others who holed up inside North Korea's embassy were allowed to leave in a deal with Pyongyang to ease tensions, despite Malaysia's anger at the public use of a chemical weapon on its territory.

Lawyers for the two women, who face the death penalty if convicted, asked the court to compel prosecutors to identify four people still at large mentioned in the charge sheet as having a common intention to kill Kim. The judge denied the request.

Four witnesses testified Monday: an airport information counter worker and a police officer who were among the first to interact with Kim after the attack, and a doctor and a nurse at the airport who treated him.

Airport clinic Dr. Nik Mohd Adzrul Ariff Raja Azlan gave a detailed account of Kim's rapid decline.

"When I saw him, his hands were clutching his head. He was closing his eyes tightly and his face was very red. He was sweating profusely," Nik said, adding that Kim was unable to respond when asked what happened.

Nik said Kim had very high blood pressure and a quickened pulse and started to display seizure symptoms, with his jaw and teeth clenched and eyes rolling upward.

He said Kim then fell unconscious, his blood pressure dropped to 70/40, and then his pulse was lost.

The prosecution phase of the trial is expected to last about two months, after which the judge will decide if there is a strong case for the women to have to mount their defense, said Hisyam Teh Poh Teik, Huong's lawyer.

Kim, who was 45 or 46, was the eldest son of the family that has ruled North Korea since its founding, yet he reportedly fell out of favor in 2001 when he was caught trying to enter Japan on a false passport, saying he wanted to visit Tokyo Disneyland. He had been living abroad for years and at the time of his death was traveling on a North Korean diplomatic passport under the name "Kim Chol."

North Korea has a long history of ordering killings of people it views as threats to its regime, though Kim was not thought to be seeking influence over his younger brother. He had, however, spoken out publicly against his family's dynastic control of the reclusive, nuclear-armed nation.

North Korea has denied any role in the killing and has not even acknowledged the dead man was Kim Jong Nam. It has suggested the victim died of a heart attack and accused Malaysia of working with South Korean and other "hostile forces" in blaming Pyongyang.

During Monday's hearing, Kim was referred to as "Kim Chol." The two defendants listened intently and were briefed by translators during the trial, with Huong smiling on several occasions.

The trial will be closely watched by the Indonesian and Vietnamese governments, which have hired lawyers to defend the women.

Aisyah's lawyer, Gooi Soon Seng, said before the trial began that her defense will be that she didn't know

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she had poison on her hand when she smeared Kim's face and was instead the victim of an elaborate trick. The 25-year-old was at a pub in Kuala Lumpur in early January when she was recruited by a North Korean man to star in what he said were video prank shows, Gooi said.

Over the course of several days, the North Korean, who went by the name James, had Aisyah go out to malls, hotels and airports and rub oil or pepper sauce on strangers, which he would film on his phone, the lawyer said.

Aisyah was paid \$100-\$200 for each prank and hoped the income would allow her to stop working as an escort, Gooi said.

In late January, Aisyah flew to Cambodia, where James introduced her to a man called Chang, who said he was the producer of video prank shows for the Chinese market, the lawyer said. Back in Malaysia, Chang asked Aisyah to do several more pranks at the Kuala Lumpur airport a few days before Kim was attacked. At the airport on the day of Kim's death, Chang pointed him out to Aisyah as the next target and put the poison on her hand, the lawyer said.

Police say Chang was actually Hong Song Hac, one of the four North Korean suspects who left Malaysia on the day of the killing, while James was Ri Ji U, one of the three other North Koreans who hid inside their country's embassy in Kuala Lumpur to avoid questioning.

Those three were later allowed to fly home in exchange for nine Malaysians allowed to leave Pyongyang. Gooi said James was key to Aisyah's defense and that his absence could weaken her case.

Aisyah, who has a son, has written to her family and told them to pray for her "so that the case will be over soon and I can go back home."

The 29-year-old Vietnamese suspect, Huong, was caught on airport security surveillance cameras wearing a white sweatshirt emblazoned with the big black letters "LOL" — the acronym for "laughing out loud." Little is known about her. Raised in a rice farm in northern Vietnam, her family said they had hardly heard from her since she left home a decade ago.

She made postings on a Facebook page under the name Ruby Ruby, according to her niece, Dinh Thi Quyen.

Photos on the page show Huong wearing a white shirt that says "LOL," like the one seen during the attack. It shows her posing for selfies in January in Cambodia and in Kuala Lumpur a few days before the attack. Her last post was on the morning of Feb. 11, two days before the attack, from an area near the airport.

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. MASS SHOOTING ON LAS VEGAS STRIP DEADLIEST IN MODERN US HISTORY

A gunman on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino opens fire on an outdoor country music festival, killing at least 50 people and wounding more than 200, officials say.

2. CATALANS UPSET, DIVIDED AFTER INDEPENDENCE VOTE

Catalonia's government is holding a closed-door Cabinet meeting to discuss the next steps in its plan to secede from Spain.

3. WHO TOOK 2017 NOBEL PRIZE IN MEDICINE

Three Americans — Jeffrey Hall, Michael Rosbash and Michal Young — are laureates for their discoveries about the body's daily rhythms.

4. ATTACKS IN HAVANA HIT AMERICAN SPY NETWORK IN CUBA

Sources tell AP the U.S. realized something was amiss when its operatives working under diplomatic cover reported hearing bizarre sounds and experienced strange physical effects.

5. HOW TRUMP IS COUNTERING LACK OF LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

The president is highlighting his own directives to government agencies, which have been ordered to cut two regulations for every new one imposed.

6. SUPREME COURT TO GAVEL IN NEW YEAR

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Justice Neil Gorsuch is on board for his first full term and there are several high-profile, difficult cases on its docket.

7. PLEAS ENTERED IN KIM JONG NAM CASE

Two women accused of fatally poisoning the estranged half brother of North Korea's ruler plead not guilty in Malaysia.

8. WHERE OJ SIMPSON PLANS TO STAY A WHILE

A Nevada parole official tells the AP that the former football hero and celebrity criminal defendant plans to live at a home in the Las Vegas area for the foreseeable future.

9. BRITAIN'S 5TH-LARGEST CARRIER GOES UNDER

Authorities are scrambling to bring home 110,000 travelers after Monarch Airlines collapses.

10. SEAHAWKS RALLY PAST COLTS

Linebacker Bobby Wagner scoops up a forced fumble and rumbles 21 yards for a score, sparking Seattle past Indianapolis 46-18.

OJ Simpson freed; parole official says he'll live in Vegas

By KEN RITTER and JUSTIN PRITCHARD, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Officials at a remote Nevada prison where O.J. Simpson was set free after nine years for armed robbery arranged the former football and Hollywood star's dead-of-night departure to avoid public scrutiny.

It worked. Simpson signed release paperwork and disappeared into the darkness early Sunday, minutes into the first day he was eligible for release. Through efforts by prison officials to keep the time and place secret, there were no journalists outside the prison gates to capture the moment.

Though publicity-prone in the past, Simpson apparently took the advice of people in his inner circle that he avoid the spotlight. He was neither heard from nor seen publicly, except when a television news crew found him in a car at a gas station on the way to Las Vegas and he declined to be interviewed.

State Division of Parole and Probation Capt. Shawn Arruti told The Associated Press that the former football hero and celebrity criminal defendant plans to live at a home in the Las Vegas area for the foreseeable future. Arruti declined for what he said were security and privacy reasons to disclose the exact location of the house.

Simpson was released at 12:08 a.m. PDT from Lovelock Correctional Center in northern Nevada, state prisons spokeswoman Brooke Keast told AP. She said she didn't know the name of the driver who met him and took him to an undisclosed location.

Keast recorded and released a brief video on social media in which Simpson is told to "come on out" and he responds "OK" after walking through an open door and toward a parking lot bordered by desert scrub brush.

The prisons spokeswoman also took photographs showing Simpson — in blue jeans, denim jacket, eye-glasses, ball cap and white sneakers — signing documents about 10 minutes before midnight. He later left the prison with four or five boxes of possessions in the car. Keast said she had no information about where he was going.

Tom Scotto, a Simpson friend who lives in Naples, Florida, said by text message an hour after the release that he was with Simpson. But Scotto did not answer texts asking where they were going or whether members of Simpson's family were with them.

Along with Simpson's sister and oldest daughter, Scotto had attended the July parole hearing at the same prison where Simpson went after his conviction for a botched 2007 heist at a Las Vegas hotel room — prison time he avoided after his 1995 acquittal in the killings of his ex-wife and her friend.

The 70-year-old Simpson said at the hearing that he wanted to move back to Florida, where he lived for nearly a decade before he was sent to prison in 2008. That return did not appear imminent.

Arruti said the only Simpson living arrangement received, investigated and approved was in the Las Vegas area. The parole official said Simpson doesn't have permission to leave Nevada.

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Florida's Corrections Department "has not received any transfer paperwork from Nevada" about Simpson that would be required for him to live in that state and be monitored there, spokeswoman Ashley Cook said Sunday.

Though Florida's attorney general has urged corrections officials to object to Simpson's return, the department previously has said it would be required to accept a transfer if it met certain criteria.

"We understand we may have to take him, if he was a model prisoner. And two of his children live here, so that's his hook for coming to Florida," state Attorney General Pam Bondi said. "If we have to accept him, I certainly want conditions placed on him."

Simpson's attorney, Malcolm LaVergne, and state Parole and Probation Capt. Shawn Arruti, who has been handling Simpson's case, did not respond Sunday to messages seeking comment about Simpson's whereabouts.

Las Vegas is a 450-mile (720-kilometer) drive south of Lovelock, and a television news crew reported finding Simpson at a gas station near his destination. Simpson declined to be interviewed, saying he had done nothing since his release but sit in a car for five hours.

LaVergne said recently that Simpson looked forward to reuniting with his family, eating steak and seafood and returning to Florida. Simpson also planned to get an iPhone and get reacquainted with technology in its infancy when he began his sentence, his attorney said.

Both LaVergne and Scotto said in recent interviews with the AP that they thought Simpson should stay out of public view and focus on family and friends.

Keast said the overnight release from the prison about 90 miles (145 kilometers) east of Reno, Nevada, was conducted to avoid media attention. No media were near the front gate at the time when Simpson's car left the prison by a back road and entered nearby Interstate 80, she said.

"We needed to do this to ensure public safety and to avoid any possible incident," Keast said.

She acknowledged Nevada prison officials misled the media with word about the timing and location of Simpson's release. They had advised it would be no earlier than Monday and possibly in Las Vegas.

Simpson faces restrictions during five years of parole supervision, which could be reduced for good behavior. He cannot use illegal drugs and can drink alcohol only if the amount he drinks is below Nevada's blood-alcohol limit for driving. He also is prohibited from associating with felons or anyone who Nevada officials prohibit him contacting. And he must tell the state where he'll be living and when he changes his residence. The conditions still apply if Simpson ends up out of state.

Simpson bought his home near Miami five years after his acquittal and raised two of his children, Justin and Sydney, there away from the limelight. He lost the home to foreclosure in 2012.

It's all a new chapter for the one-time pop culture phenomenon whose fame was once again on display when the major TV networks carried his parole hearing live.

He told officials that leading a group of five men into the hotel room confrontation was an error in judgment he would not repeat.

Simpson told the parole board that he led a "conflict-free life," an assertion that angered many who believe he got away with killing his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, in Los Angeles in 1994. He was acquitted the following year in what was dubbed the "trial of the century."

In a statement released through a family spokesman, Goldman's parents said they respected the Nevada Parole Board's decision to release Simpson, but that it was "still difficult for us knowing he will be a free man again."

Fred and Kim Goldman said they will continue to pursue payment of a \$33.5 million judgment awarded in 1997 after Simpson was found civilly liable for the deaths. They also said they'll keep advocating for domestic violence awareness, victim advocacy and judicial reform.

Simpson is still obligated to pay the judgment, which now amounts to about \$65 million, said David Cook, a Goldman family lawyer.

On Sept. 16, 2007, Simpson led five men he barely knew into a cramped room at the Palace Station casino in Las Vegas in an effort to retrieve items that Simpson insisted were stolen after his acquittal in the 1994 slayings.

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Two of the men with Simpson in Las Vegas carried handguns, although Simpson still insists he never knew anyone was armed. He says he only wanted to retrieve personal items, mementoes and family photos from two sports memorabilia dealers.

His conviction in October 2008 in Las Vegas came 13 years to the day after his acquittal in October 1995 in Los Angeles. His lawyers called his stiff 9-to-33-year sentence for armed robbery, kidnapping and other charges unfair. Many other people characterized it as payback for his acquittal in the Los Angeles murder case.

Pritchard contributed from Los Angeles. Associated Press writer Ian Mader in Miami contributed to this report.

As calendar flips to October, the MLB postseason from A to Z

By **BEN WALKER, AP Baseball Writer**

All those home runs by Aaron Judge, all those wins by the Los Angeles Dodgers, nicely done. Except none of that matters now — a sinker that bounces to the backstop, a liner that hooks barely foul, the whole script flips.

October has a way of doing that.

The Major League Baseball playoffs start Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium when New York hosts the Minnesota Twins in the AL wild-card game. A look at the 2017 postseason, from A to Z:

A: ALTUVE'S ASTROS — Generously listed at 5-foot-6, Jose Altuve is baseball's little big man. The do-everything second baseman won his third AL batting title and aims to lead the Astros to their first World Series crown. With the Houston area recovering from Hurricane Harvey, they're the sentimental favorites.

B: BULLPENS — Kenley Jansen and Aroldis Chapman going long, Andrew Miller entering early, Clayton Kershaw as a closer. The old rules were out last October when it came to relief roles. We'll see what pops up in the 'pens this year.

C: CUBS VS. CLEVELAND — Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo, Corey Kluber & Crew, once more? It's been a while since a World Series rematch, when Reggie Jackson led the Yanks over the Dodgers in 1977-78. But, it's already been a ripe year for repeats — Warriors vs. Cavaliers, Alabama vs. Clemson.

D: DEBUTS — Strikeout king Chris Sale makes his first playoff appearance when Boston starts at Houston on Thursday in the best-of-five AL Division Series. Rockies bopper Nolan Arenado and Twins slugger Brian Dozier are postseason newbies, too. So is Nationals backup Adam Lind, after 12 years and more than 1,300 games.

E: EXTRA — Hmm, anyone remember the last time a postseason game went to extra innings? Hard to top the Cubs' 10-inning, rain-delayed, 8-7 thriller over Cleveland in Game 7. The Red Sox are the experts of extras this year — they're 15-3, including seven straight wins.

F: FREE AGENTS — Sure, 20 teams are done. But their fans can always dream. Cubs righty Jake Arrieta, Royals third baseman Mike Moustakas and Rays thumper Logan Morrison are on the list of who'll soon be available. The most intriguing possibility might be Shohei Otani, a star pitcher and hitter in Japan.

G: GOOD TO SEE YA — Rockies outfielder Carlos Gonzalez returns to the playoffs for the first time since 2009, when he was 10 for 17. Twins star Joe Mauer has been absent since 2010. And Nationals ace Stephen Strasburg has pitched just once in Washington's three trips, heading into this matchup with the Cubs.

H: HOME FIELD — World Series home-field advantages goes to the team with the best record. Thankfully, it's no longer based on who wins the All-Star Game. That means the Dodgers (104 wins) get first dibs, followed by Cleveland (102), Houston (101), Washington (97), Boston (93) and the Cubs (92).

I: INJURIES — Nationals ace Max Scherzer tweaked his hamstring, teammate Bryce Harper is getting over a bad knee. Banged-up All-Stars Miguel Sano of the Twins and Michael Brantley of the Indians might be able contribute this week. Might not.

J: JOE MADDON — A cool cat, he keeps his Cubs loose. He reveled in last year's rallying cry: "Try Not to Suck." The skipper became the toast of Chicago, ending that century-old drought. Funny, all those warm-

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and-fuzzy Wrigley Field feelings are gone now, at least beyond the Friendly Confines.

K: KERSHAW — He tied for the major league lead in wins and won his fifth ERA title. He's a three-time Cy Young Award winner and seven-time All-Star. But will anyone get more scrutiny in the postseason than Clayton Kershaw? Probably not, because the LA lefty is 4-7 with a 4.55 ERA in the postseason.

L: LOUSY WEATHER — Too bad, the temperature is often better suited for snowballs than baseballs. It was in the low 40s at Wrigley last year, and just imagine how it might feel in Denver or Minneapolis. If you want clear conditions, root for Arizona vs. Houston and their retractable roofs.

M: MANAGERS — Twin Cities native Paul Molitor, Torey Lovullo of the Diamondbacks and Bud Black of the Rockies are first-time skippers in the playoffs. Washington's Dusty Baker is back for his ninth try, still seeking that elusive first World Series championship.

N: NETTING — Fan safety has drawn special focus ever since a 1-year-old girl was recently hit by Todd Frazier's 105 mph foul ball at Yankee Stadium. Of the teams in these playoffs, three already had extended the netting to screen spectators: Houston, Washington and Minnesota. The Yankees say they'll have it next year.

O: OCTOBER — Of course. But if the World Series goes to Game 7, they'll go beyond Halloween and play on Nov. 1.

P: PUERTO RICO — Carlos Beltran, Francisco Lindor and Carlos Correa are among the many players from Puerto Rico trying to raise money and awareness for the damage done to their island by Hurricane Maria. Look for messages on caps and shoes over the next few weeks.

Q: QUICK? — Extra mound conferences, longer TV commercials, more pitching changes, they all contribute to slowing down the pace in the playoffs. MLB wants to speed up the action and avoid a repeat from last year, when postseason games averaged almost 3 1/2 hours. Not a good sign that regular-season games this year took more than 3 hours, 5 minutes on average, the longest ever.

R: ROOKIES — Yankees behemoth Aaron Judge broke the major league record with 52 home runs by a rookie, Dodgers surprise Cody Bellinger set the NL mark with 39. Other newcomers who could make an impact: Red Sox outfielder Andrew Benintendi, Cubs outfielder/infielder Ian Happ and 33-year-old Astros first baseman Yuli Gurriel.

S: STREAKS — Jose Ramirez and the Indians set an AL record by winning 22 straight, the Dodgers dropped 11 in a row for their worst skid since moving from Brooklyn. A year after winning its first six postseason games, and in this season of streaks, Cleveland hopes to do it again.

T: TRADES — Justin Verlander (5-0, 1.06 ERA for Houston), J.D. Martinez (29 homers in 62 games for Arizona) and Jose Quintana (7-3, 3.74 for the Cubs) are some of the stars who were acquired in midseason trades. Yu Darvish, David Robertson and Eduardo Nunez also gave their new teams a boost.

U: UMPIRES — It won't be long before some team is hollering about an ump's strike zone. Those calls can't be contested, but others can. Some teams are very good at getting them overturned (Joe Girardi and the Yankees won 72 percent of their challenges). Others, not so much (the Nationals were right only 36 percent).

V: VOTING — All ballots for MVP, Cy Young and other major awards must be sent before the playoffs begin. These honors will generate plenty of debate before the winners are announced in November. Altuve or Judge, Kluber or Sale?

W: WILD CARDS — Madison Bumgarner and the 2014 Giants are the only wild-card team to win the World Series since MLB went to a one-and-done format in 2012. Before that, five wild cards took the title: Cardinals (2011), Red Sox (2004), Marlins (2003, 1997) and Angels (2002).

X: XANDER BOGAERTS — Perhaps the Boston shortstop might be the next infielder to really break out in postseason. Think Javier Baez, Daniel Murphy, Ben Zobrist and Alcides Escobar in recent years.

Y: YANKEE STADIUM — The playoffs begin the Bronx, with Yankees youngster Luis Severino starting the AL wild-card game, taking on Ervin Santana and the Twins.

Z: ZACK GREINKE — The Arizona ace is set to throw the first pitch in Wednesday's NL wild-card game at home against a familiar opponent. He's 2-1 in five starts vs. Colorado this year.

Trump says envoy 'wasting his time' talking to North Korea

By MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Sunday that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was “wasting his time” trying to negotiate with North Korea over its nuclear and missile programs, raising speculation about whether Trump could be undermining efforts to maintain channels of communication or somehow bolstering the diplomat’s hand in possible future talks.

It was not immediately clear what prompted Trump’s tweets, among a series of weekend posts that ranged from hurricane recovery efforts in Puerto Rico to NFL players’ allegiance to the national anthem, and at whom they were aimed: Tillerson, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, those pushing for continued diplomacy, those favoring a military response to repeated provocations.

Tillerson had acknowledged on Saturday, after meetings in Beijing with Chinese leaders, that the Trump administration was keeping open direct channels of communications with North Korea and probing the North’s willingness to talk.

He provided no elaboration about those channels or the substance of any discussions. After he left China, his spokeswoman issued a statement saying that North Korean officials “have shown no indication that they are interested in or are ready for talks regarding denuclearization.”

And then Trump weighed in the next day with tweets that included his usual personal dig at Kim.

“I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man ... Save your energy Rex, we’ll do what has to be done!”

Trump offered no further explanation, but last month he told the U.N. General Assembly that if the U.S. is “forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”

Later, after Trump arrived at an international golf competition at a northern New Jersey course, a new tweet appeared: “Being nice to Rocket Man hasn’t worked in 25 years, why would it work now? Clinton failed, Bush failed, and Obama failed. I won’t fail.”

To a senior Tillerson adviser, there was no ambiguity in Trump’s earlier posts.

“The President just sent a clear message to NK: show up at the diplomatic table before the invitation gets cold,” R.C. Hammond tweeted. “Message to Rex? Try message to Pyongyang: Step up to the diplomatic table.”

U.S.-North Korean communications are long-standing. They include the two nations’ U.N. missions, regular exchanges between senior diplomats, and unofficial discussions between North Korean officials and former U.S. officials. Diplomats say there have been no new channels established recently, or any dramatic shift in Trump administration policy.

Some commentators seized on Trump’s tweets as evidence that he was either undermining Tillerson personally or his diplomacy, or both. Others said the tweets might represent a “good cop-bad cop approach” to North Korea that may or may not be misguided or bear fruit.

Still others saw Trump’s words as an attempt to give Tillerson diplomatic cover and potentially strengthen his hand in persuading North Korea to come to the table by declaring the effort a “waste of time” that the U.S. could abandon at any time in favor of tightening sanctions even further or a military response.

Sen. Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the U.S. “absolutely” should step up diplomatic efforts. “We’re moving to a place where we’re going to end up with a binary choice soon,” Corker told NBC’s “Meet the Press” in an interview before Trump had tweeted.

“I think Tillerson understands that every intelligence agency we have says there’s no amount of economic pressure you can put on North Korea to get them to stop this program because they view this as their survival,” Corker said.

He added: “If we don’t ramp up the diplomatic side, it’s possible that we end up cornered.”

The main goal of the initial contacts through the diplomatic back-channel between the Trump State Department and North Korea’s mission at the United Nations was the freedom of several American citizens imprisoned in North Korea, although U.S. officials have told The Associated Press there were broader

discussions about U.S.-North Korean relations.

Those contacts, however, have failed to reduce the deep mistrust between the adversaries.

North Korea has in recent months tested long-range missiles that potentially could reach the U.S., and on Sept. 3 conducted its largest nuclear test explosion to date. The standoff has entered a new, more dangerous phase since then as Kim and Trump have exchanged personal insults and threats of war.

"Yes" side wins Catalonia independence vote marred by chaos

By ARITZ PARRA and JOSEPH WILSON, Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Catalonia's regional government declared a landslide win for the "yes" side in a disputed referendum on independence from Spain that degenerated into mayhem Sunday, with more than 800 people injured as riot police attacked peaceful protesters and unarmed civilians trying to cast their ballots.

Catalonia has "won the right to become an independent state," Catalan president Carles Puigdemont said after the polls closed, adding that he would keep his pledge to declare independence unilaterally if the "yes" side wins.

"Today the Spanish state wrote another shameful page in its history with Catalonia," Puigdemont added, saying he would appeal to the European Union to look into alleged human rights violations during the vote.

Catalan regional government spokesman Jordi Turull told reporters early Monday that 90 percent of the 2.26 million Catalans who voted chose the "yes" side in favor of independence. He said nearly 8 percent of voters rejected independence and the rest of the ballots were blank or void. He said 15,000 votes were still being counted.

The region has 5.3 million registered voters, and Turull said the number of ballots didn't include those confiscated by Spanish police during violent raids that aimed to stop the vote.

No one knows what will happen if Catalan officials follow through on their pledge to use the vote as a basis for declaring independence, a provocation that would possibly remove from Spain one of its most prosperous regions, including the coastal city of Barcelona, the regional capital.

Hundreds of police armed with truncheons and rubber bullets were sent in from other regions to confiscate ballots and stop the voting, and amateur video showed some officers dragging people out of polling stations by the hair, throwing some down stairs, kicking them and pushing them to the ground. Anguished, frightened screams could be heard.

Police were acting on a judge's orders to stop the referendum, which the Spanish government had declared illegal and unconstitutional — and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said going forward with the vote only served to sow divisions.

In a televised address after the majority of polls closed Sunday, he thanked the Spanish police, saying they had acted with "firmness and serenity" — comments sure to anger Catalans.

Spanish Foreign Minister Alfonso Dastis said the violence, while "unfortunate" and "unpleasant" was "proportionate."

"If people insist in disregarding the law and doing something that has been consistently declared illegal and unconstitutional, law enforcement officers need to uphold the law," Dastis told The Associated Press in an interview.

Catalans favoring a break with Spain have long wanted more than the limited autonomy they now have, arguing that they contribute far more than they receive from the central government, which controls key areas including taxes and infrastructure. The police aggression on Sunday was likely to only fuel the passion for independence, and the main separatist group urged the regional government to declare independence after the violent crackdown.

By day's end, Catalan health services said 844 civilians had been treated in hospitals for injuries, including two in serious condition and another person who was being treated for an eye injury that fit the profile of having been hit by a rubber bullet. Thirty-three police officers were also injured.

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At the Pau Claris School in Barcelona, amateur footage filmed by one voter showed police roughing up unarmed people standing in their way. Amateur video from other locations showed similar tactics, with people seen being hit, kicked and thrown around by police, including elderly people with their dogs, young girls and regular citizens of all stripes. Many tried to shield themselves from being smacked on the head.

There were also some signs of provocation by activists. In footage released by the Spanish Interior Ministry, some protesters were seen throwing objects and metal barriers at riot police.

Elisa Arouca, who was waiting to vote outside the Estel school in central Barcelona, reacted with anger when national police agents yanked her and other prospective voters out of the way, then smashed open the door and confiscated the ballot boxes.

She had been planning to vote in favor of keeping Catalonia part of Spain, but decided instead to join the march for independence. She moved to another polling station to try and cast her vote in favor of breaking away.

"I was always against independence, but what the Spanish state is doing is making me change my mind," she said. "The national police and civil guard are treating us like criminals."

There was no organized campaign for the "no" side in the vote, which most national political parties boycotted because it lacked legal guarantees and was suspended by the courts. Polls in recent years have shown roughly half of the 7.5 million residents of the region want to remain a part of Spain.

Mari Martinez, a 43-year-old waitress, said she didn't vote. "I don't lean toward independence, because we are part of Spain," she said. "Today's violence is not good for anybody. We never should have gotten to this point. Politicians haven't done their job, and they should have reached an agreement a long time ago."

A member of the Israeli parliament, sent to observe the vote, said she was shocked by the use of rubber bullets by Spanish police against crowds of unarmed voters.

"We did expect a normal democratic process," said Ksenia Svetlova, part of a delegation of 33 observers invited by Catalan officials. "We knew that a lot of police were here but still, you know, there should be a respect for the will of the people to vote regardless of what you think of the referendum."

Tensions were running so high that Barcelona played its soccer game against Las Palmas without fans after the team announced the match would be played behind closed doors shortly before kickoff, with thousands of soccer fans already outside the stadium. Barcelona wanted to postpone the game but said the Spanish league refused the request.

Manuel Condeminas, a 48-year-old IT manager who tried to block police from driving away with ballot boxes on Sunday, said police had kicked him and others before using their batons and firing the rubber bullets.

Elsewhere, civil guard officers, wearing helmets and carrying shields, used a hammer to break the glass of the front door and a lock cutter to break into the Sant Julia de Ramis sports center near the city of Girona that was being used as a polling station. A woman injured outside the building was wheeled away on a stretcher by paramedics.

Clashes broke out less than an hour after polls opened, and not long before Puigdemont, the Catalan regional president, was expected to turn up to vote at the sports center. Polling station workers reacted peacefully and broke out into songs and chants challenging the officers' presence. Puigdemont was forced to vote in Cornellà de Terri, near the northern city of Girona, his spokesman said.

Associated Press writer Alex Oller contributed to this report from Barcelona, and Gregory Katz and Frank Griffiths contributed from London.

US stocks move higher, led by health care companies

By MARLEY JAY, AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks are on track for record highs Monday as health care companies lead the market broadly higher. Energy companies are plunging as the prices of crude oil and other fuels fall sharply. Nordstrom is tumbling after the New York Post said talks to take the department store company

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private were stalling. Spain's main stock index is dropping after reports of widespread violence and unrest as the Catalan region votes on an independence referendum.

KEEPING SCORE: The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 5 points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,524 as of 11:35 a.m. Eastern time. The Dow Jones industrial average advanced 75 points, or 0.3 percent, to 22,479. The Nasdaq composite gained 13 points, or 0.2 percent, to 6,509. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks jumped 5 points, or 0.4 percent, to 1,496. The S&P 500, Nasdaq and Russell closed at record highs Friday, while the Dow is trading above its record high close set on Sept. 20.

NORDSTROM WOES: Nordstrom slumped following a report that talks to sell the company to a group of investors including the Nordstrom family could fall apart. The New York Post reported that the would-be buyers are having trouble getting enough financing to complete the sale, and that the recent bankruptcy of retailer Toys R Us was making that process harder.

Nordstrom rallied in recent months after it disclosed the talks. On Monday its stock fell \$3.56, or 7.6 percent, to \$43.59. Other retailers also falling on concerns about the value of the companies and their ability to raise money. Rival department stores took steep losses. Macy's retreated \$1.16, or 5.3 percent, to \$20.66 and Kohl's slumped \$1.74, or 3.8 percent, to \$43.91.

OIL SLICK: Benchmark U.S. crude fell \$1.56, or 3 percent, to \$50.11 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the standard for international oil prices, shed \$1.22, or 2.1 percent, to \$55.57 a barrel in London. Wholesale gasoline, heating oil and natural gas prices also sank.

Exxon Mobile gave up 59 cents to \$81.39 and Chevron declined \$1.09 to \$116.41. Hess shed 91 cents, or 1.9 percent, to \$45.98.

EARLY LEADERS: Health insurer UnitedHealth picked up \$1.30 to \$197.15 and genetic testing equipment company Illumina gained \$3.13, or 1.6 percent, to \$202.33. Drugmaker AbbVie climbed 69 cents to \$89.55. Chipmaker Intel added 55 cents, or 1.4 percent, to \$38.63. PayPal rose 70 cents, or 1.1 percent, to \$64.73. Cloud computing company Citrix Systems jumped \$3.54, or 4.6 percent, to \$80.36.

CHANNEL CHANGER: Shares of Disney and cable company Altice both rose after the two sides resolved a dispute that could have resulted in a blackout of Disney channels like ABC and ESPN in the New York area. The two sides differed over how much Altice has to pay to broadcast the channels, a cost that gets passed down to its cable customers.

Altice runs Optimum cable. Altice USA gained 64 cents, or 2.3 percent, to \$27.95 and Disney edged up \$1.23, or 1.2 percent, to \$99.80.

CAVITY: Dental products manufacturer Dentsply Sirona plunged after the company said its board replaced the company's chairman, its CEO and its president. The company said the changes are intended to help it "achieve its potential" are not related to any financial issues. The stock dropped \$3.22, or 5.4 percent, to \$56.60.

LAS VEGAS: MGM Resorts stock fell after a man shot and killed at least 58 people and wounded more than 500 at a concert at MGM's Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. It's one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history. Police say the shooter was 64-year-old Stephen Paddock and that he shot himself inside the hotel.

Shares of gun manufacturers traded higher, as they often do following large shootings as investors wonder if the violence will lead to greater gun sales. Sturm, Ruger jumped \$2.40, or 4.6 percent, to \$54.10 and American Outdoor Brands, the parent of Smith & Wesson, rose 87 cents, or 5.7 percent, to \$16.12.

EUROPE: The euro declined and Spanish stocks dropped as investors reviewed an independence vote and unrest in Catalonia. Officials in the region, which includes Barcelona and accounts for a large portion of Spain's economy, say an overwhelming majority of voters supported independence from Spain. The central government says the referendum is invalid and illegal. Close to 900 people were injured in confrontations with police who were trying to shut down the voting, although most of the injuries were not serious. More than 30 police officers were also hurt.

The Spanish IBEX index dropped 1.4 percent.

BONDS: Bond prices were little changed. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note held steady at 2.34

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percent.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 112.68 yen from 112.51 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1740 from \$1.1816.

OVERSEAS: Germany's DAX advanced 0.5 percent and the CAC 40 of France rose 0.2 percent. The British FTSE 100 index added 0.8 percent. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.2 percent. Markets in Hong Kong and South Korea were closed Monday for national holidays.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Oct. 2, the 275th day of 2017. There are 90 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 2, 1967, Thurgood Marshall was sworn as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court as the court opened its new term.

On this date:

In 1780, British spy John Andre was hanged in Tappan, New York, during the Revolutionary War.

In 1835, the first battle of the Texas Revolution took place as American settlers fought Mexican soldiers near the Guadalupe River; the Mexicans ended up withdrawing.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson suffered a serious stroke at the White House that left him paralyzed on his left side.

In 1939, the Benny Goodman Sextet (which included Lionel Hampton) made its first recording, "Flying Home," for Columbia.

In 1941, during World War II, German armies launched an all-out drive against Moscow; Soviet forces succeeded in holding onto their capital.

In 1944, German troops crushed the two-month-old Warsaw Uprising, during which a quarter of a million people had been killed.

In 1950, the comic strip "Peanuts," created by Charles M. Schulz, was syndicated to seven newspapers.

In 1959, Rod Serling's "The Twilight Zone" made its debut on CBS-TV with the episode "Where Is Everybody?" starring Earl Holliman.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford formally welcomed Japan's Emperor Hirohito to the United States during a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House.

In 1985, actor Rock Hudson, 59, died at his home in Beverly Hills, California, after battling AIDS.

In 1996, an AeroPeru Boeing 757 crashed into the Pacific Ocean, killing all 61 passengers and nine crew members on board.

In 2002, the Washington, D.C.-area sniper attacks began, setting off a frantic manhunt lasting three weeks. (John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo were finally arrested for 10 killings and three woundings; Muhammad was executed in 2009; Malvo was sentenced to life in prison.)

Ten years ago: Blackwater chairman Erik Prince, testifying before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, vigorously rejected charges that guards from his private security firm had acted recklessly while protecting State Department personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. Five workers were found dead 1,000 feet inside an empty underground water tunnel following a chemical fire at a Colorado hydroelectric plant. A federal jury in New York ordered the owners of the New York Knicks to pay \$11.6 million to former team executive Anucha Browne Sanders, concluding she'd been sexually harassed and fired out of spite. Tony Award-winning actor George Grizzard died in New York at age 79.

Five years ago: On the eve of the first presidential debate of the 2012 campaign, Vice President Joe Biden said the middle class had been "buried" during the last four years, a statement Republicans immediately seized upon as an unwitting indictment of the Obama administration.

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One year ago: Colombians rejected a peace deal with leftist rebels by a razor-thin margin in a national referendum, scuttling years of painstaking negotiations and delivering a stunning setback to President Juan Manuel Santos. The Americans won a 17-11 victory over Europe in the Ryder Cup, their biggest rout in 35 years. Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully signed off for the last time, ending 67 years behind the mic for the Dodgers, as he called the team's 7-1 loss to the Giants in San Francisco.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer-musician Leon Rausch (Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys) is 90. Retired MLB All-Star Maury Wills is 85. Movie critic Rex Reed is 79. Singer-songwriter Don McLean is 72. Cajun/country singer Jo-el Sonnier (sahn-YAY') is 71. Actor Avery Brooks is 69. Fashion designer Donna Karan is 69. Photographer Annie Leibovitz is 68. Rock musician Mike Rutherford (Genesis, Mike & the Mechanics) is 67. Singer-actor Sting is 66. Actress Robin Riker is 65. Actress Lorraine Bracco is 63. Country musician Greg Jennings (Restless Heart) is 63. Rock singer Phil Oakey (The Human League) is 62. Rhythm-and-blues singer Freddie Jackson is 61. Singer-producer Robbie Nevil is 59. Retro-soul singer James Hunter is 55. Former NFL quarterback Mark Rypien is 55. Rock musician Bud Gaugh (Sublime, Eyes Adrift) is 50. Folk-country singer Gillian Welch is 50. Country singer Kelly Willis is 49. Actor Joey Slotnick is 49. Rhythm-and-blues singer Dion Allen (Az Yet) is 47. Actress-talk show host Kelly Ripa (TV: "Live with Kelly and Ryan") is 47. Singer Tiffany is 46. Rock singer Lene Nystrom is 44. Actor Efrén Ramirez is 44. Rhythm-and-blues singer LaTocha Scott (Xscape) is 44. Gospel singer Mandisa (TV: "American Idol") is 41. Actress Brianna Brown is 38. Rock musician Mike Rodden (Hinder) is 35. Tennis player Marion Bartoli is 33. Actor Christopher Larkin is 30. Rock singer Brittany Howard (Alabama Shakes) is 29. Actress Samantha Barks is 27. Actress Elizabeth McLaughlin is 24.

Thought for Today: "There's one way to find out if a man is honest — ask him. If he says 'yes,' you know he is crooked." — Groucho Marx, American comedian (born this date in 1890, died in 1977).