

Groton Daily Independent

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Today: End of Third Quarter

BLOCKER CONSTRUCTION
NEW CONSTRUCTION
REMODELING
HOOP BARNS
(605) 216-2677 (605) 226-4062

Bates Township ROW Notice

Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and expenses charged to the landowner.

Landowner is responsible for spraying all noxious weeds.

Bates Township Board of Supervisors
Betty Geist
Township Clerk

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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No. 6 Wolves Advance to First NCAA Men's Basketball National Championship in School History

Sioux Falls, S.D. – Multiple comebacks and a double overtime victory, propelled the No. 6 Northern State University men's basketball team into the NCAA Division II National Championship. The Wolves defeated Queens (NC) in a late night affair on Thursday evening from the Sanford Pentagon, 105-99. With the win, NSU advances to the first NCAA National title game in school history and improves to 36-3 on the year.

NSU will look to defend their home state on Saturday afternoon, in a 2 p.m. tip-off with Ferris State from the Sanford Pentagon. The year 2000 was the last time a team advanced to the national title game in their home state, when Kentucky Wesleyan faced Metro State from Louisville. The Northern State community will also look to pack the Pentagon for the third straight contest, as NSU as played in front of 6,364 fans in the quarter and semifinal rounds of the NCAA Elite Eight.

The Wolves dug themselves a hole in the first half, trailing by as much as 11 with 5:41 left to play. The two teams entered the locker with a 33-29 halftime score, and the Wolves faithful hungry for more. Northern shot just 36.4 percent from the floor, and gave up 11 of their 19 turnovers in the first 20 minutes. Northern however, entered with a new fire in the second half, out-scoring the Royals 45-41.

NSU went on a 5-for-5 field goal run to open the second half, grabbing their first lead of the game, 39-37, just four minutes in. The two teams battled with Northern holding the largest lead of six points, just before the half-way mark. Queens led by five with 1:22 on the clock, however a foul by Daniel Carr kept the NSU hope alive. Ian Smith knocked down both free throw attempts, bringing the Wolves within three. It was the Royals ball, and all Logan Doyle for the remainder of regulation as the senior notched a defensive block, dunk to bring the Wolves within one, and made free throw to tie things at 74.

QU took the 5-point lead, for the second time in the contest, but this time with just 27 seconds remaining in the first overtime period. DJ Pollard pushed the ball up the floor and drew a Royal foul from beyond the arc, sending the senior to the foul line for three shots. He hit the first two, cutting into the Queens lead, however missed the third. Gabe King came up with a big offensive board, and quickly dished the ball out Bo Fries, who sent it around the horn to Pollard. The senior had his looked and drained the three, tying the game at 89 and sending the teams to their second overtime of the contest.

It was all Northern in the final five minutes of action, as the Wolves ran away with the game, out-scoring the Royals 16-10. Pollard led the team in overtime, hitting 3-of-3 from the floor, 2-of-2 from beyond the arc, and 4-of-6 from the foul line for 12 points.

Northern shot 62.5 percent from the floor in the second half, and an even better 71.4 percent in the two overtime periods, fueled by the crowd. For the game, NSU shot 55.0 percent from both the field and the 3-point line and 68.3 percent from the foul line. They tallied 11 made 3-pointers, 36 rebounds, 20 assists, six blocks, and six steals. The men combined for 40 points in the paint, 26 points off the bench, 20 points off turnovers, 18 second chance points, and four fast break points.

Smith led the team with 22 points, playing all 50 minutes. The junior shot 41.2 percent from the floor, while dishing out a team high seven assists, and grabbing two rebounds and two steals. With his 14th point of the game, Smith became the 55th member of the Northern State 1,000 points club and fourth Wolf on the 2017-18 roster to reach the feat. Darin Peterka was second on the team with 20



**Sun Dial Manor in Bristol
is accepting applications for
full time and part time CNA's.
12 hr. shifts- days and nights
(SIGN ON BONUS OFFERED)**

**DIETARY OPENINGS
Full time cook, 8 hr. shifts
(WITH SIGN ON BONUS)**

Part time Dietary Tech

**For more information,
call 605-492-3615**

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points, hitting 7-of-12 from the field. The senior led the Wolves with four made 3-pointers, and added six rebounds, two steals, and one assist.

Doyle led the team off the bench with 18 points, knocking down 3-of-5 from the floor and 12-of-17 from the foul line. He tallied a team second best seven rebounds, as well as three assists and two blocks. DJ Pollard and Carter Evans were the final Wolves in double figures, recording 17 and 12 points respectively. Pollard notched a team high three blocks, as well as three rebounds and three assists, while Evans grabbed a team leading nine rebounds, and recorded four assists, one block, and one steal.

King and Fries proved their worth on defense, holding the Royals leading scorer, Todd Withers, who averaged 14.0 points per game to just one made free throw. The duo each grabbed eight points in the win, with King shooting 75.0 percent from the floor and adding five rebounds, and one assist. Fries went a perfect 3-of-3 from the field and 2-of-2 from the 3-point line, notching four rebounds and one assist.

The Northern State men will tip-off with top-seeded Ferris State at 2 p.m. (CT) from the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls on Saturday, March 24. Stay tuned to nsuwolves.com for further fan information and most importantly Go Wolves!

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** ☆☆☆

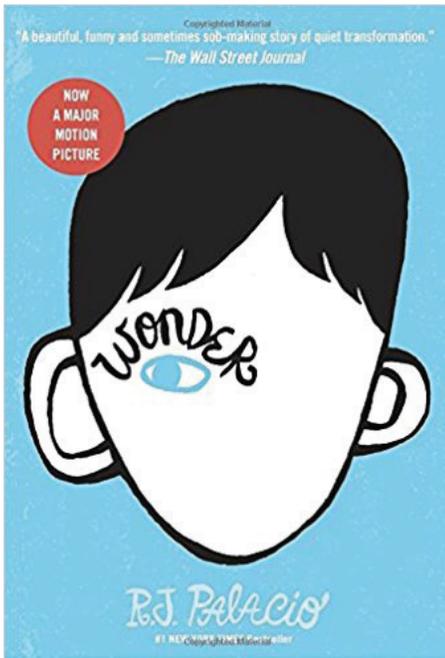
Contact Brynn Pickrel or Nellie Hatfield at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.

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



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton



Book Summary

Wonder is a spare, warm, uplifting story that will have readers laughing one minute and wiping away tears the next.

Winner of the BookBrowse 2012 Best Book for Younger Readers Award

I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.

August (Auggie) Pullman was born with a facial deformity that prevented him from going to a mainstream school - until now. He's about to start 5th grade at Beecher Prep, and if you've ever been the new kid then you know how hard that can be. The thing is Auggie's just an ordinary kid, with an extraordinary face. But can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, despite appearances?

R. J. Palacio has written a spare, warm, uplifting story that will have readers laughing one minute and wiping away tears the next. With wonderfully realistic family interactions (flawed, but loving), lively school scenes, and short chapters, Wonder is accessible to readers of all levels.



Kristi Anderson receives a grant from Poet manager Kelly Kjelden.

(Photo from Groton Area facebook page)

Anderson wins Poet Community Grant

Kristi Anderson, Groton Area Elementary Teacher, received a \$2,500 grant on behalf of Groton Area School from Poet Biorefining of Groton.

The presentation was made Thursday, March 22, in the commons area of the elementary school. Kelly Kjelden, manager of the Groton Poet facility, made the presentation of the Never Satisfied Community Grant. Elementary Principal Brett Schwan, said, "Mrs. Anderson put a lot of time and effort into this. Books mean a lot to her. Reading means a lot to her."

Anderson told the GDI, "Grades 3-5 will be reading the book WONDER. We will also incorporate writing prompts, poetry, and art into the project. I am in the planning stage as we will begin this towards the end of April. I hope to have some community members reading the book also and join us for a discussion in May." Anderson told the students, "Remember to come every day the best you can be." Anderson will start the project on April 23.

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WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 7 AM CDT SATURDAY...

* WHAT...Mixed precipitation expected. Total snow accumulations of 3 to 5 inches, with localized amounts up to 6 inches, and ice accumulations of up to one tenth of an inch are expected.

* WHERE...McPherson and Brown Counties.

* WHEN...Until 7 AM CDT Saturday.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...The ice will result in difficult travel conditions. Tree branches could fall. Expect reduced visibilities at times.

A Winter Weather Advisory means that periods of snow, sleet or freezing rain will cause travel difficulties. Expect slippery roads and limited visibilities, and use caution while driving. The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.



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

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

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The Moscow Times

After months of lackluster campaigning and rowdy television debates, the election dust is settling into a shape that is the spitting image of Vladimir Putin.

Of course we can't know for sure it's actually him — according to some Russians, there are a number of indistinguishable doppelgängers doing the rounds.

Putin's record result gives him six more years in office, beating Brezhnev's 18-year stint and edging him closer to Stalin's big 30. By the end of Putin's fourth term, the stars of our Generation P project will be stumbling into their quarter-life crises.

Symptoms include feeling lost, scared, lonely or confused — not unlike the emotional state of journalists after a day in the State Duma.

Several Russian media outlets have announced a boycott of the Duma after its aptly-named ethics commission dismissed sexual harassment allegations against lawmaker Leonid Slutsky, saying he had not violated "behavioral norms."

The scandal is gaining momentum with a male journalist coming out on Thursday to accuse the longtime head of the Liberal Democratic Party Vladimir Zhirinovsky of harassment.

Foul gases emanating from a landfill in a town in the Moscow region have led to more than 50 children being hospitalized.

The incident sparked loud protests with angry residents demanding that heads roll.

Meanwhile, Boris Johnson compared the upcoming World Cup in Russia to the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany. Looks like the Brits are skipping appeasement this time around and diving straight into the battlefield.

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Today in Weather History

March 22, 1966: The blizzard began on the 22nd in the west moving southeastward into Nebraska and then moving northeastward across the southeastern part of South Dakota. Winds up to 50 mph caused blowing snow which reduced visibility to near zero. Seven to 8 inches of snow fell on the plains of South Dakota with up to 2 feet in the Black Hills. Traffic was paralyzed due to snow-blocked roads. Schools and many businesses were closed. One death was attributed to the storm to exposure and exhaustion. A heart attack indirectly caused one death in Sioux Falls.

March 22, 1987: Snowmelt and rainfall caused some rivers and small streams to rise to very high levels in central South Dakota. Lowland flooding around the basins occurred, submerging some minor roads and streets. Also, high water levels and ice damaged some railroad bridges between Wakpala and Mahto in Corson County.

March 22, 2009: A stretch of warmer weather occurred from March 14th to 17th, which resulted in high temperatures in the 40s and low 50s. The snow depth in Fargo on the 14th was 15 inches with a melted water equivalent of 3.10 inches. By the 17th, the snow depth in Fargo had dropped to 6 inches. The snow was followed by a couple of colder days, which temporarily slowed down any additional snowmelt. The second period of warmer weather began on March 20th and continued through the 24th. During this period, high temperatures again climbed into the 40s and low 50s. Most of the remaining snow in Fargo melted during this stretch of warm weather, with the Fargo snow depth falling from 2 inches to 0. Conditions were about the same in Grand Forks, with the snow depth dropping to 0 by the 24th. These two warm-ups resulted in a quick response in river levels, especially across the southern Red River Valley and west central Minnesota. The Red River also showed a response, especially in the southern Red River Valley. With all the runoff moving into the river systems, water covered many roads and resulted in numerous road closures. The water covered entire sections of land as well and threatened many homes. A winter storm event on March 24th and 25th brought more snow to the region, along with a turn to colder temperatures. This resulted in the first crest for many rivers in the southern Red River Valley and west central Minnesota. However, river levels at most points along the Red River continued to stay high. Another winter storm event hit much of the area March 30th to 31st, dropping up to 2 feet of snow in the southern Red River Valley. There was a lot of moisture in this new snow, with snow to liquid ratios of less than 10 to 1. This set the stage for continued flooding into April and early May. The North Dakota Governor issued a statewide disaster declaration on March 13 in anticipation of spring flooding. Most counties in eastern North Dakota later received a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

1920 - A spectacular display of the Northern Lights was visible as far south as Bradenton FL, El Paso TX, and Fresno CA. At Detroit MI, the display was described so brilliant as to blot out all stars below first magnitude. (22nd-23rd) (The Weather Channel)

1936 - A great flood crested on rivers from Ohio to Maine. The flood claimed 107 lives and caused 270 million dollars property damage. (David Ludlum)

1954 - Six to ten inch rains caused the Chicago River to overflow its banks. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - An intense storm produced heavy snow in the southern and central Rockies, and high winds from southern California to West Texas. Wolf Creek Pass CO received 24 inches of snow, and winds gusted to 69 mph at Ruidoso NM. Blizzard conditions were reported in eastern Colorado. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Rain and high winds battered the Northern Pacific Coast Region, with wind gusts to 78 mph at Ocean Shores WA. The high winds uprooted trees and down power lines. Ten cities in the northeastern U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date. Eight cities in the central U.S. reported record highs. Southerly winds gusting to 60 mph helped push the mercury at Ottumwa IA to a record warm reading of 83 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Six cities in the Great Lakes Region, and three in southern Texas, reported new record low temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 9 above zero, and Brownsville TX with a reading of 38 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

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| Fri Mar 23 | Sat Mar 24 | Sun Mar 25 | Mon Mar 26 | Tue Mar 27 | Wed Mar 28 | Thu Mar 29 |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 35°F | 37°F | 39°F | 39°F | 42°F | 46°F | 43°F |
| 30°F | 30°F | 32°F | 27°F | 25°F | 27°F | 28°F |
| ESE 29 MPH Precip 100% | E 14 MPH | SSE 17 MPH Precip 70% | E 10 MPH Precip 80% | N 9 MPH | SSW 10 MPH | WNW 14 MPH |

Winter Weather Today

What

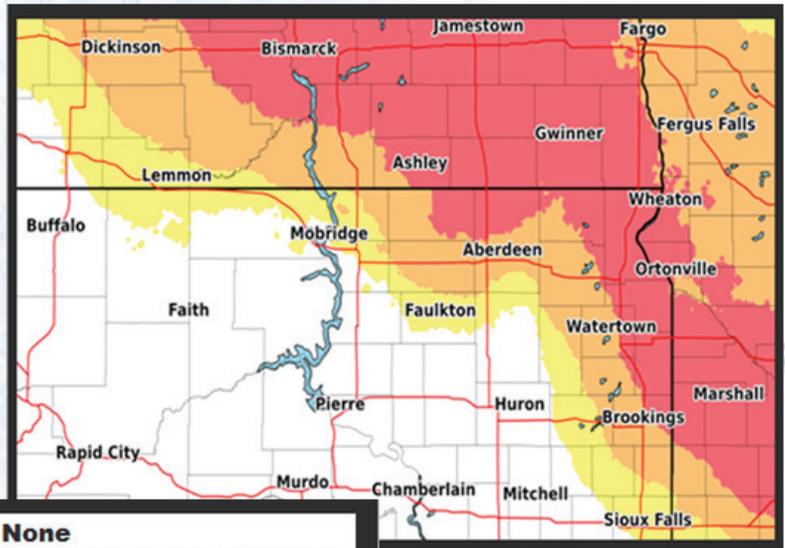
Heavy wet snow, mixed precipitation, rain, fog and east-southeast wind gusts to 40+ mph

Where

Heavy wet accumulating snow is most likely across far northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota

Impacts

Difficult travel conditions including the evening commute, newborn livestock will be vulnerable



None
No impacts are expected at this time

Minor
Light accumulations and minor road impacts are possible

Moderate
Slippery roads, low visibility and travel impacts are possible

Significant
Snow/ice over roads and local whiteout conditions are possible

Extreme
Major impacts are possible, travel may be impossible



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

3/23/2018 5:08 AM
Graphic Created

Published on: 03/23/2018 at 5:11AM

Heavy snow, a mix of precipitation, rain and wind will impact the area Today. The greatest uncertainty remains near/along a line from roughly Eureka to Aberdeen to Watertown as a sharp rain/snow line should set up in this area. Latest forecast: www.weather.gov. CANL: <https://www.weather.gov/abr/canl>

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 47.0 F at 2:27 PM

Low Outside Temp: 29.1 F at 5:08 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 23.0 Mph at 6:36 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 81° in 1963

Record Low: -21° in 1899

Average High: 44°F

Average Low: 23°F

Average Precip in March: 0.79

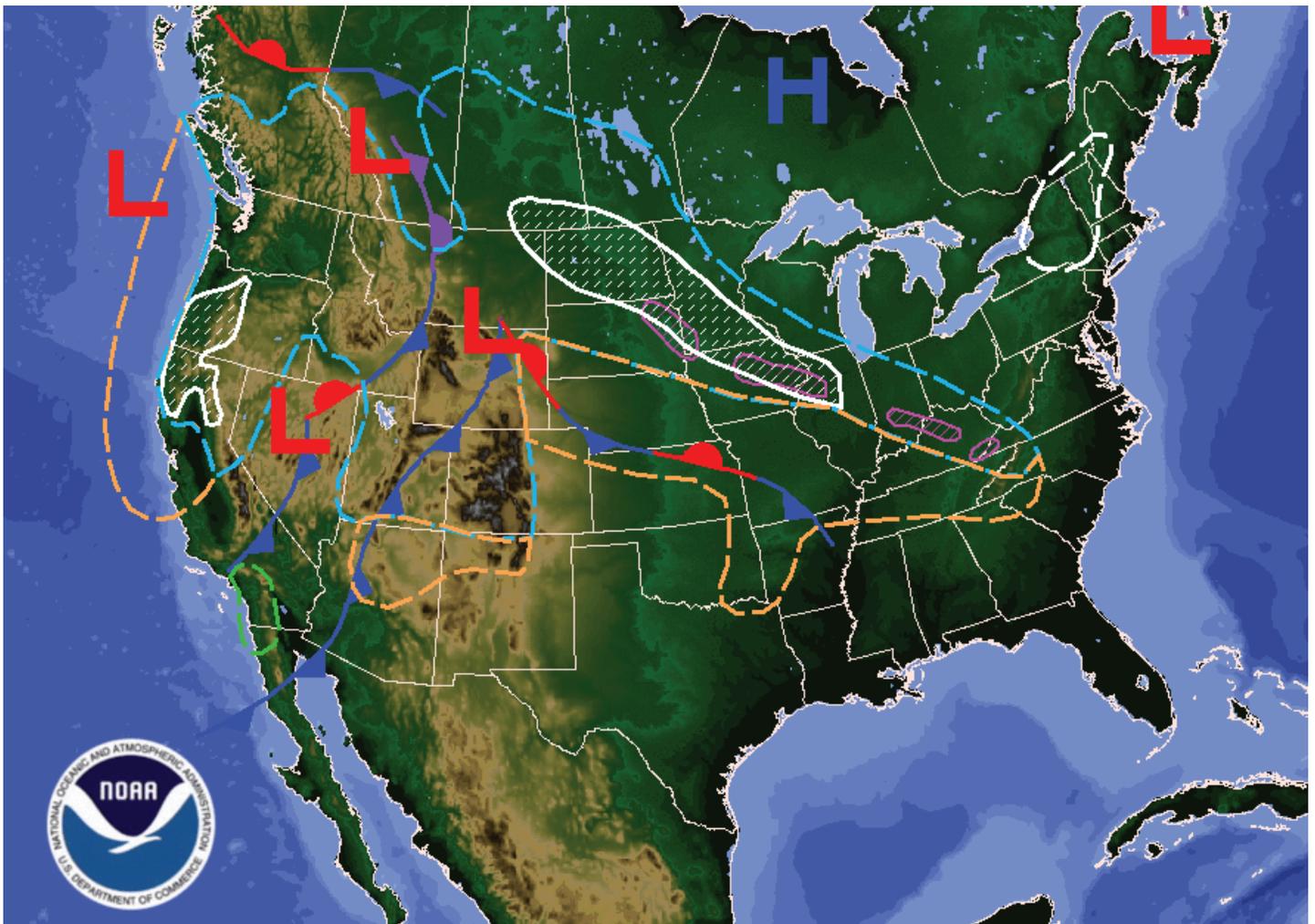
Precip to date in March: 1.14

Average Precip to date: 1.81

Precip Year to Date: 1.55

Sunset Tonight: 7:50 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:29 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Mar 23, 2018, issued 4:57 AM EDT

DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center

Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

Some years ago the cover of Time magazine asked an intriguing question on its cover: "What ever happened to ethics?" The subtitle continued saying that we have been, "Assaulted by sleaze, scandals and hypocrisy, America searches for its moral bearings." There is little doubt that there has been a loss of moral sensitivity and responsibility. That is very obvious. It is difficult to watch television and not be offended by the language or scenes of indecency. A new language has been introduced that has no respect for God or godly principles.

The only way to solve this problem of moral decay or it can be reversed would be through a national revival. If those of us who profess to trust God's Word and believe in the fact that He will do what He says He will it is not unreasonable that revival will come. A spiritual awakening will visit our nation if we have enough faith, persevere in prayer and regain a sense of the holiness of God.

Psalm 99:1 describes what would happen if we did regain a new sense of the holiness of God. Because "the Lord reigns, let the nations tremble, He sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth tremble."

This awesome picture of God that the Psalmist presents to us describes His holiness, power, might and majesty. This description of God is not one that we are familiar with since our minds have become so "clouded" with the things of this world. Certainly we can blame the producers for the programs we watch, but they would not produce what they do without us watching and enjoying it.

Prayer: Lord, open our eyes to "see" what we watch, our minds to reject vulgarities and our hearts to repent. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 99:1 The Lord reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; Let the earth be moved!

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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)
- 5/27/2018 Historic Trinity Church Pump Organ Concert.
- 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)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party

- 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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, March 22

Arena vote hardly a reason to celebrate

It was around noon Tuesday when Tonchi Weaver sent a news release to the media proclaiming victory in her bid to refer the Barnett Arena project to a public vote. "It's a great day for our Republic and for the voters of Rapid City," she wrote.

Even though the city is just beginning to verify if Weaver's Citizens for Liberty group has the necessary 2,095 signatures from local registered voters, the victory dance had begun, which included a broadside swipe at a favorite target: Rapid City government.

"Our goal has been reached," she continued in the release. "The citizens will make the final decision and we hope the city is done playing games."

So, what is this group really celebrating?

Even if they succeed in stopping the construction of a modern \$130 million arena, it won't reduce anyone's taxes. It just means the city will spend at least \$25 to \$30 million in Vision Funds — the same earmarked source that would be used to build a new arena — to make modest improvements to a 41-year-old facility that has become less desirable with time.

If the city goes with the patchwork plan the Citizens for Liberty now endorses, it does little to stem the tide of declining sales tax revenue the city collects from the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, which includes Barnett Arena.

According to the city, attendance is down 25 percent there since around 2009, a decline that would certainly be greater if the Rapid City Rush weren't playing in the Ice Arena built in 2008 at a cost of \$25.7 million.

If the city collects less sales tax from events at Barnett Arena and fewer customers are eating, drinking, shopping and staying in Rapid City, it means the city likely will someday have to offer either fewer services or consider raising property taxes to maintain those services that get more costly with time.

Is that something to celebrate?

The special election also poses a threat to the Vision Fund, a half-cent sales tax collected from locals, visitors and tourists since 1972 when 63 percent of the voters approved it to build the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, which has generated millions of dollars in revenue for the city over the years.

If attendance continues to decline at the now antiquated Barnett Arena, however, it means less revenue for the Vision Fund that has funded numerous quality-of-life projects in the community. It also will hurt many employers and employees who are working, spending money and paying taxes in Rapid City.

Is that something to celebrate?

The city council-approved plan does not raise anyone's taxes either, yet allows the city to build an entertainment venue that will serve the community for another 30 or 40 years, providing new jobs, business opportunities, sales tax revenue and another way to showcase the assets of an area that has not yet reached its full potential.

The Citizens for Liberty plan puts the city in a holding pattern, which means Rapid City will slip further behind other communities that understand the value of investing in the future.

Is that something to celebrate?

Citizens for Liberty is clearly an opponent of the new arena plan and city government in general. If the signatures are validated, it will be the second time this year the group has referred a city council decision to voters. These are the wins it celebrates as it works to hold the council accountable to its no-growth agenda. It is by no means a win for the republic. Citizens have and will continue to have the right to vote.

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In a few weeks, Rapid City voters will decide what they really want to celebrate — the past or prospects for the future. It will be a critical election for a city that needs to look ahead or fall behind.

Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan, Yankton, March 20 **Revenue During The Winter Months**

Yankton is enjoying a nice run in rising sales tax revenues, which is certainly good news, especially since things weren't looking nearly so bright a year ago.

After the first two months of the year, the city's revenue is up more than 5 percent from this point last year, when soft returns had city officials making contingency cuts to their budgets. But things picked up in the last half of 2017, and that rally has carried over into this not-so-New Year.

In discussing the current good trend, City Manager Amy Nelson noted that, among other things, the city produced good revenue numbers in January and February, which are normally "lighter months" in terms of receipts. While speculating on the reason for the uptick, she cited such events as January's indoor soccer tournament and last month's World Archery Indoor Championships as potential factors in why Yankton saw a good winter in terms of revenue.

That should sound at least vaguely familiar if you've listened to discussions regarding Yankton tourism in recent years.

Yankton has grown into a great tourism venue — reportedly, it is the most popular tourism destination in South Dakota outside of the Black Hills. Of course, most of that is due to Lewis and Clark Lake, which is one of the region's busiest summertime attractions.

But when summer is gone, so, too, are a lot of the tourists.

Because of that, efforts have been made by tourism and park officials, for instance, to promote the so-called "shoulder seasons" that reside on either side of summer. This has seen some success as the Lewis and Clark Recreation Area now draws more campers and visitors in the spring and fall seasons.

Meanwhile, the motel and hotel operators here have long sought to see events in the off-season that could attract more people to the community. That has led to some far-reaching discussions on possible new facilities that could be constructed to help draw more people to town, particularly during the slow cold-weather months.

An example that Nelson cited (and has also been cited here) is the Dam Fireworks River City Rumble Indoor Soccer Tournament, which took place in mid-January — which is about as mid-winter as you can get — and featured 73 teams from three states. That translated into several hundred players, coaches and fans, many of whom brought fresh money to town at a time that is otherwise inert in terms of tourism dollars.

The archery tournament, which brought in hundreds of people from literally across the world, also created an influx of new revenue — as well as global exposure, which is priceless — at a time of the year that's normally quiet here.

Whether it's sporting events, conventions, expos or whatever else, these off-season activities can make an impact on the economic outlook of the community. And that's what local officials and interests have been looking for, for some time now.

Yankton is making progress on this front, and the revenue numbers may be an encouraging sign of the benefits from that expansion. Let's hope that trend can continue, as well.

Madison Daily Leader, Madison, March 21 **After icy winter, keep track of salination**

As this icy winter comes to a close, the folks at South Dakota State University bring up a topic we don't think about much: Will there be negative effects of the salting of roads, sidewalks, parking lots and so on?

We recognize that salting, sanding or using another material to improve traction on icy roads is necessary for public safety. Leaving roads icy is not an option for us.

Many municipalities (like Madison) use sand at intersections very effectively. It provides traction and can

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be swept up easily in the spring — but it doesn't melt the ice like salt or other compounds.

Salt, on the other hand, will effectively melt the ice but also can cause corrosion to road surfaces and bridges. That could be very costly if infrastructure needs to be replaced earlier due to salt damage.

But there's another potential problem with salt use: it can build up in surface waters such as lakes and streams, which could eventually cause harm to fishing and water quality.

"While the salination of South Dakota surface waters is not a water quality concern at this time, awareness of the issue could prevent it from being a concern in the future," said David Kringen, SDSU Extension water resources field specialist.

Salination (sometimes called salinization) is the process where water-soluble salts accumulate in soils or a body of water. It is typically measured by an increase in chloride.

In soils, salination is a concern, Kringen explained, because excess salts hinder the growth of crops by limiting their ability to take up water.

"In freshwater ecosystems, increased salinity can significantly reduce both the number of species in an ecosystem and relative abundance of aquatic plants and invertebrates, which in turn, affects the entire food chain," he said.

We're glad to hear salination isn't a problem in our local lakes and streams, but we believe public officials and other decision-makers should consider alternatives to keep roads and highways safe while avoiding a water quality problem in our lakes in the future.

Eagle feathers, plumes at graduations now protected in law

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has approved protections in South Dakota law for students who want to wear eagle feathers or plumes at school graduations.

The Republican governor on Thursday signed the tribal regalia law, which requires state and local officials to let people wear eagle feathers and plumes at school honoring or graduation ceremonies. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates the National Eagle Repository to provide Native Americans with eagle carcasses, parts and feathers.

Secretary of Tribal Relations Steve Emery told a state Senate panel earlier this month that a person coming back from war would receive an eagle feather.

"I think it's very important as a culture we recognize the accomplishments and achievements of people that do great things," Emery said. "Graduating high school is a great accomplishment for many of our children, and I think this bill needs to go forward to recognize and honor those accomplishments."

Democratic Rep. Shawn Bordeaux, the bill's sponsor, said before the measure was signed that it's a "great way" to allow tribal members to express pride in who they are. He said South Dakota is becoming a "better place each and every day."

Daugaard listed the legislation as an accomplishment in a recent column about the 2018 legislative session. With his signature, it will take effect July 1.

Minnesota Vikings sign guard Tom Compton

EAGAN, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have signed guard Tom Compton.

The Vikings announced Thursday they have signed the former South Dakota offensive tackle who grew up in Minnesota.

Compton spent last season with the Chicago Bears, where he played in 11 games with five starts. The Rosemount, Minnesota, native was drafted in the sixth round by the Washington Redskins in 2012, appearing in 44 games with 10 starts during the 2013-15 seasons in Washington.

He joined the Atlanta Falcons for their Super Bowl run in 2016, appearing in all regular and postseason games.

Compton has appeared in 71 games with 15 starts throughout his career and played at both guard and center.

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

Gov. Dennis Daugaard signs off on SDSU precision ag project

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has approved a major new precision agriculture facility at South Dakota State University.

The governor signed bills Thursday authorizing and funding the project. The roughly \$55 million project includes building a precision agriculture classroom and laboratory, with renovations to an existing building expected later.

Lawmakers addressed about \$46 million of the cost in their plan. That includes \$16.6 million in private donations, \$11 million from SDSU and \$18.4 million from other sources including a fertilizer fee hike and a one-time \$2 million state appropriation.

The university says its bachelor's degree in precision agriculture is the first in the nation. Daugaard says the program is preparing students to navigate the future of South Dakota's top industry.

2 killed in crash between school bus, car near Wounded Knee

WOUNDED KNEE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say two people have died in a crash between a school bus and car near Wounded Knee.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Public Safety says the two who died were in the car. All 26 children and the driver of the bus were not seriously injured.

The crash happened about 8 a.m. Thursday on Highway 18.

Harrold pulse plant on hiatus as it deals with money woes

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The only plant in South Dakota that processes pulse crops such as field peas and lentils has stopped buying from farmers as it deals with financial woes.

The South Dakota Pulse Processors plant in Harrold faced a setback last year when more than 200 electric motors running the processing equipment had to be replaced to meet the state's electrical codes.

The plant has sought relief from creditors who delayed loan payments earlier this year. But recent price decreases pressured by India closing off its market for peas, chickpeas and other pulse crops has dealt another blow.

India is one of the United States and Canada's biggest customers for pulse crops.

President Tom Young told the Capital Journal that India's increased tariffs on foreign peas and chickpeas were a problem his plant didn't need.

Young said the plant's employees are still working, maintaining and improving the plant that opened in January 2017.

But he said the market slump has made it difficult for the plant to profitably buy peas from farmers, process them and ship them.

"We just aren't buying product right now," Young said.

The field pea market prices dropped to \$5 to \$5.50 a bushel for farmers in central South Dakota in recent months. Young said it has made it even more difficult to find profitable deals. When prices are low, farmers usually try to hold onto their crops until prices rise.

The plant is searching for more funds, but Young remains optimistic about its future.

"We have had several conversations with different companies about different options that we are exploring at this time," said Young.

"We definitely don't have the answer at this time, but it's sure nice to see the options we do have," he said.

Helmsley trust gives \$1.8M for Custer State Park fire rehab

CUSTER, S.D. (AP) — A charitable trust established by the late hotel and real estate baroness Leona Helmsley is contributing \$1.8 million to help rehabilitate Custer State Park after a historic wildfire, South Dakota officials said Thursday.

The funding will be used over three years to support aerial mapping, tree thinning and stream rehabilitation, among other initiatives, according to South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. The December fire, which burned more than 84 square miles (218 square kilometers), was the third-largest in Black Hills recorded history.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard said in a statement that hard work that started with responding firefighters has continued to rehabilitation efforts, with the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust's help. Daugaard said park staff will have it in "pristine condition" by peak visitor season.

Helmsley trustee Walter Panzirer said the organization is pleased to help "secure the park for future generations."

"Custer State Park is truly a gem for the entire state of South Dakota," Panzirer said.

The park just south of Mount Rushmore National Memorial is a top tourist destination, featuring hills with ponderosa pine and prairie. Visitors often drive through to see roaming buffalo and other wildlife.

This story corrects the spelling of Helmsley in one reference.

Person injured in Sioux Falls hotel fire might be a suspect

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating whether a man injured in a Sioux Falls hotel fire started the blaze.

Firefighters responded to the Nites Inn about 3:45 a.m. Thursday and had the fire under control in about 20 minutes. Everyone inside the hotel got out.

Police say a man who suffered cuts and burns made comments to an officer that he might have started the fire. Authorities say the man might have been using drugs.

The 47-year-old man was transported to a Minneapolis burn center and not immediately arrested.

Fire damage was contained to one room and a part of the hotel's roof, but several other rooms suffered smoke damage.

Custer State Park gets \$1.8M grant for post-wildfire work

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Custer State Park has received a \$1.8 million grant to support rehabilitation work following a devastating December wildfire that burned more than half the park.

The Legion Lake Fire started from a downed power line and grew to become the third-largest fire in Black Hills modern history.

The state Game, Fish and Parks Department says the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust is providing the grant. The money will be used over three years for aerial mapping, tree thinning, reseeding, weed control, erosion control and stream rehabilitation work.

Trust spokesman Walter Panzirer says Custer State Park "is truly a gem for the entire state of South Dakota."

Supreme Court says drug suspect lawfully detained

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court has ruled against a man who claimed he was unlawfully detained by a trooper who stopped him for speeding and discovered a suitcase full of marijuana.

Bree Barry argued the drug evidence should be suppressed because the trooper had unlawfully prolonged the traffic stop on Interstate 90 near Sioux Falls without a reasonable suspicion of drug activity.

The court ruled the trooper had reasonable suspicion of drugs and did not prolong the stop beyond constitutional limits. Authorities say Barry was transporting the marijuana from Colorado to Wisconsin.

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when he was stopped. Attorney General Marty Jackley says the high court's decision will allow the state to move forward with prosecution of the case.

Change on tap for microbrewers after governor signs overhaul

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has signed a bill easing a state production limit and other regulations on South Dakota craft breweries.

The Republican governor said Thursday the new law is an "economic development win" that will help the state's homegrown microbreweries expand and thrive. Daugaard had pushed for the brewing overhaul, contending state regulations are stifling the industry.

The legislation creates a microbrewery license allowing the businesses to produce 30,000 barrels of beer annually, up from 5,000 barrels. Breweries that exceed the current 5,000-barrel limit would lose privileges such as being able to sell growlers.

It also permits craft brewers to bypass distributors to sell up to 1,500 barrels of their beer each year directly to bars.

The law was a compromise between beer distributors and craft brewers. Daugaard also signed five other alcohol bills Thursday.

Scotland grocery store to stay in business

SCOTLAND, S.D. (AP) — The owner of a southeastern South Dakota town's grocery store says it will remain open after months of uncertainty.

The Daily Republic reports that Scotland CashSmart owner R.F. Buche said Wednesday he will retain ownership of the store and keep it operating. Earlier this year, Buche closed two other regional grocery stores in Tyndall and Tripp because of poor sales.

Buche says he listened to people at community meetings, and "everyone agreed that Scotland needs a grocery store." He took over the Tyndall, Tripp and Scotland stores in 2017 after they were abruptly closed.

The stores' previous owner, Mark Mora, is facing felony charges for failing to pay seven months of sales tax.

The Tyndall store is scheduled to open again next week, and Tripp officials are also pushing to re-open their town's grocery.

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

40 years in prison for fatally shooting teen neighbor

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — A Watertown man has been sentenced to 40 years in prison for fatally shooting a young neighbor last June following a dispute.

Thirty-one-year-old Alexis Javier Velazquez-Sanchez earlier pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in the death of Jayden Harley. The teen had graduated from high school earlier in the day and police say the defendant and victim argued over noise.

The Argus Leader says Velazquez-Sanchez pulled out a handgun and fired one shot, strike Harley in the chest. He died at the hospital.

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

Rapid City man sentenced for robbery in store clerk's death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has been sentenced to 7 1/2 years in prison for stealing beer from a store clerk who was later stabbed to death by the man's companion.

The Rapid City Journal reports that 20-year-old Cody Grady last month pleaded guilty to robbery in the stabbing death of Loaf 'N Jug clerk Kasie Lord on Jan. 18, 2017.

Grady's companion, 18-year-old Carlos Quevedo, has pleaded guilty to murder and faces a mandatory life sentence.

Authorities say Lord was stabbed 38 times.

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

Sentence imposed in fatal convenience store robbery

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — One of the two men facing charges in connection with a robbery that turned deadly at a Rapid City convenience store last year has been sentenced to seven and a-half years in prison.

Cody Grady pleaded guilty to second-degree robbery in a plea agreement with prosecutors. KOTA-TV says Grady was originally charged with first-degree murder in the stabbing death of Loaf 'n' Jug clerk Kasie Lord following an attempt to steal beer in January 2017.

Another defendant Carlos Quevedo earlier pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in Lord's death.

Grady says he fought with Lord after he and Quevedo tried to steal the beer. Grady says he left the store before Lord was stabbed. In court Thursday Grady said he was sorry for the outcome of that night.

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

Mother of emaciated children now facing drug charges

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The mother of two toddlers found emaciated on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 2016 is now facing drug charges.

Thirty-four-year-old Darcel Featherman was arrested Tuesday night in a Rapid City hotel lobby. She's accused of possessing and using methamphetamine.

Featherman was recently sentenced to three years of probation for abandoning her daughters to people whom she knew were unfit to take care of them. Her sister was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and the criminal case against her mother is ongoing.

The Rapid City Journal reports that the conditions of Featherman's probation include not possessing a controlled substance.

Featherman appeared in court on the drug charges Wednesday but didn't enter a plea. She was granted release on personal recognizance and is due back in court next month.

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

China targets \$3 billion of US goods in tariff spat

By JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China announced a \$3 billion list of U.S. goods for possible retaliation in a tariff dispute with President Donald Trump and girded Friday for a bigger battle over technology policy as financial markets sank on fears of global disruption.

The Commerce Ministry said higher duties on pork, apples, steel pipe and other goods would offset Chinese losses due to Trump's tariff hike on steel and aluminum imports. It urged Washington to negotiate a settlement but set no deadline.

In a separate and potentially bigger dispute, the ministry criticized Trump's decision Thursday to approve a possible tariff hike on Chinese imports worth up to \$60 billion over Beijing's technology policy. It gave no indication of a possible response but a foreign ministry spokeswoman said Beijing was "fully prepared to defend" its interests.

"We don't want a trade war, but we are not afraid of it," said the spokeswoman, Hua Chunying.

Financial markets sank on concern the escalating tensions might disrupt the biggest global trading relationship or lead other nations to raise import barriers.

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Tokyo's benchmark tumbled by an unusually large 5.1 percent while the Shanghai Composite Index closed down 3.4 percent.

The dollar dipped to 104.90 yen as investors shifted into the Japanese currency, which is viewed as a "safe haven" from risk.

China's response Friday appeared to be aimed at increasing domestic U.S. pressure on Trump by making clear which exporters, including farm areas that voted for him in 2016, might be hurt.

"Beijing is extending an olive branch and urging the U.S. to resolve trade disputes through dialogue rather than tariffs," said economist Vishnu Varathan of Mizuho Bank in a report. "Nevertheless, the first volley of shots and retaliatory response has been set off."

The list announced Friday was linked to Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs, but companies already were looking ahead to a battle over complaints Beijing steals or forces companies to hand over technology.

The tensions reflect the dueling nationalistic ambitions of Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

U.S. efforts to boost exports of technology-based goods, begun under Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, conflict with China's plan for state-led development of global competitors in fields from robotics to electric cars. Foreign business groups complain Chinese regulators are trying to squeeze them out of promising industries.

The Commerce Ministry announcement Friday made no mention of jetliners, soybeans or other products that are the biggest U.S. exports to China by value. That leaves Beijing room to take more drastic steps.

Chinese officials are trying to figure out how to address U.S. concerns, said Jake Parker, vice president for China operations of the U.S.-China Business Council, which represents American companies that do business with China.

"Until the Trump administration articulates those concerns and how China can address them, it's going to be very, very difficult for China to make those changes," said Parker.

Washington doesn't believe it needs to give Chinese leaders another list of requests because they already know what the United States wants, said a senior U.S. official, who briefed reporters on condition he not be identified further. He said Trump and Xi agreed last year on a 100-day agenda of trade-liberalization measures but Beijing failed to act on about half of them.

Instead, the Trump administration wants Chinese leaders to address more basic structural issues that interfere with market forces, said the official.

The official cited Beijing's "Made in China 2025" plan as "hugely problematic." It calls for creating Chinese competitors in electric cars, robots, artificial intelligence and other fields. Business groups complain it will hamper or outright block foreign access to those industries.

The latest proposed Chinese tariffs would add a 25 percent charge on pork and aluminum scrap, mirroring Trump's 25 percent duty on steel, according to the Commerce Ministry. A second list of goods including wine, apples, ethanol and stainless steel pipe would be charged 15 percent, the same margin as Trump's tariff hike on aluminum.

Chinese purchases of those goods last year totaled \$3 billion, the ministry said.

The U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs also have irked Japan, America's closest ally in Asia.

"We have repeatedly told the U.S. side that steel and aluminum imports from its ally Japan will not adversely affect America's national security, and that Japan should be excluded," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga.

China's top economic official, Premier Li Keqiang, appealed to Washington on Tuesday to "act rationally" and said, "we don't want to see a trade war."

The United States buys little Chinese steel or aluminum, but analysts have said Beijing would feel obligated to take action to avoid looking weak.

Beijing reported a trade surplus of \$275.8 billion with the United States last year, or two-thirds of its global total. Washington reports different figures that put the gap at a record \$375.2 billion.

Trump's technology order is in response to "unfair and harmful acquisition of U.S. technology," said a statement by the U.S. Trade Representative's office. It said USTR would pursue a World Trade Organization case against Beijing's "discriminatory technology licensing."

A USTR statement said possible measures include a 25 percent tariff on Chinese-made aerospace, computer and information technology and machinery but gave no details.

China is unlikely to respond until Washington acts but might launch an investigation of imports of U.S. corn and soybeans "as a warning shot," said Parker. He noted Beijing began a probe of U.S. sorghum in February after Trump announced the steel and aluminum tariffs.

On Tuesday, the Chinese premier promised at a news conference Beijing will "open even wider" to imports and investment as part of efforts to make its state-dominated economy more productive.

Li said Beijing would "fully open" manufacturing, with "no mandatory requirement for technology transfers." However, Chinese officials already insist companies aren't required to hand over technology, so it was unclear how policy might change.

AP Writers Gillian Wong and researcher Yu Bing contributed. Mari Yamaguchi contributed from Tokyo.

Bolton replacing McMaster as Trump national security adviser

By CATHERINE LUCEY, ZEKE MILLER and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Charging ahead with the dramatic remaking of his White House, President Donald Trump said he would replace national security adviser H.R. McMaster with the former U.N. Ambassador John Bolton, a foreign policy hawk entering an administration facing key decisions on Iran and North Korea.

After weeks of speculation about McMaster's future, Trump and the respected three-star general put a positive face on the Thursday departure, making no reference to the growing public friction between them. Trump tweeted that McMaster had done "an outstanding job & will always remain my friend." He said Bolton will take over April 9 as his third national security adviser in just over a year.

The national security shakeup comes as the president is increasingly shedding advisers who once eased the Republican establishment's concerns about the foreign policy and political novice in the White House. McMaster is the sixth close adviser or aide to announce a departure in a turbulent six weeks, joining ally Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who was unceremoniously fired last week.

The White House has said the president is seeking to put new foreign policy leaders in place ahead of a not-yet-scheduled meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un. Bolton is likely to add a hard-line influence on those talks, as well as deliberations over whether to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal.

The White House said McMaster's exit had been under discussion for some time and stressed it was not due to any one incident, including this week's stunning leak about Trump's recent phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

McMaster had briefed Trump before the Putin call — and his team drafted all-caps instructions telling Trump not to congratulate the Russian leader on his re-election victory. Trump did it anyway.

An internal investigation into the leak is underway, said a White House official who — like others interviewed about the announcement and the White House shakeup — demanded anonymity to discuss internal matters.

In a statement released by the White House, McMaster said he would be requesting retirement from the U.S. Army effective this summer, adding that afterward he "will leave public service."

McMaster had told confidants he would leave the post if at any point he lost credibility on the international stage, according to three White House officials. The feverish speculation about an impending exit sped up the decision for him to depart, the officials said, in part because McMaster believed foreign partners were beginning to doubt his influence.

Chief of staff John Kelly and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis had been pushing Trump to get rid of McMaster and had been escalating their campaign in recent weeks. It had appeared McMaster's departure was imminent last week — but White House officials insisted the speculation was false.

"Just spoke to @POTUS and Gen. H.R. McMaster — contrary to reports they have a good working relationship and there are no changes at the NSC," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders

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tweeted late last Thursday night.

McMaster never developed a personal rapport with Trump, who chafed at his long-winded briefing style, according to a White House official and a person close to the president. His influence in high-level decision-making had waned in recent months, as Trump has increasingly relied on the direct counsel of Kelly and Mattis.

Yet officials said the president still has genuine respect for McMaster. He had been under consideration for a fourth star, and White House officials hoped it would provide a graceful exit from the West Wing for the longtime soldier. No suitable postings had been identified, leaving McMaster — long an iconoclast among the top brass — with no choice but retirement.

Bolton, probably the most divisive foreign policy expert ever to serve as U.N. ambassador, has been a force in Republican foreign policy circles for decades. He served in the Republican administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, and as a Bush lawyer during the 2000 Florida recount.

A strong supporter of the Iraq war and an advocate for aggressive use of American power, Bolton was unable to win Senate confirmation after his nomination to the U.N. post alienated many Democrats and even some Republicans. He resigned after serving 17 months as a Bush "recess appointment," which allowed him to hold the job on a temporary basis without Senate confirmation.

The role of national security adviser does not require Senate confirmation.

Bolton met with Trump and Kelly in early March to discuss North Korea and Iran. He was spotted entering the West Wing earlier Thursday.

Tension between Trump and McMaster had grown increasingly public. Last month, Trump took issue with McMaster's characterization of Russian meddling in the 2016 election after the national security adviser told the Munich Security Summit that interference was beyond dispute.

"General McMaster forgot to say that the results of the 2016 election were not impacted or changed by the Russians and that the only Collusion was between Russia and Crooked H, the DNC and the Dems," Trump tweeted Feb. 17, alluding to frequent GOP allegations of impropriety by Democrats and Hillary Clinton.

Tillerson's exit also forecast trouble for McMaster, who had aligned himself with the embattled secretary of state in seeking to soften some of Trump's most dramatic foreign policy impulses.

McMaster told The New York Times last year that Trump's unorthodox approach "has moved a lot of us out of our comfort zone, me included."

The military strategist, who joined the administration in February 2017, has struggled to navigate a tumultuous White House. Last summer, he was the target of a far-right attack campaign, as conservative groups and a website tied to former Trump adviser Steve Bannon targeted him as insufficiently supportive of Israel and not tough enough on Iran.

McMaster was brought in after Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, was dismissed after less than a month in office. White House officials said he was ousted because he did not tell top advisers, including Vice President Mike Pence, about the full extent of his contacts with Russian officials.

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Congress OKs \$1.3 trillion budget, averting another shutdown

By LISA MASCARO and ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress gave final approval Friday to a giant \$1.3 trillion spending bill that ends the budget battles for now, but only after late scuffles and conservatives objected to big outlays on Democratic priorities at a time when Republicans control the House, Senate and White House.

Senate passage shortly after midnight averted a third federal shutdown this year, an outcome both parties wanted to avoid. But in crafting a sweeping deal that busts budget caps, they've stirred conservative opposition and set the contours for the next funding fight ahead of the midterm elections.

The House easily approved the measure Thursday, 256-167, a bipartisan tally that underscored the popularity of the compromise, which funds the government through September. It beefs up military and

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domestic programs, delivering federal funds to every corner of the country.

But action stalled in the Senate, as conservatives ran the clock in protest. Then, an unusual glitch arose when Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho, wanted to remove a provision to rename a forest in his home state after the late Cecil Andrus, a four-term Democratic governor.

At one point, Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., stepped forward to declare the entire late-night scene "ridiculous. It's juvenile."

In the end, Risch lost. But the fight contributed to late-night delays before passage of the massive spending package,

Once the opponents relented, the Senate began voting, clearing the package by a 65-32 vote a full day before Friday's midnight deadline to fund the government.

"Shame, shame. A pox on both Houses - and parties," tweeted Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who spent the afternoon tweeting details found in the 2,200-page bill that was released the night before. "No one has read it. Congress is broken."

Paul said later he knew he could only delay, but not stop, the outcome and had made his point.

The omnibus spending bill was supposed to be an antidote to the stopgap measures Congress has been forced to pass — five in this fiscal year alone — to keep government temporarily running amid partisan fiscal disputes.

Leaders delivered on President Donald Trump's top priorities of boosting Pentagon coffers and starting work on his promised border wall, while compromising with Democrats on funds for road building, child care development, fighting the opioid crisis and more.

But the result has been unimaginable to many Republicans after campaigning on spending restraints and balanced budgets. Along with the recent GOP tax cuts law, the bill that stood a foot tall at some lawmakers' desks ushers in the return of \$1 trillion deficits.

Trump only reluctantly backed the bill he would have to sign, according to Republican lawmakers and aides, who acknowledged the deal involved necessary trade-offs for the Democratic votes that were needed for passage despite their majority lock on Congress.

"Obviously he doesn't like this process — it's dangerous to put it up to the 11th hour like this," said Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., who opposed the bill and speaks regularly to Trump. "The president, and our leadership, and the leadership in the House got together and said, Look, we don't like what the Democrats are doing, we got to fund the government."

White House legislative director Marc Short framed it as a compromise. "I can't sit here and tell you and your viewers that we love everything in the bill," he said on Fox. "But we think that we got many of our priorities funded."

Trying to smooth over differences, Republican leaders focused on military increases that were once core to the party's brand as guardians of national security.

"Vote yes for our military. Vote yes for the safety and the security of this country," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., ahead of voting.

But even that remained a hard sell. In all, 90 House Republicans, including many from the conservative House Freedom Caucus, voted against the bill, as did two dozen Republicans in the Senate.

It was a sign of the entrenched GOP divisions that have made the leadership's job controlling the majority difficult. They will likely repeat in the next budget battle in the fall.

Democrats faced their own divisions, particularly after failing to resolve the stalemate over shielding young Dreamer immigrants from deportation as Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has left it for the courts to decide.

Instead, Trump won \$1.6 billion to begin building and replacing segments of the wall along the border with Mexico. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus opposed the bill.

Also missing from the package was a renewal of federal insurance subsidies to curb premium costs on the Affordable Care Act exchanges. Trump ended some of those payments as part of his effort to scuttle President Barack Obama's health care law, but Republicans have joined Democrats in trying to revive them.

Bipartisan efforts to restore the subsidies, and provide additional help for insurance carriers, foundered over disagreements on how tight abortion restrictions should be on using the money for private insurance plans. Senate Republicans made a last-ditch effort to tuck the insurance provisions into the bill, but Democrats refused to yield on abortion restrictions.

Still, Democrats were beyond pleased with the outcome. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., chronicled the party's many gains, and noted they could just have easily withheld votes Republicans needed to avert another shutdown.

"We chose to use our leverage to help this bill pass," Pelosi said.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said as the minority party in Congress, "We feel good." He added, "We produced a darn good bill."

Associated Press writers Matthew Daly and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Follow Mascaro on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/LisaMascaro> and Fram at <https://twitter.com/AsFram>

Protest over shooting of unarmed black man overtakes freeway

By SOPHIA BOLLAG and DON THOMPSON, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Protesters decrying this week's fatal shooting of an unarmed black man marched from Sacramento City Hall and onto a nearby freeway Thursday, disrupting rush hour traffic and holding signs with messages like "Sac PD: Stop killing us!"

Hundreds of people rallied for Stephon Clark, a 22-year-old who was shot Sunday in the backyard of his grandparents' home. Police say they feared he had a handgun when they confronted him after reports that he had been breaking windows in the South Sacramento neighborhood.

But police found only a cellphone.

"We are at a place of deep pain" because of recent violence directed at black people in Sacramento and elsewhere, said the Rev. Les Simmons, a community leader. He said the city's first black police chief, Daniel Hahn, is doing what he can but protested the actions of Hahn's officers.

Clinton Primm said he was friends with Clark, who was nicknamed "Zoe," for about six years and fears others are also at risk at being shot by police.

"He was a great dad," he recalled of Clark, the father of sons ages 1 and 3. "He loved both of them to death."

Sacramento resident Vanessa Cullars said she has lost two family members to police violence.

"I'm fed up with this," she said at the protest. "I feel like our lives don't matter to them."

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg earlier said he was horrified but won't second-guess the "split-second decisions" of the officers. He praised Hahn for quickly releasing videos of the shooting and said the department has improved its policies since the fatal shooting of a mentally ill black man in 2016.

But independent experts said the footage from body cameras and an overhead helicopter raises more questions than it answers.

The officers appeared to believe they were in danger, they said, and if so the shooting was likely legally justified.

One officer is heard "doing a mental inventory to make sure there's no holes in his body" because the officers appear to think Clark may have shot at them and missed, said Peter Moskos, a former police officer and assistant professor in the Department of Law and Police Science at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

But Geoffrey Alpert, a professor of criminology at the University of South Carolina and an expert on police use of force, said the officers may have a tough time explaining why they jumped to the conclusion that Clark had a gun.

He also questioned why an arriving backup officer had the two original officers turn off the microphones on their body cameras, eliminating what he called "important evidence."

In an ideal world, the two officers should have immediately provided first aid instead of waiting five

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minutes for backup, said Eugene O'Donnell, a professor of police studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "But that could be more the product of hope than reality," he said, with the officers still in shock and worried about their own safety.

The Sacramento Police Department said officers were responding to reports of a man seen breaking into at least three vehicles and later into a neighbor's home. The police said deputies in the helicopter saw Clark break a neighbor's sliding glass door before jumping a fence.

As a result, "their threat radar is really high," said Plumas County sheriff's deputy and special prosecutor Ed Obayashi, who trains officers and testifies in court on police use of force.

"They have to assume that their lives are in danger at that very second," he said.

Associated Press writers Jonathan J. Cooper and Kathleen Ronayne contributed.

Second half of Sweet 16 filled with compelling matchups

By JOHN MARSHALL, AP Basketball Writer

Loyola-Chicago and its game-planning nun are headed to the Elite Eight. So too are Kansas State, Florida State and Michigan in this maddest of Marches.

Day 2 of the Sweet 16 has Villanova's Jalen Brunson vs. West Virginia's Jevon Carter, Duke's athletes trying to solve Syracuse's zone and the arm brace saga of Purdue's Isaac Haas. Oh, and all those athletes between Kansas and Clemson.

No wonder sports fans love this time of the year so much.

The marquee matchup comes in the East Region Friday in Boston, where Villanova, one of two No. 1 seeds remaining, faces Press Virginia.

The Wildcats have been on a tear while everyone has been tearing up their brackets, making 31 combined 3-pointers in lopsided opening NCAA Tournament wins over Radford and Alabama. Villanova (32-4) has been even better on defense, holding its first two opponents to 37 percent shooting and less than 60 points per game.

West Virginia (26-10) is known for its defense, but rode its hot-shooting offense into the Sweet 16 for the third time in four years. The Mountaineers shot at least 50 percent in their NCAA opening wins over Murray State and Marshall, averaging 84 points per game. They also play that relentless, pressure-all-time defense that gives teams fits, especially this time of year.

"The matchup with West Virginia, it's what you get at this point in the tournament," Villanova coach Jay Wright said. "Sweet 16, you're going to play a great team that's playing on all cylinders. You can't get this far unless you're really clicking right now."

The game also will have two of the nation's top players at the top of their games: Brunson and Carter.

Brunson is a front-runner for national player of the year. Carter is one of the nation's top one-on-one defenders. Could be the best individual match-up of the bracket right there.

"What makes him tough? He's smart. He's very smart," Carter said of Brunson. "He's crafty. He knows how to use his body well. He knows about angles and stuff."

BLUE DEVILS VS. ORANGE ZONE: Syracuse was not exactly an offensive juggernaut in the NCAA Tournament, scoring 60 points once in three games. The Orange (23-13) reached the Sweet 16 behind coach Jim Boenheim's 2-3 zone, which has limited teams to 54 points per game and limited No. 3 Michigan State to 26 percent shooting to reach the Sweet 16.

Syracuse faces its toughest test yet against the Blue Devils (28-7) in Omaha. Duke has a superb inside-out game with super frosh Marvin Bagley III in the middle and is averaging 85 points per game in the NCAA Tournament.

Something has to give.

HAAS AND THE BRACE: Purdue suffered a huge blow when Haas, the Boilermakers' 7-foot-2 match-up nightmare, broke his right elbow in its opener against Cal State-Fullerton. Haas has not given up on the season just yet, though.

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The senior big man tried to wear a brace in Purdue's round of 32 game against Butler, but the NCAA nixed it because the brace had metal in it.

In steps Purdue's engineering students. Given NCAA guidelines by the Purdue staff, the engineering whizzes worked through the night Monday to create a one-of-a-kind brace to hold Haas' elbow in place.

Even with his new elbow accessory, Boilermakers coach Matt Painter all but ruled Haas out for Friday's game against Texas Tech. Haas is still holding out hope.

"If I did play, it would just be really short minutes, I'm sure," Haas said. "But I'll play as many as I'm asked of."

TIGERS AND JAYHAWKS: Kansas (29-7), the No. 1 seed in the Midwest, won its record 14th straight Big 12 title and opened the NCAA Tournament by beating Penn and Seton Hall behind a stingy defense. The Jayhawks have one of the biggest stars left in the bracket in Devonte Graham, but fifth-seeded Clemson (25-9) is on a roll, coming off a 31-point thrashing of No. 4 seed Auburn, the third-largest win by a lower seed since 1979.

"I think we have moments where we don't play very tough, but I also think we have some moments where our experience and our toughness definitely shows," Kansas coach Bill Self said.

SEC OUT: The SEC had the second-most teams in the NCAA Tournament with eight. Now there are none.

With Kentucky's 61-58 loss to Kansas State Thursday night, the SEC does not have a team left in the bracket through the first half of the Sweet 16. The Wildcats were the conference's last team standing after Texas A&M was blown out by Michigan earlier Thursday.

NEW FINAL FOUR: With Gonzaga's loss to Florida State, this year's Final four is guaranteed to have four different teams than last season.

Defending national champion North Carolina, which beat the Zags in the title game a year ago, lost its second-round game against Texas A&M. South Carolina and Oregon did not make this year's NCAA Tournament.

More AP college basketball: <https://collegebasketball.ap.org> ; https://twitter.com/AP_Top25 and <https://www.podcastone.com/ap-sports-special-events>

Before big break in case, Austin bombs frustrated police

By **PAUL J. WEBER** and **RYAN J. FOLEY**, Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — After the first package exploded on an Austin doorstep, police assured the public that there was no wider threat, no signs of terrorism. The idea of a serial bomber striking random strangers never came up.

The March 2 blast killed Anthony Stephan House, a 39-year-old man with a background in finance and an 8-year-old daughter. Investigators didn't rule out that House may have mishandled homemade explosives.

Hours later, in an interrogation room, detectives told one of House's neighbors their main theory: The deadly package was retaliation, maybe from a drug cartel, for a raid days earlier that seized more than \$300,000 and 30 pounds of pot. The cartel just got the address wrong.

"They're saying, 'Who's trying to blow you up?' They're trying to do the whole thing, 'Help us help you, because they're not going to miss again,'" said Mark McCrimmon, an Austin attorney who represents the neighbor.

It wouldn't be the last wrong lead in the three-week search that eventually led to Mark Anthony Conditt, an unemployed community college dropout who blew himself up Wednesday as officers closed in.

The manhunt intensified after more explosions in the weeks that followed House's death. By the time the suspect too was dead, his bombs had killed two people, badly wound four others and unnerved the Texas capital.

On Thursday, authorities gave no indication they were any closer to understanding why Conditt did it. Austin Police Chief Brian Manley said the bomber left behind a 25-minute cellphone recording that amounted to a confession but revealed no clear motive.

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It's one last mystery in a case that police struggled to crack. More than 500 federal agents swarmed Austin in what Rep. Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, called the nation's largest bombing manhunt since the 2013 Boston Marathon attacks.

The trail to Conditt included many dead ends among more than 500 phoned-in tips. There were theories that didn't pan out and surveillance cameras that failed to record a glimpse of the suspect.

"They got a lot of calls," McCaul said of investigators, "but not a lot of credible leads."

Early miscalculations stoked frustration in the neighborhoods where the second and third bombings went off on March 12.

Because police initially believed House's death was an isolated attack, they did not warn Austin residents about suspicious deliveries before another package killed 17-year-old Draylen Mason and wounded his mother. Mason and House were both black and related to prominent Austin families, which led police to consider whether they were dealing with a hate crime.

"They didn't consider all the alternatives, and it came back to bite us," said Nelson Linder, president of the Austin chapter of the NAACP.

When the third bomb wounded a 75-year-old Hispanic woman, investigators wondered whether it was actually intended for a neighbor, Erica Mason, who has the same last name as the slain teenager.

Erica Mason, who is white, said she told police she had no connection to Draylen Mason's family. Police now think the shared name was just a coincidence.

Even after three bombings, investigators were still unsure whether they were dealing with a single attacker. "We're not calling it a serial bomber," Manley told reporters on March 12.

A week later, they were.

By then, police had urged residents to report any strange packages. The warning flooded 911 operators with more than 1,000 calls. Six days after Mason's death, authorities increased the pot of reward money to \$115,000 and tried a new tactic to draw the bomber out: a news conference that included a direct appeal for him to get in touch. Hours later, another explosion seemed to be his answer.

The fourth blast, triggered by a tripwire attached to a "children at play" sign that Conditt purchased at Home Depot, was the first on the city's more affluent west side. The new location dampened earlier theories about who the bomber was targeting.

After a fifth explosion Monday at a FedEx processing center outside San Antonio, authorities finally got their big break.

Conditt had been careful to avoid cameras before entering a FedEx store in southwest Austin disguised in a blond wig and gloves, said McCaul, who called it the bomber's "fatal mistake."

Surveillance at the store also captured a license plate linked to Conditt, which in turn gave authorities a cellphone number they could track.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said police were able to monitor Conditt and his movements for about 24 hours before his death. The cellphone number tied Conditt to bombing sites around Austin, but McCaul said Conditt had eluded authorities by powering off the phone for long stretches.

By Tuesday night, police began closing in on Conditt's home in suburban Pflugerville. They finally found him early Wednesday at a hotel north of Austin, and officers prepared to move in for an arrest. When the suspect's sport utility vehicle began to drive away, they followed.

Conditt drove into a ditch on the side of the road, and SWAT officers approached, banging on his window. That's when he ended his life by setting off one of his own devices inside the vehicle.

Police found him because he turned his phone back on, McCaul said.

"He turned it on. It pinged, and then the chase ensued," he said.

Associated Press Writer Sadie Gurman in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pauljweber.

Roommate's mom: Son was in custody until police found bomber

By EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press

PFLUGERVILLE, Texas (AP) — The mother of a man who lived with suspected serial bomber Mark Conditt in a home north of Austin says her son was kept in police custody until after Conditt died in a fatal confrontation with officers.

Jennifer Withers told The Associated Press that her 26-year-old son, Collin Thomas, was walking from work Tuesday night in Pflugerville to the house he and another man shared with Conditt when a group of officers "flew at him." Withers, who spoke during an interview Thursday, said Thomas, who is black, was handcuffed, taken into custody by SWAT officers and questioned about the bombings.

She said he was held overnight but that none of his family was notified about where he was.

Conditt died early Wednesday after detonating a bomb as police were about to arrest him. Thomas was eventually released.

Police said earlier Thursday that they'd released Conditt's other roommate. They refused to name him, saying he wasn't currently under arrest.

Austin police spokeswoman Anna Sabana said neither roommate has been charged. She said she did not know why Thomas was detained forcibly in the way his mother described.

Withers said Thomas lived with Conditt for more than three months in a home Conditt was renovating with his father. She said her son was close to a family at the Christian church he attended, and that they introduced him to Conditt's family who were also Christian.

She said her son and the 23-year-old Conditt, who was white, "seemed to get along fine."

"Collin said they all would sit around and chat and talk," Withers said.

She said her son didn't know anything about the bombs and that she never got to meet Conditt.

Conditt's first two bombs killed and injured black victims, leading to speculation that they were hate crimes — though investigators backed off those theories somewhat when subsequent victims were Hispanic and white.

They now say they don't know what motivated him.

Conditt made a 25-minute cellphone recording before his death. It was recovered after he detonated one of his own bombs along the side of Interstate 35 just outside of Austin as a SWAT team moved in.

But investigators say the recording provides few clues as to Conditt's motives — and they've refused to release it publicly, citing the ongoing investigation.

Conditt built bombs planted in different parts of Austin that killed two people and severely wounded four others over three weeks starting on March 2. He began by placing explosives in packages left overnight on doorsteps, then rigged an explosive to a tripwire along a public trail. Finally, he sent two parcels with bombs via FedEx.

As fear grew, Conditt eventually was tracked down through store surveillance video, cellphone signals and witness accounts of a customer shipping FedEx packages in a disguise that included a blond wig and gloves.

Police found him early Wednesday at a hotel. And when his car moved, they followed and forced him off the road, setting up the confrontation that ended in an explosion.

Austin Mayor Steve Adler praised police officers for stopping Conditt's sport utility vehicle before he could get onto the highway, even though they were aware he likely had explosive devices inside and they did not have as much backup as planned.

"We hear about folks who run into danger to keep us safe and we had one of those moments in very graphic and specific detail," Adler said at a news conference Thursday.

NAACP Austin President Nelson Linder said the manhunt's end was a relief but that the public needs answers on what motivated Conditt, including whether the first two victims were targeted because they are from prominent black families.

"I don't think it's random at this point," Linder said. "We're going to withhold our judgment and keep searching for information and why he killed those people."

Investigators have released few details about Conditt, who was unemployed, home-schooled and attended Austin Community College until 2012 but didn't graduate.

The Austin American-Statesman reported Thursday that a bomb Conditt made and shipped via FedEx had been addressed to an employee at a downtown Austin spa. It was intercepted at a processing center without exploding.

Anita Ward works at Austin Med Spa and says that police and federal agents told her that her daughter, who also works there, was meant to be the recipient of the unexploded package.

Ward declined to name her daughter, who she said doesn't know Conditt. Police haven't commented.

Life support ending for 'brain dead' school shooting victim

By **MATTHEW BARAKAT** and **BRIAN WITTE**, Associated Press

A teenage girl was brain dead days after being shot when a classmate opened fire inside their Maryland high school and was to be removed from life support, her mother said Thursday.

Melissa Willey told news reporters Thursday night that her daughter, 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey had "no life left in her." She said Jaelynn would be removed from life support during the evening, by the family's decision.

The mother, holding a young baby, said, "On Tuesday ... our lives changed completely and totally forever. My daughter was hurt by a boy who shot her in the head and took everything from our lives."

The teen was shot Tuesday by 17-year-old Austin Rollins at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County.

Rollins died after shooting Willey. A school resource officer got there within a minute and fired a shot at Rollins, but it's not yet clear whether Rollins was killed by the officer's bullet or took his own life.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office said Wednesday Rollins and the girl had been in a relationship that recently ended.

"All indications suggest the shooting was not a random act of violence," police said in a statement.

Willey had been in critical condition at the University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center. A fundraising page to help her family has raised more than \$59,000.

Jaelynn was one of nine siblings, her mother said, and a member of the swim team.

The shooting broke out just before classes were to begin Tuesday, according to the sheriff's office, which said the gun used belonged to Rollins' father.

A 14-year-old boy who was shot in the thigh during the encounter was released Wednesday from a hospital.

In an email Thursday to The Associated Press, his mother, Kimberly Dennis, said her family is "eternally grateful" that her son, Desmond Barnes, is "alive, doing well and in good spirits."

She expressed sympathy for Willey and her family and added, "We are also praying for the entire Great Mills High School family and young people around this country. As a community and nation, we must continue to work and fight for a world that is safe for our children."

Great Mills High School has about 1,600 students and is near the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, about 65 miles (104 kilometers) southeast of Washington.

St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron credited Deputy First Class Blaine Gaskill with preventing any more loss of life.

Cameron said Gaskill, a six-year veteran with SWAT team training, responded within a minute and fired his weapon simultaneously with a final shot fired by Rollins. The officer was unharmed.

On Wednesday, authorities said the Glock handgun used in the shooting was legally owned by Rollins' father. In Maryland it is illegal for anyone under age 21 to possess a handgun unless it is required for their employment.

This story has been updated to correct that authorities say the school resource officer fired a shot at Rollins, not at the female victim.

Associated Press contributors include David McFadden, Courtney Columbus and Sarah Rankin.

Trump's plan to remove McMaster wasn't true _ until it was

By ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It wasn't true, it wasn't true — until it was.

Thursday's announcement that National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster will be the latest top aide to leave the White House spotlights President Donald Trump's mercurial decision-making when it comes to staffing the top ranks of government.

Trump will discuss. Consider. Float. Leak. But nothing's decided until it's decided.

His personnel moves materialize in fits and starts — at once both glacial and impulsive. In the White House, they're called "long-term snap decisions."

McMaster showed up to work Thursday the same way he had for months: His days in the West Wing were numbered, but not even Trump knew how long he'd keep his aide around. Hours later, in a phone call between the two, it became clear that McMaster's time was up.

Trump had mused to advisers and outside allies about McMaster's ouster for months — the pair had never formed a strong rapport — and rumors of his replacement had swirled in Washington for months.

Just last week, it had appeared McMaster's departure was imminent — but White House officials insisted the speculation was false.

"Just spoke to @POTUS and Gen. H.R. McMaster — contrary to reports they have a good working relationship and there are no changes at the NSC," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders tweeted a week ago.

Some White House staff rejected suggestions they had misled the public about McMaster's status. At the same time, they maintained the decision to remove him had been long in coming and was not a response to Tuesday's leak of briefing papers related to Trump's phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a disclosure that had generated considerable criticism and fresh speculation that McMaster was in trouble.

They also insisted Sanders' tweeted assurances about McMaster were true — that even as Trump considered ousting McMaster, the president hadn't made the final call.

The timing of McMaster's departure in part had been complicated by efforts on the part of the president and Chief of Staff John Kelly to find a suitable landing pad for the three-star general, but one never materialized.

In the end, Trump went ahead with the personnel change nonetheless. Foreign policy hawk John Bolton had been in conversations with Trump for weeks about taking the job, but had no indication he'd receive the offer Thursday until he was invited to the White House.

It was a familiar scenario after the firing last week of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson: His eventual departure had been viewed as a certainty ever since he was reported to have called the president a "moron" after a meeting on Afghanistan strategy last July. White House aides denied for months that a shakeup was afoot, even though Kelly had drawn up plans last fall to replace Tillerson with CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

It also fit the pattern set with other high-profile departures, including Trump's first chief of staff, Reince Priebus, and press secretary Sean Spicer. Each was long rumored to be leaving — but hung on and on until, suddenly, he was out.

As Trump takes a more active role in reshaping his White House, the same assertive decision-making style is beginning to surface on matters of policy. Trump grew frustrated by what he considered to be stalling on the part of the more moderate forces in his administration who opposed his calls for more protectionist trade policies. One day, with almost no warning, he cut them out of the loop and decided to pursue tough tariffs on global trading partners.

It's clear that the turmoil isn't subsiding.

Though the timing is, as ever, uncertain, Kelly is viewed to be one of the next to exit — and Cabinet secretaries like Housing Secretary Ben Carson and Veterans Affairs' David Shulkin are increasingly on thin ice. Current and former White House officials have maintained that once the president begins considering replacing one of his aides, the staffer is playing on borrowed time.

One White House official characterized the president's decision-making process in more literary terms,

referencing Ernest Hemingway's quip on how one goes bankrupt: "Gradually, then suddenly."

Tweet offering home to gun protesters launches movement

By ASHRAF KHALIL, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It started with a rare tweet by a woman who had — "maybe" — 28 followers on Twitter.

Elizabeth Andrews, a D.C. attorney and mother of a high schooler, was moved by the poise and eloquence of students from Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School after the deadly Feb. 14 shooting. So four days after the shooting, she tweeted an offer to host young protesters coming to Washington for the newly announced March For Our Lives rally in support of stronger gun control measures.

Within hours, her tweet had taken on a life of its own, with thousands of likes and retweets. Now Andrews, who said she's never been an activist, finds herself running an ad-hoc volunteer network that includes more than 1,500 families willing to host demonstrators and provide logistical support for Saturday's rally. It's all part of the intense preparation and speculation ahead of the most anticipated Washington protest since last year's massive women's march.

"It's been crazy, but crazy in a good way," she said. "People want to find some way to actively participate. Everyone wants to help."

Besides the offers to host young demonstrators, Andrews received proposals to help her organize a grassroots movement that she never intended to launch. A group called DC Local Ambassadors, formed after the women's march to provide support for liberal protests, offered to help create a website to field both host families and demonstrators in need of lodging. Marjory Stoneman Douglas' alumni association, organized as a support network the day after the Feb. 14 shootings, has been sending hundreds of prospective demonstrators her way.

The website went live on Feb. 28 and "48 hours later, we had 300 host families signed up," Andrews said. That number is now around 1,620, exceeding the number of demonstrators who have requested lodging.

Anne Tumlinson said volunteering her D.C. home was "a no-brainer" as soon as she heard about the initiative. A Florida native who grew up in Gainesville, Tumlinson was matched up with a group of 18-year-olds from Jacksonville. The vetting process consisted of chatting briefly with the parents of one of the teens.

"It already feels like it's just a bunch of friends or family members coming to town, like of course I would want them to stay with me," she said.

Andrews has been so busy with her network, she's not hosting anyone herself. She said she's now in the "unintended second phase of our work"— channeling the energy of those volunteers into other avenues.

Aspiring host families without guests are being asked to prepare brownbag lunches or pick up demonstrators from the airport. Others have offered to buy Metro subway cards for the protesters. The MSD Alumni Association came up with a wish list of protester needs — things like rain ponchos, safety vests and energy bars. Every item had been purchased by Wednesday.

Up to 1,000 young protesters have been matched with host families, although it's unclear how many will come since many of them were still frantically fundraising for the trip. At least 1,000 people — students, parents and faculty — are expected to come up from MSD High School, but most will be flying straight back to Florida and not staying overnight.

Exactly how many protesters will actually gather Saturday has become a local guessing game. Organizers predicted up to 500,000 demonstrators in their National Park Service permit — which would approximately match the women's march and place it among the largest protests in Washington since the Vietnam era.

"A lot of parents are looking at what these kids are doing and thinking that they might actually be able to make a difference at this moment in history," Andrews said. "Maybe they can succeed in actually changing the country's gun laws in a way that their parents and previous generations failed."

Asian shares slump on fears of trade war between US, China

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian stock markets slumped Friday after Beijing responded to the Trump administration's tariff hikes by saying it may order higher import duties on a range of U.S. goods, ratcheting up fears of a trade war.

Stocks plunged Thursday on Wall Street after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on goods and investment from China. The Dow Jones industrial average dropped more than 700 points as investors feared that trade tensions between the world's largest economies would escalate.

The planned sanctions include tariffs on \$48 billion worth of Chinese imports as well as restrictions on Chinese investments. Trump said he was taking those steps in response to theft of American technology.

The U.S. Trade Representative identified 1,300 product lines as potential targets, including aerospace, information and communication technology, and machinery. A more complete list is due soon, to be followed by a 30-day comment period.

The Chinese government said it will defend itself, and investors are worried that trade tensions will wreak havoc on the world economy.

On Thursday they fled stocks and bought bonds, which sent bond prices higher and yields lower. With interest rates falling, banks took some of the worst losses. Technology and industrial companies, basic materials makers and health care companies also fell sharply.

The fear rippled into Asia, where shares tumbled in early trading. By late morning in Japan, the benchmark Nikkei 225 index was down 3.5 percent at 20,827.92. South Korea's Kospi tumbled 2.3 percent to 2,438.03. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 3.2 percent to 30,090.32 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China sank 2.7 percent to 3,169.19. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 skidded 1.9 percent to 5,824.50.

In response to President Donald Trump's tariff hike on steel and aluminum, China unveiled a list of U.S. goods including pork, apples and steel pipe that it may hit with higher import duties.

The Commerce Ministry in Beijing urged Washington to negotiate a settlement, saying tariffs undermine the global trading system.

"Markets are looking immensely fragile today. Strap in as a tit-for-tat tariff tiff is about to start," Stephen Innes, head of Asian trading at OANDA, said in a commentary.

On Thursday, markets sank. The S&P 500 index skidded 2.5 percent to 2,643.69. The Dow Jones industrial average sank 2.9 percent to 23,957.89. The Nasdaq composite gave up 2.4 percent to 7,166.68.

Investors also sold some of the market's biggest recent winners. Among technology companies, Microsoft fell \$2.69, or 2.9 percent, to \$89.79 and Alphabet, Google's parent company, fell \$40.85, or 3.7 percent, to \$1,053.15. Online retailer Amazon slid \$36.94, or 2.3 percent, to \$1,544.92.

The reaction to the moves in Washington and Beijing was somewhat muted, with Asian markets regaining some lost ground after early sell-offs.

Peter Donisanu, an investment strategy analyst for the Wells Fargo Investment Institute, said the risk of a damaging trade war is still low because the Trump administration is targeting specific goods that aren't central to China's economy. That could change if it puts tariffs on products like electronics or appliances imported from China.

"If the Trump administration really wanted to hurt China and start a trade war, then they would go after those larger sectors," he said.

Earlier this month the Trump administration ordered tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, and stocks dropped as investors worried about the possibility of tougher restrictions on international trade and smaller profits for corporations.

Their fears eased when the administration said some countries will be exempt from the tariffs. That continued Thursday, after U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said the tariffs won't apply to the European Union, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Australia.

The jitters over trade tensions sent investors toward traditional "safe havens" like the Japanese yen, which strengthened against the U.S. dollar.

The dollar fell to 104.87 yen from 105.28 yen in late trading Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.2337 from \$1.2302.

Oil futures rallied. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 95 cents to \$65.27 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract shed 87 cents, or 1.3 percent, to close at \$64.30 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, rose 92 cents to \$69.30 a barrel in London.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay contributed to this report.

After Parkland shooting, worldwide 'March for Our Lives'

By KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — They can't buy a beer or rent a car and most aren't even old enough to vote, yet the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School have spearheaded what could become one of the largest marches in history with nearly 1 million people expected in Washington and more than 800 sister marches from California to Japan.

In the wake of a Valentine's Day shooting that killed 17, the teens have pulled all-nighters, scheduling speakers, petitioning city councils, renting stages and walking march routes with police in a grass-roots movement that has raised more than \$4 million. Students will walk down Pennsylvania Avenue during the March for Our Lives on Saturday alongside pop stars Ariana Grande, Jennifer Hudson, Miley Cyrus and Demi Lovato.

They have requested 14 Jumbotrons, 2,000 chairs and 2,000 public restrooms.

"People don't think about all these little things, but they add up," said Marjory Stoneman Douglas senior Ryan Deitsch, who is 18.

Several student organizers have become mainstays on national TV, promoting the marches, and they landed on the cover of Time magazine. In the first two weeks after the shooting, Deitsch worked 22-hour days, often sleeping in his clothes.

"I'd basically keep going until I shut down, like I'd just collapse, sometimes I'd be on the floor," Deitsch said.

Seasoned activists have marveled at what the students accomplished so far, including a sweeping gun bill in Florida and school walkouts attended by over a million students last week, according to organizers Women's March. Oprah Winfrey and George and Amal Clooney have each donated \$500,000. The cast of "Modern Family" did a public service announcement, and Broadway stars Lin-Manuel Miranda and Ben Platt recorded a song for the march.

The Women's March, Everytown for Gun Safety and the gun violence prevention group founded by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords provided heavy support for the march, opening the youths up to criticism that they are just pawns of left-wing organizations that have been fighting guns for years.

The students said, however, they are calling the shots, and have refused money and turned down support that doesn't align with their vision.

"They like to believe we're puppets, they like to believe that we're being controlled by someone else because ... they don't want to believe that human beings have this power because if they have this power then they might not need a gun," Deitsch said.

In Arizona, well over 20,000 people on social media promised to attend the student-led march, said leader Jordan Harb, a 17-year-old junior at Mountain View High School in Mesa. He coordinated vendors and met with police to talk about barricades and security as they expect counter-protesters to bring assault weapons.

They've raised roughly \$34,000 through T-Shirt sales and donations. The group Arizonans For Gun Safety is handling the money since the teens are underage.

"All of my waking hours are pretty much spent on the march right now," Harb said. "I'm in class and all I do in class is march stuff. I was in Spanish yesterday depositing \$10,000 in our bank account."

Marjory Stoneman Douglas student Casey Sherman spends most of her time in class working on a sister

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march in Parkland, where they're expecting more than 20,000 people. She and fellow students successfully petitioned city commissioners to get permits and she's learned about sponsorships and tax exemptions for charitable groups.

"Every day it's kind of cool because I'm learning things I don't learn in school," the 17-year-old said.

Broward County Property Appraiser Marty Kiar helped the students navigate local government but credited the rest to them, saying "I've never seen anybody be able to bring so many stakeholders together in such a short period of time."

Riley Helberg, a 14-year-old freshman at Crescenta Valley High School, said the Los Angeles march could eclipse the Women's March there with more than 100,000 expected, along with a performance from singer Charlie Puth.

In New York, 17-year-old Winter Minisee, who spearheaded the student walkouts, dismissed criticisms that the teens don't have the credentials to change laws.

"Historically youth have led all the major movements in America, whether it was the civil rights movements, whether it was the movement against the Vietnam war," Minisee said.

The ultimate goal, the students said, is to harness the support into actual voters, with their sights set on November's midterms.

"The high-schoolers and the college students are sick of this normalcy in this environment that we live in where we have to live with mass shootings and code red drills," said Alex Wind, a junior at Stoneman Douglas.

Associated Press writer Jennifer Peltz contributed to this report in New York

Communist Party will regulate China's media, film industry

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese state media will be getting more propaganda now that the Communist Party has announced it will be in direct control of broadcasters and the regulators of everything from movies and TV to books and radio programs.

The move is part of a push by President Xi Jinping — emboldened by the removal of term limits on his time in office — to tighten party supervision over broad swaths of Chinese public life as he pushes for what he calls "unity in thought" among officials and citizens.

Analysts say having direct oversight of the media will help the party hammer home its message domestically and also work to improve its image internationally.

"It's one vast effort to get everybody thinking together," said David Zweig, director of the Center on China's Transnational Relations at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Under the plan announced Wednesday, China Radio International, China National Radio and China Central Television, along with its international broadcast arm, China Global Television Network, will be merged into a new body with a name that translates to "Voice of China."

The government's regulator of the press and print publications, radio, film and television will cease to exist and its responsibilities and resources will be transferred to the party's Central Propaganda Department, along with control over the film industry, including the import and export of movies.

The new body's chief responsibilities include "implementing the party's propaganda guidelines and policies," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The Communist Party newspaper Global Times quoted government expert Feng Yue of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as saying the move will "concentrate the resources and authority to improve China's influence overseas and promote China's international image."

While Chinese media consumers have grown increasingly apolitical with an ever-expanding range of options, from foreign television shows to video games and online shopping, Xi has been steadily increasing the role of the party in the lives of many through new or newly invigorated branch committees in schools, offices and factories.

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That could leave ordinary Chinese with “little choice” but to become active consumers of propaganda, Zweig said.

Writing on the website of the China Media Project at the University of Hong Kong, editor David Bandurski said the change gave the Propaganda Department — which formerly provided broad overall guidance of the media message — direct control over output.

“And that is largely the point that comes through here — the tighter, more centralized control of media and ideology,” Bandurski said.

As its name suggests, the new media monolith appears modeled on outlets such as the U.S.’s Voice of America or Russia’s Russia Today, now known simply as RT.

Xi has repeatedly stressed the role of state media as the party’s “throat and tongue” — the equivalent of “mouthpiece” — especially since a 2016 visit to Xinhua and other major outlets during which he further reinforced the message by saying such outlets must “take the ‘party’ as their surname.”

At the same time, China has faced opposition to its moves to consolidate territorial claims in the South China Sea and rapid economic expansion overseas, as embodied by Xi’s signature trillion-dollar Belt and Road infrastructure initiative to tie China to Southeast Asia, Europe and Africa through roads, railways, ports and power plants.

China has spent vast sums to boost its overseas media presence in recent years, with CCTV opening broadcast centers in Washington and Nairobi, Kenya, and the English-language China Daily newspaper paying to have itself included as an insert in esteemed American papers such as the Washington Post.

Yet those efforts face an uphill battle in competing with well-established global media outlets such as CNN and the BBC, while much of the reporting on China smacks of party propaganda in contrast to reports about the country by foreign media outlets.

Cao Peixin, a professor at the Television School under Beijing’s Communication University of China that has long trained much of the country’s on-air talent, said the reorganization fits the trend toward greater efficiency and media convergence, but would also help present a more unified political message.

Integrating the various departments may not be easy, however, Cao said.

“If the system cannot be established in a modern, efficient and very flexible way, it will be very difficult for many organizations to work in step,” he said.

EU recalls Moscow envoy after blaming Russia over spy attack

By JILL LAWLESS and RAF CASERT, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union is recalling its ambassador from Moscow for consultations over the nerve gas attack against a former spy in Britain earlier this month, reinforcing a united stand with Prime Minister Theresa May against Russia.

After the EU firmly sided with May in the escalating conflict reminiscent of the Cold War and said it was “highly likely Russia is responsible” for the attack on Sergei Skripal, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the EU envoy “is being recalled for consultations to Brussels.”

May won the backing of 27 other EU leaders at a summit Thursday and the bloc called the attack a “grave challenge to our shared security.”

The EU states said they would “coordinate on the consequences to be drawn in the light of the answers provided by the Russian authorities.”

May was delighted with the support early Friday. “This is about us standing together to uphold our values against the Russian threat,” she said.

Rutte said no sanctions were actually discussed at the summit even though rumors swirled of more drastic diplomatic measures. President Dalia Grybauskaitė of former Soviet state Lithuania said she was considering expelling Russian diplomats in the wake of the March 4 attack.

Rutte said over the coming days or weeks, “we and our partners must see what the logical next steps are.”

He insisted that any measure “must have an added value to this extremely strong political declaration.”

The unanimity was a victory for May. She had been striving at a summit in Brussels to persuade her EU

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colleagues to unite in condemning Moscow over the attack on Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer convicted of spying for Britain, and his daughter, Yulia.

Russia strongly denies responsibility and has slammed Britain's investigation.

During a summit dinner, May laid out the reasons Britain is convinced Moscow was behind the attack, including the type of poison used — a Soviet-developed nerve agent known as Novichok — and intelligence that Russia has produced it within the last decade.

Britain argues the attack is part of a pattern of behavior by an increasingly assertive Russia whose muscle-flexing, cyber-meddling and law-breaking on foreign soil pose a threat to the international rule of law.

May said Thursday that "it is clear that the Russian threat doesn't respect borders." She said "the incident in Salisbury was part of a pattern of Russian aggression against Europe and its near neighbors, from the western Balkans to the Middle East."

But European politicians and leaders varied in how far they were willing to go in blaming the Kremlin.

Russia President Vladimir Putin's office said Thursday that Greek leader Alexis Tsipras had called Putin to congratulate him on his re-election and discuss issues, including the Salisbury poisoning.

Britain and Russia have expelled 23 of each other's diplomats in a dispute showing no sign of easing.

Russia's ambassador to the U.K., Alexander Yakovenko, accused the U.K. Thursday of having a "bad record of violating international law and misleading the international community."

"History shows that British statements must be verified," he told reporters in London, demanding "full transparency of the investigation and full cooperation with Russia" and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Associated Press writers Lorne Cook in Brussels, Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow and Danica Kirka and Greg Katz in London contributed to this report.

Species battle pits protected sea lions against fragile fish

By GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

NEWPORT, Ore. (AP) — The 700-pound sea lion blinked in the sun, sniffed the sea air and then lazily shifted to the edge of the truck bed and plopped onto the beach below.

Freed from the cage that carried him to the ocean, the massive marine mammal shuffled into the surf, looked left, looked right and then started swimming north as a collective groan went up from wildlife officials who watched from the shore.

After two days spent trapping and relocating the animal designated #U253, he was headed back to where he started — an Oregon river 130 miles (209 kilometers) from the Pacific Ocean that has become an all-you-can-eat fish buffet for hungry sea lions.

"I think he's saying, 'Ah, crap! I've got to swim all the way back?'" said Bryan Wright, an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife scientist.

It's a frustrating dance between California sea lions and Oregon wildlife managers that's become all too familiar in recent months. The state is trying to evict dozens of the federally protected animals from an inland river where they feast on salmon and steelhead that are listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The bizarre survival war has intensified recently as the sea lion population rebounds and fish populations decline in the Pacific Northwest.

The sea lions breed each summer off Southern California and northern Mexico, then the males cruise up the Pacific Coast to forage. Hunted for their thick fur, the mammals' numbers dropped dramatically but have rebounded from 30,000 in the late 1960s to about 300,000 today due to the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act.

With their numbers growing, the dog-faced pinnipeds are venturing ever farther inland on the watery highways of the Columbia River and its tributaries in Oregon and Washington — and their appetite is having disastrous consequences, scientists say.

In Oregon, the sea lions are intercepting protected fish on their way to spawning grounds above Wil-

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lamette Falls, a horseshoe-shaped waterfall about 25 miles (40 kilometers) south of Portland. Last winter, a record-low 512 wild winter steelhead completed the journey, said Shaun Clements, the state wildlife agency's senior policy adviser.

Less than 30 years ago, that number was more than 15,000, according to state numbers.

"We're estimating that there's a 90 percent probability that one of the populations in the Willamette River could go extinct if sea lion predation continues unchecked," he said. "Of all the adults that are returning to the falls here, a quarter of them are getting eaten."

Clements estimates the sea lions also are eating about 9 percent of the spring chinook salmon, a species prized by Native American tribes still allowed to fish for them.

Oregon wildlife managers say sea lions are beginning to move into even smaller tributaries where they had never been seen before and where some of the healthiest stocks of the threatened fish exist. The mammals also have been spotted in small rivers in Washington state that are home to fragile fish populations.

California sea lions are not listed under the Endangered Species Act, but killing them requires special authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which was changed to address the issue of fish predation.

Biologists this spring started trapping the sea lions in the Willamette River and releasing them at the coast. They also have applied with the federal government to kill the worst offenders to protect the fish runs.

Native tribes, which have fished for salmon and steelhead for generations, support limited sea lion kills because of the cultural value of the fish, said Doug Hatch, a senior fisheries scientist with the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission.

"You're pitting this protected population that has been fully recovered against these Endangered Species Act-listed fish," Hatch said. "We think it's an easy choice."

If U.S. officials grant the request, the trap-and-kill program would expand a similar and highly controversial effort on another major Pacific Northwest river. Oregon and Washington wildlife managers are allowed to kill up to 93 sea lions trapped each year at Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River under certain conditions.

In the past decade, the agency has removed 190 sea lions there. Of those, 168 were euthanized, seven died in accidents during trapping and 15 were placed in captivity, according to state data.

The Humane Society of the United States sued over the trap-and-kill program and may sue again if it's allowed on the Willamette River, said Sharon Young, the organization's field director for marine wildlife.

The animals are not the only problem facing wild winter steelhead and chinook salmon, she said.

Hydroelectric dams that block rivers, agricultural runoff, damage to spawning grounds and competition with hatchery-bred fish have all hurt the native species, Young said. And new sea lions will take the place of those that are killed, she added.

"It's easier to say, 'If I kill that sea lion, at least I keep him from eating that fish.' But if you don't deal with the cause of the problem, you're not going to help the fish," she said. "It's like a treadmill of death. You kill one, and another one will come."

While Oregon awaits word on the sea lions' fate, wildlife managers are trapping them and hauling them to the ocean, which can sometimes seem futile.

Five days after his 2 ½-hour drive to the Oregon coast, #U253 was back at Willamette Falls, hungry for more fish.

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus> .

Legal shake-up in Trump team may suggest shift in strategy

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's lead lawyer in the special counsel's Russia investigation resigned Thursday, shaking up the legal team just as Trump intensifies attacks on an inquiry he calls nothing more than a witch hunt.

The departure of attorney John Dowd removes the primary negotiator and legal strategist who had

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been molding Trump's defense. It also comes just days after the Trump legal team added a new lawyer, former U.S. Attorney Joseph diGenova, who has accused FBI officials of being involved in a "brazen plot" to exonerate Hillary Clinton in the email investigation and to "frame" Trump for nonexistent crimes.

Dowd confirmed his decision in an email to The Associated Press, saying, "I love the President and wish him well." Dowd said he made the decision voluntarily and he denied reports that his departure had to do with Trump ignoring his legal advice. Dowd said he formally resigned Thursday morning.

It already was a delicate time in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. Trump's attorneys, including Dowd, have been negotiating with Mueller over the scope and terms of an interview of the president. Trump has told reporters that he was eager to speak with Mueller, but Dowd has been far more apprehensive, and the lawyers have not publicly committed to making Trump available for questioning.

Asked Thursday whether he still wants to speak with Mueller's team, Trump told reporters, "Yes, I would like to."

Dowd's exit nearly a year into Mueller's tenure threatens to undo the cooperation between prosecutors and Trump's lawyers, and may herald a stark shift in strategy as the investigation reaches closer into the White House and the president's inner circle.

Over the weekend, Dowd issued a statement calling for an end to the investigation. The White House and later Dowd had to clarify the statement, saying the president's legal team wasn't calling for Mueller to be fired.

But Trump has stepped up his public criticism of Mueller.

In a series of tweets since last week, the president has said the investigation never should have started, that it was based on "fraudulent activities," that it was a "WITCH HUNT" and that it is being led by "13 hardened Democrats, some big Crooked Hillary supporters."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said this week that the tweets were a reflection of Trump's frustration with the process of the investigation. She said the White House did not think firing Mueller would be "the most productive step forward."

Speaking on a panel Thursday at the Financial Times "Future of News" event in New York, former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon said the president has clearly decided to take a more aggressive approach with the special counsel.

"I think President Trump is going to war on this," Bannon said, noting that while in the White House he warned Trump that Dowd and White House lawyer Ty Cobb were being too soft.

This is at least the second major reshuffling of Trump's legal team in the last year. Dowd had taken over the lead lawyer role last summer from New York attorney Marc Kasowitz, who has long been by Trump's side.

Dowd has been working closely with another Trump lawyer, Jay Sekulow, who remains on the team.

"John Dowd is a friend and has been a valuable member of our legal team. We will continue our ongoing representation of the President and our cooperation with the Office of Special Counsel," Sekulow said.

Dowd is a veteran defense lawyer perhaps best known for producing a report for Major League Baseball on star player Pete Rose's gambling habits. Dowd also has played a role in some of the defining legal quagmires of the past four decades, including the Iran-Contra affair, the Keating Five, the Enron collapse and a scandal over the firing of U.S. attorneys.

As the investigation progressed, Dowd has cited the cooperation of the White House and Trump campaign with Mueller's investigation, calling it "the most transparent response in history."

His work on behalf of Trump has previously raised eyebrows.

In December, he took ownership of a tweet from Trump that said former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn was dismissed months earlier for having lied to the FBI. The tweet appeared to confirm for the first time that the White House knew at the time of Flynn's firing that he had misled the FBI. That was important because fired FBI Director James Comey has alleged that Trump, in a private Oval Office conversation, had encouraged him to end an investigation into Flynn.

Amid media scrutiny of the tweet, Dowd claimed to have written it himself.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

Septuagenarian smackdown? Trump, Biden trade fighting words

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Imagine: A pay-per-view steel-cage fight featuring Donald “Kick His A--” Trump versus Joe “Beat the Hell Out of Him” Biden. Price to tune in? Enough to eliminate the government’s deficit.

The Republican president and the former Democratic vice president are trading fighting words over who’d come out on top in a hypothetical matchup.

Trump, reacting to taunts Biden made earlier in the week, tweeted Thursday: “Crazy Joe Biden is trying to act like a tough guy. Actually, he is weak, both mentally and physically, and yet he threatens me, for the second time, with physical assault. He doesn’t know me, but he would go down fast and hard, crying all the way. Don’t threaten people Joe!”

At a University of Miami rally Tuesday against sexual assault, Biden cited lewd comments that candidate Trump made in a 2005 “Access Hollywood” tape about grabbing women without their permission.

“If we were in high school, I’d take him behind the gym and beat the hell out of him,” Biden said. He also said any man who disrespected women was “usually the fattest, ugliest SOB in the room.”

Biden, 75, made similar comments in the closing days of the 2016 campaign. He has kept open the possibility of a 2020 bid for president and is gearing up to play a big role campaigning for Democrats running in this year’s midterm elections.

Trump, 71, dismissed the prospect of a Biden run recently at the annual Gridiron Dinner with Washington journalists, calling him “Sleepy Joe” and saying he could “kick his ass.” Trump also attacked Biden on Twitter in 2016, calling him “Our not very bright Vice President.”

Biden refrained from re-upping his taunts in an appearance Thursday in Washington, just blocks from the White House. He stuck to the promised subject of protecting U.S. workers in the age of globalization during a speech at the Newseum.

Defeated rebels begin leaving enclave near Syrian capital

By BASSEM MROUE and ZEINA KARAM, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Carrying their light arms, hundreds of defeated rebels began evacuating with their families Thursday from a devastated town in eastern Ghouta, an effective surrender under a deal with the government after a long siege and bombing campaign of the enclave on the outskirts of Damascus.

The departure of the powerful Ahrar al-Sham group — the first such arrangement for eastern Ghouta — could serve as a blueprint for fighters in other towns, bringing President Bashar Assad’s government closer to ending years of rebellion in the territory just east of the capital.

As night fell, Syrian TV showed dozens of white buses carrying opposition fighters and civilians pulling out in a long convoy after being parked all day on a main highway. Among the 1,580 evacuees from the town of Harasta were 413 gunmen, it said.

Earlier, a few fighters with automatic rifles slung on their shoulders were seen milling around the buses. As the sun set, a group of rebels knelt on the Harasta highway and prayed.

Ahrar al-Sham is a powerful, ultra-conservative Islamic group in Syria. It is one of the smaller rebel groups based in eastern Ghouta — and the first to acknowledge defeat. Under the agreement with the Assad government, the group’s fighters and their relatives will leave their base in the town of Harasta and head to opposition-controlled Idlib in northern Syria.

The deal will see 1,500 rebels and 6,000 civilians depart, according to the state-affiliated Military Media Center.

The convoy of buses from Harasta, their headlights blazing, was reminiscent of those ferrying defeated rebels out of eastern Aleppo in late 2016, following a similar agreement with the government.

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"They are leaving toward Idlib with no return," said Rabieh Dibeh, correspondent for state-affiliated al-Ikhbariya TV, when the buses started moving.

The deal is modeled on others that have had rebels surrender swaths of territory around the capital and other major cities to the government. In all cases, the arrangements followed indiscriminate bombing campaigns against hospitals, markets and other civilian targets, driving thousands from their homes.

As Ahrar al-Sham rebels prepared to leave Harasta, thousands of civilians streamed out of other areas in eastern Ghouta that were still being bombed by the government.

Dozens of the civilians appeared to be wounded, some hobbling on crutches, another with an eye injury. Several children were seen crying in fear. A girl who appeared to be younger than 10, wearing a yellow dress, struggled to walk while carrying a toddler and some belongings.

The government assault has sparked a tide of people trying to escape the violence in the Damascus suburbs. Some have moved deeper into the rebel-held enclave, while about 50,000 others have crossed the front lines toward government-controlled areas.

The air and ground assault, which escalated Feb. 18, has seen the once-sprawling territory at the edge of the capital shrink to three disconnected rebel-held islands. That has made it only a question of when — not if — the Russian-backed government forces would recapture the entire region.

Also on Thursday, the media arm of Lebanon's Hezbollah group and an opposition activist group said the second-largest rebel group in eastern Ghouta has declared a cease-fire in order to negotiate leaving the area.

The rebel group Failaq al-Rahman will abide by a cease-fire as of midnight Thursday, according to Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group.

There was no immediate comment from Failaq al-Rahman. Hezbollah is fighting alongside Assad's forces.

The international medical charity Doctors Without Borders said the advancing government forces had captured or destroyed 19 of the 20 hospitals the group was supporting only a week ago. Medical workers were fleeing the approaching front lines, it said.

Rebels now hold only one-fifth of the territory they controlled a month ago in eastern Ghouta, according to the Observatory. But that territory includes several densely populated residential zones, including Douma, the largest town in the enclave.

Iyad Abdelaziz, a member of Douma's Local Council, said a civilian committee representing the town is in talks with the Russians to reach a settlement. He said the committee has presented a proposal to the Russians for their forces to enter the town, while residents stay in place and restore state institutions there. Abdelaziz said he did not have further details.

"Until now, there's been no response from the Russians, but today we received a reply of rockets and bombs," he said.

Commenting on Thursday's evacuations from Harasta, Douma-based Syrian opposition activist Haitham Bakkar accused the government of forcefully removing its opponents from some areas and replacing them with Assad supporters.

"This is a demographic change par excellence," he said.

Rebels and the government exchanged 18 prisoners ahead of the Harasta evacuation, according to pro-government media.

The 13 men released by the rebels identified themselves to the media outside Harasta as soldiers and civilians attached to the Syrian army who were captured in the fighting for the town. Crying in relief, they thanked God, the Syrian army and Assad for their freedom.

Monther Fares, a spokesman for the rebel faction Ahrar al-Sham, confirmed that his group's fighters were preparing to depart. Fares said the rebels agreed to leave because of "civilian pressure" resulting from intense airstrikes and "warplanes that do not leave the sky," adding that Harasta residents have spent the last three months in shelters.

But the arrangement leaves other fighters for the Failaq al-Rahman group still inside. The government is threatening to move on them if they do not also agree to depart.

In violence elsewhere, an airstrike on a market in the village of Harem in northwestern Syria killed at least 28 people, according to observers and the opposition's Civil Defense group.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the dead included 11 children and women, and the overall death toll could still rise since many others were critically wounded.

The Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets, said the airstrike killed 37, mostly women or children.

Harem is in Idlib province, which is mostly controlled by rebels and has been subjected to intense airstrikes recently.

Associated Press writers Philip Issa in Beirut, Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow and an AP writer in Damascus, Syria, contributed.

Lone Nigerian captive refused to convert for Boko Haram

By SAM OLUKOYA and BASHIR ADIGUN, Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — The mother of the only Nigerian schoolgirl still in Boko Haram captivity after the extremists released 104 classmates said Thursday her daughter was blocked from boarding the vehicle to freedom and told to convert to Islam.

Fifteen-year-old Leah refused, Rebecca Sharibu told The Associated Press.

"She was about to board the vehicle that was to bring them back. Then Boko Haram said she should convert," the mother said.

"Her friends said they tried to convince her but she said she will not convert to Islam. Boko Haram said since she will not convert to Islam she should remain behind. That was how they left her. She is alone."

Leah Sharibu, who is Christian, asked her departing Muslim classmates to pray for her.

President Muhammadu Buhari confirmed that Sharibu was the only schoolgirl still held by Boko Haram after the extraordinary release of the girls on Wednesday and vowed that she "will not be abandoned."

Buhari, himself a Muslim, said "true followers of Islam all over the world respect the injunction that there is no compulsion in religion." He added that he looked forward to meeting with the girls who were freed.

The president's statement had no word on the five girls still unaccounted for.

Also Thursday, the father of one of the five girls said he has been told his daughter and the others are dead.

Inuwa Garba told the AP that friends of his daughter who were freed told him the 16-year-old died from injuries in the frightened stampede that occurred during the mass abduction in Dapchi a month ago.

"They told me five of the girls died and my daughter, who was among them, was the first to die" the day the girls were seized, Garba said. The survivors told him the bodies were buried in the bush.

"I believe what the girls told me because they were all together and saw what happened," he said.

The freed girls have been taken to the capital, Abuja, where they are expected to meet Buhari on Friday.

The Boko Haram extremists brought back the girls they had kidnapped from a boarding school, dropping them off with a warning: "Don't ever put your daughters in school again." Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language.

The abductions in Dapchi have evoked painful memories of the tragedy in Chibok, where 276 girls were kidnapped from their boarding school. Nearly four years later, about 100 of them have never returned home. Many had been forced to marry their captors and had children fathered by them.

The Nigerian government denies that it paid a ransom or made a prisoner swap in exchange for the Dapchi girls' freedom. Both occurred before the largest release of Chibok schoolgirls last year.

The latest mass abduction is thought to have been carried out by a Boko Haram splinter group aligned with the Islamic State group that has criticized the leader of the main Boko Haram organization for targeting civilians and has focused instead on military and Western targets.

Nigeria's government under Buhari has repeatedly claimed victory over Boko Haram in recent months but the extremists continue to carry out deadly suicide bombings in the north, often using young women

who have been abducted and indoctrinated.

The Dapchi mass abduction has caused a fresh round of outrage, especially about the protection of schools in a region where Boko Haram has kidnapped thousands of people over nearly a decade.

The release of the girls came a day after an Amnesty International report accused the Nigerian military of failing to heed several warnings of the imminent attack on Feb. 19 during which the girls were seized. The military has called the report an "outright falsehood."

Adigun reported from Abuja, Nigeria.

Peru president undone by corruption scandals he vowed to end

By FRANKLIN BRICENO and JOSHUA GOODMAN, Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — He took office in 2016 as a political outsider boasting that his strong business credentials would buoy Peru's economy while sweeping away endemic corruption. But with his offer of resignation, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski joins a long list of recent Peruvian presidents undone by scandals that have destroyed voters' trust in their elected officials.

Kuczynski, flanked by his cabinet, announced his decision to resign Wednesday in a nationally televised address, accusing opponents led by the daughter of former strongman Alberto Fujimori of plotting his overthrow for months and making it impossible to govern.

Shortly after, he exited the back door of the baroque presidential palace built by Spanish conquerors and was driven off, all alone, in an SUV.

Congress was expected to vote Thursday to accept his resignation, or if not, to impeach him.

It was an ignominious end to a presidency that started with the highest of expectations.

When Kuczynski, a former Wall Street investor, was elected in 2016, he was immediately thrust to the helm of a conservative revival in South America. Voters had grown tired of once-dominant leftist governments marred by corruption and blamed for squandering a decade-long commodities boom that had ended abruptly.

At home, he promised an investment windfall from old business buddies in the U.S., where he lived for decades and met his current and former American wives. He also surprised many by speaking out forcefully against Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro and leading a coalition of like-minded leaders to isolate the socialist leader for human rights abuses.

But the 79-year-old was hobbled almost immediately out of the gate. His self-tailored party, named for his own PPK initials, won just 18 seats in the 130-member congress. And instead of courting supporters on the left who pushed him to victory by a razor-thin margin over opponent Keiko Fujimori, he tried in vain to form an alliance with the former strongman's power-hungry, vindictive allies. Aides privately complained of stubbornness and political naiveté.

"When Kuczynski came in, everyone hailed him as Peru's salvation," said Laura Sharkey, a Bogota-based analyst at Control Risks consultancy. "But he just completely underestimated the strength of the opposition."

Even on the economy, his strong suit, Kuczynski fell short, as growth has slowed and promised mining and infrastructure projects never got off the ground.

What most outraged voters, however, was his seeming dishonesty, something that has long dominated Peruvian politics and he had vowed to end.

For months, as three of his predecessors were probed and one even jailed for taking bribes from Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht, Kuczynski steadfastly denied having any business or political ties with the company at the heart of Latin America's biggest graft scandal.

Then, Fujimori's party produced confidential bank documents from Odebrecht showing \$780,000 in decade-old payments to his consulting firm. Kuczynski said he had no knowledge of the payments that overlapped with his years as a government minister and said that in any case had paid taxes on all of his earnings.

To save his skin he cut the sort of closed-door deal that Peruvians have grown to abhor. A group of

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lawmakers led by Kenji Fujimori defied his sister's leadership of the Popular Force party to narrowly block Kuczynski's impeachment. Days later, Kuczynski pardoned the feuding siblings' father from a 25-year jail sentence for human rights abuses committed during his decade-long presidency.

Ultimately that alliance spelled his downfall. Popular Force this week revealed secretly shot videos of Kenji Fujimori and other presidential allies allegedly trying to buy the support of an opposition lawmaker with promises of state contracts.

Kuczynski denied any bribery attempt, but for Peruvians traumatized by the videos of Fujimori's longtime spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, handing out huge stacks of bills to politicians, military officers and media moguls, the damage was done.

To be sure, Keiko Fujimori seems unlikely to be able to fill the void. An Ipsos poll taken this month showed that while a dismal 19 percent of Peruvians approve of Kuczynski's presidency an even smaller number, 14 percent, have a favorable view of congress, where Fujimori's party is dominant. The poll had a margin of error of 2.8 percentage points.

In addition to the bitter feud with her brother, Fujimori herself is facing accusations that her own 2011 presidential campaign received never-declared contributions from Odebrecht, something she denies.

For many Peruvians, the clandestine videos that did Kuczynski in are a reminder of the corrupt, deceit-filled politics of the Fujimori era that they had hoped was behind them. In the coming days, as Peru works its way through a messy presidential succession, that widespread outrage is likely to fuel louder calls for early elections — for both congress and the presidency.

"The only public institution with moral authority left in Peru is the fire department," said Oscar Mendoza, a lawyer standing outside the presidential palace moments after Kuczynski waved goodbye to aides. "All the rest, when you touch them with your finger, pus comes out because they are fully corrupted by graft."

Goodman reported from Bogota, Colombia. AP Writers Manuel Rueda and Christine Armario in Bogota contributed to this report.

Judge blocks Trump lawyers in Trump-Panama hotel dispute

By LAWRENCE NEUMEISTER and JEFF HORWITZ

NEW YORK (AP) — The owners of a formerly Trump-branded hotel in Panama scored a victory over the U.S. president's companies Thursday when a New York judge blocked a Trump firm from pursuing arbitration claims aimed at restoring their control over the luxury hotel.

Separately, Panamanian court documents obtained by the AP show that the owners defeated another legal effort by Trump's lawyers to regain control of the hotel.

In New York, U.S. District Judge Edgardo Ramos ruled against two Trump hotel businesses, finding that the public interest favored granting the request by the majority owner of the Bahia Grand Panama, a 70-story luxury high-rise that was once run by Trump.

After a bitter dispute, the hotel's owners evicted Trump's management team and stripped his name from the waterfront hotel with 369 units, restaurants and a casino.

Ramos ruled after two hours of oral arguments.

His decision blocks the Trump Organization's \$9 million claim against majority owner Ithaca Capital, but allows Ithaca Capital's claims to proceed. The group is seeking a declaration from the International Chamber of Commerce that it had the right to fire Trump as the hotel's manager due to gross mismanagement.

Perry Amsellem, a lawyer for Trump International Hotels Management LLC and Trump Panama Hotel Management LLC, told Ramos he'll have to speak with his client before deciding whether to appeal.

He declined comment after the Manhattan proceeding.

Joshua Bernstein, a lawyer for the new owners, said they hope the ruling will speed along the case it brought in arbitration, which could be decided within months of its fall filing.

In arguments before Ramos ruled, Bernstein said Trump's company had initially brought a \$150 million claim in arbitration against the new owners and others, making "wild and frivolous" allegations.

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In court papers, Bernstein called the claim a “conspicuous effort to bully the hotel’s owners into dropping their well-supported claims of mismanagement against Trump and to divert attention from Trump’s failures as a hotel operator.”

Bernstein told Ramos that he believed the Trump companies wanted to proceed in arbitration to avoid court requirements that require lawyers to assure that litigation is not being brought for an improper purpose, such as to harass, boost the cost of litigation or to delay justice.

Amsellem said the Trump companies would “never, ever do such a thing.”

He said there was no precedent in the federal appeals courts or by the U.S. Supreme Court for blocking a party such as the Trump companies from proceeding with their arbitration action.

In an entirely separate case involving the hotel, Panamanian court documents obtained by the AP reflect another defeat for Trump’s lawyers earlier this month. Judge Doriela Paz de Ortega upheld a previous legal decision upholding the validity of Trump Hotels’ firing, which was first reported by a Panamanian newspaper on Tuesday. The March 9 ruling, which was obtained by the AP earlier this week, also replaced the hotel owners association’s Trump-selected lawyers, Britton & Iglesias, with lawyers hired by Ithaca Capital’s director, Orestes Fintiklis.

Together, the decisions in New York and Panama City narrow Trump Hotels’ path to either regaining control of the property or receiving a large-dollar judgment as compensation for its firing. Further decisions are expected in the coming weeks.

Though the initial rounds of the dispute over the hotel were kept secret, the vitriol of the battle became public last month amid a standoff between Fintiklis and Trump over physical control of the hotel. That fight ended in early March, when a Panamanian judge ordered the eviction of Trump’s management and a workman stripped Trump’s name from the property with a crowbar.

Jeff Horwitz reported from Washington, D.C.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 23, the 82nd day of 2018. There are 283 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On March 23, 1775, Patrick Henry delivered an address to the Virginia Provincial Convention in which he is said to have declared, “Give me liberty, or give me death!”

On this date:

In 1792, Joseph Haydn’s Symphony No. 94 in G Major (known as the “Surprise” symphony because of an unexpected crashing chord in the second movement) had its first public performance in London.

In 1806, explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, having reached the Pacific coast, began their journey back east.

In 1914, the first installment of “The Perils of Pauline,” the silent film serial starring Pearl White, premiered in the greater New York City area.

In 1933, the German Reichstag adopted the Enabling Act, which effectively granted Adolf Hitler dictatorial powers.

In 1942, the first Japanese-Americans evacuated by the U.S. Army during World War II arrived at the internment camp in Manzanar, California.

In 1956, Pakistan became an Islamic republic.

In 1965, America’s first two-person space mission took place as Gemini 3 blasted off with astronauts Virgil I. “Gus” Grissom and John W. Young aboard for a nearly 5-hour flight.

In 1968, UCLA defeated North Carolina, 78-55, to win college basketball’s NCAA championship.

In 1973, before sentencing a group of Watergate break-in defendants, Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica read aloud a letter he’d received from James W. McCord Jr. which said there was “political pressure”

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to "plead guilty and remain silent."

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan first proposed developing technology to intercept incoming enemy missiles — an idea that came to be known as the Strategic Defense Initiative. Dr. Barney Clark, recipient of a Jarvik permanent artificial heart, died at the University of Utah Medical Center after 112 days with the device.

In 1998, "Titanic" tied an Academy Awards record by winning 11 Oscars, including best picture, director (James Cameron) and song ("My Heart Will Go On").

In 2003, during the Iraq War, a U.S. Army maintenance convoy was ambushed in Nasiriyah (nah-sih-REE'-uh); 11 soldiers were killed, including Pfc. Lori Ann Piestewa (py-ES'-tuh-wah); six were captured, including Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was rescued on April 1, 2003.

Ten years ago: A roadside bomb killed four U.S. soldiers in Baghdad, pushing the overall American death toll in the five-year war to at least 4,000. Vice President Dick Cheney visited the West Bank, where Palestinian leaders asked him to pressure Israel to halt settlement construction and voiced other complaints. The Seattle-based fishing trawler Alaska Ranger sank in the Bering Sea, killing five crew members; 42 others survived. Al Copeland, founder of the Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken chain, died near Munich, Germany, at age 64.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama concluded a four-day visit to the Middle East as he marveled at the beauty of one of the region's most stunning sites, the fabled ancient city of Petra in Jordan. Pope Francis traveled from the Vatican to Castel Gandolfo south of Rome to have lunch with his predecessor, Benedict XVI. Boris Berezovsky, 67, a self-exiled and outspoken Russian tycoon who'd had a bitter falling out with Russian President Vladimir Putin, was found dead at his home in Ascot, England.

One year ago: Abandoning negotiations, President Donald Trump demanded a make-or-break vote on health care legislation in the House, threatening to leave "Obamacare" in place and move on to other issues if the next day's vote failed. (Trump and GOP leaders ended up pulling their bill when it became clear it would fail badly.) The Republican-led Senate confirmed President Donald Trump's pick to be U.S. ambassador to Israel, 52-46, ignoring objections from Democrats that David Friedman lacked the temperament for such an important diplomatic post.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Mark Rydell is 89. International Motorsports Hall of Famer Craig Breedlove is 81. Singer-producer Ric Ocasek is 69. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is 66. Singer Chaka Khan is 65. Actress Amanda Plummer is 61. Actress Catherine Keener is 59. Actress Hope Davis is 54. Actor Richard Grieco is 53. Country musician Kevin Griffin (Yankee Grey) is 53. Actress Marin Hinkle is 52. Rock singer-musician Damon Albarn (Blur) is 50. Actress-singer Melissa Errico is 48. Rock musician John Humphrey (The Nixons) is 48. Bandleader Reggie Watts (TV: "The Late Late Show With James Corden") is 46. Actor Randall Park is 44. Actress Michelle Monaghan is 42. Actress Keri Russell is 42. Actress Anastasia Griffith is 40. Gossip columnist-blogger Perez Hilton is 40. Actress Nicholle Tom is 40. Country singer Paul Martin (Marshall Dyllon) is 40. Country singer Brett Young is 37. Actor Nicolas Wright is 36.

Thought for Today: "A man who fears suffering is already suffering from what he fears." — Michel de Montaigne (MEE'-shel duh mohn-TEHN'), French essayist (1533-1592).