

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 31, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 260 ~ 1 of 45

“Don't wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul.”

~ Luther Burbank



- 1- Groton Ford Ad
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 1- Dairy Queen Easter Ad
- 2- Sen. Thune's Weekly Column
- 3- Rep. Noem's Weekly Column
- 3- Sun Dial Manor Ad
- 4- Obit: Marlis Nack
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At Easter...

...The celebration of holy love

...The day of resurrection

... The day that brings us new hope

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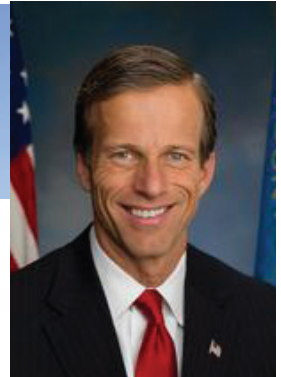
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Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper recycling trailer at the school is Open

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



A Race We Can and Should Win

The United States has experienced numerous technological revolutions throughout its relatively short history that have been so monumental that life as Americans knew it would never be the same. Henry Ford made automobiles and the assembly line a reality. Scientists helped American astronauts take "one giant leap for mankind." And U.S. innovators and academics played a pivotal role in making the internet as integral to our day-to-day lives as it is today.

It was Americans' desire to ask "what's next?" that led to each of these technological revolutions in the past, and it's already leading to those of the future. An easy example of this is the evolution in how we've consumed media over the last century and the technology that has allowed us to do it. We had books and newspapers, then radio and television, then color television, then VHS and VCRs, then DVDs and Blu-ray, and now with a few quick clicks, you can watch a movie from a wireless tablet on a chair in your backyard or on an internet-connected airplane at 30,000 feet.

When it comes to mobile broadband technology, in particular, of which media consumption is only one small part, I believe American innovators and entrepreneurs are at the doorstep of another "what's next?" moment. I'm hopeful that lawmakers in Washington can help these new American pioneers cross the finish line faster and more efficiently, because if we don't win this race, another country will.

In early 2016, I introduced the Making Opportunities for Broadband Investment and Limiting Excessive and Needless Obstacles to Wireless (MOBILE NOW) Act, bipartisan legislation that would lay critical groundwork for the next generation in wireless broadband technology. At the time, I said the MOBILE NOW Act would be our passport to a 5G future of gigabit wireless connectivity, and I believe it now more than ever.

While the Senate Commerce Committee, which I chair, easily approved this common-sense legislation a few months later, it unfortunately didn't make it to the Senate floor before the end of the year. We were close, though, which is why I reintroduced the bill on the very first day of the 115th Congress in 2017. Our hard work and persistence paid off. The committee passed it again, and, as part of a larger legislative package, so did the full House and Senate. Our multi-year effort culminated with the president recently signing it into law.

Now that it's the law of the land, I hope we can move quickly to cut unnecessary and overly burdensome red tape so U.S. innovators can continue to move the ball down the field. By deploying newer, modernized infrastructure, like small cell technology, and making more of it available for broadband, including inefficiently used government spectrum, the airwaves over which mobile communications travel, we can achieve these goals.

My hope is that as this new technological revolution continues to take shape, states like South Dakota can play a leading role in making it a reality. Some might say, "why South Dakota?" And to them, I say, why not? It's within reach.

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KRISTI NOEM
REPRESENTATIVE FROM SOUTH DAKOTA



Your Story Can Change Policy

Never underestimate the power of your story to influence policy. It's advice I often offer those who ask what they can do to create change. Over the last month or so, dozens of South Dakotans have come to my Washington, D.C., office to do just that, for which I'm incredibly grateful.

South Dakota soybean producers, for instance, dropped by as I was preparing for an international trade meeting with President Trump. They shared concerns about recent tariffs and potential countermeasures from the Chinese government, which I conveyed to the president.

Later that day, FFA students opened up about how ag education in middle school and high school can inspire more kids to come home to farm and ranch. It's an idea I agree with wholeheartedly.

Veterans also stopped by in March, raising concerns about VA care and the state's mental health resources, while leadership from Ellsworth briefed me on the base's role in meeting America's long-term security needs.

Many of those visiting spoke about reforms within the education system - from early childhood education to graduate-level programs. School nutritionists discussed a bill I'm working on to grant them greater flexibility, ensuring kids have access to healthy, affordable and appetizing school lunches. Administrators from Hill City and elsewhere met with me about Impact Aid, a policy I support that helps make sure students in some rural areas have access to a good education. SDSU President Barry Dunn also updated me on the Wokini Initiative, which seeks to open more opportunities for tribal students to get a college degree. It's an incredible program that deserves support.

Others visited with me about their support for Israel, the lifesaving work of first responders like Black Hills Lifeflight, and the work of the timber industry to improve the health of our forests.

Workforce development and Medicare fee schedules were the topics of discussion during a meeting with South Dakota clinical lab managers, who are struggling to provide timely service in rural communities.

And the Chairman and members of the Sisseton Wahpeton tribe shared their need for a new Justice Center, which I support and Congress funded a few weeks after our meeting. Without it, they are forced to let criminals go free.

I am truly grateful to those who took the time to stop in. It means the world to me and helps me do my job as your representative. We have offices throughout the state as well, but if you're ever in Washington, D.C., please contact my office and let us know. I'd love to meet with you, give you a tour, or be a resource to you while you visit. I hope to see you soon.



**Sun Dial Manor in Bristol
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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**

The Life of Marlis E. Nack



Funeral services for Marlis E. Nack, 84, Aberdeen, SD, are 10:30am, Tuesday, April 3, 2018, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, with Pastor Kevin Bergeson officiating. Burial at Sunset Memorial Gardens. Marlis died Wednesday, March 28, 2018, at ManorCare Health Services in Aberdeen.

Visitation is 2:00-7:00, Monday, with family present from 5:00-7:00pm, and a prayer service at 7:00pm at Spitzer-Miller Funeral Home.

Marlis Elaine Larsen was born February 26, 1934, to Rangvald and Margaret (Johnson) Larsen on the family farm in Groton, SD. This is where she grew up and graduated high school. She was the Snow queen for Groton

in 1952.

Marlis married Darrell Nack on June 12, 1955, at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Groton and made their home in Aberdeen. In 1961, Darrell built his family a home in which 40 years were spent. Together, they enjoyed gardening and spending time at their lake home that Darrell also built at Richmond Lake in the late 70's. Marlis was a homemaker for her family. She also worked at the Brown County Auditor's Office, Helen Julson's Jo Rich Shop, Feinstein's Bridal, and part-time at the NSU Bookstore.

Marlis was a 'Jack of all Trades'. She was an independent, strong woman that could take care of just about anything. She just had the "Knack" for it. She enjoyed sewing, quilting, knitting, baking, cooking, and assembling a Cookbook of the families favorite recipes, which she gave to all of her Grandchildren. Christmas was special because she enjoyed time spent with family; especially her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She will be dearly missed by all.

Grateful for having shared Marlis' life are her children: Lonnie (Nancy) Nack, Cathie (Patrick) Murphy, Laurie Baumgartner, and Bradley (Kim) Nack; grandchildren: Sara Nack (fiancée Raymund Molina), Ryan Nack (Kelly Heitman), Kyle (Dakota) Murphy, Karly (Tyler)Murphy-Brown, Matthew Baumgartner, Tyler Nack, Cassandra Nack and Kayla Nack; great-grandchildren: Taylor Nack, Cooper Nack and Riley Brown; sister: Sharon (Roger) Monson; and sister-in-law, Deanna (Darrel) Hendrickson.

Preceding Marlis in death are her parents Rangvald and Margaret Larsen and Walter and Vesta Nack; husband, Darrell Nack; and brothers: Loel Larsen and Ramon Larsen



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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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EarthTalk®

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: I'm in the market for a new mattress after two decades on "old faithful" and I figure it's a good time to go green. What are the options out there these days for eco-friendly mattresses?

-- Betsy Langdon, Chicago, IL

Who would have thought that the comfy mattress you've been sleeping of for years contains dozens of potentially harmful substances and materials, from petrochemicals to adhesives to dyes to flame retardants, among other toxins and carcinogens. Luckily for green-minded consumers, though, there's never been a better time to find a truly "green" mattress.

"Green technology and innovation have impacted a wide range of industries in recent years...and this growing demand has led many mattress manufacturers to offer sustainable products as well," reports Tuck, a website dedicated to improving sleep hygiene, health and wellness through the creation and dissemination of comprehensive, unbiased, free resources. "However, terms like 'green,' 'natural' and 'eco-friendly' are often misused or exaggerated within the mattress industry." Further complicating matters, there is no regulatory body fact-checking green claims within the mattress industry, although certifications are available for certain mattress materials like foam, latex, and fabrics.

So, what's a green-minded, health-conscious mattress shopper to do? First and foremost, know what to look for. According to Tuck, a true green mattress features natural and/or organic materials (natural latex, plant-based polyfoam or memory foam, cotton, wool, etc.). Tuck says that any mattress that contains less than 60 percent natural or organic material has no right to market itself as "green."

There is no overall certification for green mattresses overall per se, but there are certifications that apply to certain types of mattresses and their materials. To wit, if a mattress meets the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), at least 95 percent of its materials are certified organic, while certain noxious chemicals (chemical flame retardants, polyurethane) can't be present at all. Meanwhile, the Global Organic Latex Standard (GOLS) certifies that a latex mattress is made from 95 percent organic latex, with similarly stringent restrictions on what can be in the remaining five percent of the mattress.

Another certification to look for is OEKO-TEX, which sets limits on how much a given mattress can off-gas potentially harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde and other so-called volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) linked to respiratory illness, memory impairment and other human health issues.

Foam mattress buyers should keep an eye out for the CertiPUR-US label, which certifies polyfoams and memory foams as made without ozone depleters, chemical flame retardants, heavy metals, formaldehyde and phthalates—and emit little if any volatile organic compounds that can compromise indoor air quality.

Some of the leading green mattress brands out there, as vetted by Tuck and other experts, include Avocado, Bear, Essentia, Happpy, Keetsa, Live & Sleep, LifeKind/OMI, Loom & Leaf, Luxi, My Green Mattress, Naturepedic, Nest Bedding, Organic Mattresses, Plushbeds, Saatva, Sleep On Latex, Soaring Heart, Spindle, Tuft & Needle and Zenhaven.

To learn more, peruse Tuck.com. The freely accessible database contains information on 125,000 different customer experiences from nearly 1,000 individual sources.

EarthTalk® is a weekly syndicated column produced by Doug Moss and Roddy Scheer for the non-profit EarthTalk. To find out more, submit a question, or make a donation, visit us at EarthTalk.org.

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Today in Weather History

March 31, 1967: Heavy snow of 6 to 15 inches combined with 30 to 50 mph winds, caused blizzard conditions across most of northeast South Dakota. Many people were stranded, especially along Interstate-29 and Highway 12. In Hamlin County, a man was injured when his snowmobile struck a snowplow in Bryant in the early evening. Also, in the early afternoon, 4 miles west of Lake Norden on Highway 28, a car crossed the lane and hit a semi. The car was destroyed with thousands of dollars of damage to the semi. The driver of the car was injured. Many schools were let out early on the 31st and were canceled for April 1st. Many activities and sports events were either postponed or canceled. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Doland, Conde, and Castlewood, 7 inches at Turton and Clear Lake, 8 inches at Clark and Britton, 9 inches at Bryant and Webster, 10 inches near Peever, and 11 inches at Summit. Snowfall amounts of a foot or more included, 12 inches at Watertown and Big Stone City, 13 inches at Victor, the Waubay NWR, and Sisseton, 14 inches at Wilmot, and 15 inches at Milbank.

March 31, 2014: A strong surface low-pressure area moving across the region brought mixed precipitation to all of the area including rain, freezing rain, sleet, snow along with some thunder. As the precipitation changed to over to all snow, northwest winds increased substantially to 30 to 40 mph with gusts to 50 to 60 mph causing widespread blizzard conditions. Much of the area received a coating of ice with trace amounts up to a tenth of an inch with several locations receiving up to 2 inches of sleet. Snowfall amounts from 2 to as much as 10 inches occurred with this storm. The precipitation changed over to snow in the morning out west and into the late afternoon hours across the east. The light snow did not end in the eastern portion of South Dakota until the early morning hours of April 1st. Many schools, government offices, and businesses were closed or canceled early. Travel was not advised across much of region with Interstate-29 being closed for a time from Brookings to the North Dakota border.

1942: 107 inches of rain fell during the month at Puu Kukui at Maui, Hawaii to set the U.S. record for rainfall in one month. The same place also holds the annual rainfall record for the United States with 578 inches in 1950.

1962: A tornado struck the town of Milton, Florida killing 17 persons and injuring 100 others. It was the worst tornado disaster in Florida history.

1973: A devastating tornado took a nearly continuous 75-mile path through north-central Georgia causing more than 104 million dollars damage.

1890 - Saint Louis, MO, received 20 inches of snow in 24 hours. It was the worst snowstorm of record for the St Louis. (David Ludlum)

1954 - The temperature at Rio Grande City, TX, hit 108 degrees, which for thirty years was a U.S. record for the month of March. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - March went out like a lion in the northeastern U.S. A slow moving storm produced heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region, and heavy rain in New England. Heavy rain and melting snow caused catastrophic flooding along rivers and streams in Maine and New Hampshire. Strong southerly winds ahead of the storm gusted to 62 mph at New York City, and reached 87 mph at Milton MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - March went out like a lion in eastern Colorado. A winter-like storm produced 42 inches of snow at Lake Isabel, including 20 inches in six hours. Fort Collins reported 15 inches of snow in 24 hours. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Centerville UT. Albuquerque NM received 14 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)








1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather from North Carolina to Pennsylvania. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 76 mph at Cape Henry VA. While squalls blanketed northwest Pennsylvania with up to 9 inches of snow, thunderstorms in eastern Pennsylvania produced golf ball size hail at Avondale. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - The month of March went out just as it came in, like a lamb. Marquette MI, which started the month with a record high of 52 degrees, equalled their record for the date with a reading of 62 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2010 - Jacksonville, Florida's, record streak of days with high temperatures below 80 degrees comes to an end at 105 days. It was also Jacksonville's first 80 degree reading of the year. The previous latest first 80 degree day was on March 14, 1978.

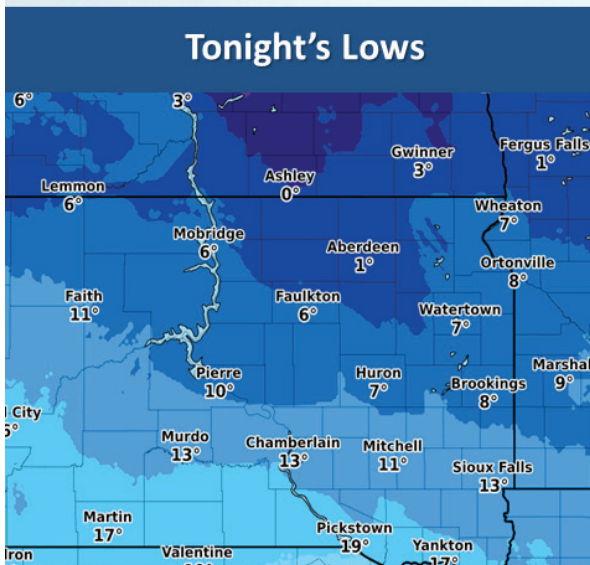
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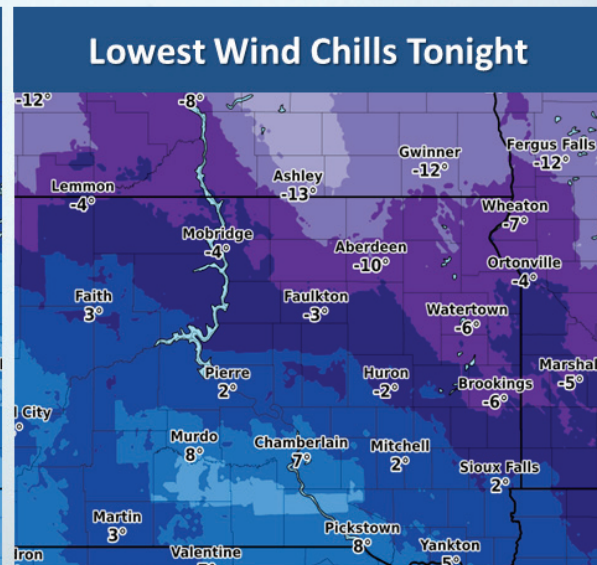
Sat Mar 31	Sun Apr 1	Mon Apr 2	Tue Apr 3	Wed Apr 4	Thu Apr 5	Fri Apr 6
						
21°F 4°F	35°F 22°F	36°F 14°F	23°F 8°F	34°F 14°F	35°F 15°F	32°F 2°F
NNW 25 MPH Precip 80%	W 10 MPH	SE 12 MPH Precip 50%	N 16 MPH Precip 40%	SW 7 MPH	NNE 11 MPH Precip 20%	N 10 MPH



Now Comes the Cold!



Near record cold for a few areas



Wind chills below zero tonight



www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
3/31/2018 5:47 AM

Published on: 03/31/2018 at 5:52AM

Much colder air has moved into the region, and the core of this cold air will settle over the area tonight. Low temperatures tonight will drop into the single digits and teens, with wind chills dipping below zero. Unfortunately, there is no end in sight to the much below normal temperatures.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 31.2 F at 4:32 PM

Low Outside Temp: 17.4 F at 9:16 AM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 24.0 Mph at 7:18 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 86° in 1946

Record Low: 0° in 1899

Average High: 48°F

Average Low: 26°F

Average Precip in March: 1.16

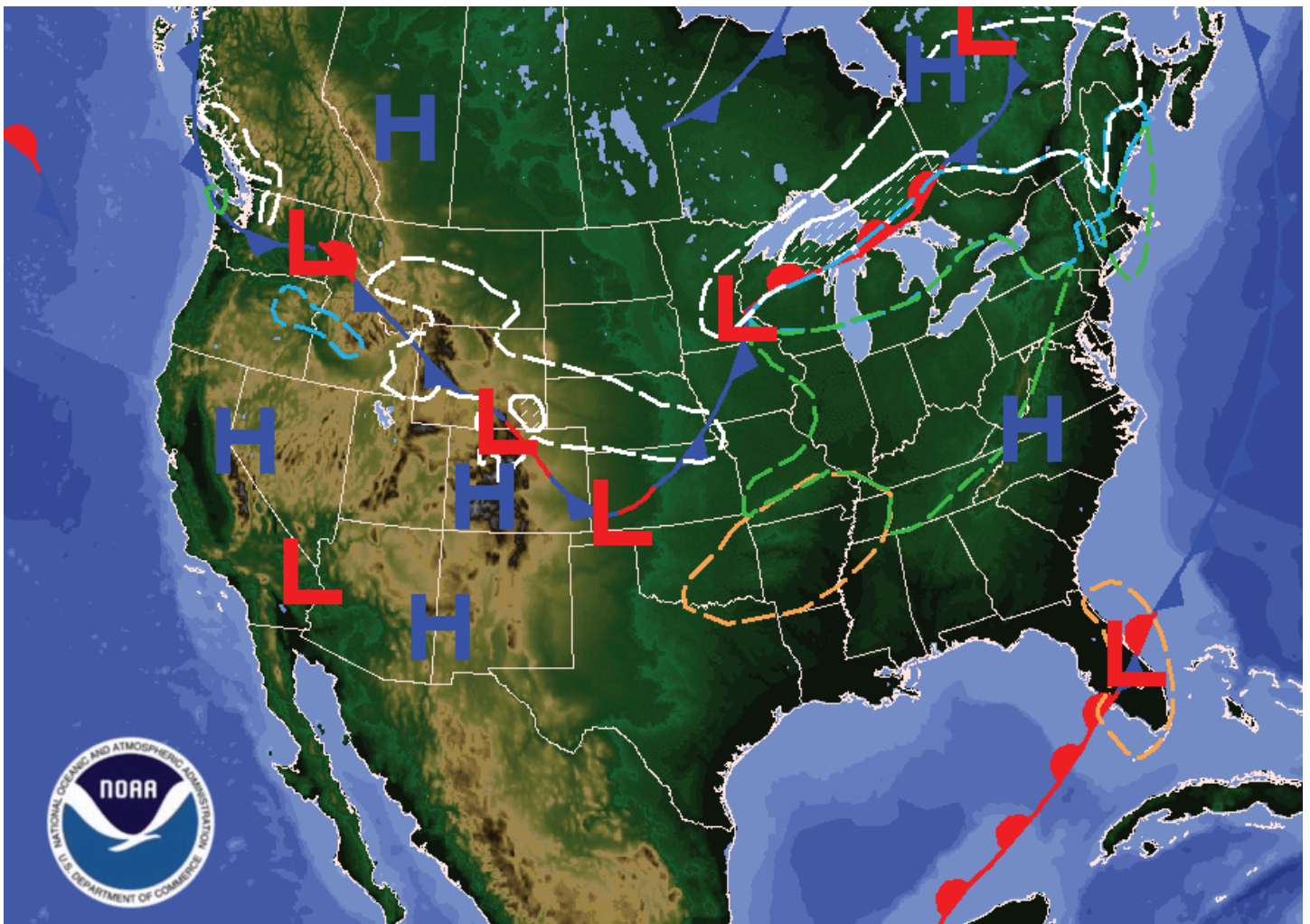
Precip to date in March: 1.66

Average Precip to date: 2.18

Precip Year to Date: 2.07

Sunset Tonight: 8:00 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:13 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Mar 31, 2018, issued 4:23 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Oravec 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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NEEDED: EXAMPLES

It's not unusual to hear someone say, "But I don't want to be a role model." But that's not the way it is. All of us are, at one time or another, a model who someone will try to imitate for one reason or another. David made this observation a long time ago.

"My eyes will be on the faithful in the land," he said. When David looked for a role model he did not look for one who was famous or powerful, one who had wealth or riches, he looked for one who was "faithful to the Lord." He was committed to build his life on God's principles - principles that were eternal and everlasting. So, he searched for those who had God's purposes and plans in their minds and hearts, those were obedient to God. And when he found them he surrounded himself with them and even invited them to "dwell" with him.

Someone once asked John Rockefeller, "How did you become so successful?" He looked at him sternly and said, "Because I surround myself with successful people!"

Here we find a great lesson for life: If we want to achieve great things for God, we must surround ourselves with people who have done or are doing great things for God. We cannot become more than we are for God if we associate with and follow the examples of those who do not care much for God or do not have loving and serving God at the very center of their lives.

David expressed his need for being surrounded by the "faithful." He knew that "He whose walk is blameless will minister to me."

Prayer: Lord, may we be careful to choose friends who will encourage us to be faithful to You in all that we do. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 101:6 My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, That they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me.

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)
- 1/27/2019 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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

11-28-31-46-59, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 3

(eleven, twenty-eight, thirty-one, forty-six, fifty-nine; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$521 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$50 million

Winning numbers drawn in 'Mega Millions' game

By The Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) _ The winning numbers in Friday evening's drawing of the "Mega Millions" game were:

11-28-31-46-59, Mega Ball: 1, Megaplier: 3

(eleven, twenty-eight, thirty-one, forty-six, fifty-nine; Mega Ball: one; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$521 million

'He's just so loving': Emaciated dog finds home

By JOHN HULT and MAKENZIE L. HUBER, Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Lisa Schaunaman couldn't believe the shape the yellow Labrador was in.

Schaunaman first saw him on Craigslist, where an Egan couple posted his photo and told the story of how he'd wandered up to their door two weeks earlier.

She knew he was in rough shape, but she still wasn't prepared for what she saw when she picked him up recently in the parking lot of the Lewis Drug store.

He was emaciated, his skin wrapped tight around his ribs at his chest. She saw open sores on his body and tail and a worn camouflage collar without an ID tag around his neck. She'd soon learned he was deaf.

"We call him Old Yeller because he's in such bad shape," Schaunaman said.

He's recovering with high-calorie puppy food and medication after several trips to the vet, Schaunaman said, but "he might still have to be put down."

Schaunaman reached out to the Argus Leader recently, hoping to find out who'd neglected him and let him loose. She said she can barely believe that a pet owner would treat a kind dog so poorly.

"Even after all he's been through, he's so loving," she said.

Schaunaman considers the Egan couple who saved Old Yeller, his "guardian angels."

Starla Thacker posted about the yellow lab on social media sites, trying to find the dog's owner. She and her husband also took Old Yeller, who they named James, to the vet and tried to help him gain weight.

Thacker gave herself a week to find his owner, and then she let Schaunaman try to help him.

"If we lost our dog we'd want someone to be looking for us to return her," Thacker said. "We were just trying to do the right thing."

Thacker's 10-year-old daughter found Old Yeller when she took the family's dog out for a walk. She found him wandering near the house, patted him on the head and that was enough for him to stick around, Thacker said.

It was obvious to Thacker that the dog was at one point part of a loving family by the way he behaved around her children and how he was house trained, which made it more confusing how he ended up at

their doorstep.

Schaunaman would like to know how her new pet came to be so emaciated.

Prosecutions for animal neglect are rare in Sioux Falls, although reports of neglect are more common.

Last year, Minnehaha County State's Attorney Aaron McGowan's office prosecuted seven cases involving 11 defendants. Since 2013, there have been a total of 35 cases involving 40 separate defendants.

Sioux Falls Animal Control responds to about 15 complaints each month, but those cases of suspected neglect don't always lead to prosecution, according to Animal Control officer Missy John.

About half of the time, the suspected neglect is due to medical conditions. Most of the time, calls are an opportunity to educate residents about animal care, she said.

Kori Bade, executive director of the Humane Society, said the organization sees about 200 cases of animal neglect out of about 8,000 to 10,000 animals they take in each year.

"Sioux Falls is not immune to issues like neglect and abuse," Bade said. "But the biggest thing we try to do is education. If you find an animal, you should make sure it's not someone else's animal before you do anything."

Bade said calling the Humane Society or Animal Control should be the first step after finding an animal to see if someone is looking for their pet.

Schaunaman plans to check if Old Yeller has a locating chip when she brings him back to the vet. But her primary concern is helping him gain weight.

"We don't know how long we'll have him," Schaunaman said. "But we're going to make the best of a bad situation and keep him comfortable."

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

South Dakota high school project turns into business plan

By ANNA JAUHOLA, Mitchell Daily Republic

FORESTBURG, S.D. (AP) — Alex Wormstadt and Austin Schmit recently won a statewide competition in Pierre with their prototype of a mobile calf-warming box. The duo received \$1,500 through the South Dakota Bankers Foundation 2018 Business Plan Competition after presenting their plan and project in February.

"As the presentation went along, we could tell the judges were intrigued," Wormstadt said. "So, it turned into a conversation with them."

"The judges ate it up when we were presenting it. We could tell they liked it," Schmit said, smiling. "We thought we had a pretty good shot."

The Mitchell Daily Republic reports that Sanborn Central boasted five other entries this year, said economics teacher Corey Flatten. Over the last four years, the school has placed students within the top six, but this is the first year they've had students take home the top prize. The students began working on their projects in the economics class during the first semester.

"It is a remarkable achievement for the boys," Flatten said. "To be able to take that idea, develop a business plan, realistic financial projections, and create a prototype is a testament to their ingenuity and overall passion for their product."

The boys, both sons of cattle ranchers, said they wanted to do something practical to benefit the local area. In tossing ideas around, they realized there isn't a calf-warming box on the market that ranchers can use in the field.

"The problem was how to get a wet calf from the field to the farm without it getting cold," Wormstadt said.

And so, the idea of the Double A Calf Box began. The box will fit in the rear of a UTV side-by-side, and could also be used for sheep, goats, other livestock and hunting dogs.

They built a half-size model out of 20-gauge steel and plywood, with a grated floor. The heater, which is made from two hair dryer heads, sits in a compartment below the grate and is powered through a cigarette lighter. The calf lies on the grate and the hatch door, with ventilation, closes to warm and dry the calf.

Usually when a calf is born in cold weather, cattle ranchers have to carry the animal in blankets back to

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their barn to a calf-warmer. With this mobile box, ranchers can get the calves back out in the field faster.

"Our motto has been, 'If you save one to two calves, the warmer kind of pays for itself,'" Wormstadt said.

Wormstadt's father helped with the project by lending the use of his computerized plasma cutter to not only cut the metal, but also map out the blueprint for the box.

To prepare for the project, the boys created a business plan with projected numbers and sales, described how the box works, and discussed how they handled the partnership. After their presentation passed the initial round, they began planning out and building the box for the final round in the competition, which took them about 24 hours total to complete.

The judges aren't the only ones who have been impressed with the boys' project. Several area cattle ranchers have shown interest, Schmit said.

The pair is still recovering from the shock of winning but are both seriously considering using their winnings to further develop the Double A Calf Box. They plan to have a full-size version ready to show at DakotaFest and the South Dakota State Fair.

"We have to shed some weight off the box," Schmit said.

"We'd use aluminum instead of 20-gauge steel. And we'd use a material that's easier to wipe down," Wormstadt said, referring to the plywood interior.

Right now, the boys estimate their product would cost \$800, but they want to make it even more affordable.

"I believe that Austin and Alex started the project as an assignment, but over time it snowballed into a valid business plan," Flatten said, adding he hopes they turn the project into a business.

The young entrepreneurs have a lot of work left, but also a bunch of support from their families, friends, and school.

"We'll have to see where the summer takes us," Wormstadt said.

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

Judge denies bail for suspect in Rapid City shooting

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A judge has denied bail for a man accused of injuring four people in an apparent random shooting in downtown Rapid City.

Twenty-eight-year-old Dwight Quigley faces a dozen criminal charges in the Wednesday night shooting, including attempted murder.

The Rapid City Journal reports a Pennington County prosecutor asked Magistrate Judge Marya Tellinhuisen to set a \$500,000 cash-only bond. Deputy State's Attorney Alexandra Weiss says Quigley fired multiple shots into a car "with no apparent motive."

Authorities say three people were shot when Quigley allegedly fired multiple shots into a vehicle about 10 p.m. Wednesday. A fourth person was injured when the vehicle crashed in a ditch. All are expected to survive.

Police have recovered a semi-automatic rifle believed used in the shooting. They're still investigating a possible motive.

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

Rapid City to consider new settlement in billboard lawsuit

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City will consider a potential settlement in a long-running lawsuit over billboards in the city.

Epic Outdoor Advertising challenged two 2011 city ordinances that effectively banned the company's digital billboards. The company had been running full-motion videos on four billboards in Rapid City since 2005 and believed its billboards were grandfathered in as legal.

The ordinances also restricted the size and height of new static billboards and put a 20-year expiration

date on sign credits.

A court ruled in December that the Zoning Board of Appeals exceeded its authority by "retroactively applying" the newer ordinances against Epic's billboards. But Epic appealed the court's decision to deny their request for the city pay their attorney fees. The city also appealed the ruling.

The City Council will discuss a new settlement offer Monday that Epic's attorney Michal Sabers presented to City Attorney Joel Landeen last month, the Rapid City Journal reported . The council shot down a similar settlement attempt last summer.

Epic's new settlement offer proposes the company stop running full-motion video on all its billboards and commit to fully complying with the city ordinances in the future. In exchange, the city would need to approve multiple ordinance amendments, including increasing the maximum allowable size and height of billboards along Interstate 90.

The city would also have to remove a provision that requires full-motion video billboards to run public service advertising for a minimum of 12 minutes every hour.

Rapid City also faces another pending lawsuit over the legality of the sign credit system. That case will continue in civil court.

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

Judge demands explanation in Dakota Access lawsuit

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press**

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge has set a Monday deadline for the environmental entity Earth First to explain what he says appears to be discrepancies in its argument that it can't be sued for opposing the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

The Center for Constitutional Rights maintains Earth First is an unstructured social movement or philosophy, similar to Black Lives Matter, and can't be sued. However, U.S. District Judge Billy Roy Wilson says Earth First has been a listed plaintiff in three federal lawsuits in the 1980s and 1990s, involving a water project in Arizona, a wilderness area in Oregon and a New Mexico canyon important to American Indians.

"If Earth First can sue, it seems to me that it is subject to being sued," Wilson said in a March 22 order. Center attorney Pamela Spees did not immediately respond to an Associated Press request for comment Friday.

Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners in August sued Earth First, Greenpeace and BankTrack for up to \$1 billion, alleging they disseminated false and misleading information about the \$3.8 billion pipeline that's now moving oil from North Dakota to Illinois, and instigated violent protests while the pipeline was under construction.

ETP lawyers maintain Earth First has been served with the lawsuit via Earth First Journal, whose website bills the Florida-based environmental publication as a forum for discussion within the Earth First movement.

Spees, who represents the journal, says it and the movement aren't the same thing. She sought sanctions including attorney fees against ETP for what she asserted was "intentional and reckless disregard of their duties to the court."

Wilson denied the request. And while he said that he doesn't think serving the lawsuit on the journal is adequate, "it appears to me, also, that Earth First and/or the journal is dancing around." He ordered Spees to provide information on who ETP should serve with the lawsuit.

"I prefer not to waste time with this sort of issue," he said.

The larger question surrounding the lawsuit is whether the environmental groups worked to undermine the pipeline project. Greenpeace and BankTrack maintain the lawsuit is meritless and an attack on free speech. ETP says it's seeking to vindicate damage from criminal activity, not peaceful speech.

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

Trials for 3 people in GEAR UP scandal moved to Sioux Falls

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Jury trials for three people who allegedly aided in an embezzlement scheme that helped spark South Dakota's GEAR UP scandal will all be held in Sioux Falls.

The Argus Leader reports a judge has moved the joint trial for former Mid-Central Educational Cooperative Director Dan Guericke and former GEAR UP consultant Stacy Phelps from Charles Mix County to Minnehaha County.

The trial site was moved earlier for former Mid-Central Assistant Business Manager Stephanie Hubers.

Former Mid-Central Business Manager Scott Westerhuis in 2015 shot his wife and their four children, then set fire to their home and killed himself. Authorities believe the couple stole more than \$1 million before their deaths.

Attorneys representing Guericke, Phelps and Hubers have argued they've been made scapegoats for the scandal.

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

Manderson man pleads not guilty to shooting 2 women

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Manderson man accused of shooting two women near Porcupine last month has pleaded not guilty to assault and weapons charges.

Twenty-year-old Elijah West allegedly shot the women Feb. 20 after they left a party on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and their vehicle became stuck in the snow. One woman suffered a spinal cord injury and the other an arm wound.

Court documents don't discuss a possible motive.

West recently pleaded not guilty in federal court. He could face life in prison if convicted. He remains jailed pending trial.

Winter wheat in good shape in South Dakota as winter ends

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's winter wheat crop appears to be in good shape as winter nears its end.

The federal Agriculture Department says in its monthly crop report that 80 percent of the wheat crop is rated in fair or good condition.

Topsoil moisture supplies statewide are rated about two-thirds adequate, but subsoil moisture is only about half in that category.

Suspect in reservation shooting convicted of assault

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Porcupine man has been convicted at trial of seriously injuring another man in a shooting on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation a year ago.

The Rapid City Journal reports that 45-year-old Kison Robertson was found guilty March 21 of federal assault and weapons charges. He was acquitted of attempted murder.

He faces between 10 years and life in prison at his sentencing on June 22.

Authorities say Robertson shot Urva Quick Bear Sr. in the stomach on March 30, 2017, following an argument with Quick Bear's son.

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

Official says Sioux Falls park review wasn't a safety audit

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 2-year-old audit of Falls Park that Sioux Falls officials used to defend park safety protocol after a 5-year-old girl drowned in the area was actually a training exercise.

Documents released Wednesday to the Argus Leader show that what the city cited as an "independent

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review" and "safety audit" of the park was a training exercise for employees of the South Dakota Public Assurance Alliance, the city's insurance company. The member-owned alliance helps insure more than 400 local government entities in the state.

Sioux Falls officials referred to the "safety audit" last week as evidence that the park's safety precautions are adequate following the March 18 drowning death of Maggie Zaiger, who fell into the Big Sioux River at Falls Park. Maggie's mother and several elected officials have called for more safety measures at the park, such as a barricade near the river's edge.

No formal safety review of Falls Park was conducted in 2016, according to Robert Anderson, an attorney representing the assurance alliance.

Anderson said the SDPAA conducted internal training exercises during the summer of 2016. The exercises were administered by O'Connell Consulting, a safety management company. The alliance received permission to use Sioux Falls facilities and departments in the training, according to Anderson.

Alliance Executive Director Judith M. Payne later sent Mayor Mike Huether a letter giving the city high scores in risk management practices, but didn't specifically determine which city assets the company inspected.

City Emergency Manager Regan Smith said he erred in calling the 2016 review an audit when addressing the media March 19.

"I inadvertently called it an audit and did not clarify that the SDPAA findings were relayed orally to the city team in 2016," said Smith. "But I felt it was important to make myself available regarding safety measures taken at our city's namesake and that no additional recommendations were made in 2016 beyond those implemented in 2013."

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

K-Pop time: South Koreans fly to North for rare concerts

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — From aging crooners to bubbly K-Pop starlets, some of South Korea's biggest pop stars flew to North Korea on Saturday for rare performances that highlight the sudden thaw in inter-Korean ties after years of tensions over the North's nuclear ambitions.

The concerts in Pyongyang on Sunday and Tuesday come ahead of a historic summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in at a border village on April 27. The meeting, which will precede a planned summit between Kim and President Donald Trump in May, could prove to be significant in the global diplomatic push to resolve the standoff over the North's nuclear weapons and missiles program.

The 120-member group that flew to Pyongyang also included government officials, reporters and a taekwondo demonstration team that will perform in Pyongyang on Sunday and Monday. Another team of 70 South Korean technicians went to Pyongyang on Thursday to set up equipment.

Singer Yoon Do-hyun, who previously performed in Pyongyang in 2002, was emotional after landing in the North Korean capital.

"My heart is bursting," Yoon told reporters, his eyes welling up with tears. "I am most curious about the reaction of the audience, how it would be different from 16 years ago."

The artists were greeted by Hyon Song Wol, the photogenic leader of Kim Jong Un's hand-picked Moranbong girl band who has been working out the details of the performances with South Korean officials.

"Your arrival in Pyongyang brings big expectations," she said. "A lot of famous singers have come."

A look at the South Korean singers who made the trip and a certain horse-dancing specialist who didn't:

THE LEGEND

During stormier times, North Korea described the South's society and culture as a "corrupt bourgeois lifestyle." Still, that didn't stop southern pop singers from performing across the border when relations

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warmed.

It's the second trip for the iconic Cho Yong-pil, perhaps South Korea's most influential musician of the past 50 years. He staged a solo concert in Pyongyang in 2005 during a previous era of rapprochement between the rivals.

"It will be as comfortable performing in the North as it is to perform in the South," the 68-year-old singer said at a news conference at South Korea's Gimpo Airport on Saturday. "There's no reason for me or other singers to be nervous. We all finished rehearsing and will have a fun and comfortable time showing our music."

Seoul hasn't officially announced the titles of the songs by the South Korean artists. Cho's "Dear Friend," a ballad about a long-lost friend that reportedly drew an enthusiastic response from the Pyongyang crowd 13 years ago, will almost certainly be one of them.

It would be the third North Korean performances for female balladeers Choi Jin-hee and Lee Sun-hee, who are relatively well-known in the North.

The 61-year-old Choi will likely sing her biggest hit, "Maze of Love," which is rumored to have been a favorite of former North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, the late father of current leader Kim. Lee, who at 53 still might have the best pipes in the business, may sing "To J," one of several South Korean songs North Korean musicians performed during the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

"I hope we can create a stage where we can make an emotional connection and convey the warm feelings between the South and North," Choi said.

THE GIRLS

It won't be all slow ballads in Pyongyang. It will be interesting to see how the North Koreans reacts to girl band Red Velvet, currently one of the most popular acts in the highly competitive K-Pop scene.

The genre, which has a huge following across Asia, has been defined by synthesized music, powerful visuals and dance moves, and teasing sexuality. In recent years, South Korea's military has used K-Pop for psychological warfare, blaring it from loudspeakers along the heavily armored border between the rivals.

"Happiness! Hello, it's Red Velvet!" band member Seulgi cheerfully shouted during the news conference.

"We're the 'maknae' (youngest of the group), so we will make sure to deliver our bright energy to the North," said the 24-year-old.

K-Pop groups have performed before in North Korea. The now-disbanded Sechs Kies and Fin.K.L sang and danced in Pyongyang in 1999, as did boy band Shinhwa in 2003. Some of the artists said later that the reaction from the audience was awkward and quiet.

Red Velvet may find a better reception more than a decade later as cultural tastes change, even in isolated North Korea. Currently, the most popular music act in North Korea is Hyon's Moranbong band, whose members often perform suggestive shimmies in short skirts with electric guitars.

Park Hyeong-il, an official at South Korea's Unification Ministry, said North Korean officials didn't show any discomfort about Red Velvet and also didn't take issue with the "red" in the band's name.

Red Velvet is originally a five-member band, but only four made the trip to Pyongyang — 22-year-old Joy stayed in South Korea to film a soap opera.

NO 'GANGNAM STYLE,' PLEASE

Despite constant questioning from reporters, South Korean officials aren't offering a clear explanation on why PSY, the "Gangnam Style" singer, was left out of the concert lineup.

South Korea's culture ministry spokesman Hwang Seong-un said without specifying that the YouTube rapper had been initially considered for the Pyongyang events before being excluded. He said he couldn't confirm a media report that North Korean officials had rejected PSY.

"What I can say is that we explored ways to include him, but it didn't work out," Hwang said. "We hope there will be better opportunities for him in the future."

It's possible that officials from either the North or the South concluded that PSY's bizarre humor and

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highly sexualized music would be too provocative for the North Korean public.

It's not that North Korea had entirely ignored the global Gangnam Style craze. In September 2012, the North posted a video on its Uriminzokkiri website of a horse-dancing PSY character that had a photo of conservative South Korean presidential candidate Park Geun-hye's face transposed on it. The lyrics had the character satirically defending Park's late father, staunch anti-communist dictator Park Chung-hee.

Park went on to win the presidential race, only to be ousted from office and jailed over a corruption scandal in March last year.

WILL KIM JONG UN ATTEND?

The South Korean singers will perform at the 1,500-seat East Pyongyang Grand Theater on Sunday and then take part in a joint concert with North Korean artists on Tuesday at the 12,000-seat Ryugyong Jong Ju Yong Gymnasium.

It's unclear whether North Korean leader Kim will show up in any of these performances. His presence would be seen in the South as a proper response to Moon's attending the North Korean performances in February. But Kim also was accused by Seoul in previous years of harshly punishing, and even executing, North Korean officials and people who were caught privately consuming South Korean popular culture.

In 2014, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers that North Korea used firing squads to execute 10 officials that year for taking bribes or watching South Korean television dramas.

Follow Kim Tong-hyung on Twitter at @KimTongHyung

Winning ticket for Mega Millions jackpot sold in New Jersey

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A winning ticket for a giant lottery jackpot estimated at \$521 million has been sold in New Jersey.

Mega Millions says one winning ticket was sold in Friday night's drawing. The winning numbers were 11, 28, 31, 46, 59 and Mega Ball 1.

The New Jersey Lottery said Saturday on Twitter that the winning ticket was sold at a Riverdale, Morris County, Lukoil station. Riverdale is in northeastern New Jersey, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) outside of New York City.

It's the nation's 10th-largest lottery jackpot. No one had matched all six numbers since January.

The \$521 million is the annuity option, in which payments are made over 29 years. The cash option would pay \$317 million.

Mega Millions is played in 44 states plus Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Trump's call for tariffs creating anxiety in the farm belt

By THOMAS BEAUMONT, Associated Press

HOSPERS, Iowa (AP) — In Sioux County, where swine barns interrupt the vast landscape of corn-stubbed fields, exports of meat, grain and machinery fuel the local economy. And there's a palpable sense of unease that new Chinese tariffs pushed by President Donald Trump — who received more than 80 percent of the vote here in 2016 — could threaten residents' livelihood.

The grumbling hardly signals a looming leftward lurch in this dominantly Republican region in northwest Iowa. But after standing with Trump through the many trials of his first year, some Sioux County Trump voters say they would be willing to walk away from the president if the fallout from the tariffs causes a lasting downturn in the farm economy.

"I wouldn't sit here today and say I will definitely support him again," said 60-year-old hog farmer Marv Van Den Top. "This here could be a real negative for him."

Last week, Trump announced plans to impose tariffs on a range of Chinese goods, a move aimed at punishing Beijing for stealing American technology. The Chinese government responded with a threat to tag U.S. products, including pork and aluminum, with an equal 25 percent charge.

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That sent a chill through places like Sioux County, which ranks first among Iowa's 99 counties in agricultural exports. In 2016, the county sold \$350 million in meat, grain, machinery and chemicals overseas. Far closer to the sparsely populated crossroads of South Dakota and Minnesota than Iowa's bustling Des Moines metro area, Sioux County is home to just 34,000 people, but more than 1 million hogs, 6 million chickens and nearly as impressive numbers of cattle and sheep.

Brad Te Grootenhuis sells about 25,000 hogs a year and could lose hundreds of thousands of dollars if the tariffs spark a backlash from China. He said it's possible he would abandon Trump if pork's price decline continues and lasts.

"Any time you're losing money, nobody's happy," the 42-year-old farmer said. "I've got payments to make, plain and simple."

Nationally, opinions on Trump's tariffs, which were a central part of his campaign pledges to get tough on China, are mixed.

Although GOP congressional leaders have argued tariffs would prompt a trade war and have urged Trump to reverse course, 61 percent of Americans who identify as Republicans nationwide favor a tariff, according to a national poll taken this month by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Still, 39 percent of Republicans say it will lead to a decrease in jobs, according to the poll, compared to 32 percent who think it will lead to an increase. That's similar to the views of all voters, the survey shows.

Countermeasures by China, which is second only to Canada in importing Iowa products, could cause pain across the American agricultural sector, according to economists. For instance, a pork tariff imposed by China, which spent \$42 million on Iowa pork products in 2017, would back up the Iowa market and force prices sharply downward.

"Retaliatory tariffs from China would have a devastating impact on U.S. agricultural exports, especially if they focus on products like soybeans and hogs," said Adam Kamins, a senior economist at Moody's Analytics. "This puts northwest Iowa and the Great Plains more broadly on the front line in a trade war."

For hog farmer Tim Schmidt, the fallout of a geopolitical spat with China would force him to hold off on any new construction or maintenance on the decades-old buildings on his family-run farm along the Missouri River.

"There is an uncertainty to exactly what the next two to three years are going to look like," Schmidt said. A Trump voter in 2016, Schmidt said that if "things are bad and someone better comes along, we're willing to take a look."

Sioux County seed dealer Dave Heying echoed a common refrain that any downturn in the farm economy would curb spending throughout the local economy, with direct impact on farm machinery dealers, mechanics and agricultural construction, among other businesses.

"Protecting our U.S. industries is important, but my concern is, at what expense to the farmer?" Heying said of Trump's trade moves. "It is too early to say whether or not I would support him. These types of decisions give you hesitation."

As a presidential candidate, Trump was a somewhat awkward fit for Sioux County, where a third of its residents are members of the Dutch Reformed Church of America, which holds strictly conservative social positions. In striking contrast, the bombastic New Yorker has been married three times and shadowed by allegations of sexual harassment and infidelity.

Trump finished fourth in Sioux County in Iowa's Republican presidential caucus, but carried 81.3 percent of the vote in the general election, his second-highest county share in the state. And a large core of voters in Sioux County, where Franklin Roosevelt was the last Democratic presidential candidate to win, remains with Trump, even if the farm economy suffers as a result of his trade policies.

"You have to have faith in our innovation and entrepreneurialship in this country," said Ed Westra, a grain cooperative manager and Trump devotee. "You've got to think of the big game."

AP polling director Emily Swanson contributed to this report from Washington.

Follow Thomas Beaumont at <http://twitter.com/TomBeaumont>

Spring break offers first lady refuge from affair headlines

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Spring break couldn't have come at a better time for Melania Trump. With fresh details spilling into the headlines daily about how Donald Trump allegedly cheated on her early in their marriage, the former model escaped the intense glare by spending the past week at the family's estate in Palm Beach, Florida, with their 12-year-old son, Barron.

But even then, there was no perfect refuge from the attention to recent legal activity related to the president's past conduct with women.

On Mrs. Trump's first full day away, when the president also was at their Mar-a-Lago estate, Trump had dinner not with her but with attorney Michael Cohen — who paid porn actress Stormy Daniels \$130,000 in 2016 to keep her from going public with her story of a 2006 tryst with Trump. The Trumps did dine together on Thursday night after the president returned to Florida, with boxing promoter Don King stopping by to chat.

Some say the first lady should exit her 13-year union with Trump, much like Hillary Clinton was urged to do after President Bill Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky became public in the late 1990s.

"Melania should do for this generation of girls what Hillary Clinton did not do for mine and leave her jerk of a husband," conservative commentator S.E. Cupp wrote in an opinion piece that recently was splashed across the front page of the New York Daily News — one of Trump's hometown newspapers — with the headline "Dump Trump!"

Trump himself recently joked about the possibility of his wife leaving him. She was seated at the head table at a Washington dinner last month where the president, in a speech that traditionally pokes at friends and adversaries, addressed the heavy staff churn at the White House.

"Now the question everyone keeps asking is, 'Who's going to be the next to leave? Steve Miller or Melania?'" he said, referring to policy adviser Stephen Miller. "That is terrible honey, but you love me, right?"

A Marist-McClatchy Poll in February found the public divided on the issue. Forty-three percent said the first lady should stay married, 34 percent said she should leave her husband and 23 percent weren't sure what she should do.

Through it all, Mrs. Trump has kept a steely silence on claims by Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal that they had sexual relationships with Trump that began in 2006 just after the future first lady gave birth.

Stephanie Grisham, a spokeswoman for Mrs. Trump, responded to questions about Daniels and McDougal by saying the first lady is "focused on being a mom" and spent the break working on future projects, including Monday's annual White House Easter Egg Roll and the coming state visit of French President Emmanuel Macron on April 24.

Mrs. Trump kept up an everything's-normal Twitter feed during the week, posting about her recent participation in the State Department's courage awards, a White House discussion she had convened on cyberbullying, an upcoming opioids exhibit near the White House, White House garden tours and her surprise visit to a Florida hospital Thursday to deliver Easter baskets to young patients.

She is silent now on her husband's dealings with other women, but has traversed this awkward terrain before.

"People think and talk about me like, 'Oh Melania, Oh poor Melania,'" she told CNN in a 2016 interview. "Don't feel sorry for me. I can handle everything."

She gave that interview after Trump was heard on a decade-old audiotape describing how he had grabbed women by their genitals and kissed them without permission. Trump at the time also faced accusations of sexual misconduct from more than a dozen women. He has called the women's charges false, and said he was engaging in "locker-room talk" on the tape.

Some fault Mrs. Trump for making the "politically freighted choice" of going ahead with what the White House said is her traditional spring break getaway.

Iowa State University history professor Stacy Cordery said most people will forgive an erring man when

his wife stands by him. But “we don’t see any evidence of her standing by him in that way. Even though she’s an extremely private person, she could still appear at his side, but she’s choosing not to,” added Cordery, a first lady scholar.

The allegations don’t appear to have hurt Trump politically. The White House often notes that Trump was elected even though voters knew about sexual misconduct allegations against him. Trump’s approval rating, meanwhile, is up 7 points since last month to 42 percent, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Friends say the first lady, who met Trump while his divorce from his second wife was being finalized, can handle what’s coming at her.

“The first lady is very strong. She’s, unfortunately, used to attacks of fake news,” said Paolo Zampolli, her friend and former modeling agent.

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

This story has been corrected to say the first lady met Trump while his divorce was being finalized.

Israel says it will expand response if Gaza clashes go on

By **FARES AKRAM** and **ARON HELLER**, Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel will target “terror organizations” in Gaza if violence along the territory’s border with Israel drags on, the chief military spokesman warned Saturday, a day after thousands of Palestinians staged protests near the border fence.

The mass marches were led by Gaza’s ruling Hamas group and touted as the launch of a six-week-long protest campaign. Palestinian health officials said 15 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire and more than 750 hit by live rounds, making it the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 cross-border war between Israel and Hamas.

In Friday’s confrontations, large crowds gathered near the border fence, with smaller groups of protesters rushing forward, throwing stones and burning tires.

Israeli troops responded with live fire and rubber-coated steel pellets, while drones dropped tear gas from above. The army released video showing soldiers with rifles perched on high earthen embankments overlooking the scene.

Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis, the chief army spokesman, denied allegations of excessive use of force, saying those killed by Israeli troops were men between the ages of 18 and 30 who were involved in violence and belonged to militant factions.

He alleged Gaza health officials exaggerated the number of those wounded, and that several dozen at most were injured by live fire while the rest were merely shaken up by tear gas and other riot dispersal means.

Four of the dead on the Health Ministry’s list were members of the Hamas military wing, the group said Saturday. The group said two people not counted in the official death toll were missing and presumed dead. It said Israel had the two bodies, including that of a Hamas military wing member.

Gaza City’s Shifa Hospital received 284 injured people Friday, the majority with bullet injuries, said spokesman Ayman Sahbani. He said 70 were under the age of 18 and 11 were women.

He said 40 surgeries were performed Friday and that 50 were planned Saturday. “These are all from live bullets that broke limbs or caused deep, open wounds with damage to nerves and veins,” he said.

Among those recovering from surgery was 16-year-old Marwan Yassin who had thrown stones with a slingshot at the fence Friday and was shot in both legs. One of his legs was wrapped in bandages and the other had a cast and metal fixtures.

His mother said at his bedside that she would forbid him from participating in future protests.

On Saturday, a few hundred people gathered at five tent encampments set up several hundred meters from the border fence. The tents serve as the launch points for marches.

Protest organizers have said mass marches would continue until May 15, the 70th anniversary of Israel's creation. Palestinians mark that date as their "nakba," or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were uprooted during the 1948 war over Israel's creation. The vast majority of Gaza's 2 million people are descendants of Palestinians who fled or were driven from homes in what is now Israel.

Manelis reiterated Saturday that Israel "will not allow a massive breach of the fence into Israeli territory."

He said that Hamas and other Gaza militant groups are using protests as a cover for staging attacks. If violence continues, "we will not be able to continue limiting our activity to the fence area and will act against these terror organizations in other places too," he said.

The border protests were seen as a new attempt by Hamas to break the border blockade, imposed by Israel and Egypt after the Islamic militant group seized Gaza from forces loyal to its rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in 2007. The continued closure has made it increasingly difficult for Hamas to govern.

The large turnout of marchers in the dangerous border zone also seemed to signal desperation among Gaza residents. Life in the coastal strip has deteriorated further in recent months, with rising unemployment, grinding poverty and daily blackouts that last for hours.

The protest campaign is also meant to spotlight Palestinian demands for a "right of return" to what is now Israel.

The prospect of more protests and Palestinian casualties in coming weeks could also place Israel on the defensive.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an independent investigation, while Security Council members urged restraint on both sides. The council didn't decide on any action or joint message after an emergency meeting Friday evening.

Abbas, the West Bank-based leader, renewed a call for international protection of Palestinians.

In the West Bank, shopkeepers observed a commercial strike called by political activists Saturday to protest Israel's response to the Gaza marches.

Heller reported from Tel Aviv, Israel. Karin Laub in Ramallah, West Bank, contributed.

Nobel Prize winner Malala visits her Pakistan hometown

By SHERIN ZADA and MUNIR AHMED, Associated Press

MINGORA, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistan's Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai on Saturday arrived in her hometown for the first time since a Taliban militant shot her there in 2012 for advocating girls' education.

Yousafzai and her family arrived in a helicopter provided by the Pakistani military, which took her to the town of Mingora in the Swat Valley from Islamabad. She had arrived in the capital before dawn on Thursday flanked by heavy security and plans to return to Britain on Monday.

Yousafzai, 20, won international renown after she was shot by the Taliban in Mingora. She received initial treatment in Pakistan and later was taken to England for further care. She stayed on in the United Kingdom to continue her education and became the youngest person to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

Yousafzai entered her childhood home Saturday accompanied by her father, mother and brother. She sobbed upon entering the home where relatives, former classmates and friends had been anxiously waiting since morning to welcome her with flowers and hugs.

Yousafzai said she waited for the moment for more than five years and said she often looked at Pakistan on the map, hoping one day to return. She said she plans to permanently return to Pakistan after completing her studies in Britain.

"It is still like a dream for me, am I among you? Is it a dream or reality," she said.

Yousafzai later returned to Islamabad, where she met with human rights activists.

Arooj Bibi, a neighbor, said she was happy to meet with Yousafzai, but was sad because her visit was

so brief. Bibi said Yousafzai "lit the candle of education. God willing, there will be thousands of girls like Malala getting an education" in Swat.

Yousafzai also attended a gathering at the army's Cadet College in Swat.

Security had been visibly beefed up in Mingora the previous day. The Pakistani Taliban had warned after the attack on the then-14-year-old that they would target her again if they got the chance.

Yousafzai had asked authorities to allow her to go to Mingora and Shangla village in the Swat Valley, where a school has been built by her Malala Fund.

In October 2012, Yousafzai was shot in the head by a Taliban assassin who jumped inside her school van and yelled, "Who is Malala?" She was targeted for speaking out on girls' education.

Since her attack and recovery, Yousafzai has led the Malala Fund in which she said has invested \$6 million for schools and books and uniforms for schoolchildren.

Yousafzai has delighted in telling the Taliban that instead of silencing her, they have amplified her voice. She has also written a book, spoken at the United Nations and met with refugees.

On Friday, Yousafzai praised the Pakistan army in an interview on the independent Geo news channel for providing her timely medical treatment, saying her surgery was done by an army surgeon at the "right time."

Yousafzai has won praise from across Pakistan on her return home, but some critics on social media have tried to undermine her efforts to promote girls' education. Yousafzai told media outlets Friday that she expected criticism from militants, who had a particular mindset, but doesn't understand why some educated Pakistanis oppose her.

"Those who do criticize have an absurd kind of criticism that doesn't make any sense," she said in an interview with Pakistan's The News English-language newspaper published Saturday.

"What I want is for people to support my purpose of education and think about the daughters of Pakistan who need an education," she told the newspaper. "Don't think about me. I don't want any favor or I don't want everyone to accept me. All I care about is that they accept education as an issue."

In the interview, she said she was sitting in her classroom when news broke about her Nobel Prize and that she was not aware of it as she was not using her mobile phone at the time.

"My teacher came into my classroom and called me outside. I was worried that I might have done something wrong and I am in trouble. But she told me that I had won the Peace Prize. I said thank you. You don't know how to respond. For me, it was for the cause of education," she told the paper.

Ahmed reported from Islamabad.

Autopsy disputing police account of shooting prompts anger

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Calls for justice and charges against two police officers who fatally shot an unarmed black man aren't abating in California's capital city after an autopsy showed Stephon Clark was shot in the back, a counter to the department's statement that he was approaching officers when he was killed.

"His back was turned — he didn't get a chance," said Latarria McCain, who joined several hundred Friday in a downtown protest that lasted more than four hours, causing disruption and blocking traffic but largely remaining peaceful.

Sacramento native and former NBA player Matt Barnes has organized another rally for Saturday afternoon, hours before a Sacramento Kings-Golden State Warriors game will bring thousands of fans to the downtown arena that protesters have twice blocked.

Several Kings players joined black community activists' calls for racial justice at a Friday night community meeting, nearly two weeks after Clark's March 18 death.

"I want to make sure that these mistakes that keep happening have consequences," player Garrett Temple said.

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Earlier, the famed pathologist Dr. Bennet Omalu announced Clark was hit by eight bullets — six in the back, one in the neck and one in the thigh — and took three to 10 minutes to die. Police waited about five minutes before rendering medical aid.

“The proposition that has been presented that he was assailing the officers, meaning he was facing the officers, is inconsistent with the prevailing forensic evidence,” Omalu said at a news conference with family attorney Benjamin Crump.

He said it was not clear if Clark would have survived had he gotten immediate medical attention.

Sacramento police responded with a brief statement that said the department had not yet received an official autopsy report from the Sacramento County coroner’s office. It said the coroner’s death investigation is independent from the investigation being conducted by police and the state Department of Justice.

A day after the shooting, police distributed a press release that said the officers who shot Clark “saw the suspect facing them, advance forward with his arms extended, and holding an object in his hands.”

Police video of the shooting doesn’t clearly capture all that happened after Clark ran into his grandmother’s backyard. He initially moved toward the officers, who are peeking out from behind a corner of the house, but it’s not clear he’s facing them or that he knows they are there when they open fire after shouting “gun, gun, gun.”

After 20 shots, officers call to him, apparently believing he might still be alive and armed. They eventually approach and find no gun, just a cellphone.

“When a young man who is 22 is shot down in his grandma’s backyard, which is supposed to be a safe place, I don’t know. What’s beyond a crisis?” said Nikki Whitfield, who works at a local adoption agency and attended the community forum.

With a joyous but somber feel, the event marked a change in tone from the protests that have disrupted the capital city’s downtown. But the message was similar, with several hundred members of the black community discussing police brutality and calling out of the names of black people who have been killed by law enforcement.

Later, protesters chanted outside City Hall before marching through downtown for more than four hours. Black Lives Matter Sacramento leaders helped diffuse tension at several points, including when protesters had a brief standoff with police by an interstate ramp and later when the police handcuffed a hotel door shut as protesters tried to enter, according to Capital Public Radio. But confrontations between the protesters and police or other civilians were minimal and the march was largely peaceful.

Gov. Jerry Brown issued his first statement on the situation Friday, calling it a tragic death that “raises a number of very serious questions and I support the California Attorney General’s independent oversight of the investigation.”

The autopsy was released a day after an emotional funeral service. The Rev. Al Sharpton delivered the eulogy and praised demonstrators for their restraint and urged them to follow the lead of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his advocacy of nonviolent protest.

Associated Press reporters Sophia Bollag and Don Thompson in Sacramento and John Antczak in Los Angeles contributed.

Mormon conference ushers in leaders as church faces scrutiny

By BRADY McCOMBS, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A Mormon conference this weekend in Utah will usher in a new era of church leadership that comes as the faith grapples with heightened scrutiny about its handling of sexual abuse reports and one-on-one interviews between local lay leaders and youth.

Church President Russell M. Nelson will preside over the twice-annual gathering for the first time since taking office. Two new members will be chosen for an all-male top governing body.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints this week announced updated guidelines for the reporting of sexual abuse following news that a former prominent missionary leader was accused of sexually

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assaulting two women in the 1980s.

The new guidelines call on lay leaders to never disregard a report of abuse or encourage a person to stay in an abusive home. They also say children can bring a parent or other adult to one-on-one interviews with local church leaders. Parents previously were allowed only in a hallway or adjacent room. Youth can still go alone if they choose.

Some say the changes fall short.

On Friday, about 1,000 Mormons and ex-Mormons marched to the church's Salt Lake City headquarters to deliver petitions demanding an end to the closed door, one-on-one meetings that start at age 12, along with the sexual questions they sometimes include.

Mormon spokeswoman Irene Caso said in a statement Friday the faith condemns any inappropriate behavior or abuse regardless of when or where it occurs, and that church leaders are given instructions for youth interviews.

The statement also seemed to express a willingness to change: "As with any practice in the Church, we continually look for ways to improve and adjust by following the Savior in meeting the needs of our members."

Nelson is expected to speak at this weekend's conference, but it's unknown if he'll address the issue or the larger topic of sexual misconduct that has been thrust into the national spotlight by the #MeToo movement. Church leaders usually focus their conference speeches on spiritual guidance and religious themes.

Nelson, a 93-year-old former heart surgeon, was appointed the 17th president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in January following the death of president Thomas S. Monson, who served for a decade.

Both Nelson and Monson rose up church leadership ranks after being named to a governing body called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, modeled after Jesus Christ's apostles. Members of the all-male panel serve under the church president and his two counselors and remain on the panel until they die.

Church members and scholars will be closely watching Saturday to see if the Utah-based church adds diversity to its top leadership tier, which is made up entirely of white men from the U.S. with the exception of one German, Dieter Uchtdorf.

More than half of the religion's 16 million members live outside the United States, and some Mormons would like to see the church's global footprint represented in leadership.

The last time there were openings on the quorum, in October 2015, the church chose three Utah men.

Women aren't allowed on the religion's highest leadership councils or in the faith's lay clergy that lead local congregations. Church officials say their doctrine states men and women are equal, but only men are allowed in the lay priesthood because the religion follows the "pattern set by the Savior when it comes to priesthood ordination."

A contingent of Mormons have advocated for years for a change in doctrine to allow women in the priesthood — including large rallies outside church conferences in 2013 and 2014 — but the Mormon church remains committed to its patriarchal structure. Nine highest-ranking women in the church oversee three organizations that run programs for women and girls. These councils sit below several layers of leadership groups reserved for men.

The new leaders are likely to come from next-tier of church leaders, which is called the Quorum of the Seventy, which is where the last 12 men chosen were working before their selections.

The new Quorum members will join a quorum undergoing a substantial turnover following a string of deaths as previous leaders succumbed to the effects of aging.

After Saturday, five of the 12 panel members will have been appointed in the past three years. Prior to 2015, it had been six years since a new quorum member was chosen, and more than a decade since the leadership council had two openings.

Autopsy disputes police account of fatal Sacramento shooting

By DON THOMPSON and SOPHIA BOLLAG, Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Sacramento police shot Stephon Clark seven times from behind, according to autopsy results released Friday by a pathologist hired by Clark's family, a finding that calls into question the department's assertion the 22-year-old black man was facing officers and moving toward them when he was killed.

Dr. Bennet Omalu also determined Clark took three to 10 minutes to die. Police waited about five minutes before rendering medical aid.

"The proposition that has been presented that he was assailing the officers, meaning he was facing the officers, is inconsistent with the prevailing forensic evidence," Omalu said at a news conference with family attorney Benjamin Crump.

He said it was not clear if Clark would have survived had he gotten immediate medical attention.

Sacramento police responded with a brief statement that said the department had not yet received an official autopsy report from the Sacramento County coroner's office. It said the coroner's death investigation is independent from the investigation being conducted by police and the state Department of Justice.

A day after the March 18 shooting, police distributed a press release that said the officers who shot Clark "saw the suspect facing them, advance forward with his arms extended, and holding an object in his hands."

Police video of the shooting doesn't clearly capture all that happened after Clark ran into his grandmother's backyard. He initially moved toward the officers, who are peeking out from behind a corner of the house, but it's not clear he's facing them or that he knows they are there when they open fire after shouting "gun, gun, gun."

After 20 shots, officers call to him, apparently believing he might still be alive and armed. They eventually approach and find no gun, just a cellphone.

The shooting has produced almost daily angry but peaceful protests in the downtown area of California's capital city.

About 200 protesters gathered Friday night at City Hall. They shouted "Hands up, Don't Shoot!" and Stand Up, Fight Back."

They also chanted the names of young black men who have been killed by police around the country.

Earlier, several hundred black residents gathered at a South Sacramento church for a community meeting focused on supporting black youth in the city.

Clark's death was highlighted, however, with Sacramento Kings player Garrett Temple telling the crowd that Clark "could have been any of us."

Teammate Vice Carter and former Kings player Doug Christie also attended.

Gov. Jerry Brown issued his first statement on the situation earlier Friday, calling it a tragic death that "raises a number of very serious questions and I support the California Attorney General's independent oversight of the investigation."

Police were called to the South Sacramento neighborhood on March 18 after a neighbor reported someone was breaking car windows. A police helicopter identified a suspect, who ran as police on the ground gave chase.

The helicopter video shows the two officers at the corner of Clark's grandmother's house and Clark on the backyard patio. He moves toward the officers' position as they peer around the corner and open fire.

Clark staggers sideways and falls on his stomach as officers continue shooting.

Omalu, whose study of a degenerative brain condition in football players prompted the NFL to adopt new safety rules designed to prevent concussions, said any of the six bullets that hit Clark in the back and one in the neck could have been the fatal shot. An eighth bullet went into Clark's thigh.

The autopsy was released a day after an emotional funeral service. The Rev. Al Sharpton delivered the eulogy and praised demonstrators for their restraint and urged them to follow the lead of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his advocacy of nonviolent protest.

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Later in the day, police in riot gear stood waiting outside the Golden 1 Center as fans wove through barricades and fencing to enter a Sacramento Kings-Indiana Pacers game. Twice since the shooting, demonstrators had blocked thousands of fans from entering the area.

But protesters never came to the arena Thursday night, heeding calls from Clark's brother, Stevante Clark, and Black Lives Matter organizers to avoid the arena.

Instead, they blocked rush hour traffic on nearby downtown streets.

The Kings and their owner have supported the family.

Associated Press reporters Kathleen Ronayne and Haven Daley in Sacramento and John Antczak and Brian Melley in Los Angeles contributed.

Court: Government can't block immigrant teens from abortion

By JESSICA GRESKO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal court in Washington has told the Trump administration that the government can't interfere with the ability of pregnant immigrant teens being held in federal custody to obtain abortions.

A judge issued an order Friday evening barring the government from "interfering with or obstructing" pregnant minors' access to abortion counseling or abortions, among other things, while a lawsuit proceeds. The order covers pregnant minors being held in federal custody after entering the country illegally.

Lawyers for the Department of Health and Human Services, which is responsible for sheltering children who illegally enter the country unaccompanied by a parent, have said the department has a policy of "refusing to facilitate" abortions.

In private, Trump has mused about Syria pullout for weeks

By MATTHEW LEE and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's unscripted remark this week about pulling out of Syria "very soon," while at odds with his own policy, was not a one-off: For weeks, top advisers have been fretting about an overly hasty withdrawal as the president has increasingly told them privately he wants out, U.S. officials said.

Only two months ago, Trump's aides thought they'd persuaded him that the U.S. needed to keep its presence in Syria open-ended — not only because the Islamic State group has yet to be entirely defeated, but also because the resulting power vacuum could be filled by other extremist groups or by Iran. Trump signed off on major speech in January in which Secretary of State Rex Tillerson laid out the new strategy and declared "it is vital for the United States to remain engaged in Syria."

But by mid-February, Trump was telling his top aides in meetings that as soon as victory can be declared against IS, he wanted American troops out of Syria, said the officials. Alarm bells went off at the State Department and the Pentagon, where officials have been planning for a gradual, methodical shift from a military-led operation to a diplomatic mission to start rebuilding basic infrastructure like roads and sewers in the war-wracked country.

The officials weren't authorized to comment publicly and demanded anonymity.

In one sign that Trump is serious about reversing course and withdrawing from Syria, the White House this week put on hold some \$200 million in US funding for stabilization projects in Syria, officials said. The money, to have been spent by the State Department for infrastructure projects like power, water and roads, had been announced by outgoing Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at an aid conference last month in Kuwait.

The officials said the hold, first reported by The Wall Street Journal, is not necessarily permanent and will be discussed at senior-level inter-agency meetings next week.

The State Department said it continually reviews appropriate assistance levels and how best they might

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be utilized. And the agency said it continues to work with the international community, members of the Coalition, and our partners on the ground to provide needed stabilization support to vulnerable areas in Syria.

"The United States is working everyday on the ground and with the international community to help stabilize those areas liberated from ISIS and identify ways to move forward with reconstruction once there has been a peaceful political transition away from (Syrian President Bashar) Assad," according to a statement from the Department.

Trump's first public suggestion he was itching to pull out came in a news conference with visiting Australian Prime Minister Alastair Campbell on Feb. 23, when Trump said the U.S. was in Syria to "get rid of ISIS and go home." On Thursday, in a domestic policy speech in Ohio, Trump went further.

"We'll be coming out of Syria, like, very soon. Let the other people take care of it now. Very soon — very soon, we're coming out," Trump said.

The public declaration caught U.S. national security agencies off-guard and unsure whether Trump was formally announcing a new, unexpected change in policy. Inundated by inquiries from journalists and foreign officials, the Pentagon and State Department reached out to the White House's National Security Council for clarification.

The White House's ambiguous response, officials said: Trump's words speak for themselves.

"The mission of the Department of Defense to defeat ISIS has not changed," said Maj. Adrian Rankine-Galloway, a Pentagon spokesman.

Still, without a clear directive from the president, planning has not started for a withdrawal from Syria, officials said, and Trump has not advocated a specific timetable.

For Trump, who campaigned on an "America First" mantra, Syria is just the latest foreign arena where his impulse has been to limit the U.S. role. Like with NATO and the United Nations, Trump has called for other governments to step up and share more of the burden so that Washington doesn't foot the bill. His administration has been crisscrossing the globe seeking financial commitments from other countries to fund reconstruction in both Syria and Iraq, but with only limited success.

Yet it's unclear how Trump's impulse to pull out could be affected by recent staff shake-ups on his national security team. Tillerson and former national security adviser H.R. McMaster, both advocates for keeping a U.S. presence in Syria, were recently fired, creating questions about the longevity of the plan Tillerson announced in his Stanford University speech in January. But Trump also replaced McMaster with John Bolton, a vocal advocate for U.S. intervention and aggressive use of the military overseas.

The abrupt change in the president's thinking has drawn concern both inside and outside the United States.

Other nations that make up the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS fear that Trump's impulse to pull out hastily would allow the notoriously resourceful IS militants to regroup, several European diplomats said. That concern has been heightened by the fact that U.S.-backed ground operations against remaining IS militants in Syria were put on hold earlier this month.

The ground operations had to be paused because Kurdish fighters who had been spearheading the campaign against IS shifted to a separate fight with Turkish forces, who began combat operations in the town of Afrin against Kurds who are considered by Ankara to be terrorists that threaten Turkey's security.

"This is a serious and growing concern," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said this month.

Beyond just defeating IS, there are other strategic U.S. objectives that could be jeopardized by a hasty withdrawal, officials said, chiefly those related to Russia and Iran.

Israel, America's closest Mideast ally, and other regional nations like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are deeply concerned about the influence of Iran and its allies, including the Shiite militant group Hezbollah, inside Syria. The U.S. military presence in Syria has been seen as a buffer against unchecked Iranian activity, and especially against Tehran's desire to establish a contiguous land route from Iran to the Mediterranean coast in Lebanon.

An American withdrawal would also likely cede Syria to Russia, which along with Iran has been propping up Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces and would surely fill the void left behind by the U.S. That

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prospect has alarmed countries like France, which has historic ties to the Levant.

In calling for a withdrawal "very soon," Trump may be overly optimistic in his assessment of how quickly the anti-IS campaign can be wrapped up, the officials said. Although the group has been driven from basically all of the territory it once controlled in Iraq and 95 percent of its former territory in Syria, the remaining five percent is becoming increasingly difficult to clear and could take many months, the officials said.

Associated Press writers Robert Burns and Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

IOC president says Kim committed to Tokyo, Beijing Olympics

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach met with Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang on Friday and said the North Korean leader is committed to having his country participate in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and the Beijing Winter Games in 2022.

Bach told an Associated Press Television crew that the two had a 30-minute formal meeting followed by 45 minutes of casual discussions while watching a football match Friday afternoon at Pyongyang's May Day Stadium.

He called the talks productive and said Kim expressed his appreciation for the IOC's role in helping North Korea compete at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea last month.

"We had a very fruitful meeting where it became clear that the supreme leader has a clear vision of the role that sport can play in a society with regard to education, with regard to health," Bach said. He added that Kim told him the North's participation in the Pyeongchang games and marching together with South Korean athletes were an "important contribution to a peaceful dialogue."

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency published a report on the meeting on Saturday, saying that Bach expressed his "heartfelt thanks" to Kim over the North's participation in the Pyeongchang Games that made the event "symbolic of peace."

In response, Kim told Bach he was "very thankful" that the IOC took special measures to allow for North Korean athletes to compete in South Korea. He called for further cooperation with the IOC in developing winter sports and other sports activities in North Korea, the agency said.

Bach arrived in Pyongyang on Thursday to discuss development of sports in North Korea and the preparation of its athletes to qualify and participate in upcoming Olympics. He is the first foreign official to meet Kim since the North Korean leader returned earlier this week from a summit in Beijing with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

That was Kim's first known trip abroad since he assumed power after the death of his father in late 2011. Kim is to meet with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27.

Bach, who also met with North Korea's sports minister, said he received a commitment from the country's National Olympic Committee to participate in Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022, along with competing in the respective youth Olympic Games.

"This commitment has been fully supported by the supreme leader Kim Jong Un in a meeting we had this afternoon," he said. "He explained that sport is a pillar in his policy for the future development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

Both the North and South hailed the Pyeongchang Games as a significant step toward easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula that reached dangerously high levels last year as the North stepped up its missile tests and detonated its largest nuclear device to date.

Since the Olympics, the North has pushed forward with a flurry of diplomatic moves. After his summit with Moon, Kim is to meet President Donald Trump by May, though the date and location of that summit have not been announced. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said he is exploring the possibility of a meeting with Kim as well.

The exact reasons behind Kim's seeming change of tactics remain something of a mystery.

Hopes have been raised that the North Korean leader may be willing to discuss his nuclear weapons program and other measures to reduce the threat of war, possibly in exchange for security guarantees and

an easing of the international sanctions that have severely pinched the already struggling North Korean economy.

Kim's talks with Bach appear to have focused mostly on sports.

Raising the level of North Korean athletes has been high on Kim's agenda since he became leader. Of the 22 North Korean athletes who competed in Pyeongchang, only two won places on merit and the other 20 were granted special spots by the IOC.

Bach, who is German, competed in the Olympics for West Germany before Germany's unification and says that gives him a special feeling for the Koreans.

"It is the mission of the International Olympic Committee always to build bridges and by building these bridges through sport we can also make a contribution to the ongoing political talks," he said, adding that he hopes the talks will lead "in the Olympic spirit to a peaceful future for the Korean Peninsula."

Associated Press Pyongyang bureau chief Eric Talmadge contributed to this report from Tokyo.

Deadly clashes in Gaza mark start of Palestinian campaign

By **FARES AKRAM and KARIN LAUB, Associated Press**

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Thousands of Palestinians marched to Gaza's border with Israel on Friday in the largest such demonstration in recent memory, and 15 were killed by Israeli fire on the first day of what Hamas organizers said will be six weeks of daily protests against a stifling border blockade.

It was the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 cross-border war between Israel and Hamas.

Fourteen of the marchers were killed and more than 750 wounded by Israeli fire in clashes along the border fence, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. Another Palestinian was killed earlier Friday.

The Israeli military said thousands of Palestinians threw stones and rolled burning tires toward troops deployed on the other side of the border fence. It accused militants of trying to carry out attacks under the cover of mass protests, saying that in one incident, Palestinian gunmen fired toward soldiers.

The large turnout of the flag-waving marchers in the dangerous border zone was a testament to Hamas' organizing skills, but it also signaled desperation among Gaza residents after a decade-old border closure. Life in the coastal strip has deteriorated further in recent months, with rising unemployment, grinding poverty and daily blackouts that last for hours.

Asmaa al-Katari said she participated in the march despite the risks and would join upcoming protests because "life is difficult here in Gaza and we have nothing to lose."

The history student said she is a descendant of refugees from what is now Israel's southern Negev Desert. She said her grandfathers had lived in tents as refugees.

"I want to tell the world that the cause of our grandfathers is not dead," she added.

Gaza resident Ghanem Abdelal, 50, said he hopes the protest "will bring a breakthrough, an improvement, to our life in Gaza."

He had brought his family to a protest tent camp near Gaza City — one of five set up several hundred meters from the border fence — where he distributed water bottles to women and children sitting on a mat.

Israel had threatened a tough response, hoping to deter breaches of the border fence. The Israeli military released video showing a row of snipers perched on a high earthen embankment facing the Gaza crowd in one location.

Israel also used a new means of crowd control Friday — small drones that each dropped several tear gas canisters on protesters below. People quickly scattered when they saw the drones approaching.

The U.N. Security Council held an emergency meeting late Friday to discuss the situation in Gaza. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for "an independent and transparent investigation" into the deadly clashes and council members urged restraint on both sides.

Friday's high death toll and prospects of daily protests in coming weeks have raised concerns about another escalation along the volatile frontier. Israel and the Islamic militant Hamas have fought three

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cross-border wars in recent years.

The protest campaign is meant to spotlight Palestinian demands for a "right of return" to what is now Israel. A large majority of Gaza's 2 million people are descendants of Palestinians who fled or were driven from their homes in the 1948 Mideast war over Israel's creation.

The 70th anniversary of the establishment of Israel, on May 15, is marked by Palestinians as their "na-kba," or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were uprooted.

The planned mass sit-ins on the border are also seen as a new attempt by Hamas to break the border blockade, imposed by Israel and Egypt after Hamas seized Gaza from forces loyal to its rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in 2007. The continued closure has made it increasingly difficult for Hamas to govern.

Other attempts to break the blockade, including wars with Israel and attempts to reconcile with the West Bank-based Abbas, have failed over the years.

The latest Egyptian-led reconciliation efforts collapsed earlier this month, when a bomb targeted but missed Abbas' prime minister and intelligence chief during a visit to Gaza.

Hamas and Abbas traded accusations after the bombing, signaling that any deal on Hamas handing the Gaza government to Abbas is increasingly unlikely.

The Hamas leader in Gaza, Yehiyeh Sinwar, said the protests are a signal to Israel and the world that "our people will not accept the continuation of the siege."

Israel and the Trump administration expressed concern in recent months about a looming humanitarian crisis in Gaza and appealed to the international community to fund large-scale development projects there, including a desalination plant.

However, such plans appeared to be linked to a deal on Abbas taking charge in Gaza, and Israel didn't say what it would do if such an arrangement didn't work out.

Friday's violence began before dawn when a 27-year-old farmer picking parsley in his field was hit by an Israeli tank shell in southern Gaza, the Health Ministry said. Another farmer was injured by shrapnel.

Israel's military said troops directed tank fire toward suspicious figures on the border.

Later in the day, mosque loudspeakers urged Gaza residents to head to the border encampments. A Hamas-linked bus company ferried protesters to the area. In all, tens of thousands gathered at the encampments, though not all headed to the border, witnesses said. Other Palestinian factions also participated in organizing the protests.

The Health Ministry said at least 1,000 people were injured, including 758 by live fire and the rest by rubber bullets and tear gas.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum praised the turnout.

"The large crowds ... reflect the Palestinian people's determination to achieve the right of return and break the siege and no force can stop this right," he said.

Groups of marchers threw stones at Israeli soldiers who responded with live fire, tear gas and rubber bullets.

The military said thousands participated in the clashes.

Maj. Gen. Eyal Zamir, commander of the Israeli military's Southern Command, which includes the Gaza border, said he held Hamas responsible for the violence and alleged there were attempts to "carry out terror attacks under the camouflage of riots."

The army said Israeli soldiers opened fire at two Palestinians who approached the fence and shot at soldiers in northern Gaza. It said troops also fired on Palestinians who had infiltrated into Israel.

The military had doubled its standard troop level along the border, deploying snipers, special forces and paramilitary border police units, which specialize in riot control.

Friday's protest campaign began as Jews prepared to mark Passover, and it is scheduled to culminate with the start of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, in mid-May.

The anniversary of Israel's founding will be particularly fraught for Palestinians this year.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has pledged to move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to mark the occasion. The planned embassy move falls in line with Trump's recognition

in December of contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a decision that has infuriated Palestinians who seek the city's Israeli-annexed eastern sector as a future capital.

Laub contributed from Ramallah, West Bank.

1 Baton Rouge officer fired, 1 suspended in deadly shooting

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE, Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A Louisiana police chief on Friday fired the white officer who fatally shot a black man during a struggle outside a convenience store nearly two years ago, a killing that set off widespread protests.

Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul announced officer Blane Salamoni's firing less than a week after Louisiana's attorney general ruled out criminal charges in Alton Sterling's July 2016 shooting death.

Paul also suspended officer Howie Lake II, the other officer involved in the deadly confrontation, for three days. Lake helped wrestle Sterling to the ground but did not fire his weapon that night.

Paul said he fired Salamoni for violating department policies on use of force and "command of temper." He suspended Lake for violating only the latter policy.

"My decision was not based on politics," Paul said during a news conference. "It was not based on emotions. It was based on the facts of the case."

Both officers had remained on paid administrative leave since the shooting.

Police also released body camera footage and other videos of the officers' deadly encounter with Sterling. Two cellphone videos of the incident quickly spread on social media after the shooting, but the new videos show the clearest and most complete picture of what happened that night.

In the body camera footage, an officer can be heard repeatedly using profanity as he shouts at Sterling and at one point threatens to shoot him in the head as Sterling asks what he did. Authorities have said Salamoni made that threat as he pointed a gun at Sterling.

When Sterling complains that the officers are hurting him, one of the officers says to use a Taser on him and an electric buzzing can be heard. The officer believed to be Salamoni then runs at Sterling, tackling him as the camera footage blurs with motion.

Someone yells "he's got a gun," then gunshots ring out.

Salamoni told an internal affairs investigator in September 2016 that he cursed at Sterling to send a message that the officers weren't "playing," according to a report released Friday. Salamoni also said he saw Sterling reach for and hold a gun in his pants pocket right before he shot him during their struggle on the ground.

Trying to explain why he swore at Sterling after the shooting, Salamoni said "he was so mad at Sterling for making him kill him and for trying to kill us," the report says.

L. Chris Stewart, a lawyer representing two of Sterling's five children, said the newly released videos show officer Salamoni attacked Sterling without provocation "like a wild dog."

"The most obvious thing that stands out is Alton wasn't fighting back at all," Stewart said. "He's trying to defuse it the whole time."

Salamoni shot Sterling six times during the struggle outside the Triple S Food Mart, where the 37-year-old black man was selling homemade CDs. After the shooting — as Sterling lies on the ground — an officer can be heard using profanity to say Sterling was stupid.

Salamoni's attorney, John McLindon, said he will appeal the officer's firing to a civil service board. Salamoni knows he probably can't return to the Baton Rouge police force but wants to prove he did nothing wrong, his lawyer said.

"He did what he was trained to do," McLindon added.

The officers recovered a loaded revolver from Sterling's pocket. As a convicted felon, Sterling could not legally carry a gun.

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry announced Tuesday that his office isn't charging either officer

with state crimes. The Justice Department ruled out federal criminal charges last May.

Less than an hour after the chief's announcement Friday evening, Travis Hicks, 33, was selling CDs in the parking lot outside the store where Sterling was killed. He said the videos released Friday confirmed what most people in the neighborhood already knew.

Hicks said he didn't think Lake deserved to be fired but thought the fact that Salamoni was not criminally charged shows a double standard.

"If it was one of us," he said, gesturing at two African-American men browsing his table of CDs, "it would have never took that long. They would have sent us right to Angola," Hicks said, referring to Louisiana's state prison.

In June 2017, Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Weston Broome called on Paul's predecessor, Carl Dabadie Jr., to fire Salamoni. Dabadie refused, saying it would be improper and premature because the shooting remained under investigation.

Salamoni, 30, had served as a Baton Rouge police officer for four years before the shooting. Lake was a three-year veteran of the force.

Lake had a separate hearing Thursday before Paul and three of his deputies before the chief announced his disciplinary decision. Lake's attorney, Kyle Kershaw, said his client wants to return to his patrol job in Baton Rouge after his brief suspension.

"Every measure that he employed was exactly what he was taught at the academy," Kershaw said.

For nearly two years, Sterling's family and many other Baton Rouge residents have called on authorities to release all of the video footage of the shooting. The shock of finally seeing and hearing it overwhelmed Andrika Williams, the mother of three of Sterling's children. Williams told her attorney, Michael Adams, that she had an anxiety attack and collapsed when she saw one of the newly released videos in a friend's social media post as she walking in her neighborhood Friday evening.

"Every time they see this footage, they relive this. It's horrible to watch," Adams said.

1,000 march in Salt Lake City over Mormon youth interviews

By BRADY McCOMBS, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — About 1,000 current and former Mormons marched to the church's headquarters in Salt Lake City Friday to deliver petitions demanding an end to closed door, one-on-one interviews between youth and lay leaders where sexual questions sometimes arise.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints changed its policy this week to now allow children to bring a parent or adult with them to the interviews, but protesters said that doesn't go far enough to keep children safe.

The policy change followed recent revelations that a former prominent missionary leader was accused of sexually assaulting two women in the 1980s. The ex-leader denies the allegations.

Protesters carried signs such as "Mormon children we have your back" and "No more closed doors," saying the so-called "worthiness" meetings can lead to unhealthy shaming of youth. Some cried as they recalled being asked detailed questions about their sexual activity or being punished after admitting to masturbation.

"This is my church and it has many good things but it has one thing that has to be eliminated," said campaign organizer Sam Young, a Mormon from Houston, urging an end to one-on-one interviews and all sexually explicit questions.

Church officials say the interviews allow bishops to get to know youth better and determine their religious habits and obedience to God. They usually happen twice a year starting at age 12. Questions cover topics such as school, sports, hobbies, education goals and family issues, but sometimes delve into sexual behavior because of the church's strict teachings on abstinence before marriage.

The protesters said they delivered 55,000 signatures on petitions and 15 copies of a book with people's stories of inappropriate encounters during the interviews to a church representative from the public relations office.

The event came a day before a twice-annual church conference that will be the first since new church president Russell M. Nelson assumed the post in January.

The march had been planned for months by Young, who launched the public campaign last year after he said private attempts to get church leaders' attention failed.

Allan Mount, a 36-year-old Mormon father of four from Murray, Utah, said he's a loyal member of the religion who plans to teach his kids the importance of chastity. But, he said the line of questioning that too often happens in the meetings isn't necessary.

"There's too much shame attached it," said Mount. "You can have a healthy understanding of how you should responsibly act sexually without there being shame involved."

Robin Day, 40, traveled to the march from Arkansas. At one point, he broke down in tears as he relived not being allowed to pray in church or visit the temple when he admitted to his bishop as a teen that he masturbated. He eventually left the church.

"I was told I was lying to God if I don't confess," Day said.

Mormon spokeswoman Irene Caso said in a statement Friday that the religion "condemns any inappropriate behavior or abuse regardless of where or when it occurs" and that church leaders are given instructions for youth interviews.

The statement also seemed to be open to change: "As with any practice in the Church, we continually look for ways to improve and adjust by following the Savior in meeting the needs of our members."

Scott Gordon, president of FairMormon, a volunteer organization that supports the church, said he agrees that bishops shouldn't be asking inappropriate sexual questions but disagrees with Young's demand to require that parents be in every interviews and a ban on questions about a teen's sexual activities.

"What they're asking is a step too far," Gordon said. "It's making the assumption that bishops are sexual predators. They're not."

2 British IS members say hostage beheadings were a 'mistake'

By SARAH EL DEEB and ANDREA ROSA, Associated Press

KOBANI, Syria (AP) — Two British militants believed to have been part of an Islamic State group cell notorious for beheading hostages in Syria were unapologetic in their first interview since their capture, denouncing the U.S. and Britain as "hypocrites" who will not give them a fair trial.

The men, along with two other British jihadis, allegedly made up the IS cell nicknamed "The Beatles" by surviving captives because of their English accents.

The nickname belied the cell's brutality. In 2014 and 2015, it held more than 20 Western hostages in Syria and tortured many of them. It beheaded seven American, British and Japanese journalists and aid workers and a group of Syrian soldiers, boasting of the butchery in videos released to the world.

Speaking to The Associated Press at a Kurdish security center, the two men, El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexandra Amon Kotey, repeatedly refused to address allegations they were part of the cell — clearly having a future trial in mind. They complained that they could "disappear" after Britain reportedly revoked their citizenship.

They were captured in January in eastern Syria by the Kurdish-led, U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces amid the collapse of IS. Their detention has set off a debate in the U.S. and Europe over how to prosecute their citizens who joined IS — as the Kurds pressure the West to take them back to relieve overcrowding in prisons.

The two said the killings of the captives were a mistake — but for tactical reasons.

Many in IS "would have disagreed" with the killings "on the grounds that there is probably more benefit in them being political prisoners," Kotey said.

"I didn't see any benefit (in killing them). It was something that was regrettable." He also blamed Western governments for failing to negotiate, noting that some hostages were released for ransoms.

Elsheikh said the killings were a "mistake" and might not have been justified. But, he said, they were in retaliation for killings of civilians by the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS. He said the militants shouldn't have

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initially threatened to kill the hostages because then they had to go ahead with it or else "your credibility may go."

The beheadings, often carried out on camera, horrified the world soon after IS took over much of Iraq and Syria in 2014. The group also committed widescale atrocities including massacring thousands of Iraqi troops and civilians and taking sex slaves.

The first victim was American journalist James Foley, followed by fellow Americans Steven Sotloff and Peter Kassig, British aid workers David Haines and Alan Henning and Japanese journalists Haruna Yukawa and Kenji Goto.

Speaking to the AP on Friday, Foley's mother, Diane Foley, called on the international community and U.S. government "to have the courage to hold these men accountable in an open trial where we can face them and they can hear all the pain and suffering they've inflicted on the world. And so that the rest of the world can understand the atrocity of their crimes."

She said she opposes the death penalty for them since it feeds jihadi "desire for martyrdom and heroic afterlife."

"These men do not deserve that. They deserve to be held in solitary confinement for the rest of their lives."

The leader of the cell, Mohammed Emwazi, was dubbed "Jihadi John" in the British media after he appeared, masked, in the videos, sometimes performing the butchery. He was killed in a U.S.-led coalition drone strike in 2015 in the Syrian city of Raqqa, the de facto IS capital. Another member, Aine Lesley Davis, was arrested in Turkey and convicted there in 2017, sentenced to seven years in prison.

Elsheikh, whose family came to Britain from Sudan when he was a child, was a mechanic from White City in west London.

He traveled to Syria in 2012, initially joining al-Qaida's branch before moving on to IS, according to the U.S. State Department's listing of the two men for terrorism sanctions. It said he "earned a reputation for waterboarding, mock executions and crucifixions while serving as an (IS) jailer."

Kotey, who is of Ghanaian and Greek-Cypriot descent and converted to Islam in his 20s, is from London's Paddington neighborhood.

Serving in the IS cell as a guard, he "likely engaged in the group's executions and exceptionally cruel torture methods," the State Department said. It also said he was an IS recruiter who brought other Britons into the group.

Elsheikh and Kotey spoke to the AP at a Kurdish security building in the town of Kobani, where they were brought, initially in handcuffs and face covers that were removed. They appeared to speak openly with no signs of duress and were friendly with SDF security who came in and out of the room.

They were both initially confrontational but over the interview became more conversational. Kotey often cracked jokes — when asked whether IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was alive, he joked that some people thought Elvis never died and Tupac Shakur is still alive. Elsheikh was straightlaced and reserved, referring more often to Islamic texts.

They were unrepentant about belonging to IS — though they said they did not agree with everything it did. Kotey said he did not think suicide bombings were permissible in Islam. Elsheikh said IS's killing of a captured Jordanian pilot by burning him alive in a cage was "atrocious."

But they seemed dismissive of the idea that IS was egregious in brutality.

"I am not here to justify or shun every act IS did," Elsheikh said, arguing that nationals of a country can't be held responsible for crimes by the state.

They scoffed at the idea that that they were a cell and refused to comment whether they had worked as jailors, had ever seen any hostages or knew Emwazi.

They depicted the allegations as created by media and foreign intelligence — "so the world can say this is the bad guy and kill the bad guy," Elsheikh said.

"No fair trial, when I am 'the Beatle' in the media. No fair trial," he added.

They said they had been questioned repeatedly by U.S. military officials and the FBI — daily interrogations for a month, then frequent ones for weeks after.

The U.S. has been pressing for the home countries of foreign jihadis in Iraq and Syria to take their nationals for trial. Britain's defense secretary has said they should not be allowed back into the country. Former captives of the cell and families of its victims have called on Elsheikh and Kotey to be given a fair trial, whether in the United States or Britain, arguing that locking them away in a facility like Guantanamo Bay would only fuel further radicalism.

Kurdish officials complain they are being left to deal with the IS legacy, including overburdened prisons full of militants, including foreign fighters whose home countries don't want to take them back.

Elsheikh and Kotey are held in an undisclosed location. Kotey said he shares a cell with 70 others, all but four of them Syrians, and that they are sleeping like "sardines, literally head to toe, head to toe." Despite the overcrowding, he said, they get fresh air, play games and have classes.

Kotey said the U.S. and Britain were not upholding their own laws of due process. "Where are they now or are they just applicable when they suit you?" he said. "It just looks very hypocritical, double standards."

The two denounced as "illegal" the British government's reported decision in February to strip them of citizenship. The decision was widely reported in British media, though officials have not confirmed or denied it, citing privacy rules.

The revocation exposes them to "rendition and torture," Elsheikh said.

"When you have these two guys who don't even have any citizenship ...if we just disappear one day, where is my mom going to go and say where is my son," he said.

"I found it strange that they could actually do that, revoke the citizenship of a person," Kotey said.

"I was born in the UK," he said. "My mother was born in the UK. I have a daughter there in the UK. ... I probably never left the UK more than 3 months" before coming to Syria.

Kotey said the fairest venue for a trial may be the International Criminal Court in The Hague in the Netherlands. "That would be the logical solution."

Mohammed Hassan in Kobani, Syria contributed to this report.

Widow of Orlando nightclub gunman is acquitted in the attack

By TAMARA LUSH, Associated Press

The widow of the gunman who slaughtered 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, was acquitted Friday of helping to plot the attack and lying to the FBI afterward — a rare and stinging defeat for the U.S. government in a terrorism case.

Noor Salman, 31, sobbed upon hearing the jury's verdict of not guilty of obstruction and providing material support to a terrorist organization, charges that could have brought a life sentence. Her family gasped each time the words "not guilty" were pronounced.

On the other side of the Orlando courtroom, the families of the victims of the June 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting sat stone-faced and silent.

Within hours, Salman was released from jail after 14 months and got into a waiting car without answering questions.

"Noor is so grateful. Her belief in the process was shown. She wants to get back to her son," her attorney Linda Moreno said. Family spokeswoman Susan Clary said Salman's family "always thought that Noor was the first victim" of her husband, Omar Mateen.

The verdict reverberated through Orlando and legal circles beyond.

"The government rarely, rarely loses these kinds of cases. It's got every single factor on its side," said David Oscar Markus, a Miami attorney who routinely tries federal cases. "It's a pretty impressive win for the defense and a devastating loss for the government."

Mateen, the American-born son of Afghan immigrants, was killed by police after opening fire in the name of the Islamic State group.

Relying heavily on an alleged confession from Salman, federal prosecutors charged that she and Mateen had scouted out potential targets together — including Disney World's shopping and entertainment

complex — and that she gave him the “green light to commit terrorism.”

But the defense portrayed her as an easily manipulated woman with a low IQ and argued that she signed a false confession because she was tired after a long interrogation and feared losing her young son.

In a blow to the government’s case, the FBI itself found that receipts and cellphone signals showed the couple were nowhere near the Pulse on the day Salman said they were.

Also, prosecutors introduced no online posts, texts or any other evidence that Salman supported ISIS, and were hard-pressed to counter the defense’s portrayal of her as a simple, sweet mother who loves her 5-year-old son, romance novels and the cartoon character Hello Kitty.

After the verdict, prosecutors said they were disappointed and took no questions.

The jurors said little as they left court.

“Noor Salman should never have been on trial,” said Ahmed Bedier, a civil rights advocate and the president of United Voices of America. “Let this verdict serve as a message to law enforcement and prosecutors who railroad and persecute innocent people on little evidence, the people of this great nation will not allow it.”

Some veteran attorneys said the government made a mistake in not recording the alleged confession. The jury was given only a written statement.

“The FBI needs to start recording their statements. It’s a terrible practice. But it’s the FBI’s policy not to record,” Markus said. “Even local police agencies now record statements and are required to do so. Jurors in today’s age want to hear the recording, they want to see the evidence.”

Miami defense attorney David Weinstein said: “As much as we don’t want to admit it, this is the age of the cellphone. It’s ingrained in the minds of jurors, if it’s not recorded, it didn’t happen.”

Christine Leinonen, an attorney and former state trooper whose only son was killed in the nightclub massacre, told The Orlando Sentinel she was disappointed but not shocked by the verdict. She said Salman’s alleged confession was “clearly coerced” and added: “Cops screw up their own cases.”

Prosecutors had also accused Salman of falsely claiming that her husband didn’t use the internet in their home, that he had deactivated his Facebook account years earlier, that he had one gun when he had three, and that he wasn’t radicalized.

But the defense said that Salman, who was born in California to Palestinian parents, was abused and cheated on by her husband and that he concealed much of his life from her. Her attorneys argued there was no way she knew her husband would attack the nightclub because even he didn’t know it until moments before.

According to prosecutors, Mateen intended to attack Disney World’s shopping and entertainment complex by hiding a gun in a stroller but became spooked by police and chose a new target.

Lush reported from St. Petersburg, Florida.

This story has been corrected to show that Bedier is with United Voices of America.

Officials seek clues in SUV cliff crash that likely killed 8

By PAUL ELIAS and PHUONG LE, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Accident-reconstruction investigators are trying to figure out what caused an SUV carrying a family to plunge off a California cliff in a deadly wreck that happened shortly after child-welfare authorities went to their home to investigate possible abuse.

Five members of the Hart family — a free-spirited brood from Washington state who grew their own food and took up activist causes — were found dead. Searchers kept looking Friday for three more children believed to have been in the vehicle when it went over a scenic coastal overlook and landed on rocks in the Pacific Ocean below. The missing children may have been washed out to sea.

“There are a lot of unknowns on this,” Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman said. “Several of the questions that have been asked today will never be answered.”

Allman said there is no reason so far to think the crash was intentional but also mentioned there were

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no skid marks or signs the driver braked as the GMC Yukon crossed a flat, dirt pull-off area, about 75 feet (23 meters) wide, where motorists on the Pacific Coast Highway often walk their dogs.

Accident-reconstruction experts said investigators would look at road conditions along with such possibilities as brake failure or a blown tire. The sheriff appealed to anyone who might have seen the family of eight to come forward.

Known as the Hart Tribe, the multiracial family of two married women — Sarah and Jennifer Hart — and six adopted children took spontaneous road trips to camp and hike and traveled to festivals and other events, offering hugs and promoting unity.

One of the children, Devonte Hart, drew national attention when the black youngster was photographed hugging a white police officer during a 2014 protest in Portland, Oregon, over the deadly police shooting of a black man in Ferguson, Missouri. Devonte was holding a "Free Hugs" sign.

A passing motorist discovered the wreck Monday, three days after social service authorities opened an investigation apparently prompted by a neighbor's complaint that the children were being deprived of food.

A state caseworker went to the Harts' house in Woodland, Washington, on March 23 but didn't find anyone home, officials said. The Department of Social and Health Services had no prior history with the family, said Norah West, an agency spokeswoman.

Bruce and Dana DeKalb, next-door neighbors of the Harts, said they called child protective services because 15-year-old Devonte had been coming over to their house almost every day for a week, asking for food.

Dana DeKalb said Devonte told her his parents were "punishing them by withholding food." The boy asked her to leave food in a box by the fence for him, she said. She told The Oregonian/OregonLive that Devonte asked for things like tortillas and peanut butter and eventually was coming over three times a day.

She said the boy's first words when he came to the door March 22 were: "Have you called?"

"I almost got the feeling it was more of, 'What are you waiting for, lady?'" Dana DeKalb said.

Authorities don't know exactly when the wreck took place. But by Saturday, the family's SUV was gone from the driveway, Bruce DeKalb said.

Well before the wreck, Sarah Hart pleaded guilty in 2011 to a domestic assault charge in Douglas County, Minnesota, telling authorities "she let her anger get out of control" while spanking her 6-year-old adoptive daughter, court records show.

The two women, both 38, were found dead inside the SUV, while three of their children — Markis Hart, 19, Jeremiah Hart, 14, and Abigail Hart, 14 — were discovered outside the vehicle. Searchers were looking for Hannah Hart, 16; Sierra Hart, 12; and Devonte.

Their model of Yukon was presumably equipped with a black box recorder that would show its speed and use of the brakes, said Marcus Mazza, an engineer and accident-reconstruction expert with Lancaster, Pennsylvania-based Robson Forensic.

Authorities in Washington state searched the family's home Thursday. The Clark County sheriff's office said deputies were looking for bills or anything else that could shed light on why the family left and other circumstances related to the trip, Portland, Oregon, news station KGW-TV reported.

Family friend Max Ribner took issue with the notion the wreck was something other than a tragic accident. The couple adopted many of their children from "hard backgrounds," he said. "They transformed these kids' lives."

Le reported from Seattle. Associated Press Writer Tom James contributed from West Linn, Oregon.

Russia ramps up diplomatic tensions, expels more UK envoys

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and GREGORYKATZ, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The crisis between Russia and the West over the poisoning of a former double agent in Britain heightened Friday as Russia ordered new cuts to the number of British envoys in the country.

Russia also summoned 23 foreign ambassadors to inform them that some of their diplomats would be

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expelled, a day after ordering 60 U.S. diplomats to leave and demanding that Washington's consulate in St. Petersburg close on short notice.

The massive expulsion of diplomats on both sides has reached a scale unseen even at the height of the Cold War.

Two dozen countries, along with NATO, ordered out more than 150 Russian diplomats this week in a show of solidarity with Britain over the nerve-agent poisoning of Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Britain that London blamed on Russia.

Moscow has vehemently denied involvement in the March 4 nerve agent attack in the English city of Salisbury and announced the expulsion of the same number of diplomats from each nation.

The ministry escalated its response Friday, saying it has ordered Britain to reduce the number of its diplomats in Moscow to the level that Russia has in London. The exact number wasn't immediately clear, but state news agency RIA Novosti agency quoted an unidentified Russian diplomat as saying the number of British diplomatic personnel in Russia exceeds the number of Russian envoys in Britain by more than 50 people.

The ministry said it summoned the British ambassador to hand him a protest over the "provocative and unsubstantiated actions by Britain, which instigated the expulsion of Russian diplomats from various nations for no reason." It gave London one month to reduce its diplomatic personnel in Russia.

Adding to the tensions, the ministry late Friday said a plane belonging to Russian state airline Aeroflot was being searched by police in London. Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said there was no explanation given for the search, which she called "the latest provocation." The plane left London's Heathrow Airport for Moscow about three hours behind schedule.

Commenting on the Russian move to expel more U.K. diplomats, a spokeswoman for the British Foreign Office said "it's regrettable but in light of Russia's previous behavior, we anticipated a response."

"However, this doesn't change the facts of the matter: the attempted assassination of two people on British soil, for which there is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian state was culpable," she said. "Russia is in flagrant breach of international law and the Chemical Weapons Convention and actions by countries around the world have demonstrated the depth of international concern."

The expulsions affect not only the diplomats but their families as well, forcing them to take their children out of school in the middle of the year.

A hospital treating the Skripals said Thursday that the 33-year-old daughter Yulia was improving rapidly and was now in stable condition but her 66-year-old father remained in critical condition.

Speaking to reporters Friday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted that "Russia didn't start any diplomatic wars," and "remains open for developing good ties."

He added that Russia has called a meeting of the international chemical weapons watchdog next week to press for an "unbiased and objective investigation."

Russia has accused Britain of failing to back up its accusations with evidence and refusing to share materials from the probe. The Foreign Ministry said it told the British ambassador on Friday that Moscow is ready to cooperate in the investigation.

Earlier this week, the Russian Foreign Ministry alleged that British special services could have been involved in the poisoning and claimed that Britain, the U.S., the Czech Republic and Sweden all have re-searched the class of nerve agent that London said was used to poison Skripal.

Britain and its allies have rejected the Russian nerve agent claims.

The countries informed Friday by Russia of diplomat expulsions were Australia, Albania, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Finland, France, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Estonia.

The Foreign Ministry added that it would also consider mirror expulsions of diplomats from Belgium, Hungary, Georgia and Montenegro.

Bulgaria announced it would not expel any Russian diplomats. The country is heavily dependent on Russian gas supplies and tourists.

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In response to the U.S. move earlier this week to close the Russian Consulate in Seattle, Moscow also shut the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg, giving it until Saturday to vacate the premises.

An Associated Press reporter on Friday saw U.S. consulate staff carrying boxes from the building in St. Petersburg and loading them into a van. Several mini-vans drove out of the consulate while security also detained a man who threw a Starbucks cup at the building.

Some passers-by near the U.S. Consulate cheered the expulsions.

"Let them get out of here," said 61-year-old retiree Viktor Fedin. "You won't put Russia on its knees."

Others were more cautious, worried that the closures would affect visa processing for Russians.

"The Russian government has to respond to the hostile actions against Russia," said 32-year-old researcher Yelena Bogomazova. "But the escalation is bad. The closure of the consulate will make it difficult for people to get U.S. visas. They will have to go to Moscow."

After Russia expelled several dozen U.S. diplomats, the waiting list for U.S. visa applications in Russia has increased to weeks, if not months. The U.S. Embassy said it was unable to process visa applications faster because of the staff shortage.

Russia also warned that the expulsions of its diplomats could slow down issuing visas.

In a statement that reflects the soaring tensions, Moscow also accused Washington of trying to recruit the Russian diplomats it has expelled as spies.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said the U.S. special services have engaged in "frantic efforts" to make cooperation offers to the expelled Russian diplomats. The ministry described the alleged U.S. overtures as "cynical and disgusting," adding that they have failed.

Gregory Katz reported from London. Irina Titova in St. Petersburg, Jim Heintz and Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow contributed to this report.

Heaven sent: Chat with Sister Jean brightens up Final Four

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Who needs "One Shining Moment" when you've got Sister Jean?

The 98-year-old nun who has become the face of this most-inspiring NCAA Tournament held court on Good Friday in one of the best-attended news conferences ever held at the Final Four.

Hundreds of reporters and cameramen jammed in, elbow-to-elbow, in an interview room that would normally draw two dozen journalists for a player.

"I walked by, and I thought it looked like Tom Brady at the Super Bowl," Loyola-Chicago coach Porter Moser said.

It was more monumental than that.

This was the No. 1 fan of Moser and the Ramblers — the 11th-seeded team whose magical, miraculous run to the cusp of the title would've made for great theater, even without a nun.

Sister Jean Dolores-Schmidt has added a completely new, unexpected and, yes, wonderful twist to the proceedings. Her 15-minute Q&A on the eve of Loyola's game against Michigan illustrated precisely why.

She fielded questions about everything from whether God cares about basketball — "more the NCAA than the NBA" — some light trash talk with former Michigan star Jalen Rose's 100-year-old grandma — "Somebody said, 'Maybe you need a pair of boxing gloves' and I said, 'Well, we'll see what happens'" — and what it takes to really have your prayer heard — "God always hears, but maybe He thinks it's better for us to do the 'L' instead of the 'W,' and we have to accept that."

A lot has changed, Sister Jean says, since the Ramblers last made history — back in 1963 when they completed an equally unexpected run by knocking off Cincinnati for the national championship.

"I watched it on a little 11-inch black-and-white TV, and the game was (tape) delayed," she said. "And then everybody got out of the house and walked down the line on Sheridan Road, men and women together."

Sister Jean has been on a whirlwind since the Ramblers started this unexpected return to the college basketball promised land.

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That this is all happening on Easter weekend makes it that much more hectic. But, as she has shown time and again over the past three weeks, sports and religion really can mix, so long as you keep everything in perspective.

"We're having a university Mass together on Easter Sunday," she said. "You know, I said Easter Sunday because we hope to stay, and we're confident enough we will."

Sister Jean is far from the only Catholic going for glory at this Final Four. On the other side of the bracket, the Catholic school, Villanova, is represented by Rev. Rob Hagan — aka Father Rob — who told The Associated Press the matchup is "kind of like fighting with your brothers and sisters. We're all in the same family."

Michigan coach John Beilein used a question posed to him about Sister Jean to remind folks that he, like the Loyola-Chicago players, is a product of a Jesuit education.

"And I had a priest, not even at my own parish, stop Mass and say, 'They have Sister Jean, you have everybody here praying for you,'" Beilein said. "It's been a lot of fun and it's great."

Not that this mix of sports and religion is particularly groundbreaking. Players thank God all the time, and more often than not, their prayers and thanks go largely ignored by the mainstream media and the fans.

But college basketball is going through some rough times these days, filled with dirty coaches and agents, payoffs to players and an FBI investigation that has unmasked corruption in many corners of the game.

Change is coming.

Sister Jean's presence has reminded everyone that the game is about more than slam dunks, busted brackets, big money and the glossy "One Shining Moment" video that wraps things up at the end.

"It's just cool that everybody in the world knows who she is now, and they're starting to get to see how cool she is and how amazing she is," Ramblers guard Clayton Custer said.

On Friday, Sister Jean's 15 minutes of fame was just that: 15 minutes, and then it was time to move onto the day's regularly scheduled menu of interviews with coaches and players.

But she was having a grand time.

"I could stay for an hour," she said.

Spending an hour talking hoops with a nun?

Nary a soul objected.

AP Sports Writers Dan Gelston and Stephen Hawkins contributed to this report.

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

Promises, promises: Facebook's history with privacy

By RYAN NAKASHIMA, AP Technology Writer

MENLO PARK, Calif. (AP) — "We've made a bunch of mistakes." "Everyone needs complete control over who they share with at all times." "Not one day goes by when I don't think about what it means for us to be the stewards of this community and their trust."

Sound familiar? It's Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg addressing a major privacy breach — seven years ago .

Lawmakers in many countries may be focused on Cambridge Analytica's alleged improper use of Facebook data, but the social network's privacy problems go back more than a decade. Here are some of the company's most notable missteps and promises around privacy.

2007

The social media darling unveils its Facebook Platform to great fanfare. Zuckerberg says app developers can now access the web of connections between users and their friends, a set of connections Facebook calls the "social graph."

"The social graph is changing the way the world works," he says .

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That November, Facebook launches Beacon , which shares what users are doing on other websites with their Facebook friends. Many users find it intrusive and difficult to disable. Massachusetts resident Sean Lane buys his wife a diamond ring for Christmas on Overstock.com, but Facebook ruins the surprise , an incident leading to a class-action lawsuit.

In December, Zuckerberg apologizes and enables users to shut off Beacon. "I know we can do better," he says .

2008

Facebook launches Facebook Connect , aiming to correct Beacon's mistakes by requiring users to take deliberate action before they share activity from other websites when logged in using Facebook. More than 100 websites use the tool at launch, including CNN and TripAdvisor.

2009

Facebook announces "privacy improvements" after a yearlong review by Canada's Office of the Privacy Commissioner found that it geared its default privacy settings toward openness, failed to inform users their data would be used to serve ads, and leaked data to third party developers, including when their friends used apps. Facebook vows to encourage "users to review their privacy settings" but does not agree to all the recommendations.

Beacon is officially shut down, settling Lane's class action lawsuit.

The American Civil Liberties Union warns people that Facebook's default settings mean that when a friend uses an app or takes a quiz, the quiz- or app-maker can peer into your profile, even if you've made it private.

2010

App-makers exhibit a sophisticated grasp of data they can scoop from Facebook's social graph.

The Wall Street Journal reports that many popular apps are transmitting personalized Facebook data to dozens of advertising and internet companies, among them, Zynga's breakout game FarmVille. Facebook responds by shutting down some apps.

Prior to the Journal report, Facebook says it has redesigned its privacy tools, giving its 400 million users "the power to control exactly who can see the information and content they share.

2011

The Federal Trade Commission reaches a consent decree with Facebook after an investigation of its broken privacy promises to consumers.

The FTC alleges, among other things, that:

—Facebook made its users' friend lists public in December 2009, even if they had been set to private, without telling them.

—Even if users limited data sharing to "friends only," data was actually shared with third party apps that friends used.

—Facebook failed to verify the security of apps it put on a "verified apps" list.

—Facebook promised not to share personal information with advertisers, but did.

Facebook promises to submit to a privacy audit every two years for the next 20 years, and Zuckerberg owns up to mistakes.

2012

Facebook introduces new methods to help advertisers reach people in ways "that protect your privacy," including an encryption tool called Custom Audiences that lets marketers match the email addresses of sales leads to the addresses that Facebook users used to set up their accounts.

Facebook also rolls out new privacy tools aimed at simplifying its convoluted and confusing privacy controls. Among other things, it narrows the scope of app permissions so they don't suck in as much user data automatically.

2013

Facebook shares two-year-old anonymized data on billions of friendships between countries with Cambridge researcher Aleksandr Kogan and co-authors a research paper with him (published in 2015).

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Kogan creates a quiz app, installed by around 300,000 people , giving him access to tens of millions of their friends' data.

2014

Facebook says it dramatically limits the access apps have to friend data, preventing the type of data scoop Kogan and others were capable of. It also requires developers to get approval from Facebook before accessing sensitive data.

2015

Facebook says it learns from Guardian journalists that Kogan has shared data with Cambridge Analytica in violation of its policies. It bans the app and asks Kogan and Cambridge Analytica to certify they had deleted the data.

It rolls out "Security Checkup ," a new tool aimed at simplifying its convoluted and confusing privacy controls.

2017

Facebook introduces "Privacy Basics ," a Frequently Asked Questions site aimed at simplifying its privacy controls.

2018

Facebook says it learns from The Guardian and other media outlets that Cambridge Analytica did not delete improperly obtained Facebook data and suspends the company, Kogan, and whistleblower Christopher Wylie from its service.

Zuckerberg tells CNN that "I'm really sorry that this happened." He promises to audit app makers that gathered massive amounts of data prior to 2014 and to notify affected users. Amid calls for investigations in the U.S. and U.K., the FTC begins investigating whether Facebook broke its 2011 consent decree.

"Our responsibility now is to make sure that this doesn't happen again," Zuckerberg says.

Facebook redesigns its privacy settings menu on mobile devices and says in a blog post, "It's time to make our privacy tools easier to find."

Follow AP Technology Writer Ryan Nakashima at <https://twitter.com/rnakashi>

Trump EPA expected to roll back auto gas mileage standards

By TOM KRISHER, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The Trump administration is expected to announce that it will roll back automobile gas mileage and pollution standards that were a pillar in the Obama administration's plans to combat climate change.

It's not clear whether the announcement will include a specific number, but current regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency require the fleet of new vehicles to get 36 miles per gallon in real-world driving by 2025. That's about 10 mpg over the existing standard.

Environmental groups, who predict increased greenhouse gas emissions and more gasoline consumption if the standards are relaxed, say the announcement could come Tuesday at a Virginia car dealership. EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said in an email Friday that the standards are still being reviewed.

Any change is likely to set up a lengthy legal showdown with California, which currently has the power to set its own pollution and gas mileage standards and doesn't want them to change. About a dozen other states follow California's rules, and together they account for more than one-third of the vehicles sold in the US. Currently the federal and California standards are the same.

Automakers have lobbied to revisit the requirements, saying they'll have trouble reaching them because people are buying bigger vehicles due to low gas prices. They say the standards will cost the industry billions of dollars and raise vehicle prices due to the cost of developing technology needed to raise mileage.

When the standards were first proposed, the government predicted that two-thirds of new vehicles sold would be cars, with the rest trucks and SUVs, said Gloria Bergquist, spokeswoman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. Now the reverse is true, she said.

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Still, environmental groups say the standards save money at the pump, and the technology is available for the industry to comply.

They also say burning more gasoline will put people's health at risk.

"The American public overwhelmingly supports strong vehicle standards because they cut the cost of driving, reduce air pollution, and combat climate change," said Luke Tonachel, director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Clean Vehicles and Fuels Project.

The EPA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are involved in setting the standards, which would cover the years 2022 through 2025.

Some conservative groups are pressing EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to revoke a waiver that allows California to set its own rules. They say California shouldn't be allowed to set policy for the rest of the nation. Pruitt has publicly questioned the veracity of evidence compiled by climate scientists, including those in his own agency, that global warming is overwhelmingly caused by man-made carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels.

If the waiver is revoked, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra says the state will resist. "What we're doing to protect California's environment isn't just good for our communities — it's good for the country," he said in a statement. "We're not looking to pick a fight with the Trump administration, but when they threaten our values, we're ready."

Getting rid of the waiver or having two gas mileage and pollution requirements presents a huge dilemma for automakers: while they would like to avoid fines for failing to meet the standards, they also want the expense of building two versions of cars and trucks, one for the California-led states and another for the rest of the country.

Mark Reuss, a General Motors' product development chief, said in a recent interview that he would rather have a single nationwide standard, even if it stays the same. He called two standards "just waste," because they would require different vehicle equipment and costly additional engineering. "I want one good one," he said. "I could focus all my engineers on one."

Automakers agreed to the standards in 2012, but lobbied for and received a midterm review in 2018 to account for changes in market conditions. In the waning days of the Obama presidency, the EPA did the review and proclaimed that the standards have enough flexibility and the technology is available to meet them.

Janet McCabe, who was acting assistant EPA administrator under Obama when the review was done, said Friday it will take a couple years for the EPA to propose new rules, gather public comment and finalize any changes. Any rollback would likely bring legal challenges, forcing Pruitt's EPA to defend the science behind the changes.

"This would all take a long time," said McCabe, now a senior fellow at the Environmental Law and Policy Center.

In the meantime, automakers have to proceed with plans for new cars and trucks under the current gas mileage requirements because it takes years to develop vehicles.

Today in History By The Associated Press.

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 31, the 90th day of 2018. There are 275 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 31, 1968, at the conclusion of a nationally broadcast address on Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson stunned listeners by declaring, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

On this date:

In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain issued an edict expelling Jews from Spanish soil, except those willing to convert to Christianity.

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In 1889, French engineer Gustave Eiffel unfurled the French tricolor from atop the Eiffel Tower, officially marking its completion.

In 1917, the United States took formal possession of the Virgin Islands from Denmark.

In 1923, the first U.S. dance marathon, held in New York City, ended with Alma Cummings, who had danced with six consecutive male partners, setting a world record of 27 hours on her feet.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act, which created the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 1943, "Oklahoma!," the first musical play by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, opened on Broadway.

In 1958, the Chuck Berry single "Johnny B. Goode" was first released on the Chess label.

In 1976, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that Karen Ann Quinlan, a young woman in a persistent vegetative state, could be disconnected from her respirator. (Quinlan, who remained unconscious, died in 1985.)

In 1986, 167 people died when a Mexicana Airlines Boeing 727 crashed in a remote mountainous region of Mexico.

In 1993, actor Brandon Lee, 28, was accidentally shot to death during the filming of a movie in Wilmington, North Carolina, when he was hit by a bullet fragment that had become lodged inside a prop gun.

In 1995, Mexican-American singer Selena Quintanilla-Perez, 23, was shot to death in Corpus Christi, Texas, by the founder of her fan club, Yolanda Saldivar, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

In 2005, Terri Schiavo (SHY'-voh), 41, died at a hospice in Pinellas Park, Florida, 13 days after her feeding tube was removed in a wrenching right-to-die dispute.

Ten years ago: HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson announced his resignation amid the wreckage of the national housing crisis. A Bahamas jury ruled that Anna Nicole Smith's son, Daniel, died from an accidental drug overdose, just like his mother. American movie director Jules Dassin, whose Greek wife, Melina Mercouri, starred in his hit movie "Never on Sunday" and six more of his films, died in Athens at age 96.

Five years ago: Pope Francis marked Christianity's most joyous day at the Vatican with a passionate plea for world peace as he celebrated his first Easter Sunday as pontiff. The Houston Astros, coming off consecutive 100-loss seasons, made an impressive debut in the American League, trouncing the Texas Rangers 8-2 on opening night.

One year ago: President Donald Trump signed a pair of executive orders focused on reducing the U.S. trade deficit; the first order gave the Commerce Department 90 days to assemble a report on the factors behind the trade deficit, while the second sought to increase collection of duties on imports. Evgenia Medvedeva of Russia retained her world figure skating title at the championship in Helsinki. William T. Coleman Jr., a civil rights lawyer who served as transportation secretary during the Ford administration, died in Alexandria, Virginia, at age 96.

Today's Birthdays: Actor William Daniels is 91. Actor Richard Chamberlain is 84. Actress Shirley Jones is 84. Musician Herb Alpert is 83. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., is 78. Former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., is 78. Actor Christopher Walken is 75. Comedian Gabe Kaplan is 74. Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, is 74. Rock musician Mick Ralphs (Bad Company; Mott the Hoople) is 74. Former Vice President Al Gore is 70. Author David Eisenhower is 70. Actress Rhea Perlman is 70. Actor Robbie Coltrane is 68. Actor Ed Marinaro is 68. Rock musician Angus Young (AC/DC) is 63. Actor Marc McClure is 61. Actor William McNamara is 53. Alt-country musician Bob Crawford (The Avett (AY'-veht) Brothers) is 47. Actor Ewan (YOO'-en) McGregor is 47. Actress Judi Shekoni is 40. Rapper Tony Yayo is 40. Actress Kate Micucci is 38. Actor Brian Tyree Henry (TV: "Atlanta" Stage: "Book of Mormon") is 36. Actress Melissa Ordway is 35. Jazz musician Christian Scott is 35. Pop musician Jack Antonoff (fun.) is 34. Actress Jessica Szohr is 33.

Thought for Today: "Man does not speak because he thinks, he thinks because he speaks." — Octavio Paz, Mexican poet (born this date in 1914, died 1998).