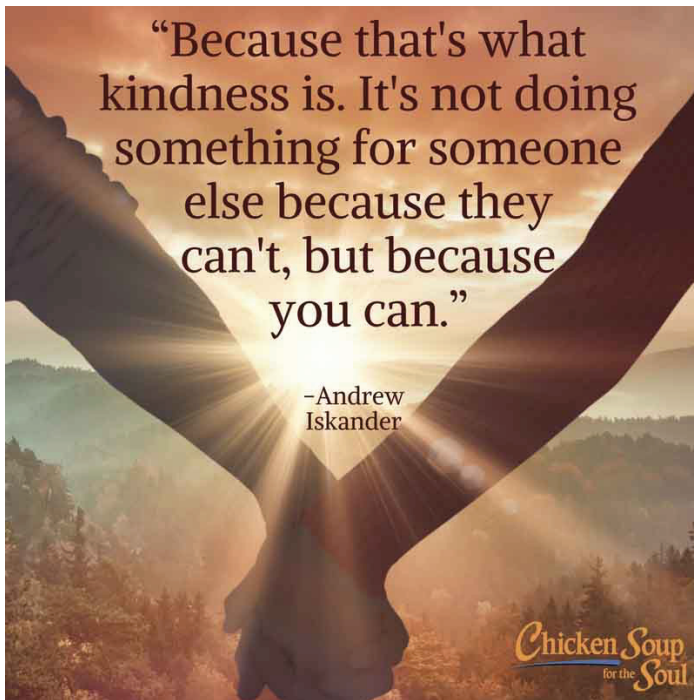


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Due to the icy road conditions, Groton Area will be starting 2 hours late on Tuesday, Dec. 5. There will be no 8:30 a.m. Preschool. OST will open at 7 a.m.

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Blocker Construction Ad
- 2- Groton Care & Rehab Help Wanted Ad
- 3- Farmers Union PSA
- 3- Erdmann takes 2nd at State CDE
- 3- Skating Rink personnel hired
- 4- Winter Weather
- 5- C&MA Christmas Party
- 5- City looking at getting 3rd speed sign
- 6- Jail dealt a "Get out of Jail Free" card
- 7- Groton PD looking to get Narcan® Nasal Spray
- 8- National Gas Prices
- 9- Sombke re-elected Farmers Union President
- 10- Today in Weather History
- 11- Today's Forecast
- 12- Yesterday's Weather
- 12- Today's Weather Info
- 12- National Weather Map
- 13- Daily Devotional
- 14- 2018 Community Events
- 15- News from the Associated Press



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**

Tuesday

Milbank Novice Debate
Practice ACT Test at GHS
JHGBB at Ipswich (7th grade at 5:30 p.m.,
8th grade at 6:30 p.m.
Wrestling at Britton-Hecla is cancelled

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



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")**



Tessa Erdmann placed second in the State FFA Creed Speaking CDE. (Photo Groton FFA Facebook Page)

Skating Rink personnel hired

After an executive session, the city council hired the skating rink personnel for the season. Hannah Lewandowski will be the manager. Nine other attendants were hired. They are Erin Unzen, Tanae Lipp, Lee Iverson, Dragr Monson, Alexis Hanten, Anthony Schinkel, Jasmine Schinkel, Taylor Holm and Kellie Jones.

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The first major winter storm of the season hit the area on Monday. The system first dropped freezing rain, then snow pellets before changing over to all snow by 4 p.m. The Blizzard Warning that was issued in the morning caused many area schools to shut down for the day. With the day being called off in Groton Area, the make-up day will be Monday, February 19, President's Day. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The semi found the road a little slippery along with the gusty wind and ended up partially in the ditch between Groton and Aberdeen. (Photo Brian Bahr Facebook Page)

City looking at getting third speed sign

The Safe Routes to School funds that remain amount to \$6,512.50. The funds have to be spend by the end of this year or the funds will disappear. The school administration has suggested getting three new bicycle racks (2 at elementary and 1 at high school), and the police department has suggested getting helmets, bicycles and shoe certificates. The council decided to pursue a third speed sign with the city's match at \$1,400. The council agreed to the other purchases for the school. The funds have to be used for the Safe Routes to School project.

Gravel bids were opened with Krueger Brothers getting the low bid for 2018 for crushed gravel at \$16.69 per yard. The other bid came from Hanlon Brothers at \$17.80.

The city will sponsor a city lighting contest with prizes being \$100, \$75 and \$50 credit towards the utility bills. The council directed Peggy Locke to set up the transit and to have residents of the Groton Care and Rehabilitation do the judging.

Approximately \$1,100 was raised from the annual Thanksgiving Day dinner. The funds were donated to the city and it was suggested that a new oven be purchased for the community center.

The first Monday in January falls on January 1 - New Year's Day, so the council decided to move its January meetings to January 8 and January 22.

The council approved the joint cooperative agreement with the Northeast Council of Governments. The rate has increased by \$25 this year and the rate is based on the city's population.

- Paul Kosel

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

Jail dealt a "Get out of Jail Free" card

The Groton Jail was subject to be torn down, but the jail has been given a pass, for now, to not be torn down and to allow an entity to see what it can do with the building.

Topper Tastad and Bruce Babcock came before the council Monday evening to discuss the future of the old Groton jail house. The council had set a deadline of November 30, 2017, for the building to be torn down as the council was not interested in spending tax payer's dollars in the repairs.

Councilman Karyn Babcock said that the jail is not in that bad of shape and would like to see something done with it. Tastad added, "I would like to see the building preserved and it should be kept as a historical value at no expense to the city."

Councilman Jay Peterson questioned if there was asbestos in the building and how that would be dealt with if the test came back positive. Tastad said that he has worked with asbestos in the past and is not afraid to work with it.

The council has been debating about the future of the jail for three years. City Attorney Drew Johnson said that the city needs to have it tested for asbestos and that the city cannot pass on any liability to any one else, even if they are willing to take the risk.

The jail was built in 1912. There is some water damage done to the structure prior to the city putting on the new roof. Tastad said that the tuck and point could easily be done at minimal cost. Tastad suggested that the city lease the building to an entity for 10 years and that entity would take care of all of the repairs. At the end of the 10 years, the city could get the building back in a rejuvenated condition. The council

decided to test first for asbestos, and also instructed Tastad to draw up a contract that the city could review.

- Paul Kosel



The old jail house on First Ave. East, east of Third Street. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Left: This is the view of the inside of the jail building. (Photo

by April Abeln)

Groton PD looking to get Narcan® Nasal Spray

Groton Police Chief Stacy Mayou came before the council to discuss the department's desire to get Narcan® Nasal Spray.

According to the Narcan.com website, "NARCAN® (naloxone HCl) Nasal Spray is the first and only FDA-approved nasal form of naloxone for the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose.

"NARCAN® Nasal Spray counteracts the life-threatening effects of opioid overdose. Since most accidental overdoses occur in a home setting, it was developed for first responders, as well as family, friends, and caregivers."

The spray comes in a 4 mg spray container. Mayou said the spray can be used in an emergency treatment of an opioid overdose and can also be used in situations where pentothal has been used. "It (Narcan®) saves so many lives," Mayou said. "And with all of the traffic we have on US12, you never know what you will run into." Mayou said that the drug pentothal can be absorbed by the skin and could affect an officer if they were in contact with it.

The council authorized officer Justin Cleveland to attend a class and training session in Moberge. By attending the class, the department can receive the Narcan® for free, which would normally cost \$150.

- Paul Kosel



(Image screenshot from narcan.com)

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National Gas Prices Fall below \$2.50 for First Time in a Month – South Dakota's Prices are Stable

December 4, 2017 - At \$2.48, the national gas price average is at the cheapest price since early November. More so, pump prices nationally have been steadily dropping during the last two weeks. Today's gas price is three cents less than a week ago, four cents cheaper than one month ago and 30 cents more than a year ago.

South Dakota's statewide gas price average is the same as one week ago, but 6 cents cheaper than 20 days ago.

"Cheaper winter gas prices are being seen for the bulk of the country as gasoline demand hits the lowest mark since February," said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA spokesperson.

Quick Stats

The top 10 states with the largest monthly changes are: Indiana (-40 cents), Ohio (+14 cents), Missouri (-14 cents), Oklahoma (-11 cents), Hawaii (+10 cents) and Kansas (-8 cents).

The top 10 states with the largest yearly changes are: Alaska (+62 cents), California (+50 cents), Colorado (+48 cents), Montana (+43 cents), Wyoming (+43 cents), Hawaii (+43 cents), North Dakota (+43 cents), Oregon (+42 cents), Minnesota (+41 cents) and New Mexico (+39 cents).

Great Lakes and Central Region

For a second week, the Great Lakes and Central states are seeing the largest drops at the pump in the region and the country. Eight states land on this week's top 10 states biggest change list: Indiana (-14 cents), Ohio (-12 cents), Illinois (-11 cents), Michigan (-9 cents), Missouri (-6 cents), Wisconsin (-6 cents), Nebraska (-4 cents) and Kansas (-4 cents). Of note, Kentucky (+3 cents) was the only state in the region to see pump prices jump in the last seven days.

Compared to one month ago, all states in the region except two are paying less at the pump with Indiana (-40 cents), Ohio (-34 cents), Michigan (-30 cents), Illinois (-29 cents), Wisconsin (-18 cents) and Missouri (-14 cents) seeing double-digits drops. Only North Dakota (+1 cents) is paying more on the month in the Great Lakes and Central region.

After shutting down for two weeks following a spill, the Keystone pipeline resumed operations last Tuesday. The shutdown had minimal impact on gas prices in the region. The pipeline runs from Hardisty, Alberta to Cushing, Oklahoma and to Wood River/Patoka, Illinois.

Oil Market Dynamics

On Friday, WTI increased 96 cents, closing at \$58.36. The price per barrel of crude pushed higher last week and is likely to continue its climb following news on Nov. 30 from OPEC and some non-OPEC producers, led by Russia, that they have agreed to keep their production cuts in place through the end of December 2018. Participants in the agreement will continue to reduce output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in order to drain the global glut of oil that has suppressed oil prices.

The U.S. is gaining export prowess through increased demand for exports, making up for losses in global supply due to OPEC's agreement. As the U.S. moves toward exporting more oil and petroleum products than it imports, such as gasoline for the second year in a row, market observers may decide to pull back on optimistic expectations for the price per barrel of crude.

Motorists can find current gas prices along their route with the free AAA Mobile app for iPhone, iPad and Android. The app can also be used to map a route, find discounts, book a hotel and access AAA roadside assistance. Learn more at AAA.com/mobile.

AAA provides automotive, travel, and insurance services to 58 million members nationwide and nearly 97,000 members in South Dakota. AAA advocates for the safety and mobility of its members and has been committed to outstanding road service for more than 100 years. AAA is a not-for-profit, fully tax-paying member organization works on behalf of motorists, who can now map a route, find local gas prices, discover discounts, book a hotel, and track their roadside assistance service with the AAA Mobile app (AAA.com/mobile) for iPhone, iPad and Android. For more information, visit www.AAA.com.

Doug Sombke Reelected to Serve as S.D. Farmers Union President of During 102nd State Convention

HURON, S.D. - Doug Sombke was reelected to serve as President of South Dakota Farmers Union during the organization's 102nd State Convention held in Huron Nov. 30-Dec.1, 2017.

"I love this organization because it gives a voice to family farmers and ranchers," said Sombke who has served as President of the organization since 2005. "I am a farmer. Farming is all I ever wanted to do - it's my passion. I have made it my lifelong goal to work to advance the future of family farmers and ranchers any way I can. I gave up my daily involvement in my family's farm to serve this organization because I want to ensure the next generation of farm and ranch kids have the opportunity to farm and ranch."

Sombke has served as President of South Dakota Farmers Union since 2005. He is a fourth-generation crop and livestock farmer who continues to remain involved in his family's Conde farm - although since he began serving as SDFU President, his three sons have taken over managing the day-to-day farm operations. His sons also operate value-added enterprises from the farm. He and his wife, Mel, have three grandchildren.

In his role as President of S.D. Farmers Union, Sombke has served on the board of directors for Farmers Union Industries,

an organization which is made up of several businesses - the dividends of which go to help fund Farmers Union organizations in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana and Wisconsin as well as Farmers Union Enterprise programs and National Farmers Union. In 2017, Doug was named President of this organization.

As President of South Dakota Farmers Union, Sombke leads the state-wide organization which works to enhance South Dakota's number one industry of agriculture by developing policy to support the family farmers and ranchers who actively grow crops and raise livestock, their rural communities and protect future generations of farmers and ranchers.

"As a father to three young farmers in their 20s, I have skin in game. Every day, our livelihoods are at risk from regulations, policies or markets," Sombke said. "As the leader of this organization, I will continue to fight each day to ensure that those in control hear the voice of South Dakota's family farmers and ranchers. I am not afraid to be the mouthpiece of our family farmer and rancher members - even when what we have to say is not popular."



Doug Sombke was reelected to serve as President of South Dakota Farmers Union during the organization's 102nd State Convention held in Huron Nov. 30-Dec.1, 2017.

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Today in Weather History

December 5, 1960: A storm dropped snow on the entire region from the morning of the 4th to the late afternoon of the 5th, with the greatest amounts in the western, central and north central parts of South Dakota. Five to 10 inches of snow fell in these areas. The heaviest snowfall amounts occurred in the extreme southwest part of the state, as well as the triangular area in the north-central part of the state between Mobridge, Pierre, and Aberdeen. The snow, blown by winds of 30 to 40 mph, caused extensive drifting of streets and highways. A brief period of freezing rain preceded the snow and added to hazardous driving conditions on roads. Schools were closed for one to two days, with 27 towns reporting closed schools in the Aberdeen area alone. Telephone and power disruption was widespread in central and north central counties of the state, as poles and wires were broken by a combination of ice, snow, and the wind. The storm produced mostly rain in the extreme eastern counties of South Dakota into west central Minnesota, with a narrow band of freezing rain preceding light snow immediately to the west. No serious automobile accidents or property damage was reported in this area of freezing rain and light snow.

December 5, 1976: Cold Canadian air moved across South Dakota during the day on Sunday, December 5th. Strong winds gusted to 63 mph at Philip and to 55 mph at Rapid City. One to two inches of snow fell over all of South Dakota; however, many counties in the southeast, south central, and east-central parts of the state received amounts varying from three to five inches. After this storm, night time temperatures fell to below zero. Snowfall amounts included 2 inches at Pierre, Aberdeen, and Watertown; and 3 inches at Redfield and Clear Lake.

December 5, 1886: A southern storm dumped heavy snow up into far southwest Virginia. The storm dumped 11 inches in Montgomery Alabama and 22.5 inches in Knoxville, TN. It also dropped 25 inches in Rome, Georgia, and 26 inches in Ashville, North Carolina.

1941 - The temperature at Enosburg Falls soared to 72 degrees to establish a state record for Vermont for the month of December. (The Weather Channel)

December 5, 1953: A tornado outbreak occurred over northeastern Louisiana, southeastern Arkansas and western Mississippi on this day. At least four confirmed tornadoes touched down. The strongest tornado was rated F5 as it destroyed the town of Vicksburg, Mississippi. This tornado first touched down just west of the Mississippi River in East Madison Parish in Louisiana. The tornado crossed the Mississippi River and tore through the downtown area of Vicksburg. On the ground for seven miles, this tornado caused 38 deaths, 270 injuries, and cost an estimated \$25 million in damages in 1953. Estimated cost adjusted for inflation in 2013 Dollars would be over \$200 million. The NWS Office in Jackson, Mississippi has an interactive track map of this event which includes photos and personal accounts.

1987 - Heavy snow blanketed parts of the north central U.S., and freezing drizzle produced a coat of ice up to half an inch thick in northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. Snowfall totals ranged up to seven inches at Grand Rapids MN, and 12 inches at Seney MI. High winds in the north central U.S. gusted to 63 mph at Pellston MI, and reached 70 mph at Makinaw Bridge MI. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1988 - There was only a "flurry" of activity, as for much of the nation winter remained on hold. The cold and snow of winter was primarily confined to the northeastern U.S. Five cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Norfolk NE with a reading of 65 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A warm Pacific storm system brought high winds and heavy rain to western Washington and western Oregon. Up to ten inches of rain deluged the western slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range in Washington State over a three day period, and 500 persons had to be evacuated due to flooding along the Skagit River. Up to five inches of rain drenched northwest Oregon, and winds gusted to 71 mph at Netarts. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major winter storm impacted parts of the Mid-Atlantic and northeastern United States during the 5th-7th. Snowfall accumulations of one to two feet were common across areas of Pennsylvania northward into New England. Boston, MA received 16.2 inches while Providence, RI had the greatest single snowstorm on record with 17 inches, beating the previous record of 12 inches set December 5-6, 1981. Boston's Logan International Airport was closed briefly on the 7th as heavy snowfall made regular airport operations impossible (AFP).

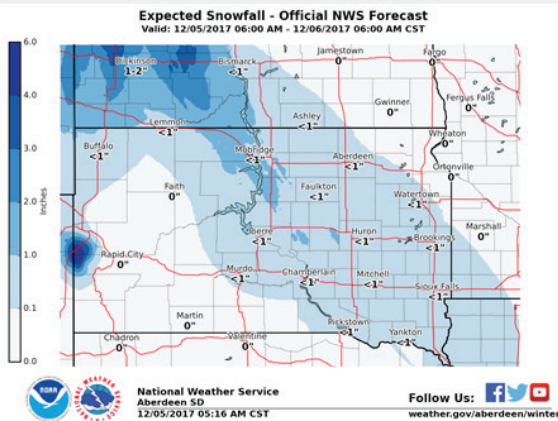
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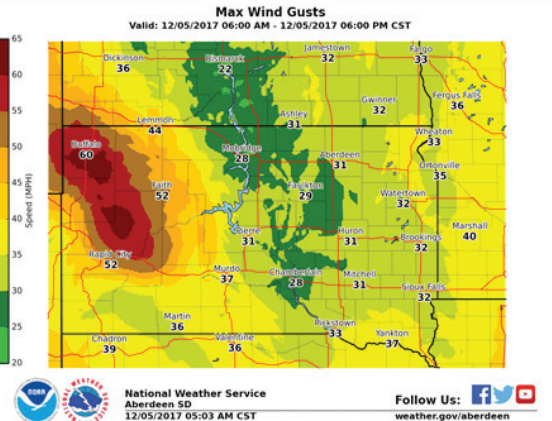
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
 20%	 20%					
Slight Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Slight Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 25 °F	Low: 13 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 5 °F	High: 26 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 28 °F

Cold, Windy, Areas of Light Snow Today/Tonight

Snowfall Forecast



Peak Wind Gusts



- *Clipper system brings light snow/less than an inch of snowfall*
- *Northwest winds gusting to 25 to 40 mph causing some blowing snow*
- *Highs range from the low 20s east to the mid 30s west Today*

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

[weather.gov/Aberdeen](#) [f](#) National Weather Service Aberdeen [t](#) @NWSAberdeen | Updated: 12/5/2017 5:51 AM Central

Published on: 12/05/2017 at 6:05AM

Colder today with northwest winds of 25 to 40 mph bringing areas of blowing snow. A clipper system dropping in from the northwest will bring some additional light snow mainly west of the James Valley with less than an inch accumulation. Highs will range from the low 20s east to the mid 30s west.

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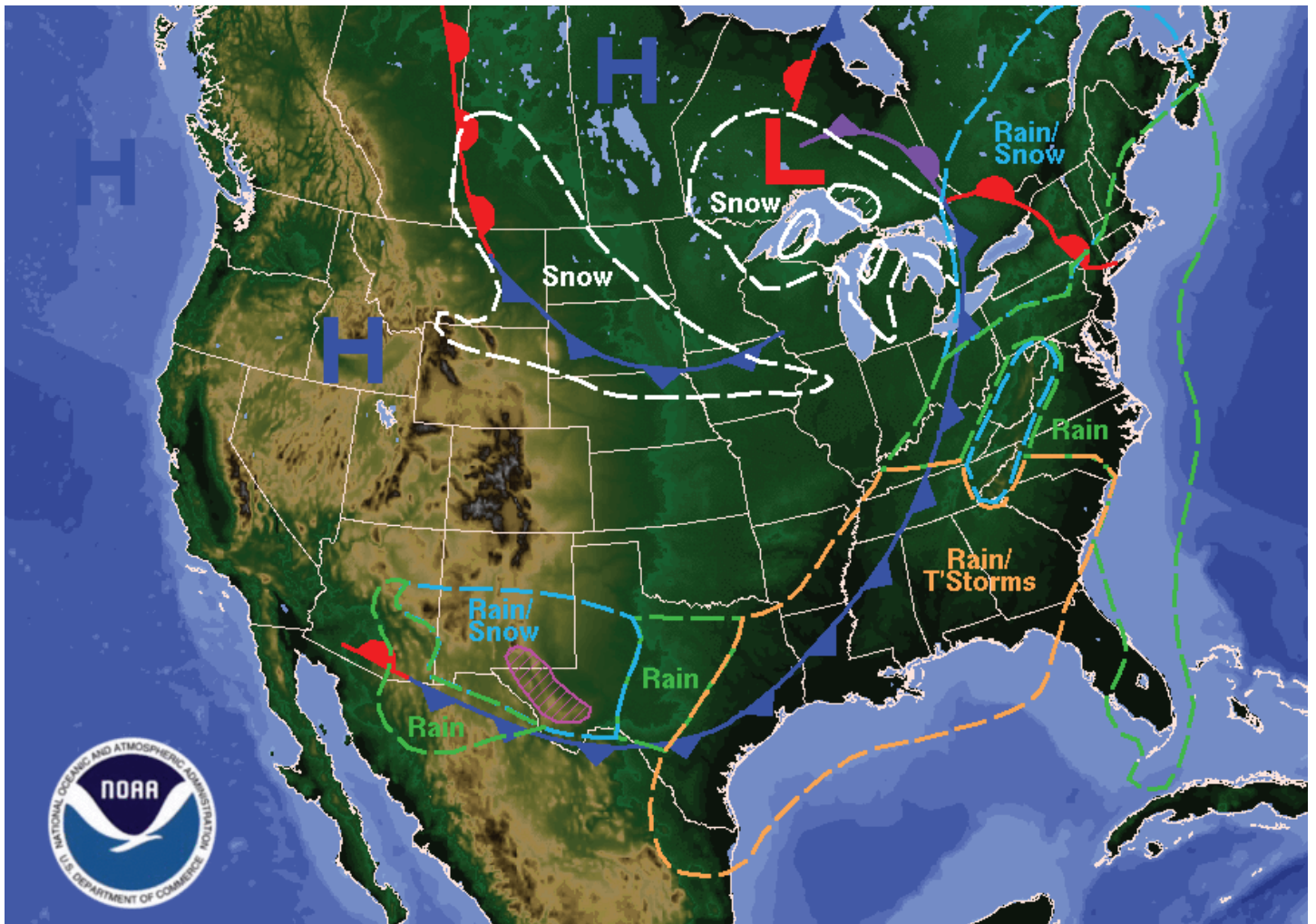
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 35.6 at 1:25 AM
Low Outside Temp: 16.6 AT 11:59 PM
High Gust: 39 MPH AT 5:25 PM
Precip: 0.00 About 1 1/2" of snow

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1939
Record Low: -25° in 2005
Average High: 29°F
Average Low: 9°F
Average Precip in Dec: 0.09
Precip to date in Dec: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.29
Precip Year to Date: 13.47
Sunset Tonight: 4:50 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:59 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Dec 05, 2017, issued 4:49 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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HOW TO LEARN UNDERSTANDING

James the Fifth of Scotland ruled his subjects quite differently than other rulers did. Historians say that he would often lay aside his royal robes, put on the clothes of an ordinary man, work as they worked and live as they lived. His disguise allowed him to move freely among his people without being recognized.

He did this, we are told, to gain an understanding of their needs and problems, sorrows and difficulties. Then, when he returned to his throne, he would have a clearer insight of his subjects and was better able to rule over them with compassion and care.

That is what Jesus, the King of kings, did. He laid aside His glory. Paul writing of this said, "Though he was God, He did not demand and cling to His right as God. He made himself nothing, He took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form!"

It is common for most of us to be selfish and express our pride by "demanding our rights!" We want what we think is "rightfully" ours for any number of reasons. We believe that we have earned something or deserve something and therefore demand something!

But not Jesus. He laid aside every right that was rightfully His in order to serve others.

As His followers we are to live as He lived. We must develop an attitude of love and humility and willingly and sacrificially serve others as He did!

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for becoming like one of us and for going through everything that we go through. Knowing this enables us to know just how much You do care. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 2:5-8 "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of 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

Daugaard to outline spending priorities to state Legislature

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard is set to outline his spending priorities to lawmakers at the state Capitol.

The Republican on Tuesday will give his annual budget address to the state Legislature. Lawmakers will rework this year's budget and make the next one during the 2018 legislative session.

Daugaard said ahead of the speech that money will be tight for South Dakota's current and upcoming fiscal years. The session that starts in January and ends in late March is Daugaard's last as governor.

Recently released state figures show revenues for the first four months of the current budget year are roughly \$8.3 million below expectations largely because of short sales tax receipts.

South Dakota Public Broadcasting will carry the 1 p.m. speech live on TV, radio and the internet .

Boy's Basketball Polls By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) - The preseason South Dakota Prep Media basketball poll is listed below, with the top five teams in each class ranked by points received, along with the teams receiving votes. First-place votes are indicated in parentheses.<

Class AA

Rank-School;FPVTP

1. Aberdeen Central;(17)109
2. Sioux Falls Lincoln;(3)84
3. Sioux Falls O'Gorman;(3)62
4. Harrisburg;(1)52
5. Sioux Falls Washington;(-)17

Others receiving votes: Huron 13, Brandon Valley (1) 10, Rapid City Stevens 7, Yankton 7, Pierre 6, Sturgis 4, Brookings 3, Rapid City Central 1.<

Class A

Rank-School;FPV;TP

1. Tea Area;(25)125
2. Madison;(-)93
3. Sioux Falls Christian;(-)56
4. Sioux Valley;(-)35
5. Tri-Valley;(-)31

Others receiving votes: Vermillion 13, St. Thomas More 10, Dell Rapids 8, Chamberlain 2, Pine Ridge 1.<

Class B

Rank-School;FPV;TP;

1. Bridgewater-Emery;(24)124;
2. Clark-Willow Lake;(1)90
3. Sully Buttes;(-)57
4. Irene-Wakonda;(-)39
5. Canistota;(-)16
- (tie)Langford Area;(-)16;

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Others receiving votes: Colman-Egan 11, Corsica-Stickney 5, Wolsey-Wessington 5, Harding County 3, White River 3, Potter County 2, Warner 1, Arlington 1, Aberdeen Christian 1, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 1.<

Girl's Basketball Polls By The Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) - The preseason South Dakota Prep Media basketball poll is listed below, with the top five teams in each class ranked by points received, along with the teams receiving votes. First-place votes are indicated in parentheses.<

Class AA

Rank-School;FPV;TP

1. Aberdeen Central;(13);107
2. Harrisburg;(10);104
3. Sioux Falls O'Gorman;(2);52
4. Sioux Falls Lincoln;(-);47
5. Brandon Valley;(-);31

Others receiving votes: Sioux Falls Roosevelt 16, Rapid City Stevens 11, Pierre 4, Sioux Falls Washington 3.<

Class A

Rank-School;FPV;TP

1. St. Thomas More;(23);118
2. Lennox;(1);89
3. Hamlin;(-);49
4. Vermillion;(-);42
5. Dell Rapids;(-);24

Others receiving votes: McCook Central/Montrose 22, Sioux Falls Christian (1) 14, Aberdeen Roncalli 7, Madison 5, Flandreau 4, Belle Fourche 1.<

Class B

Rank-School;FPV;TP

1. Sully Buttes;(15);92
2. Warner;(7);79
3. Avon;(1);63
4. DeSmet;(-);50
5. Ethan;(2);47

Others receiving votes: Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 27, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 6, Hanson 5, New Underwood 5, Deubrook Area 1.<

Ashes of woman killed in South Dakota returned to England

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — An American couple have returned the cremated remains of a British woman to her relatives in England, nearly 40 years after the woman was killed in South Dakota.

Lena White Hat was attacked and strangled in 1977 in Rapid Valley, but she had no family in the U.S. other than her American husband, who died two years later. Her niece, Sharon Papen, learned about her aunt's ashes while researching her family history.

She claimed the ashes earlier this year but lacked the money to fly them back to England.

Bob and Vikki French, who live in Rapid City, a city about 5 miles (8 kilometers) from Rapid Valley, learned

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about Papen's plight and volunteered to deliver the ashes during a planned trip to England, the Rapid City Journal reported. The couple returned the ashes to Papen in an airport terminal last month.

Vikki French said the delivery was far more celebratory than she imagined.

"I think that was because of the closure," French said.

Papen said she's grateful to those who helped coordinate the safe return of her aunt's ashes.

"Without you wonderful people, this would not have happened due to my circumstances," Papen told the newspaper. "It's not often you find such good people. You have helped me close this chapter in this book."

Papen said her family may bury the ashes near the graves of White Hat's relatives.

John Thomas Martin was convicted in White Hat's death. Court records show Martin had been under psych Governor: Money's tight for South Dakota state budget

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard said Monday that money will be tight for South Dakota's current and upcoming budget years ahead of his yearly budget address to the state Legislature.

Lawmakers will revise this year's budget and shape the next one during the 2018 legislative session. The Republican executive is set to outline his spending priorities to lawmakers at the state Capitol on Tuesday.

Daugaard said that officials will have to "tighten our belt" for the current budget year and be "very judicious" with the money available for 2019. Daugaard said that he will not be recommending cuts, but rather reducing the projected growth of some state expenses.

"We need to remember that South Dakota still is in good shape," Daugaard told The Associated Press ahead of the address. "Maybe we're not as able to fulfill all our wishes, but I would say we are still fulfilling our needs."

Recently released state figures show that revenues for the first four months of the current budget year are roughly \$8.3 million, or 1.5 percent, below expectations due in large part to short sales tax receipts. Sales tax is the state's main revenue source.

The figures through October also show that a tax imposed on construction contractors has brought in roughly \$2 million, or 4.6 percent, less than lawmakers had previously anticipated, while tobacco taxes and an insurance company tax are also among the state receipts down from projections.

Lawmakers also dealt with sluggish state tax collections in the 2017 legislative session. But South Dakota ended the 2017 budget year in June with a surplus built on state spending reductions after Daugaard asked agencies to cut expenditures in the face of weaker-than-anticipated revenues.

The session that starts in January and ends in late March is Daugaard's last as governor. He can't run again next year because of term limits and leaves office in 2019.

iatric care before he attacked White Hat with a rolling pin and a pickax, and strangled her with a belt in his home. Martin is serving a life prison sentence in South Dakota.

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

Winter-like weather arrives with a bang in Midwest states

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Blizzard warnings were posted on Monday for portions of Minnesota and the Dakotas as winter-like weather was set to collide with mild temperatures that previously had allowed Midwesterners to rake leaves and put holiday decorations in place.

Despite warmer temperatures in Minneapolis on Monday morning than Phoenix and Los Angeles, by early afternoon blizzard warnings had been posted for northwest Minnesota, southeast North Dakota and northeast South Dakota where winds of up to 55 mph (88.51 kph) were expected to whip up snow and create white-out conditions.

Some schools got ahead of the approaching conditions by canceling classes Monday, especially in South Dakota. Aberdeen, Britton-Hecla, Groton, Sisseton and Webster schools are among those closed Monday. Anywhere from 1 inch (25 millimeter) to 5 inches (127 millimeters) of snow was expected to fall in that

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area. In North Dakota and Minnesota, some school districts dismissed students early, including Fergus Falls, East Grand Forks, Emerado and Thompson.

The University of North Dakota closed its campus at 12:30 p.m. Monday.

The South Dakota Department of Transportation temporarily closed westbound Interstate 90 in western South Dakota around noon Monday because of some crashes involving semis, which are especially vulnerable in the high winds.

The North Dakota Department of Transportation issued a travel alert for portions of south central and north eastern North Dakota due to snow covered and slippery roads and blowing snow. Areas included in the south central alert are the cities of Jamestown, Valley City, Ashley, Ellendale and surrounding areas. Areas included in the north eastern alert are the cities of Grand Forks, Grafton, Pembina and surrounding areas.

In South Dakota, forecasters said the rare weather anomaly known as "thunder snow" was possible in the northeast. National Weather Service meteorologist Ryan Lueke said instable weather patterns build electricity, including lightning.

The driving force behind the blizzard conditions is the high winds, Lueke told the Aberdeen American News.

"That's the main story," he said. "Without the winds this snow would be mild. But add in wind gusts of 40 and 50, and sometimes up to 60 miles per hour in some areas, and then mix in the snow — that's the driving force behind the blizzard concerns."

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Relative: Rep. Conyers won't seek re-election due to health

By COREY WILLIAMS, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A relative says John Conyers, who is battling sexual harassment allegations from former female staffers, won't seek re-election to a 28th term in Congress.

Michigan state Sen. Ian Conyers, a grandson of John Conyers' brother, told The New York Times for a story Tuesday that the 88-year-old Democrat's doctor "advised him that the rigor of another campaign would be too much for him, just in terms of his health."

Ian Conyers told the newspaper that his great-uncle — the longest-serving current U.S. House member — "is not resigning. He is going to retire." The report didn't specify how Ian Conyers knew of the congressman's plans. He said he plans to run for John Conyers' seat in Washington, D.C.

The Associated Press left the younger Conyers a message seeking comment Tuesday.

John Conyers' attorney, Arnold Reed, has said the congressman plans to speak on a Detroit radio show Tuesday morning about his political future.

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Conyers, who was first elected in 1964, easily won re-election last year in the heavily Democratic 13th District. But following the mounting allegations of sexual harassment, he has faced growing calls to resign from colleagues in the House, including House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Reed has said Conyers' health would be the paramount consideration in whether he decides to step down from his House seat. He has already stepped aside from his position as ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

John Conyers returned to Detroit from Washington last week and was hospitalized on Wednesday after complaining that he felt light-headed.

The House Ethics Committee is reviewing allegations of harassment against John Conyers.

On Monday, a woman who said she worked for him for more than a decade said he slid his hand up her skirt and rubbed her thighs while she was sitting next to him in the front row of a church.

Elisa Grubbs made the allegation in an affidavit released late Monday by her attorney, Lisa Bloom. Grubbs is the cousin of another accuser, Marion Brown, who reached a confidential settlement with Conyers over sexual harassment allegations, but broke the confidentiality agreement to speak publicly last week.

Bloom posted Grubbs' affidavit on Twitter and confirmed to The Associated Press that it was genuine.

Grubbs' affidavit says that she worked for Conyers in various roles from approximately 2001 to about 2013.

"Rep. Conyers slid his hand up my skirt and rubbed my thighs while I was sitting next to him in the front row of a church," Grubbs said. "I was startled and sprang to my feet and exclaimed, 'He just ran his hand up my thigh!' Other staffers witnessed the event."

She also said that she saw Conyers touching and stroking the legs and buttocks of Brown and other female staffers on "multiple occasions."

Grubbs said witnessing such harassment "was a regular part of life while working in the office of Rep. Conyers."

One time when Grubbs was at Conyers home, she said he came out of the bathroom naked when he knew she was in the room.

Reed told the Detroit Free Press that the allegations by Grubbs are "another instance of tomfoolery from the mouth of Harvey Weinstein's attorney." Bloom previously represented Hollywood executive Weinstein, who is accused of sexual misconduct by a number of women. She quit Weinstein's team after the allegations became public and now represents sexual harassment victims.

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Southern California fire forces thousands to flee homes

SANTA PAULA, Calif. (AP) — Ferocious winds in Southern California whipped up an explosive wildfire that prompted evacuation orders for nearly 8,000 homes, authorities said.

The blaze broke out Monday and grew wildly to more than 48 square miles (124 sq. kilometers) in the hours that followed, consuming vegetation that hasn't burned in decades, Ventura County Fire Sgt. Eric Buschow said.

At least 150 structures have burned so far, fire officials said. There was no immediate word whether the structures were homes or businesses. More than 27,000 people have been evacuated and one firefighter was injured. There was no word on the extent of the injuries.

The winds were pushing it toward Santa Paula, a city of some 30,000 people about 60 miles (97 kilometers) northwest of Los Angeles. Many of the evacuated homes were in that city.

However, evacuation orders were expanded to houses in Ventura, which is 12 miles (19 kilometers) southwest and has 106,000 residents.

"The fire growth is just absolutely exponential," Ventura County Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said. "All that firefighters can do when we have winds like this is get out ahead, evacuate people, and protect structures."

Thomas Aquinas College, a school with about 350 students, has also been evacuated, with students

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going to their own homes or to those of faculty and staff, the college said in a statement.

One person was killed in an auto accident associated with the fire, officials said. They gave no further details.

Winds exceeding 40 mph and gusts over 60 mph have been reported in the area and are expected to continue, the National Weather Service said. Fire officials said the winds increased overnight.

Firefighters from neighboring Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties were pouring in to help.

Nearly 180,000 customers in the Ventura county area were without power, Southern California Edison said on Twitter.

All schools in the Ventura Unified School District will be closed on Tuesday.

Arab, Muslim opposition building to any US nod on Jerusalem

By **KARIN LAUB** and **JOSEF FEDERMAN**, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Vociferous Arab and Muslim opposition was building Tuesday to any possible U.S. recognition of the hotly contested city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Turkey threatened to cut ties with Israel, the Palestinians warned they would halt contacts with their U.S. counterparts — and key Washington ally Saudi Arabia spoke out strongly against such a possible step.

Saudi Arabia, a regional powerhouse, is crucial to any White House plans to promote a possible Mideast peace deal.

Trump's next move concerning Jerusalem remained shrouded in mystery.

U.S. officials have said he may recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital this week as a way to offset his likely decision to delay his campaign promise of moving the U.S. Embassy there. Trump's point-man on the Middle East, son-in-law Jared Kushner, later said the president hasn't decided yet what steps to take.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration appeared to have missed a statutory deadline to sign a new waiver keeping the U.S. Embassy in Israel in Tel Aviv.

The deadline came and went without any White House announcement about whether Trump had signed a waiver. Without the waiver, by the law the embassy is supposed to move to Jerusalem. The White House said Monday that Trump was still deciding.

The implications of missing the deadline are unclear. Lawyers have said there's some flexibility in the exact timing. Congress could withhold State Department funding for overseas facilities but is unlikely to do so. The Trump administration has blown through many other congressional deadlines without consequence in the past.

At the same time, the prospect of Trump recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital has triggered mounting opposition in the Arab and Muslim world.

The holy city is home to the third holiest site of Islam, along with the holiest site in Judaism and major Christian shrines. It forms the combustible center of the Israel-Arab conflict. Any perceived harm to Muslim claims to the city has triggered large-scale protests in the past, both in the Holy Land and across the region.

East Jerusalem, now home to more than 300,000 Palestinians, was captured by Israel in 1967 and then annexed to its capital, a move most of the international community has not recognized.

Palestinians seek east Jerusalem as a future capital. Israel's current government, unlike its predecessors, rejects the idea of partition and claims the entire city as Israel's capital. Under international consensus and long-standing U.S. policy, the fate of the city is to be determined in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

A Trump recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital would up-end Washington's traditional approach to the conflict. It was not immediately clear what Trump could hope to gain from such a step, while the downsides were apparent. Among other things, the U. S. risks alienating crucial Arab allies, from Saudi Arabia to Jordan.

On Tuesday, warnings against such a possible U.S. move were pouring in from across the region.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told parliament that U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital was a "red line" and that his country's response "could go as far as us cutting diplomatic ties with Israel."

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Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett played down the threat, saying that "at the end of the day it is better to have a united Jerusalem than Erdogan's sympathy."

In the West Bank, the diplomatic adviser of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital could destroy Washington's role as mediator between Israelis and Palestinians.

"If the Americans recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, then this would mean they decided, on their own, to distance themselves from efforts to make peace and that they will have no credibility or role in this issue," Majdi Khaldi told The Associated Press in perhaps the most sharply worded comments yet by a Palestinian official.

"We will stop our contacts with them (in the event of recognition) because such a step goes against our existence and against the fate of our cause," Khaldi said. "It targets Muslims and Christians alike."

Saudi Arabia expressed its "grave and deep concern" about possible recognition.

In a statement on the state-run Saudi Press Agency, the Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that the kingdom affirms the rights of Palestinian people regarding Jerusalem which it said "cannot be changed." The statement warned that this step would "provoke sentiments of Muslims throughout world."

The Arab League with almost two dozen member states was to discuss the controversy later Tuesday.

On Monday, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, which has 57 member states, said U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital would constitute "naked aggression" against the Muslim and Arab world.

Laub reported from Amman, Jordan. Associated Press writers Josh Lederman in Washington and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this story.

Tribes: Trump's monument order disrespects native people

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and BRADY McCOMBS, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — President Donald Trump's rare move to shrink two large national monuments in Utah triggered another round of outrage among Native American leaders who vowed to unite and take the fight to court to preserve protections for lands they consider sacred.

Environmental and conservation groups joined the battle Monday and began filing lawsuits that ensure that Trump's announcement is far from the final chapter of the yearslong public lands battle. The court cases are likely to drag on for years, maybe even into a new presidency.

Trump decided to reduce Bears Ears — created last December by President Barack Obama — by about 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante — designated in 1996 by President Bill Clinton — by nearly half. The moves earned him cheers from Republican leaders in Utah who lobbied him to undo protections they considered overly broad.

Conservation groups called it the largest elimination of protected land in American history.

The move comes a week after tribal leaders decried Trump for using the name of a historical Native American figure as a slur.

On Nov. 27, Trump used a White House event honoring Navajo Code Talkers to take a political jab at Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat he has derisively nicknamed "Pocahontas" for her claim to have Native American heritage.

"It's just another slap in the face for a lot of us, a lot of our Native American brothers and sisters," Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez said. "To see that happen a week ago, with disparaging remarks, and now this."

Trump also overrode tribal objections to approve the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines.

The Navajo Nation was one of five tribes that formed a coalition that spent years lobbying Obama to declare Bears Ears to preserve lands home to ancient cliff dwellings and an estimated 100,000 archaeological sites. Native Americans visit the area to perform ceremonies, collect herbs and wood for medicinal and spiritual purposes, and do healing rituals.

The coalition's lawsuit to protect Bears Ears is expected to be filed by Tuesday.

Earthjustice filed the first of several expected lawsuits Monday, calling the reduction of Grand Staircase-

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Escalante an abuse of the president's power that jeopardizes a "Dinosaur Shangri-la" full of fossils. Some of the dinosaur fossils sit on a plateau that is home to one of the country's largest known coal reserves, which could now be open to mining. The organization is representing eight conservation groups.

Trump, in a speech at Utah's Capitol with the governor and other politicians, said the state's lands should not be managed by "very distant bureaucrats located in Washington."

"Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away," Trump said. "I've come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens."

The decision marks the first time in a half century that a president has undone these types of land protections.

Trump's move followed months of lobbying by Utah's mostly Republican officials who said the two monuments closed off the area to energy development and other access.

Environmental and tribal groups say the designations are needed to protect important archaeological and cultural resources, especially the more than 1.3 million-acre (2,030-square-mile) Bears Ears site featuring thousands of Native American artifacts.

Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch said only Congress, not the president, has the power to reduce a national monument, something that the tribal coalition plans to argue in court.

Additional legal challenges were expected from environmental groups and outdoor clothing company Patagonia.

Outside Trump's announcement Monday, roughly 3,000 protesters lined up near the State Capitol. Some held signs that said, "Keep your tiny hands off our public lands," and they chanted, "Lock him up!" A smaller group gathered in support, including some who said they favor potential drilling or mining there that could create jobs. Bears Ears has no oil or gas, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told reporters, though Grand Staircase-Escalante has coal.

Bears Ears, created nearly a year ago, will be reduced to 201,876 acres (315 square miles).

Grand Staircase-Escalante will be reduced from nearly 1.9 million acres (nearly 3,000 square miles) to 1 million acres (1,569 square miles).

Both were among a group of 27 monuments that Trump ordered Zinke to review this year.

Democrats and environmentalists accuse Trump and Zinke of engaging in a secretive process aimed at helping industry groups that have donated to Republican political campaigns.

Zinke accompanied Trump aboard Air Force One, as did Utah's Republican U.S. Sens. Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee. Hatch and other Utah Republican leaders pushed Trump to launch the review, saying the monuments designated by the former Democratic presidents locked up too much federal land.

Trump framed the decision as returning power to the state, saying, "You know and love this land the best and you know the best how to take care of your land." He said the decision would "give back your voice."

"Public lands will once again be for public use," Trump said to cheers.

Hatch, who introduced Trump, said that when "you talk, this president listens" and that Trump promised to help him with "federal overreach."

No president has tried to eliminate a monument, but some have reduced or redrawn the boundaries on 18 occasions, according to the National Park Service. The most recent instance came in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy slightly downsized Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico.

Trump signed an executive order in April directing Zinke to review the protections, which Trump is able to upend under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The law gives presidents broad authority to declare federal lands as monuments and restrict their use.

Zinke has also recommended to Trump that Nevada's Gold Butte and Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou monuments be reduced in size, though details remain unclear. The former Montana congressman's plan would allow logging at a newly designated monument in Maine and more grazing, hunting and fishing at two sites in New Mexico.

Patagonia President and CEO Rose Marcario said the outdoor-apparel company will join an expected court fight against the monument reduction, which she described as the "largest elimination of protected

land in American history.”

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey in Salt Lake City and Darlene Superville in Washington contributed to this report.

UAE, Saudi Arabia forming new group, separate from GCC

By JON GAMBRELL, Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — The United Arab Emirates on Tuesday announced it has formed a new economic and partnership group with Saudi Arabia, separate from the Gulf Cooperation Council — a move that could undermine the council amid a diplomatic crisis with member state Qatar.

The Emirati Foreign Ministry announcement, just hours ahead of a GCC meeting in Kuwait, said the new “joint cooperation committee” was approved by the UAE’s ruler and president, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nayhan.

Saudi Arabia did not immediately comment on the new partnership.

It wasn’t immediately clear how the development could affect the six-member GCC meeting, which is expected to focus on the Qatar issue. Half of the GCC members are boycotting Doha in a dispute that’s cleaved the Arabian Peninsula.

The Emirati ministry said the new “committee is assigned to cooperate and coordinate between the UAE and Saudi Arabia in all military, political, economic, trade and cultural fields, as well as others, in the interest of the two countries.”

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have cultivated even-closer ties in recent years. Emirati troops are deeply involved in the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Abu Dhabi’s powerful crown prince, Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nayhan, also is believed to have a closer relationship with Saudi Arabia’s young Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The Emirati announcement did not say whether any other Gulf Arab countries would be invited to join the new group but the development puts pressure the GCC, a group of American-allied Gulf Arab nations formed in part in 1981 as a counterbalance to Shiite power Iran. It includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Emirates.

The United States and its European allies all have told the council’s members that the region remains stronger with them working together as a whole, while the countries themselves still appear divided over their future.

The fact the GCC meeting in Kuwait was to take place at all is a bit of a surprise, given the unusually sharp criticism among the typically clubby members of the GCC pointed at Doha.

“This is the most important annual summit the GCC has held for more than two decades,” said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University. “The GCC needs to illustrate its relevance after having been bypassed at every stage of the Qatar crisis.”

The dispute began in June, following what Qatar described as a hack of its state-run news agency that saw incendiary comments attributed to its ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Soon after, GCC members Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates closed off their airspace and seaports to Qatar, as well as the small peninsular nation’s sole land border with Saudi Arabia.

The boycott initially riled Doha, though it soon replaced food products with those flown in from Turkey and Iran.

However, Qatar’s foreign reserves have dropped by some \$10 billion - a fifth of their value - since the dispute began. Those reserves are crucial in supporting the nation’s riyal, which is pegged to the U.S. dollar, as well as funding the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup that Doha will host.

For boycotting nations, they allege Qatar funds extremist groups and has too-cozy ties to Iran. Qatar has long denied funding extremists but it restored full diplomatic ties with Iran during the crisis. Doha shares a massive offshore natural gas field with Tehran that gives its citizens the highest per-capita income in

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the world.

A similar dispute involving Qatar erupted in 2014. But this time positions have hardened against Qatar, whose support for Islamist opposition groups has angered the Arab nations now boycotting it. The UAE in particular views Islamists as a threat to hereditary rule in its federation of seven sheikhdoms. Egypt, angered by Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and the nation's deposed President Mohammed Morsi, is also boycotting Doha.

The U.S., which has some 10,000 troops stationed at Qatar's sprawling al-Udeid Air Base as part of its campaign against the Islamic State group and the war in Afghanistan, also has sought to end the crisis. Its military has halted some regional exercises to put pressure on the GCC to resolve the crisis. However, President Donald Trump in the meantime made comments seemingly supporting the Arab nations' efforts at isolating Qatar, complicating those efforts.

A Trump-prompted call in September between Qatar's Sheikh Tamim and the Saudi crown prince that offered a chance at negotiations also broke down in mutual recriminations.

Kuwait's 88-year-old emir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, has tried to mediate the dispute, so far without success. However, Kuwait appeared in recent days to secure promises from the GCC to attend its annual high-level summit.

Tuesday's meeting in Kuwait City was to be a summit of the region's rulers. However, only Qatar and Kuwait had its head of state attending, sparking anger online by Kuwaitis that the nations boycotting Qatar had slighted their leader. Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said rarely attends Gulf-wide meetings.

But the GCC meeting also represents more than just the Qatar crisis. The long-stalemated Saudi-led war in Yemen suffered a new setback with the death Monday of former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who recently defected from the Shiite rebels holding its capital.

Meanwhile, a new generation of Gulf leaders is rising, like Saudi Arabia's assertive 32-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed, who launched the Yemen war and has been more confrontational with Iran.

"The Saudi camp is seeking to commit the Gulf states to a hard-line anti-Iran policy and adherence to Saudi leadership," Ayham Kamel, the head of the Middle East and North Africa division of the Eurasia Group, wrote in an analysis published Tuesday. "While the UAE believes its interests are best served by an alliance with Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain is compelled to follow Riyadh's lead, the other Gulf states are much more hesitant to do so."

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellap . His work can be found at <http://apne.ws/2galNpz> .

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. LEGAL BACKLASH FOR TRUMP'S MOVE ON NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Tribes that spent years pushing for the creation of Bears Ears National Monument in Utah say they will sue over the president's plan to reduce the protected area by 85 percent.

2. WHAT HOLY CITY'S STATUS COULD REVERBERATE THROUGH THE REGION

The Palestinians, Turkey and other nations warn of dire diplomatic repercussions if Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

3. WHAT UNITED ARAB EMIRATES HAS FORMED

A new economic and partnership group with Saudi Arabia, separate from the Gulf Cooperation Council — a move that could undermine the council amid a diplomatic crisis with Qatar.

4. WHERE NATION'S IDEOLOGICAL, RACIAL DIVIDES HAVE GROWN

North Carolina's Robeson County is the most diverse rural county in the U.S., but the backlash on social media after some African-American high school cheerleaders kneeled during the national anthem exposed a rift.

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5. HOW TAX OVERHAUL COULD AFFECT HEALTH CARE

The Republican plan could undermine "Obamacare's" health insurance markets and add to the financial squeeze on Medicare over time.

6. NEW ACCUSER COMES OUT AGAINST CONYERS

A woman who says she worked for the Michigan Democratic congressman says he slid his hand up her skirt and rubbed her thighs while in church.

7. JUSTICES TO HEAR ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW ARGUMENTS

The Supreme Court is taking up the highly anticipated case of the Colorado baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.

8. POLL: MANY HARVEY VICTIMS STILL NEED HELP

Nearly half of the residents who had property damage or lost employment after the powerful hurricane say they're not getting the resources they need, a Kaiser Family Foundation/Episcopal Health Foundation survey finds.

9. WHO'S SPOTIFY'S TOP ARTIST

Largely snubbed by the Grammys, Ed Sheeran tops the streaming service's 2017 list with 6.3 billion streams.

10. STEELERS RALLY PAST BENGALS 23-20

Down 17-0 early, Le'Veon Bell and Antonio Brown help Pittsburgh (10-2) extend its best start since 2004 in a physical game with a couple of frightening injuries.

APNewsBreak: Border arrests plunge, deportation arrests soar

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The federal government, in the most complete statistical snapshot of immigration enforcement under President Donald Trump, says Border Patrol arrests plunged to a 45-year low while arrests by deportation officers soared.

The Border Patrol made 310,531 arrests during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, a decline of 25 percent from 415,816 a year earlier and the lowest level since 1971. Despite the significant decline, arrests increased every month since May — largely families and unaccompanied children.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, whose officers pick up people for deportation away from the border, made 143,470 arrests, an increase of 25 percent from 114,434 a year earlier. After Trump took office, ICE arrests surged 40 percent from the same period a year earlier.

The numbers released by the government Tuesday show that deportation officers are taking Trump's call for an immigration crackdown to heart, even without the funding increase that the president has sought from Congress for more hiring. In February, then-Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly scrapped the previous administration's instructions to limit deportations to public safety threats, convicted criminals and recent border crossers, effectively making anyone in the country illegally vulnerable.

"We have clearly seen the successful results of the president's commitment to supporting the frontline officers and agents of (the Department of Homeland Security) as they enforce the law and secure our borders," said Elaine Duke, acting secretary.

ICE said that deportations totaled 226,119, a decline of 6 percent from the previous year, but that number masks a seismic shift away from the border. ICE often takes custody of people at the border before deporting them; the sharp drop in Border Patrol arrests means fewer people to remove.

ICE said "interior removals" — people deported after being arrested away from the border — jumped 25 percent to 81,603 from 65,332 the previous year. They rose 37 percent since Trump's inauguration compared to the same period a year earlier.

Reasons for the precipitous drop in border arrests are unclear but Trump's election may have deterred people from trying. Trump has yet to get funding for the first installment of his proposed border wall with Mexico and the number of Border Patrol agents has declined as the government's struggles to fill vacancies continues under his presidency.

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About 58 percent of Border Patrol arrests were people from countries other than Mexico — up from 54 percent a year earlier — largely from Central America. Starting around 2011, large numbers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras began entering the country in South Texas, which replaced Arizona as the busiest corridor for illegal crossings.

Ronald Vitiello, Customs and Border Protection's acting deputy commissioner, said he was "very concerned" about increases in families and children crossing in recent months. During the fiscal year, which included the President Barack Obama administration's final months, border authorities stopped people traveling as families 104,997 times on the Mexican border and unaccompanied children 48,681 times.

CBP also said inspectors at land crossings, airports and seaports denied entry 216,370 times during the fiscal year, a decline of 24 percent from 2016. Border Patrol arrests occur outside of those official points of entry.

CBP, which has faced allegations of excessive use of force, said its employees used firearms 17 times during the fiscal year, down from 27 the previous year and 58 in 2012. It said its employees were assaulted 847 times, compared to less than 600 each year going back to 2012.

Saudi strikes pound Yemeni capital after ex-president slain

By AHMED AL-HAJ and MAGGIE MICHAEL, Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Heavy airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition pounded Yemen's capital overnight, targeting Sanaa's densely populated neighborhoods in apparent retaliation for the killing of the former Yemeni president by the country's Shiite rebels, residents said.

The body of ex-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, which had appeared in a video by the militias with a gaping head wound, was taken to the city's military rebel-controlled hospital but it was not immediately clear if the rebels would allow Saleh's family to hold a funeral later in the day.

The gruesome images from the previous day sent shockwaves among Saleh's followers — a grisly end recalling that of his contemporary, Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, in 2011.

Saleh's son Salah said on Facebook on Tuesday that he won't receive condolences for his father's death until "after avenging the blood" of the longtime strongman. Salah also urged his father's followers to fight their former allies, the Shiite rebels known as Houthis.

From Cairo, Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul-Gheit issued a statement Tuesday denouncing Saleh's "assassination" at the hands of "criminal militias," and warned Yemen's situation could explode further and worsen humanitarian crisis. The League spokesman, Mahmoud Afifi, quoted Aboul-Gheit as saying the international community should label the Houthis a "terrorist" organization.

"All means should be tackled for the Yemeni people to get rid of this black nightmare," he said.

Saleh's slaying likely gives the rebels the upper hand in the days-long fighting for Sanaa while also shattering hopes by Yemen's Saudi-backed government that the former president's recent split with the Houthis would have weakened them.

That would give Yemen's internationally recognized government and the Saudi-led coalition backing it and waging war on the Houthis a chance for a turning point in the stalemated conflict that has brought humanitarian disaster.

But with Saleh's forces seemingly in disarray, it was not immediately clear if the Saudi-led coalition will be able to turn the split to its advantage in the war. Many Sanaa residents remained hunkered down in their homes, fearing the rebels and the Saudi airstrikes, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fears for their safety.

Saleh ruled Yemen for more than three decades until an Arab Spring uprising forced him to step down in 2012. He later allied with the Houthi rebels hoping to exploit their strength to return to power. That helped propel Yemen into the ruinous civil war that has spread hunger and disease among its 28 million people.

Houthi officials said their fighters killed Saleh as he tried to flee the capital for his nearby hometown of Sanhan. The Houthis' top leader, Abdul-Malek al-Houthi, said Saleh paid the price for his "treason," accusing him of betraying their alliance to side with the Saudi-led coalition.

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Houthi and Saleh-loyalist forces have been fighting in Sanaa since late last week. The Saudi-led coalition has been hitting Houthi positions with airstrikes, hoping that having Saleh on its side after his split with the rebels could provide a foothold in the capital for the forces of the Saudi-backed president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

From the Saudi capital, Riyadh, where he has been in self-imposed exile for most of the war, Hadi tried on Monday to rally Saleh's allies to keep up the fight against the Houthis.

When Saleh left power, he stayed in the country and kept the loyalty of many military commanders, splitting the armed forces between himself and Hadi. Saleh's forces were key to helping the Houthis overrun Sanaa in 2014 and then much of the north and center of the country.

But over the past year, the Houthis appear to have undermined Saleh, wooing away some of his commanders, strengthening their own fighters and reducing their need for him. It appears that pushed Saleh into flirting with the coalition, ultimately leading to the breakdown of the alliance with the Houthis and the recent outbreak of clashes.

The fighting has brought new suffering to Sanaa's residents; many said the night was shattered by the sounds of gunfire and children screaming.

Witnesses said the bodies of slain civilians and fighters littered the streets as no ambulances were able to reach the area.

Michael reported from Cairo.

His job security questioned, Tillerson tours Europe anyway

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — What do you do when you're America's top diplomat, fourth in line to the presidency, and the White House makes it publicly known you're living on borrowed time? If you're Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, you brush it off, pack a suitcase and hop a flight to Europe, as if nothing had happened.

Tillerson tours Europe this week under circumstances unparalleled in recent U.S. diplomatic memory. After months of public tensions with President Donald Trump and rumors about Tillerson's future, the White House signaled last week he could be fired — and possibly soon. White House officials told multiple news organizations a plan was afoot to oust Tillerson and replace him with CIA Director Mike Pompeo, a close Trump confidant.

"It's laughable," Tillerson quipped the next day, as aides insisted he was staying in his job.

"FAKE NEWS," tweeted the president, saying Tillerson was "not leaving."

Yet such damage to Tillerson's standing is not so easily erased — certainly not by a single tweet.

In Belgium, Austria and France this week, Tillerson will contend with European officials who now have more reason than ever to question whether he truly speaks for the president, how much credence to give his policies, and if he'll remain long enough to see them through. For foreign governments, it has created even more uncertainty over dealing with a mercurial administration in which the only voice that seems to matter is that of Trump himself.

Opening his first day in Brussels on Tuesday, Tillerson alluded to the growing doubt about his leadership of the State Department as he greeted diplomats at the U.S. embassy. He acknowledged that "we don't have any wins yet" and said he's getting "a little criticism" over the high number of vacancies in key roles — including, in Brussels, no U.S. ambassadors to either Belgium or the European Union.

Still, Tillerson insisted he was making progress on his top priority: a top-to-bottom overhaul of the State Department. He said there would be some "quick wins" coming shortly that he would discuss at town hall meetings about the overhaul he said he'd hold before year's end.

"The State Department is not missing a beat," Tillerson said.

In the Belgian capital, Tillerson planned to meet with the EU's foreign policy chief and other regional diplomats before a conference of NATO foreign ministers. He'll then fly late Wednesday to Vienna for a conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and a meeting with Russian Foreign

Minister Sergey Lavrov, whose talks with Tillerson are always closely watched.

The former Exxon Mobil CEO will lastly go to Paris for a final round of meetings before returning to Washington. In each stop, key security issues related to Syria, North Korea, Lebanon and Iran are expected to be high on the agenda.

Though Trump insisted on Twitter that he and Tillerson "work well together," he allowed news stories about Tillerson's impending demise to percolate for more than 24 hours before pushing back. Trump's spokeswoman didn't explicitly dispute that a plan had been hatched to replace Tillerson. Nor did she declare outright Trump's confidence in the Texas oil man.

In Trump's Washington, such is often the way. "Trial balloons" are floated in the press, and competing factions swipe and snipe from behind a cloak of anonymity. It's left to Americans at home to try to discern whether it's happening against the president's wishes or at his direct behest.

Earlier this year, Tillerson clashed bitterly with former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon and his allies. But Tillerson ultimately remained while Bannon and his associates were pushed out. More recently, Tillerson and his team have bumped heads with Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, and others in Kushner's camp, said several administration officials who weren't authorized to discuss internal disputes and requested anonymity.

Republican Sen. Bob Corker, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman and Tillerson ally, said it's clear someone has sought to undermine Tillerson.

"I don't know who that is," Corker said after word emerged of the White House plan. "I know he's taken on some tough issues like the reform of the State Department. I know it hasn't gone in a spectacular way."

Associated Press writer Richard Lardner in Washington contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Trump's tweet adds to allies' worries about legal problems

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The shifting explanations for why President Donald Trump fired national security adviser Michael Flynn have revived questions about whether the president may have obstructed an ongoing investigation of potential contacts between his campaign and Russia.

Pressure on the administration has mounted since Flynn last week pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his conversations with the Russian ambassador, with prosecutors revealing that he is now cooperating with special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. And a muddled White House response, including a problematic presidential tweet, has left some Trump confidants worried that the president is not being well-served by his legal team and believing his lawyers have painted a too-rosy picture of the president's potential plight.

The president's aides and legal advisers have scrambled for 48 hours to explain a presidential tweet that raised the specter of obstruction. It read: "I had to fire General Flynn because he lied to the Vice President and the FBI. He has pleaded guilty to those lies. It is a shame because his actions during the transition were lawful. There was nothing to hide!"

That tweet appeared to indicate a change in the White House explanation for Flynn's firing, suggesting Trump was aware when the White House dismissed Flynn on Feb. 13 that the national security adviser had lied to the FBI, whose agents had interviewed him weeks earlier. Former FBI Director James Comey has said Trump the following day brought up the Flynn investigation in private at the White House and told him he hoped he could "let this go," raising the possibility he knew Flynn had lied and was looking to cover up the offense.

With questions raised by the tweet, Trump associates tried to put distance between the president and the potentially incriminating message.

One of Trump's attorneys, John Dowd, told CNN on Sunday that he was responsible for crafting the tweet.

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Dowd declined to comment to the AP but replied with a Fox News story Monday quoting prominent lawyer Alan Dershowitz as saying Trump couldn't have committed obstruction of justice by urging Comey to drop the FBI investigation of Flynn.

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, backed up Dowd's claim that he wrote the tweet, saying "the lawyers are the ones that understand how to put those tweets together."

"I was with the president on Saturday all day, frankly, and I know that what he said is correct," Conway continued, referring to Dowd. "What he says is that he put it together and sent it to our director of social media."

A White House spokesman declined to answer whether Dowd dictated the tweet word-for-word to the White House director of social media, Dan Scavino, or whether Scavino, who has access to the @RealDonaldTrump account and its 44 million followers, put the sentiment into something resembling Trump's own voice.

The president angrily scolded aides for the tweet over the weekend, according to a person familiar with private conversations but not authorized to discuss them publicly. The White House is considering reviewing how some tweets, particularly related to the Russia probe, get posted.

The episode has rattled some of Trump's outside advisers, who have pressed upon Trump since Flynn's guilty plea that he needs to change legal strategy. White House lawyer Ty Cobb has repeatedly offered public assurances that the investigation into the administration would soon be over, with the president exonerated.

Trump has taken that counsel to heart, telling two close allies over the weekend that he believed he was in the clear and that Mueller's team wouldn't unveil any further charges, according to the advisers who discussed the private conversations under the conditions of anonymity. Both of the confidants said they disputed that assessment and urged Trump to go on the offensive, perhaps by firing his current lawyers or triggering a series of events that could lead to Mueller's dismissal.

Trump did not suggest he was considering that approach. And one of the advisers, who speaks to Trump regularly, said the president had not discussed with him the possibility of issuing any pardons.

The president did lob new criticism at the special counsel investigation Monday, saying he feels "very badly" for Flynn.

"I think it's a shame," Trump said of Flynn's situation, adding that it's "very unfair" and that Flynn had "led a very strong life."

In the wake of the controversial tweet, Trump launched a fresh denial that he had pressured the former FBI director, tweeting Sunday that "I never asked Comey to stop investigating Flynn. Just more Fake News covering another Comey lie!"

Trump fired Comey in May, leading to Mueller's appointment.

Any proof that Trump knew before he spoke with Comey in February that Flynn had lied to the FBI could bolster obstruction of justice allegations against the president and raise the prospect that he was trying to protect a key member of his inner circle from probable prosecution, said Jimmy Gurule, a Notre Dame criminal law professor and former federal prosecutor.

Though the president has previously said he was thinking of "this Russia thing" when he fired Comey, Gurule said it was reasonable to infer from the weekend tweet that the dismissal of Comey was done in the hope of terminating the FBI investigation.

"If you have knowledge of a crime, a reasonable person would disclose that information to law enforcement. The president did not," Gurule said.

But David Rivkin Jr., a Washington lawyer specializing in constitutional law who worked in the Justice Department under presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, said that even if the president knew that Flynn had lied to the FBI, "his authority as the chief executive is perfectly sufficient and appropriate to decide that this matter should not be investigated any further."

Lemire reported from New York.

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

Q&A: Tax bill impacts on health law coverage and Medicare

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The tax overhaul Republicans are pushing toward final votes in Congress could undermine the Affordable Care Act's health insurance markets and add to the financial squeeze on Medicare over time.

Lawmakers will meet this week to resolve differences between the House- and Senate-passed bills in hopes of getting a finished product to President Donald Trump's desk around Christmas. Also in play are the tax deduction for people with high medical expenses, and a tax credit for drug companies that develop treatments for serious diseases affecting relatively few patients.

The business tax cuts that are the centerpiece of the legislation would benefit many health care companies, but there's also concern among hospitals, doctors and insurers about the impact on coverage. Here are some questions and answers on how the tax bill intersects with health care:

Q: Trump has said he won't cut Medicare, and the program doesn't even seem to be mentioned in the tax bill. Why is AARP saying that health insurance for seniors could be jeopardized?

A: The tax bill would increase federal deficits by about \$1 trillion over 10 years, even after accounting for stronger economic growth expected from tax cuts. More red ink means higher borrowing costs for the government, and that would reduce the options for policymakers when Medicare's long-postponed financial reckoning comes due.

Medicare's giant fund for inpatient care isn't expected to start running short until 2029. That's still more than a decade away, but a federal anti-deficit law currently in effect could trigger automatic cuts as early as next year — about \$25 billion from Medicare.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wisc., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said in a joint statement last week that such speculation is unfounded. "This will not happen," the GOP leaders said. Congress has previously waived such cuts, they explained, and there's no reason to think this time would be different.

Nonetheless others see an increased risk to Medicare.

"The greater concern is even if the automatic cuts don't take place, the tax bill just exacerbates the pressure on the federal deficit and Republicans have been pressing for cuts in Medicare for some time," said Paul Van de Water, a policy expert with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which advocates for low-income people.

Q: How did "Obamacare" wind up in the tax bill?

A: The Senate version repeals the Affordable Care Act's tax penalties on people who don't have health insurance. That would result in government savings from fewer consumers applying for taxpayer-subsidized coverage, giving GOP tax writers nearly \$320 billion over 10 years to help pay for tax cuts.

What's more, repealing the fines would deal a blow to the Obama-era health law after a more ambitious Republican takedown collapsed earlier this year.

Q: Those fines have been very unpopular, so how could repealing them undermine the health law? Other parts of the ACA will remain on the books.

A: Premiums will go up, and that's never popular. The fines were meant to nudge healthy people to get covered. Because insurance markets work by pooling risks, premiums from healthy people subsidize care for the sick.

Without some arm-twisting to get covered, some healthy people will stay out of the pool. That's likely to translate to a 10 percent increase in premiums for those left behind, people more likely to have health problems and need comprehensive coverage, says the Congressional Budget Office.

The CBO also estimated that 13 million more people would be uninsured in 2027 without the penalties. If they have a serious accident or illness, uninsured people get slammed with big bills, and taxpayers wind

up indirectly subsidizing the cost.

Q: So just taking away an unpopular penalty would destabilize the health insurance law?

A: Repealing the fines is part of a broader context.

The Trump administration slashed the advertising budget for ACA sign-ups this year, at the same time that it cut the enrollment window in half. The administration is working on rules that would allow broader sale of skimpy insurance plans with lower premiums, which would also draw healthy people away from the health law markets.

"The program would still exist, but it would be quite hobbled at this point," said Larry Levitt of the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

A separate bipartisan bill to stabilize health insurance markets is still pending in the Senate, and it remains unclear where the markets will settle out.

Q: Taxes and health care are connected. Anything else to flag in the GOP bills?

A: The House bill repeals the tax deduction for people with high medical expenses not covered by insurance. The Senate bill would make the deduction more generous than what's currently allowed. People could deduct amounts that exceed 7.5 percent of their income. The differences would have to be resolved in conference.

In order to raise money to pay for lower tax rates, the House bill eliminates a tax credit available to drug companies that develop medications for people with rare diseases; the Senate bill scales back the tax credit. Organizations representing patients are pushing to keep the credit intact.

Justices take up dispute over wedding cake for gay couple

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up the highly anticipated case of the Colorado baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.

Tuesday's clash at the high court pits baker Jack Phillips' First Amendment claims of artistic freedom against the anti-discrimination arguments of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, and two men Phillips turned away in 2012.

The commission ruled that Phillips violated the state's anti-discrimination law when he refused to make a wedding cake for Charlie Craig and David Mullins.

The argument is the first involving gay rights since the Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that states could not prevent same-sex couples from marrying.

The Trump administration is supporting Phillips in his argument that he can't be forced to create a cake that violates his religious beliefs. It appears to be the first time the federal government has asked the justices to carve out an exception from an anti-discrimination law.

The case's outcome also could affect photographers and florists who have voiced objections similar to those of Phillips.

"Artists shouldn't be forced to express what the government dictates. The commission ordered Jack to celebrate what his faith prohibits or to stop doing the work he loves. The Supreme Court has never compelled artistic expression, and doing so here would lead to less civility, diversity, and freedom for everyone, no matter their views on marriage," Kristen Waggoner, the Alliance Defending Freedom who is representing Phillips, said in an email.

But the American Civil Liberties Union and other rights groups that have sided with the gay couple said they fear a ruling for Phillips could allow for discrimination by a range of business owners. They said the court has never recognized what they call a constitutional right to discriminate.

"The question is whether a shop like Masterpiece Cakeshop can put up a sign in its window saying, 'Wedding cakes for heterosexual couples only,'" ACLU deputy legal director Louise Melling said. The ACLU is representing Craig and Mullins.

All eyes will be on Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose vote often decides cases that otherwise split the court's liberals and conservatives. The 81-year-old Kennedy is the author of the 2015 gay marriage decision and all the court's major gay-rights rulings. At the same time, Kennedy has forcefully defended free-speech

rights in his nearly 30 years as a justice.

Colorado native Neil Gorsuch also will be taking part in the most important gay rights case since he joined the Supreme Court in April.

Colorado is among only 21 states that have statewide laws barring discrimination against gays and lesbians in public accommodations.

The case, Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, 16-111, will be decided by late June.

Prosecutors: Manafort wrote op-ed with colleague in Russia

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an attempt to burnish his public image and leave no fingerprints behind, Donald Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort recently enlisted a longtime colleague "assessed to have ties" to Russian intelligence to help him ghostwrite an op-ed, prosecutors said Monday.

Prosecutors working for special counsel Robert Mueller say in court papers that they believe the opinion piece — written while Manafort is on house arrest facing several felonies — would have violated a judge's order that bars him from trying his case in the press.

They are now pushing for Manafort to remain confined to his home on GPS monitoring for the time being.

According to the court papers, Manafort and the colleague sought to publish the op-ed to influence public opinion about his political consulting in Ukraine, work at the heart of the criminal case against him. The op-ed was being drafted as late as last week.

Prosecutors did not name Manafort's colleague, who is currently based in Russia, or provide details of how they determined the person had ties to a spy agency. Reached Monday, a spokesman for Manafort declined comment.

Manafort is currently facing several felony charges involving allegations of money laundering and other financial crimes related to his political consulting work in Ukraine. Manafort has denied any wrongdoing. A trial is scheduled for next year.

In the court filing, prosecutors say the op-ed appeared to violate an admonishment from the judge last month to refrain from public statements. An op-ed is an opinion essay written to be published in some form, usually on a website or in a newspaper or magazine. It is usually marked as representing the views of the writer and separated from news content.

"Even if the ghostwritten op-ed were entirely accurate, fair, and balanced, it would be a violation of this Court's November 8 Order if it had been published," the prosecutors wrote. "The editorial clearly was undertaken to influence the public's opinion of defendant Manafort, or else there would be no reason to seek its publication (much less for Manafort and his long-time associate to ghostwrite it in another's name)."

They added, "It compounds the problem that the proposed piece is not a dispassionate recitation of the facts."

Prosecutors said they discovered the efforts to publish the op-ed last Thursday and alerted Manafort's attorney, who assured prosecutors that "steps would be taken to make sure it was no longer going to be published."

At the time, Manafort was working to secure his release from home confinement by posting more than \$10 million in bond, and according to court papers, he had reached a tentative agreement with the government. But after discovering the op-ed, Mueller's team is now opposing Manafort's proposed bond agreement.

Prosecutors did not disclose the op-ed in court papers so as to prevent it from becoming public. They also did not disclose what name the ghostwritten op-ed would have been published under.

Manafort and his longtime business associate, Rick Gates, were indicted in October by a grand jury in Washington. They were among the first people to face charges brought by the special counsel's office.

Manafort led the Trump campaign for several months, including during the Republican National Convention. Gates also worked in a senior role on the campaign.

Mueller has been leading a wide-ranging investigation into Russia's election interference and any coordination with Trump associates.

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

Read the court filing: <http://apne.ws/JtXbTI7>

Ed Sheeran tops Spotify's 2017 list with 6.3 billion streams

By MESFIN FEKADU, AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Grammys may have dissed Ed Sheeran, but Spotify says he is the most streamed artist of the year.

The streaming service announced Tuesday that Sheeran tops its 2017 list with 6.3 billion streams. He also has Spotify's biggest album of the year with "Divide," streamed 3.1 billion times, and the top song with "Shape of You," logging 1.4 billion streams.

Sheeran received two Grammy nominations last week, but was shut out of the major categories, including album, song and record of the year.

No female acts were in the Top 5 most streamed acts of the year: Sheeran is followed by Drake, The Weeknd, Kendrick Lamar and The Chainsmokers. Rihanna is the most streamed female performer of the year, followed by Taylor Swift and Selena Gomez.

Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee's "Despacito" remix, co-starring Justin Bieber, was the second-most streamed song of the year. The original version of the song was ranked third.

Drake's "More Life," which he didn't submit for consideration at the upcoming Grammy Awards, is the second-most streamed album of the year. Lamar's "DAMN.," The Weeknd's "Starboy" and Post Malone's "Stoney" round out the Top 5.

Spotify says hip-hop increased by 74 percent in the last year, while Latin music jumped 110 percent.

Trump takes rare step to reduce 2 national monuments in Utah

By CATHERINE LUCEY and DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday took the rare step of scaling back two sprawling national monuments in Utah, declaring that "public lands will once again be for public use" in a move cheered by Republican leaders who lobbied him to undo protections they considered overly broad.

The decision marks the first time in a half century that a president has undone these types of land protections. Tribal and environmental groups oppose the decision and began filing lawsuits Monday in a bid to stop Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

Trump made the plan official during a speech at the State Capitol, where he signed proclamations to shrink the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. Both monuments encompass millions of acres of land.

State officials said the protections were overly broad and closed off the area to energy development and other access.

Environmental and tribal groups say the designations are needed to protect important archaeological and cultural resources, especially the more than 1.3 million-acre (2,030-square-mile) Bears Ears site featuring thousands of Native American artifacts, including ancient cliff dwellings and petroglyphs.

Trump argued that the people of Utah know best how to care for their land.

"Some people think that the natural resources of Utah should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington," Trump said. "And guess what? They're wrong."

Roughly 3,000 demonstrators lined up near the State Capitol to protest Trump's announcement. Some held signs that said, "Keep your tiny hands off our public lands," and they chanted, "Lock him up!" A smaller group gathered in support, including some who said they favor potential drilling or mining there that could create jobs. Bears Ears has no oil or gas, Zinke told reporters, though Grand Staircase-Escalante has coal.

"Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands

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and thousands of miles away," Trump said. "I've come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens."

Bears Ears, created last December by President Barack Obama, will be reduced by about 85 percent, to 201,876 acres (315 square miles).

Grand Staircase-Escalante, designated in 1996 by President Bill Clinton, will be reduced from nearly 1.9 million acres (nearly 3,000 square miles) to 1,003,863 acres (1,569 square miles).

Both were among a group of 27 monuments that Trump ordered Zinke to review this year.

Zinke accompanied Trump aboard Air Force One, as did Utah's Republican U.S. senators, Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee. Hatch and other Utah Republican leaders pushed Trump to launch the review, saying the monuments designated by the former Democratic presidents locked up too much federal land.

Trump framed the decision as returning power to the state, saying, "You know and love this land the best and you know the best how to take care of your land." He said the decision would "give back your voice."

"Public lands will once again be for public use," Trump said to cheers.

Hatch, who introduced Trump, said that when "you talk, this president listens" and that Trump promised to help him with "federal overreach."

Earthjustice filed the first of several expected lawsuits Monday, calling the reduction of Grand Staircase-Escalante an abuse of the president's power that jeopardizes a "Dinosaur Shangri-la" full of fossils. Some of the dinosaur fossils sit on a plateau that is home to one of the country's largest known coal reserves, which could now be open to mining. The organization is representing eight conservation groups.

Native American leaders said they expect to file a lawsuit challenging the Bears Ears decision soon.

Patagonia President and CEO Rose Marcario said the outdoor-apparel company will join an expected court fight against the monument reduction, which she described as the "largest elimination of protected land in American history."

No president has tried to eliminate a monument, but some have reduced or redrawn the boundaries on 18 occasions, according to the National Park Service. The most recent instance came in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy slightly downsized Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico.

Trump's move against Bears Ears, covering lands considered sacred to tribes that long pushed for protections, marks his latest affront to Native Americans.

Trump overrode tribal objections to approve the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. He also used a White House event honoring Navajo Code Talkers to take a political jab at Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat he has nicknamed "Pocahontas" for her claim to have Native American heritage.

"One week ago today, our Code Talkers were disrespected. And one week later, we get this," said Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, referring to the monuments.

Trump signed an executive order in April directing Zinke to review the protections, which Trump is able to upend under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The law gives presidents broad authority to declare federal lands as monuments and restrict their use.

Zinke has also recommended to Trump that Nevada's Gold Butte and Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou monuments be reduced in size, though details remain unclear. The former Montana congressman's plan would allow logging at a newly designated monument in Maine and more grazing, hunting and fishing at two sites in New Mexico.

Democrats and environmentalists accuse Trump and Zinke of engaging in a secretive process aimed at helping industry groups that have donated to Republican political campaigns.

Superville reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Brady McCombs, Michelle L. Price and Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City contributed to this report.

Trump's tweet raises obstruction specter, worries allies

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The shifting explanations for why President Donald Trump fired national security adviser Michael Flynn have revived questions about whether the president may have obstructed an ongoing investigation of potential contacts between his campaign and Russia.

Pressure on the administration has mounted since Flynn last week pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his conversations with the Russian ambassador, with prosecutors revealing that he is now cooperating with special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. And a muddled White House response, including a problematic presidential tweet, has left some Trump confidants worried that the president is not being well-served by his legal team and believing his lawyers have painted a too-rosy picture of the president's potential plight.

The president's aides and legal advisers have scrambled for 48 hours to explain a presidential tweet that raised the specter of obstruction. It read: "I had to fire General Flynn because he lied to the Vice President and the FBI. He has pleaded guilty to those lies. It is a shame because his actions during the transition were lawful. There was nothing to hide!"

That tweet appeared to indicate a change in the White House explanation for Flynn's firing, suggesting Trump was aware when the White House dismissed Flynn on Feb. 13 that the national security adviser had lied to the FBI, whose agents had interviewed him weeks earlier. Former FBI Director James Comey has said Trump the following day brought up the Flynn investigation in private at the White House and told him he hoped he could "let this go," raising the possibility he knew Flynn had lied and was looking to cover up the offense.

With questions raised by the tweet, Trump associates tried to put distance between the president and the potentially incriminating message.

One of Trump's attorneys, John Dowd, told CNN on Sunday that he was responsible for crafting the tweet.

Dowd declined to comment to the AP but replied with a Fox News story Monday quoting prominent lawyer Alan Dershowitz as saying Trump couldn't have committed obstruction of justice by urging Comey to drop the FBI investigation of Flynn.

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, backed up Dowd's claim that he wrote the tweet, saying "the lawyers are the ones that understand how to put those tweets together."

"I was with the president on Saturday all day, frankly, and I know that what he said is correct," Conway continued, referring to Dowd. "What he says is that he put it together and sent it to our director of social media."

A White House spokesman declined to answer whether Dowd dictated the tweet word-for-word to the White House director of social media, Dan Scavino, or whether Scavino, who has access to the @RealDonaldTrump account and its 44 million followers, put the sentiment into something resembling Trump's own voice.

The president angrily scolded aides for the tweet over the weekend, according to a person familiar with private conversations but not authorized to discuss them publicly. The White House is considering reviewing how some tweets, particularly related to the Russia probe, get posted.

The episode has rattled some of Trump's outside advisers, who have pressed upon Trump since Flynn's guilty plea that he needs to change legal strategy. White House lawyer Ty Cobb has repeatedly offered public assurances that the investigation into the administration would soon be over, with the president exonerated.

Trump has taken that counsel to heart, telling two close allies over the weekend that he believed he was in the clear and that Mueller's team wouldn't unveil any further charges, according to the advisers who discussed the private conversations under the conditions of anonymity. Both of the confidants said they disputed that assessment and urged Trump to go on the offensive, perhaps by firing his current lawyers or triggering a series of events that could lead to Mueller's dismissal.

Trump did not suggest he was considering that approach. And one of the advisers, who speaks to Trump

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regularly, said the president had not discussed with him the possibility of issuing any pardons.

The president did lob new criticism at the special counsel investigation Monday, saying he feels "very badly" for Flynn.

"I think it's a shame," Trump said of Flynn's situation, adding that it's "very unfair" and that Flynn had "led a very strong life."

In the wake of the controversial tweet, Trump launched a fresh denial that he had pressured the former FBI director, tweeting Sunday that "I never asked Comey to stop investigating Flynn. Just more Fake News covering another Comey lie!"

Trump fired Comey in May, leading to Mueller's appointment.

Any proof that Trump knew before he spoke with Comey in February that Flynn had lied to the FBI could bolster obstruction of justice allegations against the president and raise the prospect that he was trying to protect a key member of his inner circle from probable prosecution, said Jimmy Gurule, a Notre Dame criminal law professor and former federal prosecutor.

Though the president has previously said he was thinking of "this Russia thing" when he fired Comey, Gurule said it was reasonable to infer from the weekend tweet that the dismissal of Comey was done in the hope of terminating the FBI investigation.

"If you have knowledge of a crime, a reasonable person would disclose that information to law enforcement. The president did not," Gurule said.

But David Rivkin Jr., a Washington lawyer specializing in constitutional law who worked in the Justice Department under presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, said that even if the president knew that Flynn had lied to the FBI, "his authority as the chief executive is perfectly sufficient and appropriate to decide that this matter should not be investigated any further."

Lemire reported from New York.

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

The Latest: RNC resumes support of Roy Moore Senate campaign

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President Donald Trump's endorsement of Republican Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate race (all times local):

9:35 p.m.

The Republican National Committee is once again supporting embattled Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore after President Donald Trump formally endorsed him Monday.

An RNC official confirmed the committee will resume its financial support to the Alabama Republican Party's effort to elect Moore to the U.S. Senate, despite the allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss the internal deliberations. The reversal was first reported by Breitbart News.

The RNC announced three weeks ago that it was severed its fundraising ties to Moore following allegations that he'd molested two teenagers when he was in his 30s.

Trump on Monday formally endorsed Moore in a phone call and on Twitter.

12:50 p.m.

President Donald Trump has spoken by phone with Republican Alabama Senate nominee Roy Moore and formally endorsed his candidacy.

White House spokesman Raj Shah said Monday that the two had "a positive call" during which they discussed the state of the race and the president's endorsement.

Moore's campaign says Trump called Moore a "fighter" and expressed his eagerness at having Moore fighting for his agenda in Washington.

Trump's support comes despite allegations that the 70-year-old Moore sexually assaulted teenage girls

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decades ago, including one who said he molested her when she was 14 and he was in his 30s. Many national Republicans have called on Moore to step aside in the wake of the sexual assault and harassment allegations.

Moore's wife, Kayla, thanked Trump for the call on her Facebook page.

8 a.m.

Roy Moore has tweeted his thanks for President Donald Trump's endorsement.

The Alabama Republican who's running for U.S. Senate says he "can't wait to help" Trump "#Drain-TheSwamp."

Trump endorsed Moore in a tweet Monday morning, saying Moore's vote is needed in Congress.

It was Trump's strongest show of support for Moore since allegations surfaced that the candidate had sexually assaulted teenage girls decades ago, including one who said he molested her when she was 14 and he was in his 30s. Many national Republicans have called on Moore to step aside in the wake of multiple sexual assault and harassment allegations.

After Trump's tweet, Moore tweeted that "The America First agenda will #MAGA," a reference to Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

6:55 a.m.

President Donald Trump is throwing his full support behind embattled Republican Roy Moore in the Alabama Senate race.

Trump tweeted early Monday that "Democrats refusal to give even one vote for massive Tax Cuts is why we need Republican Roy Moore to win in Alabama."

It was Trump's most full-throated endorsement of Moore, who has lost backing of many top Republicans since he was hit with allegations of sexual misconduct decades ago.

Trump has assailed Democratic candidate Doug Jones and has defended Moore against allegations of child molestation. But the White House has said he has no plans to make campaign appearances.

Trump tweeted: "We need his vote on stopping crime, illegal immigration, Border Wall, Military, Pro Life, V.A., Judges 2nd Amendment and more. No to Jones, a Pelosi/Schumer Puppet!"

Billy Bush says Trump 'Access Hollywood' tape is real

NEW YORK (AP) — Billy Bush said it was indeed Donald Trump's voice captured on a 2005 "Access Hollywood" tape talking about fame enabling him to grope and try to have sex with women.

"Of course he said it," the former "Access Hollywood" and "Today" show personality said in an op-ed published Sunday in The New York Times.

The video shows Trump, who was the star of "The Apprentice," riding on an "Access Hollywood" bus with then-host Bush. At one point, Trump describes trying to have sex with a married woman. He also brags about women letting him kiss and grab them because he is famous.

"When you're a star, they let you do it," Trump says. "You can do anything."

"Along with Donald Trump and me, there were seven other guys present on the bus at the time, and every single one of us assumed we were listening to a crass standup act. He was performing. Surely, we thought, none of this was real. We now know better," Bush said in the op-ed.

In an appearance taped Monday for CBS' "Late Show With Stephen Colbert," Bush addressed the president: "That is your voice. I was there, you were there, that's your voice on the tape."

The recording of the lewd conversation between Bush and Trump emerged during the 2016 presidential campaign. Trump later said he never did any of the actions described on the tape, and dismissed his words as locker room talk.

In the waning days of the presidential election, more than a dozen women came forward to say that Trump had sexually assaulted or harassed them over the years. He denied it.

But Bush said he believes the women, and he felt the need to write the piece following reports that

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Trump had privately suggested that the "Access Hollywood" tape was not authentic.

"I can only imagine how it has reopened the wounds of the women who came forward with their stories about him, and did not receive enough attention," Bush said. "This country is currently trying to reconcile itself to years of power abuse and sexual misconduct. Its leader is wantonly poking the bear."

On Colbert's show, Bush added: "Enough's enough. Stop playing around with people's lives."

Bush, who had recently been hired as co-host of the "Today" show, lost his job following the release of the tape. He wrote in the Times op-ed that he has since gone through a lot of soul searching.

"None of us were guilty of knowingly enabling our future president," he said. "But all of us were guilty of sacrificing a bit of ourselves in the name of success."

Reeling Giants fire coach McAdoo, GM Reese after 10th loss

By TOM CANAVAN, AP Sports Writer

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Believing the team was spiraling out of control, the New York Giants went out of character by making two major in-season moves, firing coach Ben McAdoo and general manager Jerry Reese.

With the team reeling at 2-10 in a season where most felt it was capable of challenging for a Super Bowl, co-owners John Mara and Steve Tisch reached the decision Monday morning. It came less than a day after the Giants lost in Oakland, with quarterback Eli Manning benched and the offensively inept team performing poorly again.

"We agreed that wholesale changes to this organization needed to be made to get us back to the team we expect it to be," Mara said at a hastily called news conference. "We also agreed it was pointless to wait any longer to make these changes."

Defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo will take over as interim coach for the final four games. He coached the St. Louis Rams from 2009-11.

Mara did not know whether Manning will return as the starter this weekend against Dallas, saying the decision will be made by Spagnuolo.

In a radio interview on WFAN, Manning said he told Spagnuolo that he wants to start the last four games. "I want to be out there and help us go win these four games," Manning said. "I hope I'm out there on Sunday playing against the Cowboys."

Mara said neither McAdoo nor Reese was surprised by the decision, saying they were both professionals. He said his meeting with Reese was more emotional because the two had worked together since 1994.

"I don't think there was any one final straw," Mara said. "I just think that where we are as a franchise right now, you know, we're 2-10. We've kind of been spiraling out of control. I just felt like we needed a complete overhaul. I don't think there was any one event or one final act to precipitate that."

Many felt the benching earlier last week of the well-liked Manning, the face of the franchise and a two-time Super Bowl MVP, was the deciding factor.

McAdoo also would have been subjected to howls from fans with three of the final four games at home, starting this weekend.

The moves come less than a year after the 40-year-old McAdoo ended a four-year Giants playoff drought in his first season, going 11-6. That record was aided in large part by Reese's outstanding work in the free agent market that rebuilt the defense.

While the 2016 season ended in a loss to Green Bay in the wild-card game, this year was supposed to be better. Much better.

The offense was bolstered by signing free agent wide receiver Brandon Marshall and drafting tight end Evan Engram in the first round. The defense was back with the major exception of defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins.

A fifth Super Bowl was in everyone's sights if the offensive line could improve.

It fizzled from the start. The Giants lost their first five games. The line was inept. The defense underperformed, then the injury bug decimated the roster.

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"This has been the perfect storm this season," Mara said. "Everything that could have gone wrong this season has gone wrong."

Assistant general manager Kevin Abrams will take over on an interim basis for Reese, who became GM in 2007 and had two Super Bowl wins on his resume. But the Giants missed the playoffs four times in the past five years, and his failure to address those offensive line problems this past offseason played a major role in a horrible season.

Mara said Abrams and Spagnuolo will be offered the chance to continue in their interim jobs. Former general manager Ernie Accorsi will be a consultant in hiring a new GM, whom Mara wants in place before a coach.

Mara has candidates in mind for general manager and said it's possible a new GM could be in place before the season ends.

The moves came less than a week after McAdoo made one of the biggest mistakes of his short tenure, mishandling the decision to bench Manning. Mara was forced to address the matter the following day and said he wished the decision had been handled better.

McAdoo had a 13-16 record, and his firing is the first midseason head coaching move by the Giants since Bill Arnsparger was replaced seven games into the 1976 season by John McVay. The 2-10 mark is the Giants' worst since they were 2-10 in 1976, and their worst since the advent of the 16-game schedule in 1978.

With the losses, word started to emerge that McAdoo was losing the team. His one-game suspensions of popular cornerbacks Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie and Janoris Jenkins heightened the problem.

Mara and Tisch came to McAdoo's defense after an embarrassing loss to the then-winless 49ers on Nov. 12, saying his job was safe until the end of the season.

"To be honest with you, it became more and more apparent that we were going to have to do something at the end of the season, so we talked after the game and again this morning about why prolong it any longer?" Mara said Monday. "Why not just get it done now?"

The Giants hired McAdoo away from Green Bay in 2014 to serve as Tom Coughlin's offensive coordinator. He was elevated to head coach on Jan. 14, 2016, less than two weeks after Coughlin was forced out after missing the playoffs for the fourth straight season.

McAdoo's first season was exceptional. His second was a fiasco.

"Our team is not good enough," Mara said.

For more AP NFL coverage: <http://pro32.ap.org> and http://twitter.com/AP_NFL

AP word cloud reveals the patterns in N. Korean propaganda

By ERIC TALMADGE and PENNY YI WANG, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Kim. Nuclear. War.

The message embedded in North Korea's propaganda is summed up best in those three words. That's what the world hears — and what's revealed in this word cloud, a visual display of terms used by the Korean Central News Agency's English-language service.

The Associated Press condensed 1,542 stories filed between July 1 and Oct. 11 by the official North Korean news agency into a list of the 183 most frequent words. The resulting word cloud reveals some of the key patterns Pyongyang employs in its rhetorical wars with Washington.

Just as important, it reflects how the government wants to be seen by the outside world.

'KIM' AND 'NUCLEAR'

The first takeaway (no surprise) is that North Korean propagandists spend nearly all of their time hailing be-all-end-all leader Kim Jong Un.

The appearance of his surname in KCNA reports 2,793 times, way more than "nuclear" at 1,671, is the predictable result of the North's inescapable cult of personality.

The reverence goes deeper. While it doesn't show in the word cloud, when the North Korean media

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mentions the leader's name, or the names of his father and grandfather, it uses a special font reserved especially for that purpose. Even the dates on the pages of the ruling party newspaper come from a calendar that counts the years in terms of the birth of Kim's grandfather, Kim Il Sung. This year in North Korea isn't 2017; it's "Juche 106."

In contrast, the frequency of "nuclear" is telling because of the relatively narrow range of contexts in which it is used.

The primary mission of the North Korean media is to chronicle Kim Jong Un's frequent "on-the-spot-guidance" trips, the heaps of laurels he receives from foreign dignitaries, the vows of devotion from his countrymen. "War," the third-most common word in the AP cloud, is also used not just when talking of a looming conflict with the United States but in connection with the historical one — the 1950-53 Korean War, which North Korean propaganda uses as the prime example of American imperialism and barbarism.

"Nuclear," however, is almost always used in just two ways.

It's either cited in defense of the North's development of nuclear weapons as a just act of self-defense, or in threats that Pyongyang is willing and ready to use them to counter the "nuclear" blackmail of the United States. That it shows up so much attests to just how obsessive the North's rhetorical defenses of its nuclear program really are.

LIKE A SNAPSHOT

A caveat is probably in order at this point.

When it comes to North Korean propaganda, word clouds produce a more impressionistic than scientific picture. The best way to look at this one is like a Polaroid snapshot. It's a little blurry around the edges and a higher resolution would certainly be helpful. But to anyone who pays close attention to politics in the North, the words do fall pretty much where expected.

"Party" and "military," for example, are among the top-tier nouns — they're rendered larger than other words as a result — along with honorifics frequently used in connection to Kim and his forefathers. "Sanctions" — a major target of Pyongyang's ire — hovers in the top 10 as well. Stories about bouquets offered at monuments to the leaders are a staple on KCNA, explaining the fairly strong showing of "floral," and allies of the U.S. are customarily written off as "puppets," another robust performer.

Of course, this word cloud does not show every single word that KCNA used. Using a common practice called a "stoplist," we excluded words such as "the," "an" and "whatever" for a basic reason: They were generic words that added no real meaning to the graphical representation. Other words jettisoned included basic numbers ("three," "seven") and procedural terms whose appearance would have offered little overall insight ("government," "newspaper").

For this word cloud, countries and cities were also excluded (though it's worth noting the U.S. was the second-most mentioned after North Korea itself).

FRESH FROM THE NEWS

And then there are the more recent, newsy additions.

ICBM — short for intercontinental ballistic missile — made 475 appearances in the more than 1,500 KCNA English-language stories between July and October that were analyzed, a period that saw the North launching missiles at a record pace. Hwasong, the name North Korea attaches to most of its long-range missiles, appeared 271 times.

President Donald Trump, despite being the single-biggest villain in the North's eyes, figures in the mix a bit less than one might expect.

At 388 mentions, he falls far short of "imperialists" (454), the more generic KCNA term for Americans. "Lunatic" and "dotard," which are emerging as KCNA's favored adjectives for Trump, are still being broken in and haven't established themselves enough to make the top 100 list. Trump's locking of horns with Kim Jong Un didn't really get going until late August, which also might account for the fewer appearances.

And what of "justice," "friendship," "dignity?" When it comes to word deployment, unfortunately — but

perhaps not unexpectedly — they remain relegated to the blurry fringe.

Associated Press designer Penny Yi Wang in Bangkok produced the word cloud for this story using Voyant Tools. Eric Talmadge, the writer, has been the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief since 2013. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram at @erictalmadge

Supreme Court allows full enforcement of Trump travel ban

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Trump administration to fully enforce a ban on travel to the United States by residents of six mostly Muslim countries.

This is not a final ruling on the travel ban: Challenges to the policy are winding through the federal courts, and the justices themselves ultimately are expected to rule on its legality.

But the action indicates that the high court might eventually approve the latest version of the ban, announced by President Donald Trump in September. Lower courts have continued to find problems with the policy.

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said the White House is "not surprised by today's Supreme Court decision permitting immediate enforcement of the President's proclamation limiting travel from countries presenting heightened risks of terrorism."

Opponents of this and previous versions of the ban say they show a bias against Muslims. They say that was reinforced most recently by Trump's retweets of anti-Muslim videos.

"President Trump's anti-Muslim prejudice is no secret. He has repeatedly confirmed it, including just last week on Twitter. It's unfortunate that the full ban can move forward for now, but this order does not address the merits of our claims," said Omar Jadwat, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Immigrants' Rights Project. The ACLU is representing some opponents of the ban.

Just two justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor, noted their disagreement with court orders allowing the latest policy to take full effect.

The new policy is not expected to cause the chaos that ensued at airports when Trump rolled out his first ban without warning in January.

The ban applies to travelers from Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Lower courts had said people from those nations with a claim of a "bona fide" relationship with someone in the United States could not be kept out of the country. Grandparents, cousins and other relatives were among those courts said could not be excluded.

The courts were borrowing language the Supreme Court itself came up with last summer to allow partial enforcement of an earlier version of the ban.

Now, those relationships will no longer provide a blanket exemption from the ban, although visa officials can make exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

The justices offered no explanation for their order, but the administration had said that blocking the full ban was causing "irreparable harm" because the policy is based on legitimate national security and foreign policy concerns.

In lawsuits filed in Hawaii and Maryland, federal courts said the updated travel ban violated federal immigration law. The travel policy also applies to travelers from North Korea and to some Venezuelan government officials and their families, but the lawsuits did not challenge those restrictions. Also unaffected are refugees. A temporary ban on refugees expired in October.

All the rulings so far have been on a preliminary basis. The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, will be holding arguments on the legality of the ban this week.

David Levine, a University of California Hastings law school professor, said that by allowing the ban to take effect just days before the appeals court arguments, the justices were signaling their view.

"I think it's tipping the hand of the Supreme Court," Levine said. "It suggests that from their understand-

ing, the government is more likely to prevail on the merits than we might have thought.”

Both appeals courts are dealing with the issue on an accelerated basis, and the Supreme Court noted it expects those courts to reach decisions “with appropriate dispatch.”

Quick resolution by appellate courts would allow the Supreme Court to hear and decide the issue this term, by the end of June.

Associated Press writer Eugene Johnson in Seattle contributed to this report.

Future of Irish border remains an obstacle in Brexit talks

By RAF CASERT and JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union and Britain ended a flurry of top-level diplomacy on Monday without a deal on the terms of their divorce, as agreement on how to maintain an open Irish border after Brexit slipped out of the negotiators’ grasp.

But the two sides said they were within striking distance of consensus, setting up a hectic negotiating rush ahead of an EU summit next week. Member countries must decide whether to broaden the talks to the topic of future relations.

British Prime Minister Theresa May went to Brussels for a long negotiating lunch with EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. After a day that see-sawed between hope and disappointment, the leaders failed to make what the EU considers “sufficient progress” on three issues: Britain’s exit bill, the rights of citizens affected by Brexit and the status of the currently invisible Irish border.

The border issue remained the main sticking point.

“We had an agreement this morning,” Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said, expressing disappointment at the last-minute glitch.

EU leaders want a deal on the breakup terms in time for them to agree at the Dec. 14-15 summit whether to move the negotiations on to the next stage of talks, including trade. The lack of progress so far has raised concerns that Britain may not have a deal by the time it officially leaves on March 29, 2019.

“Despite our best efforts and the significant process we and our teams have made over the past days on the remaining withdrawal issues, it was not possible to reach an agreement,” EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said.

“This is not a failure,” Juncker added after a long negotiating lunch with British Prime Minister Theresa May.

May said that “on a couple of issues some differences do remain which require further negotiation and consultation.” But she said talks would reconvene later this week “and I am also confident we will conclude this positively.”

The EU and the U.K. are nearing agreement on some divorce terms, including the size of the bill that Britain must pay as it leaves and the rights of citizens affected by Brexit. But the border issue has proved more intractable.

After Britain leaves the bloc, the currently invisible 310-mile (500-kilometer) frontier will be the U.K.’s only land border with an EU country.

Britain says it wants to maintain a “frictionless” flow of people and goods with no border posts. But Ireland and the other EU nations are demanding to know how that will work if Britain is outside the EU’s borderless single market and its tariff-free customs union, a looser trading bloc that includes non-EU states like Turkey.

Negotiators were discussing an agreement that would commit Britain to maintaining “regulatory alignment” between Northern Ireland and Ireland after Brexit. Both sides would promise to maintain compatible trading rules, keeping the border transparent for trade.

Irish and EU officials indicated that agreement was close. But then Northern Ireland’s Democratic Unionist Party, which props up May’s minority government, announced it wouldn’t support any deal that made

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special rules for Northern Ireland. The pro-British Unionist party opposes any special status that could take Northern Ireland further from Britain and closer to the Republic of Ireland.

The DUP has only 10 seats out of 650 in Britain's House of Commons, but without their support May's government would fall.

"We will not accept any form of regulatory divergence which separates Northern Ireland economically or politically from the rest of the U.K.," DUP leader Arlene Foster said. "The economic and constitutional integrity of the U.K. must not be compromised in any way."

Varadkar said he was "surprised and disappointed that the British government now appears not to be in a position to conclude what was agreed earlier today."

"I still hope this matter can be concluded in the coming days," he said.

Chief European Parliament Brexit official Guy Verhofstadt, who had put the odds of agreement Monday at "50/50," warned that unless all issues are solved "there will be no green light in October 2018."

A decision on any new deals with Britain would have to be reached by the fall of next year to give individual member states enough time to approve all the measures in their parliaments before the final date on March 2019.

European Council President Donald Tusk cautioned that time was running short.

"It is now getting very tight but agreement at December (summit) is still possible," he tweeted.

Jill Lawless reported from London.

Mattis seeks more cooperation with Pakistan on terror fight

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis pressed top Pakistani leaders Monday to "redouble" efforts to go after insurgents operating in safe havens, the Pentagon said, underscoring a long frustration with Islamabad over Taliban-linked militants that freely cross the border to conduct attacks against the U.S. and allies in Afghanistan.

Both sides released comments saying that the U.S. and Pakistan want to continue to work together and that Islamabad plays a key role in the struggle for peace in Afghanistan.

In brief comments before their meeting, Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said his country is committed to the war on terror and shares the same common objectives as the U.S.

"Engagement is there," he said, adding that they "need to move forward with (the) issues at hand."

Mattis did not speak while reporters were present. A Pentagon statement said that during the meetings Mattis discussed Pakistan's role in the peace process and "reiterated that Pakistan must redouble its efforts to confront militants and terrorists operating within the country."

A senior U.S. official said the meetings were "straightforward," and that Mattis was very specific about what Pakistan needs to do to show it is taking action against the militants. Asked if Mattis set any timelines, the official said the urgency of the matter was communicated.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private meetings, said Mattis also made it clear that Pakistan must do its part to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table with Afghanistan.

A statement from Abbasi's office said the prime minister talked about recent counterterrorism operations and said Pakistan "would continue to conduct intelligence based operations all over the country." And it said Abbasi appreciates "the U.S. resolve not to allow the use of Afghan soil against Pakistan."

Earlier, Mattis told reporters traveling with him that he wants to work with Pakistan to address the problems, adding that the U.S. is committed to a pragmatic relationship that expands cooperation while also "reinforcing President Trump's call for action against terrorist safe havens."

"We have heard from Pakistan leaders that they do not support terrorism. So I expect to see that sort of action reflected in their policies," Mattis said before his trip to Islamabad.

Mattis met with Abbasi and army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, as well as a number of senior Pakistani leaders and military officials and U.S. Ambassador David Hale. It was Mattis' first trip to Pakistan as

secretary.

Bajwa, in a statement, said Mattis expressed concern about militants in Pakistan trying to "further their terrorist agenda" in Afghanistan, and said he is "prepared to look into the possibility of miscreants exploiting Pakistan's hospitality."

Mattis' statement reflects persistent U.S. assertions that Islamabad is still not doing enough to battle the Taliban and allied Haqqani network insurgents within its borders.

Since the start of the war in Afghanistan, militants in Pakistan have crossed the mountainous and ill-defined border to wage attacks, then return to safe havens in Pakistan, where they have had a long-standing relationship with the ISI, Islamabad's intelligence agency.

In a blunt assessment early last week, Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said there have been no changes in Pakistan's support for militant networks.

He said Pakistani leaders went to Kabul and met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

"They identified certain steps that they were going to take. We've not yet seen those steps play out," Nicholson told reporters in a recent briefing.

The U.S., he said, has been very direct about what it expects Pakistan to do in the fight against the Taliban.

"We're hoping to see those changes," he said.

Following Mattis' visit, Pakistan's prime minister's office released a statement saying there are no safe heavens in Pakistan and that the nation was committed to eradicating terrorism once and for all.

In August, the United States said it would hold up \$255 million in military assistance for Pakistan until it cracks down on extremists threatening Afghanistan.

Imtiaz Gul, an Islamabad security analyst, said U.S. officials always come to Islamabad with their "own wish list."

"I am sure the U.S. defense secretary is also carrying a wish list with him but I don't think Pakistan will accept any dictation as it has already demonstrated its seriousness in fighting terrorism, and Washington in recent weeks has appreciated and acknowledged Pakistan's sacrifices in war on terror," he said.

Gul said relations between Pakistan and the U.S. have gone from bad to worse since the Trump administration announced Afghan strategy in which Pakistan was degraded and India was elevated.

President Donald Trump's tough words about Pakistan as he unveiled the updated U.S. strategy for the war in Afghanistan, infuriated Islamabad and triggered anti-U.S. protests there that Pakistani police had to use tear gas to disperse

Mattis' trip to Pakistan comes at the end of a short trip to the region, including stops in Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait.

Associated Press writer Ahmed Munir contributed to this story from Islamabad

Malta announces 10 arrests in journalist's car bomb killing

By **STEPHEN CALLEJA**, Associated Press

VALLETTA, Malta (AP) — Ten suspects were arrested Monday for the car bomb slaying of a prominent Maltese journalist who covered corruption, the prime minister and other authorities said.

The arrests came seven weeks to the day after the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia. They were the first known break in a crime that shocked Malta and motivated European Union officials to look into the EU island nation's laws and government.

Caruana Galizia, 53, was killed Oct. 16 when a bomb destroyed her car as she was driving near her home. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, who was among the subjects of the late reporter's investigations, declined to say who the suspects were or why they were arrested.

Eight Maltese citizens were arrested because of "reasonable suspicion" for their involvement in Caruana Galizia's killing, Muscat told reporters at a news conference.

A little while later, Muscat tweeted that two others had been arrested. They also are Maltese, Home

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Minister Michael Farrugia said. Authorities did not release the names of any of the 10 suspects.

Explaining the reason for staying tight-lipped, Muscat cited concerns that divulging information could compromise the prosecutions. Farrugia said he wouldn't disclose anything because "I have been already threatened by legal action by the Caruana Galizia family."

The journalist's family alleged last month that Farrugia had put the investigation at risk by sharing confidential information with lawmakers. The minister brushed off the allegation, but the family said it was prepared to take legal action to prevent the government from sabotaging the case.

Caruana Galizia's family reacted angrily to how the arrests were announced on Monday, saying police should have informed them before the prime minister. They reiterated their skepticism that justice would be carried out, despite Muscat's public insistence that all would be done to find and punish the killers.

Muscat "appears to view the investigation into Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination as a marketing exercise for his government and not as a contract killing, which has left surviving family members wondering what happened and how justice can be truly served," the family said in a statement.

They said they had already written to the police commission about "the constant stream of leaks which prejudice the integrity of the investigation," but never received a response.

The family contended the police had leaked information about the identities of seven suspects.

"It is important to ask whether they are not also leaking information to other suspects, some of whom could be in or close to government," the statement continued.

"The blurring of boundaries with the executive — and this in a case which has political implications — is disturbing," the family statement said. "When the handling of an investigation is not sound, it is difficult to have faith in its outcome."

The arrests coordinated among the Police Corps, the Armed Forces of Malta and the Security Services. The investigation appeared to be continuing Monday as police and military members cordoned off an area in Marsa, a small port town close to Valletta, the capital of Malta. Marsa is where most of the arrests were made.

Video released later by Maltese police showed officers and members of the security service and armed forces making some of the arrests. Some officers arrived in Marsa by boat and apprehended suspects in waterfront warehouses.

Maltese media, citing unidentified police sources, said two brothers were among the suspects. One of them was acquitted of a 2015 armed robbery charge for lack of sufficient evidence. The other has been charged with possession of unlicensed weapons and tools used to pick locks.

Investigators have 48 hours to question the suspects to decide whether to seek charges, in accordance with Maltese law.

A court hearing was set for Tuesday, when the police can officially file charges. The suspects then can either plead innocent or guilty. The magistrate will decide whether to set bail or remand them in custody.

Europol, the European Union's police agency, has sent a team of organized crime experts to help Maltese police investigate the assassination, joining the FBI and Dutch forensic experts.

Muscat told reporters Monday that when the evidence is compiled, during court proceedings "all the relevant information will be made public," including input from the FBI and European investigators, including from Finland's National Bureau of Investigation, as well as Maltese investigators.

Just before her death, Caruana Galizia, 53, had posted on her closely followed blog, Running Commentary, that there were "crooks everywhere" in Malta.

Malta has a reputation as a tax haven in the European Union and has attracted companies and money from outside Europe as well.

Last week, a visiting delegation of European Parliament lawmakers left the island expressing concerns over the rule of law in the country and issued a warning that the "perception of impunity in Malta cannot continue."

Low tax rates and a popular government program that allows wealthy foreigners to buy Maltese citizenship have made the country an attractive place for investment, financial and other companies. Authorities,

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including anti-Mafia investigators in nearby Ita Astronauts make, fling, float, eat pizzas on space station
By MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The first-ever pizza party in space is getting sky-high reviews. Astronauts at the International Space Station posted pictures and a video over the weekend of their small, made-from-scratch pizza pies. The fixings flew up last month on a commercial supply ship, and the crew wasted little time pulling out the flatbread, tomato sauce, cheese, pepperoni, olives, olive oil, anchovy paste and pesto.

After making their own individual-size pizzas, the six astronauts tossed and twirled them like floating Frisbees, before heating and devouring them.

Commander Randy Bresnik called the pizzas “flying saucers of the edible kind.” The crew, he said in a tweet, “had a blast channeling our inner chef by building tasty pizzas for movie night.”

“The IPDS (Intergalactic Pizza Devouring Squad) says 12 thumbs up!” Bresnik added.

NASA’s space station manager, Kirk Shireman, took pity on Italian astronaut Paolo Nespoli’s pizza craving and, in mid-November, shipped up all the ingredients on an Orbital ATK capsule. Nespoli, in orbit since July, declared the pizza “unexpectedly delicious.”

Nespoli has just over a week before returning to true Italian cuisine. He will land in Kazakhstan on Dec. 14, along with Bresnik and a Russian.

Online:

NASA: https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/index.html

Stealth jets, other aircraft fly in US, South Korean drills

By YOUKYUNG LEE, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Hundreds of aircraft including two dozen stealth jets began training Monday as the United States and South Korea launched a massive combined air force exercise. The war games come a week after North Korea test-fired its most powerful missile ever, an ICBM that may be able to target the eastern seaboard of the United States.

The five-day drill, which is called Vigilant Ace, is meant to improve the allies’ wartime capabilities and preparedness, South Korea’s defense ministry said.

The U.S. Seventh Air Force sent major strategic military assets, including an unusually large number of the latest generations of stealth fighter jets, for the annual training in the Korean Peninsula. They include six F-22 and 18 F-35 stealth fighter jets. About 12,000 U.S. military personnel are participating. In total, 230 aircraft will be flying at eight U.S. and South Korean military installations in the South.

An official at the South Korean Defense Ministry, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of office rules, corrected his earlier statement that the exercise was the biggest ever.

Some local media report that B-1B bombers will also join aerial drills, but officials did not confirm their participation.

The training, held each year in late fall, is not in response to any incident or provocation, the Seventh Air Force said in a statement.

North Korea’s state media said the drill pushes the Korean Peninsula “to the brink of nuclear war.” Such language is typical in North Korean propaganda because the country claims U.S.-South Korean drills are preparation for invasion.

Still, always bad tensions are at a particularly dangerous point as North Korea edges toward its goal of a viable arsenal of nuclear-tipped long-range missiles, and as President Donald Trump ramps up his rhetoric toward the North, threatening, for instance, to unleash “fire and fury” against the country.

Pyongyang will “seriously consider” countermeasures against the drill, and the U.S. and South Korea will “pay dearly for their provocations,” the Korean Central News Agency said on Sunday before the start of the exercises.

While many South Koreans typically ignore North Korea’s rhetoric, some senior American officials have

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expressed worry following the ICBM test, North Korea's third.

On Sunday, Lindsey Graham, a Republican U.S. senator from the state of South Carolina, said he believes that it's time for U.S. military families in South Korea to leave the country because conflict with North Korea is getting close. The U.S. government has not announced a formal decision to evacuate U.S. citizens from South Korea, and there were no such signs in the diplomatic community in Seoul. An evacuation of dependents by Seoul's closest ally and major military defender could prompt a panicked reaction by other countries, and among South Koreans.

In addition to American diplomats and other embassy workers, about 28,500 U.S. troops operate in South Korea, and many come to their posts with their families, who often live on huge, well-guarded military bases.

Also on Sunday, the White House national security adviser said that Trump will take care of North Korean threats by "doing more ourselves."

"The priorities that the president's given us to move as quickly as we can to resolve this crisis with North Korea," General H.R. McMaster told Fox News in an interview.

"If necessary, the president and the United States will have to take care of it, because he has said he's not going to allow this murderous, rogue regime to threaten the United States."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned Monday that war on the Korean Peninsula "would be catastrophic and it would have global consequences."

He said the 29-country military alliance "is strong, and united, and NATO is able to respond to any attack, including ballistic and nuclear attacks."

Stoltenberg added that NATO "will continue to put maximum pressure on North Korea. We will continue to deliver credible deterrence and ... work with our partners in the region."

This story was corrected to reflect South Korea's defense ministry retracting statement that this was the largest-ever joint air force exercise.

Beyond Rx? CVS Health-Aetna deal may mean more services

By TOM MURPHY, AP Health Writer

CVS Health wants to do much more than fill your prescription or jab your arm with an annual flu shot.

The second-largest U.S. drugstore chain is buying Aetna, the third-largest health insurer, in order to push much deeper into customer care. The evolution won't happen overnight, but in time, shoppers may find more clinics in CVS stores and more services they can receive through the network of nearly 10,000 locations that the company has built.

"They'll be pretty much a soup-to-nuts health company ... except for the hospital part of it," said Craig Johnson, president of Customer Growth Partners, a retail consulting and research firm.

Patients also may find the CVS-Aetna combination much more involved in managing their care, especially for those with expensive chronic conditions like diabetes. The bulked-up company also may gain more negotiating leverage over prescription drug prices, but it's far too early to say how much or whether that benefit will trickle down to customers.

The \$69 billion deal announced Sunday evening will push the drugstore chain more forcefully in a direction it has been heading for years, according to Wall Street analysts. The company, which stopped selling tobacco products in 2014 to further burnish its image as a care provider, already runs about 1,100 clinics and has been steadily expanding the health care it offers.

The clinics started off as a place to treat basic health care needs like sinus infections or strep throat. Gradually, CVS added services like blood draws or monitoring of chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Expect that trend to continue as the drugstore switches more from selling products in its stores to services that can't be bought online, where retailers face formidable competition from the likes of Amazon.

"I think over time you're going to see less of that front-store retail and more health care services in their stores," said Jeff Jonas, a portfolio manager for Gabelli Funds who follows drugstores.

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The mammoth acquisition pairs a company that runs more than 9,700 drugstores with an insurer covering around 22 million people. CVS Health Corp. is also one of the nation's biggest pharmacy benefit managers, processing more than a billion prescriptions a year for clients like large employers and insurers including Aetna Inc.

Analysts say the combined company could add more clinics and expand in-store services to include eye care or maybe centers for hearing aids. That could gradually turn CVS into a one-stop-shop for health care, a place where patients can get a hearing aid checked, then see a nurse practitioner and pick up prescriptions.

"If you think about it, we actually don't have anything like that," said Jefferies analyst Brian Tanquilut said.

Clinics aren't especially profitable, but they are important because they draw people into the stores and help build deeper customer relationships, analysts say.

The clinics have become an attractive option for customers in need of basic health care because they are usually open longer than the family doctor's office. A clinic visit also can be cheaper than a \$100 doctor visit for someone who doesn't have insurance, but they have drawbacks. Family doctors say they know their patients better and can check on their overall health during a visit rather than dealing with just the one issue that brought that person in.

Some CVS shoppers also are skeptical about getting their health checked in a retail store.

Jessy Tatenco, 23, buys household items and over-the-counter medications for his three children at CVS. But he said would be reluctant to get medical services there. He feels more comfortable in a doctor's office or traditional clinic setting.

"I wouldn't trust them with my health care. They sell toys," he said after leaving a CVS store Sunday in downtown San Diego.

CVS isn't the only health care giant delving into clinical care. The deal will help it compete with others like UnitedHealth Group Inc. The nation's largest health insurer also runs clinics and doctor's offices. Like CVS, it also has one of the nation's largest pharmacy benefit management businesses.

CVS and Aetna also want to go beyond just clinic visits to help patients and customers.

Aetna Chairman and CEO Mark Bertolini has talked frequently about how most of a person's life expectancy is determined by genetics and location and not by clinical care, which is where health care spending is focused.

"Our conventional operating model is not effective," Bertolini said earlier this year. "People are angry at this model. It doesn't work effectively in controlling costs."

He has talked about the need to get into patients' homes to gauge what they need, like whether they have enough food or may need transportation.

CVS can help through its home infusion business, which sends nurses to patients' homes to deliver complex drugs for people with hemophilia among other conditions. The clinic and drugstore locations could also give patients with chronic conditions like diabetes more convenient options to get their blood monitored or counseling on their condition.

Over time, health care experts say that can help keep these conditions from growing worse and stave off expensive hospital stays.

CVS will pay about \$207 in cash and stock for each share of Aetna. The boards of both companies have approved the deal, and the companies expect the deal to close in the second half of next year.

But ant-trust regulators still need to evaluate it.

The Justice Department said last month that it is suing AT&T to stop its \$85 billion purchase of Time Warner. Regulators also sued to stop the Aetna's approximately \$34 billion purchase of rival Humana Inc. — a deal that fell apart earlier this year.

Hartford, Connecticut-based Aetna and Woonsocket, Rhode Island-based CVS both manage Medicare prescription drug coverage. Some of that business may have to be sold to address antitrust concerns. But otherwise, Leerink analyst David Larsen thinks a CVS-Aetna combination has decent odds of getting past regulators, in part because the businesses have little overlap.

AP Writers Elliot Spagat in San Diego and David Koenig in Dallas contributed to this report.

UN voices alarm about spread of HIV in Egypt

By NARIMAN EL-MOFTY, Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The U.N. is voicing alarm over the spread of HIV in Egypt, where the number of new cases is growing by up to 40 percent a year, and where efforts to combat the epidemic are hampered by social stigma and a lack of funding to address the crisis.

The virus that causes AIDS, U.N. officials say, is infecting more young and adolescent people than any other age group.

Egypt, home to some 95 million people, ranks behind only Iran, Sudan and Somalia in the Middle East for the rate at which the epidemic is spreading, according to U.N. figures. In Egypt, patients are often jailed on trumped up charges and ostracized by society. The disease is associated with homosexuality, which is not explicitly illegal but is widely seen as a transgression against religion and nature in the conservative, Muslim-majority country.

"There is a 25-30 percent increase in incidents every year... It's alarming to us because the growth of the epidemic and the discontinuation of interest from donors in funding," Ahmed Khamis, of the U.N. AIDS agency, told The Associated Press.

Estimates of the number of people living with HIV in Egypt vary. UNAIDS says there are over 11,000 cases, while the country's Health Ministry estimates the figure to be around 7,000.

The rise in the number of new infections, however, is not in dispute.

"Most recently, we've been seeing people of a much younger age group infected with the virus. There is a higher risk now for adolescents and youths than in the past," said Khamis.

"We don't have exact numbers, but this is what the evidence we are seeing on the ground is suggesting," he added, explaining that the lack of funds is hampering Egypt's capacity to produce precise figures.

Patients who require surgical intervention are often unable to access basic health care at hospitals because of the associated stigma, UNAIDS officials said.

The virus can be spread through sexual contact, as well as contaminated needles or syringes, or blood transfusions. It can also be passed from infected women to their babies at birth or through breast-feeding. But in Egypt, the virus is widely associated with homosexuality, which is seen by many Egyptians as a lifestyle choice.

In a recent conference on AIDS, Islamic scholar and cleric Ali al-Jifri spoke about the stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV and AIDS patients. "A person diagnosed with HIV is a human. We should never question their diagnosis," he told the conference.

A Christian priest, Bolous Soror, told the conference that Egyptians should accept others, regardless of their HIV status.

Shunned by society, it is not uncommon for patients to contemplate suicide.

Ahmed, 40, is one of them. He has been trying to gain asylum status in the U.S. because, he says, he has lost hope in a future in Egypt.

"I do not want to be living a life always feeling strapped down and imprisoned," he told his therapist during a session attended by an AP reporter. Fearing further stigma, he asked that he be identified only by his first name.

In an anonymous testimony given to UNAIDS and seen by the AP, one woman said she was infected by her late husband and later found it hard to live in a society that rejects people carrying the virus. She was beaten and denied by her family an inheritance she and her children were legally entitled to when her husband died. When she attempted to start a new life with her children in a different neighborhood, her in-laws made sure her new neighbors learned about her condition.

ly, worry that Malta is eyed by criminals on the lookout for money-laundering schemes.

Caruana Galizia focused her reporting for years on investigating political corruption and scandals, and

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reported on Maltese mobsters and drug trafficking. She also wrote about Maltese links to the so-called Panama Papers leaks about offshore financial havens.

Many top officials had sued her over her reporting. Caruana Galizia made plain she didn't trust the island's police or judiciary to adequately investigate many of the wrongdoings she alleged.

Muscat said Monday of the slaying: "As I stated as soon as I learned about this barbaric act, we will leave no stone unturned to get this case solved."

Asian shares steady after tech stocks slump on Wall Street

By ELAINE KURTENBACH, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Shares were steady in Asia on Tuesday after a lackluster session on Wall Street where technology stocks tumbled. Investors are keeping an eye on U.S. tax legislation and Brexit negotiations.

KEEPING SCORE: Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index slipped 0.3 percent to 22,635.22 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index dropped 0.3 percent to 29,051.63. The Kospi in South Korea gained 0.2 percent to 2,506.55 while the Shanghai Composite index added 0.1 percent to 3,311.59. Australia's S&P ASX 200 fell 0.2 percent to 5,971.30. Shares in Southeast Asia were mostly higher. Taiwan declined.

WALL STREET: Telecom stocks, banks and other sectors that stand to benefit the most from Washington's drive to cut corporate tax rates jumped, but technology stocks slumped, giving up a chunk of the gains that made them the best-performing part of the market by far this year. Losers and gainers were nearly evenly split. The S&P 500 dipped 0.1 percent to 2,639.44, while the Dow Jones industrial average rose 0.2 percent to 24,290.05. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite fell 1.1 percent, to 6,775.37.

U.S. TAXES: Indexes initially jumped on expectations that lower tax rates will boost corporate profits. But technology companies that already pay the lowest effective tax rates of the 11 sectors in the S&P 500 skidded. Uncertainty over the tax overhaul persists since the Senate and House of Representatives must iron out differences in their respective proposals, with a Friday deadline to avert a government shutdown looming.

BREXIT TALKS: The European Union and Britain ended a flurry of top-level diplomacy on Monday without a deal on the terms of their divorce, as agreement on how to maintain an open Irish border after Brexit slipped out of the negotiators' grasp. But the two sides said they were within striking distance of consensus, setting up a hectic negotiating rush ahead of an EU summit next week.

ANALYST VIEWPOINT: "The two overarching macro themes the market honed in on overnight have been the response from European and U.S. traders to the Senate passing its tax plan and that no deal has yet been formally reached in the Brexit negotiations," Chris Weston of IG said in a commentary. "What we have seen though is a fairly upbeat session, but perhaps not as strong as we had anticipated."

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 112.51 Japanese yen from 112.41 yen late Monday. The euro climbed to \$1.1877 from \$1.1866, and the British pound fell \$1.3472 from \$1.3479.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude gained 12 cents to \$57.59 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It slumped 89 cents to settle at \$57.47 per barrel on Monday. Brent crude, the international standard, picked up 8 cents to \$62.53 per barrel. It fell \$1.28 to \$62.45 a barrel in London.

AP Business Writer Stan Choe in New York contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 5, the 339th day of 2017. There are 26 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 5, 1952, the Great Smog of London descended on the British capital; the unusually thick fog, which contained toxic pollutants, lasted five days and was blamed for causing thousands of deaths.

On this date:

In 1782, the eighth president of the United States, Martin Van Buren, was born in Kinderhook, New York;

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he was the first chief executive to be born after American independence.

In 1791, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna, Austria, at age 35.

In 1792, George Washington was re-elected president; John Adams was re-elected vice president.

In 1831, former President John Quincy Adams took his seat as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1916, British Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith resigned (he was succeeded by David Lloyd George).

In 1933, national Prohibition came to an end as Utah became the 36th state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the 18th Amendment.

In 1945, five U.S. Navy torpedo bombers mysteriously disappeared after taking off from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on a training mission with the loss of all 14 crew members; "The Lost Squadron" contributed to the legend of the Bermuda Triangle.

In 1967, pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock and poet Allen Ginsberg were among more than 260 people arrested during an anti-Vietnam War protest outside an armed forces induction center in lower Manhattan.

In 1977, Egypt broke diplomatic relations with Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq and South Yemen in the wake of criticism that followed President Anwar Sadat's peace overtures to Israel.

In 1988, a federal grand jury in North Carolina indicted PTL founder Jim Bakker and former aide Richard Dortch on fraud and conspiracy charges. (Bakker was convicted on all counts; Dortch pleaded guilty to four counts and cooperated with prosecutors in exchange for a lighter sentence. Bakker was initially sentenced to 45 years in prison; the term was eventually reduced to eight years, and he served a total of about five.)

In 1994, Republicans chose Newt Gingrich to be the first GOP speaker of the House in four decades.

In 2013, Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who became South Africa's first black president, died at age 95.

Ten years ago: A 19-year-old gunman went on a shooting rampage at the Westroads Mall in Omaha, Nebraska, killing six store employees and two customers before taking his own life. President George W. Bush, in Omaha for a fundraiser, called on Iran to "come clean" about the scope of its nuclear activities or else face diplomatic isolation (Bush left the city about an hour before the mall shooting).

Five years ago: Port clerks ended an eight-day strike at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach after winning guarantees against the outsourcing of jobs. Jazz composer and pianist Dave Brubeck died in Norwalk, Connecticut, a day before he would have turned 92. Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer died in Rio de Janeiro at age 104.

One year ago: President-elect Donald Trump chose retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson to be secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. A judge in Marietta, Georgia, sentenced Justin Ross Harris to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole after a jury found that he intentionally left his 22-month-old son, Cooper, in a hot SUV to die. A South Carolina judge declared a mistrial after a jury deadlocked in the murder trial of a white former police officer charged in the shooting death of an unarmed black motorist. Cindy Stowell, 41, of Austin, Texas, who competed on the TV game show "Jeopardy!" while battling terminal cancer, died eight days before her first episode aired. (Stowell, who won six games and \$105,803, had pledged her winnings to cancer research.)

Today's Birthdays: Singer Little Richard is 85. Author Joan Didion is 83. Author Calvin Trillin is 82. Actor Jeroen Krabbe (yeh-ROHN' krah-BAY') is 73. Opera singer Jose Carreras is 71. Pop singer Jim Messina is 70. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL quarterback Jim Plunkett is 70. World Golf Hall of Famer Lanny Wadkins is 68. Actress Morgan Brittany is 66. Actor Brian Backer is 61. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Art Monk is 60. Country singer Ty England is 54. Rock singer-musician John Rzeznik (REZ'-nihk) (The Goo Goo Dolls) is 52. Country singer Gary Allan is 50. Comedian-actress Margaret Cho is 49. Writer-director Morgan J. Freeman is 48. Actress Alex Kapp Horner is 48. Rock musician Regina Zernay (Cowboy Mouth) is 45. Actress Paula Patton is 42. Actress Amy Acker is 41. Actor Nick Stahl is 38. Actor Adan Canto is 36. Rhythm-and-blues singer Keri Hilson is 35. Actor Gabriel Luna is 35. Actor Frankie Muniz is 32. Actor Ross Bagley is 29.

Thought for Today: "All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them." — Walt Disney, American movie producer (born this date in 1901, died 1966).