

Groton Daily Independent

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JOHNSON AGENCY

Real Estate & Insurance

Jay Johnson, Broker

www.johnsonagencygroton.com

102 N Main St. Office: 605/397-2424
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Friday, December 1st
State Oral Interp at Aberdeen Central

Saturday, December 2nd
Groton hosts JH GBB Jamboree
with Langford, Northwestern, Waubay-
Summit starting at 10 a.m.
Wrestling at Clark, 10 a.m.

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

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

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Coyotes 12, Cheetahs 12, Shih Tzus 9, Jackelopes 9, Chipmunks 9, Foxes 9

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 254, 204, Ron Belden 203, Roger Spanier 186

Women's High Games: Darci Spanier 170, Vicki Walter 167, Michelle Johnson 166

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 643, Roger Spanier 519, Roger Colestock 490

Women's High Series: Vicki Walter 482, Michelle Johnson 448 Darci Spanier 442

NEW SIGN-ON BONUSES!

★ ★ ★ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ **\$3,000 for LPNs** ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ **\$4,500 for RNs** ★ ★ ★

Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield 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

111717

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All auto owners!
Save \$2-\$4 /tank
& 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")**

Wild and windy day

It was an extremely windy day on Wednesday as a peak gust of 55 mph was recorded late in the morning. Many twigs and some larger branches fell to the ground as the result of the wind gusts. By mid afternoon, the wind had subsided only to blow back up again in the evening. By late evening, the wind went back down again on the roller coast wind event day.

Today the wind should only be around 10 mph.

The only sign of precipitation in the 10-day forecast is for Monday with a 20 percent of chance of rain, then rain and snow and then snow with winds gusting up to 23 mph.

Meanwhile the weather will continue to be pleasant through the weekend.

Save the Jail!

There is a movement by Topper Tastad to save the old jail building in Groton. The jail building has been on the council agenda for some time and the city council had decided this summer to have the jail building torn down by the end of November, which is today. The council had authorized Scott Hanlon to tear down the jail and the city would haul out the debris. However, that has not been done and Tastad is on the agenda for Monday night's city council meeting to save keep the jail intact.

Status Reviews of South Dakota's Threatened and Endangered Species Available for Comment

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is conducting a review of state endangered and threatened species and asking the public to provide comment on the draft status reviews for 22 species. Comments are accepted through Dec. 8, 2017.

The review process provides a concise summary of the current status for each state-listed threatened or endangered species.

Where sufficient information existed for the recovery of species, draft criteria for downlisting (changing status from endangered to threatened) and/or delisting (removing a threatened or endangered species from the state list) are described. If such information was not available, the review describes additional monitoring or research needs.

For species also listed as federal threatened or federal endangered under the Endangered Species Act, separate state recovery goals were not drafted. GFP will continue cooperating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to meet identified recovery goals.

The status reviews are available online: gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/threatened-endangered/default.aspx. To provide written feedback on these reviews, please email StatusReviews@state.sd.us or mail comments to South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501.

Wolves Football Announces Myers Hendrickson as Offensive Coordinator

Aberdeen, S.D. – Northern State head football coach Tom Dosch announced on Wednesday that Myers Hendrickson will take over the offensive coordinator and quarterback duties for the Wolves after spending two seasons in same position at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

“I’m excited to announce Myers as our offensive coordinator,” noted Dosch. “He brings a vast array of experience at a variety of levels of college football; from junior college to NAIA to FCS, and FBS. It is great to welcome Myers into the Wolves football family!”

“I am extremely excited and honored for the opportunity to serve at Northern State University,” explained Hendrickson. “I am very impressed with the outstanding academics, tremendous athletic tradition, and incredible community support. I want to thank Dr. Downs, Josh Moon, and Coach Dosch for the opportunity to join the Wolves family.”

In his two seasons at Coe, the Kohawks went 15-7 overall winning the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championship and advancing to the second round of the NCAA Division III playoffs in 2016. In his first season with the program, the offense ranked 15th in the nation in rushing offense with 253.7 yards per game, 26th in the nation in total offense with 473.6 yards per game, and 23rd in the nation in red zone offense, scoring 86.8 percent of the time. Running Back Trevor Heitland led the nation in all-purpose yards with 223.92 per game, while also leading the nation in rushing yards with 1,913.

Prior to his work at Coe, Hendrickson spent two seasons at Kansas Wesleyan as the quarterbacks and wide receivers coach in 2014 and offensive coordinator in 2015. Hendrickson recruited and coached 2015 KCAC Player of the Year, Jake Curran, who led the league in total offense and passing yards. A total of nine Coyotes were named to the KCAC All-Conference teams in 2015, including five first team members.

In each season working as a coordinator, Hendrickson has seen school records fall. In 2017, wide receiver Demetrius Harper set the single season school record at Coe for receptions with 73. In 2016, quarterback Gavin Glenn set the single season school record for passing touchdowns at Coe with 27. In 2015, quarterback Jake Curran set the single season school record for passing with 3,436 yards.

Hendrickson began his coaching career as the defensive quality control coach at Auburn University in 2012. He then moved on to Holmes Community College for the 2013 season as the running backs coach, prior to his stint at Kansas Wesleyan.

He is a former collegiate player, opening his career at Cornell University. Hendrickson then transferred to Western Illinois where he played wide receiver for the Leathernecks. WIU reached the 2nd round of the NCAA Football Championship Subdivision Playoffs in 2010. Hendrickson was a 3-time All-Missouri Valley Academic selection as well as the Western Illinois Dr. Frank Sorenson Award recipient, for holding the highest GPA on the football team.

Hendrickson received his bachelor of business in supply chain management from Western Illinois University in 2011. He went on to receive his master of business administration in 2015 from Kansas Wesleyan University.

Hendrickson will begin his duties on December 4th.

**Christmas Party Club
Groton C&MA Church**

706 N Main

December 9

10-11:30am

For ages 5-12

Come join the fun!

**There will be songs, games,
snacks and a bible story!**

Call 397-2696 or 290-8258

for more information.

No reservation necessary

*Holiday Party
Olive Grove Golf Course*

*Tour of Homes
& Silent Auction*

*Hors d'oeuvres, coffee & cider served at golf course.
Saturday, December 2 - Tours 4 pm to 8 pm
Party 4pm to Close*

*\$12 per person. - Tickets can be purchased at:
Groton Ford, Lori's Pharmacy, Olde Bank Floral' N More,
Hair & Co. (423 Moccasin Dr., Aberdeen, SD) or
by calling Vicki Walter 380-0480 or
Brenda Waage 380-9419*

*Thanks to the following homeowners on tour:
Nick & Jenna Strom, Bruce & Karyn Babcock,
Tom & Emily Sternhagen, Chad & Chanise Pray,*

*Fundraiser
(Proceeds for course
equipment)*

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Today in Weather History

November 30, 1981: A two-day winter storm, beginning as rain, changing to freezing rain and then to snow, completely paralyzed the eastern half of South Dakota, as well as west central Minnesota Monday, November 30 through Tuesday, December 1, 1981. Snow accumulations of between eight and twelve inches were common in South Dakota. Wind with gusts to near 50 mph whipped the snow into blizzard conditions. The Governor of South Dakota closed east-west Interstate 90 to all traffic. Hundreds of motorists were stranded. One person died during snow removal after the storm. Some storm total snowfall amounts included 8 inches at Kennebec, 7 inches at Pierre and Faulkton, 4 inches at Aberdeen, and 2 inches at Watertown. The winter precipitation was caused by a storm center that moved from Kansas Monday through Iowa Monday night and into Wisconsin Tuesday morning, December 1st. The same storm produced heavy snow and blizzard conditions over a large area of the central Plains. Travel was especially difficult because of the snow. Many roads were impassible and motorists were forced to find shelter.








November 30, 1991: The third major winter storm of the season moved from the central plains to eastern South Dakota. The storm generally dropped between 4 and 8 inches of snow over the eastern third of South Dakota from the 28th to the 30th. New snow accumulations of 2 to 5 inches occurred over most of the rest of the state. Some specific snow reports across the area included Aberdeen with 2 inches and Watertown with 3 inches. Five inches fell at Clear Lake and 3 inches fell near Summit. Strong winds developed after the snow fell, producing widespread blowing and drifting snow, especially across the northeast corner of South Dakota.

November 30, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 12 inches fell across a large part of northern South Dakota and into western Big Stone County in Minnesota, causing travel problems and school closings. Several accidents also occurred due to the slippery roads. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Milbank and Ortonville; 8 inches at McLaughlin, Ipswich, Summit, and Mellette; 9 inches northwest of Britton, Clear Lake, and Pollock; 10 inches at Leola and Faulkton; 11 inches at Aberdeen and Webster; and 12 inches at Houghton.

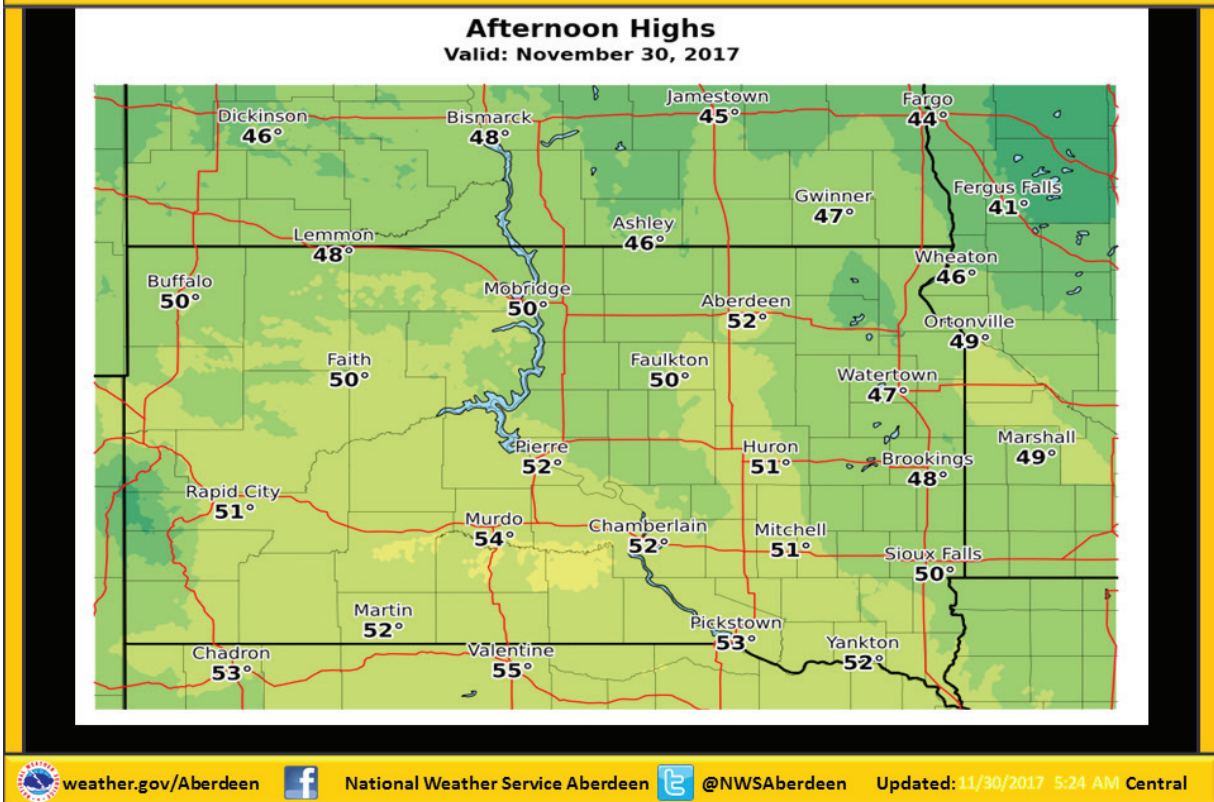
November 30, 1925: An extremely rare late November hurricane began to affect the west coast of Florida as it strengthened during the day. The storm made landfall very early on December 1st south of Tampa Bay, weakened to a tropical storm as it crossed central Florida, and exited around St. Augustine. The storm regained Hurricane strength off Jacksonville late on the 1st. Heavy rain continued over northeast Florida on the 2nd. Gale force winds were reported from the Keys to Jacksonville and over 50 people lost their lives, mostly on ships at sea. Damage along the coast south of Jacksonville was heavy and excessive rain and wind seriously damaged citrus and truck crops.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 51 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 44 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 48 °F	Low: 27 °F	High: 46 °F

Breezy & Continued Mild



A west breeze and ample sunshine will result in another day with temperatures some 10 to 15 degrees above average. These mild & dry conditions will continue through the end of the work week and into the weekend.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 54.0 at 3:21 PM

Low Outside Temp: 21.9 at 1:49 AM

High Gust: 55 mph at 10:53 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 66° in 1995

Record Low: -27° in 1964

Average High: 31°F

Average Low: 12°F

Average Precip in Nov: .73

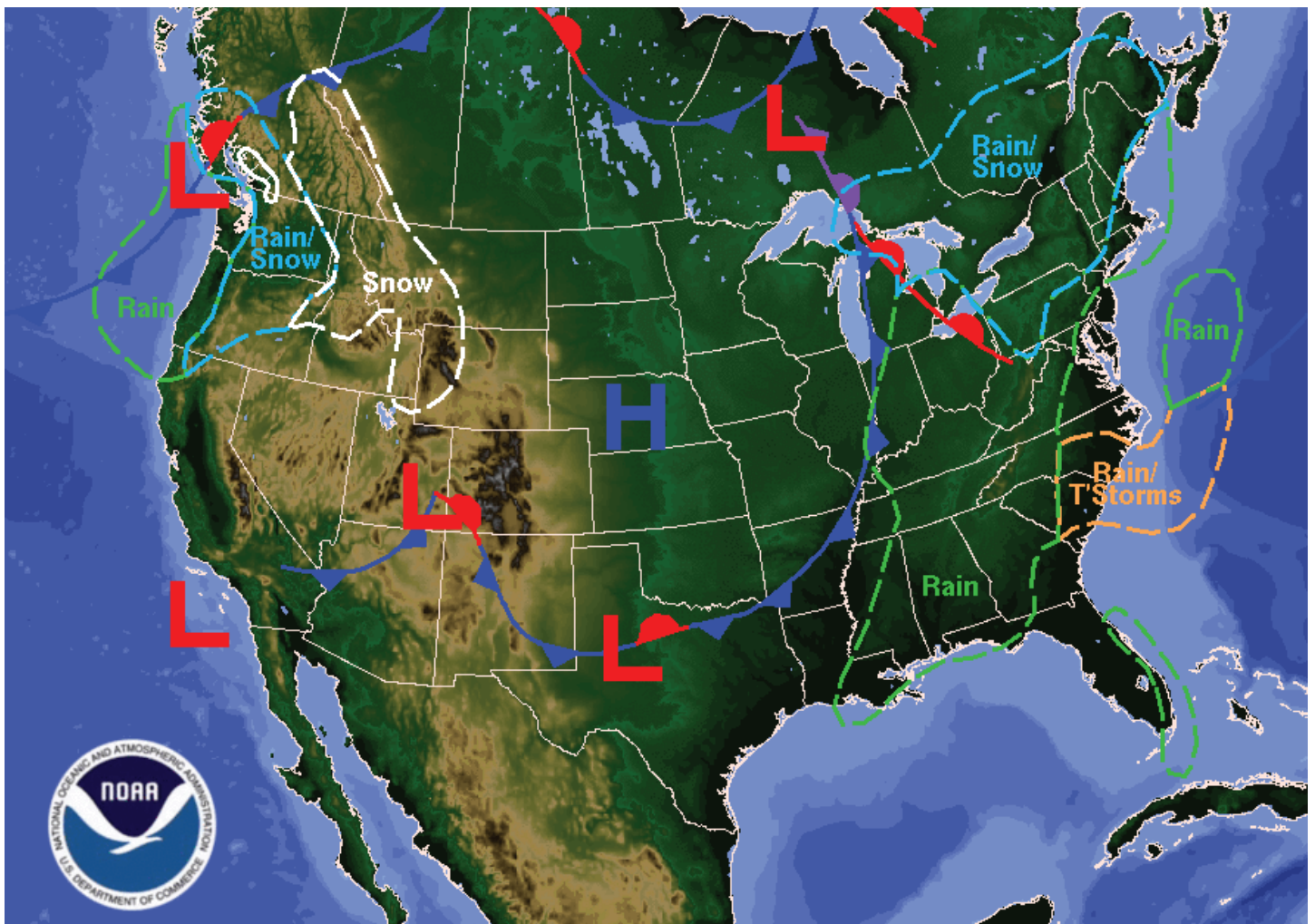
Precip to date in Nov: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.20

Precip Year to Date: 13.47

Sunset Tonight: 4:52 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:53 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Nov 30, 2017, issued 4:48 AM EST

DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center

Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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WISHING, HOPING AND FACTS

"Be careful what you wish for – it just might come true!" is a saying most of us have grown up with. It comes with no guarantee or assurance that what we ask for is what we will get. In fact, according to some, it may be the exact opposite and result in problems.

Wishing is imagining something in our minds that we want to come true – believing that our lives will be better or filled with happiness or joy or riches. It is wanting our lives to be more fulfilling or better or happier without our having to do anything or making any effort or changes.

But wishing is different from hoping – especially the hope that believers have in God. We can have unflinching and unwavering hope in God because He has done everything He has ever said He would do. There is no room for any doubt in Him or any of His promises. They are well documented and are a testimony to the fact that God is faithful and can be trusted to keep His Word.

God's faithfulness, the psalmist reminds us, is so predictable that it has become "a law in Israel." And this testimony of God's faithfulness is to be passed on by fathers to their children so they put their hope in God and "never forget His deeds."

God wants fathers to teach their children that hope does not come from politicians or policies. Nor does He want fathers to teach their children that they are to place their hope in acquiring wealth or worldly goods. And He does not want them to teach their children to place their hope in the knowledge or skills or talents they possess. God wants everyone to place their hope in Him.

Prayer: We pray, Lord, that fathers will realize their responsibility to raise their children to hope only in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 78:6 ...so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

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 Meat- 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

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News from the Associated Press

Oglala Sioux Tribe again looking for new police chief

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — The Oglala Sioux Tribe is once again looking for a new police chief after the person it hired failed to show up for the job.

Grace Her Many Horses was expected to start her new job last week. She's a police captain on the Fort Berthold reservation in North Dakota.

Oglala law and order committee vice-chairwoman Lydia Bear Killer says the tribe decided to hire Her Many Horses because of her experience with securing grants, complying with federal regulations and hiring more officers on the Rosebud reservation. Her Many Horses submitted a letter of intent to take the job, went through interviews and a background check.

The Rapid City Journal says her reason for failing to report to her new job is not clear. She has not responded to messages seeking comment.

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

Sioux City officials find error on wastewater service charge

SIOUX CITY, Iowa (AP) — Sioux City officials have found they were mistaken about a wastewater service charge to three neighboring cities.

The officials thought they'd discovered the neglected charge during an audit and notified officials in Sergeant Bluff, Iowa; North Sioux City, South Dakota; and South Sioux City, Nebraska, that Sioux City would begin imposing the 7 percent charge.

Sioux City officials have since learned they were wrong. Utilities director Mark Simms told the Sioux City Journal Wednesday that additional research uncovered a nearly four-decade-old document that showed the service charge was folded into the existing rates.

Simms says Sioux City has notified the other cities that it had made a mistake and would not be levying the charge.

Information from: Sioux City Journal, <http://www.siouxcityjournal.com>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

10-15-20-32-35

(ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty-two, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

01-04-05-16-38, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 2

(one, four, five, sixteen, thirty-eight; Star Ball: nine; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$15.65 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$145 million

Powerball

24-26-28-59-63, Powerball: 16, Power Play: 3

(twenty-four, twenty-six, twenty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty-three; Powerball: sixteen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$163 million

TransCanada to run inspection device in Keystone pipeline

AMHERST, S.D. (AP) — TransCanada Corp. says it will run an inspection device through its Keystone oil pipeline to make sure there aren't segments of pipe with similar characteristics to a section that ruptured in South Dakota.

A company spokesman said Wednesday that it would run the pipeline inspection gauge through its system within a 120-day period ordered by a federal pipeline safety agency.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration this week issued a corrective order on the estimated 210,000-gallon oil spill. The report says a weight installed on the pipeline nearly a decade ago may have damaged the pipeline and coating.

The order says TransCanada must also submit a proposal to analyze available data on other weight locations for similarities with the leak location.

The company disclosed the leak Nov. 16.

Arctic snowy owls visit South Dakota dam

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Snowy owls have made a temporary home in the area surrounding a dam along the South Dakota-Nebraska border, marking a rare sighting for many residents.

Yankton resident and avid birdwatcher Roger Dietrich said two snowy owls were spotted near the Gavins Point Dam, the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reported.

"It's very unusual for snowy owls to be down here," Dietrich said. "They're from the (Arctic) tundra. It must be an unusually big production year for lemmings."

Snowy owls have a high rate of nesting success when there are more lemmings, which are small rodents, in the Arctic. A robust food source enables more owlets to survive and learn to fly more quickly.

With a larger population of snowy owls in their natural habitat, it's also more likely the animals will spread out and fly to unknown areas, like Yankton. The two snowy owls spotted near the dam were most likely born this year, Dietrich said.

The bird enthusiast said this wasn't the first time snowy owls visited Yankton. Several years ago, Dietrich said, birdwatchers identified 20 snowy owls around the county and neighboring areas.

Snowy owls are distinctive to most observers because of their coloring and size. Males whiten with age, and females have brown and black markings. They're the largest of North American owls, averaging about four pounds (1.8 kilograms). They also hunt during the day.

"There have been a lot of people coming to see these birds," Dietrich said. "I know (birdwatchers) are coming from Sioux City and Sioux Falls."

Dietrich warns those who want to observe the owls to stay in their vehicles because they can be unpredictable in an unfamiliar environment.

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

3rd person charged in beating death at Sioux Falls party

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A third person has been charged in the beating death of a 55-year-old man during a party at his house in Sioux Falls.

Police said Wednesday that 33-year-old Nathan MacTaggart was arrested on a warrant for aggravated assault and was being held on a \$25,000 cash bond. It wasn't immediately clear if he had an attorney.

Sixteen- and 17-year-old girls were charged earlier in juvenile court with aggravated assault in the Nov. 3 incident.

The victim's name hasn't been released.

Environment groups want pipeline company's lawsuit dismissed

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Environmental groups being sued by the developer of the Dakota Access pipeline have asked a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuit.

Netherlands and U.S.-based Greenpeace and Netherlands-based BankTrack argue in court documents that their opposition to the \$3.8 billion project to move North Dakota oil to Illinois is protected free speech, not an illegal effort to undermine the developer.

Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners in August filed a lawsuit against Greenpeace, BankTrack and Earth First, alleging they disseminated false and misleading information about the Dakota Access project, interfered with its construction and damaged the company's reputation and finances through illegal acts.

The lawsuit filed in federal court in North Dakota cites "a pattern of criminal activity and a campaign of misinformation for purposes of increasing donations and advancing their political or business agendas," and seeks damages that could approach \$1 billion.

Attorneys for Greenpeace and BankTrack in court documents filed Tuesday argue that the lawsuit is without merit and an attack on free speech.

"Greenpeace's political advocacy criticizing Energy Transfer's practices is within the core of First Amendment protection," the attorneys wrote.

In the lawsuit, ETP levies numerous accusations against what it describes as a vast network of co-conspiring groups and people that committed crimes to further their agendas.

Greenpeace attorneys argue in their response that many of the lawsuit's examples of allegedly defamatory statements were made by groups not being sued, and that Greenpeace only released factual statements aimed at "swaying public opinion."

"Energy Transfer is quite literally trying to transform First Amendment-guaranteed associational rights into criminal affiliations," Greenpeace said.

BankTrack attorneys echoed Greenpeace's arguments, calling ETP's claims frivolous. Earth First has not yet responded to the lawsuit, and the company has not replied to Associated Press requests for comment.

In reference to its filing of the lawsuit, ETP has told the AP that it has an obligation to its shareholders, partners and stakeholders.

The 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) pipeline began operating June 1, after months of delays caused by legal wrangling and on-the-ground protests. Police made 761 arrests in North Dakota between August and February. Four American Indian tribes in the Dakotas are continuing to fight the project in federal court, hoping a federal judge in Washington, D.C., will shut down the line.

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

Driver injured when car crashes into Sioux Falls house

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A driver was seriously injured when he crashed his car into a house in Sioux Falls.

Police say it happened about 3:30 a.m. Wednesday on the city's northeast side. The homeowners tell KSFY-TV they heard a loud bang and the sound of shattering glass. No one inside the home was injured.

Lt. Jeff Garden says a 21-year-old man who was driving the car was transported to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. No one else was in the car. Police say the driver missed a curve in the road, hit a curb, grazed a tree and flipped over before crashing into the house.

The homeowners say it's not the first time their house has been hit by a vehicle. It also happened in April of 2015.

Information from: KSFY-TV, <http://www.ksfy.com>

South Dakota dairy farm raises concerns for Minnesota lake

HENDRICKS, Minn. (AP) — A legal fight over a proposed mega-dairy farm near a lake that helps drive the economy in southwestern Minnesota will soon be heard in a South Dakota courtroom.

The Lake Hendricks Improvement Association has filed a court challenge to stop construction of the proposed 4,000-cow dairy farm near the lake on the South Dakota side, Minnesota Public Radio reported. Lake Hendricks sits on the Minnesota-South Dakota border and is a fishing and boating destination.

The 100 member association aims to improve the lake water quality and recreational activities. The group has spent more than \$100,000 to challenge the farm in court.

The farm could negatively impact wildlife in the area, the association said.

"This location, it's just not the right place for it," said Brenda Boeve, president of the association. "I love the nature that I can experience from this. The wildlife during all times of the year. The beauty of it in the winter."

The cows will produce phosphorus-rich manure that will wash off into area fields and eventually go into the lake, the association said.

Michael Crinion, the farm's developer, said he would install safeguards to prevent manure from spilling from the farm's storage lagoons. The chances of runoff flowing into the lake would be slim, he said.

Lake Hendricks is on Minnesota's list of impaired waters. Association members said that while the water quality has improved over the years, they fear the dairy farm could negate those improvements.

Officials in Brookings County, South Dakota, approved the proposal last year. A South Dakota judge in January will determine whether the approval was legal. South Dakota officials have been supporting the construction of more dairy farms, particularly in the eastern portion of the state.

Information from: Minnesota Public Radio News, <http://www.mprnews.org>

Regional Health plans new health campus serving Spearfish

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid-City based health system is fundraising to build a more than \$100 million new health care campus to serve the Spearfish area.

The Black Hills Pioneer reports that Regional Health's announcement comes after a 40-acre land donation from a Spearfish company planning a 700-acre residential and retail development.

With the land donation, Regional Health embarked on a fundraising campaign with a \$50 million goal. The system hopes to attract the funding from the public, cities, counties and the state.

Thomas Worsley, interim president of Spearfish Regional Hospital and the Spearfish and Belle Fourche markets, tells the newspaper that the facility's construction timeline will largely be determined by fundraising.

Worsley says the campus would consolidate health care in Spearfish, where Regional Health currently employs nearly 600 people.

Information from: Black Hills Pioneer, <http://www.bhpioneer.com>

South Dakota woman dies in Nebraska interstate crash

OVERTON, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say a South Dakota woman died in a crash on Interstate 80 in south-central Nebraska.

The accident occurred around 12:15 p.m. Tuesday, about 2 miles (3 kilometers) east of Overton. The Nebraska State Patrol says an eastbound sport utility vehicle driven by 63-year-old Daniel Hafner drifted into the median, struck a guardrail and rolled.

The patrol says his wife, 58-year-old Linda Hafner, died at the scene. She lived in Tea, South Dakota, with her husband.

Daniel Hafner was taken to a Kearney hospital for treatment.

Lawmaker, brother-in-law met rough ocean before drowning

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a South Dakota state representative and his brother-in-law encountered high tides and rough seas before they drowned in a kayaking accident last week off an island in the South Pacific.

The Rapid City Journal reports that Cook Islands police say 68-year-old Rep. Craig Tieszen and his brother-in-law, 61-year-old Brent Moline, were paddling kayaks at a reef Nov. 22 when both ran into difficulty toward its ocean side.

Authorities say the police were notified by a hotel that their guests were kayaking and had capsized.

Officials say Tieszen was found and brought to shore, while a police search-and-rescue boat found Moline and took him to a nearby harbor. Both were pronounced dead just before 1 p.m.

The men were attending a family wedding in the Cook Islands.

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

2-vehicle crash in Rapid City kills man, injures another

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — One person is dead after a two-vehicle crash in Rapid City.

The Highway Patrol says the 25-year-old man lost control of his car on a curve and drifted into the on-coming lane, colliding with a pickup truck shortly before 8:30 p.m. Tuesday.

He was pronounced dead at the scene. The 49-year-old man driving the pickup was taken to a hospital with what authorities said were serious injuries that are not life-threatening.

\$4.5 million school plan voted down in Wessington Springs

WESSINGTON SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) — Voters have narrowly defeated a \$4.5 million bond issue to upgrade the century-old high school in Wessington Springs.

The Daily Republic reports that 59 percent of the 751 voters in Tuesday's election favored the project, but it needed 60 percent approval to pass. The difference was just seven votes.

The project would have included upgrades to heating and cooling systems, plumbing, electrical systems, bathrooms, flooring, windows and fire sprinklers. An elevator also was to be installed and some classrooms rearranged.

Voters also rejected a \$1 million bond issue to partially fund the construction of a new auxiliary gym attached to the elementary school.

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

Fall harvest in South Dakota nearly wrapped up

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The fall harvest in South Dakota is nearly wrapped up after another week of unseasonably warm weather.

The federal Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that the sunflower harvest is 94 percent complete, the sorghum harvest is 95 percent done and the corn harvest is 97 percent complete.

The state's winter wheat crop is rated 62 percent fair, good or excellent.

In the ranching community, pasture and range conditions are rated 55 percent poor or very poor. Stock water supplies are 51 percent short or very short.

Authorities identify Pierre man killed in weekend ATV crash

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a Pierre man who died after an all-terrain vehicle crash in the city.

The Highway Patrol says 65-year-old John Miller died Sunday at a Sioux Falls hospital, after crashing his ATV into a tree on Saturday.

Miller was alone on the ATV.

Accused wrong-way-driver arrested for alleged 2nd offense

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A woman charged with eluding police while allegedly driving on the wrong side of Interstate 90 is back in jail after allegedly committing the same offense again this month.

The Rapid City Journal reports that 52-year-old Marguerite Martin was on release from jail to undergo mental health treatment when she was arrested on Nov. 15.

Martin has pending charges of aggravated eluding and driving on the wrong side of the road in an alleged Jan. 20 incident. Judge Robert Mandel in October found her incompetent to stand trial and ordered her released from jail so she could receive mental health treatment before her criminal case continues.

The treatment is pending, and Mandel on Monday said he wasn't comfortable releasing Martin back into the community. She's being held without bond.

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

Sanford expanding neonatal intensive care in Bismarck

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Sanford Health says it will double the size of its neonatal intensive care unit in Bismarck.

The expansion, which also includes new technology, is made possible by a \$1 million donation and matching endowment campaign. The new unit is expected to open in the summer of 2019, and it will include 24 beds and 18 private rooms. Sanford's current NICU can care for 12 patients and hospital officials say it's always at capacity.

The Bismarck Tribune says Mark and Claudia Thompson donated \$500,000 for the project. Their daughter gave birth prematurely to twins. One of the twins died shortly after birth at 24 weeks. The other survived and spent 117 days at Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota. Today, that child is in 6th grade and on the honor roll at her middle school.

Information from: Bismarck Tribune, <http://www.bismarcktribune.com>

Woman sentenced for ID theft, bank fraud in 3-state region

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A Marshall, Minnesota, woman has been sentenced in federal court in South Dakota to nearly three years in prison for an identity theft and bank fraud scheme.

Authorities say 27-year-old Angelica Hatch-Pequin and co-conspirator Jason Fagin would steal mail from mailboxes in Minneapolis to obtain personal banking information of other people. They would use the information to create counterfeit checks they would cash at stores and casinos in Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa.

Hatch-Pequin and Fagin were arrested in November 2016 at a tribal casino in Flandreau, South Dakota.

U.S. Attorney Randolph Seiler says Hatch-Pequin was recently sentenced to 35 months in federal prison. Fagin has not yet been sentenced.

Guilty plea in shooting that left victim paralyzed

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Piedmont man has pleaded guilty to shooting his friend, causing injuries that left him paralyzed.

Forty-nine-year-old Michael Wisecarver pleaded guilty Tuesday to aggravated assault and commission of a felony with a firearm in a plea agreement with the state. Wisecarver says he doesn't remember shooting Chad Arnold in the driveway of his home in Rapid City last July after becoming intoxicated.

KOTA-TV reports Arnold told police he saw Wisecarver shoot him from the driver side window of a truck. Arnold was shot in the left arm and the bullet ended up lodged against his spine. He was left in his driveway overnight.

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

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. WHAT PHOTOS SAY ABOUT NEW NORTH KOREAN BALLISTIC MISSILE

Images of the Hwasong-15, a new ICBM Pyongyang claims can reach any target in the continental U.S., is a goldmine for rocket experts trying to parse reality from bluster.

2. ANOTHER BIG NAME FALLS

Matt Lauer's firing as host of NBC's "Today" makes him the biggest media figure brought down by sexual misconduct allegations since Bill O'Reilly and Roger Ailes were ousted from Fox News Channel.

3. AFTER ADULATION, A RECKONING

Hero celebrities have fallen before — Bill Cosby to name one — but never in the rapid succession that has rocked so many worlds since revelations about Harvey Weinstein exploded into the mainstream in October.

4. WHO HAS BEEN QUERIED IN RUSSIA PROBE

Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner has been questioned by special counsel Robert Mueller's investigators about former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

5. POPE BEGINS SECOND LEG OF SOUTH ASIA TOUR

The pontiff is now in neighboring Bangladesh where the Muslim Rohingya refugee crisis is expected to take center stage.

6. US TROOPS GET FREEZE-DRIED PLASMA FOR BATTLEFIELD BLOODSHED

The Special Operations fighters that U.S. generals are sending off to fight in remote mountains and deserts now have blood plasma in their first aid kits.

7. AP FACT CHECK: ANTI-MUSLIM VIDEOS MISREPRESENT

Like much other propaganda, the anti-Muslim videos spread around by Trump mix grains of truth, fakery and shades in between, overlaid with a message meant to be a blunt hammer blow for a cause.

8. US FREES AFRICAN ASYLUM-SEEKER WHO'S ON LIFE SUPPORT

The case of 33-year-old Saliou Ndiaye of Senegal raises questions about the United States' responsibility for immigration detainees' care, AP finds.

9. EARLY HOLIDAY SHOPPING REVEALS TRENDS

As shoppers have bought TVs and toys so far this holiday season, they've shown a desire for deals but also an inclination for some impulse spending, retail experts say.

10. WHERE THE FOCUS IS ON TIGER WOODS

When the 14-time major champion tees it up in the Bahamas for a competitive round for the first time in nearly 10 months, the question is how long his latest comeback from injury will last.

This story corrects the headline on No. 5 to make South Asia instead of South Africa.

Pope lands in Bangladesh with Rohingya crisis looming large

By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Pope Francis arrived Thursday in Bangladesh for the second leg of his six-day trip to Asia with the Rohingya crisis looming large.

Francis arrived in the capital amid tight airport security and much anticipation. Huge banners with pictures of the pope and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina were put up around Dhaka, and St. Mary's Cathedral was decorated with lights in preparation for his three-day trip to the Muslim majority nation.

Security was a concern after a Christian priest went missing in northern Bangladesh on Tuesday, and his family reported they got calls demanding money. Police said they were looking for the man but would not confirm if it was a kidnapping.

Francis arrived from Myanmar, where he refrained from speaking out about the Rohingya Muslim crisis out of diplomatic deference to his hosts, who consider the Rohingya as having illegally migrated from Bangladesh and don't recognize them as their own ethnic group.

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More than 620,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar and poured into Bangladesh refugee camps over the last few months, and the issue is expected to take center stage in Bangladesh.

The country's leading English-language newspaper, The Daily Star, said in an editorial it felt "slightly let down" the pope didn't mention the crisis specifically while in Myanmar.

"We remain hopeful that given Pope Francis' legacy of standing up for the oppressed, he will speak out against the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya during this very important visit," the paper added.

Francis won't visit the refugee camps while in Bangladesh but he will host an interfaith peace meeting on Friday in the garden of the Dhaka archbishops' residence, at which a small group of Rohingya are expected.

The Vatican defended Francis' silence in Myanmar, saying the pope wanted to "build bridges" with the predominantly Buddhist nation.

But human rights groups and Rohingya themselves have expressed disappointment that Francis, an advocate for refugees and the world's most marginal, refrained from condemning what the U.N. has said is a textbook case of ethnic cleansing.

Vatican spokesman Greg Burke said Francis took seriously the advice given to him by the local Catholic Church, which urged him to toe a cautious line and not even refer to the "Rohingya" by name during his trip to Myanmar.

"You can criticize what's said, what's not said, but the pope is not going to lose moral authority on this question here," Burke told reporters on Wednesday.

Rohingya have faced persecution and discrimination in Myanmar for decades and are denied citizenship, even though many families have lived there for generations. The situation grew worse in August when the army began what it called clearance operations in northern Rakhine state following attacks on security positions by Rohingya militants.

Rohingya have since poured into neighboring Bangladesh, where they have described indiscriminate attacks by Myanmar security forces and Buddhist mobs, including killings, rapes and the torching of entire villages.

Burke stressed that Francis' diplomatic stance in public in Myanmar didn't negate what he had said in the past, or what he might be saying in private.

In the past, Francis has strongly condemned the "persecution of our Rohingya brothers," denounced their suffering because of their faith and called for them to receive "full rights."

While he called in his first major speech on Tuesday for all of Myanmar's ethnic groups to have their human rights respected, his failure to specify the Rohingya crisis on Myanmar soil drew criticism from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Rohingya themselves.

On Wednesday, Myanmar Bishop John Hsane Hgyi suggested that reports of atrocities being committed against the Rohingya were not "reliable" or "authoritative," and that those who criticized Myanmar's response to a complex situation should "go into the field to study the reality and history" to obtain "true news."

Lauer becomes biggest name toppled by misconduct allegations

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Matt Lauer's firing as host of NBC's "Today" makes him the biggest media figure brought down by sexual misconduct allegations since Bill O'Reilly and Roger Ailes lost their lofty positions at Fox News Channel.

In the wave of accusations sweeping through the media, Hollywood and politics, the stature and wealth that once served as protection have turned into flimsy shields.

Lauer has long been a valuable and highly visible part of NBC News and one of the highest-paid figures in the industry, and his downfall shook the network and rippled out across the roughly 4 million "Today" viewers who started their day with him.

His firing Wednesday for what NBC called "inappropriate sexual behavior" with a colleague was quickly followed by a published report accusing him of crude and habitual misconduct with other women around the office.

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Network news chief Andrew Lack said in a memo to the staff that NBC received a complaint about Lauer's behavior on Monday and determined he violated company standards. NBC said the misconduct started when Lauer and a network employee were at the Sochi Olympics in 2014 and continued beyond that assignment.

Lack said it was the first complaint lodged against Lauer in his 20 years at NBC, but "we were also presented with reason to believe this may not have been an isolated incident."

NBC News received two new complaints against Lauer on Wednesday, "NBC Nightly News" reported.

Earlier Wednesday, it was left to Lauer's shaken "Today" colleagues, Savannah Guthrie and Hoda Kotb, to break the news to viewers at the top of the morning's show. They regrouped and joined Al Roker to emcee NBC's "Christmas in Rockefeller Center" special Wednesday night, which Lauer was to have co-hosted.

Hours after the firing, the trade publication Variety posted what it said was a two-month investigation that included dozens of interviews with current and former staffers who asked to remain anonymous.

Among other things, Variety reported allegations that Lauer once gave a colleague a sex toy with an explicit note about how he wanted to use it on her; that he exposed himself to another female co-worker; that he would question female producers about their sex lives; and that he would talk about which co-hosts he would like to sleep with.

Messages to Lauer and his agent were not immediately returned, and NBC would not say whether he denied or admitted to any wrongdoing. He is married with three children.

Lauer becomes the second morning host in a week to lose his job over sexual misconduct allegations. CBS fired Charlie Rose after several women who worked for him complained about his behavior.

In other developments, former "Prairie Home Companion" host Garrison Keillor was cut loose by Minnesota Public Radio over an allegation of "inappropriate behavior." MPR gave no details, but the 75-year-old Keillor said he put his hand on a woman's back to console her and he inadvertently touched her bare skin through an opening in her shirt.

In an email to the Minneapolis Star Tribune, Keillor said he apologized to the woman, she told him she forgave him and the two remained friends "right up until her lawyer called."

Minnesota Public Radio said it will end distribution of the radio program "The Writer's Almanac," Keillor's daily reading of a poem and telling of literary events, and end rebroadcasts of old "Prairie Home Companion" episodes.

Lauer, 59, has essentially been the king of television morning news since first being paired with Katie Couric on "Today" in 1997.

For many years, "Today" was the unquestioned ratings leader, until it was eclipsed by ABC's "Good Morning America" following the ugly 2012 firing of Lauer's co-host Ann Curry. The show had stabilized in recent years with Lauer's pairing with Guthrie.

Lauer's "Where in the world is Matt Lauer?" segments were popular for years, and he regularly played a lead role at the Olympics and other major news events.

He joins a lengthening list of media figures felled by sexual misconduct accusations this year. Besides Rose, they include Lauer's NBC News colleague Mark Halperin, Fox News prime-time host O'Reilly and National Public Radio newsroom chief Michael Oreskes.

Ailes, ousted as chair and CEO of Fox News in 2016 for alleged sexual misconduct, died last May.

The current flood of allegations was set off in large part by the downfall of Hollywood studio boss Harvey Weinstein, who has been accused of sexually assaulting or harassing dozens of women.

Ari Wilkenfeld, the attorney for Lauer's accuser, praised NBC for acting "quickly and responsibly" in response to the morning host's "egregious acts of sexual harassment and misconduct." The lawyer did not identify his client.

Lack, in his memo, said, "We are deeply saddened by this turn of events. But we will face it together as a news organization - and do it in as transparent a manner as we can."

An immediate challenge is filling a giant hole on a show that has long been the most lucrative for NBC News. One potential replacement, Willie Geist, on Wednesday called Lauer someone "I have always looked

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up to in the business, and he taught me a lot.”

On Wednesday’s show, Guthrie appeared to fight back tears as she called Lauer her friend who is beloved by many at NBC. She said she was “heartbroken for my colleague who came forward to tell her story and any other women who have their own stories to tell.”

Later in the show, NBC’s Megyn Kelly, who has written about being sexually harassed by Ailes at Fox News, noted the anguish on the faces of her colleagues but said, “What we don’t see is the pain on the faces of those who found the courage to come forward, and it is still a terrifying thing to do.”

Associated Press writer Patrick Mairs in Philadelphia and Television writers Frazier Moore in New York and Lynn Elber in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

US, China hold low-key military talks amid NKorea tensions

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. and Chinese generals engaged in an unusual set of security talks on Wednesday, just hours after North Korea’s most powerful missile test yet, focused on how the mighty American and Chinese militaries might communicate in a crisis.

As President Donald Trump greeted the North’s launching of another intercontinental ballistic missile with familiar demands for China to get tougher with its ally, the low-profile and unpublicized meeting at the National Defense University in Washington was taking place amid signs China is more willing at this time to discuss how the two world powers would manage an even worse emergency on the divided Korean Peninsula.

The Pentagon stressed the talks were scheduled long before North Korea’s surprise missile launch in the early hours Wednesday in Asia. Officials insisted the dialogue wasn’t centered on North Korea or anything else in particular.

Trump has vowed to prevent North Korea from having the capability to strike the U.S. mainland with a nuclear-tipped missile — using military force if necessary. He is running out of time: Some experts said the missile fired on a high trajectory that splashed down in the Sea of Japan showed North Korea’s ability to strike Washington and the entire U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

The threat of a military confrontation is making China rethink its resistance to discussing contingencies involving North Korea, according to experts. Such discussions have long been off-limits for Beijing, which fought on North Korea’s side against the United States in the 1950-53 Korean War and remains its treaty ally.

In a phone conversation with Trump on Wednesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated his desire for a diplomatic resolution to the standoff with North Korea.

Objectives for Wednesday’s military consultations appeared modest.

“The engagement will serve as an opportunity to discuss how to manage crises, prevent miscalculations, and reduce the risk of misunderstanding,” the office of Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told The Associated Press in a statement.

The U.S. and China agreed on the talks when Dunford met with his Chinese counterpart in Beijing in August. While in China, Dunford observed a Chinese military drill at Shenyang, about 120 miles from the North Korean border — an unusual stop for an official visit.

Wednesday’s talks were being led by Lt. Gen. Richard Clarke, the Joint Chiefs’ planning director, and Maj. Gen. Shao Yuanming, a senior Chinese military official. They’re especially noteworthy given the deep strategic mistrust between the U.S. and China, and Beijing’s increasing challenge to America’s post-World War II dominance in the Asia-Pacific.

China has been more explicit in saying what the talks are about.

Yao Yunzhu, a retired general who specializes in U.S.-Chinese defense relations at China’s Academy of Military Science, said this summer they should include Northeast Asia, where North Korea is located. She also mentioned the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

Yun Sun, an expert on Chinese foreign policy at the Stimson Center think tank, said Dunford raised

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North Korean contingencies at the August meeting and the two sides discussed the potential danger of a conflict or a nuclear disaster. U.S. officials wouldn't confirm that account. Sun said she anticipated those talks would continue Wednesday.

While such discussions have occurred in recent years among non-government experts, they hadn't yet happened at official levels.

However, Oriana Skylar Mastro, a Georgetown University professor, said her Chinese contacts indicated willingness to broach North Korea contingencies in the military dialogue.

"Things are shifting right now in both China and the United States. There seems to be an opening," said Mastro. She expected the talks would still be at a preliminary stage.

"This type of discussion is difficult among friends. It's much more difficult between potential adversaries, but absolutely necessary," Mastro said. "The type of war that might break out (with North Korea) is one that would be more costly than anything that generations of Americans have experienced."

Political limitations exist on both sides, making some experts skeptical that progress would be made or even that North Korean contingencies would be addressed at all. The U.S. must be wary of offending South Korea, which isn't in the dialogue. China risks further alienating a paranoid ally at a time Beijing is supporting increasingly tough U.N. sanctions on North Korea's economy in response to its missile and nuclear tests.

"The Chinese side is very worried that if North Korea gets word it might turn them into a hostile neighbor," said Frank Aum, a former Pentagon adviser on North Korea.

Chinese opinions are divided. But in a sign of growing antipathy toward Pyongyang, some Chinese intellectuals have called for radical policy change. Not only is North Korea a liability for China's global standing, it also poses a nuclear risk on its doorstep.

A collapse of North Korea's state, or another crisis, could push Beijing into conflict with the U.S. and South Korea. Bonnie Glaser, an Asia expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, mentioned North Korean nuclear facilities within 50 miles of the Chinese border, and said both sides could try to secure loose nukes.

There have been grave miscommunications before. Abraham Denmark, a former senior U.S. military official for East Asia, cited the run-up to the Korean War, when Washington thought Beijing knew it would not seek to invade China; the Chinese thought the Americans knew that if U.S. forces advanced north of the 38th parallel into North Korea, China would intervene.

"Both sides at the time thought that they were being extremely clear, but neither side had any idea of what was going on," Denmark said. "That suggests to me that both sides need to be very up front with one another."

AP writer Robert Burns contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of the name of Oriana Skylar Mastro.

AP source: Kushner questioned by Mueller's team about Flynn

By ERIC TUCKER and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner has been questioned by special counsel Robert Mueller's team of investigators about former national security adviser Michael Flynn, a person familiar with the investigation confirmed to The Associated Press.

The person said Wednesday that the questioning of Kushner earlier this month took about 90 minutes or less and was aimed in part at establishing whether Kushner had any information on Flynn that might be exculpatory. The person said multiple White House witnesses have been asked about their knowledge of Flynn, who was forced to resign from his national security adviser job at the White House in February after officials concluded he had misled them about his contacts with the Russian ambassador.

The confirmation of Kushner's interview came as prosecutors working for Mueller postponed grand jury

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testimony related to Flynn's private business dealings.

The reason for the postponement was not immediately clear, but it comes one week after attorneys for Flynn alerted Trump's legal team that they could no longer share information about the case. That discussion between lawyers was widely seen as a possible indication that Flynn was moving to cooperate with Mueller's investigation or attempting to negotiate a deal for himself.

An attorney for Flynn, Robert Kelner, did not immediately respond to email and phone messages Wednesday afternoon. Peter Carr, a spokesman for Mueller, declined comment.

In a statement, Kushner's attorney, Abbe Lowell, said, "Mr. Kushner has voluntarily cooperated with all relevant inquiries and will continue to do so."

The details of Kushner's questioning and the postponement of the grand jury testimony were confirmed by people familiar with Mueller's investigation. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly discuss the ongoing investigation.

The grand testimony that had been scheduled for the coming days related to Flynn's firm, Flynn Intel Group, its work with a public relations firm and interactions with congressional staff, one of the people said.

Mueller and the FBI have been interested in hearing from employees at the public relations firm, SGR LLC, because of the firm's work with Flynn Intel Group. SGR LLC, which does business as Sphere Consulting, did public relations work on a film Flynn Intel Group was working on about Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen. The film was never completed.

Mueller was appointed by the Justice Department in May to oversee an investigation into potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign to influence the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. The investigation, which produced its first criminal charges last month against three former Trump campaign officials, incorporated an earlier FBI inquiry into Flynn's lobbying and investigative research work on behalf of a Turkish businessman. Flynn's firm was paid \$530,000 for the work.

Sphere employees have cooperated for months with Mueller's investigation, including by turning over documents requested by investigators and sitting for voluntary interviews.

An October 2016 meeting that was expected to be the subject of the grand jury testimony has been described as a bait-and-switch carried out on behalf of Flynn's firm.

As the AP reported in March, Flynn's business partner, Bijan Kian, invited a representative of the House Homeland Security Committee to Flynn Intel's offices in Alexandria, Virginia, to discuss secure communications products. But after discussing the products, the session quickly turned into a lobbying pitch that mirrored Turkish government talking points.

Kian and others involved were particularly interested in pushing for congressional hearings to investigate Gulen, whom the Turkish government has blamed for a botched coup and who has been living in exile in Pennsylvania. Gulen has denied any involvement.

Flynn Intel Group's requests for congressional hearings went nowhere.

Flynn disclosed some of the details of the meeting in a filing with the Justice Department earlier this year. According to that filing, an employee of Sphere consulting was present during the meeting.

CNN first reported the postponement.

Follow Eric Tucker and Chad Day on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP> and <https://www.twitter.com/ChadSDay>

What North Korean photos say about new ballistic missile

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — North Korea released dozens of photos Thursday of the Hwasong-15, a new intercontinental ballistic missile it claims can reach any target in the continental United States. The photo dump, published in the paper and online editions of the ruling party's official daily, is a goldmine for rocket experts trying to parse reality from bluster.

Their general conclusion is that it's bigger, more advanced and comes with a domestically made mobile

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launcher that will make it harder than ever to pre-emptively destroy. But there's a potentially major catch: it might not have the power to go much farther than the West Coast if it is loaded down with a real nuclear warhead, not a dummy like the one it carried in its test launch on Wednesday.

Here's a closer look:

THE MISSILE

The North's new missile appears to be significantly bigger than the Hwasong-14 ICBM it tested twice in July. Note how it dwarfs North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who stands about 170 centimeters (5 feet 7 inches) tall. In a tweet just after the photos were published, Michael Duitsman, a researcher at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, California, said: "This is very big missile ... And I don't mean 'Big for North Korea.' Only a few countries can produce missiles of this size, and North Korea just joined the club." Size is important because a missile targeting the United States would have to carry a lot of fuel. Duitsman also suggested the new ICBM appears to have a different engine arrangement and improved steering.

THE LAUNCHER

North Korea boasted repeatedly in its announcement of the launch Wednesday that the Hwasong-15 was fired from a domestically made erector-launcher vehicle. Its photos back that up. Being able to make its own mobile launch vehicles, called TELs, frees the North from the need to get them from other countries, like China, which is crucial considering the tightening of international sanctions that Pyongyang faces. TELs make it easier to move missiles around and launch them from remote, hard-to-predict locations. That makes finding and destroying the Hwasong-15 before a launch more difficult.

THE PAYLOAD

North Korea claims the Hwasong-15 can carry a "super-heavy" nuclear payload to any target in the mainland United States. The re-entry vehicle, that nose cone in the photo, does indeed look quite large. But the heavier the load the shorter the range. Michael Elleman, a leading missile expert, has suggested in the respected 38 North blog that Hwasong-15's estimated 13,000-kilometer (8,100 mile) range assumes a payload of around 150 kilograms (330 pounds), which is probably much lighter than any real nuclear payload the North can produce. To get to the West Coast, the North needs to keep that weight down to 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds). Whether it can do that remains questionable. "Kim Jong Un's nuclear bomb must weigh less than 350 kilograms (800 pounds) if he expects to strike the western edges of the US mainland," Elleman estimated. "A 600-kilogram (1,300-pound) payload barely reaches Seattle."

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

Garrison Keillor fired for 'inappropriate behavior'

By JEFF BAENEN, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Garrison Keillor, whose stories of small-town characters entertained legions of public radio listeners for 40 years on "A Prairie Home Companion," became another celebrity felled by allegations of workplace misconduct on Wednesday when Minnesota Public Radio terminated his contracts.

The homegrown humorist told The Associated Press he was fired over "a story that I think is more interesting and more complicated than the version MPR heard." Keillor didn't detail the allegation to AP, but he later told the Minneapolis Star Tribune that he had put his hand on a woman's bare back when trying to console her.

"I meant to pat her back after she told me about her unhappiness, and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six inches. She recoiled. I apologized," Keillor told the newspaper in an email. "I sent her an email of apology later, and she replied that she had forgiven me and not to think about it.

"We were friends. We continued to be friendly right up until her lawyer called."

MPR said only that it received allegations of "inappropriate behavior" against Keillor last month involving

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one person who worked with him during his time hosting "A Prairie Home Companion." Keillor retired as host of the radio variety show last year, but continued to work for MPR on various projects.

MPR said it had received no other complaints but had retained an outside law firm that was continuing to investigate.

Later Wednesday, Keillor gave a statement to MPR News saying he had to "respect the privacy of the two employees who have made the allegations." A spokeswoman for MPR's corporate arm didn't immediately respond to questions from AP on whether Keillor was accused of bad behavior with more than one person.

Keillor's hand-picked successor to host the show, mandolinist Chris Thile, tweeted Wednesday he was "in shock" after Keillor's firing. Thile had been a frequent musical guest on the show and said he knew nothing about the allegation, adding: "I trust that the proper steps are being taken."

Sue Scott, who worked on the show as a voice actor for 24 years with Keillor, told the AP she was stunned. She said she saw no evidence of inappropriate behavior from Keillor.

Fans also were shocked. Cindy Dina, of the Minneapolis suburb of Forest Lake, said she frequently listened when Keillor hosted the show and admired him, saying the Minnesota native was "iconic."

"It's just one more, wow," she said, adding that she hoped the continuous allegations against high-profile men would send a strong message to all men.

Keillor's storytelling earned him comparisons with Mark Twain and Will Rogers. His 1985 best-selling book, "Lake Wobegon Days," landed him on the cover of Time magazine.

"A Prairie Home Companion" was heard by nearly 4 million listeners a week on nearly 700 public radio stations across the U.S. the year before Keillor left as host. The inaugural show — attended by about a dozen people at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, on July 6, 1974 — is in the Library of Congress' national registry of historic sound recordings.

On Wednesday, Keillor didn't say when the incident with the woman occurred. In his statement to AP, Keillor said it was "poetic irony to be knocked off the air by a story, having told so many of them myself.

"But I'm 75 and don't have any interest in arguing about this. And I cannot in conscience bring danger to a great organization I've worked hard for since 1969."

His separation from MPR came just days after Keillor, an avowed Democrat, wrote a syndicated column that ridiculed the idea that Minnesota Sen. Al Franken should resign over allegations of sexual harassment.

MPR said it would rename the show now hosted by Thile and end distribution of "The Writer's Almanac," Keillor's daily reading of a poem and telling of literary events. MPR also plans to end rebroadcasts of "The Best of A Prairie Home Companion" hosted by Keillor.

Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" aired on Saturdays, featuring tales of his fictional Minnesota hometown of Lake Wobegon "where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average."

The show featured musical acts, folksy humor, parody ads for fake products such as Powdermilk Biscuits and the centerpiece: Keillor delivering a seemingly off-the-cuff monologue, "The News From Lake Wobegon," in his rich baritone voice.

He also has been working on a Lake Wobegon screenplay and a memoir about growing up in Minnesota.

"A person could not hope for more than what I was given," Keillor said in his statement Wednesday to AP.

Keillor was scheduled to appear Wednesday evening at a theater in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, along with the folk duo Robin and Linda Williams, but the show was canceled.

A couple of hours later at a Pittsfield restaurant, he told The Berkshire Eagle that it's "bewildering" that he worked on a show he loved for decades, and "somebody else can torch it in one morning."

Trump stokes anti-Muslim sentiment; censured in US, abroad

By CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stoking the same anti-Islam sentiments he fanned on the campaign trail, President Donald Trump on Wednesday retweeted a string of inflammatory videos from a fringe British political group purporting to show violence being committed by Muslims.

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The tweets drew a sharp condemnation from British Prime Minister Theresa May's office, which said it was "wrong for the president to have done this." May spokesman James Slack said the far-right Britain First group seeks to divide through its use of "hateful narratives which peddle lies and stoke tensions."

Brushing off the criticism in an evening tweet, Trump said May instead of focusing on him should "focus on the destructive Radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom."

Trump had turned away from taxes, North Korea and other issues facing his administration to share the three videos tweeted by Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of the British group. It was not clear what drew him to the videos, though one had been shared by conservative commentator Ann Coulter the day before.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump was simply promoting border security and suggested that verifying the content was not a top concern.

"Whether it's a real video, the threat is real and that is what the president is talking about," she said.

The tweets read: "VIDEO: Islamist mob pushes teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!" and "VIDEO: Muslim Destroys a Statue of Virgin Mary!" and "VIDEO: Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!"

Trump made anti-Muslim comments one hallmark of his presidential campaign and has previously retweeted inflammatory posts from controversial Twitter accounts including some with apparent ties to white nationalist groups. As president, he has sought to ban travel to the U.S. from a number of majority-Muslim countries.

His promotion of the videos came two days after he mocked Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren as "Pocahontas" during an Oval Office event with Native American veterans, drawing criticism from of Native American war veterans and politicians of both major parties.

Britain First opposes what it calls the "Islamization" of Britain. It has run candidates in local and national elections, with little success, and has campaigned against the construction and expansion of mosques.

Trump's retweets gave a wide platform to the previously obscure group. The videos were each shared more than 10,000 times, and Fransen picked up nearly 10,000 Twitter followers in the hours following Trump's retweets. She thanked him on Twitter, saying "GOD BLESS YOU TRUMP!"

Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke also welcomed the videos, tweeting that Trump was being "condemned for showing us what the fake news media WON'T. Thank God for Trump! That's why we love him!"

Condemnation from civil rights organizations was swift.

The executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Nihad Awad, said in a statement that Trump is "clearly telling members of his base that they should hate Islam and Muslims."

The American Civil Liberties Union, in a tweet, said, "Trump's prejudice against Muslims reveals itself at every turn — with today's tweets meant to gin up fear and bias."

There are about 3.45 million Muslims in the United States, according to an August report from the Pew Research Center.

One of the retweeted videos from 2013 showed a radical Islamist in Egypt throwing a 9-year-old boy off a roof. The video was filmed in Egypt days after the overthrow of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi by Egypt's military. The perpetrators of the roof violence were later sentenced to death for killing the boy and another man.

Another video shows a man — said to be a supporter of Syria's al-Qaida affiliate then known as the Nusra Front — smashing a blue and white statue of the Virgin Mary. The video appeared on the internet in October 2013, in the midst of the Syrian civil war, and was reported by the Middle East Media Research Institute, MEMRI.

The third video shows one young man attacking another young man on crutches. It was originally posted to a Dutch video site in May 2017 and picked up by Dutch media the following day. Two 16-year-old boys were arrested, according to De Telegraaf, and police removed the video. The boys' religion was not included in any of the reports.

Fransen said in her tweet that a "Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!" But a statement from a spokesman for the Dutch prosecution service Wednesday said the boy was not a migrant and was born and raised in the Netherlands.

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The Netherlands Embassy in the United States also weighed in with a tweet, writing: "Facts do matter. The perpetrator of the violent act in this video was born and raised in the Netherlands. He received and completed his sentence under Dutch law."

Fransen has been charged with causing religiously aggravated harassment through leaflets and videos that were distributed during a criminal trial earlier this year. She has separately been charged with using "threatening, abusive or insulting words or behavior" in a speech she made in Northern Ireland in August. She is currently free on bail.

She was convicted last year of religiously aggravated harassment and fined after hurling abuse at a Muslim woman wearing a hijab.

Trump's retweets were condemned by Brendan Cox, whose British lawmaker wife Jo Cox was murdered last year by an attacker with far-right views.

Cox tweeted: "Trump has legitimised the far right in his own country, now he's trying to do it in ours. Spreading hatred has consequences & the President should be ashamed of himself."

The British government rejected calls from opposition lawmakers to revoke Trump's invitation to visit. May announced in January that he had accepted an invitation for a state visit, one of the biggest honors the country can bestow on foreign leaders. Almost a year later, no date has been set, and opponents of Trump have vowed to stage large protests if he does come.

Jill Lawless reported from London.

Bali flights resume, but volcanic ash still disrupts travel

By **STEPHEN WRIGHT, Associated Press**

KARANGASEM, Indonesia (AP) — Flights trickled out of Bali a day after its airport reopened but the erupting volcano there shut down air travel to a neighboring Indonesian island Thursday, showing the continued risk to aircraft from the towering ash clouds.

Mount Agung has been gushing black-gray columns of volcanic dust and steam since the weekend and glowing a dramatic red at night as lava wells in its crater.

Bali's airport was closed from early Monday until Wednesday afternoon, stranding tens of thousands of travelers on the idyllic resort island famous for its Hindu culture, surf beaches and lush interior.

It reopened after the hazardous ash clouds changed direction, but the threat has now closed the small international airport on Lombok island until at least Thursday evening.

Australia's Jetstar said it would have 16 flights out of Bali on Thursday, six more than usual, which would take about 3,500 Australians home. Two South Korean airlines said they were sending charter flights on Thursday, one to Bali and another to Surabaya on the neighboring island of Java, which some tourists have reached by ferry and bus, to collect as many as 700 Koreans.

Figures from the airport showed 23 flights, mostly domestic, carried about 1,600 passengers out Wednesday. Inbound flights included a Singapore Airlines jet with only two passengers.

The volcano was erupting less furiously Thursday. The Disaster Mitigation Agency said the ash plume was rising about 2,000 meters above the crater, about half its previous height. As ash has drifted away from the mountain, it has reached heights of 25,000 feet (7,600 meters), posing a threat to aircraft.

Despite the all-clear for Bali's airport, flights are unlikely to rapidly return to normal levels and a change in the direction of the ash or a new more powerful eruption could force the airport's closure again.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo ordered ministries and agencies, the military and police to help Bali's government deal with the disaster, and he has urged anyone inside the mountain's exclusion zone to get out "for the sake of their safety."

Authorities have told 100,000 people to leave an area extending up to 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the volcano. About 40,000 people are staying in 225 shelters, the disaster agency said, but tens of thousands more have stayed they feel safe or don't want to abandon homes and livestock.

In the village of Tulamben inside the exclusion zone, farmers were plowing their fields with cattle Wednesday.

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day, seemingly unbothered by the smoking mountain behind them swelling with orange lava.

In Sukadana village, about 8 kilometers from the crater, a few remaining residents said mudflows of volcanic debris and water had passed through the area for a couple of days before solidifying.

Some stranded tourists managed to get off the island before the airport reopened, but they faced an arduous journey involving crowded roads, buses, ferries and sometimes overnight waits in yet another airport in Surabaya on the island of Java.

"This is a very unforgettable experience for us. So much hassle and definitely one for the books," said Sheryl David, a tourist from Manila, Philippines, who arrived Saturday in Bali with three friends and was supposed to leave Tuesday. She said the experience didn't dampen her feelings about the island.

"Yes, still a paradise," she texted.

The volcano's last major eruption, in 1963, killed about 1,100 people, but it is unclear how bad the current situation might get or how long it could last. A worst-case scenario would involve an explosive eruption that causes the mountain's cone to collapse.

"An analogy would be the twin towers collapsing in New York on 9/11," said Richard Arculus, a volcano expert at Australian National University. "You saw people running away from the debris raining down and columns of dust pursuing people down the street. You will not be able to outrun this thing."

Indonesian officials first raised the highest alert two months ago when seismic activity increased at the mountain. The activity decreased by late October, and the alert was lowered before being lifted to the highest level again Monday.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and has more than 120 active volcanoes.

Associated Press journalists Ali Kotarumalos and Margie Mason in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Kiko Rosario in Bangkok contributed to this report.

Haley: NKorea 'brings us closer to war' the US doesn't seek

By EDITH M. LEDERER and MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said Wednesday that North Korea's launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile — which some observers believe could reach the Eastern U.S. — "brings us closer" to a war the U.S. isn't seeking.

Nikki Haley, speaking at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council, said that if war comes as a result of further acts of "aggression" like the latest launch, "make no mistake the North Korean regime will be utterly destroyed."

"The dictator of North Korea made a decision yesterday that brings us closer to war, not farther from it," Haley said. "We have never sought war with North Korea and still today we do not seek it."

The Trump administration threatened new sanctions on North Korea after the reclusive government shattered 2½ months of relative quiet with its most powerful weapon test yet.

President Donald Trump tweeted that he spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping about Pyongyang's "provocative actions," and he vowed that "additional major sanctions will be imposed on North Korea today. This situation will be handled!" Trump's top diplomat, Rex Tillerson, said the U.S. could target financial institutions doing business with the North.

At the emergency Security Council meeting, China's deputy U.N. ambassador Wu Haitao reiterated the China-Russia proposal for North Korea to suspend all nuclear and missile tests and for the U.S. and South Korea to suspend all military exercises.

Russia's U.N. ambassador Vassily Nebenzia also urged North Korea to stop the tests and called on the U.S. and South Korea to cancel large-scale military maneuvers scheduled for December.

Haley said the world's nations have the power to further isolate and reverse North Korea's dangerous course, by cutting all ties to the country and enforcing U.N. sanctions. She said Trump during his call to Xi urged the Chinese president to cut off all oil deliveries to North Korea. "That would be a pivotal step in the world's effort to stop this international pariah," she said.

The fresh deliberations about new forms of punishment for North Korea came after its government said

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it successfully fired a "significantly more" powerful, nuclear-capable ICBM it called the Hwasong-15. Outside governments and analysts concurred the North had made a jump in missile capability.

A resumption of Pyongyang's torrid testing pace in pursuit of a viable arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles that can hit the U.S. mainland had been widely expected. But the power of the missile and suddenness of the test jolted the Korean Peninsula and Washington. The launch at 3:17 a.m. Wednesday local time — early Tuesday afternoon in the U.S. capital — indicated an effort to perfect the element of surprise and obtain maximum attention in the U.S.

In a government statement released through state media, North Korea said the Hwasong-15, the "greatest ICBM," could be armed with a "super-large heavy nuclear warhead" and is capable of striking the "whole mainland" of the U.S. The North said the missile reached a height of 4,475 kilometers (2,780 miles) and traveled 950 kilometers (590 miles) before accurately hitting a sea target, similar to the flight data announced by South Korea's military.

After the launch, it said leader Kim Jong Un "declared with pride" that his country has achieved its goal of becoming a "rocket power." State TV said Kim gave the order Tuesday, and it broadcast a photo of Kim's signed order where he wrote: "Test launch is approved. Taking place at the daybreak of Nov. 29! Fire with courage for the party and country!"

Speaking later Wednesday, Trump could not resist taking a dig at Kim. Digressing during a speech in Missouri on tax reform, Trump called Kim "Little Rocket Man" and described him as "a sick puppy."

The North Korean launch was a message of defiance to the Trump administration after it restored North Korea to a U.S. list of terror sponsors. It raises fears of war or a pre-emptive U.S. strike and casts a deeper shadow over the security of the Winter Olympics early next year in South Korea.

A rattled Seoul responded by almost immediately launching three of its own missiles in a show of force. South Korean President Moon Jae-in expressed worry that North Korea's missile threat could force the U.S. to attack the North before it masters a nuclear-tipped long-range missile.

The launch was North Korea's first since Sept. 15 and may have broken any efforts at diplomacy. U.S. officials have sporadically floated the idea of direct talks with North Korea if it maintained restraint.

The missile also appeared an improvement on North Korea's past launches.

If flown on a standard trajectory, instead of the lofted angle of the test flight, the missile would have a range of more than 13,000 kilometers (8,100 miles), said U.S. scientist David Wright, a physicist who closely tracks North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. "Such a missile would have more than enough range to reach Washington, D.C., and in fact any part of the continental United States," Wright wrote in a blog post for the Union for Concerned Scientists.

Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said the missile landed inside Japan's special economic zone in the Sea of Japan.

A big unknown, however, is the missile's payload. If, as expected, it carried a light mock warhead, then its effective range would have been shorter, analysts said.

In his call with Xi, Trump made clear "the determination of the United States to defend ourselves and our allies," according to a White House statement. Trump also "emphasized the need for China to use all available levers to convince North Korea to end its provocations and return to the path of denuclearization."

The Trump administration bolstered U.S. sanctions against North Korea last week and imposed new restrictions on North Korean shipping firms and Chinese companies that deal with the North.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency said Xi told Trump that China remained determined to clear the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons, and to preserve peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

Lederer reported from the United Nations. Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor and Robert Burns in Washington, Foster Klug and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

AP FACT CHECK: Anti-Muslim videos misrepresent what happened

By CALVIN WOODWARD, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like much other propaganda, the anti-Muslim videos spread around by President Donald Trump mix grains of truth, fakery and shades in between, overlaid with a message meant to be a blunt hammer blow for a cause.

Trump's penchant for sharing doctored images and making false statements on Twitter means that content tweeted or retweeted by the president should be viewed skeptically. His spokeswoman, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, suggested the veracity of the videos wasn't a high priority amid concern over national security and strong borders, saying: "Whether it's a real video, the threat is real and that is what the president is talking about."

Here's a look at known facts behind the videos tweeted by a far-right British fringe group and retweeted by President Trump:

FALSE

One video shows a young man attacking another who is on crutches, near a river bank. It was originally posted to a Dutch viral video site in May and picked up by Dutch media. In her tweet, Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of Britain First, wrote: "VIDEO: Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!" But the victim was not attacked by a Muslim migrant.

"Facts do matter," the Dutch Embassy in Washington said in a tweet directed at Trump. "The perpetrator of the violent act in this video was born and raised in the Netherlands. He received and completed his sentence under Dutch law."

APPARENTLY TRUE

One video shows a man, said to be a supporter of Syria's al-Qaida affiliate then known as the Nusra Front, smashing a statue of the Virgin Mary. The Middle East Media Research Institute identified the man as Sheikk Omar Raghba. In the video, he declares that "idols" will no longer be worshipped in the Levant before he smashes the statue, half his size, in the Yakubiya village in northwestern Syria.

The circumstances are not verified, but the images ring true. It's well known that Islamic extremists target people and objects of other faiths — Christians, Jews, Muslims of other sects and movements — as well as indiscriminate populations. Also well known: Anti-Muslim extremists in the U.S. and other countries of the West have torched mosques. The video appeared online in 2013.

MISSING PIECES

One video, blurry and shaky, shows someone falling from the roof of an apparent elevator shaft, then at least one man punching the victim. "Islamist mob pushes a teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!" says the tweet introducing it.

The video was filmed days after the overthrow of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi by Egypt's military. In the video, a supporter of Morsi is seen roaming the roof of a building in the coastal city of Alexandria, raising a black flag often used by militants. Little else is obvious from the video except that a confrontation was unfolding on the roof. Perpetrators of the roof violence were sentenced to death for killing a boy and a man.

The wider context of those killings was ignored — the fact that both sides had blood on their hands. It was a time of violent protests by pro-Morsi protesters and a violent military crackdown. More than 1,000 people died in the military's dispersal of Islamic protests.

Find AP Fact Checks at <https://apnews.com/tag/APFactCheck>

Lawyer: Conyers has no plan to resign amid harassment claims

By COREY WILLIAMS and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Embattled U.S. Rep. John Conyers has no plans to resign amid allegations that the congressman sexually harassed several women when they worked on his staff, his lawyer said Wednesday.

Detroit-area attorney Arnold Reed told The Associated Press that the 88-year-old Conyers is going to fight claims that he inappropriately touched the women and that anyone making the allegations should be prepared to back them up.

Reed said Conyers is “innocent and will cooperate with any investigation that ensues.”

“He’s going to fight these allegations tooth and nail if he has to with evidence, with documentation, witnesses, whatever he has to do,” Reed said. “And the accusers will have to prove up their case.”

Last week, BuzzFeed News reported that Conyers had settled a complaint in 2015 from a woman on his staff who alleged she was fired because she rejected his sexual advances.

BuzzFeed reported that Conyers’ office paid the woman more than \$27,000 in the confidential settlement. BuzzFeed also published affidavits from former staff members who said they had witnessed Conyers touching female staffers inappropriately or requesting sexual favors.

A former scheduler filed a complaint earlier this year, but later dropped it. The Associated Press hasn’t released her name. And a third ex-staffer, Deanna Maher, said Tuesday that in 1997 Conyers undressed to his underwear in front of her and twice touched her leg inappropriately.

Reed said he met with Conyers, who was at his Detroit home Wednesday and mostly remained indoors before being driven away in the afternoon as reporters gathered outside the gated driveway.

Monica Conyers told reporters that her husband is entitled to have the judicial process play out “before we start being his judge and jury ... and tarnish all of these years of his legacy for nothing.”

Conyers first was elected to the U.S. House in 1964. He missed two roll-call votes late Tuesday and was photographed by a passenger boarding a flight to Detroit from Washington.

“It’s very unfortunate to see him fight so long for so many people and to automatically have the allegations assumed to be true,” said his son, John Conyers III.

He noted, however: “And of course, with sexual assault, women are to be believed. But in this instance he has no history of this.”

Conyers told Reed that fears for his family over media coverage prompted his return to Detroit late Tuesday from Washington. Reed said the congressman will return to Washington when he feels it’s safe to go back.

The House Ethics Committee is investigating Conyers, who announced Sunday that he would step aside as the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi pressured Conyers behind the scenes to leave the chamber, according to a senior House aide, who spoke late Tuesday on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Also Tuesday, members of the Congressional Black Caucus met with Conyers and explained to one of their founding members why he should resign, but stressed the decision was up to him, the senior House aide said.

On Wednesday, Rep. Kathleen Rice walked out of a Democratic Caucus meeting, saying the issue wasn’t being taken seriously.

Rice said Pelosi spoke only “very briefly” about sexual harassment and focused mostly on efforts by female members to combat it.

“But let’s talk about the big elephant in the room. That’s why I was done with the meeting,” Rice said.

“I don’t have time for conversations that are not real, that are not going to advance the ball for all of us here in Washington, and I for one am not going to stand silent even in the face of pressure from leadership,” she added.

Caucus chairman Rep. Joseph Crowley said at a news conference after the meeting that Caucus members “believe these are very, very, very serious allegations.”

But, he said, calling “for a resignation does not actually create the resignation” and that an ethics com-

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mittee review could "bring this to the forefront."

Three Democrats have suggested Conyers should resign: Rice, Rep. Earl Blumenhauer and Rep. Pramila Jayapal.

Monica Conyers said her husband was spending time Wednesday with family and that she was sure he would return to Washington, eventually.

"I don't know when," she said. "He's doing good. Right now, he's just hanging out with his family."

Conyers is among a number of prominent men in politics, entertainment and journalism who have been accused of sexual misconduct in the wake of explosive allegations against former Hollywood executive Harvey Weinstein. Also last week, Republican Rep. Joe Barton of Texas apologized for a nude photograph leaked on social media.

The latest woman to come forward with claims of harassment by Conyers is Deanna Maher, who ran a Michigan office for Conyers from 1997 to 2005.

Maher told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the first incident occurred in 1997 during a Congressional Black Caucus event in Washington.

Maher said while she was in the bedroom of a hotel suite, Conyers walked in, ordered sandwiches and undressed.

"I had my nightclothes on," said Maher, who now lives in the Holland area in western Michigan. "I was just scared to death. I was married at the time. He sat in the bedroom taking his clothes off. I didn't say anything and he didn't say anything."

Nothing happened between them, she added.

"He didn't go naked. He was down to his skivvies," Maher said. "He sat there eating sandwiches and then he stormed out and slammed the door. I was so embarrassed and ashamed of myself for being so stupid. I needed a job."

She added: "He didn't put his hand on me, but the message was loud and clear."

Maher's allegations against Conyers initially were reported by The Detroit News. She said there were other incidents involving unwanted touching in a car in 1998 and unwanted touching of her legs under her dress in 1999.

Associated Press reporter Alan Fram in Washington, D.C., contributed to this story.

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What's new, and what's ahead, after North Korea's ICBM test

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Experts may debate trajectories, payload weights and re-entry shields, but North Korea's claim that the entire United States is within range of its rapidly improving missiles just got a lot more credible.

Wednesday's launch of what the North called the Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile demonstrated a greater range than other missiles it's tested and showcased several capabilities the North must master if it were ever to actually try to unleash them at the United States.

Here is a quick look at the advancements made, the developments still to come, and the implications for the United States and its Asian allies:

THE MISSILE ITSELF

According to North Korea's announcements about the launch, the Hwasong-15 can be tipped with a "super-large heavy warhead" and is capable of striking anywhere in the U.S. mainland. The North claims it reached an altitude of 4,475 kilometers (2,780 miles) and flew 950 kilometers (600 miles) from its launch site just outside of Pyongyang. It was airborne for 53 minutes before splashing down in the Sea of Japan.

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The launch data jibe with what foreign experts observed. U.S. scientist David Wright, a physicist who closely tracks North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, estimates the Hwasong-15 has an estimated range of more than 13,000 kilometers (8,100 miles) if flown on a standard trajectory — putting Washington within reach.

Pyongyang claims the missile has significant tactical and technical improvements from the Hwasong-14 ICBM it tested in July and is the North's "most powerful" to date. KCNA also said Kim Jong Un "declared with pride that now we have finally realized the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force."

The repeated claim in the announcement that North Korea has now completed its "rocket weaponry system development" is new and important. It could be bluster, but might also suggest a shift away from tests — at least of these kinds of missiles — toward production and deployment.

The North's arsenal is still a far cry from the quality and quantity of what the United States can field. The Air Force's development of the Minuteman ICBM goes back to the late 1950s. It now has about 400 of the latest version, the Minuteman III, which also has a maximum range of about 13,000 kilometers.

HOW IT WAS LAUNCHED

The timing and location are important. It was launched in the dead of night, most likely from a mobile launcher, near the capital. That indicates the North was trying to show it can launch whenever and wherever it pleases — a capability makes it more difficult to take pre-emptive action. It's impossible to blow up a North Korean missile on the launch pad if the missile can be moved and there isn't any launch pad at all.

Interestingly, however, Japanese media reported on Tuesday their government had intercepted radio signals from the North suggesting a launch was imminent. It's not clear if that was a first, since details on such intelligence are normally not made public. But it does suggest the North's neighbors are having some success with surveillance efforts.

The trajectory of the launch is also significant. The missile was "lofted" at an extremely sharp angle and reached an altitude more than twice as high as satellites in low Earth orbit.

North Korea needs to launch toward the Pacific because it would otherwise be shooting its missiles at Russia or China — a very unwise proposition. And lofting avoids flying over Japan, which could prompt Tokyo or Japan-based U.S. missile-defense facilities to attempt an intercept, and hits open seas instead of other nations.

But lofting doesn't closely simulate conditions of a real launch. Experts can roughly gauge the range of the missile from its lofted performance, but a missile on an attack trajectory would fly a lower, flatter pattern that presents some different challenges, particularly in the crucial re-entry stage of the nuclear payload.

SO WHAT NOW?

North Korea claimed as it always does that the test is part of its overall strategy to defend itself against Washington's "nuclear blackmail" and that its development of missiles and nuclear weapons does not pose a threat to any country "as long as the interests of the DPRK are not infringed upon." DPRK is short for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In an equally familiar manner, the move was immediately condemned in the strongest terms by Tokyo and Seoul. President Donald Trump said Washington "will handle it," while giving no indication of how or what handling it actually would mean.

Clearly, however, the problem isn't going away.

The launch broke a two-month lull in what has been a record pace of tests for the North. While some claimed that was the result of pressure from the United States and its allies, it's common for the North to re-focus its energies to farming activities during the harvest season and for its military to shift into a lower-profile mode for its winter training cycle.

North Korea still needs to conduct further missile tests, particularly of its submarine-launched missile systems, to improve its overall arsenal. But having now demonstrated what it claims to be the primary missile it needs to deter attack from the United States, Pyongyang may turn to more testing of its nuclear weapons.

So far, five of its six nuclear tests have been conducted in a series of tunnels under Mount Mantap, a 2,205 meter (7,200 foot) tall granite peak in the northeast part of the country. But Pyongyang has hinted it might attempt an atmospheric test over the Pacific Ocean.

That would be a far more provocative move than Wednesday's missile test and might prompt a military response.

Talmadge has been the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief since 2013. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram at EricTalmadge.

Arrest of suspected killer puts Tampa neighborhood at ease

By TAMARA LUSH, Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — After enduring almost two months of fear, a Tampa neighborhood breathed a sigh of relief Wednesday after authorities announced the arrest of a suspected serial killer, a recent college graduate who police say gave himself away after asking a co-worker to hold a bag containing a handgun.

Howell Emanuel Donaldson, who was working as crew chief at a McDonald's, was charged with four counts of first-degree murder in a string of shootings that targeted people near bus stops.

"We had a community that was on edge," Mayor Bob Buckhorn said. "Today the light shines. The darkness is over. This community begins the healing process."

Neighbors of the 24-year-old — who lived in a different area of Tampa than where the slayings took place — said they recently saw him playing basketball with his younger brother in the driveway of the family's suburban home. Now they're watching news of him on television, puzzled as to how a kid who went to college in New York on a basketball scholarship ended up behind bars.

"He's very nice. He waves, very polite," said neighbor Kelly Fabian, who said she walked Donaldson to school when he was younger. "Quiet kid. It's a shocker."

Arrest records did not list an attorney for Donaldson, and the police chief said he did not know if the suspect had a lawyer yet. He's scheduled to make a first court appearance Thursday in Hillsborough County.

The arrest, which happened Tuesday night, brought immense relief to the anxious neighborhood of Seminole Heights, which had stopped many outdoor activities since the first death on Oct. 9. Two more fatal shootings happened in the weeks that followed, and residents were so scared that police escorted children while they trick-or-treated. The fourth killing happened earlier this month.

"I think in this situation it's a lose-lose no matter how you look at it, except for a magical thing like when a community — organizations, law enforcement — come together unified and can put somebody behind bars," said Brittany Lott, who said she has not walked her bulldogs in 51 days, choosing to spend time in the backyard instead.

The crack in the case came Tuesday when Donaldson brought a bag holding a loaded Glock .40-caliber handgun to McDonald's and asked a co-worker to hold it while he went across the street, authorities said.

Restaurant workers thought Donaldson's request was odd. When he left, they reported the gun to a police officer who was doing paperwork there, setting off an investigation. When he returned to the restaurant, officers were waiting.

In addition to matching shell casings found at the shootings, authorities said location data from Donaldson's cellphone put him at the scene of at least three of the killings.

"The gun is what we needed," Police Chief Brian Dugan said at a news conference surrounded by family members of the victims.

Donaldson did not live in the neighborhood where the shootings occurred and told investigators he was unfamiliar with it.

Robert Hoffa, the uncle of victim Monica Hoffa, said he was "overjoyed" when Tampa police called him to say they had made an arrest.

"This is about family. This is about community. This is about everybody sticking together," he said.

Authorities have not been able to determine why Donaldson chose the Seminole Heights neighborhood.

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Although he's been cooperative and friendly to officers, the suspect did not shed any light on his motive or why he targeted individual victims, the police chief said.

Donaldson graduated from St. John's University in New York in January. He was a walk-on for the men's basketball team during the 2011-12 season but never played in a game, school spokesman Brian Browne said.

After graduating, he worked in customer support at the Ultimate Medical Academy, a school that trains workers for health care jobs. He started there Feb. 13 and worked for about three months before being fired for absenteeism. The academy said he passed a background check before he was hired.

His LinkedIn account also listed a job as a "guest experience host" for the New York Mets in 2016. The Mets would neither confirm nor deny that he was employed there.

Police in New York said Donaldson was arrested in May 2014, but the arrest was sealed and no details were available. Authorities planned to review cold cases to see if Donaldson could be linked to any crimes there.

Donaldson bought the gun and a 20-round box of bullets from Shooter's World in Tampa on Oct. 3. He picked it up after the four-day waiting period, and the first killing happened two days after that.

The arrest report said police found clothing inside Donaldson's car that was similar to what was worn by a person spotted in surveillance video taken the night of the first shooting.

Residents and police had been on edge since Oct. 9, when 22-year-old Benjamin Mitchell was shot to death.

On Oct. 11, 32-year-old Monica Hoffa was slain, followed on Oct. 19 by 20-year-old Anthony Naiboa, who was killed after taking the wrong bus home from his new job. The final victim, 60-year-old Ronald Felton, was killed Nov. 14.

All of the October victims were either getting on or off a city bus, or were at a bus stop when they were shot, police said.

Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Freida Frisaro in Miami, Kelli Kennedy in Fort Lauderdale and Colleen Long in New York, as well as AP news researcher Rhonda Shafner, also in New York.

An earlier version of this report had an incorrect spelling for the name of the Seminole Heights neighborhood.

Facing pressure, House OKs anti-harassment training

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pressured to respond to burgeoning sexual misconduct allegations, the House easily approved a bipartisan measure Wednesday requiring annual anti-harassment training for lawmakers and aides after a debate that rang with lawmakers' own accounts of such episodes.

Voice vote passage came as Congress waged year-end battles over Republican tax cuts and a potential government shutdown but has been diverted to also address allegations against some of its own. The accused include liberal heroes Rep. John Conyers and Sen. Al Franken and far-right GOP Senate candidate Roy Moore of Alabama.

With Conyers being pressed to resign from Congress by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and others, Pelosi seemed to suggest it was time for the long-serving liberal and civil rights hero to step down.

"No matter how great the legacy, it is not a license to harass and abuse," Pelosi, D-Calif., said without mentioning the 88-year-old Michigan Democrat's name. She said Congress must tolerate no abuse, "no matter your contribution to our country."

Conyers' attorney, Arnold Reed, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the lawmaker has no plans to leave Congress and will fight the accusations against him "tooth and nail."

The House debate also saw Rep. Robert Brady, D-Pa., describe conversing with a female colleague in the chamber as a congressman he didn't identify "walked by and groped her from behind." Rep. Ann McLane

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Kuster, D-N.H., recounted a story she's told before about being sexually assaulted while a congressional aide four decades ago by "a distinguished guest of the United States Congress."

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., a sponsor of the training measure, said a woman told her of being on the House floor when a man "grinded up against her and then stuck his tongue in her ear." Speier, who offered no names and has described the incident previously, has said she herself was sexually assaulted by her office's chief of staff when she was an aide years ago.

Earlier, House Speaker Paul Ryan said there should be no room for sexual harassment "in any workplace, let alone in the United States Congress." Ryan, R-Wis., told reporters that having a hostile environment on Capitol Hill is "a disgrace."

Ryan and others said one upcoming target for examination is the secretive practice lawmakers use to settle complaints using federally financed payments. No information is publicly released and recipients must promise silence.

Many such settlements go through Congress' obscure Office of Compliance, which has said it's paid more than \$17 million over the last 20 years to resolve claims of sexual harassment, pay disputes and other disagreements. It's provided no detail. Rep. Gregg Harper, R-Miss., who chairs a committee that oversees that office, said he's requested figures on settlements involving sexual harassment by lawmakers.

Despite unanimity that harassment must be addressed, one Democrat complained leaders weren't being aggressive enough.

Conyers surrendered his post as the House Judiciary Committee's top Democrat after a report that he'd quietly settled a complaint by a former aide who said he'd harassed her. But at least three colleagues have said he should quit the House.

One critic, Rep. Kathleen Rice, D-N.Y., said she left a meeting of House Democrats unhappy that the issue wasn't being taken seriously enough. She cited recent firings of media figures and told reporters, "We don't do the same, and I think it's a disgrace."

Top Democrats disputed that, and one senior aide said eight lawmakers discussed the issue at the closed-door meeting.

Other accusers have also emerged. Conyers has denied the allegations and returned to Detroit.

Ryan sidestepped a question on whether lawmakers should more vocally address some women's claims that they were sexually harassed by Donald Trump before he became president. Trump has denied the allegations.

"Right now we're focused on making sure this place works the right way," Ryan said.

Lawmakers say the House training measure, similar to a plan the Senate already approved, is merely a first step. Rep. Barbara Comstock, R-Va., a sponsor of Wednesday's resolution, said lawmakers are considering ending taxpayer-funded settlements, giving victims of alleged harassment more rights and requiring more information about complaints to be publicly released.

Franken was accused by one woman of forcibly kissing her and by three others of grabbing their buttocks while taking pictures. He's apologized.

In Alabama, Moore faces allegations he's denied of preying on teenage girls decades ago. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, has apologized after a nude photo of him was leaked on social media.

AP reporters Juliet Linderman and Kevin Freking in Washington and Corey Williams in Detroit contributed.

New, long-acting drugs cut frequency of migraine headaches

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE, AP Chief Medical Writer

New, long-acting drugs may hold hope for millions of people who often suffer migraines. Studies of two of these medicines, given as shots every month or so, found they cut the frequency of the notoriously painful and disabling headaches.

The drugs are the first preventive medicines developed specifically for migraines. They work by interfering with a substance involved in modifying nerve signaling and progression of pain and symptoms.

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"It's a whole new direction" for treatment and an important advance for people who don't want to take or aren't helped by the daily pills sometimes used now to prevent recurrences, said Dr. Andrew Hershey, neurology chief at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

He had no role in the research but has tested other migraine drugs and wrote a commentary published with the studies Wednesday by the New England Journal of Medicine.

Migraines plague more than a billion people worldwide, more than 38 million in the U.S. alone. They're more severe than an ordinary headache — throbbing, squeezing pain and pressure, often accompanied by vision problems, sensitivity to light, noise or smells, and nausea. They can leave people unable to work or do simple things like cooking or even hold a conversation.

WHAT THE STUDIES SHOW

One study tested erenumab (er-EN-yoo-mab), from Amgen and Novartis, in about 900 people who averaged eight migraines a month. Nearly half had already tried other preventive medicines.

For six months, they were given monthly shots into the abdomen of a high dose of the drug, a low dose or a dummy medicine. The number of days they suffered migraines each month dropped by three to four in the drug groups and nearly two in the placebo group. Half of the patients on the higher dose saw their migraine days cut at least in half.

"I very definitely benefited," said Anne Vickers, who got the lower dose through one of the study leaders at Mercy Hospital St. Louis in Missouri.

"I can have anywhere from 15 to 18 headaches per month, and probably five of those days are migraines," but that dropped 40 percent on the drug, she said. "I have three kids, so for me it meant having more days when I was able to live my everyday life, cook a meal at home, go to events at school."

The second study tested fremanezumab (frem-uh-NEZZ-yoo-mab), from Teva Pharmaceutical, for chronic migraine, defined as headaches on 15 or more days per month, at least eight of them migraines.

About 1,000 patients were given monthly shots for three months: One third got the drug each time, another third got the drug the first time and then dummy shots the next two times, and the rest got dummy shots each time.

Monthly headache days dropped by four to five in the groups given the drug and by two to three for those given dummy treatments.

THE CAVEATS

Average reductions of one or two days a month are modest, but "there are some patients who have had a complete response — they become headache-free," Hershey said.

No worrisome side effects emerged, but the studies were very short, so long-term safety and effectiveness are unknown.

The new drugs were not tested against existing ones, only placebo treatments.

Many study leaders work for or have other financial ties to the drugmakers, and the companies helped analyze results.

Biotech drugs like these tend to be very expensive and if they're approved, insurers may set big copays or require patients to try older medicines first, Hershey said. When the drugs did work, the benefit was seen right away, so there's less financial risk in trying one or two doses.

"The patient will know quickly if this is a drug for them and if not, move on to something else," Hershey said.

Both drugs have been submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for approval. Eli Lilly and Co. and Alder Biopharmaceuticals also are testing similar drugs.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed at @MMarchioneAP

US, China hold quiet military talks amid NKorea tensions

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. and Chinese generals engaged in an unusual set of security talks on Wednesday, just hours after North Korea's most powerful missile test yet, focused on how the mighty American and Chinese militaries might communicate in a crisis.

As President Donald Trump greeted the North's launching of another intercontinental ballistic missile with familiar demands for China to get tougher with its ally, the low-profile and unpublicized meeting at the National Defense University in Washington was taking place amid signs China is more willing to discuss how the two world powers would manage an even worse emergency on the divided Korean Peninsula.

The Pentagon stressed the talks were scheduled long before North Korea's surprise missile launch in the early hours Wednesday in Asia. Officials insisted the dialogue wasn't centered on North Korea or anything else in particular.

Trump has vowed to prevent North Korea from having the capability to strike the U.S. mainland with a nuclear-tipped missile — using military force if necessary. He is running out of time: Some experts said the missile fired on a high trajectory that splashed down in the Sea of Japan showed North Korea's ability to strike Washington and the entire U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

The threat of a military confrontation is making China rethink its resistance to discussing contingencies involving North Korea, according to experts. Such discussions have long been off-limits for Beijing, which fought on North Korea's side against the United States in the 1950-53 Korean War and remains its treaty ally.

In a phone conversation with Trump on Wednesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated his desire for a diplomatic resolution to the standoff with North Korea.

Objectives for Wednesday's military consultations appeared modest.

"The engagement will serve as an opportunity to discuss how to manage crises, prevent miscalculations, and reduce the risk of misunderstanding," the office of Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told The Associated Press in a statement.

The U.S. and China agreed on the talks when Dunford met with his Chinese counterpart in Beijing in August. While in China, Dunford observed a Chinese military drill at Shenyang, about 120 miles from the North Korean border — an unusual stop for an official visit.

Wednesday's talks were being led by Lt. Gen. Richard Clarke, the Joint Chiefs' planning director, and Maj. Gen. Shao Yuanming, a senior Chinese military official. They're especially noteworthy given the deep strategic mistrust between the U.S. and China, and Beijing's increasing challenge to America's post-World War II dominance in the Asia-Pacific.

China has been more explicit in saying what the talks are about.

Yao Yunzhu, a retired general who specializes in U.S.-Chinese defense relations at China's Academy of Military Science, said this summer they should include Northeast Asia, where North Korea is located. She also mentioned the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

Yun Sun, an expert on Chinese foreign policy at the Stimson Center think tank, said Dunford raised North Korean contingencies at the August meeting and the two sides discussed the potential danger of a conflict or a nuclear disaster. U.S. officials wouldn't confirm that account. Sun said she anticipated those talks would continue Wednesday.

While such discussions have occurred in recent years among non-government experts, they hadn't yet happened at official levels.

However, Oriana Skylar Mastro, a Georgetown University professor, said her Chinese contacts indicated willingness to broach North Korea contingencies in the military dialogue.

"Things are shifting right now in both China and the United States. There seems to be an opening," said Mastro. She expected the talks would still be at a preliminary stage.

"This type of discussion is difficult among friends. It's much more difficult between potential adversaries, but absolutely necessary," Mastro said. "The type of war that might break out (with North Korea) is one that would be more costly than anything that generations of Americans have experienced."

Political limitations exist on both sides, making some experts skeptical that progress would be made or even that North Korean contingencies would be addressed at all. The U.S. must be wary of offending South Korea, which isn't in the dialogue. China risks further alienating a paranoid ally at a time Beijing is supporting increasingly tough U.N. sanctions on North Korea's economy in response to its missile and nuclear tests.

"The Chinese side is very worried that if North Korea gets word it might turn them into a hostile neighbor," said Frank Aum, a former Pentagon adviser on North Korea.

Chinese opinions are divided. But in a sign of growing antipathy toward Pyongyang, some Chinese intellectuals have called for radical policy change. Not only is North Korea a liability for China's global standing, it also poses a nuclear risk on its doorstep.

A collapse of North Korea's state, or another crisis, could push Beijing into conflict with the U.S. and South Korea. Bonnie Glaser, an Asia expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, mentioned North Korean nuclear facilities within 50 miles of the Chinese border, and said both sides could try to secure loose nukes.

There have been grave miscommunications before. Abraham Denmark, a former senior U.S. military official for East Asia, cited the run-up to the Korean War, when Washington thought Beijing knew it would not seek to invade China; the Chinese thought the Americans knew that if U.S. forces advanced north of the 38th parallel into North Korea, China would intervene.

"Both sides at the time thought that they were being extremely clear, but neither side had any idea of what was going on," Denmark said. "That suggests to me that both sides need to be very up front with one another."

AP writer Robert Burns contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of the name of Oriana Skylar Mastro.

Croat war criminal's shocking death stuns UN tribunal

By MIKE CORDER, Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Seconds after a U.N. judge confirmed his 20-year war crimes sentence on Wednesday, former Bosnian Croat military commander Slobodan Praljak shouted, "I am not a war criminal!" threw back his head, drank liquid from a small bottle and told the court he had taken poison. A flustered judge halted the hearing and Praljak was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he died.

Shocking images of the 72-year-old former philosophy professor and theater director who became a wartime general shouting and drinking what he said was poison were streamed live on the court's website and around the Balkans.

The death cast a pall over the last case at the groundbreaking International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Judges upheld sentences ranging from 10-25 years against Praljak and five other Bosnian Croat wartime political and military leaders for their part in a plan linked to Croatia's late former President Franjo Tudjman to violently carve out a Croat-dominated mini-state in Bosnia during the Balkan wars by killing, mistreating and deporting Muslims.

Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic offered his condolences to Praljak's family and said the former general's actions reflected the "deep moral injustice" done to him and the five others whose sentences were also upheld by the appeals judges Wednesday.

In their ruling, the judges confirmed that Praljak was guilty of crimes including murder, persecution and inhumane treatment as part of the plot to establish a Croat entity in Bosnia in the early 1990s, as well as the 20-year sentence initially handed to Praljak in May 2013 at the end of the six men's trial.

Ironically, Praljak, who surrendered to the tribunal in April 2004 and had already been jailed for 13 years, could have soon walked free because those who are convicted are generally released after serving

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two-thirds of their sentences.

After Praljak's outburst, Dutch police immediately were called in to launch an independent investigation. Questions the detectives will attempt to answer include: What was the liquid Praljak drank and how did he manage to get it into the tightly guarded courtroom?

The courtroom where the dramatic scene unfolded was sealed off. Presiding Judge Carmel Agius said it was now a "crime scene."

A Serbian lawyer who has frequently defended suspects at the U.N. war crimes court in the Netherlands told The Associated Press it would be easy to slip poison into the court.

Attorney Toma Fila said that security for lawyers and other court staff "is just like at an airport," with security staff inspecting metal objects and confiscating cell phones, but "pills and small quantities of liquids" would not be registered.

Nick Kaufman, an Israeli defense lawyer who used to work as a prosecutor at the tribunal, also said a defendant could find a way to bring in a banned substance.

"When deprived of authority over the masses and the attention which formerly fueled their ego and charisma, such defendants can often be extremely resourceful with the little power they retain," he said.

In the past, two Serbs have taken their lives while in the tribunal's custody.

In July 1998, Slavko Dokmanovic, a Croatian Serb charged in the deaths of over 200 Croat prisoners of war, was found dead in his prison cell in The Hague. Milan Babic, a wartime Serbian leader who was closely cooperating with prosecutors, took his life in a prison tribunal cell in March 2006.

Wednesday's hearing was the final case at the groundbreaking tribunal before it closes its doors next month. The tribunal, which last week convicted former Bosnian Serb military chief Gen. Ratko Mladic of genocide and other crimes, was set up in 1993, while fighting still raged in the former Yugoslavia. It indicted 161 suspects and convicted 90 of them.

The original trial began in April 2006 and provided a reminder of the complex web of ethnic tensions that fueled fighting in Bosnia and still underlies frictions in the country today.

Croatian Prime Minister Plenkovic said that his country's leadership during the Bosnian war could "in no way be connected with the facts and interpretations" of Wednesday's judgment.

Associated Press writers Dusan Stojanovic and Jovana Gec in Belgrade, Serbia; Sabina Niksic and Amer Cohadzic in Sarajevo, Bosnia; Eldar Emric in Mostar, Bosnia, and Darko Bandic in Zagreb, Croatia contributed to this report.

Bitcoin surges past \$10,000 threshold, only to plunge

By CARLO PIOVANO, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The price of bitcoin surged through \$10,000 on Wednesday, adding to its ten-fold jump in value this year and fueling a debate as to whether the virtual currency is gaining mainstream acceptance or is merely a bubble waiting to burst.

But as soon as bitcoin went through \$10,000, it surged past \$11,000, only to plummet from those lofty levels. The cost of buying one bitcoin as measured by the website Coindesk was hovering around \$9,800, and was as low as \$9,300 on Wednesday afternoon. A price of one bitcoin had been roughly \$1,000 at the beginning of the year.

The vertiginous rise in the price of bitcoin and other virtual currencies this year has divided the financial community on their merits and whether — or when — the value might come crashing back down.

The CEO of JPMorgan Chase has called bitcoin a "fraud," as it is not based on anything other than software code and is not backed by any monetary authority.

Other executives, including International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde, say virtual currencies should not be dismissed and could have useful applications, such as a means of payment in countries with unstable currencies.

Some countries, like China, have tried to stifle bitcoin exchanges. But in a move that gave further cred-

ibility to the virtual currency, the U.S. exchange operator CME Group said last month that it plans to open a futures market for the currency before the end of the year, if it can get approval from regulators.

Bitcoin was created about a decade ago as an alternative to government-issued currencies. Transactions allow anonymity, which has made it popular with people who want to keep their financial activity, and their identities, private.

The digital coins are created by so-called "miners," who operate computer farms that verify other users' transactions by solving complex mathematical puzzles. These miners receive bitcoin in exchange. Bitcoin can be converted to cash when deposited into accounts at prices set in online trading.

Whereas virtual currencies were initially used primarily as a method of payment, in recent months they have become a hot investment among speculators.

Daniele Bianchi, an assistant professor of finance at the Warwick Business School in England, says that the price increases are due to rising demand but also to the fact that the supply of bitcoins is kept fixed. There are currently only 21 million that can be mined in total.

Bianchi also noted that trading in bitcoin is becoming more professional and open to the general public. He believes virtual currencies are "here to stay" and expects the price to rise higher still.

"The increasing demand pressure from investors and speculators makes the case for an even further increase in bitcoin prices in the near future," he said.

Others are far more skeptical.

Neil Wilson, a senior market analyst at ETX Capital in London, says bitcoin is "following the playbook for a speculative bubble to the letter."

A new market enjoys a boom when professional investors start entering the market. That's followed by euphoria as others rush in to partake in the gains. Wilson says bitcoin could rise a lot further, but says it is merely a question of when, not if, the bubble bursts.

"This sort of thing never, ever lasts," he said.

Trump health pick parries questions on drug cost, health law

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Calling it the opportunity of his lifetime, President Donald Trump's pick for health secretary pledged Wednesday to help lower drug prices and said he'd carry out the Obama-era health law his boss has been unable to erase.

Alex Azar's assurances to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee were met with doubt by lawmakers of both parties, especially Democrats concerned about his ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

Nonetheless the 50-year-old former drug company and government executive deflected Democratic attempts to paint him as a political partisan beholden to a powerful industry. Some Democrats, including Sens. Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, focused their questions on practical policy issues not tinged by ideological conflict.

"I don't have pharma's policy agenda," Azar said at one point. "This is the most important job I will have in a lifetime, and my commitment is to the American people."

Committee chair Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., told Azar at the conclusion of the hearing that he believes the Senate will vote to confirm him.

Known as a brainy policy expert with a conservative political pedigree, Azar said his main priorities would be lowering drug prices, making health insurance more affordable, continuing Medicare's efforts to pay for value not just volume, and confronting the opioid epidemic.

On prescription drug costs, he said his combination of industry and government experience makes him uniquely suited to find solutions. Azar spent a decade as a top executive of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly and served in senior positions during a previous stint at the Department of Health and Human Services, which he'd now lead.

That was insufficient for Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky.

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"You've got some convincing to make me believe you're going to represent the American people, not big pharma," said Paul.

Paul demanded a written explanation from Azar on why it wouldn't be safe for U.S. patients to import lower-cost prescription drugs from other advanced countries. Drug companies have succeeded in staving off the imports challenge through successive administration of both parties.

Pressed on drug pricing, Azar said all players in the system — drug manufacturers, insurers, pharmacy benefit managers, and government — share some of the blame.

One of his top priorities would be to increase generic and brand drug competition, he said, and he vowed to crack down on drug company "gaming" to extend patents that ward off generic competition.

"Finger-pointing is not a constructive exercise — everybody in the system owns a piece of this," he said.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., delivered a blunt appraisal: "Your resume reads like a how-to manual for profiting from government service," she told Azar, noting the millions he earned at Lilly.

Warren and other Democrats also said they worried Azar will continue the administration's efforts to "sabotage" the Obama-era Affordable Care Act, only do so with a polite smile instead of Trump's hard-edged rhetoric.

Azar confirmed he's no fan of the ACA, but refrained from calling it "Obamacare," a term coined by Republicans as a pejorative and now widely used.

He said he disagrees with the law's penalties on people who don't get health insurance. He asserted that the government should act to help consumers who don't qualify for health law subsidies but face its high premiums. He said he supports bipartisan legislation to stabilize insurance markets.

"If it remains the law my goal is to implement it in a way that leads to affordable insurance," said Azar. But Democrats dismissed that as coded language for undermining consumer protections such as minimum benefits.

"I don't think we can have an HHS secretary who doesn't support the health care safety net," said Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va.

Azar was also quizzed about the Trump administration's "conscience exemption," which allows employers to opt out of providing free birth control to women. He said very few employers have invoked it, and signaled that he supported their ability to do so.

Health care issues have been a flashpoint between social and religious conservatives and those who are scientifically minded. Azar said, "I firmly believe in following evidence and science where it will take us."

The Senate Finance Committee will hold another hearing on Azar soon and formally decide whether to send the nomination to the full Senate.

Before resigning from Eli Lilly earlier this year, Azar built a financial portfolio now worth between \$9.5 million to \$20.6 million, according to disclosure records filed with the Office of Government Ethics.

If confirmed, Azar would be Trump's second HHS secretary, replacing Tom Price, who resigned under pressure after using private charter flights at taxpayer expense.

Asian stocks fall after Wall Street losses

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets declined Thursday after U.S. tech stocks fell and China reported stronger manufacturing as investors looked ahead to a key OPEC meeting.

KEEPING SCORE: The Shanghai Composite Index shed 0.2 percent to 3,330.04 and Tokyo's Nikkei 225 retreated 0.1 percent to 22,570.42. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1 percent to 29,332.42 and Seoul's KOSPI lost 0.6 percent to 2,497.35. Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 declined 0.7 percent to 5,965.90. Benchmarks in Taiwan, Singapore and Jakarta also retreated, while New Zealand and Malaysia gained.

WALL STREET: A steep slide in big technology companies pulled major U.S. stock indexes mostly lower, offsetting strength in banks and health care and erasing some of the gains the market made a day earlier. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite, which is the best-performing index this year, had its biggest single-day drop since August as investors cashed in some of their winnings and bid up shares in health care compa-

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nies and retailers. The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost just under 1 point to 2,626.07 and the Dow Jones industrial average gained 0.4 percent to 23,940.68. The Nasdaq lost 1.3 percent to 6,824.39.

CHINA MANUFACTURING: A monthly survey showed Chinese manufacturing activity improved in November, adding to signs of a pickup in global and domestic demand. The China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing said its purchasing managers' index rose to 52.4 from October's 51.6 on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 show activity accelerating. Components of the survey that measure imports, exports and new orders all improved, while the indicator for employment weakened. "The breakdown shows a broad-based pickup in demand," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report.

OPEC: With crude prices at two-year highs, OPEC and allied oil producing-nations appear ready to agree to extend output cuts at a meeting Thursday after Iraq's energy minister said there was broad agreement for such a move. Prices are up almost 20 percent over a year ago. And the bets have been that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and their non-OPEC partners will try to keep supply tight by prolonging the daily 1.8 million barrel output reductions agreed to a year ago. Some market watchers say quotas agreed in November 2016 will be stretched into 2018, and the comments by Iraq's Jabbar Ali Hussein Al-Luiebi strengthened such expectations.

ANALYST'S TAKE: The decline in U.S. tech shares, driven by potential tax changes, is likely to weigh on Asian markets, said Jingyi Pan of IG in a report. "The better than expected Chinese November PMI figures were seen providing little to support prices given a market that largely anticipates steady expansionary manufacturing figures," said Pan. "Oil will take center stage with today's OPEC meeting. While the realization of the technical committee's recommendation may ensue, reactions could still be a wild card."

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 6 cents to \$57.36 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract fell 69 cents on Wednesday to \$57.30. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 12 cents to \$62.65 in London. It lost 71 cents the previous session to \$62.53.

CURRENCY: The dollar strengthened to 111.98 yen from 111.90 yen. The euro gained to \$1.1870 from \$1.1847.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 30, the 334th day of 2017. There are 31 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 30, 1835, Samuel Langhorne Clemens — better known as Mark Twain — was born in Florida, Missouri.

On this date:

In 1016, Edmund II, King of the English, died after a reign of seven months.

In 1782, the United States and Britain signed preliminary peace articles in Paris for ending the Revolutionary War; the Treaty of Paris was signed in Sept. 1783.

In 1803, Spain completed the process of ceding Louisiana to France, which had sold it to the United States.

In 1874, British statesman Sir Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace.

In 1900, Irish writer Oscar Wilde died in Paris at age 46.

In 1939, the Winter War began as Soviet troops invaded Finland. (The conflict ended the following March with a Soviet victory.)

In 1954, Ann Elizabeth Hodges of Oak Grove, Alabama, was slightly injured when an 8-1/2-pound chunk of meteor crashed through the roof of her house, hit a radio cabinet, then struck her as she lay napping on a couch.

In 1966, the former British colony of Barbados became independent.

In 1977, Bing Crosby's final Christmas TV special, "Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas," aired on CBS.

In 1982, the Michael Jackson album "Thriller" was released by Epic Records. The motion picture "Gandhi," starring Ben Kingsley as the Indian nationalist leader, had its world premiere in New Delhi.

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In 1987, American author James Baldwin died in Saint Paul de Vence, France, at age 63.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the Brady Bill, which required a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases and background checks of prospective buyers.

Ten years ago: A man took hostages at a Hillary Clinton campaign office in Rochester, New Hampshire; he surrendered about five hours later. An Atlasjet plane crashed in southwest Turkey, killing all 57 people on board. An Amtrak train and a freight train collided on a track on the South Side of Chicago, injuring dozens of people. Motorcycle daredevil Evel Knievel died in Clearwater, Florida, at age 69.

Five years ago: Israel approved the construction of 3,000 homes in Jewish settlements on occupied lands, drawing swift condemnation from the Palestinians a day after their successful bid for recognition by the United Nations. Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in Egypt, denouncing President Mohammed Morsi and a draft constitution that was approved earlier in the day by his Islamist allies.

One year ago: Air conditioning company Carrier Corp. said it had reached a deal with President-elect Donald Trump to keep nearly 1,100 jobs in Indiana instead of moving them to Mexico; however, some 600 other jobs were still eliminated by outsourcing. House Democrats re-elected Nancy Pelosi as their leader. A prosecutor cleared a Charlotte, North Carolina, police officer in the killing of a black man whose death touched off civil unrest, saying the officer was justified in opening fire on Keith Scott.

Today's Birthdays: G. Gordon Liddy is 87. Country singer-recording executive Jimmy Bowen is 80. Movie director Ridley Scott is 80. Movie writer-director Terrence Malick is 74. Rock musician Roger Glover (Deep Purple) is 72. Playwright David Mamet (MA'-meht) is 70. Actor Mandy Patinkin is 65. Musician Shuggie Otis is 64. Country singer Jeannie Kendall is 63. Singer Billy Idol is 62. Historian Michael Beschloss is 62. Rock musician John Ashton (The Psychedelic Furs) is 60. Comedian Colin Mochrie is 60. Former football and baseball player Bo Jackson is 55. Rapper Jalil (Whodini) is 54. Actor-director Ben Stiller is 52. Rock musician Mike Stone is 48. Actress Sandra Oh is 47. Music producer Steve Aoki is 40. Singer Clay Aiken is 39. Actor Billy Lush is 36. Actress Elisha Cuthbert is 35. Actress Kaley Cuoco (KWOH'-koh) is 32. Model Chrissy Teigen is 32. Actress Christel Khalil is 30. Actress Rebecca Rittenhouse is 29. Actress Adelaide Clemens is 28.

Thought for Today: "Whenever you find that you are on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." — Mark Twain (1835-1910).