

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 1 of 39



- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Treeline Tree Service Ad
- 1- Clay Target League signup is Feb. 19
- 2- Weekend Storm Will Create Difficult Driving Conditions in Western and Central South Dakota
- 3- Region 1A GBB Pairings Released
- 4- GHS Marching Band performing at Disney Land in Florida
- 8- Today in Weather History
- 9- Today's Forecast
- 10- Yesterday's Weather
- 10- Today's Weather Info
- 10- National Weather Map
- 11- Daily Devotional
- 12- 2018 Community Events
- 13- News from the Associated Press

**Sperry Stump Removal** Tyler: 605/216-8431

**Over 30 Years of Combined Experience!**

TJ: 605/380-7915 **TreeLine Tree Service**

Saturday: Wrestling Regions at Webster

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

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

**Closed**

## Clay Target League Sign-up is Feb. 19

There will be a parent meeting and sign up for students in grades 6-12 interested in participating in the South Dakota Clay Target League on Monday, February 19 at 7:00 PM in the GHS Gymnasium.

Questions should be direction to Stephan Wright (605-396-7695) or Tom Mahan (605-380-1253).

## Weekend Storm Will Create Difficult Driving Conditions in Western and Central South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – Officials are cautioning travelers that a winter storm making its way into South Dakota on Sunday, Feb. 18, will bring heavy snowfall and high winds with gusts 35 mph or more across the western and central part of the state.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm watch for parts of western and central South Dakota. This strong storm system will impact the region starting Sunday morning into Monday. It will bring heavy snow, strong winds and below zero wind chills creating difficult driving conditions with significant reductions in visibility.

Officials are encouraging motorists to move up travel plans to avoid driving in the affected areas Sunday afternoon and Monday. A map of the affected area and projected snowfall totals can be found here: <http://www.weather.gov/unr/>.

Motorists should visit [www.safetravelusa.com/sd](http://www.safetravelusa.com/sd) or call 511 to check the latest road conditions and travel advisories before heading out. There is also an app available for Android and iOS devices. Sign up for ClearPath511 for closure notifications by text message or email.

Travelers are reminded that SDDOT crews will plow until early evening hours as conditions allow. After that, winter maintenance will be suspended and will resume about 5 a.m. the next morning, weather permitting.

People who must travel in affected areas of South Dakota are advised to slow down and drive with extreme caution.

If you must travel, the departments of Transportation and Public Safety recommend travelers also take the following steps.

- Wear your seatbelt
- Travel during the day
- Drive with your headlights on (not daytime running lights) so you can be seen by other motorists from the front and rear
- Don't use cruise control on icy or snow-covered roads
- Use highly traveled roads and highways
- Keep family and friends informed of your travel schedule and route
- Call 511 or visit [safetravelusa.com](http://safetravelusa.com) for road conditions
- Keep a winter weather survival kit in your car. The kit should include blankets, warm clothing, water, energy bars, a flashlight, a distress flag, a shovel and matches
- Travel with a charged cell phone, but don't rely on it to get you out of a bad situation
- § Change travel plans as weather conditions warrant

If you do get stranded:

- § Stay in your vehicle
- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes an hour to stay warm
- When the engine is running, open a window slightly to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Periodically clearing snow from the exhaust pipe will also help prevent carbon monoxide buildup
- When it's dark outside, turn on the interior light so rescuers can see you
- Put up a distress flag, or spread a large colored cloth on the ground to attract attention from rescuers

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 3 of 39

## Region 1A Girls Basketball Tournament

### #1 Aberdeen Roncalli

Score:

Date:

Time:

Site:

Score:

### #4 Tiospa Zina

Score:

Date:

Time:

Site:

Score:

### #5 Groton Area

Score:

Date:

Time:

Site:

Score:

### #7 Sisseton

Score:

Date:

Time:

Site:

Score:

### #3 Milbank

Score:

Date:

Time:

Site:

Score:

### #6 Webster Area

ROUND OF 16 QUALIFIER

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School	Seed Pts.
Aberdeen Roncalli	44.000
Redfield/Doland	40.400
Milbank	40.300
Tiospa Zina	38.850
Groton Area	38.800
Webster Area	38.800
Sisseton	37.947

ROUND OF 16 QUALIFIER

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 4 of 39

## GHS Marching Band performing at Disney Land in Florida

The Groton Area music department is in Florida performing at various events. Here are some of the pictures seen on Facebook taken by Deb Schuelke and Darrin Erdmann.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 5 of 39



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 6 of 39



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 7 of 39



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 8 of 39

## Today in Weather History

February 17, 1962: Very heavy snow of 20 to 30 inches fell across the southeastern half of South Dakota. One location had 44 inches of snowfall from the storm. Everything was shut-down due to the storm including roads, schools, and businesses. Some snowfall amounts included, 10 inches at Bryant, 11 inches at Miller, 20 inches at Mitchell, 21 inches at Redfield, 23 inches at Huron, and 32 inches at Sioux Falls.

February 17, 1972: In Minnesota, high winds of 30 to 50 mph across southern and central Minnesota reduced visibilities to zero at times from blowing snow. Wind gusts of 90 mph were reported at Worthington and Fairmont. Snow of 2 to 6 inches fell across the state. The blizzard stopped almost all traffic from west-central through the south-central part of the state. Most schools in the area closed. Dozens to hundreds of people were stranded in nearly every town. Many communities stopped all traffic from leaving town. The snow derailed a train at Butterfield. There were many auto accidents. In South Dakota, freezing rain followed by snow accompanied by winds of over 60 mph produced hazardous driving conditions in the area. Traffic was brought to a standstill in many areas resulting in cancellations of school and other activities. Some accidents occurred due to the icy roads. Although the snowfall was light, strong winds caused drifting with visibilities to near zero at times.

February 17, 1991: On February 17th, a major snowstorm dumped massive amounts of snow on the most of the state from the Black Hills, southwest, central, east-central, and the northeast. At the end of the storm, parts of the black hills received up to 2 feet of snow while the rest of affected area had between 8 and 15 inches. The heavy snow caused most of Interstate 90 west of the Missouri River to close, as well as many other highways in the central part of the state. Many cars and trucks skidded off the roads, causing many minor injuries. The only serious injury was a man rolled his car over after losing control near Belvidere.

1926: A deadly avalanche, Utah's worst, demolishes 14 miner's cottages and a three-story boarding house in Bingham Canyon. Thirty-six are killed and 13 injured.

1958: From the 14th through the 17th, one of the greatest snowstorms of the mid 20th century struck the northeastern U.S. The storm produced 30 inches of snow in the interior of New England, including more than 19 inches in 24 hours at the Boston Airport. The same storm produced up to three feet of snow in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, with 14 inches at Washington D.C., and 15.5 inches at Baltimore, Maryland. The storm resulted in 43 deaths and 500 million dollars damage over the Middle Atlantic Coast States.

1973: Snow showers moved across southeast Texas with most locations only reporting snow flurries. However, the Houston Intercontinental Airport measured 1.4 inches of snow.

1899 - While much of the central and eastern U.S. was recovering from the most severe cold wave of modern history, the temperature at San Francisco soared to 80 degrees to establish a record for month of February. (David Ludlum)

1959 - Some of the higher elevations of California were in the midst of a five day storm which produced 189 inches of snow, a single storm record for North America. (13th-19th) (David Ludlum)

1987 - A small but intense low pressure system combined with northerly upslope winds to produce eight inches of snow in five hours at Meeteetsie WY, located southeast of Cody. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms soaked the Central Gulf Coast Region with heavy rain. Totals in southern Louisiana ranged up to 8.50 inches near the town of Ridge, with 6.55 inches at Plaquemine. Thunderstorms in northern Florida drenched Apalachicola with 5.41 inches of rain in 24 hours, and produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Mayo. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



# Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 9 of 39

Sat Feb 17	Sun Feb 18	Mon Feb 19	Tue Feb 20	Wed Feb 21	Thu Feb 22	Fri Feb 23
30°F	34°F	11°F	9°F	12°F	27°F	29°F
14°F	3°F	-2°F	-10°F	1°F	11°F	12°F
W 16 MPH	ESE 19 MPH	N 21 MPH	NNW 12 MPH	SSW 9 MPH	SSW 11 MPH	SW 8 MPH
	Precip 20%	Precip 40%	Precip 30%			Precip 20%

### Couple Rounds of Light Snow this Weekend

Under 1" of Snow this Morning →

Around 1" Tonight into Sunday  
Higher Amounts in North Dakota  
Patchy Freezing Drizzle Possible

↓ ↓

Valid Ending Saturday February 17th, 2018 at 6 PM CST

Valid Ending Sunday February 18th, 2018 at 6 PM CST

**Snow expected Sunday night through Tuesday morning**

**Central South Dakota could see 3-5" of accumulation Sunday night**

**Otherwise, mainly less than 3" of snow possible in each 12 hour period from Sunday night through Tuesday morning**

**\*\*Snow Forecast subject to change\*\***

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

Graphic Created  
2/17/2018 5:09 AM

Published on: 02/17/2018 at 5:15AM

Light snow can be expected this morning across central and south central South Dakota. Under one inch of snow is expected. Additional light snow will be possible tonight through Sunday, mainly along and north of Highway 12. The heaviest snowfall should occur in North Dakota. More widespread accumulating snow is expected Sunday night through Tuesday morning.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 10 of 39

## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 24.6 F at 4:55 PM**

**Low Outside Temp: -7.2 F at 6:19 AM**

**Wind Chill:**

**High Gust: 32.0 Mph at 3:17 PM**

**Precip: 0.00**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 58° in 1930**

**Record Low: -39° in 1903**

**Average High: 29°F**

**Average Low: 8°F**

**Average Precip in Feb: 0.29**

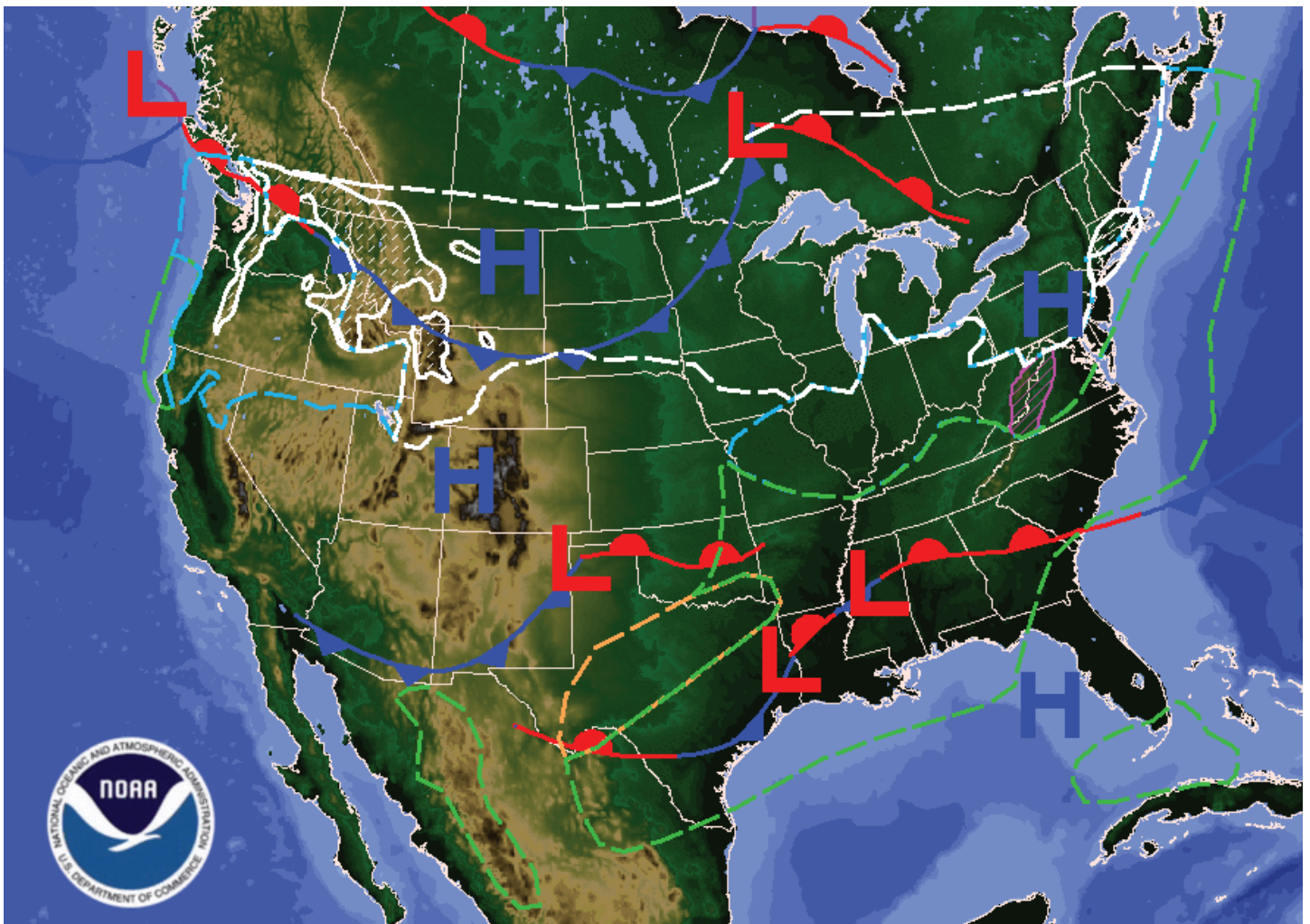
**Precip to date in Feb: 0.00**

**Average Precip to date: 0.76**

**Precip Year to Date: 0.00**

**Sunset Tonight: 6:03 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Feb 17, 2018, issued 5:16 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by Hurley 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)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 11 of 39



## SEMPER FI

"Check on me" was a familiar request that we heard every night as our youngest son, Byron, began walking to his bedroom. Even though we took every precaution to make certain that our home was safe from any threat or danger, there was nothing more comforting than a nightly visit before the lights were turned off. Knowing that someone was near by and readily available if an emergency arose made falling asleep much easier.

The need to know that we are safe and secure is important to each of us. Stripes divide streets and signs give important instructions to drivers. A checklist must be completed before an aircraft can take flight. Warnings about possible problems surround us wherever we go or whatever we do. Sometimes they seem to get in the way of life. But warnings are important to warn us of impending dangers.

Psalm 91 reminds us of the unpredictability, yet the certainty, of dangers that await us. But it does not do so to frighten us, but to give the assurance that we are safe at all times and in all situations because of the faithfulness of our God. Listen as the Psalmist assures of the safety and security we have in God: "You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that strikes at midday...if you make the Most High your dwelling!"

How gracious of our God to assure us that we do not need to ask Him to "check on us" – He does it constantly.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the promise of Your protection that gives us peace, security and hope. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 91:5-6 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 12 of 39

## 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)
- 4/13/2018 Elementary School Carnival, 5 p.m.
- 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 13 of 39

## News from the Associated Press

### Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 53, Northwestern 46  
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 59, Sunshine Bible Academy 46  
Arlington 57, Chester 43  
Bennett County 77, Jones County 72  
Bon Homme 66, Gregory 56  
Bridgewater-Emery 68, Parker 62  
Brookings 56, Pierre 52  
Canton 72, Alcester-Hudson 38  
Castlewood 70, Estelline 36  
Clark/Willow Lake 74, Redfield/Doland 40  
Colman-Egan 47, Canistota 46  
Crow Creek 88, St. Francis Indian 48  
Dell Rapids 65, Lennox 57  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 65, Baltic 60  
Edgemont def. Sioux County, Neb., forfeit  
Ethan 57, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 52  
Flandreau Indian 81, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 62  
Freeman 57, Avon 53  
Groton Area 70, Milbank Area 61  
Harding County 79, Lemmon 36  
Herreid/Selby Area 61, Leola/Frederick 52  
Lake Preston 66, Iroquois 53  
Lyman 67, Kadoka Area 53  
Madison 67, Dakota Valley 59  
Menno 49, Scotland 39  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 58, Parkston 48  
Potter County 68, Highmore-Harrold 61  
Red Cloud 65, Sturgis Brown 58  
Sioux Valley 80, Garretson 61  
Sisseton 63, Hamlin 38  
Tea Area 67, Elk Point-Jefferson 50  
Timber Lake 65, Newell 15  
Tiospa Zina Tribal 73, Webster 62  
Watertown 48, Huron 37  
White River 92, New Underwood 39  
Winner 51, Mobridge-Pollock 42

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 57, Harrisburg 35  
Aberdeen Roncalli 58, Britton-Hecla 13  
Alcester-Hudson 52, Canton 34  
Andes Central/Dakota Christian 41, Sunshine Bible Academy 33  
Bon Homme 62, Centerville 24  
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 57, Timber Lake 50

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 14 of 39

Crazy Horse 86, Takini 23  
Crow Creek 59, St. Francis Indian 36  
Dakota Valley 51, Madison 46  
Deubrook 44, Florence/Henry 38  
Douglas 52, Rapid City Christian 33  
Elk Point-Jefferson 60, Tea Area 29  
Ethan 45, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 41  
Flandreau Indian 52, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 17  
Hamlin 50, Sisseton 15  
Jones County 33, Lyman 30  
McLaughlin 54, Chamberlain 43  
Philip 62, White River 56  
St. Thomas More 49, Hot Springs 8  
Sturgis Brown 52, Red Cloud 51  
Wall 54, Hill City 47  
Watertown 56, Yankton 42  
Wessington Springs 62, James Valley Christian 47  
Winner 58, Mobridge-Pollock 19

## South Dakota's Corn Palace expects strong tourism year

By EVAN HENDERSHOT, The Daily Republic

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — After millions of dollars' worth of investment, the stars have aligned for an excellent tourism season at the World's Only Corn Palace.

A visit to the Corn Palace is always a unique experience — it is the only attraction of its kind, after all. But the corn-adorned building has accumulated more features in the last few years, from an education center and art gallery on the second floor to new domes and turrets along the structure's roof.

Those improvements came at a cost, a total of \$14,424,904 worth of expenses at the Palace over the last five years. But was it worth the investment?

Mitchell Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Director Katie Knutson said the current photographs of the building make it an easier sell to potential tourists. And with the Palace sporting a new look, plus the added bonus of last season's Sixth Avenue plaza construction out of the way, Knutson is excited about the upcoming tourism season in Mitchell.

"We are expecting a really great year, even with the finishing of Burr Street construction," Knutson said.

While the possibility of a strong tourism year hangs in the balance, there is good news for the new year. Despite the major investments, Corn Palace expenses dropped in 2017, hitting a five-year low of \$1,966,095, according to the city of Mitchell finance office. Even still, there's no doubt the Corn Palace experience has amplified in the last few months.

Since the start of September, a new set of corn murals was installed, a large corn sculpture was added at the building's southwestern edge, and perhaps most importantly, a large park space was officially opened for the public to enjoy immediately south of the Palace.

Corn Palace Director Scott Schmidt feels as though those new additions to the Palace also make it more of an appealing event center.

"You walk across the street and you see the Corn Palace Plaza and the Corn Palace sign, you see the new domes, you see it lit up, it looks like an actual event center now," Schmidt said. "It doesn't look like a building with corn on it in the middle of downtown."

With features both new and old, Corn Palace Director Scott Schmidt is aiming to match or beat last year's visitor total.

The new year will also provide the city an opportunity to test the typical tourist season.

In 2017, the Corn Palace implemented a new system to count the number of tourists entering the build-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 15 of 39

ing, which tracks all the visitors who enter the front doors rather than just those who walk through the old-school turnstiles. With that in mind, Schmidt said measuring 2017 versus 2016 is like comparing apples to oranges.

But Schmidt will be able to measure 2017 to 2018, and he said a successful tourism season would match 2017's 249,155 visitor count from May to August.

Between the new additions and no more major construction project just off Interstate 90 on Burr Street, Schmidt is hotly anticipating 2018's visitor numbers. Although, he said, they have no way of tracking how many potential visitors were lost from last season's Burr Street project.

Mitchell Councilman Jeff Smith, who serves as the council's representative on the Corn Palace Events & Entertainment Board, is also interested to learn the true attendance to the building through the new electronic monitoring system.

"That's always nice to be able to measure, now we need to get somewhat of a normal year or two to kind of see what the base is," Smith said.

As visitor numbers rise and expenses drop, the city's return on investment has yet to be seen in its sales tax collections, the Daily Republic reported .

First and second penny sales tax collections in Mitchell stagnated in 2017, rising only 0.02 percent over 2016's collections. But the 2 percent sales tax collected in both 2016 and 2017 was lower than 2015's total, and only slightly higher than 2014. The entertainment tax — which is collected from hotel rentals, restaurant sales and sales of alcoholic beverages — also dropped in 2017 by 0.39 percent.

The drop in entertainment tax collections coincided with the city's decision not to replace the Corn Palace's signature murals for the 2017 tourism season. The small drop also coincided with construction around the building to create the Corn Palace Plaza.

The reduction in entertainment tax collections, however, was quite small, and the city's two longest-tenured Mitchell City Council members are optimistic about the recent changes at the building.

Longtime Mitchell City Councilman Marty Barington has been one of the Corn Palace's biggest proponents over the years, often framing the Palace as the best means to draw people into his hometown. With the recent improvements to the Corn Palace grounds and facade, Barington is looking forward to what 2018 will bring.

"We've got to have a structure like this," Barington said last week. "We've got to use it in more ways than one. It's not just our event center, it's also our icon and our tourist attraction."

He's not the only one excited about the year.

Earlier in the week, Knutson was in North Carolina promoting bus tours to Mitchell, and she said photos of the new and improved Palace help pique more interest.

With the new murals and added green space — as well as manageable gas prices for those on road trips — Knutson said the city is in line for a strong year for tourism.

And while Barington is satisfied with the changes at the attraction and event center in recent years, he sees more room for improvement at the Palace.

Barington said he'd like to see more investment into the Corn Palace Education Center, a corn-themed room that sits atop Council Chambers on the second floor of Mitchell City Hall geared toward teaching children about corn and agriculture. He also sees an opportunity for southward expansion of the Corn Palace Plaza.

In January, the city voted to tear down the building that formerly served as the home to the Jitters Coffeehouse, which sits a stone's throw from the Palace plaza. The city also purchased the longtime home to NorthWestern Energy's Mitchell office, which sits even closer to the plaza.

Discussions to extend the plaza haven't advanced publicly, but Barington sees room to make the park space south of the Palace even better for those in the community.

"I think that Sixth street plaza is just an ideal location for it, for the people that come into our community every year," Barington said. "... And I would like us to keep expanding on it and adding things to it."

Although he wasn't entirely certain to what extent the plaza could be improved, past city meetings have

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 16 of 39

indicated a performance stage could be one major addition or a large shade structure could be included.

Both Barington and Smith, who have served on the council since 2006, see a bright future for the Corn Palace. Smith spoke particularly well of the new plaza, which he said has earned rave reviews throughout the state and adds to the Corn Palace's ability to serve as an event center as well as a tourist attraction.

"I have just heard nothing but positive comments on how well it looks and how well it's presented, and even people from South Dakota that's outside of Mitchell, they've even commented to me that they're so impressed with how that area is coming together," Smith said. "So it's going to be kind of fun to see how that evolves down there."

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

## South Dakota craft brewing industry continues to grow

By JIM HOLLAND, Rapid City Journal

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Spearfish Brewing Company general manager Jon Marek said Spearfish's newest craft beer brewery was off to a good start, even before it was even officially open.

Marek and brewmaster Nathan Venner have already hosted a charity event at the brewery, located in a fresh new building at the corner of Main Street and Jackson Boulevard, and then decided — spur of the moment — to open their doors on Jan. 29 to allow anyone wandering in to try out their selection of craft beer.

"We didn't really tell anybody, we just put a tiny sign on the door, and we had 30-40 people in here," Marek said.

"It's getting off to a great start," he said. "The community has been very supportive."

The company officially drew its first glasses of craft lagers, ambers and ales on Feb. 2 at their location, the Rapid City Journal reported .

State officials touted the new brewery as another piece of a burgeoning industry in South Dakota.

"The craft beer industry has seen substantial growth in South Dakota, especially in recent years," said Scott Stern, commissioner with the Governor's Office of Economic Development. "Taprooms like the one Spearfish Brewing is opening are a lucrative business where tourists and locals alike can enjoy craft beer in a unique environment."

At the heart of the gleaming new brewery, said Venner in a news release, is a stainless steel 341-gallon, two-vessel brewhouse built by American Beer Equipment from Lincoln, Nebraska, boasting a brewing capacity of 3,600 barrels per year.

Venner is originally from Pierre, with 11 years of experience as a commercial brewmaster — 13 years total in the brewing industry.

He brings his knowledge from working in breweries in Laramie and Lander, Wyoming.

According to a release, he plans about a dozen classic American and international styles of lagers, clear ambers and India Pale Ales (IPAs), and also wants to recreate some of his favorite and most acclaimed beers from his years of brewing, including a classic American wheat beer that has earned him two silver medals at the Great American Beer Festival, along with an award-winning rye beer, and a seasonal chili beer which "won medals at the North American Beer Awards for seven consecutive years," he said.

The process begins with a state-of-the-art water filtration system that allows a brewmaster to highlight the flavors in each style of beer.

Marek said the brewery is taking further advantage of the filtration system to produce in-house sparkling waters, giving patrons a unique non-alcoholic alternative.

Some of their first sparkling water creations include cucumber-lime and orange peel and pear flavors.

"We wanted to put in a system that could make really great light lagers," Marek said. "Once we got that water filtration system in, we decided to double-down and actually produce some craft sparkling waters. They've actually been a huge hit," Marek said.

The brewery also offers an upscale small-plate menu from chef Kyle Smith from RedWater Kitchen, a



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 17 of 39

separately-owned eatery in the same building.

"He's got expansive beer knowledge and he's a really great chef," Marek said of Smith.

Marek said a rotating food menu at the brewery will also include seafood dishes from Dakota Seafood Co. of Rapid City, which also plans a new retail space under the same roof.

According to the Spearfish Economic Development Corporation, Spearfish Brewing received support from state and local economic development organizations.

"Spearfish Brewing Company will be an excellent addition to our ever-growing business community," said Kory Menken, Spearfish Economic Development Corporation executive director, in a news release. "SEDC is pleased we were able to help play a part in bringing this exciting project to fruition."

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

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

14-38-48-53-58, Mega Ball: 16, Megaplier: 3

(fourteen, thirty-eight, forty-eight, fifty-three, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: sixteen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$168 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$223 million

## Sioux Falls Lutheran School preparing to build new facility

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls is getting a new school.

Sioux Falls Lutheran School is preparing to build a preschool through eighth-grade facility on 30 acres of land recently donated by Sanford Health. Sanford also provided a \$5 million match donation.

Sioux Falls Lutheran first announced the push for a new building more than a year ago, citing a lack of space in its current facility. School administrator Tia Esser says the goal is to start construction later this year.

The Argus Leader reports the site also will house child care, softball and soccer fields, a tennis court and a track. There's enough room left for a high school, though that's not currently in the works.

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

## South Dakota inmate's case could reopen after DNA testing

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota inmate who was sentenced to life in prison for a murder charge nearly 30 years ago says he might soon have DNA test results to help prove his innocence.

Stacy Larson, 48, was convicted of second-degree murder for the shooting death of Ronald Hilgenberg in 1990, the Argus Leader reported. Larson has maintained his innocence and there's no physical evidence linking him to the case.

The South Dakota Supreme Court upheld his conviction, but the state's high court identified issues with Larson's case. Evidence of concern includes his time-stamped receipt for a beer purchase on the night of the murder. The receipt suggests that Larson would have had to drive between 95 to 350 miles per hour to make it from the convenience store to the crime scene.

Larson has been working with Innocence Project of Minnesota since 2006.

Attention returned to his case after a 2016 discovery of five boxes of evidence Larson thought had been

destroyed. DNA swabbed from the boxes' contents could rule Larson out as a suspect.

"I know it's going to prove I didn't do it," Larson said.

Julie Jonas, legal director of the Innocence Project of Minnesota, said the DNA sampling may not be enough to make the case. Jonas said if DNA testing matches a new suspect, they hope is it would encourage a prosecutor to reopen the case.

Attorney General Marty Jackley's office is handling Larson's case. Jackley said he "didn't oppose" the Innocence Project's efforts to test the evidence, particularly since DNA testing has evolved since Larson's trial.

"I've indicated that I'd take a look at (the results) and keep an open mind," Jackley said.

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

## **Boozy cupcake-maker sparks rush to modify South Dakota laws**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Lawmakers are rushing to change South Dakota food laws to allow a Sioux Falls bakery to continue selling its alcohol-infused cupcakes.

After shutting down operations to comply with the state's century-old ban on alcohol used in confectionery foods, online bakery Intoxibakes received an outpouring of support from the Sioux Falls business community and policymakers.

Several city councilors responded to news of Intoxibakes' closing by investigating business regulations and ways to change the law.

City Councilor Christine Erickson told the Argus Leader she's working with state Sen. Deb Peters to change state law through a proposal that would limit alcohol content in food at 0.5 percent. The measure mirrors laws in at least a dozen other states, including Iowa and Minnesota.

"This isn't isolated to Intoxibakes," Erickson said. "We've got lots of calls from people that had been doing this all over the state."

Intoxibakes owners had met with regulators before opening in November to confirm that they didn't need a liquor license to sell their boozy cupcakes. Co-owner Josie Layton said they felt they were misinformed.

Under state law, any treats made with alcohol are illegal regardless of whether the owner has a liquor license, according to a representative from the Department of Public Safety.

The new proposal faces a few hurdles, since legislative deadlines for introducing bills have already passed. The measure will need to be pushed forward in a hodgepodge amendment to a bill originally crafted for other purposes.

Republican Rep. Greg Jamison of Sioux Falls said he'd support the proposal if it ends up in the House of Representatives.

"It's an old law, so if the proposal is reasonable, I'd say yeah, let's make a change," he said. "But it might be something that has to wait until next year."

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

## **Police: Wife's fatal shooting of husband was self-defense**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say a woman's fatal shooting of her husband in November was determined to be self-defense and she will not face charges.

Police were called early on Nov. 5 on a report of a gunshot and found the man and woman inside the home. The man died of a gunshot wound to his chest. The woman told police she shot her husband in self-defense and that no one else was home at the time. Authorities recovered a gun at the scene.

Sioux Falls police investigated and presented their evidence to the Minnehaha County State's Attorney's office, which determined the shooting was likely self-defense and therefore a justifiable homicide under South Dakota law. No charges will be filed.

## **TransCanada's Keystone Pipeline spill cleanup on schedule**

AMHERST, S.D. (AP) — TransCanada Corp. says cleanup of a massive on-shore oil spill from Keystone Pipeline in South Dakota is halfway finished.

Last November, the pipeline leaked 210,000 gallons of crude oil onto agricultural land in Marshall County, one of the largest on-shore oil spills in the U.S. since 2010.

TransCanada spokeswoman Robynn Tysver told Aberdeen American News that the work has transitioned from excavation of the Amherst site to its remediation to original condition.

"All of the excavation work at the site has been completed, and most of the impacted soil has been removed," Tysver said. "We are now working to replace the top soil, with plans to seed later in the spring."

The pipeline moves oil from eastern Alberta, Canada to Oklahoma and Illinois.

TransCanada said the cleanup is on track with its schedule. The company also has agreed to restore the roads used by trucks transporting equipment and soil.

Last month, a half-ton of contaminated soil was spilled as the result of a truck rollover. The soil has been cleaned up and the truck's driver was charged with careless driving. A case is still open about an unknown truck driver dumping contaminated soil southwest of the leak site, according to the State Department of Environment and Natural Resources' leak database.

A spill and activity report on the agency's website shows that TransCanada has installed groundwater monitoring systems, which haven't yet detected any contamination.

An investigation into the cause of the leak is ongoing.

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Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

## **No additional charges for woman who was high in court**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A woman appearing in South Dakota's Sixth Judicial Circuit Court on methamphetamine charges faces no additional consequences for coming to court high on marijuana.

Twenty-three-year-old Cecilia Thunder appeared before Judge Mark Barnett earlier this week on a felony charge of ingesting meth.

The Capital Journal reports Barnett accepted Thunder's guilty plea, then asked why she was giggling. Thunder said she was nervous.

Barnett then asked her if a drug test would show she was on meth while appearing in court. Thunder answered that it would not, but she would test positive for marijuana. Barnett ordered the urine test for Thunder, which produced the expected positive result.

Barnett told Thunder he would cut her "some slack" and not add a new drug charge. Sentencing is in a few weeks on the meth charge.

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Information from: Pierre Capital Journal, <http://www.capjournal.com>

## **Romney, favored in Senate bid, could take on outsized role**

**By MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mitt Romney's extensive resume has many Republicans looking to him to take on a role, if he's elected Utah's next senator, often filled by John McCain as an elder statesman and counterweight to a president many in the GOP see as divisive and undignified.

Romney, the 2012 White House nominee, is among the best-known names in U.S. politics. He's been a successful businessman, governor of heavily Democratic Massachusetts, Olympics rescuer and, more recently, one of his party's fiercest critics of President Donald Trump.

McCain was quick to praise Romney, his rival for the 2008 nomination. In a tweet Friday shortly after Romney announced his Senate bid, McCain said Romney "has shown the country what it means to lead with honor, integrity and civility. The people of #Utah and the nation need his strong voice, resolve and

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 20 of 39

service now more than ever.”

Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., said Romney would bring the prestige of his previous roles to the Senate, if elected to succeed Sen. Orrin Hatch in strongly Republican Utah.

“I think he will be a plus-plus in the Senate,” Shelby said, calling Romney “a thoughtful man” and a leader who at 70 is senior enough to be an elder statesman.

Shelby, 83, has had his differences with Trump. He publicly opposed a GOP nominee backed by Trump in Alabama’s closely watched Senate race last year, declaring before the election that “the state of Alabama deserves better” than Roy Moore, a former judge accused of sexual contact with teenage girls decades ago.

Romney has the stature to make similar declarations when — or if — they are needed, Shelby said. “I know the governor and I think he would support good ideas,” Shelby said.

Romney, a heavy favorite to win the Senate seat, will step in “immediately” as a leader in the Senate, said Idaho Sen. Jim Risch, who got to know Romney when both served as governors and when he co-chaired Romney’s presidential campaigns in Idaho.

“He has broad experience, he has the prestige. He’ll jump right in,” Risch said.

Those expectations are based largely on Romney’s record, rather than recent accomplishments. Romney has not served in elected office in more than a decade and lost bids for president in 2008 and 2012.

Trump has seized on Romney’s failed presidential bids, saying in 2016 that Romney “choked like a dog.”

It’s not clear how Romney will relate to the president as a candidate or as a senator, should he win. While he denounced Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign, Romney softened his stance after the election and put himself forward as a candidate for secretary of state before Trump looked elsewhere.

Since then, Romney has spoken up from afar. He called out Trump after a deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last year, and lashed out again last month when Trump used an obscenity to describe African countries during a White House meeting on immigration.

“The poverty of an aspiring immigrant’s nation of origin is as irrelevant as their race,” Romney tweeted, adding that comments attributed to the president were inconsistent with “America’s history and antithetical to American values.”

Despite those criticisms, Democrats say Romney and Trump are not all that different.

“While Mitt Romney desperately wants to separate himself from the extremism of the current administration, the basic policies of Trump’s GOP were his before they were Donald Trump’s,” said DNC spokesman Vedant Patel, citing the recently enacted GOP tax cuts and efforts to repeal former President Barack Obama’s health care law.

Patel called Romney “another multimillionaire looking out for himself, his rich neighbors and the special interests.”

If he does go after Trump, Romney will find himself among a dwindling breed in Congress. McCain, who is suffering from brain cancer, has not appeared in the Senate since before Christmas, while fellow Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake is retiring at the end of the year. Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., also has had public disputes with Trump, but has not criticized Trump in months and is reportedly reconsidering plans to retire.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, Romney’s 2012 running mate, said Romney’s “unparalleled experience, conservative leadership and lifetime of service” will serve him and Utah well in the Senate.

Romney “has my unwavering support, and the people of Utah will be getting an accomplished and decent man when they make him their next senator,” Ryan said.

Kirk Jowers, the former chairman and general counsel of Romney’s leadership PACs, said Romney “will always be a straight shooter” and will support the president when he takes actions that are good for America.

“If President Trump says or does something that he finds offensive or divisive, unnecessarily divisive, then I think you will continue to hear Romney as the voice of reason and conscience in the Republican Party,” Jowers said.

Follow Matthew Daly: <http://twitter.com/MatthewDalyWDC>

## Russians, Americans exchange barbs over FBI indictments

By LOLITA BALDOR and DAVID RISING, Associated Press

MUNICH (AP) — Top Russian and American officials exchanged barbs Saturday in Germany over the U.S. indictment of 13 Russians accused of an elaborate plot to disrupt the 2016 presidential election.

H.R. McMaster, U.S. President Donald Trump's national security advisor, said at the Munich Security Conference that the federal indictments showed the U.S. was becoming "more and more adept at tracing the origins of this espionage and subversion."

"As you can see with the FBI indictment, the evidence is now really incontrovertible and available in the public domain," McMaster told a Russian delegate to the conference.

Just minutes before, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had dismissed the indictments as "just blabber," according to remarks through an interpreter.

"I have no response," Lavrov said when asked for comment on the allegations. "You can publish anything, and we see those indictments multiplying, the statements multiplying."

The two men addressed the conference of top world leaders, defense officials and diplomats, giving more general back-to-back opening remarks. But both were immediately hit with blunt questions about the U.S. indictment and the broader issue of cyberattacks.

In Russia, news of the indictments was met with more scorn.

"There are no official claims, there are no proofs for this. That's why they are just children's statements," Andrei Kutsikh, the presidential envoy for international information security, told Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

McMaster also scoffed at the suggestion that the U.S. would work with Russia on cyber security issues.

"I'm surprised there are any Russian cyber experts available based on how active most of them have been undermining our democracies in the West," he said to laughter. "So I would just say that we would love to have a cyber dialogue when Russia is sincere."

The federal indictment brought Friday by special counsel Robert Mueller represents the most detailed allegations to date of illegal Russian meddling during the campaign that sent Trump to the White House.

Lavrov argued that U.S. officials, including Vice President Mike Pence, have said no country influenced the U.S. election results.

"Until we see the facts, everything else is just blabber — I'm sorry for this expression," Lavrov said.

The indictment charges 13 Russians with running a huge but hidden social media trolling campaign aimed in part at helping Republican Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

It marks the first criminal charges against Russians believed to have secretly worked to influence the U.S. election's outcome.

According to the indictment, the Russian organization was funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a wealthy St. Petersburg businessman with ties to the Russian government and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Lavrov denounced "this irrational myth about this global Russian threat, traces of which are found everywhere — from Brexit to the Catalan referendum."

In Russia, one of the 13 people indicted said that the U.S. justice system is unfair.

Mikhail Burchik was quoted Saturday by the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda as saying that "I am very surprised that, in the opinion of the Washington court, several Russian people interfered in the elections in the United States. I do not know how the Americans came to this decision."

Burchik was identified in the indictment as executive director of an organization that allegedly sowed propaganda on social media to try to interfere with the 2016 election.

He was quoted as saying that "they have one-sided justice, and it turns out that you can hang the blame on anyone."

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Jim Heintz in Moscow and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed to this report.

## Mueller charges Russians with meddling in 2016 race

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an extraordinary indictment, the U.S. special counsel has accused 13 Russians of an elaborate plot to disrupt the 2016 presidential election, charging them with running a huge but hidden social media trolling campaign aimed in part at helping Republican Donald Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The federal indictment, brought Friday by special counsel Robert Mueller, represents the most detailed allegations to date of illegal Russian meddling during the campaign that sent Trump to the White House. It also marks the first criminal charges against Russians believed to have secretly worked to influence the outcome.

"With the FBI indictment, the evidence is now incontrovertible" of Moscow's interference in the race, Trump's national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, said Saturday at a conference in Germany. Moments earlier, Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, speaking through an interpreter, had dismissed the indictment as "just blabber."

The Russian organization was funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the indictment says. He is a wealthy St. Petersburg businessman with ties to the Russian government and President Vladimir Putin.

Trump quickly claimed vindication Friday, noting in a tweet that the alleged interference efforts began in 2014 — "long before I announced that I would run for President."

"The results of the election were not impacted. The Trump campaign did nothing wrong — no collusion!" he tweeted.

But the indictment does not resolve the collusion question at the heart of the continuing Mueller probe, which before Friday had produced charges against four Trump associates. U.S. intelligence agencies have previously said the Russian government interfered to benefit Trump, including by orchestrating the hacking of Democratic emails, and Mueller has been assessing whether the campaign coordinated with the Kremlin.

The latest indictment does not focus on the hacking but instead centers on a social media propaganda effort that began in 2014 and continued past the election, with the goal of producing distrust in the American political process. Trump himself has been reluctant to acknowledge the interference and any role that it might have played in propelling him to the White House.

The indictment does not allege that any American knowingly participated in Russian meddling, or suggest that Trump campaign associates had more than "unwitting" contact with some of the defendants who posed as Americans during election season.

But it does lay out a vast and wide-ranging Russian effort to sway political opinion in the United States through a strategy that involved creating internet postings in the names of Americans whose identities had been stolen; staging political rallies while posing as American political activists and paying people in the U.S. to promote or disparage candidates.

While foreign meddling in U.S. campaigns is not new, the indictment for an effort of this scope and digital sophistication is unprecedented.

"This indictment serves as a reminder that people are not always who they appear to be on the internet," Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said Friday. "The indictment alleges that the Russian conspirators want to promote discord in the United States and undermine public confidence in democracy. We must not allow them to succeed."

The 13 Russians are not in custody and not likely to ever face trial. The Justice Department has for years supported indicting foreign defendants in absentia as a way of publicly shaming them and effectively barring them from foreign travel.

The surreptitious campaign was organized by the Internet Research Agency, a notorious Russian troll farm that the indictment says sought to conduct "information warfare against the United States of America."

The company, among three Russian entities named in the indictment, had a multimillion-dollar budget and hundreds of workers divided by specialties and assigned to day and night shifts. According to prosecutors, the company was funded by companies controlled by Prigozhin, the wealthy Russian who has been dubbed "Putin's chef" because his restaurants and catering businesses have hosted the Kremlin leader's

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 23 of 39

dinners with foreign dignitaries.

Prigozhin said Friday he was not upset by the indictment.

"Americans are very impressionable people," he was quoted as saying by Russia's state news agency. They "see what they want to see."

Also Friday, Mueller announced a guilty plea from a California man who unwittingly sold bank accounts to Russians involved in the interference effort.

The election-meddling organization, looking to conceal its Russian roots, purchased space on computer servers within the U.S., used email accounts from U.S. internet service providers and created and controlled social media pages with huge numbers of followers on divisive issues such as immigration, religion and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Starting in April 2016, the indictment says, the Russian agency bought political ads on social media supporting Trump and opposing Clinton without reporting expenditures to the Federal Election Commission or registering as foreign agents. Among the ads: "JOIN our #HillaryClintonForPrison2016" and "Donald wants to defeat terrorism ... Hillary wants to sponsor it."

"They engaged in operations primarily intended to communicate derogatory information about Hillary Clinton, to denigrate other candidates such as Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, and to support Bernie Sanders and then-candidate Donald Trump," the indictment states.

Sens. Cruz, R-Texas, and Rubio, R-Fla., ran against Trump in the Republican primary; Sanders, an independent senator from Vermont, opposed Clinton in the Democratic primary.

The indictment details contacts targeting three unnamed officials in the Trump campaign's Florida operation. In each instance, the Russians used false U.S. personas to contact the officials. The indictment doesn't say if any of them responded, and there's no allegation that any of the campaign officials knew they were communicating with Russians.

Two defendants traveled to the U.S. in June 2014 to gather intelligence on social media sites and identify targets for their operations, the indictment alleges. Following the trip, the group collected further intelligence by contacting U.S. political and social media activists while posing as U.S. citizens. They were guided by one contact to target "purple states like Colorado, Virginia and Florida," prosecutors say.

According to one internal communication described by prosecutors, the specialists were instructed to "use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump — we support them)." And according to one internal review, a specialist was criticized for having a low number of posts criticizing Clinton. The person was told "it is imperative to intensify criticizing Hillary Clinton" in future posts.

The indictment also asserts that the posts encouraged minority groups not to vote or to vote for third parties and alleged Democratic voter fraud.

Before a Florida rally, the Russians paid one person to build a cage on a flatbed truck and another to wear a costume portraying Clinton in a prison uniform. But they also organized some rallies opposing Trump, including one in New York after the election called "Trump is NOT my president."

The Russians destroyed evidence of their activities as Mueller's investigation picked up, with one of those indicted sending an email in September 2017 to a family member that said the FBI had "busted" them so they were covering their tracks.

That person, Irina Viktorovna Kaverzina, wrote the family member, "I created all of these pictures and posts, and the Americans believed that it was written by their people."

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Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Desmond Butler, Raphael Satter and Tom LoBianco contributed to this report.

Online: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4380517-Russia-probe-indictments.html>

**Trump overreaches to claim indictment proves 'no collusion'**  
By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 24 of 39

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has consistently pushed back against the idea of Russia meddling in the election that put him in power, dismissing that claim as a hoax and an affront to the legitimacy of his victory.

Now, in a 37-page indictment Friday, special counsel Robert Mueller has laid bare in excruciating detail the details of one Russian scheme, designed in part to benefit Trump's election run. It even shows contacts between foreigners and his campaign, albeit unwitting.

And Trump's national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, said Saturday at a conference in Germany that "the evidence is now incontrovertible" that Moscow interfered in the 2016 campaign.

Trump had seized on the fact that the Russian "information warfare" effort, as a top Justice Department official called it, began in 2014, before Trump announced his White House run. His team noted that the Russian efforts to sow discord are also said to have benefited Bernie Sanders, who was running for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Trump also asserted that the indictment proved there was "no collusion" between his campaign and the Russians.

His cheers of vindication Friday appeared to be more show than substance.

The administration still harbors deep worries about the direction of Mueller's nine-month probe, which has shown no signs of abating and has expanded to explore potential obstruction of justice on the part of the president and his top aides.

"Russia started their anti-US campaign in 2014, long before I announced that I would run for President," Trump tweeted after the indictment was unveiled. "The results of the election were not impacted. The Trump campaign did nothing wrong — no collusion."

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders followed minutes later with a statement echoing the "no collusion" claim in capital letters.

Trump attorney John Dowd was jubilant in a statement of his own. "The only thing I have to say is that I'm very happy for the country and Bob Mueller did a great job."

But neither the indictment nor Mueller's office has ruled out any potential collusion in any other plot to disrupt the election. U.S. intelligence agencies have previously charged that a separate Russian effort hacked Democratic Party and Clinton campaign emails and leaked them to WikiLeaks in an effort to sway the election. And Mueller is probing a 2016 meeting in Trump Tower between the president's son, son-in-law, top campaign aides and Russian nationals promising damaging information on Clinton from the Russian government.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who oversees the probe, carefully chose his words Friday as he stated, "There is no allegation in the indictment that any American was a knowing participant in the alleged unlawful activity."

Privately, White House officials acknowledged that the indictment is only one line of inquiry in Mueller's swirling probe.

Trump's estranged former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, met for hours with Mueller's team this past week. Other current and former senior White House officials have already met with the special counsel's office as he examines the firing of former FBI Director James Comey and misleading statements about the Trump Tower meeting.

Trump seized on the indictment to call for an end to "outlandish partisan attacks, wild and false allegations, and far-fetched theories" about the election, asserting they "only serve to further the agendas of bad actors, like Russia, and do nothing to protect the principles of our institutions."

"We must unite as Americans to protect the integrity of our democracy and our elections," Trump added.

Meanwhile, new questions mount about what his administration is doing to prevent Russia from doing it again.

The White House has demonstrated little enthusiasm for holding Russia to account. Privately, the president has chafed at suggestions that Russia worked to help his campaign, believing they undermine the legitimacy of his victory.

Trump has repeatedly called the Russia probe a "hoax," and during the transition attacked intelligence



agencies for their warnings about Russian intervention. Aides said Friday he was only referring to the collusion allegations.

But it took Trump until January 2017 — months after the intelligence community publicly asserted that conclusion — to make clear that he believes that Russian entities tried to sway the election. His administration has resisted taking some steps to protect the electoral system from future meddling.

Trump formed and then disbanded a commission to study unfounded allegations of electoral fraud in 2016, but not one to study Russian interference. His administration just weeks ago bucked a congressional deadline to impose new sanctions on Russian entities over the country's continued destabilizing actions.

The Department of Homeland Security, which the administration has tasked with safeguarding the electoral system ahead of the 2018 elections, has faced questions about how seriously it is taking those efforts.

Associated Press writer Tom LoBianco contributed to this report.

## 'Is this a kind of mistake?' Snowboarder wins Alpine gold

By HOWARD FENDRICH, AP Sports Writer

JEONGSEON, South Korea (AP) — This made no sense to Ester Ledecka. Just simply couldn't be. Could. Not. Be.

Which is why the part-time ski racer, part-time snowboarder from the Czech Republic stood so still, absolutely motionless and expressionless, for several moments after crossing the finish line in the Olympic super-G and seeing the numbers on a video board that appeared to show she was fast enough to be the gold medalist. Not merely any gold medalist, but one of the most unconventional and out-of-nowhere gold medalists in Alpine history.

This, the 22-year-old Ledecka would explain later, was what went through her mind at that moment: "Is this a kind of mistake?"

Then came this: "OK, they're going to change the time. I'm going to wait for a little bit, and you're going to switch and (add) some more seconds."

That never happened. This was no mistake. This was real. Her posted time of 1 minute, 21.11 seconds was, indeed, accurate. It was, indeed, 0.01 seconds — yes, one one-hundredth of a second — better than Austria's Anna Veith, the defending Olympic champion and, as the leader until the moment when the relatively unknown and low-ranked Ledecka took her turn as the 26th woman down the slope, the presumed repeat Olympic champion.

Instead, it was Ledecka who collected the prized medal. This is someone who has participated in only 19 World Cup skiing races in her entire career — Mikaela Shiffrin, in contrast, has been in 23 this season alone — and only once finished as high as seventh. Someone who is a far more accomplished snowboarder, owning a world championship in the parallel giant slalom, an event she plans to enter at the Pyeongchang Games next week, an unprecedented achievement.

"She's not a medal favorite. She just wanted to come here and be the first person ever to ski and snowboard race," said Justin Reiter, who competed for the U.S. at the Sochi Olympics in snowboarding and now is Ledecka's coach for that sport. "She stayed in her heart and she stayed in her own head and she skied like she can ski and it was beautiful to watch."

Everything about this was remarkable. Or maybe that doesn't even come close to capturing it. So pick another word. Extraordinary. Astonishing. Unbelievable. It was all of those things, and more, to Ledecka herself. To the rest of the field, which included superstar Lindsey Vonn of the U.S. and other past medalists such as Lara Gut of Switzerland and Federica Brignone of Italy. To everyone.

"Definitely shocking," said Vonn, who tied for sixth.

"Just wow," said Switzerland's Michelle Gisin, a 2017 silver medalist at the world championships who was ninth Saturday.

That pretty much described the day at the Jeongseon Alpine Center, which began with a one-hour delay because of blustery winds that calmed but still played a factor during the race, serving as tailwinds for

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 26 of 39

some skiers but acting as a headwind to others.

When things finally began under a clear-as-can-be blue sky, Vonn went first. The bronze medalist in super-G and gold medalist in downhill at the 2010 Vancouver Games but sidelined for the 2014 Olympics was fast in stretches. However, she lost a chunk of time both before the midpoint and again on the last key part of the course, a jump-turn combination that she flubbed and was sure cost her a medal.

"That's why it's so difficult to win at the Olympics," Vonn said. "Because literally anything can happen." Sure seemed to this time.

First Gut, the 2016 overall World Cup champ and a downhill bronze medalist at Sochi, temporarily moved into first place. Then Weirather, the super-G silver medalist at last year's world championships, moved in front by 0.01 seconds. Then it was Veith who took over first place, by 0.10 seconds. And that's how things stood for the next 10 skiers. It is generally considered unlikely — although not impossible, of course — for anyone outside of the first 20 starters to emerge as the winner.

Veith was sure she'd clinched a gold. Weirather figured the silver was hers. Gut couldn't wait to get that bronze around her neck.

"They were a little bit in shock," Ledeska said. "They were staring at me a little bit."

Now comes a decision for Ledeska. The Alpine downhill is Wednesday and requires serious training runs down the mountain beforehand. Qualifying for her snowboard event is Thursday.

So which should she focus on?

"I'm sure that my ski coach will be a little bit pushy on downhill," Ledeska said. "But my snowboard coach wants me on snowboard."

Her work in the two sports can help her performance in each.

The speed from skiing translates to snowboarding. And the balance required in snowboarding is a boost for ski racing. Reiter pointed out, for example, that on the same final jump that gave Vonn trouble Saturday, Ledeska's weight shifted too far backward, but she managed to recover.

"It was kind of scary there for a moment. She was able to save it," he said. "And that's because of her heart and because of her ability with a snowboard."

Ledeska proved to be pretty adept at her other sport, too.

Unlikely as it might have seemed, she forever will be able to call herself an Olympic Alpine champion.

"The fact that she's able to beat all of us and be a snowboarder is pretty darn impressive," Vonn said. "At the Olympics, a lot of weird stuff happens."

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AP Sports Writer Graham Dunbar contributed to this report.

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Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

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More AP Olympic coverage: <https://wintergames.ap.org/>

## Anger bubbles over at funerals for Florida shooting victims

By **TERRY SPENCER, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and TAMARA LUSH, Associated Press**

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — As families began burying their dead, authorities questioned whether they could have prevented the attack on a South Florida high school where a gunman took the lives of 14 students, the athletic director, a coach and a geography teacher.

At funerals and in the streets of Parkland, a suburb on the edge of the Everglades, anger bubbled over at the senselessness of the shooting and at the widespread availability of guns. A rally to support gun-safety legislation was scheduled for Saturday at the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale.

During a funeral Friday for 18-year-old Meadow Pollack, her father looked down at his daughter's plain pine coffin and screamed in anguish as Gov. Rick Scott and 1,000 others sat in Temple K'ol Tikvah.

"You killed my kid!" Andrew Pollack yelled, referring to Nikolas Cruz, who is accused of gunning down Meadow and 16 others. "My kid is dead. It goes through my head all day and all night. I keep hearing it."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 27 of 39

This is just unimaginable that I will never see my princess again.”

He briefly paused as mourners, punched by the rawness of his words, began to wail.

“I wasn’t able to do anything about it. I have always been able to protect my family,” he said. “Our kids should be safe.”

Not long after that funeral, the FBI said it received a tip last month that Cruz had a “desire to kill” and access to guns and could be plotting an attack, but agents failed to investigate. The governor called for the FBI director to resign.

A person who was close to Cruz called the FBI’s tip line on Jan. 5 and provided information about Cruz’s weapons and his erratic behavior, including his disturbing social media posts. The caller was concerned that Cruz could attack a school.

In a statement, the agency acknowledged that the tip should have been shared with the FBI’s Miami office and investigated, but it was not. The startling admission came as the agency was already facing criticism for its treatment of a tip about a YouTube comment posted last year. The comment posted by a “Nikolas Cruz” said, “Im going to be a professional school shooter.”

The FBI investigated the remark but did not determine who made it.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said the shooting that killed 17 people Wednesday was a “tragic consequence” of the FBI’s missteps and ordered a review of the Justice Department’s processes. He said it’s now clear that the nation’s premier law enforcement agency missed warning signs.

In more evidence that there had been signs of trouble with Cruz, Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said his office had received more than 20 calls about him in the past few years.

Cruz was being held without bail at the Broward County Jail on 17 counts of first-degree murder.

Authorities have not described any specific motive, except to say that Cruz had been kicked out of the high school, which has about 3,000 students and serves an affluent suburb where the median home price is nearly \$600,000. Students who knew him described a volatile teenager whose strange behavior had caused others to end friendships.

News of law enforcement’s admissions enraged those in the community.

“The FBI has failed,” said Lewis Mizen, a 17-year-old student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where the attack took place. “It’s going to be a mark on their name forever. Their mistakes have cost the lives of 17 people. There are people dead because they failed in their jobs.”

Across the internet, students who were caught in the crossfire at the school spoke out. Some took politicians to task on Twitter. A 17-year-old junior wrote an essay for CNN, saying that he and his classmates planned to pressure politicians into taking action. One student asked President Donald Trump to meet with her. Some teens have been critical of Trump for failing to mention guns in his comments about the attack.

On Friday evening, Trump visited a Florida hospital where he greeted medical staff and thanked the doctors, nurses and first responders who helped the shooting victims. He told reporters he also met with some of the victims who are still hospitalized. He later met with members of the Broward County Sheriff’s office and local law enforcement, including Coconut Creek Police Officer Mike Leonard, who said he was the one who apprehended Cruz.

Sidney Fischer, a junior who was in a Holocaust history class when the shooter aimed his gun at the window and shot into the room, went on Reddit on Friday to recount his harrowing experience and answer questions. Two students in his classroom died, and one of the slain students, Joaquin Oliver who went by the nickname ‘Guac,’ had just been transferred into his algebra class.

“I can’t believe that when I go back to school, his seat will be empty and life will just go on,” Fischer wrote.

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Lush reported from St. Petersburg, Florida.

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Follow the AP’s complete coverage of the Florida school shooting here: <https://apnews.com/tag/Floraschoolshooting>.

## Hanyu defends Olympic gold medal in men's figure skating

By **BARRY WILNER, AP Sports Writer**

GANGNEUNG, South Korea (AP) — Yuzuru Hanyu was introduced as the Olympic gold medalist, skated over to the podium and jumped high onto it. With a perfect landing, naturally.

He also leaped into the figure skating history books Saturday, becoming the first man to repeat as Olympic champion since Dick Button in 1952.

"Just happy. I can't say anymore, just happy," Hanyu said through his ever-present smile. "I just did my best today. I don't know if this is the best of my skating life, but I can say from my heart that I skated my best today."

He held off countryman Shoma Uno and Spain's Javier Fernandez in the free skate.

Coach Brian Orser met Hanyu as he left the ice after his strong but slightly flawed performance. Then Orser, a two-time Olympic silver medalist who also coaches Fernandez, rushed back to behind the sideboards to help encourage the Spaniard.

Fernandez couldn't match Hanyu.

Hanyu later congratulated Fernandez and told him he wished both of them could have won.

"I told him, 'Yes, Yuzu, but only one can be champion. Only one can have the gold medal,'" Fernandez said.

Uno moved from third Friday to second, loading a high-scoring quad and three triples into the final minute of his routine.

"I knew which level of performance I performed," he said through a translator. "I did what I intended to do."

American Nathan Chen surged from a fiasco of a short program, when he was 17th, by winning the free skate to wind up fifth. He did it with an historic routine featuring six quads.

As always, Hanyu skated to raucous support from the crowd, with thousands of Japanese flags filling the stands. He was terrific, though not perfect, particularly messing up a combination jump.

As always, he left the ice to a swarm of cascading Winnie The Pooh dolls flooding the ice.

Uno might have won the gold if not for his magnificent countryman. His energy throughout, particularly in the back end of his routine to "Turandot," permeated the arena, and he pumped his arms wildly when he finished.

Fernandez, skating to "Man of La Mancha," was a worthy medalist, finishing just 1.66 points behind Uno.

"It means a lot for my country," Fernandez said. "We've never had a figure skating Olympic medal. We have such few Winter Olympic medals in any sports, so I hope it means a lot to everyone back home."

The 18-year-old Chen had succumbed to the pressure and massive expectations in the short program, a day earlier. On Saturday, he nailed virtually every element. He even did the sixth quad, a loop, getting full credit for the four rotations though he put his hands down on the ice on it.

"I think after having such a disastrous short program and being so, so low in the ranking — lower than I usually ever am — it allowed me to completely forget the results and focus on enjoying myself out on the ice," Chen said, "and getting rid of expectations helped a lot."

He led all three U.S. skaters into the top 10 as his 127.64 points for technical virtuosity put him in another stratosphere, and his 215.08 points for the free skate were a personal high.

Chen's 17-year-old teammate Vincent Zhou, put down five quads — as if to say, "Hey buddy, I can do this, too" — in another spectacular jumping show. Zhou also soared in the standings, winding up sixth.

"It's been such a wild ride over my short 17 years," Zhou said. "I've been through so much, it would take me hours to say it all. But to skate like that, to have a successful performance means so much to me."

Adam Rippon doesn't do quads, but his presentation and dramatic flair earn him points. The 28-year-old dropped from seventh to 10th, but these were successful games for him, and his arm pumps to bolster the audience's cheers when he was done lent a comical touch.

"They usually say that like, after the Olympic Games, somebody's life changes forever," Rippon said. "A lot of times it's the gold medalist, but I have a feeling that my life has changed forever."

AP Sports Writers Dave Skretta and Jake Seiner contributed.

More AP Olympic coverage: <https://wintergames.ap.org>

## Trump focuses on first responders after Florida shooting

By CATHERINE LUCEY and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump has made a grim trip to a Florida community reeling from a deadly school shooting, meeting privately with victims and cheering the heroics of first responders.

But he extended few public words of consolation to those in deep mourning, nor did Trump address the debate over gun violence that has raged since a 19-year-old gunman killed 17 and injured 14 others.

Two days after the shooting, Trump visited Broward Health North Hospital Friday, where he saw two victims and praised the doctors and nurses for their “incredible” job. With his wife Melania, he also paid his respects to law enforcement officials in Fort Lauderdale, telling officers he hoped they were “getting the credit” they deserved.

“I was at the hospital with a lot of parents and they are really thankful for the job you’ve done,” Trump said at the Broward County Sheriff’s Office, where he was joined by Gov. Rick Scott, Sen. Marco Rubio and other Florida officials. He added that the young victims were in “really great shape” considering what they have been through.

Never a natural at consolation, the president seemed more at ease extending hearty thanks to first responders, marveling at the speed with which they rushed the wounded to the hospital and quipping that they deserved a raise. He had less to say to the grief and sorrow gripping a shocked community and nation after the deadliest school shooting since a gunman attacked an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut.

Asked if he’d talked with victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Trump added: “I did indeed, and it’s very sad something like that could happen.”

Trump spoke privately with two victims, a boy and a girl, at the hospital. At the Sheriff’s Office, he also met Detective Richard Olson and his son, Will Olson, who was shot during the attack. Trump spoke about the girl he met with, saying she had been shot four times, and that first responders had helped save her life by getting her quickly to the hospital.

Late Friday, he tweeted about the school shooting: “Our entire Nation, w/one heavy heart, continues to pray for the victims & their families in Parkland, FL. To teachers, law enforcement, first responders & medical professionals who responded so bravely in the face of danger: We THANK YOU for your courage!” He included pictures of the injured young girl and her family that he and the first lady visited.

Speaking directly to the raw emotions was Rubio, who told Trump, “This is a community and a state that’s in deep pain and they want action to make sure this never happens again.”

Trump replied: “You can count on it.”

Still, the president made no policy statements. An avid supporter of the National Rifle Association, he did not mention the renewed debate over gun violence, ignoring a shouted question about gun laws. Trump tweeted earlier Friday that he was “working with Congress on many fronts,” though he offered no details.

Trump’s visit followed a similar script to his visit to Las Vegas in the fall after the worst mass slaying in modern history. On that trip, he also made a visit to a hospital, meeting with victims behind closed doors and then congratulating first responders.

It’s an approach that stands in contrast to his predecessor’s handling of mass shootings. After the Sandy Hook slayings, five years ago, President Barack Obama attended an emotional vigil in Newtown, where he read aloud the names of each victim and promised to use “whatever power” he had to prevent future shootings.

Trump said he originally planned to visit the Parkland area on Sunday or Monday, but decided he didn’t want to wait. But as Trump arrived in Florida, some of the parents, survivors and others affected by the

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 30 of 39

tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School said they were more interested in firm action to prevent future assaults than a presidential visit.

"I don't want Trump to come, but we want more gun safety," said 18-year-old Kevin Trejos, a senior at the school. "It's a dream. It hasn't hit me yet. When I see empty desks, I'll feel it. I'm numb now."

More than 1,000 people had attended a candlelight vigil Thursday night near the school, and at one point some began chanting, "No more guns! No more guns!"

The president made the trip to meet with first responders soon after Air Force One arrived in West Palm Beach for the president to spend the weekend at his Palm Beach estate, which is about 40 miles from Parkland.

In a departure from the Trumps' original schedule, Mrs. Trump arrived at Air Force One separately from her husband for the flight to Florida and boarded the plane while reporters were kept away. A spokeswoman said the change was due to scheduling.

As he departed the White House, Trump ignored shouted questions from journalists about a report in The New Yorker magazine that he had an affair in 2006 with a Playboy model.

Mrs. Trump spoke at the Sheriff's Office. She thanked law enforcement officials "for taking care of our children" and added: "They were put through a lot in what they were experiencing two days ago and we need to take care of them."

Thomas reported from Washington. AP writers Jon Lemire in New York, Zeke Miller in Washington and Josh Replogle in Parkland, Fla., contributed to this report.

Follow Lucey on Twitter at [http://twitter.com/@catherine\\_lucey](http://twitter.com/@catherine_lucey) and Thomas at <http://twitter.com/@KThomasDC>

Link to Trump tweet on hospital visit: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/964724390637244417>

## **Indictment: Social media firms got played by Russian agents**

**By MATT O'BRIEN and MAE ANDERSON, AP Technology Writers**

The election-interference indictment brought by Robert Mueller, the U.S. special counsel, underscores how thoroughly social-media companies like Facebook and Twitter were played by Russian propagandists.

And it's not clear if the companies have taken sufficient action to prevent something similar from happening again.

Thirteen Russians, including a businessman close to Vladimir Putin, were charged Friday in a plot to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election through social media propaganda. The indictment said the Russians' conspiracy aimed, in part, to help Republican Donald Trump and harm the prospects of his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The alleged scheme was run by the Internet Research Agency, a troll farm based in St. Petersburg, Russia, which used bogus social media postings and advertisements fraudulently purchased in the name of Americans to try to influence the White House race.

"I created all these pictures and posts, and the Americans believed that it was written by their people," wrote one of the defendants, Irina Kaverzina, in an email to a family member obtained by investigators.

Tech companies have spent months pledging to fix their platforms ahead of the upcoming midterm elections this year, and reiterated those promises Friday. Twitter said in a Friday night statement it "committed to addressing, mitigating, and ultimately preventing any future attempts to interfere in elections and the democratic process, and to doing so in the most transparent way possible." Facebook thanked U.S. investigators for taking "aggressive action" and pointed out its own role in helping the investigation.

Researchers, however, noted that the companies' business incentives don't necessarily align with improved security and anti-hoaxing measures that might have frustrated Russian agents.

"I've never been convinced that these sites are motivated to fix a problem like this," said Notre Dame

business professor Timothy Carone, who added that security controls make it harder for sites like Facebook to offer users new features and keep advertisers happy. "It's a really, really, really difficult problem."

The indictment confirms earlier findings from congressional investigations that Russian agents manipulated social media to promote social division by mimicking grassroots political activity. It also underscores that the problem wasn't just "bots" — i.e., automated social-media accounts — but human conspirators who fine-tuned propaganda and built online relationships with American activists.

"The idea wasn't necessarily to help one political party over another, but to sow as much discord as possible," said Melissa Ryan, a Democratic social media marketing expert who now keeps track of right-wing online activity. "This was America that was attacked."

Social-media companies weren't the only ones subverted in the influence campaign. Federal prosecutors allege that Russian criminals used PayPal as a primary conduit to transfer money for general expenses and to buy Facebook ads aimed at influencing voters. Prosecutors say the accounts were opened using fake identities to help bypass PayPal's security measures.

PayPal spokesman Justin Higgs said the San Jose, California, company has been cooperating with the Justice Department and is "intensely focused on combatting and preventing the illicit use" of its services.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, Facebook Chief Technology Officer Mike Schroepfer outlined the complexity of preventing abuse.

"Election integrity is challenging because again, you're dealing with adversaries," Schroepfer said during a conference in Half Moon Bay, California. "They are trying to accomplish a goal and they have smart people who are trying to figure out their way into the system to accomplish that."

For instance, infiltrators often react immediately to countermeasures. If they figure out Facebook is checking the internet addresses of computers to identify visitors from particular countries, Schroepfer said, "they'll take over a machine with malware in the U.S. and post from there instead. People say, 'Why don't you just check the currency or the IP address?' And as soon as you do that, literally that afternoon, they will change tactics."

Schroepfer said the company is making "good headway" on the problem, although he declined to give specifics. "By kind of doing a lot better job of trying to figure out the authenticity of these different actors, we can certainly stop that sort of behavior," he said. "There's a big focus on that."

On the other hand, now that the Russians have shown how this sort of campaign is done, the door is open for others — including American special interest groups — to use the same tactics to target disaffected voters in the right places, said David Gerzof Richard, a communications professor at Emerson College.

"This is the new norm," he said. "It's not going away. It's not going to be magically fixed by a Silicon Valley CEO or a group of executives saying they're going to do better."

AP Technology Writer Ryan Nakashima in Half Moon Bay, California, contributed to this report.

## Kelly overhauls White House clearance procedure

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Under pressure over his handling of abuse allegations against a top aide, White House chief of staff John Kelly has ordered sweeping changes in how the White House clears staff members to gain access to classified information, acknowledging that the administration "must do better" in how it handles security clearances.

Kelly issued a five-page memo Friday that acknowledged White House mistakes but also put the onus on the FBI and the Justice Department to provide more timely updates on background investigations, asking that any significant derogatory information about staff members be quickly flagged to the White House counsel's office.

The issue has been in the spotlight for more than a week after it was revealed that former staff secretary Rob Porter had an interim security clearance that allowed him access to classified material despite allegations of domestic violence by his two ex-wives.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 32 of 39

"Now is the time to take a hard look at the way the White House processes clearance requests," Kelly wrote in the memo. "We should — and in the future, must — do better."

The memo said the FBI and Justice Department had offered increased cooperation and, going forward, all background investigations of top officers "should be flagged for the FBI at the outset and then hand-delivered to the White House Counsel personally upon completion. The FBI official who delivers these files should verbally brief the White House Counsel on any information in those files they deem to be significantly derogatory."

Dozens of White House aides have been working under interim clearances for months, according to administration officials, raising questions about the administration's handling of the issue and whether classified information has been jeopardized.

Kelly's plan would limit interim clearances to 180 days, with an option to extend them another 90 days if background checks had not turned up significant troubling information. The memo also recommends that all Top Secret and SCI (Sensitive Compartmented Information) clearances that have been pending since last June be discontinued in a week.

That change could potentially put at risk the clearance of Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and a powerful senior adviser. Kushner's attorney, Abbe Lowell, told The Associated Press this week that Kushner has been working on an interim clearance for more than a year as his background check was being conducted.

Lowell said again Friday that "there are a dozen or more people at Mr. Kushner's level whose process is delayed" and "it is not uncommon for this process to take this long in a new administration."

He added, "The new policy announced by General Kelly will not affect Mr. Kushner's ability to continue to do the very important work he has been assigned by the President." But Lowell did not respond to questions about whether Kushner's clearance would be stripped or whether his role would require him to avoid looking at documents for which he did not possess clearance.

A White House spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment about Kushner's situation.

The memo is addressed to White House counsel Don McGahn, who has also been criticized for his role in the Porter matter, as well as national security adviser H.R. McMaster. Copies were sent to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and FBI Director Christopher A. Wray.

The memo also warned about issues with the security clearance process across the federal government. U.S. officials said numerous U.S. government agencies in addition to the White House routinely grant interim clearances.

At the State Department, interim clearances are granted by Diplomatic Security after a review of an employee's completed SF-86 questionnaire and initial checks of public records, a State official said. If any derogatory information turns up, no interim clearance is issued and the worker must wait until the full investigation is finished, said the official, who wasn't authorized to discuss the clearance process and demanded anonymity.

The White House has struggled to explain its handling of the Porter matter, offering several versions of events in recent days.

McGahn was apprised of at least some of the accusations about Porter at least four times, including as early as January 2017, according to White House officials familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters. In November, one official said, one of Porter's ex-girlfriends called McGahn to describe allegations of domestic abuse by the aide. Kelly, meanwhile, said he first learned something was wrong with Porter's clearance in November.

Trump officials have faulted the FBI and the White House Personnel Security Office for not passing along sensitive information about Porter. The staff secretary, who had access to classified documents delivered to the president, maintained his interim clearance until he resigned last week.

A sense of unease about Kelly's fate has persisted in recent days.

For months, Kelly — with help from Porter — had established a semblance of stability in a White House



often rattled by an unpredictable president. That has eroded in a week's time, as accounts about the handling of the Porter matter continue to shift and some aides came to believe Kelly lied to save face and save his job.

Trump has complained to confidants that Kelly let the scandal spin out of control and that the constantly shifting narratives made the White House — and, by extension, Trump himself — look amateurish and incompetent, according to one person familiar with the discussions but not authorized to talk about them publicly.

The president has floated names of possible replacements but there was no sign that a move was imminent. The president is known to frequently poll his advisers about the performance of senior staff but is often reluctant to actually fire aides.

In the memo, Kelly defended his handling of clearances, including his order in September to cease granting new interim clearances unless the chief of staff had given his blessing.

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Associated Press writers Josh Lederman and Zeke Miller contributed from Washington.

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

## **Romney makes it official: He's running for Utah Senate seat**

**By MICHELLE L. PRICE and BILL BARROW, Associated Press**

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Former presidential hopeful Mitt Romney is running for a Utah Senate seat, officially launching his political comeback attempt Friday by praising his adopted home state as a model for an acrimonious national government in Washington.

Having been one of the Republican Party's fiercest internal critics of President Donald Trump, Romney didn't mention the administration or Trump himself in a campaign announcement posted online.

The closest allusion to Trump was Romney noting that Utah "welcomes legal immigrants from around the world," while "Washington sends immigrants a message of exclusion."

In an interview Friday with The Associated Press, Romney said he will continue to speak out when he takes exception to something the president says or does.

"I call them like I see them. Neither he nor I are likely to change very much," Romney said, adding that they could work together on policy. "You can expect me to be as forthright as I have traditionally been."

Romney, 70, will be the heavy favorite for the Senate seat being opened by Sen. Orrin Hatch's retirement. Hatch was among the first Republicans to pitch Romney as his potential successor, and gave Romney a memo last year outlining his case for why Romney should run, the former presidential candidate confirmed Friday.

Romney said he won't run for president again but wouldn't rule out seeking re-election in six years if he wins Utah's Senate seat this November.

"It's a little early to make that decision, but I recognize that I'm getting into this for the long haul. At age 70, that may not be three or four terms, but it may well be two," he said.

Romney demurred when asked if he'd seek or accept Trump's endorsement and said he's focusing his campaign on Utah, where he moved with his wife, Ann, after losing the 2012 presidential election to incumbent Democrat Barack Obama.

Romney, a former Massachusetts governor and wealthy business executive, would come to Capitol Hill with a higher profile than a typical freshman senator. Romney acknowledged that to the AP, saying, "I can fight for the people of Utah and do more for Utah than the average junior senator might be able to accomplish."

That reality was made clear by immediate reactions to his announcement from across the political spectrum.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, whom Romney tapped as his vice presidential running mate in 2012, immediately hailed his old partner's "unparalleled experience, conservative leadership and lifetime of service."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 34 of 39

Democrats, despite not yet offering any credible threat to the Republican dominance in Utah, answered with a scathing rebuke, dismissing Romney's periodic criticisms of Trump. "Mitt Romney desperately wants to separate himself from the extremism of the current administration," said Democratic National Committee spokesman Vedant Patel in a statement, but the "basic policies of Trump's GOP ... were his before they were Donald Trump's."

Hours after making his campaign announcement early Friday, Romney filed paperwork with Utah's elections office allowing him to start collecting the signatures of 28,000 registered Republicans to earn a spot on a June primary ballot.

He then toured a dairy farm in the northern Utah city of Ogden and dropped by a campaign volunteer booth set up at Utah Valley University in Orem, where he posed for pictures with a mob of excited college students.

Romney used his first big speech as a Utah Senate candidate Friday night to call for action to prevent another deadly mass shooting like the one at a Florida high school that killed 17 people.

He says it's "wrong and unacceptable for children in our schools to fear for their lives." Shootings will keep happening, he said, unless action is taken to prevent them, such as strengthening the FBI database of gun buyers and enhancing school security.

Romney supporters describe him as a "favorite son" of Utah. He's a Brigham Young University graduate who went on to turn around the scandal-plagued 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah and become the first Mormon presidential nominee of a major political party. About 60 percent of Utah's residents are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Some Utah Republicans may still question whether the one-time abortion-rights supporter is too much of an outsider or too moderate for their tastes, but he's not expected to face any serious primary or general election challenge.

Romney attracted headlines in 2016 when he took the extraordinary step of delivering a biting speech denouncing Trump, calling him a "phony" who was unfit for office. Romney muted his criticism for a time when Trump auditioned him as a potential secretary of state.

For his part, Trump has said Romney "choked like a dog" in his failed presidential bids in 2012 and four years earlier, when Romney lost the GOP nomination to Arizona Sen. John McCain.

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Barrow reported from Atlanta. Follow Price and Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/michelleprice> and <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> .

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This story has corrected a quote from Democratic National Committee spokesman Vedant Patel to say "basic policy" instead of "basis policy."

## **Indictment: Social media firms got played by Russian agents**

**By MATT O'BRIEN and MAE ANDERSON, AP Technology Writers**

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And it's not clear if the companies have taken sufficient action to prevent something similar from happening again.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 35 of 39

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"This is the new norm," he said. "It's not going away. It's not going to be magically fixed by a Silicon Valley CEO or a group of executives saying they're going to do better."

AP Technology Writer Ryan Nakashima in Half Moon Bay, California contributed to this report.

## Magnitude-7.2 earthquake slams south, central Mexico

By PETER ORSI and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN, Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A powerful magnitude-7.2 earthquake shook south and central Mexico Friday, causing people to flee swaying buildings and office towers in the country's capital, where residents were

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 36 of 39

still jittery after a deadly quake five months ago.

Crowds gathered on Mexico City's central Reforma Avenue as well as on streets in Oaxaca state's capital, nearer the quake's epicenter, which was in a rural area close to Mexico's Pacific coast and the border with Guerrero state. There were no immediate reports of deaths.

"It was awful," said Mercedes Rojas Huerta, 57, who was sitting on a bench outside her home in Mexico City's trendy Condesa district, too frightened to go back inside. "It started to shake; the cars were going here and there. What do I do?"

She said she was still scared thinking of the Sept. 19 earthquake that caused 228 deaths in the capital and 141 more in nearby states. Many buildings in Mexico City are still damaged from that quake.

The U.S. Geological Survey originally put the magnitude of Friday's quake at 7.5 but later lowered it to 7.2. It said the epicenter was 33 miles (53 kilometers) northeast of Pinotepa in southern Oaxaca state. It had a depth of 15 miles (24 kilometers).

Mexican Civil Protection chief Luis Felipe Puente tweeted that there were no immediate reports of damages from the quake. The Oaxaca state government said via Twitter that only material damages were reported near Pinotepa and Santiago Jamiltepec, but that shelters were opened for those fleeing damaged homes.

The Mexico City Red Cross said via Twitter that the facade of a building collapsed in Mexico City's Condesa neighborhood, which was hit hard on Sept. 19. A video showed people walking through a dust cloud. But reporters at the scene later found no evidence of a collapse at the location given.

About an hour after the quake, a magnitude 5.8 aftershock also centered in Oaxaca caused tall buildings in Mexico City to briefly sway again.

USGS seismologist Paul Earle said Friday's earthquake appeared to be a separate temblor, rather than an aftershock of a Sept. 7 earthquake also centered in Oaxaca, which registered a magnitude of 8.2. The Sept. 19 earthquake struck closer to Mexico City.

The Sept. 7 quake killed nearly 100 people in Oaxaca and neighboring Chiapas, but was centered about 273 miles (440 kilometers) southwest of Friday's earthquake, Earle said.

In Mexico's capital, frightened residents flooded into the streets in Condesa, including one unidentified woman wrapped in just a towel, but there were no immediate signs of damage.

"I'm scared," said Rojas Huerta, recalling five months ago when buildings fell as she ran barefoot into the street. "The house is old."

AP science writer Seth Borenstein in Washington contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to say that earlier Oaxaca earthquake was on Sept. 7 not 8.

## Russians charged with meddling in 2016 presidential race

By ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an extraordinary indictment, the U.S. special counsel accused 13 Russians Friday of an elaborate plot to disrupt the 2016 presidential election, charging them with running a huge but hidden social media trolling campaign aimed in part at helping Republican Donald Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The federal indictment, brought by special counsel Robert Mueller, represents the most detailed allegations to date of illegal Russian meddling during the campaign that sent Trump to the White House. It also marks the first criminal charges against Russians believed to have secretly worked to influence the outcome.

The Russian organization was funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the indictment says. He is a wealthy St. Petersburg businessman with ties to the Russian government and President Vladimir Putin.

Trump quickly claimed vindication Friday, noting in a tweet that the alleged interference efforts began in 2014 — "long before I announced that I would run for President."

"The results of the election were not impacted. The Trump campaign did nothing wrong — no collusion!" he tweeted.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 37 of 39

But the indictment does not resolve the collusion question at the heart of the continuing Mueller probe, which before Friday had produced charges against four Trump associates. U.S. intelligence agencies have previously said the Russian government interfered to benefit Trump, including by orchestrating the hacking of Democratic emails, and Mueller has been assessing whether the campaign coordinated with the Kremlin.

The latest indictment does not focus on the hacking but instead centers on a social media propaganda effort that began in 2014 and continued past the election, with the goal of producing distrust in the American political process. Trump himself has been reluctant to acknowledge the interference and any role that it might have played in propelling him to the White House.

The indictment does not allege that any American knowingly participated in Russian meddling, or suggest that Trump campaign associates had more than "unwitting" contact with some of the defendants who posed as Americans during election season.

But it does lay out a vast and wide-ranging Russian effort to sway political opinion in the United States through a strategy that involved creating Internet postings in the names of Americans whose identities had been stolen; staging political rallies while posing as American political activists and paying people in the U.S. to promote or disparage candidates.

While foreign meddling in U.S. campaigns is not new, the indictment for an effort of this scope and digital sophistication is unprecedented.

"This indictment serves as a reminder that people are not always who they appear to be on the internet," Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said Friday. "The indictment alleges that the Russian conspirators want to promote discord in the United States and undermine public confidence in democracy. We must not allow them to succeed."

The 13 Russians are not in custody and not likely to ever face trial. The Justice Department has for years supported indicting foreign defendants in absentia as a way of publicly shaming them and effectively barring them from foreign travel.

The surreptitious campaign was organized by the Internet Research Agency, a notorious Russian troll farm that the indictment says sought to conduct "information warfare against the United States of America."

The company, among three Russian entities named in the indictment, had a multimillion-dollar budget and hundreds of workers divided by specialties and assigned to day and night shifts. According to prosecutors, the company was funded by companies controlled by Prigozhin, the wealthy Russian who has been dubbed "Putin's chef" because his restaurants and catering businesses have hosted the Kremlin leader's dinners with foreign dignitaries.

Prigozhin said Friday he was not upset by the indictment.

"Americans are very impressionable people," he was quoted as saying by Russia's state news agency. They "see what they want to see."

Also Friday, Mueller announced a guilty plea from a California man who unwittingly sold bank accounts to Russians involved in the interference effort.

The election-meddling organization, looking to conceal its Russian roots, purchased space on computer servers within the U.S., used email accounts from U.S. internet service providers and created and controlled social media pages with huge numbers of followers on divisive issues such as immigration, religion and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Starting in April 2016, the indictment says, the Russian agency bought political ads on social media supporting Trump and opposing Clinton without reporting expenditures to the Federal Election Commission or registering as foreign agents. Among the ads: "JOIN our #HillaryClintonForPrison2016" and "Donald wants to defeat terrorism ... Hillary wants to sponsor it."

"They engaged in operations primarily intended to communicate derogatory information about Hillary Clinton, to denigrate other candidates such as Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, and to support Bernie Sanders and then-candidate Donald Trump," the indictment states.

The indictment details contacts targeting three unnamed officials in the Trump campaign's Florida operation. In each instance, the Russians used false U.S. personas to contact the officials. The indictment doesn't say if any of them responded, and there's no allegation that any of the campaign officials knew

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 38 of 39

they were communicating with Russians.

Two of the defendants traveled to the U.S. in June 2014 to gather intelligence on social media sites and identify targets for their operations, the indictment alleges. Following the trip, the group collected further intelligence by contacting U.S. political and social media activists while posing as U.S. citizens. They were guided by one contact to target "purple states like Colorado, Virginia and Florida," prosecutors say.

Cruz and Rubio ran against Trump in the Republican primary; Sanders opposed Clinton in the Democratic primary.

According to one internal communication described by prosecutors, the specialists were instructed to "use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump—we support them)." And according to one internal review, a specialist was criticized for having a low number of posts criticizing Clinton. The person was told "it is imperative to intensify criticizing Hillary Clinton" in future posts.

The indictment also asserts that the posts encouraged minority groups not to vote or to vote for third parties and alleged Democratic voter fraud.

Ahead of a Florida rally, the Russians paid one person to build a cage on a flatbed truck and another to wear a costume portraying Clinton in a prison uniform. But they also organized some rallies opposing Trump, including one in New York after the election called "Trump is NOT my president."

The Russians destroyed evidence of their activities as Mueller's investigation picked up, with one of those indicted sending an email in September 2017 to a family member that said the FBI had "busted" them so they were covering their tracks.

That person, Irina Viktorovna Kaverzina, wrote the family member, "I created all of these pictures and posts, and the Americans believed that it was written by their people."

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Desmond Butler, Raphael Satter and Tom LoBianco contributed to this report.

Online: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4380517-Russia-probe-indictments.html>

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Feb. 17, the 48th day of 2018. There are 317 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 17, 1968, the original Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, located on the campus of Springfield College in Massachusetts, was opened to the public.

On this date:

In 1815, the United States and Britain exchanged the instruments of ratification for the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

In 1864, during the Civil War, the Union ship USS Housatonic was rammed and sunk in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, by the Confederate hand-cranked submarine HL Hunley in the first naval attack of its kind; the Hunley also sank.

In 1865, during the Civil War, Columbia, South Carolina, burned as the Confederates evacuated and Union forces moved in.

In 1897, the forerunner of the National PTA, the National Congress of Mothers, convened its first meeting in Washington.

In 1913, the Armory Show, a landmark modern art exhibit, opened in New York City.

In 1925, the first issue of The New Yorker magazine (bearing the cover date of Feb. 21) was published.

In 1933, Newsweek magazine was first published under the title "News-Week."

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. forces invaded Eniwetok Atoll, encountering little initial resistance from Imperial Japanese troops. (The Americans secured the atoll less than a week later.)

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 218 ~ 39 of 39**

In 1959, the United States launched Vanguard 2, a satellite which carried meteorological equipment.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon departed the White House with his wife, Pat, on a historic trip to China.

In 1988, Lt. Col. William Higgins, a Marine Corps officer serving with a United Nations truce monitoring group, was kidnapped in southern Lebanon by Iranian-backed terrorists (he was later slain by his captors).

In 1996, world chess champion Garry Kasparov beat IBM supercomputer "Deep Blue," winning a six-game match in Philadelphia (however, Kasparov lost to Deep Blue in a rematch in 1997).

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush rejected proposed Democratic changes to his prized AIDS relief program, issuing a challenge to Congress from Tanzania to "stop the squabbling" and renew it as is. (Bush signed a compromise version into law in July 2008.) Kosovo declared itself a nation in defiance of Serbia and Russia. Ryan Newman snapped an 81-race winless streak, giving car owner Roger Penske his first Daytona 500 victory. The East beat the Western Conference 134-128 in the NBA All-Star Game played in New Orleans.

Five years ago: Danica Patrick won the Daytona 500 pole, becoming the first woman to secure the top spot for any Sprint Cup race. (Patrick covered the 2½-mile Superspeedway in 45.817 seconds, averaging 196.434 mph. A week later, Jimmie Johnson won the race, while Patrick finished eighth.) The Western Conference beat the East 143-138 in the NBA All-Star game played in Houston. Mindy McCready, 37, who'd hit the top of U.S. country music charts before personal problems sidetracked her career, died by her own hand in Heber Springs, Arkansas.

One year ago: Over the strong objections of environmental groups, the Senate confirmed Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency; Pruitt was sworn in later in the day by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito. Making his debut on the world stage, Vice President Mike Pence arrived in Germany, looking to reassure skeptical allies in Europe about U.S. foreign policy under President Donald Trump, who had made his "America First" mantra a centerpiece of his new administration.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Hal Holbrook is 93. Actor-comedian Barry Humphries (aka "Dame Edna") is 84. Country singer-songwriter Johnny Bush is 83. Actress Christina Pickles is 83. Football Hall of Famer Jim Brown is 82. Actress Brenda Fricker is 73. Actress Becky Ann Baker is 65. Actress Rene Russo is 64. Actor Richard Karn is 62. Actor Lou Diamond Phillips is 56. Basketball Hall of Famer Michael Jordan is 55. Actor-comedian Larry, the Cable Guy is 55. TV personality Rene Syler is 55. Movie director Michael Bay is 54. Singer Chante Moore is 51. Rock musician Timothy J. Mahoney (311) is 48. Actor Dominic Purcell is 48. Olympic gold and silver medal skier Tommy Moe is 48. Actress Denise Richards is 47. Rock singer-musician Billie Joe Armstrong (Green Day) is 46. Rock musician Taylor Hawkins (Foo Fighters) is 46. Actor Jerry O'Connell is 44. Country singer Bryan White is 44. Actress Kelly Carlson is 42. Actor Ashton Holmes is 40. Actor Conrad Ricamora is 39. Actor Jason Ritter is 38. TV personality Paris Hilton is 37. Actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt is 37. TV host Daphne Oz is 32. Actor Chord Overstreet is 29. Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran is 27. Actress Meaghan Martin is 26. Actress Sasha Pieterse is 22.

Thought for Today: "Life resembles a novel more often than novels resemble life." — George Sand, French author (1804-1876).