

# Groton Daily Independent

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Chicken Soup  
for the Soul

“VERY LITTLE  
IS NEEDED TO MAKE  
A HAPPY LIFE; IT IS ALL  
WITHIN YOURSELF, IN  
YOUR WAY OF THINKING.”

- MARCUS AURELIUS  
ANTONINUS

## Groton Area School is Closed Today

- 1- Recycling trailers
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Treeline Tree Service Ad
- 1- Garbage Pickup is Tomorrow
- 2- City Council Story
- 2- Help Wanted at Groton Care & Rehab
- 2- Book Fair Ad
- 3- Gov. Dugaard Signs Bills Into Law
- 3- Governor Closes Additional State Offices Due to Blizzard Conditions
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**Sperry Stump Removal** Tyler: 605/216-8431  
**Over 30 Years of Combined Experience!**  
TJ: 605/380-7915 **TreeLine Tree Service**



**Garbage Pickup will be on Wednesday,  
March 7th this week NOT TUESDAY!!  
Thanks for your cooperation!!**

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

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

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## Skating Rink is now closed

Hannah Lewandowski, ice skating house manager, came before the council Monday evening to discuss the skating house. She said that there were still a lot of skaters even after the Carnival of Silver Skates. Councilman Karyn Babcock asked how her year as manager went and she said, "It was kind of fun." The skating rink is now closed for the season.

The city used the new steamer and it worked very well in thawing some of the storm sewer inlets.

Mayor Scott Hanlon talked about the sidewalk along SD37 and he noticed the school did a nice job cleaning their sidewalk, but nothing was done north of the elementary school.

Five damaged poles will be replaced with the insurance covering the cost. The total cost from the insurance will be \$3,655. The other three poles the Baseball Foundation will pick up the cost so all of the poles match.

The 2018 street seal project was presented to the council. Then other streets were discussed and Mayor Hanlon said that Meadowbrook Lane would be good test area for the city to do the work themselves. "It would save the city a lot of money," he said.

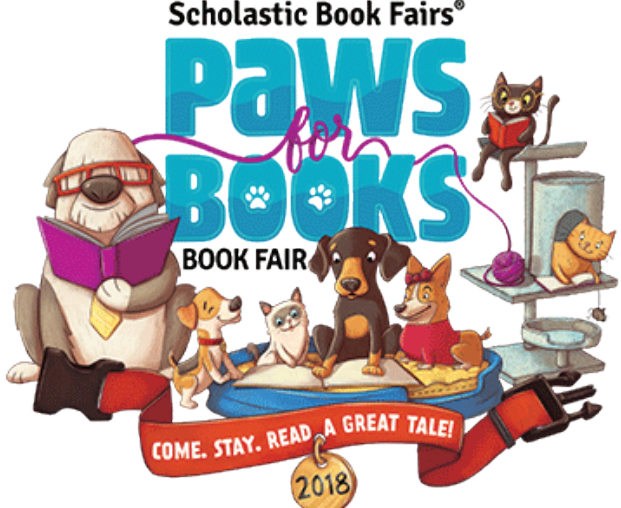
The annual drinking water report was presented to the council. The city will get another water quality award - 17 years in a row.

Jay Peterson and Scott Hanlon will attend the SDML Annual District Meeting in Roscoe on March 21 and Hope Block will attend the meeting in Selby on March 22.

The council agreed to donate a family pool pass and two season baseball tickets for the PAC Elementary School Carnival.

The second reading of the summer salary ordinance was approved.

Finance Officer Hope Block presented the 2017 Annual Report along with the supporting documents. Councilman Burt Glover asked if next year, the council could get a copy of the documents at the end of February so they would have time to review the information. "There are a lot of numbers for us to go through in 20 minutes and we can't ask any intelligent questions in this short of a period of time." The



**Scholastic Book Fairs®**  
**PAWS for BOOKS**  
BOOK FAIR  
COME. STAY. READ. A GREAT TALE!  
2018

**"Paws for Books"**  
**Scholastic Book Fair**  
**When: Tuesday, March 13, 2018**  
**3:30 to 7:30 p.m.**  
**Where: Groton Area Elementary**  
**School Library**

## Maintenance Supervisor Wanted:

Under the direction of the Facility Administrator, the Maintenance Supervisor oversees the daily operations of the Maintenance. Performs maintenance and repair of physical structures of buildings.

## Day Shift C.N.A. Wanted

### Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ **\$1,500 for CNAs** ☆☆☆

Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.

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



**1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton**

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council had to approve the financial report at the meeting. Block said that she cannot submit the report to the legislative audit until the council gives the okay.

After an executive session, the council hired the following summer help contingent on completing a 2018 city application.

Pool managers: Kami Lipp, Brenda Madsen and Karla Pasteur.

Lifeguards: Marlee Jones, Payton Maine, Rebecca Fliehs, Cody Swanson, Emma Donley, Nicole Marzahn, Eliza Wanner, Audrey Wanner, Luke Thorson, Seric Shabazz, Jasmine Schaller, Kaycie Hawkins, Tricia Keith, Tady Glover, Tylan Glover, Jasmine Schinkel, Kelly Hanson, Thomas Cranford, Tanae Lipp, Alexis Hanten, Grace Wambach and Kenzie McInerney.

Ballfield: Grounds Keepers: Wyatt Locke, Truitt Rogers, Darien Shabazz, Brandon Keith.

Gatekeeper: Katie Hansen.

Baseball Coordinator: Matt Locke

Jr. Teener: Adam Herman

Public Works: Jim Gerdes, Brian Gravatt, Aaron Severson, Heather Nelson (part time custodian).

## Gov. Daugaard Signs Bills Into Law

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Daugaard signed the following bills into law yesterday afternoon:

SB 25 – revise certain fees for entities permitted under the national pollutant discharge elimination system.

SB 41 – revise certain provisions regarding the registration of snowmobiles.

SB 42 – revise certain provisions regarding the issuance of a motor vehicle title.

SB 61 – revise certain provisions regarding sex offender registration.

SB 64 – revise certain provisions related to attempted human trafficking in the first degree and to provide a penalty therefor.

HB 1077 – update certain language regarding capital punishment and to revise the mandatory sentence for persons with an intellectual disability convicted of murder in the first degree.

HB 1094 – revise certain provisions regarding limitations on licensees engaged in the business of making loans.

HB 1101 – revise certain provisions regarding used motorcycles offered for sale at an event.

HB 1147 – revise certain provisions concerning property tax collections, delinquent property taxes, tax certificates, and tax deeds.

HB 1159 – revise certain notification provisions regarding damage of underground facilities.

HB 1173 – provide for inactive status of airport liquor licenses.

HB 1185 – establish provisions regarding the storage of wine at certain licensed premises.

HB 1213 – revise certain provisions regarding telephone and telegraph corporations.

## Governor Closes Additional State Offices Due to Blizzard Conditions

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard has expanded the list of South Dakota counties where state offices are closed today (Tuesday) because of the blizzard and winter storm impacting the state.

The order includes not only the 13 counties where the offices were closed Monday, but 10 additional counties as well.

State offices are closed Tuesday in the counties of: Aurora, Bon Homme, Brule, Campbell, Charles Mix, Davison, Douglas, Faulk, Grant, Gregory, Hand, Hughes, Hutchinson, Hyde, Jones, Lyman, Potter, Roberts, Stanley, Sully, Tripp, Walworth and Yankton.

Only essential personnel within state offices in those counties should report to their work stations.

The state Capitol in Pierre remains open and the state Legislature is meeting as scheduled. Call the Legislative Research Council at 605-773-3251 for more information.



## The Life of Hank Kurtz

Hank Kurtz was born February 26, 1946, to Darrel and Cora (Jensen) Kurtz in Groton, SD. He attended elementary and junior high school at Joan of Arc school, a half mile from the family farm and graduated from Groton High School in 1965.

He joined the United States Air Force after high school and served as a flight crewman for medical evacuations during the Vietnam War. While stationed at McCord AFB in Tacoma, WA, he met the love of his life, Joyce, and they spent 49 years in marriage until his death.

They moved back to Groton, SD, where he worked on the family farm until 1974, when he enrolled in the Denver Automotive and Diesel School studying diesel mechanics. After completing his degree, he returned to SD and worked as construction and feedlot foreman for Delzer Construction in Spearfish. Hank opened D.G. Kurtz Trucking and ran his company for many years. In addition to over the road trucking, he loved to help family and friends doing any projects and building things. He spent many hours working with his children and grandchildren sharing his skills and knowledge. He was completely devoted to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Darwin "Hank" Kurtz, 71, of Whitewood, SD, lost his battle with cancer on February 5, 2018. After a brief but fierce fight, he passed away in the hospice unit in the VA hospital at Ft. Meade, SD.

He is survived by his wife Joyce; children, Laura (Dennie) Clausen, Everett, WA, Deb (Ted) Bartunek, Rapid City, SD, and Bill (Jen) Kurtz, Chamberlain, SD; grandchildren, Adria (Dale) Gohman, St Cloud, MN, Megan (Justin) Long, Red Owl, SD, Andrew Aker, Ft. Benning, GA, Trevor Bartunek, Phoenix, AZ, Austin Bartunek, Rapid City, SD, and Autumn and Ainsley Kurtz, Chamberlain, SD; great-grandchildren, Jerika, Keaton, and Tavin Gohman, and Lexi, Leigha, Drew, and Dawson Long; sisters and brothers, Karon Kurtz and Duane Kurtz of Aberdeen, SD, Shirley Simon, Yuma, AZ, Lois (Victor) Schwahn, San Jacinto, CA, Connie Olson, Rapid City, SD, and Dennis (Sue) Kurtz, Claremore, OK; one aunt, Abbie Jensen, Spearfish, SD; and numerous nieces and nephews across the country.

He is preceded in death by his parents and one sister, Myrtle.

Services were held Friday, February 9, 2018, at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Whitewood, SD, followed by interment at Black Hills National Cemetery.

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## Today in Weather History

March 6, 1987: Twenty-eight cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Pickstown, South Dakota was the hot spot in the nation with a reading of 83 degrees. The high of 71 at Saint Cloud, Minnesota smashed their previous record by 21 degrees.








March 6, 2000: A grass fire of unknown origin was exacerbated by dry conditions and strong winds, burning 1500 acres of grassland northwest and north of Brandon in Minnehaha County. The fire threatened several homes, but no homes were damaged; although farmland and some equipment burned. In a separate event the same day, a controlled burn went out of control, exacerbated by the conditions and strong winds. The fire caused one fatality and one injury. Damage was confined to grassland.

1962: The strongest nor'easter of this century struck the Mid-Atlantic Region on March 5-9, 1962. It is known as the "Ash Wednesday Storm" and caused over \$200 million (1962 dollars) in property damage and major coastal erosion from North Carolina to Long Island, New York. In New Jersey alone, it was estimated to have destroyed or greatly damaged 45,000 homes. The Red Cross recorded that the storm killed 40 people. It hit during "Spring Tide." When the sun and moon are in phase, they produce a higher than average astronomical tide. Water reached nine feet at Norfolk (flooding begins around five feet). Houses were toppled into the ocean and boardwalks were broken and twisted. The islands of Chincoteague and Assateague, Maryland were completely underwater. Ocean City, Maryland sustained significant damage mainly to the south end of the island. Winds up to 70 mph built 40-foot waves at sea. Heavy snow fell in the Appalachian Mountains. Big Meadows, southeast of Luray, recorded Virginia's greatest 24-hour snowfall with 33 inches and the most significant single storm snowfall with 42 inches. (Luray, Virginia reported 33.5 inches on March 2-3, 1994 making this later snow their maximum 24-hour snowfall total.) Roads were blocked, and electrical service was out for several days. Washington and Baltimore fell into the mixed precipitation zone. The Ash Wednesday storm is noteworthy for producing devastating tidal flooding along the Atlantic Coast as well as record snows and the interior of a Virginia. The extremely high tides and massive waves caused tremendous damage -worst in many of the hurricanes that have hit the region. Along the Atlantic Coast tide ran for 2 to 6 ft above average with 20 to 40 ft waves crashing ashore. National Airport received only 4 inches of snow with a liquid equivalent of 1.33 inches. However, close-in suburbs, such as Silver Spring, Maryland and Falls Church, Virginia and received 11 inches of snow. Outlying areas such as Rockville, Maryland received 19 inches of snow and Leesburg, Virginia received 20 inches of snow. Other snow totals included 15 inches at Richmond; 23 inches at Culpeper; 26 inches at Charlottesville; 32 inches at Winchester; and 35 inches at Fort Royal, Virginia and Big Meadows on the Skyline Drive top the list with 42 inches of snow. [Click HERE](#) for more information from the Washington Post.

2014: The Great Lakes saw some of their worst ice cover in nearly four decades because of a frigid winter with months of below-freezing temperatures in large sections of the northern United States, the National Ocean, and Atmospheric Administration said. As of March 6, 2014, 92.2 percent of the five lakes were under ice, breaking a record set in 1973 but still short of the 94.7 percent established in 1979, the federal agency said.

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Tue Mar 6	Wed Mar 7	Thu Mar 8	Fri Mar 9	Sat Mar 10	Sun Mar 11	Mon Mar 12
Partly Cloudy 						
28°F 13°F	26°F 4°F	27°F 14°F	31°F 17°F	31°F 16°F	31°F 12°F	35°F 15°F
N 21 MPH Precip 40%	NW 13 MPH Precip 20%	S 6 MPH	SSE 9 MPH Precip 20%	NW 13 MPH Precip 10%	WNW 8 MPH	S 8 MPH

## Winter Driving



- \* Take it **SLOW** on wet, snowy, or icy roads
- \* Drive cautiously and defensively
- \* Stay on well-traveled roads when possible
- \* Inform others of your travel plans & times

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

## Diminishing Snow & Winds Today

Additional Snow Today  
around 1" or less



### Blowing Snow Diminishing

Winds 15 to 30 mph with gusts to 40 mph, diminishing this afternoon and evening. Strongest winds over western and central South Dakota

graphic created:  
3/6/2018 5:22 AM

Published on: 03/06/2018 at 5:27AM

Take it slow today on the snowy and icy roads. Snow will slowly taper off today, with additional daytime amounts of around an inch or less. Blowing snow may linger through the afternoon, and gusty winds slowly diminish. Check out your latest forecast at [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)

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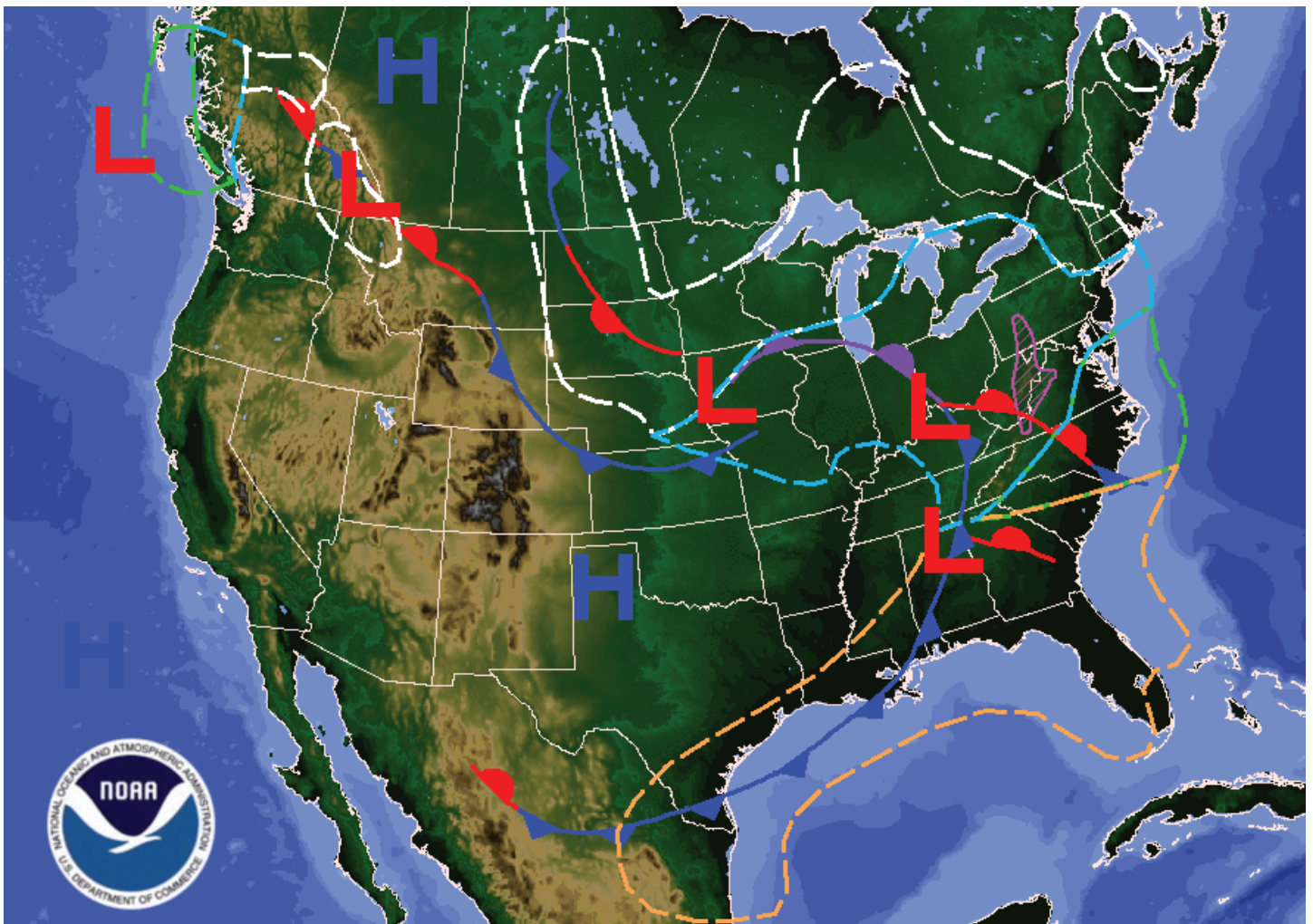
## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp:** 38.2 F at 12:07 AM  
**Low Outside Temp:** 27.3 F at 11:25 PM  
**Wind Chill:**  
**High Gust:** 27.0 Mph at 12:09 AM  
**Precip:** .78 moisture through noon yesterday

Snow amount around 9 inches

## Today's Info

**Record High:** 69° in 2000  
**Record Low:** -16° in 1899  
**Average High:** 35°F  
**Average Low:** 16°F  
**Average Precip in March:** 0.17  
**Precip to date in March:** 0.78  
**Average Precip to date:** 1.19  
**Precip Year to Date:** 1.35  
**Sunset Tonight:** 6:27 p.m.  
**Sunrise Tomorrow:** 7:00 a.m.



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Tue, Mar 06, 2018, issued 4:12 AM EST  
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center  
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

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## AN IMPORTANT WARNING!

The road to spiritual, mental and physical healing is often long and difficult. Sometimes it takes us through long periods of dark days and long nights when it seems as though we are left to survive on our own. We struggle and strain and worry and work but it seems as though we will be left to our own abilities.

There is great advice in today's verse: "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' Your love, O Lord, supported me." Before the Psalmist fell, he recognized that he was facing a situation, having to solve a problem or make a decision that could have been disastrous to his well-being. So, he did not wait until calling on God was too late - that his testimony and witness to the grace of God would be too late - he out maneuvered Satan. When he realized that his foot was slipping he called on God and God's love supported him! He did not need to ask for forgiveness - he asked God to intervene immediately and sustain him.

As Paul brought his second letter to Timothy to a close, he must have had this verse in mind. "Timothy," he wrote, "the Lord stood at my side and gave me the strength that I needed, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and that all the Gentiles might hear it."

Paul recognized how important it was for him to depend on God's strength and not his own. He knew that the battle was not his but the Lord's. So, rather than let his witness be destroyed, He called on God.

Prayer: Father, help us to realize that our strength is limited and Yours isn't. May we learn to depend on You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 94:18 If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up.



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## 2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/28/2018 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 3/24/2018 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 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

## News from the Associated Press

### **Blizzard warning continues Tuesday in South Dakota**

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Parts of central and north central South Dakota remain under a blizzard warning with officials warning against travel due to dangerous whiteout conditions.

The National Weather Service expects the snow to gradually diminish Tuesday morning, but winds were expected to remain strong. School districts, including Sioux Falls, Harrisburg and Lennox, canceled classes due to the conditions.

Parts of North Dakota are dealing with heavy snowfall, including Kulm which has received a foot of snow and Williston which got 11 inches. Minot received at least 10 inches.

A winter storm warning remained in effect Tuesday along a path from Brookings, South Dakota to the northwestern border of North Dakota.

### **General Mills, Annie's Mac & Cheese tap South Dakota farm**

By **STEVE KARNOWSKI, Associated Press**

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — General Mills announced a deal Tuesday to create South Dakota's largest organic crop farm as the food giant works to secure enough organic ingredients to meet growing consumer demand worldwide.

Gunsmoke Farms will convert 34,000 acres — more than 53 square miles — near Pierre to organic by 2020, giving it enough space for all the organic wheat needed to make General Mills' popular Annie's Macaroni & Cheese line.

General Mills, which is guaranteeing a market for the wheat, is working with Madison, Wisconsin-based Midwestern BioAg to develop the crop rotation and soil-building program needed for such a large farm to go organic.

"We're kind of obsessed with soil," Carla Vernon, president of General Mills' Annie's unit in Berkeley, California, told The Associated Press ahead of the announcement. "And that's because we know the power of soil is big."

Golden Valley, Minnesota-based General Mills, like many other food companies, has ambitious environmental goals, and like other big industry players it has bought smaller brands and tweaked its own products to appeal to consumers who want more organic and natural products. It wants to double its organic acreage by 2020 and to cut greenhouse gas emissions 28 percent by 2025 throughout its supply chain all the way down to consumers, because it believes climate change will be bad for business. The company's chief sustainability officer, Jerry Lynch, said it's on pace to meet its organic acreage goal well ahead of schedule.

Lynch said the project is one of several sites where General Mills is pilot-testing the same regenerative practices. The company will measure results in sequestering carbon in the soil, increasing biodiversity on the landscape and bringing socio-economic benefits to local communities.

Gunsmoke Farms will also carve out around 3,000 acres of pollinator habitat in cooperation with the Portland, Oregon-based Xerces Society. General Mills and Xerces announced a partnership in 2016 to add more than 100,000 acres of bee and butterfly habitat on or near existing crop lands.

General Mills bought Annie's — a brand known for its rabbit logo and bunny-shaped snacks — in 2014 for \$820 million. While Gunsmoke Farms will become a huge supplier, Vernon pointed out that Annie's also works with small farms. It's partnering now with two farmers in Montana who use regenerative practices, and it will roll out single-source, limited-edition organic macaroni and cheese and bunny graham crackers this month.

South Dakota doesn't have much organic agriculture now — just 86 certified farms with 115,780 total acres during the 2016 growing season, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics. And a little more than half that is pasture or rangeland rather than crop acres.

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Gunsmoke Farms is owned by San Francisco-based TPG, a private global investment company with an interest in sustainability. TPG bought the farm recently from Fargo, North Dakota-based R.D. Offutt Co, best known as a potato company, which used it primarily to grow conventional wheat, corn, soybeans and sunflowers. Midwestern BioAg will work with local managers on the three-year process of converting the land to organic.

Gary Zimmer, founder of Midwestern BioAg, said it's his biggest project yet in 30 years of converting land to organic. He said the land at Gunsmoke Farms needs natural waterways re-established, as well as cover crops, no-till practices and the addition of lots of trace minerals.

Since the area is fairly dry, he said, it needs deeply rooted plants to trap rainwater and to build up organic matter in the soil. The crop rotation will include legumes such as peas, clover and alfalfa, which add nitrogen to fertilize the soil.

"I think everybody's going to be watching it, so we have to make sure we do a lot of things right," he said.

## Mooney, S. Dakota beat Denver, advance to Summit title game

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Matt Mooney scored 20 points on 8-of-10 shooting to help No. 2 seed South Dakota beat third-seeded Denver 76-58 on Monday night in the Summit League Tournament semifinals.

The Coyotes, who have won nine of their last 10 games since an 84-68 loss at Denver on Jan. 27, will play top-seeded South Dakota State in Tuesday's championship game. South Dakota (26-7) split its regular-season series with the Jackrabbits, handing South Dakota State its only conference loss of the season.

A win in the title game would clinch South Dakota's first NCAA Tournament berth and tie the Coyotes' single-season record for wins.

Ade Murkey's jumper about five minutes in gave Denver (15-15) a 5-4 lead, but Mooney answered with a jumper and Triston Simpson followed with a layup and then a 3-pointer to spark a 22-4 run over the next six-plus minutes and South Dakota led by double figures the rest of the way.

The Pioneers, who came in ranked No. 38 in Division I in field goal percentage (.479) and No. 7 in 3-point field-goal percentage (.410), shot just 32.6 percent (22 of 67) from the field and a season-low 15 percent (3 of 20) from beyond the arc.

Daniel Amigo led Denver with 16 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks. The Pioneers had their five-game win streak snapped.

## South Dakota State beats North Dakota State 78-57

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — David Jenkins Jr. had 24 points on 10-of-15 shooting and South Dakota State beat North Dakota State 78-57 in the Summit League Tournament semifinals on Monday night.

Mike Daum added 19 points and 11 rebounds for the top-seeded Jackrabbits (27-6), who won their 10th straight and matched the program record for wins in a season (2003-04 and 2011-12).

South Dakota State will face No. 2 seed South Dakota in the championship on Tuesday night.

The Jackrabbits went on an 18-2 run to build their largest lead of the game at 75-45 and led by over 20 points the rest of the way.

South Dakota State opened the game on a 10-0 run and led 36-12 on Jenkins' jumper with 3:06 left in the half. No. 5 seed North Dakota State had a 19-3 run covering both halves to pull within 39-31 early in the second half but would get no closer.

Tyson Ward had 15 points to lead the Bison (15-17). Paul Miller added 14 points, Cameron Hunter scored 11 and A.J. Jacobson 10.

## Winter storm threatens foot of snow for parts of Midwest

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A large storm brought freezing rain, heavy snow and strong winds to a large swath of the Midwest on Monday, snarling traffic and forcing the closure of some schools and government

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offices.

The system by midweek also was expected to cause more problems for the Northeast, which is dealing with the aftermath of a destructive and deadly nor'easter.

Parts of the Dakotas were expected to get more than a foot of snow by the time the system moved east on Tuesday, with Minnesota, Nebraska and Iowa also getting significant amounts, according to the National Weather Service.

Snowfall reports from the agency as of mid-afternoon Monday totaled as much as 6 inches in South Dakota and 9 inches in North Dakota and Minnesota.

State transportation officials advised against travel in parts of the upper Midwest, and a 211-mile stretch of Interstate 90 in southeastern South Dakota was shut down. I-29 also was set to shut down Monday evening from the North Dakota border to Iowa.

The Highway Patrol in Minnesota reported dozens of crashes, several with injuries. Crash reports were much lighter in the Dakotas, though there were numerous reports of vehicles sliding off icy highways.

"We've been really telling people not to drive, not to travel," South Dakota Department of Public Safety spokesman Tony Mangan said.

There were 120 flight cancellations and more than 300 delays at the Minneapolis airport as of late afternoon, according to Metropolitan Airports Commission spokesman Patrick Hogan.

Closures affected mostly elementary and secondary schools, though several colleges and universities also shut down their campuses for the day. Among them were the University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University, affecting more than 26,000 students. Those large schools don't often shut down due to weather.

"Safety is always the key factor," UND spokesman Peter Johnson said.

South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard ordered state offices to close in 13 counties, though the Legislature was meeting as scheduled in Pierre. North Dakota's Human Services Department also shut down some outlying offices.

The storm system rolled in from the Pacific and is making its way to the East Coast. By Wednesday it could be causing more problems for the Northeast, which is cleaning up from a weekend nor'easter, said Frank Pereira, a meteorologist with the weather service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

The nor'easter knocked out power to more than 2 million homes and businesses, flooded coastal towns and forced a number of school districts to cancel classes. It was blamed for nine deaths from Virginia to Massachusetts.

Though it's too early to detail specific impacts of the storm that will move east out of the Midwest, "this looks to be a significant event for at least a portion of the Northeast," Pereira said. "A good swath of 6 to 12 inches of snow may fall across portions of the Northeast, and may include the Boston and New York areas."

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

## Lawmakers pass new rules for initiative petition circulators

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Legislature has approved a bill that would require ballot question signature gatherers to provide more information to voters.

Senators voted 18-15 Monday to send the bill to Gov. Dennis Daugaard. It would require circulators to provide petition signers their name, email and phone number.

Republican Sen. Jeff Monroe, a supporter, says people who sign petitions have to give their information away, but there's nothing identifying petition circulators.

Democratic Sen. Troy Heinert, an opponent, was concerned about requiring younger people who are gathering signatures to release personal phone numbers or email addresses.

## US oil expected to meet most of world's growth in demand

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By DAVID KOENIG, AP Business Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — A global energy group says booming production in the United States will meet most of the world's growth in demand for oil in the next few years.

The International Energy Agency believes U.S. oilfields will offset slow growth from the OPEC cartel.

The group, based in Paris, issued its annual oil market report on Monday. The resurgence in U.S. production is the most prominent change since the group's last forecast.

The agency continues to worry that globally, investment in new production has not rebounded from the oil-price plunge that started in mid-2014, raising the possibility of future shortages and price spikes.

The IEA predicts that within five years, the cushion of production capacity over expected demand will fall to its lowest level since 2007. That was the year before the price for oil in the U.S. surged close to \$150. Prices are less than half that today.

The energy agency, which advises energy-consuming countries, said Monday that global energy demand will grow about 7 percent by 2023, to 104.7 million barrels of oil per day. Citing the production capabilities of drillers operating in U.S. shale fields, the world capacity to produce oil will hit 107 million barrels a day.

The strongest growth is expected to come from the Permian Basin, a vast oil and gas pool that lies under parts of Texas and New Mexico. Output there is expected to double by 2023.

The energy group forecasts that the U.S. will supply enough oil to meet 80 percent of the growing demand over the next three years, and Canada, Brazil and Norway will meet the rest.

All that U.S. production should keep prices at the pump from rising. The energy group's director, Fatih Birol, said the study assumed oil prices around \$60 a barrel, which is just below the current international benchmark price of \$65.64 a barrel.

Meanwhile, the energy agency has scaled back its forecast of output from OPEC, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, a sign of the United States' ascendancy in energy.

For more than a year, OPEC and other producers including Russia have limited production, a strategy that helped boost crude prices. Benchmark crude has roughly doubled since bottoming in early 2016.

The rebound, however, also spurred more drilling in the U.S., where operators found success in shale formations stretching from Texas to North Dakota to the Northeast. And with U.S. production expected to keep surging, OPEC's caps may prove less effective in boosting prices.

Speaking at the CERAWEEK IHS Markit conference on Monday, OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo sidestepped questions about the cartel's next steps. A decision on extending the production limits beyond this year will be made at meetings in June and November, he said.

OPEC representatives planned to meet Monday night with executives from some of the U.S. shale producers — a follow-up to an ice-breaking meeting on the sidelines of the same conference a year ago.

Barkindo said the OPEC side wanted to learn how the Americans were able to use technology, cut costs, and still boost productivity.

"We are not talking about prices. We are not talking about production cuts," he said.

Environmentalists, scientists and some energy analyst question whether the world is rapidly approaching a "peak demand" scenario as policies are enacted to reduce carbon emissions from burning coal, oil and natural gas.

Birol said, however, that his group sees no sign that demand for fossil fuels will peak — or even plateau — in the next five years.

## Out-of-state disclaimer for initiative ads fails in Senate

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota voters will not be seeing ballot question advertisements with the disclaimer: "Paid for in-part with out-of-state money."

The state Senate voted 27-6 Monday to reject a bill that would have required ballot measure campaigns that accepted a donation that exceeded \$10,000 from outside South Dakota to put the disclaimer on communications such as brochures, billboards and broadcast advertisements.

The bill had passed through the House of Representatives. Republican Sen. Al Novstrup, a supporter,

says it was a "transparency issue." Senate Democratic Leader Billie Sutton questioned whether a ballot question campaign that ordered handouts before getting an out-of-state contribution exceeding \$10,000 would have to throw away those materials and start over.

He urged lawmakers to use "common sense" and defeat the measure.

## **Twin legislator pay raise bills advance at SD state Capitol**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Twin bills that would give South Dakota legislators a pay raise and tie their salaries to the state's median household income are advancing at the Capitol.

House lawmakers voted 49-15 Monday to approve one proposal. The Senate State Affairs Committee voted earlier that day to send a mirror version to the Senate floor.

Republican Sen. Jeffrey Partridge says the measure aims to fairly compensate future lawmakers in order to encourage a wider range of qualified candidates to run for office.

Republican Sen. Stace Nelson, an opponent, says there are many qualified South Dakotans who are willing to serve.

The bills would set legislators' salaries at one-fifth of the South Dakota median household income. That would increase pay to more than \$10,000, up from lawmakers' current salary of \$6,000 per session plus a per diem allowance.

## **Craft brewing compromise moves to South Dakota House floor**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House panel has approved a bill that would ease a state production limit and other regulations on microbreweries.

The House Commerce and Energy Committee voted 11-1 Monday to send the measure to the chamber's floor. Gov. Dennis Daugaard has pushed for the brewing overhaul, saying state regulations are stifling the industry.

The advancing bill comes after competing microbrewing measures at the Capitol initially pit beer distributors against craft brewers. Senate lawmakers united around the compromise last month, voting unanimously to send the bill to the House.

It would create a microbrewery license allowing the businesses to produce 30,000 barrels of beer annually, up from 5,000 barrels, and let craft brewers bypass distributors to sell up to 1,500 barrels of their suds each year directly to bars.

## **Single-subject mandate for constitutional changes advances**

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A measure that would ask South Dakota voters to mandate that constitutional amendments encompass only one subject is headed to the full Senate.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted 6-3 Monday to approve the resolution, which would put the constitutional change on the November ballot. It has passed through the state House.

House Speaker Mark Mickelson, the sponsor, says supporters want to make sure voters understand what they're voting for.

Rebecca Terk, a lobbyist for conservation and family agriculture group Dakota Rural Action, opposed the proposal. She questioned how the plan would work and says it would clutter up the ballot.

## **Seoul: Koreas agree to hold summit talks at border in April**

**By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has agreed to meet with South Korea's president next month and impose a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests if his country holds talks with the United States, a senior South Korean official said Tuesday after returning from the North.

The agreements, which follow a flurry of cooperative steps taken by the Koreas during last month's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, brightened prospects for a dialogue between North Korea and the U.S.

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over the North's nuclear program.

Last year saw increased fears of war on the Korean Peninsula, with Kim and President Donald Trump exchanging fiery rhetoric and crude insults over Kim's barrage of weapons tests.

But there is still skepticism whether the developments can help establish genuine peace between the Koreas, which have a long history of failing to follow through with major rapprochement agreements.

The United States has also made it clear that it doesn't want empty talks with North Korea and that all options, including military measures, remain on the table.

Chung Eui-yong, South Korea's presidential national security director, said after returning from North Korea on Tuesday that the two Koreas agreed to hold their summit at a tense border village in late April. He also said the leaders will establish a "hotline" communication channel between them to lower military tensions, and would speak together before the planned summit.

Chung led a 10-member South Korean delegation that met with Kim during a two-day visit to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital. They were the first South Korean officials to meet the young North Korean leader since he took power after his dictator father's death in late 2011. Chung's trip also was the first known high-level visit by South Korean officials to North Korea in about 11 years.

The Koreas are to hold working-level talks ahead of the summit between Kim and liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in. If realized, it would be the third-ever such a meeting since the Koreas' 1945 division. The two past summits, in 2000 and 2007, were both held in Pyongyang between Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, and two liberal South Korean presidents. They resulted in a series of cooperative projects that were scuttled during subsequent conservative administrations in South Korea.

Chung said North Korea also expressed willingness to hold a "candid dialogue" with the United States to discuss its nuclear disarmament and establish diplomatic relations. While such talks with the United States are underway, Chung said North Korea "made it clear that it won't resume strategic provocations like additional nuclear tests or test-launches of ballistic missiles."

North Korea also said it would not need to keep its nuclear weapons if military threats against it are removed and it receives a credible security guarantee, Chung said. He said the North promised not to use its nuclear and conventional weapons against South Korea.

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's Sejong Institute said the agreements "potentially pave the way for meaningful dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang" and offer an opportunity to stably manage the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile programs.

"Getting North Korea to agree to halt additional nuclear weapons and missile tests while the dialogue goes on is the biggest achievement of the visit to Pyongyang by the South Korean presidential envoys," he said.

## UK counterterror help inquiry after ex-Russian spy collapses

By **MARTIN BENEDYK** and **KATE DePURY**, Associated Press

SALISBURY, England (AP) — British counterterror specialists offered expertise to police in southern England on Tuesday as they sought to unravel the mystery of why a former Russian spy collapsed and became critically ill following exposure to an "unknown substance."

Authorities maintained a cordon near the spot — a bench near a shopping mall — where former double agent Sergei Skripal and an unidentified woman collapsed Sunday in Salisbury, 90 miles (145 kilometers) southwest of London. A 33-year-old woman was with him and British media reported that the woman was Skripal's daughter.

Though authorities were trying to keep an open mind, the incident drew parallels to the death of former Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned with radioactive polonium 11 years ago in London.

"I think we have to remember that Russian exiles are not immortal, they do all die and there can be a tendency for some conspiracy theories," Metropolitan Police assistant commissioner Mark Rowley told the BBC.

"But likewise we have to be alive to the fact of state threats as illustrated by the Litvinenko case."

Skripal, 66, who was convicted in Russia on charges of spying for Britain and sentenced in 2006 to 13

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years in prison. He was freed in 2010 as part of a spy swap, which followed the exposure of a ring of Russian sleeper agents in the United States.

The Kremlin said Russia hasn't been approached by British authorities to help in the investigation. But Dmitry Peskov, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, said Tuesday at a daily conference call with media in Russia that "Moscow is always ready to cooperate."

Wiltshire Police, which is responsible for the Salisbury area, said the man and woman appeared to know one another and had no visible injuries.

"They are currently being treated for suspected exposure to an unknown substance. Both are currently in a critical condition in intensive care," police said in a statement.

A small number of emergency services personnel were assessed immediately after the incident, and police said Tuesday that all but one remained hospitalized.

The discovery led to a dramatic decontamination effort. Crews in billowing yellow moon suits worked into the night spraying down the street, and the Salisbury hospital's emergency room was closed. A pub and a restaurant remain "secured," but police didn't say how long the cordons would be in place.

A closed circuit television image of a man and woman walking through an alleyway connecting the Zizzi restaurant and the bench where Skripal and the woman were found is believed to be of interest to police.

"Police had a good look at the footage and were interested in these two people. It was the only image they took away," said Cain Prince, 28, the manager of a nearby gym. "They wanted a list of everyone in the gym between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. as well."

Public records list Skripal as having an address in Salisbury.

Skripal served with Russia's military intelligence, often known by its Russian-language acronym GRU, and retired in 1999. He then worked at the Foreign Ministry until 2003 and later became involved in business.

After his 2004 arrest in Moscow, he confessed to having been recruited by British intelligence in 1995 and said he provided information about GRU agents in Europe, receiving more than \$100,000 in return.

At the time of Skripal's trial, the Russian media quoted the FSB domestic security agency as saying that the damage from his activities could be compared to harm inflicted by Oleg Penkovsky, a GRU colonel who spied for the U.S. and Britain. Penkovsky was executed in 1963.

The circumstances surrounding Sunday's incident were still murky and police urged the public not to speculate. But few could avoid invoking the name of Litvinenko — the former Russian agent who died after drinking polonium-210-laced tea in a swanky London hotel in 2006.

His illness was initially treated as unexplained. Evidence eventually emerged indicating he had been deliberately poisoned with the radioactive material.

A British judge wrote in a 2016 report that Litvinenko's death was an assassination carried out by Russia's security services — with the likely approval of Putin. The Russian government has denied any responsibility.

As British authorities sought answers, the country's senior politicians are expressing alarm. The lawmaker who heads Parliament's foreign affairs committee said the circumstances suggest Russian involvement.

"It is too early to say whether it is certain or not, but it certainly bears all the hallmarks of a Russian attack," Conservative legislator Tom Tugendhat said.

Tugendhat said Britain should mount a robust response if it does turn out to be Russian aggression. He said that could include travel bans, sanctions and the freezing of assets.

"What needs to be done is for the whole government to get involved in responding to what amounts to a soft war against the U.K., taking in the cyberhacking they have done and the various aggressions they have been involved in," he said.

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Kate DePury reported from Moscow. Associated Press writers Danica Kirka and Jill Lawless in London contributed to this story.



## In reversal, former Trump aide says he'll probably cooperate

By JILL COLVIN and TOM LOBIANCO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Trump campaign aide spent much of the day promising to defy a subpoena from special counsel Robert Mueller, even throwing down the challenge to “arrest me,” then backed off his defiance by saying he would probably cooperate in the end.

In an interview Monday night with The Associated Press, Sam Nunberg said he was angry over Mueller’s request to have him appear in front of a grand jury and turn over thousands of emails and other communications with other ex-officials, among them his mentor Roger Stone. But he predicted that, in the end, he’d find a way to comply.

“I’m going to end up cooperating with them,” he said.

It was a reversal from his tone throughout the day, when he lashed out at Trump and his campaign and threatened to defy Mueller in a series of interviews.

“Why do I have to do it?” Nunberg told CNN of the subpoena. “I’m not cooperating,” he said later as he challenged officials to charge him.

In the earlier interviews, Nunberg said he thought Mueller may already have incriminating evidence on Trump directly, although he would not say what that evidence might be.

“I think he may have done something during the election,” Nunberg told MSNBC of the president, “but I don’t know that for sure.” He later told CNN that Mueller “thinks Trump is the Manchurian candidate.” A reference drawn from a Cold War novel and film, a “Manchurian candidate” is an American brainwashed or otherwise compromised to work on behalf of an adversarial government.

Shortly after Nunberg lobbed the first allegation, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders rebuffed him during the White House press briefing.

“I definitely think he doesn’t know that for sure because he’s incorrect. As we’ve said many times before, there was no collusion with the Trump campaign,” Sanders said. “He hasn’t worked at the White House, so I certainly can’t speak to him or the lack of knowledge that he clearly has.”

Nunberg also said he thinks former Trump foreign policy adviser Carter Page, a key figure in the Russia investigation, worked with the Kremlin. “I believe that Carter Page was colluding with the Russians,” Nunberg said on CNN. “That Carter Page is a weird dude.”

Page called Nunberg’s accusations “laughable” in a comment to The Associated Press.

The Justice Department and FBI obtained a secret warrant in October 2016 to monitor Page’s communications. His activities during the presidential campaign that raised concerns included a July 2016 trip to Moscow.

In the interviews, Nunberg said he believes the president probably knew about the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting between his eldest son, top campaign staff and a team of Russians, which Trump has denied. And he blamed Trump for the investigation into Russia meddling, telling MSNBC that he was “responsible for this investigation ... because he was so stupid.”

A spokesman for the special counsel’s office declined to comment.

During his afternoon tirades, Nunberg detailed his interview with Mueller’s investigators, mocking them for asking such questions as if he had heard Russian being spoken in Trump Tower. He then said he would reject a sweeping demand from Mueller for communications between him and top Trump advisers.

“I think it would be funny if they arrested me,” Nunberg said on MSNBC.

He later added on CNN: “I’m not going to the grand jury. I’m not going to spend 30 hours going over my emails. I’m not doing it.”

Nunberg said he’d already blown a 3 p.m. Monday deadline to turn over the requested communications. He said he’d traded numerous emails a day with Stone and former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, and said spending 80 hours digging through his inbox to find them all was unreasonable.

But in his call with the AP, Nunberg said he might be more willing to comply if Mueller’s team limits the scope of its request.

“I’m happy if the scope changes and if they send me a subpoena that doesn’t include Carter Page,” he

said, insisting the two had never spoken.

He also said he believes the only reason he's being asked to testify before the grand jury is to provide information that would be used against Stone, a longtime Trump adviser, which he says he won't do.

Nunberg is the first witness in the ongoing federal Russia investigation to openly promise to defy a subpoena. But he's not the first to challenge Mueller: Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort filed a lawsuit in January challenging Mueller's authority to indict him.

It's unclear how much Nunberg would know about the inner workings of the Trump campaign or the White House. He never worked at the White House and was jettisoned from the Trump campaign early on, in August 2015, after racist social media postings surfaced. Trump filed a \$10 million lawsuit against Nunberg in July 2016, accusing him of violating a nondisclosure agreement, but they settled the suit one month later.

John Dean, a White House counsel to President Richard Nixon during Watergate, tweeted Monday that Nunberg can't flatly refuse to comply with a grand jury subpoena.

"This is not Mr. Nunberg's decision, and he will be in criminal contempt for refusing to show up. He can take the Fifth Amendment. But he can't tell the grand jury to get lost. He's going to lose this fight."

Nunberg appeared pleased by his performance, telling the AP that he was "doing something I've never seen."

"They don't know what's going on," he said, speculating that Mueller would not appreciate his comments and suggesting the authorities might send police to his apartment.

His usual cockiness, however, did appear, at times, to ebb. At the end of an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper, Nunberg asked whether the TV anchor thought he should instead cooperate with Mueller.

"If it were me, I would," Tapper responded, telling Nunberg: "Sometimes life and special prosecutors are not fair, I guess."

## Republicans want Trump to back off his tariff proposal

By KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a remarkably public confrontation, House Speaker Paul Ryan and other Republican allies of President Donald Trump are pleading with him to back away from his threatened international tariffs, which they fear could spark a dangerous trade war. Trump retorted: "We're not backing down."

The president on Monday said U.S. neighbors Canada and Mexico would not be spared from his plans for special import taxes on steel and aluminum, but he held out the possibility of later exempting the longstanding friends if they agree to better terms for the U.S. in talks aimed at revising the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"We've had a very bad deal with Mexico; we've had a very bad deal with Canada. It's called NAFTA," he declared.

Trump spoke shortly after a spokeswoman for Ryan, a Trump ally, said the GOP leader was "extremely worried" that the proposed tariffs would set off a trade war and urged the White House "to not advance with this plan."

Likewise, Republican leaders of the House Ways and Means Committee circulated a letter opposing Trump's plan, and GOP congressional leaders suggested they may attempt to prevent the tariffs if the president moves forward.

Trump's pledge to implement tariffs of 25 percent on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminum imports has roiled financial markets, angered foreign allies and created unusual alliances for a president who blasted unfavorable trade deals during his 2016 campaign. Union leaders and Democratic lawmakers from Rust Belt states have praised the planned tariffs, joining with advocates within the administration including Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and White House trade adviser Peter Navarro.

But the president has been opposed internally by Defense Secretary James Mattis and White House economic adviser Gary Cohn, who warned against penalizing U.S. allies and undercutting the economic

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benefits of the president's sweeping tax overhaul.

Likewise, the statement from Ryan's office said, "The new tax reform law has boosted the economy, and we certainly don't want to jeopardize those gains."

Asked about that public rebuke, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, "Look, we have a great relationship with Speaker Ryan. We're going to continue to have one, but that doesn't mean we have to agree on everything."

Canada is the United States' No. 1 foreign supplier of both steel and aluminum. Mexico is the No. 4 supplier of steel and No. 7 for aluminum.

Congressional Republicans say any tariffs should be narrow in scope, and they privately warned that Trump's effort could hurt the party's hopes to preserve its majority in the fall elections.

As the president dug in on his position, any potential compromise with foreign trading partners and Republican lawmakers was expected to still include some form of tariffs.

"Trump is not someone who retreats," said Stephen Moore, an economist with the conservative Heritage Foundation and a former campaign adviser. "He's going to need to be able to declare some victory here."

The tariffs will be made official in the next two weeks, White House officials said.

"Twenty-five percent on steel, and the 10 percent on aluminum, no country exclusions — firm line in the sand," said Navarro, speaking on "Fox and Friends."

Republican critics on Capitol Hill and within the administration argue that industries and their workers that rely on steel and aluminum for their products will suffer. The cost of new appliances, cars and buildings will rise for Americans if the president follows through, they warn, and other nations could retaliate.

Two dozen conservative groups, including the Club for Growth, FreedomWorks and the National Taxpayers Union, urged Trump to reconsider, writing in a letter that the tariffs would be "a tax on the middle class with everything from cars to baseball bats to even beer."

The Trade Partnership, a consulting firm, said the tariffs would increase U.S. employment in the steel and aluminum sector by about 33,000 jobs but would cost 179,000 jobs in the rest of the economy.

The end result could erode the president's base of support with rural America and even the blue-collar workers the president says he's trying to help.

"These are people that voted for him and supported him in these auto-producing states," said Cody Lusk, president of the American International Automobile Dealers Association. Lusk noted that of the 16 states with auto plants, Trump won all but two.

The administration has argued the tariffs are necessary to preserve the American aluminum and steel industries and protect national security. But Trump's comments and tweets early Monday suggested he was also using them as leverage in the current talks to revise NAFTA. The latest round of a nearly yearlong renegotiation effort is concluding this week in Mexico City.

At those talks, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said Monday that progress has been less than many had hoped and "our time is running short."

"I fear the longer we proceed, the more political headwinds we will feel," he said. And he added that if three-way negotiations don't work, "we are prepared to move on a bilateral basis."

More upbeat about progress until now, Dan Ujcz, a trade attorney with Dickinson Wright PLLC in Columbus, Ohio, said, "We were moving toward the finish line in NAFTA." But he added, "This has the potential to throw the NAFTA talks off track."

He said neither Canada nor Mexico will want to be seen as giving in to U.S. pressure. Indeed, he said, Canada is probably already drawing up lists of U.S. products to tax in retaliation.

Separately, Mexican Economy Secretary Ildefonso Guajardo tweeted: "Mexico shouldn't be included in steel & aluminum tariffs. It's the wrong way to incentivize the creation of a new & modern #NAFTA."

The president opened the door to exempting Canada and Mexico from the tariffs, saying, "That would be, I would imagine, one of the points that we'll negotiate." But he added, "If they aren't going to make a fair NAFTA deal, we're just going to leave it this way."

Trump has long threatened to pull out of the 24-year-old trade pact if it can't be overhauled and encourage manufacturers to bring factory jobs back the United States.

But Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called the tariff plan “absolutely unacceptable.” And overseas, Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, said the European Union could respond by taxing American goods including bourbon, blue jeans and Harley Davidson motorcycles. Trump threatened to tax European cars if the EU boosts tariffs on American products in response to his plan.

“If they want to do something, we’ll just tax their cars that they send in here like water,” Trump has said, lamenting European “trade barriers that are worse than tariffs.”

For congressional leaders, those products hit close to home. The iconic motorcycles are produced in Ryan’s home state of Wisconsin, and Kentucky, the home of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, is well-known for its bourbon.

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Associated Press writers Paul Wiseman, Josh Boak, Zeke Miller and Kevin Freking in Washington and Mark Stevenson and Peter Orsi in Mexico City contributed to this report.

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Follow Ken Thomas on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/KThomasDC>

## **Violence halts rare aid delivery to Syria’s eastern Ghouta**

**PHILIP ISSA, Associated Press**

BEIRUT (AP) — The first aid delivery in weeks to reach the besieged eastern suburbs of Damascus was cut short after Syrian government forces began shelling the area while aid workers were still inside, a local council said Tuesday, amid a renewed escalation in the government’s deadly aerial and ground campaign.

Aid trucks had to leave before they could finish unloading supplies on Monday, as the eastern Ghouta suburbs suffered their worst day of violence since the U.N. Security Council demanded a 30-day cease-fire for Syria.

The Syrian American Medical Society charity, which supports hospitals in eastern Ghouta, said 79 people were killed in shelling and airstrikes, as the government, supported by Russia’s military, pushed its assault on the rebel-held suburbs, where the U.N. estimates close to 400,000 people are trapped under unmanageable levels of violence.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said 80 civilians were killed on Monday.

The Security Council resolution, which passed unanimously on Feb. 25, has gone unheeded. Monday’s aid shipment was the first to enter eastern Ghouta amid weeks of a crippling siege and a government assault that has killed close to 800 civilians since Feb. 18. Aid agencies, however, said Syrian authorities removed basic health supplies, including trauma, surgical kits and insulin, from the convoys before they set off.

The International Committee for the Red Cross also confirmed that its joint convoy with the United Nations had to leave before offloading all its supplies on account of the deteriorating security situation Monday.

Ingy Sedky, the ICRC spokeswoman in Syria, said most of the aid from a 46-truck convoy was delivered to the town of Douma in eastern Ghouta but the mission was cut short before the rest of the supplies could be unloaded.

Iyad Abdelaziz, a member of the Douma Local Council, said nine aid trucks had to leave the area after government shelling and airstrikes intensified in the evening.

Airstrikes continued Tuesday. The opposition’s Syrian Civil Defense search-and-rescue group reported at least nine people were killed in airstrikes on the town of Jisreen, in eastern Ghouta. The group, also known as the White Helmets, added that two of its volunteers, and 28 others, suffered difficulties breathing following shelling on the town of Hammouriyeh on Monday evening. It accused the government of using “poison gas.” The Observatory reported 18 people suffered breathing difficulties, without attributing a cause.

It was the eighth allegation of chlorine gas use reported by the Syrian American Medical Society this year. The reports could not be independently confirmed, and Russia used its Security Council veto to freeze the work of a U.N. body investigating such reports earlier this year.

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Still, the allegations could provoke a response from Washington, which says it could take military action against the Syrian government for continued chemical weapons use against its own people.

The Syrian government, through the SANA state news agency, denied using chemical weapons in its eastern Ghouta offensive.

The convoy that reached Douma on Monday carried only a fraction of the relief needed for the estimated 400,000 people trapped under the government's siege. The U.N.'s humanitarian office said the convoy carried food for 27,500 people.

But it said the Syrian government offloaded 70 percent of the health supplies, including trauma and surgical kits and insulin, before allowing the convoy to enter eastern Ghouta.

The government routinely removes lifesaving medical supplies from aid convoys, in a pattern of denying such aid to civilians living in opposition areas. U.N. officials have complained for years about such actions by the Syrian government.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it was extending an offer to allow armed rebels to leave eastern Ghouta with their families and weapons. Russia has been a staunch ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, helping him turn the tide of the bloody civil war in his favor.

Meanwhile, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said the country plans to establish camps in nine locations in northern Syria to house people displaced by fighting amid Ankara's offensive against Syrian Kurdish fighters.

Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said on Tuesday that the camps would be built in a zone controlled by Turkish-backed forces, as well as in Idlib province where Turkish forces are trying to establish a "de-escalation zone" under an agreement reached between Turkey, Russia and Iran.

Aksoy said the camps would host a total of 170,000 people.

Turkey controls a swath of territory revolving around the town of al-Rai, al-Bab and Jarablus — a border zone that Turkey and Turkey-backed rebels took from the Islamic State group in 2016.

Turkey has also launched a campaign to oust a Syrian Kurdish militia from the enclave of Afrin that Ankara considers to be "terrorist" and linked to an insurgency within Turkey's own borders.

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Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey contributed to this report.

## South Korea meeting thrusts North's Kim into the limelight

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un grins, just on the verge of a belly laugh, as he grasps the hand of a visiting South Korean official. He sits at a wide conference table and beams as the envoys look on deferentially. He smiles broadly again at dinner, his wife at his side, the South Koreans seeming to hang on his every word.

Kim is used to being the center of gravity in a country that his family has ruled with unquestioned power since 1948, but the chance to play the senior statesman on the Korean Peninsula with a roomful of visiting South Koreans has afforded the autocratic leader a whole new raft of propaganda and political opportunities.

Photos released by North Korean state media on Tuesday showing Kim meeting with the envoys on Monday evening are all the more remarkable coming just months after a barrage of North Korean weapons tests and threats against Seoul and Washington had many fearing war.

North Korean TV later broadcast video from the meetings that showed Kim smiling and laughing during the meeting, proposing a toast at the dinner reception, and waving as two limousines carrying the South Korean delegates left the main building of the ruling Workers' Party.

It wasn't immediately clear how the images were reported in North Korea, but they spread rapidly across the southern part of the peninsula a day after the North said Kim had an "openhearted talk" with 10 envoys for South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Kim reportedly expressed his desire to "write a new history of national reunification" during a dinner that the South Korean government said lasted about four hours.

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The meeting marked the first time South Korean officials have met with the young North Korean leader in person since he took power after his dictator father's death in late 2011. It's the latest sign that the Koreas are trying to mend ties after one of the tensest years in a region that seems to be permanently on edge. The South Korean delegation led by presidential national security director Chung Eui-yong returned to the South on Tuesday, hours before Moon's office was to hold a media briefing on the outcome of the visit.

Given the robust history of bloodshed, threats and animosity on the Korean Peninsula, there is considerable skepticism over whether the Koreas' apparent warming relations will lead to lasting peace. North Korea, some believe, is trying to use improved ties with the South to weaken U.S.-led international sanctions and pressure, and to provide domestic propaganda fodder for Kim.

But each new development also raises the possibility that the rivals can use the momentum from the good feelings created during North Korea's participation in the South's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics last month to ease a standoff over North Korea's nuclear ambitions and restart talks between the North and the United States.

The role of a confident leader welcoming visiting, and lower-ranking, officials from the rival South is one Kim clearly relishes. Smiling for cameras, he posed with the South Koreans and presided over what was described by the North's official Korean Central News Agency as a "co-patriotic and sincere atmosphere."

Many in Seoul and Washington will want to know if, the rhetoric and smiling images notwithstanding, there's any possibility Kim will negotiate over North Korea's breakneck pursuit of an arsenal of nuclear missiles that can viably target the U.S. mainland.

The North has repeatedly and bluntly declared it will not give up its nuclear bombs. It also hates the annual U.S.-South Korean military exercises that were postponed because of the Olympics but will likely happen later this spring. And achieving its nuclear aims rests on the North resuming tests of missiles and bombs that set the region on edge.

But there was nothing about the Koreas' very real differences in the North Korean report. Kim was said to have offered his views on "activating the versatile dialogue, contact, cooperation and exchange" between the countries.

He was also said to have given "important instruction to the relevant field to rapidly take practical steps" for a summit with South Korean President Moon, which the North proposed last month.

Moon, a liberal who is eager to engage the North, likely wants to visit Pyongyang, its capital. But he must first broker better ties between North Korea and Washington, Seoul's top ally and its military protector.

In the meantime, Moon sent his national security director, Chung, to head the 10-member South Korean delegation. Chung's trip was the first known high-level visit by South Korean officials to the North in about a decade.

Kim was said to have expressed at the dinner his "firm will to vigorously advance the north-south relations and write a new history of national reunification by the concerted efforts of our nation to be proud of in the world."

There is speculation that better inter-Korean ties could pave the way for Washington and Pyongyang to talk about the North's nuclear weapons. The United States, however, has made clear that it doesn't want empty talks and that all options, including military measures, are on the table.

Previous warming ties between the Koreas have come to nothing amid North Korea's repeated weapons tests and the North's claims that the annual U.S.-South Korean war games are a rehearsal for an invasion.

Before leaving for Pyongyang, Chung said he would relay Moon's hopes for North Korean nuclear disarmament and a permanent peace on the peninsula.

Chung's delegation included intelligence chief Suh Hoon and Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung. The South Korean presidential Blue House said the high-profile delegation was meant to reciprocate the Olympic trip by Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, who became the first member of the North's ruling family to come to South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim Yo Jong, who also attended Monday's dinner, and other senior North Korean officials met with Moon during the Olympics, conveyed Kim Jong Un's invitation to visit Pyongyang and expressed their willingness

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to hold talks with the United States.

Having concluded their Pyongyang trip, Chung's delegation is scheduled to fly to the United States to brief officials about the outcome of the talks with North Korean officials.

President Donald Trump has said talks with North Korea will happen only "under the right conditions."

If Moon accepts Kim's invitation to visit Pyongyang, it would be the third inter-Korean summit talks. The past two summits, one in 2000 and the other in 2007, were held between Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, and two liberal South Korean presidents. They resulted in a series of cooperative projects between the Koreas that were scuttled during subsequent conservative administrations in the South.

Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung contributed to this report.

## 2 Senate seats up in Mississippi as GOP defends its majority

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Republicans suddenly find themselves defending two seats in Mississippi this year as they try to maintain their slim majority in the U.S. Senate.

Republican Sen. Roger Wicker is already up for re-election in the deeply conservative state. And 80-year-old Republican Sen. Thad Cochran announced Monday that he is resigning April 1 because of poor health.

Cochran is just over halfway through a six-year term. Republican Gov. Phil Bryant will appoint someone to temporarily succeed Cochran, and a special election will be in November — the same day as the regular election for the seat Wicker now holds. The winner of the special election will serve until January 2021.

Democrats are running for the Wicker seat, and the open seat is expected to attract several candidates from both parties. Democrat Mike Espy, President Bill Clinton's first agriculture secretary, says he has a "strong intention" to run. In 1986 he became the first African-American in modern times to win a congressional seat in Mississippi.

Cochran's departure set off a scramble within a state Republican Party already struggling to manage a disaffected conservative faction. Chris McDaniel, the outspoken, tea party-backed state senator who came close to defeating Cochran in a bitter 2014 Republican primary, qualified last week to challenge Wicker but said he might jump to the special election if the Cochran seat is open. McDaniel said Monday it is "premature" to say what he will do.

Republicans in Washington are hoping to prevent a rough and costly primary season as they struggle to defend their 51-49 hold on the Senate. Some Republicans have doubts about McDaniel's ability to win a general election. And after Republicans' bruising loss in Alabama last year, party leaders are eager to block any risky candidates.

Cochran has been a sporadic presence on Capitol Hill in recent months. He stayed home for a month last fall, returning to Washington in October to give Republicans the majority they needed to pass a budget plan. He has since kept a low profile and an aide ever present at his side.

"I regret my health has become an ongoing challenge," Cochran said in a statement. "It has been a great honor to serve the people of Mississippi and our country. ... My hope is by making this announcement now, a smooth transition can be ensured so their voice will continue to be heard in Washington, D.C."

Cochran was first elected to the Senate in 1978 after serving six years in the House. A mild-mannered Southerner, Cochran came to the Senate when it had a far clubbier atmosphere and he played an insider's game throughout his seven terms — particularly as a member of the powerful Appropriations panel, which had long been a bipartisan powerhouse and way to funnel taxpayer dollars back home.

Cochran chaired the committee twice and used the post to channel money to Mississippi and other Gulf Coast states for Hurricane Katrina recovery after the 2005 storm.

"Thad knows there's a big difference between making a fuss and making a difference. And the people of Mississippi — and our whole nation — have benefited from his steady determination to do the latter," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in a statement.

"I'm devastated. I assumed we would serve out our time together here," said Sen. Patrick Leahy of

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Vermont, the top Democrat on the Appropriations panel. "We've never once had a partisan word between us. And he has always, always, always kept his word — and I wish to heck some other senators around here would learn to do that."

But the old-school Cochran has seemed increasingly out of place in a chamber where partisan elbows are sharper.

Explicit earmarks for home-state projects such as roads and bridges, economic development grants, and help for schools such as Cochran's alma mater, the University of Mississippi, were banned in 2011.

In 2014, he struggled to win a Republican primary over McDaniel, who received financial support from libertarian-leaning groups that criticized Cochran as a big spender.

That race grabbed national attention after a McDaniel supporter entered a nursing home without permission and photographed Cochran's wife, Rose, who was bedridden with dementia. Images of her appeared briefly online in a video that attempted to show Cochran was having an inappropriate relationship with one of his longtime staff members, Kay Webber — an accusation he denied. McDaniel said he had no connection to the incident.

Rose Cochran died in December 2014. Thad Cochran married Webber in a private ceremony in May 2015.

Wicker said Monday he and his campaign haven't communicated with McDaniel about which seat he'll seek. Asked if he's relieved because McDaniel might seek the open seat instead of challenging him, Wicker said, "I don't know that." He smiled as he answered the question and told reporters, "I'm smiling because of your persistence."

The Mississippi race was also being eyed by former White House strategist Steve Bannon, who at one point warned of the challenges to GOP incumbents he felt were insufficiently supportive of President Donald Trump.

That effort may have waned, however. Senate Republicans suffered a stunning setback in December when neighboring Alabama elected a Democratic senator, in a special election, for the first time in a generation. Bannon backed Republican Roy Moore, who was accused of sexual impropriety against young women.

Mississippi's governor has not released names of people he will consider appointing to temporarily fill Cochran's seat, though there has been widespread speculation that he might appoint Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves or Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann, both Republicans.

Bryant has not said whether he would consider appointing himself to the Senate. He has told some in the GOP that Trump and McConnell have urged to appoint himself, according to one Republican who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss private conversations.

Bryant is limited to two terms as governor, and his time in that job ends in January 2020. Bryant campaigned for Trump in 2016, and has been to Washington many times in the past year to meet with the president.

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Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor and Lisa Mascaro in Washington and Sarah Mearhoff in Jackson contributed to this report.

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Follow Emily Wagster Pettus on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/EWagsterPettus> .

## Probe finds deadly Niger mission lacked proper approval

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A military investigation into the Niger attack that killed four American service members concludes the team didn't get required senior command approval for their risky mission to capture a high-level Islamic State militant, several U.S. officials familiar with the report said. It doesn't point to that failure as a cause of the deadly ambush.

Initial information suggested the Army Special Forces team set out on its October mission to meet local Nigerien leaders, only to be redirected to assist a second unit hunting for Doundou Chefou, a militant suspected of involvement in the kidnapping of an American aid worker. Officials say it now appears the



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team went after Chefou from the onset, without outlining that intent to higher-level commanders.

As a result, commanders couldn't accurately assess the mission's risk, according to the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the results of the investigation before they're publicly released. The finding will likely increase scrutiny on U.S. military activity in Africa, particularly the role of special operations forces who've been advising and working with local troops on the continent for years.

Four U.S. soldiers and four Nigerien troops were killed Oct. 4 about 120 miles (200 kilometers) north of Niamey, Niger's capital, when they were attacked by as many as 100 Islamic State-linked militants traveling by vehicle and carrying small arms and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Two other American soldiers and eight Nigerien forces were wounded.

The investigation finds no single point of failure leading to the attack, which occurred after the soldiers learned Chefou had left the area, checked his last known location and started for home. It also draws no conclusion about whether villagers in Tongo Tongo, where the team stopped for water and supplies, alerted IS militants to American forces in the area. Still, questions remain about whether higher-level commanders — if given the chance — would have approved or adjusted the mission, or provided additional resources that could have helped repel the ambush.

Army Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman, wouldn't comment on the investigation, beyond saying it's now complete and being reviewed by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and other senior leaders.

The other U.S. officials said the final report could have consequences for U.S. military operations in Africa.

Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, the Africa Command's leader, is expected to recommend greater oversight to ensure proper mission approval and risk assessment, they said. Waldhauser isn't expected to scale back missions in Africa or remove commanders' authorities to make decisions. He is slated to testify before a House committee Tuesday.

The incident is likely to trigger discussions about improved security measures, too, including heavier armored vehicles, better communications and improved individual trackers to make it easier to find missing troops.

Top Africa Command officials, led by its chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier Jr., have spent months trying to unravel the complex incident, conducting dozens of interviews across the U.S., Europe and Africa.

U.S. and Nigerien officials say the troops received intelligence about Chefou's location and acted on what was likely considered a fleeting chance to get him, or at least gather valuable intelligence on the American hostage.

It's unclear where Chefou was believed to be. But before arriving at that location, the U.S.-Nigerien team learned he had left. The troops traveled on to the site to collect any remaining information there. A second U.S. commando team assigned to the mission was unable to go because of weather problems.

One Nigerien official said the troops that reached the destination found food and a motorcycle. They destroyed the motorcycle. The team then headed home, the official said, but stopped in Tongo Tongo to get supplies.

The U.S. investigation notes the team stayed at Tongo Tongo longer than normal, but says there is no compelling evidence to conclude a villager or anyone else deliberately delayed their departure or betrayed them by alerting militants.

The Nigerien official said Abou Walid Sahraoui, an IS leader in the region, heard the team had visited the site of Chefou's last known location. He then dispatched about 20 fighters to pursue the U.S. and Nigerien troops. A larger group of militants followed later, said the official, who also would only discuss the matter on condition of anonymity. U.S. officials couldn't corroborate that information.

Shortly after leaving Tongo Tongo, U.S. and Nigerien forces were attacked and eventually overrun by the IS ambush. Army Sgt. La David T. Johnson, 25, of Miami Gardens, Florida, became separated from the others as he fought and ran for cover in the brush. He was gunned down, but his body wasn't found until two days later.

The other three Americans killed were Staff Sgt. Bryan C. Black, 35, of Puyallup, Washington; Staff Sgt. Jeremiah W. Johnson, 39, of Springboro, Ohio; and Staff Sgt. Dustin M. Wright, 29, of Lyons, Georgia. Black and Wright were Army Special Forces. Johnson and Johnson weren't Green Berets; the others were.

The U.S. troops called for help using the code "Broken Arrow," which signals they were in imminent danger, officials said. They then followed procedures and shut down their radios to prevent the enemies from using them. As a result, they couldn't communicate quickly with French aircraft sent in to rescue them. Some footage of the gruesome battle, taken off one of the U.S. soldier's helmet cameras, surfaced in recent days in an IS propaganda video posted online.

Officials said the procedural breakdown meant the overall mission lacked the higher-level command approval necessary to go after a senior militant. Such missions require approval by senior Special Operations Command officers who would've been in Chad or at Africa Command's headquarters in Germany.

The reporting failure meant those commanders lacked a complete picture of what the unit was doing, so concluded the mission was unlikely to encounter enemy forces. Had the unit gotten proper oversight and approvals, officials said, it might have been better equipped or included additional personnel more capable of sustaining a fight.

Baba Ahmed in Bamako, Mali, contributed to this report.

## Man arrested, accused of stealing McDormand's Oscar trophy

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A man was arrested and is accused of stealing Frances McDormand's Oscars trophy after the Academy Awards on Sunday night, Los Angeles police said.

Terry Bryant, 47, was arrested on suspicion of felony grand theft, said Officer Rosario Herrera, a police spokeswoman.

Video captured by The Associated Press appears to show Bryant walking with the statuette out of the Governors Ball, the Oscars after-party where police say he took it.

The video shows a man in a tuxedo who appears to be Bryant holding an Oscar statuette high and proudly as an onlooker cheers.

"All right baby boys, and baby girls," he says, walking quickly and nearly bumping into a woman.

He then quickly glances around him before walking out of frame, prominently holding the Oscar the entire time.

Another photographer who took Bryant's picture at about the same time did not recognize him as a winner at the ceremony, and began following him, police said.

When he was confronted, Bryant handed back the statuette without a fight, police said.

He was detained by security guards at the event and arrested by Los Angeles police officers. The award was later returned to McDormand.

"After some brief time apart, Frances and her Oscar were happily reunited. They celebrated the reunion with a double cheeseburger from In-N-Out Burger," McDormand's publicist, Simon Halls, told the AP.

McDormand received the Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance in "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri."

The two-time Oscar winner, who swept trophies at the Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild, Independent Spirit and BAFTA ceremonies, beat out Sally Hawkins of "The Shape of Water," Margot Robbie of "I, Tonya," Saoirse Ronan of "Lady Bird," and 21-time nominee Meryl Streep of "The Post" at Sunday's Oscars.

In "Three Billboards," McDormand played Mildred Hayes, a hardened woman seeking justice for her daughter's murder in the crime drama.

Her first Oscar came for the 1996 film "Fargo," directed by her husband Joel Coen.

Bryant was being held on \$20,000 bail Monday, police said.

There was no immediate reply to a message sent to one of Bryant's social media profiles and it wasn't clear if had an attorney who could comment on his behalf.

A video that posted live on a Facebook page that appeared to belong to Bryant showed him kissing and flaunting a statuette during the Governor's Ball.

"Look it, baby. My team got this tonight. This is mine," he said, turning the trophy toward the camera, before kissing it on the head.

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As he spun around in a circle, Bryant solicited congratulations from those around him. "Who wants to wish me congratulations?" he asked fellow revelers who were walking by, before posing for several selfies.

"You know what, I can't believe I got this."

No one named Terry Bryant won an Oscar on Sunday.

AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy in New York and AP videographer Jeff Turner in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

For full coverage of awards season, visit: <https://apnews.com/tag/AwardsSeason>

## Democrats' big Texas turnout may not translate to many wins

By WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Democrats turned out in force ahead of the first-in-the-nation primary Tuesday in what could be an early hint of a midterm election backlash against President Donald Trump, but their party remains a longshot to make much of a dent in Republican political dominance of the state.

Democratic early voting across Texas' 15 most-populous counties, the only figures available, more than doubled that of the last non-presidential cycle in 2014, while the number of Republican early ballots cast increased only slightly. Total Democratic early votes exceeded Republican ones roughly 465,000 to 420,000, though those figures combined accounted for less than 9 percent of the state's total registered voters.

Democrats haven't won any of Texas' 29 statewide offices since 1994, the nation's longest losing streak. That's expected to continue this cycle despite any possible "Trump effect" because Democrats fielded little-known candidates against top Republicans such as Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Even Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has been indicted on felony securities fraud charges, remains favored for re-election.

A record six Texas Republicans and two Democrats are leaving Congress, meaning the state will be losing clout on key House committees. But none of those open seats are expected to flip. They've drawn so many hopefuls from each party, that most primary races won't have anyone winning a majority of Tuesday's votes, meaning runoff elections May 22 will determine who will be on November's general election ballot.

Democrats have a better shot in November of unseating three Republican congressional incumbents — Rep. Pete Sessions in Dallas, Rep. John Culberson in Houston and Rep. Will Hurd in a district stretching hundreds of miles from San Antonio to El Paso. Hillary Clinton beat Trump in all three districts in 2016, but primary runoffs are likely in each of those races.

One of the Democrats leaving his House seat, former punk rock guitarist Beto O'Rourke, has generated national buzz in his uphill bid against Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz. Neither faced serious primary challengers but O'Rourke has outtrailed Cruz and the incumbent has warned conservatives against complacency, suggesting that liberals will "crawl over broken glass in November to vote," against Trump and the GOP.

The Democrats have had their own internal strife in Texas over congressional hopeful Laura Moser, who moved from Washington to her native Houston to try and unseat Culberson. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, fearing Moser may be too liberal to win the general election, blistered her for comments from a 2014 Washingtonian magazine article in which Moser said she'd "rather have her teeth pulled out" than live in rural Paris, Texas. Strategists will be watching if she advances to a runoff despite attacks from fellow Democrats.

Despite that, Texas Democratic Party chairman Gilberto Hinojosa has remained optimistic, noting that Trump beat Clinton by fewer than 10 percentage points in Texas in 2016, the smallest margin of victory for a Republican White House candidate since 1996.

"Texas is the fastest growing state in the country, we're getting younger and increasingly diverse," Hinojosa said. "These demographic shifts are a positive trendline for a big-tent progressive political party."

Republican political consultant Derek Ryan noted that only about 3 percent of those casting ballots early

in the Democratic primary were first-time voters, meaning most Texans participating “were probably voting Democrat in general elections in previous cycles.”

“Three percent, that could make a difference in some smaller races, but in a statewide election I don’t think that’s enough to sway anything,” Ryan said. “Democrats are showing up in the primary election, does that mean more are going to show up in the general election?”

A close Republican primary race Tuesday could be for Land Commissioner, where George P. Bush was the first member of his family to win his first election four years ago but drew an unlikely challenger in Jerry Patterson, a former Bush supporter who preceded him as land commissioner.

Another key contest is the Democratic gubernatorial primary, where the top two contenders in a crowded field are former Dallas County Sherriff Lupe Valdez, backed by the party’s establishment, and Andrew White, who opposes abortion and whose father, Mark, was governor in the 1980s. Neither White nor Valdez may win a majority of Tuesday’s votes, though.

Abbott has an eye-popping \$43 million in campaign cash, tops among gubernatorial hopefuls nationwide, and isn’t expected to be seriously challenged by any Democrat. Instead, he’s focused on attempting to unseat members of his own party, endorsing the Republican primary challengers to three state House incumbents who backed past ethics reform measures that might have limited gubernatorial power. That includes state Rep. Sarah Davis, a suburban Houston Republican who supports abortion rights.

Davis counters that her district’s residents “will not be told for whom to vote.”

## Prosecutors want to paint Cosby as big Hollywood predator

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (AP) — Stung by a hung jury the first time around, prosecutors are pushing to widen the scope of Bill Cosby’s looming retrial to spotlight allegations he is one of the biggest serial predators in a Hollywood suddenly aware of sexual misconduct in the #MeToo era.

The 80-year-old Cosby will be back in a suburban Philadelphia courtroom on Tuesday as his lawyers try to convince a judge to block some of his dozens of accusers from testifying against him at his April 2 retrial.

Prosecutors want as many as 19 of Cosby’s accusers to take the stand as they attempt to show the comedian had a long history of drugging and attacking women. They also are trying to insulate the accuser in his lone criminal case, Andrea Constand, from what a prosecutor called the defense’s “inevitable attacks” on her credibility.

Cosby’s lawyers have argued in writing that some of the aspiring actresses, flight attendants and other women the prosecution wants to call have allegations dating to the 1960s that are impossible to defend against. Some witnesses are dead, memories are shot and evidence has been lost, the lawyers argued.

Prosecutors made their case on Monday for allowing the women, including model Janice Dickinson, to testify. It was the first day of what is scheduled to be a two-day pretrial hearing.

Allowing the women to take the stand would show jurors that Cosby “systematically engaged in a signature pattern of providing an intoxicant to his young female victim and then sexually assaulting her when she became incapacitated,” Assistant District Attorney Adrienne D. Jappe argued.

Judge Steven O’Neill said he would not rule on whether to allow the testimony by the end of the hearing, calling it an “extraordinarily weighty issue” that he needs time to review.

O’Neill allowed just one other accuser to take the stand at Cosby’s first trial last year, barring any mention of about 60 others who have come forward to accuse Cosby in recent years.

The only other hint that jurors got of Cosby’s past came from deposition excerpts from 2005 and 2006 in which the star admitted giving quaaludes to women he wanted to have sex with.

That jury deadlocked, setting the stage for the retrial.

Cosby has pleaded not guilty to charges he assaulted Constand, a Temple University women’s basketball administrator, while he was a powerful alumnus and trustee. He has said the encounter was consensual. He remains free on bail.

Cosby’s revamped defense team, led by former Michael Jackson lawyer Tom Mesereau, argued Monday

that telephone records, travel itineraries and other evidence show the alleged assault could not have happened in January 2004, when Constand says it did, and thus falls outside the statute of limitations.

The date is important because Cosby was not arrested until Dec. 30, 2015 — meaning any assault prior to Dec. 30, 2003, would have fallen outside the 12-year statute of limitations.

O'Neill said he would leave that for the jury to decide, rejecting a defense motion to dismiss the charges. Jury selection is slated to begin March 29.

Even before the hearing started, the judge knocked Cosby's lawyers for falsely accusing prosecutors of hiding or destroying evidence.

O'Neill rejected a prosecution request to throw the lawyers off the case, saying he was reluctant to break up the defense with a retrial weeks away. But he added the defense lawyers were essentially "on notice."

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they grant permission, which Constand and Dickinson have done.

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Follow Mike Sisak at [twitter.com/mikesisak](https://twitter.com/mikesisak)

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For more coverage visit [apnews.com/tag/CosbyonTrial](https://apnews.com/tag/CosbyonTrial)

## West Virginia legislators eye measures to end teacher strike

By JOHN RABY and MICHAEL VIRTANEN, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia legislators plan to meet Tuesday to weigh some possible compromise aimed at ending the strike by West Virginia teachers now entering its ninth day.

A show of support by thousands of teachers and supporters on Monday didn't immediately sway the lawmakers, who failed to agree on a 5 percent pay raise that would end the strike, forcing districts to continue to cancel Tuesday classes. The governor, union leaders and the House of Delegates agreed to the pay raise for the teachers, among the lowest paid in the nation, but the Senate offered only a 4 percent increase.

However, a conference committee of six House and Senate members met for the second time Monday evening, where Senate Majority Leader Ryan Ferns said his chamber's leadership was offering "a compromise position." He noted it was only preliminary. Details were not disclosed publicly. The committee planned to meet again Tuesday morning.

"Our position's not as much about the amount of the pay raise but just how it's paid for," Ferns said.

Senate Finance Chairman Craig Blair, R-Berkeley, and Ferns, R-Ohio, said earlier that they remained skeptical that revised, higher revenue figures from Gov. Jim Justice to support the higher pay raises were legitimate. Blair suggested that schools reopen while the Legislature tries to work on the bills, prompting groans from the audience.

Ghent Elementary second-grade teacher April Smith attended the meeting and was disheartened.

"I don't see them coming to an agreement, especially to satisfy everyone," she said.

The committee's initial inaction prompted schools statewide to close again Tuesday, the ninth day of canceled classes.

The Capitol was closed Monday after 5,000 people entered, posing security concerns. It was reopened an hour later, and teachers vented their frustration over the lack of progress. Their strike, in one of the poorest states in the country, has disrupted the education system's 277,000 students and 35,000 employees, forcing working parents to scramble for child care. And children who rely on meals at school were at risk of going hungry.

In a state with a 17.9 percent poverty rate, teachers, bus drivers and other volunteers are collecting food for students who rely on free breakfasts and lunches. Teachers shared stories of donating their time, money or food. At least two GoFundMe pages have been launched in support of the walkout.

"It does make you feel good because we are helping them," said Ann Osburn, a special education teacher

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at Buckhannon Academy. "I think we're reaching as many as we can."

Rachel Stringer, as a stay-at-home mom from Cross Lanes, said her biggest challenge has been making sure her children don't forget what they've learned this school year. Despite the long layoff, Stringer supports the teachers.

"They deserve to be paid," she said. "They deserve to be able to have insurance."

Many teachers said they'd rather be in the classroom but believe they've come too far to back down.

"We feel like we're under attack constantly," said Cody Thompson, a social studies and civics teacher at Elkins High School. "Eventually, whenever you're pushed into a corner, you've got to push back."

The teacher walkout over pay and benefits shuttered classrooms Feb. 22. Since then, angry teachers have gone to the Capitol to press legislators to raise their pay after four years without an increase.

The walkout began after Justice signed a 2 percent pay raise for next year. After an initial round of protests, the House of Delegates later approved a 5 percent increase.

Then on Saturday, the state Senate approved a 4 percent raise, prompting angry union leaders to vow to stay out indefinitely. The House wouldn't agree to the Senate's move, sending the bill to the conference committee.

To make ends meet for themselves, many of these teachers have side jobs.

Kristie Skidmore, an elementary school reading specialist, has a clothing shop at her home.

"You're looking at people here who every day care about other people, other families. People's kids," Skidmore said. "But at the end of the day, now we're forced to be able to figure out how to care for our own families."

## North Korean dictator, Seoul envoys have 'openhearted talk'

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had an "openhearted talk" in Pyongyang with envoys for South Korean President Moon Jae-in, the North said Tuesday.

It's the first time South Korean officials have met with the young North Korean leader in person since he took power after his dictator father's death in late 2011 — and the latest sign that the Koreas are trying to mend ties after a year of repeated North Korean weapons tests and threats of nuclear war.

North Korea's state media said Kim expressed his desire to "write a new history of national reunification" during a dinner Monday night that Seoul said lasted about four hours.

Given the robust history of bloodshed, threats and animosity on the Korean Peninsula, there is considerable skepticism over whether the Koreas' apparent warming relations will lead to lasting peace.

North Korea, some believe, is trying to use improved ties with the South to weaken U.S.-led international sanctions and pressure, and to provide domestic propaganda fodder for Kim Jong Un.

But each new development also raises the possibility that the rivals can use the momentum from the good feelings created during North Korea's participation in the South's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics last month to ease a standoff over North Korea's nuclear ambitions and restart talks between Pyongyang and Washington.

The North Korean report sought to make Kim look statesmanlike as he welcomed the visiting South Koreans, with Kim offering views on "activating the versatile dialogue, contact, cooperation and exchange."

He was also said to have given "important instruction to the relevant field to rapidly take practical steps for" a summit with Moon, which the North proposed last month.

Moon, a liberal who is keen to engage the North, likely wants to visit Pyongyang. But he must first broker better ties between the North and Washington, which is Seoul's top ally and its military protector.

The role of a confident leader welcoming visiting, and lower-ranking, officials from the rival South is one Kim clearly relishes. Smiling for cameras, he posed with the South Koreans and presided over what was described as a "co-patriotic and sincere atmosphere."

Many in Seoul and Washington will want to know if, the rhetoric and smiling images notwithstanding, there's any possibility Kim will negotiate over the North's breakneck pursuit of an arsenal of nuclear mis-

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siles that can viably target the U.S. mainland.

The North has repeatedly and bluntly declared it will not give up its nuclear bombs. It also hates the annual U.S.-South Korean military exercises that were postponed because of the Olympics but will likely happen later this spring. And achieving its nuclear aims rests on the North resuming tests of missiles and bombs that set the region on edge.

Photos distributed by the North showed a beaming Kim dressed in a dark Mao-style suit and holding hands with Moon's national security director, Chung Eui-yong, the leader of the 10-member South Korean delegation. Chung's trip is the first known high-level visit by South Korean officials to the North in about a decade.

The South Korean delegates have another meeting with North Korean officials on Tuesday before returning home, but it's unclear if Kim Jong Un will be there.

Kim was said to have expressed at the dinner his "firm will to vigorously advance the north-south relations and write a new history of national reunification by the concerted efforts of our nation to be proud of in the world."

There is speculation that better inter-Korean ties could pave the way for Washington and Pyongyang to talk about the North's nuclear weapons. The United States, however, has made clear that it doesn't want empty talks and that all options, including military measures, are on the table.

Previous warming ties between the Koreas have come to nothing amid North Korea's repeated weapons tests and the North's claims that the annual U.S.-South Korean war games are a rehearsal for an invasion.

Before leaving for Pyongyang, Chung said he would relay Moon's hopes for North Korean nuclear disarmament and a permanent peace on the peninsula.

Chung's delegation includes intelligence chief Suh Hoon and Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung. The South Korean presidential Blue House said the high-profile delegation is meant to reciprocate the Olympic trip by Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, who became the first member of the North's ruling family to come to South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim Yo Jong, who also attended Monday's dinner, and other senior North Korean officials met with Moon during the Olympics, conveyed Kim Jong Un's invitation to visit Pyongyang and expressed their willingness to hold talks with the United States.

After the Pyongyang trip, Chung's delegation is scheduled to fly to the United States to brief officials about the outcome of the talks with North Korean officials.

President Donald Trump has said talks with North Korea will happen only "under the right conditions."

If Moon accepts Kim's invitation to visit Pyongyang it would be the third inter-Korean summit talk. The past two summits, one in 2000 and the other in 2007, were held between Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, and two liberal South Korean presidents. They resulted in a series of cooperative projects between the Koreas that were scuttled during subsequent conservative administrations in the South.

AP writers Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung contributed to this report.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 6, the 65th day of 2018. There are 300 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 6, 1836, the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, fell as Mexican forces led by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna stormed the fortress after a 13-day siege; the battle claimed the lives of all the Texan defenders, nearly 200 strong, including William Travis, James Bowie and Davy Crockett.

On this date:

In 1475, Italian artist and poet Michelangelo was born in Caprese (kah-PRAY'-say) in the Republic of Florence.

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In 1853, Verdi's opera "La Traviata" premiered in Venice, Italy.

In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Dred Scott v. Sandford, ruled 7-2 that Scott, a slave, was not an American citizen and therefore could not sue for his freedom in federal court.

In 1933, a national bank holiday declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt aimed at calming panicked depositors went into effect. Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak, wounded in an attempt on Roosevelt's life the previous month, died at a Miami hospital at age 59.

In 1944, U.S. heavy bombers staged the first full-scale American raid on Berlin during World War II.

In 1953, Georgy Malenkov was named premier of the Soviet Union a day after the death of Josef Stalin.

In 1967, the daughter of Josef Stalin, Svetlana Alliluyeva (ah-lee-loo-YAY'-vah), appeared at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi and declared her intention to defect to the West. Singer-actor Nelson Eddy, 65, died in Palm Beach, Florida.

In 1970, a bomb being built inside a Greenwich Village townhouse by the radical Weathermen accidentally went off, destroying the house and killing three group members.

In 1983, in a case that drew much notoriety, a woman was gang-raped atop a pool table in a tavern in New Bedford, Massachusetts, called Big Dan's; four men were later convicted of the attack.

In 1988, the board of trustees at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., a liberal arts college for the deaf, selected Elisabeth Zinser, a hearing woman, to be school president; outraged students shut down the campus, forcing selection of a deaf president, I. King Jordan, instead.

In 1998, the U.S. Army honored three Americans who risked their lives and turned their weapons on fellow soldiers to stop the slaughter of Vietnamese villagers at My Lai (mee ly) in 1968.

In 2016, former first lady Nancy Reagan died in Los Angeles at age 94.

Ten years ago: A Palestinian killed eight students at a Jewish seminary in Jerusalem before he was slain; Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip praised the operation in a statement, and thousands of Palestinians took to the streets of Gaza to celebrate. Twin bombings in a shopping district in Baghdad killed at least 68 people and wounded 130 others.

Five years ago: Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., a critic of the Obama administration's drone policy, launched an old-style filibuster to block Senate confirmation of John Brennan's nomination to be CIA director; Paul lasted nearly 13 hours before yielding the floor. Syria's accelerating humanitarian crisis hit a grim milestone as the number of U.N.-registered refugees topped 1 million, half of them children.

One year ago: Without fanfare, President Donald Trump signed a scaled-back version of his controversial ban on many foreign travelers, one that still barred new visas for people from six Muslim-majority countries and temporarily shut down America's refugee program. Robert Osborne, the genial face of Turner Classic Movies and a walking encyclopedia of classic Hollywood, died in New York at age 84. The world's most famous sled dog race, the Iditarod, started with 71 mushers setting off from the heart of Alaska and embarking on a nearly 1,000-mile trek across the wilderness. (Mitch Seavey, 57, won the race in 8 days, 3 hours and 40 minutes.)

Today's Birthdays: Former FBI and CIA director William Webster is 94. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan is 92. Dancer-actress Carmen de Lavallade is 87. Former Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova is 81. Former Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo., is 79. Actress-writer Joanna Miles is 78. Actor Ben Murphy is 76. Opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa is 74. Singer Mary Wilson (The Supremes) is 74. Rock musician Hugh Grundy (The Zombies) is 73. Rock singer-musician David Gilmour (Pink Floyd) is 72. Actress Anna Maria Horsford is 71. Actor-director Rob Reiner is 71. Singer Kiki Dee is 71. Fox News reporter John Stossel is 71. Composer-lyricist Stephen Schwartz is 70. Rock singer-musician Phil Alvin (The Blasters) is 65. Sports correspondent Armen Keteyian is 65. Actor Tom Arnold is 59. Actor D.L. Hughley is 54. Country songwriter Skip Ewing is 54. Actor Shuler Hensley is 51. Actress Connie Britton is 51. Actress Moira Kelly is 50. Actress Amy Pietz is 49. Rock musician Chris Broderick (Megadeth) is 48. Basketball Hall of Famer Shaquille O'Neal is 46. Country singer Trent Willmon is 45. Country musician Shan Farmer (Ricochet) is 44. Rapper Beanie Sigel is 44. Rapper Bubba Sparxxx is 41. Rock musician Chris Tomson (Vampire Weekend) is 34. Actor Eli Marienthal is 32. Actor Jimmy Galeota is 32. Rapper/producer Tyler,



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the Creator is 27. Actor Dillon Freasier is 22. Actress Savannah Stehlin is 22. Actress Millicent Simmonds (Film: "Wonderstruck") is 15.

Thought for Today: "Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!" — Elizabeth Barrett Browning, English poet (1806-1861).

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