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Mail Highway Route Relief Driver

Position available for Highway Relief Driver
Must be over 21, have a good driving record
Able to lift 70 pounds.

Route is early mornings and late afternoons
Mainly Saturdays and some week days
Contact Dave Miller 605-397-8277 Leave Message

Today's Events

- 10:00am; Golf: Girls Varsity Meet @ Lee Park Golf Course, Aberdeen
7:00pm: High School Spring Concert and Awards Night, GHS Gymnasium

Friday, May 4, 2018

1:00pm: Track: Varsity Meet @ Sisseton High School (Meet is rescheduled with start time at 1pm....not 4pm.)

Removal, Grinding, Chipping, Trimming

605-725-WOOD

Mason Dinger: 605-216-6098

Trevor Zeck: 605-216-8910



Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

New \$5 Buck Lunches!

**Crispy Chicken
Salad
Lunch**



**KC BBQ Bacon
Cheeseburger
Lunch**



Available
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



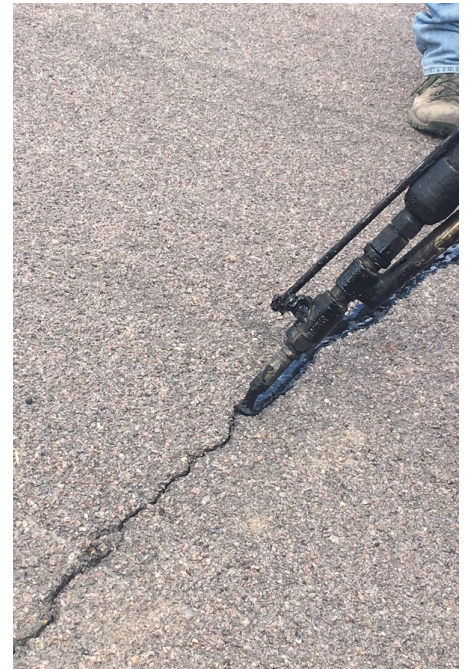
Grill & Chill

US 12, Groton



Sealing the cracks

This year, the city decided to rent a crack sealing machine to seal the cracks that have appeared on many of the mat streets in town. City Supervisor Terry Herron came up with the idea and will save the city nearly \$5,000 by doing the work itself as opposed to bringing in a contractor. Pictured here are Branden Abeln and Dan Sunne.



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A low fog was seen over the golf course this morning.



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

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

Part time Dietary Tech

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

GFP Urges Anglers to be Aware of Fish Consumption Advisories

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota departments of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP), Health (DOH) and Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are reminding anglers to check the current list of fish consumption advisories as the 2018 fishing season begins.

Based on testing results from 2017, South Buffalo Lake in Marshall County has been added to the advisory list. Fish to avoid include walleye over 24 inches.

A complete list of all lake- and species-specific advisories can be found at: doh.sd.gov/food/Fish-Advisories.aspx. Recommended guidelines for eating fish from advisory and non-advisory waters can also be found at the link above.

Annual fish testing is a collaborative effort among all three government agencies. When test results exceed established values for certain sizes of fish in a water body, a consumption advisory is issued.

-GFP-

State Parks Offer Free Entrance for Military Group Events

PIERRE, S.D. - Past and present military personnel can receive free entrance into South Dakota state parks when participating in special events that they host.

“We’re proud to offer this benefit to our veterans and members of the military,” said South Dakota State Parks director Katie Ceroll.

Park entrance licenses are not required for those participating in an eligible military group event. It includes South Dakota military veterans, members of the SD National Guard and military reserve units and patients of veterans’ hospitals in South Dakota. The exemption also extends to family members and guests in attendance at the event.

Ceroll said examples of eligible events include a veteran’s group picnic, a veteran’s home or hospital outing or a National Guard recruitment day.

In addition to the military group event entrance license exemption, South Dakota veterans having a 100 percent, service-related disability can obtain a free lifetime park entrance license and half-price camping.

For more information, call GFP at 605.773.3391. To host a military event in a state park, complete the special event application at gfp.sd.gov.

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Today in Weather History

May 3, 1895: A tornado moved northeast from 3 miles northwest of Redfield through Ashton. It was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles. Several homes were unroofed and barns destroyed. Tornadoes were spotted in Minnehaha and Bon Homme Counties in South Dakota.

May 3, 1907: The low temperature at Watertown fell to 16 degrees, making this coldest May temperature ever recorded Watertown.

May 3, 1960: Late season snowfall of 3 to 7 inches covered Perkins, Corson, and Campbell Counties. Lemmon reported 7 inches, and 6 miles SE of McIntosh had 6.5 inches. Main roads were very slippery and some rural roads impassable for about one day.

May 3, 1999: Two to four inches of rain fell across southeastern Dewey County causing flash flooding south of La Plant, mainly on Willow Creek. As a result of the flash flooding, several roads were underwater. Highway 212 south of La Plant was flooded for a few hours along with Highway 8, 15 miles south of La Plant. The flash flooding resulted in some road and bridge damage.

May 3, 2002: With low humidity, dry vegetation, and increasing South winds, embers from a day old controlled burn initiated a large grassland fire in the early afternoon hours west of Claremont. South winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph caused the fire to spread quickly. The fire extended to 4 miles wide and spread 4 miles north before it was contained late in the evening. Many trees along with a mobile home, an abandoned house, and an old barn burned. Seven miles of road had to be closed due to poor visibility from smoke. Eleven fire departments with nearly 150 firefighters extinguished the fire. The fire was completely put out during the afternoon hours of the 4th. This fire was one of the largest grassland fires in Brown County history.

1761: Large tornadoes swept through the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina when a British fleet of 40 sails was at anchor. The tornadoes raised a wave 12 feet high, leaving many vessels on their beam ends. Four people drowned.

1868: A tornado traveled 15 miles across Warren and Knox Counties, northwest of Galesburg, Illinois. The small town of Ionia, in Warren County, was destroyed. 16 homes and two churches in the city were leveled, along with 30 homes elsewhere. The tornado killed six people and injured 40 others. Many of the casualties occurred during a church service when the church roof was torn off and dropped onto the congregation.

1895: In Sioux County, Iowa an exceptionally violent tornado, at times 1,000 yards wide packing winds estimated at over 250 mph moved from three miles north of Ireton to two miles southwest of Hull hitting four schools. Two school houses several miles apart were leveled, killing teachers and students. Sibling teachers were killed at two different schools. Adjoining farms were also destroyed with several deaths in homes.

1999: There were 63 tornadoes in Oklahoma, making this the worst outbreak ever to strike the state. In Central Oklahoma alone, eight individual supercell thunderstorms produced 57 tornadoes. Bridge Creek, Moore and southern parts of the Oklahoma City Metro area were hit the hardest. When it was near Moore, Oklahoma, a truck-mounted Doppler radar measured a wind speed of 318 mph, the highest ever observed in a tornado. Forecasters at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, OK were faced with the unprecedented situation of a major tornado on the ground threatening their location. As a major F5 tornado was approaching the Oklahoma City metro area from the southwest, the SPC notified its backup, the Air Force Weather Agency at Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska that they might have to assume operational responsibility if the tornado approached Norman. The storm remained several miles west of the facility but was visible from the SPC roof. Damage from this single tornado was around one billion dollars, making it the most costly tornado in history. Estimated damage from the entire tornado outbreak was \$1.485 billion, making this the most expensive tornado outbreak ever. 2,314 homes were destroyed, and another 7,428 were damaged. To the north in Kansas, an F4 tornado tracked 24 miles through Sumner and Sedgwick Counties, killing 6, injuring 154, and causing \$146 million in damages. Haysville and Wichita suffered severe damage. A total of 8,480 buildings and homes were damaged or destroyed with, 109 destroyed. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Norman, Oklahoma.

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Thu May 3	Fri May 4	Sat May 5	Sun May 6	Mon May 7	Tue May 8	Wed May 9
73°F	79°F	77°F	71°F	74°F	73°F	70°F
42°F	49°F	44°F	46°F	51°F	51°F	43°F
NE 10 MPH	W 14 MPH	SSW 13 MPH	NNE 7 MPH	S 13 MPH	SSE 15 MPH Precip 20%	ESE 11 MPH Precip 20%

Sunny & Warm Again Today

Mild Next Few Days

Highs

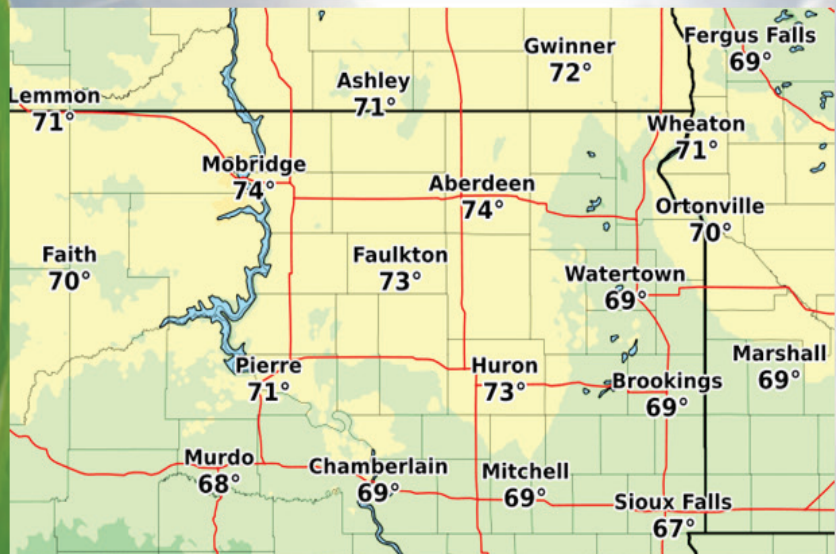
Fri 70s to Low 80s

Sat 70s to Low 80s

Sun Low 70s

Mon Mid 70s

Highs Today



Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created
5/3/2018 4:03 AM

Published on: 05/03/2018 at 4:07AM

Mild and dry to close out the week, and even the chance for moisture Sat isn't all that spectacular. There will be a couple of chances for some moisture next week however.

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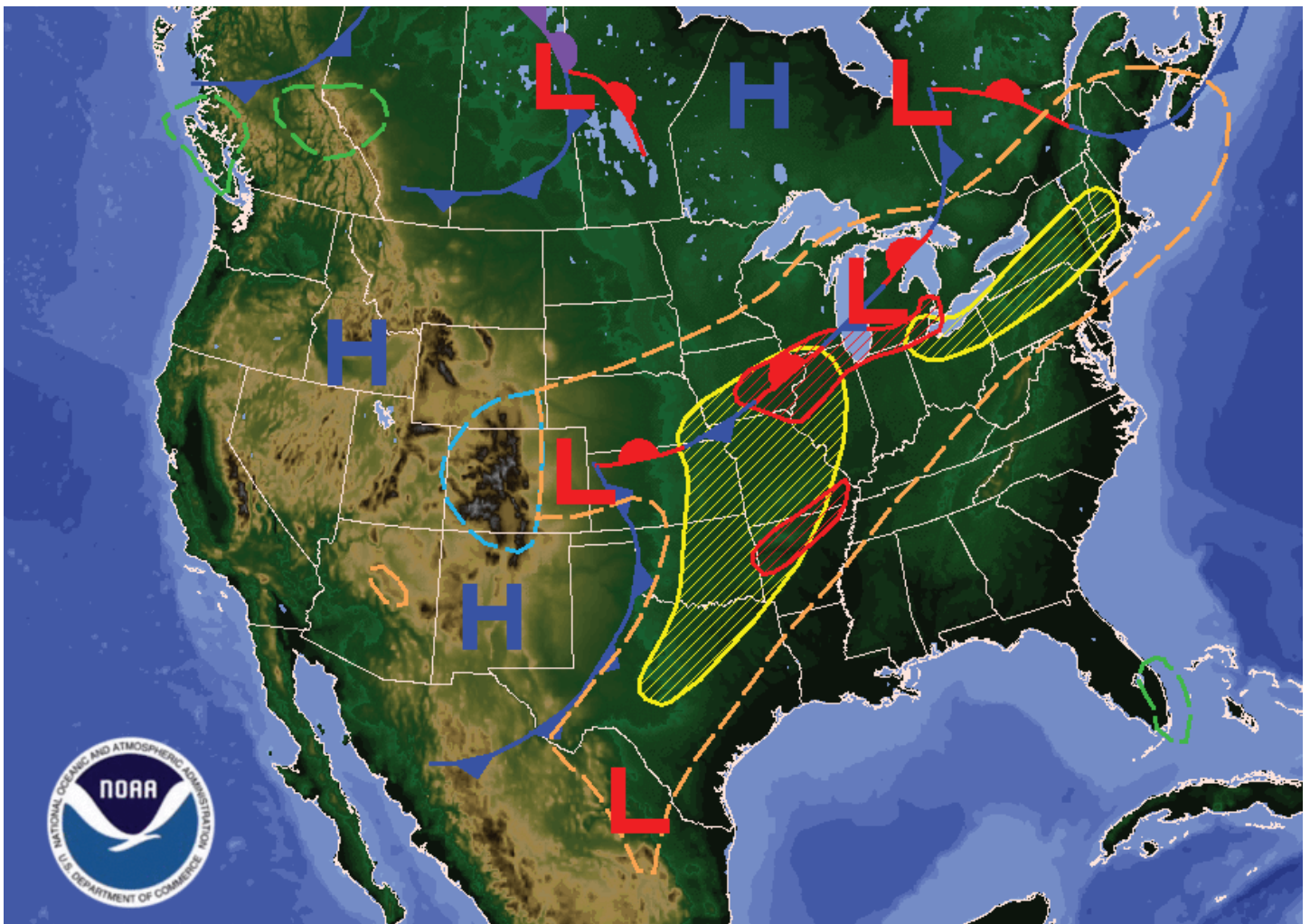
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 70.3 F at 6:28 PM
Low Outside Temp: 33.3 F at 6:34 AM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 25.0 Mph at 3:48 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1952
Record Low: 13° in 2005
Average High: 65°F
Average Low: 39°F
Average Precip in May: 0.30
Precip to date in May: 0.05
Average Precip to date: 4.33
Precip Year to Date: 2.73
Sunset Tonight: 8:43 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, May 03, 2018, issued 4:42 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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WHAT TO GIVE TO THE GIVER OF GIFTS

"They cried" when they were in trouble and He "saved them from their distress." Then when "they were in darkness and the deepest gloom," He provided light for their path. And when they were in bondage He "broke away their chains" and set them free.

God's grace and goodness for the Children of Israel reminds me of His grace and goodness for His children today. Many speak of God comforting them when He "saved" them from the distress of an emotional crisis that would have destroyed them. Often we hear stories of God's Word providing light for His children who had a difficult time in finding direction for their lives. Quite frequently we hear testimonies of individuals who were in "bondage" caused by alcohol or other drugs who were set free by His grace.

But the stories and testimonies of God's goodness must never end with the release from distress and the restoration of His blessings. His light for our path or the joy that comes from being set free from the bondage of sin must always lead to words of thanksgiving and times of worship. The words must always lead were selected to emphasize the importance and obligation we have to be grateful to God and honor Him for His goodness and grace.

Self-centeredness will reign in our hearts and control our lives until we honor God publicly for everything He does for us. When we honor Him in praise and worship for His "unfailing love and wonderful deeds," we show others how dependent we are on God for all that we are or have.

Prayer: Father, fill our hearts with gratitude and our lives with humility so others can see Your greatness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 107:13-15 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

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
- 4/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 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 Wednesday:

Dakota Cash
04-11-27-30-31
(four, eleven, twenty-seven, thirty, thirty-one)
Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America
08-18-19-30-31, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 2
(eight, eighteen, nineteen, thirty, thirty-one; Star Ball: two; ASB: two)
Estimated jackpot: \$4.13 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$143 million

Powerball
05-14-31-40-50, Powerball: 6, Power Play: 2
(five, fourteen, thirty-one, forty, fifty; Powerball: six; Power Play: two)
Estimated jackpot: \$195 million

Several South Dakota nursing homes placed into receivership

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — More than a dozen nursing homes in South Dakota are no longer operated by a New Jersey company officials say didn't pay bills and put seniors at risk.

Eighteen nursing homes and one assisted-living center were placed into receivership Tuesday, the Aberdeen American News reported. Skyline Health Care will no longer oversee the facilities.

A judge has appointed Black Hills Receiver to take over business operations, according to a statement by the South Dakota Department of Health and Human Services.

Court documents reported that seniors at the facilities have recently been at "extreme risk." Skyline cared for an estimated 900 residents across the state, according to Juda Engelmayer, company spokesman.

Debbie Menzenberg, a divisional vice president for Skyline's South Dakota facilities, told the state Health Department that the nursing homes have enough food and supplies to last until Wednesday.

"As of right now everyone is being taken care of," she said. "But we have to move on with the receivership."

Two Rapid City facilities haven't paid water bills and the utility is in danger of being shut off, Menzenberg said.

"Bottom line, the South Dakota facilities are in harm's way and all residents' safety is at risk and will increase every day," she said.

Officials at some of Skyline's properties said residents are being cared for properly.

"We have enough food and supplies, and I'm confident our residents will be cared for," said Ted Huss, executive director of Ipswich Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Nebraska and Kansas took similar action against Skyline two months ago after the company was unable to pay its staff.

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North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame announces 2018 class

MEDORA, N.D. (AP) — The North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame has announced the inductees for 2018. The Minot Daily News reports seven people, a ranch and a rodeo bull will enter the hall in Medora next month. The induction ceremony is set for June 16 at Tjaden Terrace in Medora.

This year's inductees include ranchers Steve Weekes Sr. of Mandan, Ralph Murray of Beulah, the Olson Ranch of Dunn and McKenzie counties, and ranching and rodeo leader Jack Reich of Zap.

The class also includes rodeo cowboys David Dahl of Pierre, South Dakota; Larry Sandvik of Kaycee, Wyoming, and formerly of Killdeer; and Nevada Jorgenson of Bismarck and Arizona.

Chad Berger of Mandan will be inducted in the rodeo arena category. The class also includes Top Hand, a Simmental Charolais bull from Beach.

Air Force: Next-generation B-21 bomber headed to 3 bases

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The U.S. Air Force says bases in Missouri, South Dakota and Texas will receive the next-generation B-21 bomber to replace existing aircraft starting in the mid-2020s.

The Air Force said Wednesday that Dyess Air Force Base in Texas, Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri have been chosen as "reasonable alternatives" to host the new B-21 bomber.

Officials are expected to make a final basing decision in 2019 after compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other regulations. The B-21 is to replace B-1 and B-2 aircraft.

Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson says current bomber bases are best suited for the B-21.

South Dakota U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds says Ellsworth is a candidate to be the first base to get the next-generation bomber.

Small businesses grapple with maze of conflicting pot laws

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A low unemployment rate and the spreading legalization of marijuana have led many businesses to rethink their drug testing policies for the first time in decades. A small but increasing number are simply no longer testing for pot.

For small businesses, however, how to handle these challenges may be a tougher call than for bigger corporations. There is a bewildering patchwork of state laws regarding medical and recreational marijuana use. And it's still illegal under federal law. Yet smaller companies don't have extensive HR and legal departments to help them sort through it all.

"There is a lot of conflict there, and many employers, they just don't know what to do," said Kathryn Russo, a lawyer at Melville, New York-based firm Jackson Lewis. Recreational marijuana use is legal in nine states plus Washington, D.C., and medical marijuana is legal in 29 states.

Here are some questions small businesses need to consider when deciding on what drug testing policies to follow:

— IS IT A FEDERALLY REGULATED POSITION, OR SAFETY-SENSITIVE?

Employment lawyers say these cases are the easy ones. If your business is regulated by the federal Department of Transportation or is a defense contractor, you are likely legally required to drug test for all drugs illegal at the federal level, including marijuana. Similarly, if a job raises safety concerns — such as a forklift driver, an operator of heavy factory equipment, or a meat slicer — it's in the best interests of the employer to still test for pot, even if it is legal in your state.

— DON'T DISCRIMINATE

In states where medical marijuana is legal, small businesses increasingly risk running into legal trouble if they deny a job to someone who has obtained a medical marijuana prescription.

Until last year, courts typically deferred to employers who didn't want to hire marijuana users, regardless of state law. It's still illegal under federal law, after all.

But three court cases in the past year have sided with employees, forcing companies in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island to reinstate workers with medical marijuana cards who were fired, or whose job offers were rescinded, because they tested positive.

In roughly a dozen states, medical marijuana users are protected to some degree from employment discrimination, Russo said. Yet the state laws around the issue are "all different," she said. In Arizona and Pennsylvania, for example, state law explicitly allows employers to bar medical pot users from safety-sensitive positions, Russo said. Other states don't have clear rules.

— WHAT ABOUT WORKERS' COMP?

Some companies may receive discounts on their workers' compensation insurance premiums if they conduct drug tests. If an employer is thinking about stopping testing, they should find out whether they would lose that discount.

Michael Clarkson, head of the drug testing practice at Ogletree Deakins, recommends small companies check in with their insurance brokers before making a final decision.

— KEEP AN EYE ON THE WHITE HOUSE

In January, Attorney General Jeff Sessions revoked a policy from the Obama administration that had discouraged federal prosecutors from pursuing marijuana cases in states where the drug is legal.

That move suggested the Trump administration would crack down on marijuana users and caused even greater confusion among employers.

Last month, Trump promised Colorado Senator Cory Gardner, a Republican, that the federal government wouldn't target his state's marijuana industry. The state was one of the first to legalize recreational pot when it did so in 2014.

Still, it's not clear to most employment lawyers where exactly the administration stands.

"Your guess is as good as mine where the federal government is," Clarkson said.

Follow AP's marijuana coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/LegalMarijuana>

More businesses are mellowing out over hiring pot smokers

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — FPI Management, a property company in California, wants to hire dozens of people. Factories from New Hampshire to Michigan need workers. Hotels in Las Vegas are desperate to fill jobs.

Those employers and many others are quietly taking what once would have been a radical step: They're dropping marijuana from the drug tests they require of prospective employees. Marijuana testing — a fixture at large American employers for at least 30 years — excludes too many potential workers, experts say, at a time when filling jobs is more challenging than it's been in nearly two decades.

"It has come out of nowhere," said Michael Clarkson, head of the drug testing practice at Ogletree Deakins, a law firm. "I have heard from lots of clients things like, 'I can't staff the third shift and test for marijuana.'"

Though still in its early stages, the shift away from marijuana testing appears likely to accelerate. More states are legalizing cannabis for recreational use; Michigan could become the 10th state to do so in November. Missouri appears on track to become the 30th state to allow medical pot use.

And medical marijuana users in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island have won lawsuits in the past year against companies that rescinded job offers or fired workers because of positive tests for cannabis. Before last year, courts had always ruled in favor of employers.

The Trump administration also may be softening its resistance to legal marijuana. Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta suggested at a congressional hearing last month that employers should take a "step back" on drug testing.

"We have all these Americans that are looking to work," Acosta said. "Are we aligning our ... drug testing policies with what's right for the workforce?"

There is no definitive data on how many companies conduct drug tests, though the Society for Human Resource Management found in a survey that 57 percent do so. Nor is there any recent data on how many

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have dropped marijuana from mandatory drug testing.

But interviews with hiring executives, employment lawyers and agencies that help employers fill jobs indicate that dropping marijuana testing is among the steps more companies are taking to expand their pool of applicants to fill a near-record level of openings.

Businesses are hiring more people without high school diplomas, for example, to the point where the unemployment rate for non-high school graduates has sunk more than a full percentage point in the past year to 5.5 percent. That's the steepest such drop for any educational group over that time. On Friday, the government is expected to report another robust jobs report for April.

Excluding marijuana from testing marks the first major shift in workplace drug policies since employers began regularly screening applicants in the late 1980s. They did so after a federal law required that government contractors maintain drug-free workplaces. Many private businesses adopted their own mandatory drug testing of applicants.

Most businesses that have dropped marijuana tests continue to screen for cocaine, opiates, heroin and other drugs. But James Reidy, an employment lawyer in New Hampshire, says companies are thinking harder about the types of jobs that should realistically require marijuana tests. If a manufacturing worker, for instance, isn't driving a forklift or operating industrial machinery, employers may deem a marijuana test unnecessary.

"Employers are saying, 'We have a thin labor pool,'" Reidy said. "So are we going to test and exclude a whole group of people? Or can we assume some risks, as long as they're not impaired at work?"

Yet many companies are reluctant to acknowledge publicly that they've dropped marijuana testing.

"This is going to become the new don't ask, don't tell," Reidy said.

In most states that have legalized marijuana, like Colorado, businesses can still, if they wish, fire workers who test positive. On the other hand, Maine, which also legalized the drug, became the first state to bar companies from firing or refusing to hire someone for using marijuana outside work.

Companies in labor-intensive industries — hoteliers and home health care providers and employers with many warehouse and assembly jobs — are most likely to drop marijuana testing. By contrast, businesses that contract with the government or that are in regulated industries, like air travel, or that have safety concerns involving machinery, are continuing marijuana tests, employment lawyers say. Federal regulations require the testing of pilots, train operators and other key transportation workers.

Dropping marijuana testing is more common among employers in the nine states, along with the District of Columbia, that have legalized pot for recreational use. An additional 20 states allow marijuana for medical use only. But historically low unemployment is driving change even where pot remains illegal.

After the Drug-Free Workplace Act was enacted in 1988, amid concerns about cocaine use, drug testing spread to most large companies. All Fortune 500 companies now engage in some form of drug testing, according to Barry Sample, a senior director at Quest Diagnostics, one of the largest testing firms.

In Denver, in a state with just 3 percent unemployment, 10 percent of employers that screen for drugs had dropped marijuana as of 2016, according to a survey by the Employers Council, which provides corporate legal and human resources services.

"It's because unemployment is virtually non-existent" in Colorado, said Curtis Graves, a lawyer at the council. "People cannot afford to take a hard line against off-duty marijuana usage if they want to hire."

That's particularly true in Colorado's resort areas, where hotels and ski lifts are heavily staffed with young workers, Graves said: "They can lose their jobs and walk across the street and get another one."

FPI, a property-management firm in San Francisco that employs 2,900 around the country, from leasing managers to groundskeepers, has dozens of jobs listed on online boards. Its ads say applicants must pass a "full background check and drug screening."

But it adds, "As it relates to marijuana use, FPI will consider any applicable state law when dispositioning test results."

FPI didn't respond to requests for comment, which isn't unusual given that companies that have dropped marijuana tests aren't exactly billboarding their decisions. Most still seek to maintain drug-free workplaces and still test for harder drugs.

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"They're pretty hush-hush about it," Graves said.

AutoNation, which operates dealerships in 17 states, is one of the few that have gone public. The company stopped testing for marijuana about a year ago. Marc Cannon, a company spokesman, said it did so mostly in response to evolving public attitudes. But it also feared losing prospective employees.

"The labor market has tightened up," Cannon said.

AutoNation heard from other business leaders, Cannon said. They said things like, "We're doing the same thing; we just didn't want to share it publicly."

Relaxed attitudes among employers are spreading from states where recreational marijuana is legal to those where it's lawful only for medical use, such as Michigan and New Hampshire.

Janis Petrini, who owns an Express Employment staffing agency in Grand Rapids, Michigan, says that with the area's unemployment rate below 3 percent, employers are growing desperate. Some are willing to ignore the results of drug tests performed by Express, which still screens for marijuana and won't place workers who test positive.

"We have had companies say to us, 'We don't worry about that as much as we used to,'" Petrini said. "We say, 'OK, well, we are still following our standards.'"

One of Reidy's clients, a manufacturer in New Hampshire, has dropped marijuana testing because it draws some workers from neighboring Massachusetts and Maine, which have legalized pot for recreational use. Another client, which runs assisted living facilities from Florida to Maine, has stopped testing its house-keeping and food service workers for marijuana.

The stigma surrounding marijuana use is eroding, compounding pressure on employers to stop testing. Sixty-four percent of Americans support legalizing pot, a Gallup poll found, the highest percentage in a half-century of surveys.

In Las Vegas, where recreational use is legal, marijuana dispensaries "look almost like Apple stores," said Thoran Towler, CEO of the Nevada Association of Employers.

Many high-tech companies have been moving from California to Nevada to escape California's high costs, and they're seeking workers. Towler says the most common question from his 400 member executives is, "Where do I find employees?"

He estimates that roughly one-tenth of his group's members have stopped testing for marijuana out of frustration.

"They say, 'I have to get people on the casino floor or make the beds, and I can't worry about what they're doing in their spare time,'" Towler said.

Contact Chris Rugaber on Twitter at <http://Twitter.com/ChrisRugaber>

Follow AP's marijuana coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/LegalMarijuana>

Judge rules North Dakota cannot ban security firm from state

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A North Carolina-based private security firm hired by Texas-based pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners won't be banned from North Dakota, though a judge is still weighing whether TigerSwan operated illegally in the state during protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline and might be subject to fines.

Judge John Grinsteiner rejected a request by North Dakota's Private Investigative and Security Board to order that TigerSwan stay out of the state because it isn't licensed.

The company had argued the issue was moot because its employees haven't been in the state since late last June, and Grinsteiner said the licensing board hadn't shown that they might return anytime soon.

"Furthermore, the board has failed to show that this conduct would produce injury to the board," the judge said in a ruling dated Friday.

ETP hired TigerSwan to handle security as construction crews laid pipe in North Dakota in 2016 and 2017.

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The project drew large protests, with thousands of pipeline opponents who feared environmental damage gathering in the state for months, clashing with police and resulting in 761 arrests.

The board sued the company and President James Reese last June, alleging the company operated without a license in the state. TigerSwan maintains it provided consulting services to ETP that don't require a North Dakota license, and that any investigative work occurred outside the board's jurisdiction in North Carolina.

The board asked the judge to find TigerSwan in violation of state law, ban the company from any further illegal activity and award unspecified fines.

TigerSwan attorney Lynn Boughey said he thinks Grinsteiner's refusal to ban the company bolsters its chance of having the entire case thrown out because he believes any fines should be handled administratively and not through the courts. He asked the judge on Monday to dismiss the rest of the case. Grinsteiner didn't immediately rule.

Board attorney Monte Rogneby didn't respond to email and telephone requests for comment Tuesday and Wednesday.

Rogneby argued last month that TigerSwan tried to circumvent Louisiana's denial of a license in that state last summer by creating a shell corporation through an employee, which he said was further evidence of why the company shouldn't be allowed to operate in North Dakota "to protect the public interest."

Boughey called that assertion "a total misrepresentation of the facts." TigerSwan maintains the contracted employee worked for a client, did not report to TigerSwan and was trying to set up her own business.

Grinsteiner declined to address the Louisiana matter, saying in part that it had no relevance to the North Dakota dispute. However, he added that "should the board discover similar actions in North Dakota, an injunction could be revisited."

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

Democratic governor candidate releases transparency plan

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Democratic governor candidate Billie Sutton has released a proposal aiming to improve government transparency and fight corruption.

The plan released Wednesday includes proposals to impose tighter lobbying and campaign finance laws, create a new government ethics commission and open access to records such as public officials' emails and correspondence.

Sutton, the state Senate minority leader, says there's a "real lack of trust in what your government is doing." Sutton will face the winner of the June Republican governor primary in the November general election.

The Republican candidates, Attorney General Marty Jackley and U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem, have also put forward their own proposals to boost transparency in government.

Inmate convicted of threatening to assault, kill employee

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A state inmate has been convicted of threatening to sexually assault and kill an employee of the prison.

Forty-three-year-old Joshua John Armstrong was convicted Tuesday by a Minnehaha County jury of making the threat.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says Armstrong is a convicted sex offender. In August 2016, he wrote letters threatening the employee. Armstrong's sentencing is scheduled for July 9.

Attorney general: Box Elder police fatally shoot man

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's attorney general says his office will lead the investigation into a fatal police shooting in Box Elder.

Marty Jackley's office says Box Elder police responded to a call for service Wednesday about 1:30 a.m. Mountain Daylight Time. Officers went to a mobile home in Valley Village.

Authorities say the situation escalated resulting in an officer fatally shooting a 44-year-old man who died

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at the scene. Officials did not provide details on what specifically happened.

The Division of Criminal Investigation in the AG's office will investigate and issue a report expected within 30 days.

The sheriffs' offices in Pennington County and Meade are assisting in this investigation.

Northern State women's hoops coach retires after 4 decades

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Northern State University head women's basketball coach Curt Fredrickson has retired after 39 years in the position.

Fredrickson is the winningest coach in the history of the Aberdeen school, with an 846-306 record. He also won two NAIA championships.

Former Northern State standout and current associate head coach Paula Krueger has been named Fredrickson's successor.

Nebraska hearing set for South Dakota men in ATV crash case

HARTINGTON, Neb. (AP) — A South Dakota man and his father are due in court May 14 to face charges stemming from the death of a 21-year-old woman after an all-terrain vehicle crash in northeast Nebraska.

The June 29 crash last year near Fordyce killed 21-year-old Jessi Anderson, a South Dakota State University student.

Nebraska court records say 26-year-old Derrik Nelson was driving the ATV after consuming alcohol for several hours before the crash. He's charged with vehicular homicide, failure to render aid, and other crimes.

His father, 64-year-old J. Douglas Nelson, is charged with being an accessory. Prosecutors say he disassembled the ATV after the crash in an effort to hide evidence.

The men surrendered Monday and bonded out of jail. Their attorneys didn't immediately return calls Wednesday from The Associated Press.

Woman who robbed Spearfish bank sentenced to federal prison

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Belle Fourche woman who admitted robbing a Spearfish bank a year ago has been sentenced to more than three years in federal prison.

Authorities say 23-year-old Kaycee Teppo entered the Pioneer Bank and Trust on May 18, 2017, and gave a teller a note saying she had a gun and demanding money. She later turned herself in to authorities. The weapon turned out to be a BB gun.

The Rapid City Journal reports that Teppo eventually pleaded guilty in a deal with prosecutors. She was sentenced Monday to three years and five months in prison. A restitution hearing will be held later.

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

Spink County safe theft suspects arrested in Sioux Falls

MELLETTE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have two suspects in custody in the theft of a safe from a truck stop outside Mellette.

Spink County Sheriff Kevin Schurch tells the American News that the safe was stolen about 4:30 a.m. Monday, while the Mellette Travel Plaza was closed. The thieves also took some cash and merchandise.

Schurch says law officers in Sioux Falls took the suspects into custody Tuesday evening. Details weren't immediately released.

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

Giuliani comments on Stormy payment raise legal questions

By JILL COLVIN and CHAD DAY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rudy Giuliani's revelation that President Donald Trump reimbursed his personal attorney for a \$130,000 payment to a porn star to keep her quiet about an alleged affair is raising new legal questions, including whether the president and his campaign violated campaign finance laws.

The former New York City mayor insisted on Fox News Channel Wednesday night that the payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels was "going to turn out to be perfectly legal."

"That money was not campaign money. Sorry, I'm giving you a fact now that you don't know. It's not campaign money, no campaign finance violation," he said.

Some legal experts disagree. A look at some of the issues at play:

TIMING

Giuliani's insistence the money had nothing to do with the campaign is complicated by the fact that Daniels' silence was secured just days before the 2016 presidential election, and as Trump was dealing with the fallout from the "Access Hollywood" tape in which he bragged about sexually assaulting women.

If the payment were wholly personal, said Richard L. Hasen, an expert in election law at the University of California, Irvine, there would be no campaign finance violations.

But Giuliani's argument that the payment was unrelated to the campaign appears to be "pretty far-fetched" given the timing, said Andrew Herman, an attorney specializing in campaign finance law at Miller & Chevalier.

"Certainly, the argument that the government will make is that the \$130,000 payment from Michael Cohen to Daniels was a loan to the Trump campaign to keep these allegations secret obviously and then Trump paying Cohen back would be a campaign expenditure" — a loan and expenditure that should have been disclosed to the Federal Election Commission, he said.

Larry Noble, general counsel of the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center, agreed the timing "is still strong evidence of it being campaign related," as is the reimbursement.

"And if the money was funneled through the law firm as legal fees, as Giuliani suggested, it shows an intent to cover up the source of the funds," he said.

DISCLOSURE:

All campaign expenses, including payments and loans, are supposed to be disclosed to the FEC.

Hasen said the question before Wednesday had been whether Cohen had made an unreported contribution to the Trump campaign exceeding legal limits.

"If this is true, then it looks like Cohen may have made an unreported loan to the campaign rather than a contribution," he said. That could be good news for Cohen, because it would have been up to the president or his campaign to report the loan, not up to Cohen.

"The greatest significance is that it implicates the president, directly," he said. "If it's done with Trump's knowledge ... then now we're talking about something that is related to the campaign and is more serious."

Norm Eisen, who served as an ethics lawyer in the Obama White House and now chairs the left-leaning Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, which has repeatedly challenged Trump, also said Trump should have disclosed the loan on his federal financial disclosure.

"There's probably a sufficient basis for DOJ to open another investigation about whether the president was candid on his personal financial disclosure," he said.

WHY GO THERE?

It wasn't immediately clear what Giuliani sought to gain with the admission.

Eisen suggested it might have something to do with the fact that Cohen is under criminal investigation in New York. FBI agents also raided his home and office several weeks ago seeking records about the nondisclosure agreement.

"I think the other intention here apparently was to tear the Band-Aid off and to get out in public whatever Cohen might offer should he choose to cooperate," speculated Eisen.

Sol Wisenberg, a defense attorney who was a deputy independent counsel during the Starr special

counsel investigation into President Bill Clinton, said the comment "obviously increases the president's exposure to potential campaign finance violations, but it also makes him look terrible."

"I don't understand the Giuliani strategy," he added. "Maybe it's been too long since he's been in the criminal justice field."

Noble was equally confused. "I really don't know why Giuliani said what he did. He made things worse for Trump."

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

Trump says 'retainer' to lawyer covered porn star payment

By CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday reimbursement to his personal lawyer for hush money paid to porn actress Stormy Daniels was done through a monthly retainer and "had nothing to do with the campaign."

On Twitter, Trump says his personal attorney Michael Cohen received a monthly retainer "from which he entered into, through reimbursement, a private contract between two parties, known as a non-disclosure agreement, or NDA." He added that the agreement "was used to stop the false and extortionist accusations made by her about an affair."

Trump's tweets outlining the arrangement came after Rudy Giuliani, one of his attorneys, said Wednesday that Trump reimbursed Cohen for \$130,000 in hush money to Daniels days before the 2016 presidential, appearing to contradict the president's past claims that he didn't know the source of the money.

During an appearance on Fox News Channel's "Hannity," Giuliani said the money to repay Michael Cohen had been "funneled ... through the law firm and the president repaid it."

Asked if Trump knew about the arrangement, Giuliani said: "He didn't know about the specifics of it, as far as I know. But he did know about the general arrangement, that Michael would take care of things like this, like I take care of things like this for my clients. I don't burden them with every single thing that comes along. These are busy people."

The comments appeared to contradict statements made by Trump several weeks ago, when he said he didn't know about the payment to porn actress Stormy Daniels as part of a nondisclosure agreement she signed days before the presidential election. Giuliani later suggested to The Wall Street Journal that while Trump had repaid the \$130,000, Cohen had settled the payment to Daniels without Trump's knowledge at the time.

Giuliani's revelation seemed aimed at reducing the president's legal exposure. But outside experts said it raised a number of questions, including whether the money represented repayment of an undisclosed loan or could be seen as reimbursement for a campaign expenditure.

Asked aboard Air Force One last month whether he knew about the payment, Trump said flatly: "No." Trump also said he didn't know why Cohen had made the payment or where he got the money.

In a phone interview with "Fox and Friends" last week, however, Trump appeared to muddy the waters, saying that Cohen represented him in the "crazy Stormy Daniels deal."

The White House referred questions to the president's personal legal team.

Giuliani, a former New York City mayor and ex-U.S. attorney who joined Trump's legal team last month, said the president had repaid Cohen over several months, indicating the payments continued through at least the presidential transition, if not into his presidency. He also said the payment "is going to turn out to be perfectly legal" because "that money was not campaign money."

No debt to Cohen is listed on Trump's personal financial disclosure form, which was certified on June 16, 2017.

Giuliani also described the payment to Daniels as "a very regular thing for lawyers to do." Daniels' lawyer, Michael Avenatti, called the comment "a stunning revelation."

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"Mr. Trump evidently has participated in a felony and there must be serious consequences for his conduct and his lies and deception to the American people," he said.

Giuliani made the statements to Fox host Sean Hannity, who has his own connection to the case. It was recently revealed in court that Hannity is one of Cohen's clients. Hannity has described his personal dealings with Cohen as centered on real estate advice and said that it "never rose to any level that I needed to tell anyone that I was asking him questions."

Daniels, whose legal name is Stephanie Clifford, says she had a sexual encounter with Trump in 2006, months after his third wife gave birth to his youngest child, and was paid to keep quiet as part of a non-disclosure agreement she is now seeking to invalidate. She has also filed a defamation suit against Trump after he questioned a composite sketch she released of a man she says threatened her to stay quiet.

The White House has said Trump denies having a relationship with Daniels.

Cohen had said previously: "Neither the Trump Organization nor the Trump campaign was a party to the transaction with Ms. Clifford, and neither reimbursed me for the payment, either directly or indirectly." He notably did not include the president personally.

Asked about Cohen's denial, Giuliani said that he didn't know whether Cohen had made the payment without asking Trump but that he had "no reason to dispute that."

The revelation from Giuliani came as Cohen was under escalating legal pressure. He is facing a criminal investigation in New York, and FBI agents raided his home and office several weeks ago seeking records about the nondisclosure agreement.

Daniels' lawsuit over the hush deal has been delayed, with the judge citing the criminal investigation.

The payment to Daniels has raised numerous legal questions, including whether it was an illegal campaign contribution and, now, a loan.

"If this is true then it looks like Cohen may have made an unreported loan to the campaign rather than a contribution," said Richard L. Hasen, an expert in election law at the University of California, Irvine.

He said that might be better for Cohen, but not for Trump, because it undermines the argument that Cohen was acting independently.

"The greatest significance is that it implicates the president directly," he said.

Law firms advance expenses for clients as a matter of course, and so there's nothing inherently improper about a lawyer covering a particular payment and then being reimbursed for it. In this case, though, the client who apparently reimbursed the expense was running for president and the money was paid just days before the election, raising questions about whether Cohen's law practice was functioning as a vendor for the campaign and whether the expense was therefore an unreported campaign expenditure. If so, that could be legally problematic.

Andrew Herman, an attorney specializing in campaign finance law at Miller & Chevalier, said Giuliani's argument that this was a private payment unrelated to the campaign appears to be "pretty far-fetched" given the timing — weeks before the election while Trump was under fire for his behavior with women and for an "Access Hollywood" tape in which he spoke of groping women without their consent.

But if Cohen or Trump could establish that discussions with Daniels over the payment long predated his run for office, that could help them with the argument that the money was a personal rather than political expense.

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

China congratulates North Korea's Kim on reducing tensions

BEIJING (AP) — China's foreign minister congratulated North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Thursday on his moves to reduce tensions with South Korea, China said. Their meeting in Pyongyang underscored warming ties and Beijing's desire to remain a key player in the Korean Peninsula peace process.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi also told Kim that Beijing backs North Korea's shift of focus to economic growth, along with its efforts to resolve its "legitimate security concerns" while taking steps to denuclearize, China's

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Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

China "supports and congratulates" Kim's summit meeting last week with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the statement they issued, it quoted Wang as saying.

"The meeting has brought a favorable opportunity for a political resolution of the (Korean) Peninsula issue," Wang said.

Relations between China and North Korea have undergone a vast outward improvement following Kim's recent visit to Beijing. China, North Korea's biggest trading partner, has joined United Nations sanctions against the North that have cut trade between them by around 90 percent.

Kim's March trip was his first to his country's only major ally since taking power six years ago, kicking off a flurry of diplomacy. A meeting between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump is expected in the coming weeks, although arrangements have yet to be announced.

For China, the recent meetings offer an opportunity for it to reinforce its importance in the region and ensure that its concerns and interests are respected in any future negotiations.

Wang's visit, which was to end Thursday, was aimed at exploring ways China can contribute to the easing of tensions, along with implementing agreements reached in Beijing by Kim and Chinese President Xi Jinping, said Da Zhigang, a researcher at the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences in northeastern China.

Denuclearization efforts should "do no harm by taking into consideration the interests of all parties, including China," Da said.

"If the promotion of denuclearization turns the regional situation chaotic, then that is not what people want to see," he said.

China sent troops to fight on North Korea's side in the 1950-53 Korean War, but relations have suffered in recent years over the North's reluctance to implement Chinese-style economic reforms and Kim's continued pursuit of nuclear bombs and the missiles to deliver them.

China has long called for a return to six-nation talks on the North's nuclear program, and welcomed the Koreas' summit as a way to reduce tensions. Analysts say China's sanctions may have helped prompt North Korea's diplomatic initiatives, although the secretive regime in Pyongyang has not commented publicly on the issue.

China says sanctions imposed over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs are intended to further diplomacy rather than punish the North. Beijing opposes any measures that could topple North Korea's government and possibly lead to a tide of refugees crossing its border and the stationing of U.S. and South Korean troops in the North.

Wang also told Kim that China supports efforts to bring a formal end to the Korean War, which was halted with an armistice, not a peace treaty, and North Korea's "shift of strategic focus to building its economy."

The ministry quoted Kim as hailing relations with China and stating that denuclearization was North Korea's "firm position."

Wang earlier told North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho that China is willing to work with the North to boost "practical economic and trade cooperation" and fully supports it in "concentrating its strength to carry out economic construction," the ministry said.

Texas officials ignore dioxin spread in Houston waterways

By LISE OLSEN of the HOUSTON CHRONICLE

HIGHLANDS, Texas (AP) — Evelyn and Jerome Matula were still polka-dancing newlyweds in 1950 when they spotted a half-finished cottage in the woods along the San Jacinto River east of Houston. It seemed idyllic, with panoramic views and a sandy path to the river, where their three children and later their grandchildren fished. Now, the retired refinery worker and former educator fear their kin were poisoned by carcinogenic dioxin in the fish and well water.

Decades ago, paper mill waste barged down the Houston Ship Channel was buried across the river. From their bluff today, the Matulas can see orange buoys marking a federal Superfund hazardous waste site established in 2008.

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An agreement announced last month has cleared the way for the San Jacinto Waste Pits to finally be cleaned up. But dioxin damage already has spread far beyond the waste pits, the Houston Chronicle and The Associated Press found.

More than 30 hotspots — small sites where dioxin has settled — have been located in sediments along the river, the Houston Ship Channel and into Galveston Bay, according to University of Houston research conducted from 2001 to 2011 and pieced together by the news organizations.

The affected areas are alongside parks and residential neighborhoods with thousands of homes. But the residents' wells or yards have not been tested by state health officials.

Details about the hotspots have not been made public by Texas environmental regulators, who used more than \$5 million in federal money to pay for the research. In 2012, they ended a fact-finding committee that oversaw the project and had proposed new standards for dioxin and PCBs that could have been costly to corporate polluters.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality refused to release the full results of the studies that identified the sources of dioxin and PCBs, even to academic researchers, Harris County officials and lawyers who later sued companies over environmental damage. The research funding ended in 2011, leaving unanswered questions about whether toxic damage spread even farther during hurricanes Ike and Harvey.

The university data linked hotspots primarily to three sources: the leaking waste pits, the original site of the paper mill in Pasadena and a major chemical complex in nearby Deer Park that is part of another Superfund site, records show. None has been cleaned up.

Under the Clean Water Act and state law, Texas authorities were required to address dioxin and PCBs in the river and ship channel, waterways officially designated as "impaired." Setting such standards could have forced the responsible companies to clean up and upgrade contaminated stormwater and wastewater treatment.

All three TCEQ commissioners, appointed by the governor, declined an interview request.

Carl Masterson, a former Houston-Galveston Area Council staffer who for years served as a facilitator for the committee, said state regulators failed to do their duty. Once "the meetings were done, the project was over and the findings were in, the TCEQ should have approved" the committee's recommendations, he said.

In a statement, the agency said it's still working on "a document summarizing the source characterization of dioxin loads in the Houston Ship Channel/Upper Galveston Bay system."

The state's approach to dioxin follows the same pattern the Chronicle and AP previously identified in an investigation into air and water pollution releases from Hurricane Harvey. The news organizations found that state and federal regulators did little in response to massive releases of toxic pollution reported during and after Harvey's torrential rains.

Similarly, Texas regulators have not followed up on the dioxin research with additional testing to see if wells, parks or property also are contaminated by the pollutants that formed the toxic hotspots.

In the Matulas' case, their grandson Sean, a 33-year-old emergency manager, paid to have samples from the cottage's two wells tested after learning he suffers from long-hidden heart and kidney defects that may shorten his life.

His mother had moved to the cottage when she was pregnant with him. Recent test results showed that the family well used at the time he was born tested at twice the level of dioxin considered healthy for human consumption.

"I have been told," Sean Matula said of conversations with his doctor, "that I am lucky to be walking."

LEAKING WASTE PITS

The Texas Department of Health Services warned in 1990 that catfish and crabs in the San Jacinto and parts of upper Galveston Bay area contained so much dioxin that local seafood posed potential health risks — and banned its consumption by children and pregnant women.

The Environmental Protection Agency already had been funding initiatives to clean up the nation's impaired rivers and identify sources of toxic substances in sediments and water that poisoned fish. The

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actions came in response to revelations in the 1980s that one of the most dangerous dioxin forms had been unleashed into the environment from paper bleaching and chemical manufacturing.

Even in microscopic doses, those dioxin types have been linked to birth defects as well as cancer and reproductive problems.

Some of the most likely sources were two former paper mills and the huge chemical complex in Deer Park. Then a state park employee discovered sand pits near a highway bridge where pulp from the larger paper mill in Pasadena had been barged in the 1960s, buried and forgotten.

A video of the site taken around 2009 shows that fishermen and others had carved a path across unmarked sand pits partially submerged by the river. Particles of what looks like an egg carton were shearing off the shore into the water. Those crystalline fragments are examples of dioxin sediment, said Larry Koenig, who for 10 years was the TCEQ staff member assigned to the dioxin study.

He and other experts have estimated that about half the waste originally buried in pits already had escaped into the environment before the site was rediscovered.

Koenig retired in 2010, in part, he said, because of frustration over inaction on any proposed water quality standard.

A dozen hotspots identified by teams of University of Houston researchers were scattered around those pits.

Some the worst hotspots became part of the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund site a decade ago. But others are miles downstream, near riverside neighborhoods in Baytown and LaPorte.

Another source of hotspots was chemical plants along Patrick Bayou in Deer Park, according to the committee's reports and research. The bayou had been identified as a priority site for Superfund cleanup even before the state committee's dioxin water quality work began.

The committee formed by state regulators to study dioxin included representatives of two companies ultimately found to be major contamination sources: Shell Chemical and OxyVinyls, a subsidiary of Occidental Chemical.

By 2009, the corporate representatives, along with environmentalists and government officials, had reviewed proposed water quality standards for PCB and dioxin that could have sparked regulatory or legal action against their companies.

Most of Patrick Bayou's dioxin and PCB pollution was from historic industrial activities. But Shell and Occidental Chemical would likely have faced pressure to address contaminated runoff, according to TCEQ documents, UH research, EPA records and Hanadi Rifai, the UH environmental engineering professor who oversaw the research teams.

Representatives of OxyVinyls and Shell expressed no objections to proposed pollution-reduction reforms in public meetings, according to minutes and interviews.

But EPA records show that during the time the dioxin cleanup committee was making its recommendations, neither company had agreed to pay to address polluted Patrick Bayou. EPA subsequently named Shell Chemical, Occidental Chemical and Lubrizol, all chemical companies with operations in Deer Park, as "potentially responsible parties", according to EPA records.

The companies still have not agreed to fund the cleanup of Patrick Bayou, 16 years after the area was designated as a Superfund site.

At the San Jacinto Waste Pits, federal officials said in April that International Paper Company and McGinnis Industrial Maintenance Corporation had pledged to pay design costs for the plan to remove 161,000 tons of carcinogenic paper mill waste buried there in the 1960s.

Ray Fisher, a Shell spokesman, said the company continues to collaborate "with other relevant parties" on the Patrick Bayou site, adding, "Our focus is on safety of our people and community."

Eric Moses, an Occidental Chemical spokesman, said the company is working with others to complete investigation of the site "and implement effective controls and remedies that will be protective of human health and the environment."

Both Shell and Occidental Chemical have acted more quickly to address dioxin and other pollutants at

multiple Superfund sites in other states, EPA records show.

NO KNOWN THREAT?

In 2012, the Texas Department of State Health Services delivered its public health assessment of dioxin in the waste pits. The report again warned of hazards posed to fish, but it dismissed the idea of contamination in neighborhoods' soil or well water.

Rifai said UH's studies of river water and sediment could not be used to determine whether yards, parks or well water was safe. She is now working with the Galveston Bay Foundation, an independent nonprofit, and Harris County to conduct more testing after Harvey's flooding.

The Matulas have two wells on the cottage property. For decades, they drank from the older, shallow well. About 10 years ago, they dug a deeper one.

After Sean Matula paid for testing, he asked state health officials to review the complex lab reports. They found dioxin in the older well to be more than twice what the EPA considers dangerous for humans of any age to drink. Dioxin levels in the newer well represented an increased risk of cancer for children and adults but were within EPA's drinking water limits.

Houston lawyer Richard Mithoff represents the Matulas and another 600 families. He says he believes he will be able to prove that cancer, birth defects and other ailments reported by many clients who lived around the pits are directly related to the dioxin in the river and its fish.

The EPA cleanup of the waste pits won't undo damage done to those who lived there, Mithoff said, "but it certainly holds great promise for the future and those living there now will be able to rest a little easier."

Frank Bajak of The Associated Press contributed to this report.

As genetic testing for breast cancer gene mutation expands, questions arise about treatment decisions

Katherine Drabiak, University of South Florida

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Katherine Drabiak, University of South Florida

(THE CONVERSATION) The Food and Drug Administration recently announced its authorization that permits genetics testing company 23andMe to market a test for gene mutations associated with risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

In response, 23andMe CEO Anne Wojcicki asserted that the test represents a "major milestone in consumer health empowerment."

Media articles following this announcement made it clear even if the test provides an accurate result, there are significant limitations for 23andMe's version of the test about which consumers should be aware. Notably, 23andMe discloses that the test only provides information on three genetic variants found on the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes known to be associated with a higher risk for breast, ovarian and prostate cancer in people of Ashkenazi Jewish descent.

According to the FDA, most mutations that would increase an individual's risk are not detected by the test, including mutations that may occur in other patient populations.

As a health law professor and bioethicist, here are some things I think that patients should know about genetic tests and how to think about risk.

A bit about assessing risk Research shows that women overestimate their risk of cancer and overestimate the potential of dying of cancer. This anxiety may prompt women to seek aggressive interventions even when they do not have cancer. In one study, 32.9 percent of women without a BRCA mutation who received a false positive (indicated they had cancer when in fact they did not) on a screening test for ovarian cancer and had no ovarian cancer opted for surgical removal of their ovaries, or an oophorectomy.

It is imperative to address this anxiety and situate what a cancer risk means for patients.

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For starters, it is important to know that the chance of having a BRCA mutation is exceedingly rare, with only about 0.2 percent of population affected. Put another way, in a room of 500 women, only 1 would have a BRCA mutation that increases her baseline risk of breast and ovarian cancer. But even this woman with a BRCA mutation may never develop breast or ovarian cancer during her lifetime. In fact, 90 to 95 percent of most cancer diagnoses can be attributed to environmental and lifestyle factors, not an inherited faulty gene.

According to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, up to one-third of cancer-related deaths are due to obesity and sedentary lifestyle. "Exercise is one of the most important actions you can take to help guard against many types of cancer," experts at Fred Hutchinson say. A trial published in JAMA Internal Medicine confirmed the strength of dietary modification to drastically reduce risk of breast cancer. This information should be empowering. Many patients have much more control over certain – but not all – risks than they may have thought.

These discussions raise broader questions about how we treat patients regardless of whether they have an increased risk of cancer based on genetic testing or fall into a high risk category based on family history. For patients to make meaningful health decisions, they must have accurate information that includes understanding the risks and benefits of each choice.

Implications for overtreatment Overtreatment that stems from anxiety not only leads to unnecessary and potentially harmful interventions for the patient, but it implicates physician liability. Traditionally, oncologists may favor an aggressive approach, offering and recommending interventions as a means to avoid malpractice litigation arising from patient perception that a physician could have intervened sooner. Aggressive treatment prompted by a patient's anxiety requires further scrutiny specifically because each preventive intervention entails serious risks.

To note, 23andMe does caution that its test results should not be used on their own to make medical decisions. Women who test either positive or negative should still follow up with their physicians, both 23andMe and the FDA say.

If a woman has a BRCA mutation that increases her risk of cancer, the physician would likely recommend a risk-reducing measure recommended by the National Cancer Institute: chemoprevention, preventive mastectomy with reconstruction, and surgical removal of ovaries and fallopian tubes, called salpingo-oophorectomy.

In the majority of cases, women who undergo mastectomy also opt for implant reconstruction, and women who undergo salpingo-oophorectomy begin taking synthetic hormone replacement therapy.

In my research, I've read countless clinical practice guidelines, FDA meeting minutes, congressional hearing transcripts, and case law.

Here's what I've learned: The potential for cancer risk reduction is only the first part of the equation. Yes, these interventions recommended by the National Cancer Institute do reduce risk for breast and ovarian cancer. But they also increase risk of other potentially debilitating or deadly conditions.

Many physicians agree the trade-off of reducing risk of cancer is worth it. But some physicians and patients may not be aware that physicians and clinical practice guidelines may downplay, omit or dismiss risks entirely in a manner that does not necessarily correspond to scientific evidence, but may be informed by financial conflicts of interest.

Health empowerment requires a much broader conversation of what patients – both with and without a BRCA mutation – can do about their risk of cancer. On a population level, I believe everyone should have information on how to reduce cancer risk through diet and lifestyle interventions. Let's continue the conversation of how to address patient anxiety to prevent needless overtreatment, aim for communication that accurately portrays what risks mean, and determine whether recommended interventions that pose significant risks offer sufficient clinical benefits.

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As Israel turns 70, many young American Jews turn away

Dov Waxman, Northeastern University

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Dov Waxman, Northeastern University

(THE CONVERSATION) Natalie Portman, the Oscar-winning actress, recently kicked off a massive storm of controversy when she pulled out of a prestigious award ceremony in Israel because, she said, she "did not want to appear as endorsing Benjamin Netanyahu."

The response to Portman's refusal to appear alongside Israel's prime minister was intense. She was denounced by right-wing Israeli politicians. One labeled Portman's decision as borderline anti-Semitic. Another suggested that her Israeli citizenship should be stripped. Born in Israel, Portman is a dual American-Israeli citizen.

The reaction within the American Jewish community was more divided. Some assailed her for being disloyal, deluded, or, at best, misguided. Others hailed her as a hero for publicly voicing her opposition to Netanyahu and his government's hard-line policies.

Portman's protest touched a raw nerve not just because of who she is – a world-famous Jewish celebrity and a well-known supporter of Israel – but also because of whom she is seen to represent. Her outspoken opposition to Netanyahu has been portrayed as typical of her generation of young American Jews whose attitudes toward Israel tend to be more critical than that of their parents and grandparents.

The end of 'Israel, right or wrong' American Jews were initially indifferent or even hostile to Zionism when it first appeared. It took decades, and the mass murder of European Jewry in the Holocaust, to change their attitude. But after playing an important role in Israel's establishment in 1948, most American Jews returned their attention to their own economic needs and social mobility, paying scant attention to the faraway, fledgling Jewish state.

It was only after Israel's stunning victory in the 1967 Six-Day War that American Jews fell in love with Israel, which was then

widely seen as the underdog in the Arab-Israeli conflict and an exemplar of a socially progressive, egalitarian society.

Supporting Israel came to dominate American Jewish public life and politics and became the one thing that almost all American Jews had in common. Their support tended to be unconditional and uncritical, especially during the two decades following the 1967 War when "pro-Israelism" became central to the American Jewish "civil religion."

Even if they disagreed with what the Israeli government did, American Jews generally toed the line in public, as vocal criticism of Israel was taboo within the American Jewish community. Even in private, criticism was frowned upon. The prevailing belief was that only Israelis had the right to criticize their government since it was their lives at risk.

There has been a profound shift happening in American Jewry's attitude toward Israel for some time (as I show in my book "Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict Over Israel"). Public criticism of Israel and acts of protest by American Jews have gradually become much more common, though they remain highly contentious – as is evident from the vitriolic reactions to Portman's protest.

Portman, then, is hardly a trailblazer. She is simply continuing what has by now become something of a tradition of American Jewish protest against Israeli government policies. [These protests have become much more frequent in recent years during Netanyahu's second term in office].

Nor is Portman as typical of her generation of young American Jews as her many detractors and defenders seem to believe.

Discomfort with idea of Jewish state Younger American Jews are overwhelmingly liberal in their politics – even more so than other young Americans. They are also "dovish" in their attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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In a major survey of American Jews by the Pew Research Center in 2013, for instance, only a quarter of Jews aged 18 to 29 believed that Netanyahu's government was "making a sincere effort to bring about a peace settlement with the Palestinians."

But the brand of liberal Zionism that Portman espouses – supportive of Israel, but often critical of its behavior, especially (but not only) toward Palestinians – is actually becoming unfashionable among her highly educated and politically engaged American Jewish peers.

For many, their problem with Israel is not just its current prime minister, its government's policies and its nearly 51-year-long occupation of the West Bank. It is also Israel itself that they are uncomfortable with, specifically its identity as a Jewish state.

It is not only what Israel does that bothers them, but also what Israel is.

In a recent survey of Jews living in San Francisco's Bay Area, just 40 percent of those between the ages of 18 to 34 said they were comfortable with the idea of a Jewish state. Just over a third thought that a Jewish state was very important. Most older Jews, by contrast, said they were comfortable with the idea of a Jewish state and thought it was very important to have one.

Colliding beliefsMost young American Jews have been raised with two complementary belief systems: a political liberalism that emphasizes equality and opposes all forms of discrimination, and a non-Orthodox Americanized Judaism that emphasizes universalism and a commitment to social justice.

Many find it hard to reconcile the values they have internalized from these belief systems with the idea of a state that gives preferential treatment to Jews at the expense of its non-Jewish citizens, most notably its Arab minority – as Israel does.

Not only do many young American Jews take issue with what they regard, correctly or not, as the inherently discriminatory nature of a Jewish state, they also see less of a need for such a state.

Their chronological and emotional distance from the Holocaust – which more than anything else convinced earlier generations of American Jews of the need for Jewish statehood - is no doubt a large part of the reason why younger American Jews are less likely to believe that Jews need a state of their own to shelter and protect them. Indeed, a 2012 survey showed that the Holocaust had a much greater influence on the political beliefs of older American Jews than younger ones.

Younger American Jews are also far more accustomed to feeling secure in the United States. This sense, though, has been challenged over the past couple of years as the American far right has become emboldened and anti-Semitic incidents have sharply increased.

Nevertheless, they have grown up during an era in which American Jews are more assimilated, more affluent and more influential, culturally and politically, than ever before. These younger Jews are less inclined to believe that gentiles are hostile to Jews and that Jews are always at risk, as older generations of Jews have generally done.

Indeed, many younger American Jews, such as the writer Emma Goldberg, are more likely to identify with the notion of "white privilege" than with the notion of Jewish victimhood.

If, in their eyes, a Jewish state is discriminatory and no longer really necessary, then many younger American Jews struggle with supporting it. They feel ambivalent about Israel, if not altogether alienated from it. This is particularly true for the children of interfaith marriages – now almost half the population of young American Jews – whose Jewish identities tend to be less ethnic and more cultural.

As Israel approaches the 70th anniversary of its establishment on May 14, many older American Jews will be happily celebrating the achievement of Jewish sovereignty after two millennia of statelessness. Many younger ones will be wondering whether the Jewish state is really something to celebrate at all.

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Another problem with China's coal: Mercury in rice

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(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

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(THE CONVERSATION) Mercury pollution is a problem usually associated with fish consumption. Pregnant women and children in many parts of the world are advised to eat fish low in mercury to protect against the adverse health impacts, including neurological damages, posed by a particularly toxic form of mercury, methylmercury.

But some people in China, the world's largest mercury emitter, are exposed to more methylmercury from rice than they are from fish. In a recent study, we explored the extent of this problem and which direction it could go in the future.

We found that China's future emissions trajectory can have a measurable influence on the country's rice methylmercury. This has important implications not only in China but across Asia, where coal use is increasing and rice is a staple food. It is also relevant as countries across the world implement the Minamata Convention, a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from mercury.

Why is mercury a problem in rice? Measurements of methylmercury in rice in China from the early 2000s were in areas where mercury mining and other industrial activities led to high mercury levels in soil that was then taken up by rice plants. More recent research, however, has shown that methylmercury in rice is also elevated in other areas of China. This suggests that airborne mercury – emitted by sources such as coal-fired power plants and subsequently settling onto the land – might also be a factor.

To better understand the process of methylmercury accumulation in rice through deposition – that is, mercury originating from the air that rains out or settles to the land – we constructed a computer model to analyze the relative importance of soil and atmospheric sources of rice methylmercury. Then we projected how future methylmercury concentrations could change under different emissions scenarios.

Concentrations of methylmercury in rice are lower than those in fish, but, in central China, people eat much more rice than fish. Studies have calculated that residents in areas with mercury-contaminated soil consume more methylmercury than the U.S. EPA's reference dose of 0.1 microgram methylmercury per kilogram of body weight per day, a level set to protect against adverse health outcomes such as decreased IQ. Recent data suggest that other neurodevelopmental impacts from methylmercury might occur at levels below the reference dose. Few health studies, however, have examined impacts of methylmercury exposure to rice consumers specifically.

To identify the potential scope of the problem, we compared the areas in China where mercury deposition is expected to be high based on mercury models, with maps of rice production. We found that provinces with high mercury deposition also produce substantial amounts of rice. Seven provinces in central China (Henan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guizhou, Chongqing and Hubei) account for 48 percent of Chinese rice production and receive nearly double the atmospheric mercury deposition as the rest of China.

We calculated that mercury deposition could increase nearly 90 percent or decrease by 60 percent by 2050, depending on future policies and technologies.

Our modeling approach To understand how mercury from the atmosphere might be incorporated into rice as methylmercury, we built a model to simulate mercury in rice paddies. Methylmercury is produced in the environment by biological activity – specifically, by bacteria. Often, this occurs in flooded environments such as wetlands and sediments. Similarly, rice paddies are kept flooded during the growing season, and the nutrient-rich environment created by rice roots support both the bacterial growth and methylmercury production.

Our rice paddy model simulates how mercury changes form, accumulates and converts to methylmercury in different parts of the ecosystem, including in the water, the soil and the rice plants.

In our model, mercury enters the standing flooded water via deposition and irrigation processes, and

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then moves among water, soil and plants. After initializing and calibrating the model, we ran it for the typical five-month duration from planting seedlings to rice harvest and compared our results to measurements of mercury in rice from China. We also conducted different simulations with varying atmospheric deposition and soil mercury concentrations.

Despite its simplicity, our model was able to reproduce how rice methylmercury concentrations vary across different Chinese provinces. Our model was able to accurately reflect how higher soil mercury concentrations led to higher concentrations in rice.

But the soil wasn't the whole story. Mercury from water – which can come from the flooded water in rice paddies or the water held in the soil – can also influence concentrations in rice. How much depends on the relative rates of different processes within soil and water. Under some conditions, a portion of the mercury in rice can come from the mercury in the atmosphere, once that mercury is deposited to the rice paddy. This suggested that changing emissions of mercury could potentially affect concentrations in rice.

Future emissions can influence rice. How will the rates of mercury in rice change in the future?

We examined a high emission scenario, which assumes no new policies to control mercury emissions by 2050, and a low emission scenario, where China uses less coal and coal-fired power plants have advanced mercury emission controls. Median Chinese rice methylmercury concentrations increased by 13 percent in the high scenario and decreased by 18 percent under the low scenario. Regions where rice methylmercury declined the most under strict policy controls were in central China, where rice production is high and rice is an important source of methylmercury exposure.

Managing mercury concentrations in rice thus requires an integrated approach, addressing both deposition and soil and water contamination. Understanding local conditions is also important: Other environmental factors not captured by our model, such as soil acidity, can also influence methylmercury production and accumulation to rice.

Different rice production strategies can also help – for example, alternating wetting and drying cycles in rice cultivation can reduce water consumption and methane emissions as well as rice methylmercury concentrations.

Our scenarios likely underestimate the potential health benefits of Minamata Convention controls in China, which is a party to the Convention. We include in our scenarios only changes in air emissions from power generation, while the Convention controls emissions from other sectors, bans mercury mining and addresses contaminated sites and land and water releases.

Reducing mercury could also be beneficial for other rice-producing countries, but at present, there are few data available outside China. However, our research suggests that the problem of mercury is not just a fish story – and that policy efforts can indeed make a difference.

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How artificial intelligence can detect – and create – fake news

Anjana Susarla, Michigan State University

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Anjana Susarla, Michigan State University

(THE CONVERSATION) When Mark Zuckerberg told Congress Facebook would use artificial intelligence to detect fake news posted on the social media site, he wasn't particularly specific about what that meant. Given my own work using image and video analytics, I suggest the company should be careful. Despite some basic potential flaws, AI can be a useful tool for spotting online propaganda – but it can also be startlingly good at creating misleading material.

Researchers already know that online fake news spreads much more quickly and more widely than real news. My research has similarly found that online posts with fake medical information get more views, comments and likes than those with accurate medical content. In an online world where viewers have

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limited attention and are saturated with content choices, it often appears as though fake information is more appealing or engaging to viewers.

The problem is getting worse: By 2022, people in developed economies could be encountering more fake news than real information. This could bring about a phenomenon researchers have dubbed "reality vertigo" – in which computers can generate such convincing content that regular people may have a hard time figuring out what's true anymore.

Detecting falsehood Machine learning algorithms, one type of AI, have been successful for decades fighting spam email, by analyzing messages' text and determining how likely it is that a particular message is a real communication from an actual person – or a mass-distributed solicitation for pharmaceuticals or claim of a long-lost fortune.

Building on this type of text analysis in spam-fighting, AI systems can evaluate how well a post's text, or a headline, compares with the actual content of an article someone is sharing online. Another method could examine similar articles to see whether other news media have differing facts. Similar systems can identify specific accounts and source websites that spread fake news.

An endless cycle However, those methods assume the people who spread fake news don't change their approaches. They often shift tactics, manipulating the content of fake posts in efforts to make them look more authentic.

Using AI to evaluate information can also expose – and amplify – certain biases in society. This can relate to gender, racial background or neighborhood stereotypes. It can even have political consequences, potentially restricting expression of particular viewpoints. For example, YouTube has cut off advertising from certain types of video channels, costing their creators money.

Context is also key. Words' meanings can change over time. And the same word can mean different things on liberal sites and conservative ones. For example, a post with the terms "WikiLeaks" and "DNC" on a more liberal site could be more likely to be news, while on a conservative site it could refer to a particular set of conspiracy theories.

Using AI to make fake news The biggest challenge, however, of using AI to detect fake news is that it puts technology in an arms race with itself. Machine learning systems are already proving spookily capable at creating what are being called "deepfakes" – photos and videos that realistically replace one person's face with another, to make it appear that, for example, a celebrity was photographed in a revealing pose or a public figure is saying things he'd never actually say. Even smartphone apps are capable of this sort of substitution – which makes this technology available to just about anyone, even without Hollywood-level video editing skills.

Researchers are already preparing to use AI to identify these AI-created fakes. For example, techniques for video magnification can detect changes in human pulse that would establish whether a person in a video is real or computer-generated. But both fakers and fake-detectors will get better. Some fakes could become so sophisticated that they become very hard to rebut or dismiss – unlike earlier generations of fakes, which used simple language and made easily refuted claims.

Human intelligence is the real key The best way to combat the spread of fake news may be to depend on people. The societal consequences of fake news – greater political polarization, increased partisanship, and eroded trust in mainstream media and government – are significant. If more people knew the stakes were that high, they might be more wary of information, particularly if it is more emotionally based, because that's an effective way to get people's attention.

When someone sees an enraging post, that person would do better to investigate the information, rather than sharing it immediately. The act of sharing also lends credibility to a post: When other people see it, they register that it was shared by someone they know and presumably trust at least a bit, and are less likely to notice whether the original source is questionable.

Social media sites like YouTube and Facebook could voluntarily decide to label their content, showing clearly whether an item purporting to be news is verified by a reputable source. Zuckerberg told Congress he wants to mobilize the "community" of Facebook users to direct his company's algorithms. Facebook

could crowd-source verification efforts. Wikipedia also offers a model, of dedicated volunteers who track and verify information.

Facebook could use its partnerships with news organizations and volunteers to train AI, continually tweaking the system to respond to propagandists' changes in topics and tactics. This won't catch every piece of news posted online, but it would make it easier for large numbers of people to tell fact from fake. That could reduce the chances that fictional and misleading stories would become popular online.

Reassuringly, people who have some exposure to accurate news are better at distinguishing between real and fake information. The key is to make sure that at least some of what people see online is, in fact, true.

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Ben Carson's effort to 'reform' housing safety net would deepen poverty by hurting poorest Americans

Alex Schwartz, The New School

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Alex Schwartz, The New School

(THE CONVERSATION) The Trump administration recently proposed fundamental changes to how the federal government helps low-income families pay for housing.

Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson claims his "welfare reform," which would jack up rents on the poorest Americans and impose stricter work requirements, would promote self-sufficiency and make federal housing assistance fiscally sustainable.

As someone who has studied, taught and written about housing policy for more than 25 years, I believe the proposal would do nothing of the kind.

Housing welfare, by the numbers About 4.8 million of the nation's lowest-income households currently receive housing assistance from the federal government, a figure that hasn't changed much over the past decade.

About 1 million households live in public housing, 2.5 million receive housing choice vouchers that subsidize the rents charged by private landlords and 1.3 million live in apartment buildings that are themselves directly supported by the government.

These households earn very little income. The average income of a housing choice voucher recipient, for example, is US\$14,454, while only 23 percent earn more than \$20,000.

For decades, federal rental assistance ensured that recipients paid no more than 30 percent of their adjusted household income on rent. If income goes down, they pay less. If it goes up, they pay more. The cap is based on the notion, long shared by policymakers and the real estate industry, that housing is "affordable" when it costs no more than 30 percent of a household's income.

The measure for income housing authorities have used has traditionally been adjusted for child care, medical expenses and other deductions.

Housing 'reform' The administration's proposal would greatly raise the rents that virtually all housing subsidy recipients must pay – in three ways.

The rents for subsidy recipients who are not elderly or disabled would increase from 30 to 35 percent of their income. The government would no longer take child care and medical expenses into account in determining rents. And the minimum rent recipients must pay would triple from \$50 to \$150 a month.

About 423,000 subsidy recipients currently earn less than \$2,000 a year and pay the minimum rent of \$50. Their rent would triple to \$150 a month, which would consume a whole year of income for a household earning \$1,800.

Families with higher incomes would also see sharp increases as well. A single-parent family earning \$25,000 but with \$5,000 in child care expenses would see its rent jump 46 percent from about \$500 to \$729.

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While the plan would keep elderly and disabled people at a 30 percent cap, their incomes would no longer be adjusted for medical expenses and child care. Moreover, in order to qualify for the exemption, every adult in the household must be elderly or disabled.

A history of 'reform' Most fundamentally, the Trump administration proposal would finally apply the controversial welfare "reforms" that began in the 1990s to federal housing assistance.

Welfare reform began under the Clinton administration, which in 1996 replaced a decades-old entitlement program that provided aid to poor families with kids with a new one that included work requirements and time constraints. As a result, the number of families on welfare plunged from 4.5 million in 1996 to 1.1 million last year.

The Trump administration has been pushing to extend work requirements and sometimes time limits to other safety net programs, such as Medicaid and food stamps. And now, with the latest proposal, the administration hopes to apply them to housing assistance.

Although the details are yet to be worked out, the administration's bill would authorize public housing authorities and private owners of subsidized housing to impose work requirements and time limits – and even increase some rents above 35 percent of income.

Wider ramifications While some policy analysts have previously advocated that Washington apply time limits and work requirements to housing assistance, these ideas have generally not taken hold. There are good reasons for this.

The United States confronts a housing affordability crisis of epic proportions. By the standard 30 percent of income measure, nearly half of all renters cannot afford their housing, and one-quarter spend at least half of their income on rent.

The problem is far worse among very low-income renters, with 83 percent spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent and 56 percent spending 50 percent or more. With cost burdens like these, people often struggle to pay for food, transportation, health care and other essentials. They are at high risk of eviction and homelessness.

Employment is often of little help. About half of the 8 million very low-income renters who spend 50 percent or more of their income on rent do in fact work. In only 12 of the nation's 3,142 counties can a full-time worker earning the minimum wage afford a one-bedroom home at the local fair market rent – the rent that the Housing and Urban Development department deems suitable for a modest but adequate unit.

And average full-time earnings in numerous occupations are also well below the income necessary to afford the fair market rent. For example, a child care worker in the U.S. earns an average of \$30,679, compared with the \$35,680 necessary under the 30 percent standard to afford the national average fair market rent on a one-bedroom unit.

Another reason welfare reform's emphasis on employment makes little sense for housing assistance is that most subsidy recipients who could work already do. Overall, 28 percent of all housing assistance recipients in 2017 worked. Two-thirds are either elderly or disabled. And most of the rest are single mothers, many of whom already work – and those who don't often have young children.

Moreover, the cost of implementing work requirements would be substantial. Housing authorities would need to create new data systems and devote staff time to determine which subsidy recipients would be subject to the work requirements, to monitor compliance with the requirements and impose sanctions when the requirements are not satisfied.

In short, the proposed changes in federal housing policy would neither foster economic self-sufficiency nor meaningful fiscal savings. They would deepen poverty and worsen the housing affordability crisis.

This article was originally published on The Conversation. Read the original article here: <http://theconversation.com/ben-carsons-effort-to-reform-housing-safety-net-would-deepen-poverty-by-hurting-poorest-americans-95745>.

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From the Middle East to the Kentucky Derby, the mint julep has always been about staying cool

Jeffrey Miller, Colorado State University

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Jeffrey Miller, Colorado State University

(THE CONVERSATION) The Kentucky Derby is about more than horses and hats. It's also where one of the South's favorite cocktails – the mint julep – takes center stage.

Since the 1930s, the drink – a mix of mint, syrup, bourbon, water and crushed ice – has been the traditional cocktail of the Kentucky Derby. At this year's Derby, organizers plan to serve around 120,000 mint juleps, which will require 10,000 bottles of bourbon, 1,000 pounds of fresh mint and 60,000 pounds of ice.

Like gin and Jägermeister, the julep started as a medicine. Since medieval times, mint had been prescribed for stomach ailments; it soothes the lining of the digestive tract and stimulates the production of bile, an essential digestive fluid. Though some say the drink was invented by slaves working the cotton fields outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the version of the julep we know today probably originated in Persia, where people mixed syrup with mint or rose water.

The mint julep has been a Southern tradition since at least the early 19th century. The first mention of the drink in the U.S. comes from Englishman John Davis' book "Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States: 1798-1802." In it Davis describes the julep as "a dram of spirituous liquor that has mint steeped in it" consumed by Virginians as a morning eye-opener.

Early recipes for juleps used various kinds of liquor. Brandy and cognac were popular bases in Europe, as was gin. But as juleps became more closely associated with the Kentucky Derby, bourbon – America's native whiskey – became the alcoholic mixer of choice.

Juleps are traditionally served in silver cups. The most likely reason is that the metal cups "frost up" from the ice. In the oppressive heat of the pre-air-conditioned South, gripping a cool cup made the drink that much more refreshing.

In the 19th-century South, silver julep cups were a popular gift for baby christenings, weddings and graduations, and many middle-class Southern households probably had a set of julep cups.

In a 1908 edition of Fuel Magazine, a Lexington, Kentucky, native named Samuel Judson Roberts explained the importance of the cup.

"Take a silver cup – always a silver cup. Fill it with ice pulverized to the fineness of snow." Once the drink is mixed, "shake the cup slowly until a coating of a thick white frost forms on the outside. Trim with mint and hand to an appreciative gentleman."

Today you don't have to be a gentleman to enjoy the drink. But as you cheer on your favorite horse, you can enjoy it all the same.

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#MeToo in the art world: Genius should not excuse sexual harassment

Irina Aristarkhova, University of Michigan

(The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.)

Irina Aristarkhova, University of Michigan

(THE CONVERSATION) This May, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., was to showcase the work of two famous artists: one of painter Chuck Close and another of photographer Thomas Roma. Both exhibitions, however were cancelled due to allegations of sexual harassment.

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The public debatesparked by the cancellations has centered around the question, is it possible to separate the value of art from the personal conduct of the artist?

As a scholar of aesthetics and gender studies, I believe, in the wake of #MeToo this is a good time to revisit the argument of Russian poet Alexander Pushkin about the incompatibility of genius and evil.

Genius and evilIn his short play from 1830, "Mozart and Salieri," Pushkin fictionalizes an encounter between the composer Antonio Salieri and his younger friend, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, in Vienna, Austria. Based on existing rumors at the time, Pushkin presents Salieri as envious of Mozart's genius to the point of poisoning him at the meeting.

Pushkin's claim in this play was that the human value of good defines genius, and hence committing a crime disqualifies one from being a genius. Based on this presentation of Salieri as evil, his reputation as a composer was tarnished.

After new research suggested that Mozart died from natural causes, most probably a strep infection, views on Salieri's music also changed. With this new information, Pushkin's argument was revisited, and Salieri's reputation in the music community started to improve, demonstrated by recorded albums and staging of his operas.

This goes to show how art makers and their audiences become emotionally attached to artists and composers as individuals, and not just to their music or painting. Pushkin himself identified strongly with Mozart.

And the change in attitudes to Salieri also supports Pushkin's original argument that how genius is understood is strongly correlated with human values, where good and genius reinforce each other.

The debateIn the current debate in the art world over this issue, several experts have said that the value of art should not be associated with the personal conduct of its maker. For example, Tom Eccles, executive director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, suggested that "we can't not show artists because we don't agree with them morally; we'd have fairly bare walls." An example would be that of the famous painter Caravaggio, who was accused of murder and whose works continue to be on display.

However, James Rondeau, the president and director of the Art Institute of Chicago, disagreed that museums could present their decisions about the value of the artwork as totally separate from today's ethics. Rondeau said:

"The typical 'we don't judge, we don't endorse, we just put it up for people to experience and decide' falls very flat in this political and cultural moment."

The #MeToo ethical challengeThis public debate has gained significant traction in the art world because the #MeToo movement has redefined sexual harassment as evil. Started by Tarana Burke, an African-American civil rights activist in 2006 and spread by Alyssa Milano, an American actress and activist, as a Twitter campaign in 2017, the #MeToo movement has become a social media-driven collective voice. It has presented sexual harassment and sexual violence as harm serious enough to warrant recognition and social change.

Consequently, a number of artists have come out with their experience of sexual harassment. Five women came forward accusing Thomas Roma, a photographer and professor, of sexual misconduct. In the case of Chuck Close, artists Langdon Graves, Delia Brown and Julia Fox described in interviews and on social media platforms the anguish and self-doubt his actions had caused them as individuals and also as artists.

Delia Brown, for example, described how Chuck Close told her at a dinner that he was a fan of her work and asked her to pose for a portrait at his studio. She said she was "over the moon" and excited "because having your portrait done as an artist by Chuck Close is tantamount to being canonized."

However, she was shocked when he asked her to model topless, not a practice that he pursued with other famous artists. Brown refused. Explaining her anguish, she felt he saw her only as a body rather than an important artist and felt manipulated. She said "a sense of distrust and disgust" has stayed with

her. Other artists made similar allegations of having been invited to Close's studio to pose for him and being shocked by his behavior.

Chuck Close chose to downplay the harm done to them as persons and artists by dismissing their words. He said the "last time I looked, discomfort was not a major offense."

Genius redefinedThe point this reinforces is that if sexual harassment is wrong then the value of artwork being exhibited in a public museum is questionable.

Scholar Roxane Gay, the best-selling author of the essay collection "Bad Feminist," sums up why it is so evil, when she explains the cost to women. She says:

"I remember how many women's careers were ruined; I think of those who gave up their dreams because some 'genius' decided indulging his thirst for power and control mattered more than her ambition and dignity. I remember all the silence, decades and decades of enforced silence, intimidation, and manipulation, that enabled bad men to flourish. When I do that, it's quite easy for me to think nothing of the supposedly great art of bad men."

This debate has also shown how the definitions of evil in Pushkin's "genius and evil" argument are also subjective and depend on human values at a particular time. #MeToo has changed the public view on sexual harassment. Indeed, the public debate surrounding the decision by the National Gallery of Art to cancel two exhibitions has been as much about the value of human beings as it has been about the value of art.

This article was originally published on The Conversation. Read the original article here: <http://theconversation.com/metoo-in-the-art-world-genius-should-not-excuse-sexual-harassment-91554>.

Shakeup in Trump's legal team may usher in tougher stance

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump hired a veteran attorney who represented Bill Clinton during his impeachment process as the White House shifted to a more aggressive approach to a special counsel investigation that has reached a critical stage.

The White House announced Wednesday the hiring of lawyer Emmet Flood after disclosing the retirement of Ty Cobb, who for months has been the administration's point person dealing with special counsel Robert Mueller.

It's the latest shake-up for a legal team grappling with unresolved questions on how to protect the president from legal and political jeopardy in Mueller's Russia probe, which is nearing the one-year mark.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said that Cobb had been discussing the decision for weeks and would retire at the end of May and that Flood would be joining the White House staff to "represent the president and the administration against the Russia witch hunt."

"I'm deeply grateful to the president and the chief of staff for this opportunity to serve my country," Cobb told The Associated Press on Wednesday night. "It's been a privilege, and I'm confident that the matter will be in good hands with Emmet Flood."

The replacement of Cobb with Flood may usher in a more adversarial stance toward the Mueller team as Trump's lawyers debate whether to make the president available for an interview with the special counsel and brace for the prospect of a grand jury subpoena if they refuse.

Although Cobb does not personally represent the president, he has functioned as a critical point person for Mueller's document and interview requests, coordinated dealings with prosecutors and worked closely with Trump's personal lawyers. He has repeatedly urged cooperation with the investigation in hopes of bringing it to a quick end, and he has viewed his role as largely finished now that interviews with current and former White House officials have been completed.

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Yet Flood, who was embroiled in the bitterly partisan Clinton impeachment fight 20 years ago, may well advocate a more confrontational approach. His law firm, Williams & Connolly, is one of Washington's most prominent, with a reputation for aggressive advocacy for its clients and a history of tangling with the government. It has also represented senior White House officials, including presidents.

Flood, a former law clerk to the late Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia, has defended former Vice President Dick Cheney in a lawsuit brought by former CIA official Valerie Plame and represented President George W. Bush in executive-privilege disputes with Congress - suggesting he is well-versed in the powers of the presidency and may invoke those authorities as the Mueller investigation moves forward.

Flood was always the top choice of White House counsel Don McGahn for the job Cobb was given last summer, according to a person familiar with the hiring decision who described Flood as a "fighter." The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Cobb and McGahn hold different views on how cooperative the White House should be with the special counsel investigation.

Cobb's retirement, though not a surprise, was nonetheless the latest evolution for a legal team marked by turnover.

Trump's lead personal lawyer, John Dowd, left in March. Another attorney whom Trump tried to bring on ultimately passed because of conflicts, and the president two weeks ago added former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and a pair of former prosecutors, Martin and Jane Raskin, to work alongside mainstay lawyer Jay Sekulow.

Critical decisions lie ahead. The president's legal team has not committed him to an interview with Mueller, who has dozens of questions on a broad array of topics he'd like to ask. Trump initially said he was eager for an interview, but he hasn't said so recently. His view of Mueller soured further after raids last month that targeted one of his personal lawyers, Michael Cohen, in a separate investigation.

Those interview negotiations are hugely consequential, especially after Dowd confirmed to the AP this week that Mueller's team in March raised the prospect of issuing a grand jury subpoena for Trump, an extraordinary move that would seek to force a sitting president to testify under oath.

It was not immediately clear in what context the possibility of a subpoena was raised or how serious Mueller's prosecutors were about such a move. Mueller is probing not only Russian election interference and possible coordination with Trump associates but also possible obstruction of justice by Trump after he took office.

If Mueller's team decides to subpoena Trump, the president could still fight it in court or refuse to answer questions by invoking his Fifth Amendment protection from self-incrimination.

Trump lashed out against the investigation in familiar fashion Wednesday, tweeting: "There was no Collusion (it is a Hoax) and there is no Obstruction of Justice (that is a setup & trap)."

Also Wednesday, Trump echoed the concerns of a small group of House conservatives who have been criticizing the Justice Department for not turning over certain investigation documents.

"What are they afraid of?" Trump tweeted. "At some point I will have no choice but to use the powers granted to the Presidency and get involved!"

It was unclear what Trump meant by "get involved."

Several Republican House committee chairmen have recently negotiated deals with the Justice Department to turn over documents related to Russia investigations into Trump and to a 2016 investigation into Democrat Hillary Clinton's emails.

The Justice Department says that "dozens of members and staff from both parties" have viewed thousands of classified documents and House staff members have temporary office space in the department to review additional materials.

But some lawmakers who sit on those committees remain unsatisfied, particularly members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus. Some of them have asked for an unredacted version of a Justice Department document that sets out the scope for Mueller's probe, a request that the department immediately denied because it pertains to an ongoing investigation.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Germany says Liu Xiaobo's widow is welcome 'at any time'

By YANAN WANG, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Germany said Thursday it would welcome the widow of Chinese Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiaobo after a recording was released of her crying in desperation and indicating that she has given up hope of being able to leave China.

"If I can't leave, I'll die in my home," Liu Xia, the widow, said during a recent phone call with her close friend Liao Yiwu, a writer who documented their conversation in an essay published Wednesday.

"Xiaobo is gone, and there's nothing in the world for me now," Liu said tearfully. "It's easier to die than live. Using death to defy could not be any simpler for me."

Liu has never been charged with a crime, but has been kept guarded and largely isolated since her husband, Liu Xiaobo, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his human rights activism in 2010. He was still serving a prison sentence for inciting subversion of state power when he died of liver cancer last summer.

Germany's Foreign Ministry told The Associated Press on Thursday that the German government has been discussing Liu's case with China and "will continue to do so."

"According to the information available to us, Liu Xia has not been accused of any crime," the ministry said in emailed comments. "She should be allowed to travel, also for humanitarian considerations. Should she choose to come to Germany, Liu Xia would be welcome here at any time."

Writing from Germany where he is living in exile, Liao said that Chinese state security agents repeatedly promised Liu Xia that she would be able to leave the country and seek treatment for the clinical depression that has long ailed her.

Germany was prepared to take her in, according to Liao: "In early April the German Foreign Minister had already made specific arrangements, including as to how they'd not alert the news media, how they'd covertly collect Liu Xia at the airport, and how they'd arrange her treatment and recovery and more."

But hopes for a quiet departure have not borne fruit.

Hu Jia, a dissident and longtime friend of the Lius, described Liao's essay as a "counterattack" against Chinese authorities prompted by an "awakening" after hearing for months that Liu would soon be released.

Corroborating Liao's account, Hu said Liu had initially been told by security agents to wait until after the 19th Party Congress last fall, when President Xi Jinping secured a second term at the helm of the ruling Communist Party. Then, Hu said, they told her to wait until after the meeting of the ceremonial legislature in March.

During this time, Liu's supporters kept a low profile because government agents told them that remaining silent about the case would lead to a solution, Hu told the AP.

"Why did Mr. Liao call Liu Xia on April 30? Because at that point it was already clear that hope was shattered," Hu said. "We were duped."

When asked at a regular press briefing whether Liu will be able to leave the country, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she was "not aware of the situation."

"But Liu Xia is a Chinese citizen. The competent Chinese authority will handle the relevant matter in accordance with laws," Hua said, repeating a statement often used by China to address Liu's case.

For many in Yemen, bread and tea are the day's sole meal

By MAGGIE MICHAEL, Associated Press

ADEN, Yemen (AP) — The young mother stepped onto the scale for the doctor. Even with all her black robes on, she weighed only 84 pounds — 38 kilograms. Umm Mizrah is pregnant, but starving herself to feed her children.

And her sacrifice may not be enough to save them.

The doctor's office is covered with dozens of pictures of emaciated babies who have come through Al-

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Sadaqa Hospital in Aden, casualties of a three-year war in Yemen that has left millions of people on the edge of famine.

Mothers like Umm Mizrah are often the only defense against the hunger that has killed thousands. They skip meals, they sleep to escape the gnawing in their stomachs. They hide bony faces and emaciated bodies in voluminous black abaya robes and veils.

The doctor asked the mother to get back on the scale holding her son, Mizrah. At 17 months, he was 5.8 kilograms (12.8 pounds) — around half the normal weight for his age.

He showed all the signs of “severe acute malnutrition,” the most dire stage of hunger. His legs and feet were swollen, he wasn’t getting enough protein. When the doctor pressed a finger into the skin of his feet, the indentation lingered.

Around 2.9 million women and children are acutely malnourished; another 400,000 children are fighting for their lives, in the same condition as Mizrah.

Nearly a third of Yemen’s population — 8.4 million of its 29 million people — rely completely on food aid or else they would starve. That number grew by a quarter over the past year.

Aid agencies warn that parts of Yemen could soon start to see widespread death from famine. More and more people are reliant on aid that is already failing to reach people. The war, now three years old, drags on interminably between Yemen’s Shiite Houthi rebels who hold the country’s north, and the Saudi-led coalition, armed and backed by the United States, which has sought to bomb the rebels into submission with a relentless air campaign in support of the Yemeni government.

It is unknown how many have died, since authorities are not able to track cases. Save the Children late last year estimated that 50,000 children may have died in 2017 of extreme hunger or disease, given that up to 30 percent of children with untreated cases of severe acute malnutrition die.

“Unfortunately, now Yemen is considered to be the world’s largest humanitarian emergency,” said Stephen Anderson, the Yemen director of the World Food Program. Some 18 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from.

The AP’s reporting on the war in Yemen is supported by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Even before the war, the Arab world’s poorest nation struggled to feed itself. It is a country of deserts and mountains with dwindling water resources where only 2 to 4 percent of the land is cultivated, so almost all of its food and supplies must be imported.

The war has shattered everything that kept Yemen just above starvation. Coalition warplanes blasted hospitals, schools, farms, factories, bridges and roads. The coalition has also clamped a land-sea-and-air embargo on Houthi-controlled areas, including the Red Sea port of Hodeida, once the entry point of 70 percent of Yemen’s imports. Now far less gets in as coalition ships off shore allow through only UN-inspected and approved commercial ships and aid, often with delays.

In many places there is food in the markets, but people simply can’t afford it, since salaries are going unpaid, work is harder to find and the currency has collapsed in value.

Umm Mizrah and her husband, who have three young daughters in addition to Mizrah, usually eat one meal a day, often just bread and tea. The Associated Press is identifying her by the nickname she often goes by — meaning “mother of Mizrah” — to protect her privacy.

When the doctor in Aden told her malnutrition can be fatal, she trembled. The parents felt helpless. Cigarette burns were visible on the baby’s belly. Desperate, the father had turned to a Yemeni folk cure called “maysam,” or “branding” — using burns to expel evil spirits.

“I don’t know what is right,” she said quietly. “He was playful and doing fine then he started to get sick and stopped breastfeeding and playing.”

The AP travelled across southern Yemen, territory held by the coalition-backed government, and visited several districts among the 107 areas nationwide that the U.N. warns are most likely to fall into outright

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famine.

It is a landscape of desperation.

DEATH BY STARVATION

A video filmed by a doctor shows 8-month-old Fadl in his last days of life.

The baby twitches his legs in pain. He's crying but he is so dehydrated his eyes can't produce tears. His belly is inflated as taut as a balloon. You can easily count the 12 rows of protruding ribs on his rapidly palpitating chest. His desperate parents plastered his head with black henna, a dye that is used as a folk cure.

Fadl was born in the wilderness. His mother, Fatma Halabi, was eight months pregnant when she and thousands of others fled the area around her district of Mowza as government forces descended on the Houthis.

Separated from her husband, Halabi led her four children and two goats across the Great Valley, the arid plain spilling down from the mountains toward the city of Mocha on the Red Sea.

These desolate stretches are historically a site of death. More than 400 years ago, a Muslim ruler forcibly sent almost the entire Jewish population of Yemen here for refusing to convert. Chroniclers say two thirds of them died in the heat and deprivation.

Halabi and the children hid in thorn bushes to avoid artillery and airstrikes along the shifting front line. One day in April last year, she went into labor and, alone, gave birth to Fadl under a tree. And then fainted.

Eventually, she and her husband reunited and settled in an abandoned hut in the valley.

Speaking from inside her makeshift home in February, Halabi sat with a rope cinched around her emaciated waist, her blue robe sliding off her bony shoulder.

She spoke in short, exhausted sentences. When asked what she had eaten that day, she said, "Bor," the local Arabic word for flour. "We stay patient," she said. "We have to feed the children." When she gets hungry, she lies down and tries to sleep.

Often she and her husband eat one meal in the morning, and nothing again until the next day.

Unable to breastfeed Fadl, she gave him goat or camel milk, which lack the nutrients of breast milk or formula. The newborn kept getting fever and diarrhea, so she repeatedly borrowed money to take him to the hospital in Mocha.

The hospital has seen 600 malnutrition cases over the past 10 months, but is so short on supplies it doesn't even have pain relievers for headaches, said one doctor, Abdel-Rehim Ahmed. It has no therapeutic feeding center. None of its doctors have been trained in treating malnutrition.

And Mocha is swelling with 40,000 displaced people.

Left untreated, prolonged malnutrition causes the body to lose its stock of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. The body starts to eat itself. The brain struggles to find energy, the heart shrinks, and the skin cracks, exposing the body to infections. The kidney and the liver stop functioning properly, so toxins build up inside the body, leading to a vicious cycle of disease.

Fadl's last visit to the hospital was Nov. 29. At eight months old, he weighed 2.9 kilograms (6 pounds), a third of the normal weight. The circumference of his upper arm, a common measure for malnutrition, was 7 centimeters, less than 3 inches. That indicated severe acute malnutrition.

Unable to pay for a hospital stay, Fadl's parents took him home.

He gave his last breath not long after in the arms of his grandmother. His exhausted parents were asleep on the floor. The grandmother woke them and told them their boy was dead.

The only image of Fadl from his short life of hunger and pain is the video, taken by the head of the nutrition center. His parents don't have mobile phones or a camera.

"Sometimes I wake up in the morning and I remember he's no longer there and I start to cry," Halabi said. "Who wouldn't cry for their children?"

"LIBERATED," AND STILL STARVING

Even in parts of Yemen that are wrested from Houthi rule, starvation persists — or gets worse.

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In late February, mothers carrying babies mobbed the nutrition center at the main hospital in al-Khoukha, a little town on the Red Sea, expecting to receive monthly allotments of baby formula and nutrient supplies. They left empty-handed.

The center ran out of supplies weeks ago. Some of the women, cloaked in black abayas, pushed and shoved feebly. But most were too weak to complain and silently shuffled away.

Al-Khoukha was taken back from the Houthis in December by coalition-backed forces marching up the coast. In rebel hands, the town had been directly connected to the Hodeida port farther north, the biggest entryway for international aid into Yemen.

Now cut off from the port, no supplies have come from the south.

"We have no vaccinations. There are shortages in medicines. The aid stopped," said Abdullah Doubala, head of al-Khoukha health department. The burden is increasing as families fleeing fighting elsewhere stream into al-Khoukha, bringing more thin and hungry children.

Doctors estimate that 40 percent of the children in the town suffer from malnutrition. Barefoot kids fill the center's corridors, many visibly emaciated, some with malaria or cholera. Some can barely stand.

Nine-month old Galila, her ribs sharply outlined, her eyes bulging in shrunken sockets, sat in the lap of her mother, Aisha.

The baby girl caught malaria and began to lose weight. Now she is all of 4.5 kilograms (9.9 pounds), compared to the average of 6 to 8 kilograms (13-17 pounds) for a 9-month-old girl.

Her mother is tiny as well, ravaged by giving up food for a family that is constantly growing.

Aisha has been giving birth each year; Galila is her 14th child. Her husband, a woodcutter, can hardly find any work. Even coming to the hospital is too expensive; if she wants to come, she has to wait for her brother, who has a motorcycle, to take her.

"I eat whatever is available or wait till next day," Aisha said. "A meal once a day."

The mothers' hunger is repeated over and over throughout the war-ravaged country.

A MOTHER'S HUNGER

It isn't just those driven from their homes who suffer.

Isolated in a mountain valley, the 450 residents of the village of Qibli are wasting away. Boys and girls running around barefoot in the dirt paths are stunted.

Most of the men here are soldiers, who haven't been paid for months, or farm laborers, who can no longer find work.

Any money they have goes in search of food. The nearest market is 13 kilometers (8 miles) away, which means paying high gas prices on top of the cost for the food itself, which have doubled over the past year.

Sitting on the floor of her home, Sherine fed her two children scraps of bread dipped in "besbas," a sauce of tomato and garlic. She took no bites herself.

Her 1-year-old daughter Amal, has been diagnosed with acute malnutrition and can no longer stand up.

The family lives largely on bread and tea. Her husband is among the ranks of unpaid soldiers. His father, a retired soldier, still gets a meager pension, but uses that to help all his children and grandchildren, a family of 16 in total.

Aid hasn't come to Qibli since 2016, according to relief volunteer Rashid al-Khoushbi. Only four families in the area were on the World Food Program lists for food aid. Most households here are considered to have a male breadwinner, making them a lower priority.

In the area's main town, al-Mallah, doctors were nowhere to be seen at the hospital. No one pays them so many staffers often don't show up.

Sitting in bed, Umm Molham was so weak she could barely lift her 13-month-old son. When the AP met her, she had been at the hospital for three days waiting for someone to examine him.

The toddler had been vomiting, coughing and suffered from diarrhea. The family can only afford to give him formula once a day. His body is emaciated, his eyes sunken, his belly

His mother sat helplessly, the baby in her lap.

"She is not breastfeeding," said her husband, Anwar Said. "She doesn't eat well and has no milk." Umm Molham didn't say a word, even when asked questions, lost in her internal world of frailty and hunger.

"There's a shooter": Gamblers unalarmed amid Vegas shooting

By KEN RITTER and MICHAEL BALSAMO, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The jangly music of slot machines echoed through the packed room as police officers methodically made their way across the casino floor with their guns drawn. But the hustle and bustle of Las Vegas went on and gamblers just continued tugging at slot handles, seemingly unaware that just upstairs a man was unleashing a hail of gunfire in the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

"There's a shooter! He's shot and killed multiple people already," a police officer shouts as he passes bystanders, on the hunt for the man who killed 58 people from his high-rise hotel suite.

The officers carefully work their way up to the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay casino-hotel. As they approach his suite from a stairwell, another officer yells out, "Breach! Breach! Breach!" before a loud bang and a fire alarm begins to sound.

Inside, they find Stephen Paddock lying in a pool of his own blood with rifles strewn about. One officer pulls a high-powered rifle from a window ledge as the other officers discover an arsenal of weapons, cameras in the peepholes, a homemade gas mask and venting system and even a vibrator.

But more than seven months after the Oct. 1 massacre, police are no closer to answering the key question in the investigation: What led the retired accountant and high-stakes gambler to unleash his deadly barrage of bullets?

On Wednesday, police released hours of footage from two officers' body-worn cameras in response to a lawsuit by The Associated Press and other news organizations.

The videos showed officers inside Paddock's room looking behind curtains, and one grabbed an assault-style rifle from the ledge of a broken window. The gunman's body is seen on his back, clad in dark pants and a long-sleeve shirt with a glove on his left hand. A pool of blood stains the carpet near his head as a police SWAT officer walks past.

Officers noted the amount of firepower Paddock had — more than 10 high-powered firearms. Others talked about Paddock "blasting out the window" and pointed to "a whole suitcase full of loaded AK mags."

Investigators believe the 64-year-old acted alone in the attack and fatally shot himself before officers burst through the door of his hotel suite.

The body camera video that was released on Wednesday, which totals about 2½ hours, represents a sample of hundreds of hours of body-camera recordings and does not provide a complete view of everything police discovered when they entered Paddock's suite.

The footage doesn't show what the first officer through the door saw because he didn't activate his body camera.

The revelation that the officer failed to activate his camera raised questions about whether officers followed department policy. The department requires officers with body cameras to activate them during calls that lead to interaction with residents and searches.

Police refused to say whether the officer would be disciplined for violating department policy.

The AP and other media outlets sued to obtain videos, 911 recordings, evidence logs and interview reports to shed light on the response by public agencies, emergency workers and hotel officials while Paddock fired for more than 10 minutes.

A preliminary report released in January said Paddock meticulously planned the attack, researched police SWAT tactics, rented hotel rooms overlooking outdoor concerts and investigated potential targets in at least four U.S. cities.

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press journalists Michelle Price and Regina Garcia Cano in Las Vegas contributed to this report.

Rookies Fultz, Tatum having different playoff experiences

By KYLE HIGHTOWER, AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — When Markelle Fultz spent two days in Boston last June visiting the Celtics during the pre-draft process, it felt like home.

He walked the streets downtown and later found himself soaking up the history that clings to the championship banners swaying above the TD Garden court.

"It almost feels like I belong here," Fultz said at the time.

It turned out to be nothing more than a field trip when the Celtics surprised many and passed on selecting Fultz with the No. 1 overall pick. They instead traded it to the 76ers for the third pick, which they used to grab Jayson Tatum, and a future first-round pick.

Right now it looks like a good move for Boston.

The Celtics have a 1-0 lead over Philadelphia in the Eastern Conference semifinals. Tatum has been a revelation on a team battered by injuries.

Tatum's role first increased when Gordon Hayward went down with an ankle injury, then again following Kyrie Irving's knee surgeries late in the season. Tatum has responded to every challenge, averaging 17 points, five rebounds and three assists in his first postseason.

"I enjoy it," Tatum said. "I dreamed of having big moments and having a big role. That obviously came a lot sooner than I thought. I'm just trying to prove that I belong here."

Fultz is not having nearly as much fun.

He has been reduced to a spectator after a down regular season that saw him go through shooting issues and miss 68 games with a shoulder injury. And this after having his shot dissected during the season.

But he insisted that he hasn't let any of it frustrate him.

"It didn't bother me really," he told The Associated Press. "I was just happy with the team's success. That's all I'm about."

He finally returned for some game action during the final 10 games of the regular season. But it wasn't until the final night of the season that he provided his best example to date of the potential that the Sixers spent so much capital to draft.

Fultz looked at ease for the first time in months when at 19 he became the youngest NBA player to record a triple-double, registering 13 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds in a win over Milwaukee.

Yet, while Boston is embracing Tatum, Fultz is still looking to make a meaningful postseason impact.

After playing 24 minutes over the first three games of the first round, Fultz was inactive in the final two games of the Miami series and didn't play in the opener against the Celtics.

He isn't only playing behind Rookie of the Year candidate Ben Simmons, but Fultz is also watching T.J. McConnell get minutes.

Sixers coach Brett Brown said the decision to sit Fultz hasn't come without some second-guessing. He left room for the former Washington Huskies guard to make an appearance in this series.

"It's my decision to go with T.J.," Brown said. "There are times that you for sure think about it. But to say (Fultz is) dead and buried, that's not true. But I got a decision to make. And I've made a decision.

"It doesn't mean it's etched in stone. It's always something you review and think about. And the care for Markelle Fultz and his future is always on my mind."

Fultz said he's ready to contribute in whatever way he's asked.

"Anything for the team, I'm just here," he said. "Whenever I get an opportunity I'm just going out there and play my hardest."

After the Celtics beat the Bucks in Game 7 to advance to the semifinals, Tatum was asked what he learned about himself playing in his first playoff series.

"I love what I do," Tatum said. "I love being out there. It's fun."

It's a feeling that, for now at least, Fultz has only gotten in a small dose.

"For me, it's all an opportunity," Fultz said. "When the coaches put me out there, that's what I'm going to be ready for. Other than that, I'm on the sidelines cheering my teammates on."

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Follow Kyle Hightower on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/khightower>

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/tag/NBAbasketball>

Rainstorm kills at least 91, injures over 160 in India

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — A powerful dust storm and rain swept parts of north and western India overnight, causing house collapses, toppling trees and leaving at least 91 people dead and more than 160 injured, officials said Thursday.

The devastation was particularly severe on Wednesday night in Agra, the northern Indian city where the white marble Taj Mahal is located. Forty-three people died there as the wind speed touched 130 kilometers (80 miles) per hour, said Relief Commissioner Sanjay Kumar of Uttar Pradesh state.

There was no damage to the monument.

At least 64 people died and another 67 were injured in northern Uttar Pradesh state, Kumar said.

In the western state of Rajasthan, the Press Trust of India news agency said that 27 others died and another 100 were injured. Most deaths were caused by house collapses and lightning.

The rainstorm caught people by surprise as the monsoon season is still more than six weeks away.

Uprooted trees flattened mud huts of the poor, Kumar said. Electricity supply and telephone lines were snapped in parts of Uttar Pradesh state, Kumar said.

High-scoring top lines dominating best defenders in playoffs

By **STEPHEN WHYNO, AP Hockey Writer**

Each time Boston's top line jumps over the boards, the Tampa Bay Lightning are on red alert.

Make a mistake and Brad Marchand, Patrice Bergeron and David Pastrnak can make you pay. They have.

"You think it's going all right and you're playing well, and they only need one look," Lightning defenseman Ryan McDonagh said. "We knew that. That's no surprise. They're a good line."

Top lines are lighting up opponents all over the playoffs, ratcheting scoring up to a pace not seen in more than two decades. Top trios from the Capitals, Golden Knights, Penguins, Jets and Predators are having their way against top opposing defensemen. Goals are supposed to be harder to come by in the playoffs, but after years of NHL rule changes to get goals, goals and more goals, that is exactly what's happening.

"Every line, every group of forwards, give different challenges for defensemen," Washington coach Barry Trotz said. "It's the types of reads and the tendencies of the group and as a series goes on there's going to be more and more deception happening from a forward group to our group of defenders and vice versa. It's the constant reads and the constant communication and the constant positioning that you have to have against really dynamic people who are good collectively or individually."

Especially in the Stanley Cup playoffs, it's not easy being D.

A total of 332 goals were scored through the first 54 playoff games, the most at that point since 1996 (338). Elite goaltenders are putting on a show, yet top lines like Jake Guentzel, Sidney Crosby and Patric Hornqvist (Pittsburgh); Alex Ovechkin, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Tom Wilson (Washington); Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Blake Wheeler (Winnipeg); Jonathan Marchessault, William Karlsson and Reilly Smith (Vegas); and Filip Forsberg, Ryan Johansen and Viktor Arvidsson (Nashville) are taking advantage of their opportunities.

Top lines have been on the ice for 42 of the 78 goals scored through Tuesday in the second round, a showcase of skill that shows great offense is beating great defense. So many of the game's best defensemen are now counted on as much for their offense as the play in their own end, yet even those tasked with stopping the stars haven't been able to do it.

"We've got a game plan, but I don't think we've completely executed it yet," Sharks defenseman Brenden Dillon said of containing the Golden Knights' top line. "We're kind of doing it in bits and pieces."

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The Penguins trail the Capitals 2-1 in their second-round series in part because they haven't gotten much offense beyond Guentzel, Crosby and Hornqvist, plus the goals that top line is giving up to Ovechkin and Kuznetsov.

"They're pretty aggressive, so there's some open ice heading the other way against them," top Capitals defenseman Matt Niskanen said. "You've got to defend hard when they have it and make your plays and have confidence to make plays when you do have it. If you're only playing defense against them, it's going to be a long night. You have to go on the attack, as well."

That's the risk-reward for elite defenders in the playoffs: knowing when to counterattack. It has worked some for the Bruins, who so far have limited the damage from Tampa Bay's J.T. Miller, Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov and put up some goals against them.

Bruins defensemen Zdeno Chara and Charlie McAvoy corralled Auston Matthews and Toronto's top offensive performers in the first round and continue to draw the toughest assignments against the Lightning.

"The guys on the ice, that's their assignment for 15, 18 minutes, whatever they play at even strength that night," Boston coach Bruce Cassidy said. "There's no magic formula about following them around or any particular structure other than Z and Charlie have done a good job of not getting caught up ice, giving them odd-man rushes for the most part."

Pittsburgh's biggest hole through three games defensively — outside of Matt Murray's apparently vulnerable glove hand — has been defending the Capitals on the rush.

"They're a very skilled team," defensemen Justin Schultz said. "You've got to have numbers back and keep your head on a swivel because they're very talented."

It's not just rush goals, though, as the Jets' Connor, Scheifele and Wheeler showed in helping lead a comeback from down 3-0 to beat the Predators 7-4 to take a 2-1 series lead. Winnipeg and Nashville have combined for 25 goals despite two Vezina Trophy finalists in net and some of the best defensemen in hockey. It's a blueprint for how the NHL wanted to crank up offense.

"I think the mindset is definitely to play well defensively," Predators captain Roman Josi said. "Both teams want to play a good game defensively, and for some reason these two teams seem to bring the best out of each other and they're always high-scoring games."

AP Sports Writers Josh Dubow in San Jose, California, and Teresa M. Walker in Nashville, Tennessee, and freelance reporter Matt Kalman in Boston contributed.

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US-China trade talks center on rivalry over technology

By GILLIAN WONG and KELVIN CHAN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — A high-powered U.S. delegation arrived in Beijing on Thursday for talks with Chinese officials on defusing tensions that are propelling the world's two largest economies toward a trade war.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is leading the group, which includes Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. Liu He, President Xi Jinping's top economic adviser, was heading the Chinese side in the talks, which analysts say appear unlikely to yield a breakthrough given the two sides' intensifying rivalry in strategic technologies.

President Donald Trump said he expected relations with Beijing to stay on an even keel.

"Our great financial team is in China trying to negotiate a level playing field on trade!" he said on Twitter late Wednesday. "I look forward to being with President Xi in the not too distant future. We will always have a good (great) relationship!"

Trump is seeking to cut the chronic U.S. trade deficit by \$100 billion and gain concessions over policies that foreign companies say force them to share technology with Chinese partners in order to gain market

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access.

His administration has threatened to impose new tariffs on roughly \$150 billion in Chinese goods — prompting China to announce its own tariffs on U.S. goods.

The dispute has deepened as China stepped up efforts to overtake western industry leaders in advanced technologies, especially for semiconductors, the silicon brains required to run smartphones, connected cars, cloud computing and artificial intelligence.

Under Xi, a program known as “Made in China 2025” aims to make China a tech superpower by advancing development of industries that in addition to semiconductors includes artificial intelligence, pharmaceuticals and electric vehicles. The plan mostly involves subsidizing Chinese firms. But it also does require foreign companies to provide key details about their technologies to Chinese partners.

Beijing looks unlikely to cede any ground on that strategic blueprint.

“The Made in China 2025 industrial policy concerns China’s long-term development plan, so the overall direction won’t change at all,” said Yu Miaojie, professor at Peking University’s National School of Development. Yu says China would rather cut the trade deficit by importing high-tech products from the U.S. that are currently tightly restricted.

Striking an adamant tone, the state-run Global Times newspaper said Thursday in a commentary that it’s “our sovereign right to develop high-tech industry and it is connected to the quality of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It will not be abandoned due to external pressure.”

Both sides have shown a diversity of opinions, with China recently moving to loosen a restriction on foreign ownership of automakers to minority stakes.

But the rival views in Washington, reflected in the makeup of the U.S. team, could undermine the U.S. negotiating stance, the consulting firm Eurasia Group said in a research note.

“The U.S. delegation headed to Beijing is too large and unwieldy to accomplish much; it is a reflection of inter-agency rivalry on the U.S. side and this will produce more posturing than actual negotiations with the Chinese,” the firm said.

“The trip will produce few results and increases the risk that tariffs are adopted in the near future,” it added.

Washington’s recent decision to ban Chinese telecom gear maker ZTE from importing U.S. components in a sanctions-related case drove home to Beijing its costly vulnerability to foreign sources for advanced microchips.

The “Made in China 2025” plan calls for domestic producers to supply 70 percent of the country’s chip demand.

The Trump administration’s efforts may actually spur China to ramp up efforts to develop its domestic industry as it strives to fulfill Xi’s vision, said Jian-Hong Lin, an analyst at research firm TrendForce.

China now consumes nearly 60 percent of the world’s semiconductors but supplies only about 16 percent, according to PWC. The country spends more than \$200 billion a year on foreign-made semiconductors, which in 2015 surpassed crude oil as the country’s biggest import.

Experts say Chinese chipmakers are five years behind their U.S. and Asian rivals and that increasingly high technological hurdles and a meager talent pool are hindering the effort to catch up with dominant U.S., Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese manufacturers.

As Chinese researchers and chipmakers strive to catch up, the technology is evolving, with new materials transforming the future landscape of the electronics industry. The latest advanced chips are highly complex to make because of their increasingly tiny “nodes,” measured in nanometers, that make them faster and more power-efficient.

Beijing has been backing up its towering ambitions in the semiconductor sector with money and tax breaks. The government set up the National Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund in 2014, seeded with 140 billion yuan (\$22 billion) in capital to invest in chip companies. A second round of fundraising for as much as 200 billion yuan is underway, Chinese media report.

The state-controlled Tsinghua Unigroup project, associated with Tsinghua University — China’s equivalent

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of MIT — has emerged as a national champion. It's building two massive memory chip factories, including a \$30 billion facility in Nanjing that will churn out 100,000 wafers a month and is expected to exert a "siphon effect," drawing microchip industry suppliers and experts to the area.

It's unclear how successful those efforts will be as foreign regulators push back against Beijing's strategy of acquiring overseas chipmaking-related firms. Washington has scuppered multiple China-linked bids for semiconductor-related firms following a call from a White House advisory panel to do more to protect the U.S. industry because of China's industrial policies.

Market leaders like Samsung, Intel and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing are investing aggressively as they fight for market share.

"Even though they've (the Chinese) committed a lot of money to the investment fund, the reality has sunk in that it's harder than just throwing money at the problem. The Samsungs of the world, the TSMCs have a large head start," said Alexander Wolf, an economist at Aberdeen Standard Investments. "Certain products, you can't really reverse engineer."

Companies like Huawei and ZTE are avidly pursuing advanced semiconductor technology, but experts say overall Chinese research and development spending is a fraction of the multibillion-dollar budgets of the big players. That's one reason Beijing's success is anything but a given.

"These things are built from thousands of engineers of different disciplines pulling it together," said Christopher Thomas, a Beijing-based partner at consulting firm McKinsey, who estimates it will take a decade for China's efforts to result in any meaningful shift. "You've got to solve all the complexity to catch up. You can't just solve one thing."

AP researcher Yu Bing contributed to this report from Beijing.

Warriors' shooters deal with off-nights in different ways

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Sports Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — When Stephen Curry's shot needs a little something, he dives into "The Menu." Warriors teammate Klay Thompson might put up a few extra shots after an off night. If Kevin Durant is trying to rediscover his rhythm, he does some studying that usually means watching his made shots.

Golden State boasts some of the world's best shooters and each has his own way of bouncing back from a poor performance.

For Curry, there is no actual list or book for "The Menu." The two-time MVP and his right-hand shooting man, Bruce Fraser, keep all the details in their heads for what the record-breaking 3-point sharpshooter could use work on any given day. It comes in especially handy when the shots aren't falling, though he certainly found his touch fast in returning from nearly six weeks on the sidelines with a knee injury to score 28 points Tuesday night against New Orleans.

Maybe Curry needs more catch and shoots. Or off-the-dribble work. Sometimes, it's ballhandling into his shot. Perhaps a look at balance, rhythm and core, or just focusing on spot shooting from various places.

"We collaborate. It's like going to dinner with your wife, maybe. Maybe some people's wives tell them what they want," said Fraser, a Warriors player development coach. "Different restaurant, different menu. We have a lot of things to pull from and it's usually based one day, need. What does Steph need that day? ... The Menu has all sorts of creative pieces in it that get the workout you want. Sometimes we'll piece things together and go a la carte, sometimes we'll make it a simple meal. I'm kind of having fun with it."

On the opposite end of the defending champions' practice floor, Thompson's shooting plan might be nearly as precise as he works back from a bad night — he went 4 for 20 and 2 of 11 on 3s Tuesday. Thompson will usually put up a few extra shots after a poor performance. Depending largely on how he feels physically, he might take as few as 50 shots, or well more than 200.

Either way, it typically doesn't take Thompson long to feel right again.

The belief Thompson has in his shooting ability is unwavering and he ignores any critics when it comes to his shot, considering they aren't "in the gym with me shooting every day."

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"I will never doubt myself when it comes to shooting. I put too much effort into it," he said, adding, "I know what it takes."

In a Game 4 loss to San Antonio in the Warriors' first-round series, Thompson finished 4 for 16 and scored 12 points. He was 42 of 71 — 59.2 percent — over the other four games against the Spurs.

"They make up for the bad shooting nights on the days before the bad shooting nights. They can't get out of it by going into the gym and just shooting," said Chris Webber, a TNT analyst who played 15 NBA seasons. "They're great shooters and all the thousands of shots they've been taking since college is what makes them bounce back."

Webber believes coach Steve Kerr's offensive system allows players to keep shooting and break out of ruts.

"Knowing where you're going to get your shots, how you're going to get your shots, and you have the freedom," Webber said, "but it's all because of how hard and how many shots they take and put in the work when no one's looking."

After that Game 4 against the Spurs, Thompson took a heavy shooting day.

"Probably a couple hundred, nothing serious," he said matter-of-factly.

Kerr, a talented 3-point shooter in his own right, considers the psychological component to the process as well.

"Sometimes the best thing to do if you have a bad game is to not shoot," he said. "And you have to feel that, and as a player once you've been in the league a few years you get it. You start to understand, 'OK, maybe I feel a little tired so I'm going to go walk Rocco (Thompson's bulldog) today instead down at the park and enjoy some sunshine. Or go play golf or something. Or there's a mechanical flaw and it's almost like a golfer, you go to the range and you go, 'I've got to find it.'"

"But as a player you figure it out and the more years you've played in the league the easier it is to tell what the right approach is."

After an off-night, Durant mentally goes back through each possession and studies his shots — "mainly my makes."

Curry constantly changes his workload and regimen. Durant notes, "it takes a lot to shoot a basketball ... there's a lot you've got to think about in a couple of seconds."

After most practices starting during last year's title run, Curry and Durant engage in good-natured shooting contests from all over the court. They regularly take 10 shots from different spots, keeping track of who hits more. They're usually very close.

"It's a feel thing. You monitor your fatigue level because during the season, 82 games, there's gaps in the schedule where you can go a little harder," Curry said. "Back-to-backs obviously you can't. Me and Q come up with, we call it 'The Menu.' I walk over, open up the fake menu, read down the list and see what type of workout we need. He usually tries to come up with on a scale from 1 to 10 like a 2, a 4, a 6, 8-type of workout. We go that way. There's never really a set kind of regiment to it.

"I have certain drills I like and I know help me in certain different facets of the game. But beyond that it's kind of unpredictable and I like it because you don't really know what to expect on every single day."

It comes down to a specific routine, and each shooter has his own.

For Curry, he is usually 99 percent in charge and Fraser said he offers about 1 percent input.

"There's reason to it all," Fraser said. "It depends on how he's missing, if he's missing. And Steph doesn't miss too much. It's not just based on, 'Oh, you're missing.' Are you missing because you're off balance? Are you missing because you're not getting your body into it? Why are you missing? ... They're all human so they're going to miss."

Then, it's back to "The Menu."

Rookies Fultz, Tatum having different playoff experiences

By KYLE HIGHTOWER, AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — When Markelle Fultz spent two days in Boston last June visiting the Celtics during the pre-draft process, it felt like home.

He walked the streets downtown and later found himself soaking up the history that clings to the championship banners swaying above the TD Garden court.

"It almost feels like I belong here," Fultz said at the time.

It turned out to be nothing more than a field trip when the Celtics surprised many and passed on selecting Fultz with the No. 1 overall pick. They instead traded it to the 76ers for the third pick, which they used to grab Jayson Tatum, and a future first-round pick.

Right now it looks like a good move for Boston.

The Celtics have a 1-0 lead over Philadelphia in the Eastern Conference semifinals. Tatum has been a revelation on a team battered by injuries.

Tatum's role first increased when Gordon Hayward went down with an ankle injury, then again following Kyrie Irving's knee surgeries late in the season. Tatum has responded to every challenge, averaging 17 points, five rebounds and three assists in his first postseason.

"I enjoy it," Tatum said. "I dreamed of having big moments and having a big role. That obviously came a lot sooner than I thought. I'm just trying to prove that I belong here."

Fultz is not having nearly as much fun.

He has been reduced to a spectator after a down regular season that saw him go through shooting issues and miss 68 games with a shoulder injury. And this after having his shot dissected during the season.

But he insisted that he hasn't let any of it frustrate him.

"It didn't bother me really," he told The Associated Press. "I was just happy with the team's success. That's all I'm about."

He finally returned for some game action during the final 10 games of the regular season. But it wasn't until the final night of the season that he provided his best example to date of the potential that the Sixers spent so much capital to draft.

Fultz looked at ease for the first time in months when at 19 he became the youngest NBA player to record a triple-double, registering 13 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds in a win over Milwaukee.

Yet, while Boston is embracing Tatum, Fultz is still looking to make a meaningful postseason impact.

After playing 24 minutes over the first three games of the first round, Fultz was inactive in the final two games of the Miami series and didn't play in the opener against the Celtics.

He isn't only playing behind Rookie of the Year candidate Ben Simmons, but Fultz is also watching T.J. McConnell get minutes.

Sixers coach Brett Brown said the decision to sit Fultz hasn't come without some second-guessing. He left room for the former Washington Huskies guard to make an appearance in this series.

"It's my decision to go with T.J.," Brown said. "There are times that you for sure think about it. But to say (Fultz is) dead and buried, that's not true. But I got a decision to make. And I've made a decision.

"It doesn't mean it's etched in stone. It's always something you review and think about. And the care for Markelle Fultz and his future is always on my mind."

Fultz said he's ready to contribute in whatever way he's asked.

"Anything for the team, I'm just here," he said. "Whenever I get an opportunity I'm just going out there and play my hardest."

After the Celtics beat the Bucks in Game 7 to advance to the semifinals, Tatum was asked what he learned about himself playing in his first playoff series.

"I love what I do," Tatum said. "I love being out there. It's fun."

It's a feeling that, for now at least, Fultz has only gotten in a small dose.

"For me, it's all an opportunity," Fultz said. "When the coaches put me out there, that's what I'm going to be ready for. Other than that, I'm on the sidelines cheering my teammates on."

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Vanuatu plans to permanently evacuate entire volcanic island

By NICK PERRY, Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — The Pacific nation of Vanuatu is preparing to permanently evacuate the entire population of one of its islands as thick ash spewing from a volcano kills crops, dirties water supplies and fouls the air.

The 10,000 or so people who remain on Ambae island have mixed feelings about the plans. Some who are badly affected by the ash are eager to leave while others are resisting losing their land and culture.

The island was temporarily evacuated last September when the eruption cycle began. This time, authorities are planning a permanent move.

Government spokesman Hilaire Bule told The Associated Press on Thursday that he expects the Council of Ministers to approve a relocation plan by next week. Bule said the islanders would be offered residence on two neighboring islands.

"It's not an easy decision," Bule said.

He said there were many details to work through, including providing schools and facilities to the displaced residents and negotiating land and new homes for them.

Many people have close family and spiritual ties to the islands where they'll be relocated, Maewo and Pentecost, Bule said. Traditional religion even has it that the islands are part of a family — Pentecost being the mother, Maewo the father and Ambae the son.

Most people on Ambae live a subsistence lifestyle by farming and fishing. Already hundreds of people have moved to temporary shelters on parts of the island that are not so affected by the ash.

Ambae is about 400 square kilometers (154 square miles) and is one of about 65 inhabited islands in Vanuatu, which is home to 280,000 people.

Vanuatu sits on the Pacific's "Ring of Fire," the arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes and volcanoes are common.

Brad Scott, a New Zealand volcanologist with GNS Science who has been seconded to help Vanuatu authorities, said more than one-quarter of Ambae has been severely impacted, with many traditional thatch roofs collapsing under the weight of the thick ash.

He said traditional gardens have been buried and killed in some places and water supplies have been discolored and the water tastes strange. He said there is lots of fine-grained ash, which can affect people's breathing and respiratory functioning.

Other countries including France, New Zealand and Australia provided aid and financial help for the earlier evacuation. Australia on Thursday announced it was providing 300,000 Australian dollars (\$226,000) to help with the island's permanent evacuation, with a focus on the needs of women, children and people with disabilities.

Despite the problems, Scott said, many people want to stay put.

"There has been significant pushback in the community," Scott said. "Some people, suffering from significant ash fall, would love to be anywhere else on the planet. Others have strong cultural associations."

Scott said the Manaro volcano on Ambae island had a large eruption about 400 years ago and has had several smaller eruptions over the past 100 years. There have been three phases in the current eruption, with the most recent phase, which started in March, producing the most ash.

He said the volcano has actually quietened down over the past two weeks, although there is no way of predicting if and when the next explosive phase would begin.

Asked if there was a chance that the residents might be able to one day move back to the island, Bule, the government spokesman, said that was not a question for him.

"We don't know," he said. "You'll have to ask the volcano."

Fiery explosion at barricade scene injures up to 8 officers

By **DAVE COLLINS**, Associated Press

NORTH HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — A fiery explosion rocked a Connecticut town while police were negotiating with a man who had taken his wife hostage, leaving up to eight officers injured, officials said.

The officers suffered non-life-threatening injuries in the blast at a barn behind the couple's North Haven home Wednesday night.

Deputy Police Chief Jonathan Mulhern would not comment when asked early Thursday if the suspect was in custody.

"This is still an active, ongoing scene," he said. "This is not a stable scene at this point."

First Selectman Michael Freda said the wife escaped before the explosion.

"This started late this afternoon with what was apparently a very violent domestic call," Freda told WTIC-TV, adding that it led to a barricade situation and a SWAT team being called in. He said the police "were trying to coax him ... out of the house and really try to calm the situation down. Then things took a turn for the worse with an explosion."

Police were heard continuing to try to coax the man out of the house even after the explosion.

"It's quite surprising," Freda said. "This is a quiet residential neighborhood. It's been a very emotional scene."

Residents near the home said on the police department's Facebook page that they heard the explosion and felt their own homes shake. Additional police rushed to the scene as the fire raged, and sounds of smaller explosions also were heard.

North Haven resident Joan Mazurek, 76, a retired accountant, heard what she thought was a train at her home about a mile away from the scene. It was the explosion.

"Then we heard all the, oh my God, all the ambulances and fire engines. The noise from all the emergency vehicles was unbelievable," she said. "It's a shock. Nothing ever happens like this in North Haven."

The blaze was still burning early Thursday, said fire officials, adding that power was out to the area and a local firehouse had been set up as a "refuge" for affected residents.

State police said they were assisting North Haven police with the investigation. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives also responded to the scene.

North Haven is located just outside of New Haven, home to Yale University.

Video: Police inspect wires, weapons in Vegas shooter's room

By **KEN RITTER** and **MICHAEL BALSAMO**, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas police used explosives to blast into a high-rise hotel suite where a gunman unleashed the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history and found him dead, with a cache of assault-style weapons and broken windows that had a view of a concert venue killing field, according to police body-camera videos.

Hours of footage released Wednesday from two officers' body-worn cameras showed what some of the first officers uncovered when they got to the room but didn't provide new information about the motive for the rampage.

Police say Stephen Paddock killed 58 people and injured hundreds more on Oct. 1 when he unleashed gunfire from his Mandalay Bay suite onto a crowd below before killing himself as authorities closed in.

The videos show officers walking into the casino that was still packed with people playing slot machines and drinking beer — unaware that gunfire had been raining down on an outdoor concert from 32 floors up.

"You need to get everybody out of here," an officer tells two Mandalay Bay security guards. "There's a shooter up there. He's killed multiple people already."

The video shows officers methodically checking rooms on floors 29, 30 and 31 before getting to Paddock's room on the 32nd. An officer says, "Breach! Breach! Breach!" before a loud bang and a fire alarm begins to sound.

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Inside, Paddock's body is seen on his back, clad in dark pants and a long-sleeve shirt with a glove on his left hand. A pool of blood stains the carpet near his head as a police SWAT officer walks past.

Officers in the videos mentioned the number of firearms scattered around the room, one saying there were at least 10 high-powered weapons.

"Did he have any scoped weapons over there?" an officer asked. "Oh yeah," another replied.

Others talked about Paddock "blasting out the window" and pointed to "a whole suitcase full of loaded AK mags," referring to ammunition magazines for an AK-47 rifle.

Officers are seen looking behind curtains, and one grabbed an assault-style rifle from the ledge of a broken window. An officer told others to watch where they were stepping.

"I don't know what that is, but there's a wire there," the officer said. He then turned toward the room's door and said, "He put cameras up on the peepholes and all that. That's what these wires are."

An officer said the attacker "has an intricate camera system set up ... so he knew when officers were coming down the hallway."

The videos also record officers talking about whether there was evidence of a second shooter and finding Paddock's driver's license. Police and the FBI later said they believe the 64-year-old former accountant and high-stakes video poker player acted alone.

The footage does not show what the first officer through the door saw because he didn't activate his body-worn camera. The disclosure by police lawyers late Tuesday raised questions about whether officers followed department policy.

A police spokeswoman, Carla Alston, said Wednesday that no one in the agency would comment about the videos, whether the first officer followed proper procedure by not turning on his camera or whether he had been disciplined for violating policies.

The department requires officers with body cameras to activate them during calls that lead to interaction with residents and searches.

The newly released videos, totaling 2½ hours, are a sample of hundreds of hours of body-camera recordings and do not provide a complete view of everything police discovered when they entered Paddock's suite.

The Associated Press and other media outlets sued to obtain videos, 911 recordings, evidence logs and interview reports to shed light on the response by public agencies, emergency workers and hotel officials while Paddock fired for more than 10 minutes.

The police investigation is not finished, Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo told reporters Tuesday, saying he believed releasing the footage would "further traumatize a wounded community."

"For that, we apologize," said the elected head of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. "What is seen on those videos in no way changes the facts that we were able to clarify for you shortly after the crime."

Lombardo referred to a preliminary police report released Jan. 19 that said Paddock meticulously planned the attack, researched police SWAT tactics, rented hotel rooms overlooking outdoor concerts and investigated potential targets in at least four U.S. cities.

Police department lawyers had told a judge it would be time-consuming and costly to comply with the media outlets' public records requests and said the materials could disclose investigative techniques.

But the Nevada Supreme Court last week upheld a state judge's ruling that the records must be made public. Lombardo said Tuesday that the department would release more recordings in batches in coming weeks.

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press reporters Michelle L. Price and Regina Garcia Cano in Las Vegas and Stephen Valdivia in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

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Jones makes 34 saves as Sharks tie series with 4-0 win

By JOSH DUBOW, AP Sports Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — Marcus Sorensen and Joonas Donskoi delivered the fast start San Jose coach Peter DeBoer wanted and Martin Jones did the rest to help the Sharks tie their playoff series with Vegas at two games apiece.

Sorensen and Donskoi scored in the first period and Jones made 34 saves for his sixth career postseason shutout as the Sharks bounced back from an overtime loss to beat the Golden Knights 4-0 in Game 4 on Wednesday night.

"We'd been chasing the game the whole series," DeBoer said. "We talked about it, but it's easier said than done. I think we've had chances in the last two games to get out in front, but (Marc-Andre) Fleury has I think been exceptional, especially early in games, in order to keep us off the board. It's nice that we've stuck with it, and hopefully we see some cracks."

Tomas Hertl added his team-leading fifth goal of the playoffs and Joe Pavelski scored a power-play goal in the third to set up a best-of-three for a spot in the Western Conference Final.

Game 5 is Friday night in Las Vegas.

Fleury made 30 saves and Vegas failed to convert on all five power-play chances while losing for the second time in eight games this postseason.

"They were a little more competitive than we were tonight," Golden Knights coach Gerard Gallant said. "We didn't play a bad game, but we didn't play well enough to win and they did, and they really did. I think we played well enough to win all of the first three, but tonight? No."

Jones was a big reason for that, starting with a key save early against Reilly Smith. Jones was helped on a delayed penalty when Brent Burns cleared a puck off the goal line and when James Neal hit the post on a power play in the first period.

But the San Jose goalie also delivered some big-time saves, including back-to-back stops against William Karlsson and Jonathan Marchessault on a Vegas power play in the final minute of the second. Jones then turned aside Smith on a power play in the third.

Jones tied Evgeni Nabokov's team record for most saves in a playoff shutout, and the Sharks have turned things around following a 7-0 loss in the opener.

"I thought we probably managed the puck a little bit better for the whole game," Jones said. "We won battles on the boards, we got pucks out when we needed to and we got pucks in when we needed to. That was big for us tonight."

Hertl helped give Jones a cushion with his goal early in the second. Logan Couture won an offensive zone faceoff against Erik Haula, and Mikkel Boedker took the puck behind the net for a wraparound attempt. Hertl was in front and knocked in the loose puck to make it 3-0.

Pavelski's goal on the rebound of Couture's shot sealed the game midway through the third.

The Sharks made some changes from Game 3, with defenseman Joakim Ryan returning to the lineup for the first time since March 16 in place of Paul Martin, and Donskoi getting back in after missing the previous game with a lower-body injury.

After an early giveaway led to a scoring chance for Vegas, Ryan fared well and stripped William Carrier of the puck to thwart a chance for the Golden Knights.

San Jose then scored twice in the final five minutes of the first period. Sorensen struck first, using a pick from linemate Eric Fehr to get loose from the corner and then skate around two defenseman to beat Fleury with his fourth goal of the playoffs.

The Sharks added to the lead with 5.1 seconds to go when Donskoi skated from his own zone and beat Fleury with a wrist shot from the high slot.

"At the start of the game they actually had some better looks than we did. I think they came out hard and better than we did and then Marcus scored and Joonas' goal was big as well," Couture said. "The 2-0 goal was a massive goal heading into the first intermission."

Vegas was never able to recover from that early deficit.

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"We got caught a little bit sleeping in the first period and they took advantage," Marchessault said.

NOTES: Nabokov made 34 saves in playoff shutouts against Calgary in 2004 and Detroit in 2007. ... Vegas had outscored the opposition 7-1 in the first period through its first seven games this postseason. ... Sorensen has five goals in 14 playoff games compared to six in 51 regular-season games.

More NHL hockey: <https://apnews.com/tag/NHLhockey>

Giuliani: Trump repaid Cohen \$130K for payment to porn star

By CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump reimbursed his personal lawyer for \$130,000 in hush money paid to a porn actress days before the 2016 presidential election, Rudy Giuliani, one of Trump's attorneys, said Wednesday, appearing to contradict the president's past claims that he didn't know the source of the money.

During an appearance on Fox News Channel's "Hannity," Giuliani said the money to repay Michael Cohen had been "funneled ... through the law firm and the president repaid it."

Asked if Trump knew about the arrangement, Giuliani said: "He didn't know about the specifics of it, as far as I know. But he did know about the general arrangement, that Michael would take care of things like this, like I take care of things like this for my clients. I don't burden them with every single thing that comes along. These are busy people."

The comments appeared to contradict statements made by Trump several weeks ago, when he said he didn't know about the payment to porn actress Stormy Daniels as part of a nondisclosure agreement she signed days before the presidential election. Giuliani later suggested to The Wall Street Journal that while Trump had repaid the \$130,000, Cohen had settled the payment to Daniels without Trump's knowledge at the time.

Giuliani's revelation seemed aimed at reducing the president's legal exposure. But outside experts said it raised a number of questions, including whether the money represented repayment of an undisclosed loan or could be seen as reimbursement for a campaign expenditure.

Asked aboard Air Force One last month whether he knew about the payment, Trump said flatly: "No." Trump also said he didn't know why Cohen had made the payment or where he got the money.

In a phone interview with "Fox and Friends" last week, however, Trump appeared to muddy the waters, saying that Cohen represented him in the "crazy Stormy Daniels deal."

The White House referred questions to the president's personal legal team.

Giuliani, a former New York City mayor and ex-U.S. attorney who joined Trump's legal team last month, said the president had repaid Cohen over several months, indicating the payments continued through at least the presidential transition, if not into his presidency. He also said the payment "is going to turn out to be perfectly legal" because "that money was not campaign money."

No debt to Cohen is listed on Trump's personal financial disclosure form, which was certified on June 16, 2017.

Giuliani also described the payment to Daniels as "a very regular thing for lawyers to do."

Daniels' lawyer, Michael Avenatti, called the comment "a stunning revelation."

"Mr. Trump evidently has participated in a felony and there must be serious consequences for his conduct and his lies and deception to the American people," he said.

Giuliani made the statements to Fox host Sean Hannity, who has his own connection to the case. It was recently revealed in court that Hannity is one of Cohen's clients. Hannity has described his personal dealings with Cohen as centered on real estate advice and said that it "never rose to any level that I needed to tell anyone that I was asking him questions."

Daniels, whose legal name is Stephanie Clifford, says she had a sexual encounter with Trump in 2006, months after his third wife gave birth to his youngest child, and was paid to keep quiet as part of a nondisclosure agreement she is now seeking to invalidate. She has also filed a defamation suit against Trump

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after he questioned a composite sketch she released of a man she says threatened her to stay quiet.

The White House has said Trump denies having a relationship with Daniels.

Cohen had said previously: "Neither the Trump Organization nor the Trump campaign was a party to the transaction with Ms. Clifford, and neither reimbursed me for the payment, either directly or indirectly." He notably did not include the president personally.

Asked about Cohen's denial, Giuliani said that he didn't know whether Cohen had made the payment without asking Trump but that he had "no reason to dispute that."

The revelation from Giuliani came as Cohen was under escalating legal pressure. He is facing a criminal investigation in New York, and FBI agents raided his home and office several weeks ago seeking records about the nondisclosure agreement.

Daniels' lawsuit over the hush deal has been delayed, with the judge citing the criminal investigation.

The payment to Daniels has raised numerous legal questions, including whether it was an illegal campaign contribution and, now, loan.

"If this is true then it looks like Cohen may have made an unreported loan to the campaign rather than a contribution," said Richard L. Hasen, an expert in election law at the University of California, Irvine.

He said that might be better for Cohen, but not for Trump, because it undermines the argument that Cohen was acting independently.

"The greatest significance is that it implicates the president directly," he said.

Law firms advance expenses for clients as a matter of course, and so there's nothing inherently improper about a lawyer covering a particular payment and then being reimbursed for it. In this case, though, the client who apparently reimbursed the expense was running for president and the money was paid just days before the election, raising questions about whether Cohen's law practice was functioning as a vendor for the campaign and whether the expense was therefore an unreported campaign expenditure. If so, that could be legally problematic.

Andrew Herman, an attorney specializing in campaign finance law at Miller & Chevalier, said Giuliani's argument that this was a private payment unrelated to the campaign appears to be "pretty far-fetched" given the timing — weeks before the election while Trump was under fire for his behavior with women and for an "Access Hollywood" tape in which he spoke of groping women without their consent.

But if Cohen or Trump could establish that discussions with Daniels over the payment long predated his run for office, that could help them with the argument that the money was a personal rather than political expense.

"It obviously increases the president's exposure to potential campaign finance violations, but it also makes him look terrible," said Sol Wisenberg, a defense attorney who was a deputy independent counsel during the Starr special counsel investigation into President Bill Clinton.

"I don't understand the Giuliani strategy," he added. "Maybe it's been too long since he's been in the criminal justice field."

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

Lobbyist tied to Pruitt pushed client's committee candidates

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The lobbyist whose wife rented a condo to Environmental Protection Agency head Scott Pruitt at \$50 a night sought EPA committee posts for a lobbying client, according to a newly released EPA memo.

J. Steven Hart's seeking those appointments from his wife's former tenant, Pruitt, shows "the extent to which the special interests providing him with gifts have sought specific favors from EPA in return," said Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, the senior Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The memo makes for the latest in a monthslong barrage of news reports and federal investigations questioning spending and other actions at Pruitt's EPA. Pruitt's former security chief, whose time with Pruitt

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saw the EPA administrator provided with round-the-clock security and first-class flights in the name of security, appeared for an hourslong closed-door interview Wednesday with staff on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Pruitt has repeatedly blamed his security staff and other subordinates for questioned spending by his office. Last week, the EPA head told congressional lawmakers that he had no idea staffers had spent \$43,000 on a soundproof booth after he asked for a private, secure communications set-up.

His former deputy chief of staff, Kevin Chmielewski, denied that, telling ABC News in a segment aired Wednesday that Pruitt knew the booth would be "on the tune of over \$40,000."

The New York Times first reported the new memo from Hart, the lobbyist.

Hart wrote the email Aug. 10 to Ryan Jackson, Pruitt's chief of staff.

"I want to highlight three candidates...who were nominated by our client, Dennis Treacy, the president of the Smithfield Foundation," Hart wrote, suggesting appointments for the three to an EPA science advisory board.

The foundation is an arm of Smithfield Foods Inc. of Virginia, known for its hams. Smithfield Foods paid at least \$280,000 in lobbying fees in 2017 to Hart's firm, and Hart was listed by name as representing Smithfield as its lobbyist when he wrote the email, according to federal lobbying records.

Asked if the request represented a conflict of interest for Pruitt, the EPA provided a statement from Jackson that did not address that question directly. The suggestions were among hundreds the EPA received for the board, and the three people suggested by Hart were not appointed to the advisory board, Jackson said in the statement.

Pruitt told Fox News in April that "Mr. Hart has no clients that had business before this agency," but a spokesman for Hart subsequently acknowledged that Hart actually met with Pruitt in his office in July 2017, about one month before Hart's proposed nominations to discuss efforts to preserve the Chesapeake Bay.

Pruitt's assertion had been in response to questions about the propriety of his leasing the condo, at a bargain rate, from Hart's wife.

Pallone, the lawmaker, called the August email "further proof that Administrator Pruitt has consistently misled Congress and the public."

Separately Wednesday, an environmental group released EPA emails it had obtained from a freedom-of-information lawsuit showing a former lobbyist for foreign governments persistently pitching Pruitt aides on a proposed official trip to Australia last summer.

Matthew Freedman, a promoter of U.S.-Australian business ties, framed much of his correspondence touting the trip to EPA staffers like a travelogue: On Sydney's Bondi Beach, he wrote Pruitt aide Millan Hupp, "you can walk as long as you want on a long and winding paved walking trail along the sea..and watch the surfers. I can send some photos if it is useful to visualize. Definitely a memorable experience."

Freedman's emails showed him keeping U.S. diplomats in Australia, typically involved in government trips, at arms' length at the start of his pitching. The charge d'affaire at the U.S. Embassy in Australia would likely have good ideas for the trip, "but I want to wait a bit before I contact him," Freedman wrote.

The emails "expose the fact that corporate lobbyists are orchestrating Pruitt's taxpayer-funded trips," said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, which obtained the documents.

Pruitt has drawn fire for costly foreign and domestic travel with staffers, including a multiday journey to Morocco and France in December, for reasons Democratic lawmakers say don't justify the expense.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said the Australia trip was organized by the agency, not Freedman, and noted that Hurricane Harvey ultimately forced cancellation of the trip. Freedman, last registered as a representative in the U.S. for foreign governments in the 1990s, was not a registered lobbyist, Wilcox said.

Debate underway ahead of hearing for Trump's CIA nominee

By **DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — With few details about Gina Haspel's undercover career, debate over President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the CIA descended into verbal sparring between those who praise her experience and others who want her disqualified because of her role in the spy agency's harsh interroga-

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tion of terror subjects after 9/11.

Haspel faces a contentious hearing in the Senate intelligence committee next week ahead of what the White House admits will be a close confirmation vote in the full Senate.

Hoping to sway senators his way, Trump tweeted on Wednesday: "Gina Haspel has displayed dedication and leadership throughout her more than three decades of service with the CIA and is the right person to lead the Agency."

That was a few hours after her critics held a conference call in which Chris Anders of the American Civil Liberties Union lamented: "If confirmed, Gina Haspel would be the first and only person confirmed by the Senate — we believe in its entire history — with a known operational role in using torture."

Also on that call was Dan Jones, the lead author of the Senate's report about how the CIA captured and sent terror subjects overseas to black sites where they were harshly interrogated.

"The findings and conclusions of the Senate were that the program was deeply mismanaged, that the CIA had provided misinformation to the president, Department of Justice, Congress and the American people," Jones said.

"Haspel would have been aware of the deficiencies in the program," he said, given her positions with the CIA's counterterrorism center, or CTC, and field operations from 2001 to 2008.

Jones wouldn't say how many times Haspel's name was mentioned in the 7,000-page Senate report that remains classified except for a 500-page executive summary. But he noted that Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California, Martin Heinrich of New Mexico and Ron Wyden of Oregon, who have had access to the entire report, have said that the more they read the classified version, the more disturbed they are by the actions Haspel has taken during her career.

Haspel, 61, the agency's acting director, joined the CIA in 1985. In a statement, the White House said she has shown an "unparalleled commitment to the mission of the CIA and the rule of law" and has counterterrorism and management experience and strong working relations with administration officials.

To be confirmed she will need at least 50 of the Senate's 100 senators to give her the nod since Vice President Mike Pence can break a tie.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., is battling brain cancer and might not make the vote, and even if he does, it's unclear if he'd back Haspel. McCain was instrumental in getting Congress to prohibit harsh interrogation techniques like those used on terror suspects after 9/11 and has said that any CIA nominee must pledge to uphold the ban.

With McCain's absence, Republicans have a 50-49 margin in the Senate. Marc Short, the White House legislative affairs director, said he hoped there will be enough Democrats who prioritize Haspel's qualifications, but that he still expects "it will be a close vote."

Haspel has received robust backing from former intelligence, diplomatic, military and national security officials. They recently wrote a letter, saying Haspel is a "proven leader" who can "make tough calls in times of crisis." Among those signing the letter were six former CIA directors — Porter Goss, John Brennan, Leon Panetta, George Tenet, William Webster and Mike Hayden — and three former national intelligence directors — James Clapper, Mike McConnell and John Negroponte.

However, many human rights advocates and groups are urging a "no" vote for Haspel.

Faiz Shakir, the ACLU's national political director, claims that Haspel's nomination is "clearly on the rocks" and that she would fail if the Senate held her confirmation vote today. To drive dissent, the ACLU on Wednesday released a \$50,000 digital ad buy targeting Californians and urging Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., to vote against her. Shakir said other senators might be targeted before the Senate votes.

Anders, deputy director of the ACLU's legislative office in Washington, said that while the administration has shared tidbits about how Haspel likes country singer Johnny Cash and once met the Roman Catholic nun and missionary Mother Teresa, it has only declassified one document about her career.

Last month, the CIA released a memo showing Haspel was cleared of wrongdoing in the destruction of videotapes showing terror suspects being waterboarded after 9/11. It unclear if the agency will declassify any additional information.

The eight-page memo written in 2011 summarizes a disciplinary review conducted by then-CIA deputy

director Mike Morell. He said that while Haspel was one of the two officers "directly involved in the decision to destroy the tapes," he "found no fault" with what she did.

Haspel drafted a cable ordering the destruction of the tapes, but Haspel's boss, Jose Rodriguez, who at the time was chief of the CIA's clandestine service, actually dispatched the order to have 92 videotapes shredded in 2005.

"No senator should agree to even vote on the Haspel nomination until or unless CIA truly opens its books to the American people about her role in the use of torture," Anders said.

Passengers heard window popping on Southwest plane

By **MARK GILLISPIE and DAVID PORTER, Associated Press**

CLEVELAND (AP) — Passengers on a Southwest Airlines plane first heard a loud pop and then scurried away when they saw a jagged crack in a window that forced the jet to land in Cleveland on Wednesday.

Some on board immediately thought back to just two weeks ago when a jet engine blew apart and broke a window, leading to a woman being partially sucked out and killed aboard another Southwest flight.

"It made you nervous because something like this just happened," said passenger Paul Upshaw of Chicago, who was about two seats from the window. "We didn't know if it was going to crack open."

There were no reports of injuries after Flight 957 heading from Chicago to New Jersey landed safely Wednesday after making an abrupt turn toward Cleveland while over Lake Erie, according to tracking data from FlightAware.com.

Some of the plane's 76 passengers told The Associated Press that the crew quickly checked the window near an emergency exit and handled the situation smoothly.

"People just started scattering," said Upshaw, who added there was no yelling or screaming. "We didn't panic."

Dallas-based Southwest said that the plane was diverted to examine damage to one of the three layers in the window, but didn't immediately release details on how it was broken. Photos taken by passengers and posted on social media showed one window with a large, jagged crack.

Southwest Airlines spokeswoman Brandy King said the plane never lost cabin pressure — which would have triggered oxygen masks to drop down for passengers — and that the pilots did not declare an emergency before landing.

There were no other mechanical problems with the Boeing 737, which was taken out of service, King said. The plane was built in 1998, and King said it has flown about 40,000 "cycles" or flights, "but the damaged window had been previously replaced and continues to receive regular checks as part of our maintenance program." She said it was inspected last month.

Rich Robinson, a sheriff's deputy from Sandwich, Illinois, said when the window cracked, everybody in that area hit the button for the flight attendant.

"She went running back right away, saw it, and everybody cleared out from those couple of rows," he said.

The timing of the incident could hardly be worse for Dallas-based Southwest, the nation's fourth-biggest airline. Airline executives said last week they have seen ticket sales slow since the April 17 engine failure that sent debris flying into a plane, breaking a window and killing a passenger, 43-year-old Jennifer Rioridan of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Southwest estimates the drop in sales will cost it between \$50 million and \$100 million.

Robert Mann, an airline consultant and former American Airlines executive, said windows are periodically polished to remove crazing, the formation of tiny cracks from exposure to chemicals and the sun's rays. He said he couldn't recall a similar incident caused by crazing and that the pilots were right to make a quick landing.

The window on the flight that landed in Philadelphia blew out after being hit by a loose engine part. Rioridan died of injuries suffered after she was partially sucked out.

After the Philadelphia emergency landing, the Federal Aviation Administration ordered inspections of more jet engines. The National Transportation Safety Board believes one of the blades snapped on the

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Southwest flight, hurling debris that broke a window.

Boeing declined to identify the supplier that manufactured the windows on its 737-700s, the model involved in Wednesday's incident and last month's fatal accident.

Associated Press writer David Koeing, in Dallas, contributed to this story. Porter reported from Newark, New Jersey.

60-year-old C-130 that crashed in Georgia was on final trip

By **RUSS BYNUM and DANICA COTO, Associated Press**

PORT WENTWORTH, Ga. (AP) — An aging C-130 Hercules that rescued and resupplied U.S. citizens after last year's hurricanes crashed onto a highway in Georgia during what was supposed to be its final flight, killing all nine Puerto Ricans on board.

After more than 60 years of government service, the huge plane was being flown into retirement in Arizona, reducing Puerto Rico's National Guard fleet to five similar planes, two of which need maintenance and aren't being used, Adjutant General Isabelo Rivera said.

"The planes that we have in Puerto Rico -- it's not news today that they are the oldest planes on inventory" among all National Guard planes nationwide, and they often face delays in getting spare parts shipped to the island, he said.

It's too early to say what might have caused the plane to drop out of the sky onto Georgia's Highway 21 moments after taking off from Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport. Rivera said the plane last received maintenance at the military base in Savannah in April.

All nine crew members had helped with hurricane recovery efforts as part of the 198th Fighter Squadron, nicknamed the Bucaneros, which flies out of Base Muniz in the northern coastal city of Carolina, Rivera said. The squadron used the plane to rescue Americans from the British Virgin Islands after Hurricane Irma, and later supplied food and water to Puerto Ricans desperate for help after Hurricane Maria.

"The National Guard is an extended family," Rivera said as doctors, psychologists and chaplains gathered to meet with the victims' relatives.

The huge plane came down so hard that the only part still intact was its tail section, said Chris Hanks, a spokesman for the Savannah Professional Firefighters Association. The fuselage appeared to have struck the median, and pieces of its wings, which spanned 132 feet (40 meters), were scattered across lanes in both directions.

The debris field stretched 600 feet (183 meters) in diameter, Effingham County Sheriff's spokeswoman Gena Bilbo said.

"It miraculously did not hit any cars, any homes," she said. Eight hours after the crash, she confirmed that "To our knowledge there are no survivors."

Motorist Mark Jones told the Savannah Morning News that he saw the plane hit the road right in front of him, and explode in a huge fireball.

"It didn't look like it nosedived, but it almost looked like it stalled and just went almost flat right there in the middle of the highway," Jones said.

"I'm still shook up and shaking. My stomach is in knots because I know they're people just like me. I wasn't that far from it and I could have just kept going and it would have been me and we wouldn't be talking right now," Jones said.

The U.S. territory's Gov. Ricardo Rossello expressed his sadness, tweeting that "our prayers are with the families of the Puerto Rican crew."

President Donald Trump tweeted that he had been briefed on the crash, and sent "thoughts and prayers for the victims, their families and the great men and women of the National Guard."

Coto reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Associated Press writer Jeff Martin in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Report indicates Greitens' campaign lied about donor list

By DAVID A. LIEB, SUMMER BALLENTINE and BLAKE NELSON, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A former campaign aide to Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens testified that he was duped into taking the fall when the governor's campaign was trying to explain how it had gotten a list of top donors to a veterans' charity that Greitens had founded, according to a legislative report released Wednesday.

The report from a special House investigatory committee indicates that Greitens himself received the donor list of The Mission Continues so he could call key supporters and explain that he was stepping down as CEO in 2014. It says Greitens later directed political aides to work off the charity's list to raise money for his gubernatorial campaign — even though he had signed an agreement never to disclose the charity's confidential donor information.

"The report shows the governor took advantage of a charity that works hard to take care of our veterans," said Republican Rep. Jay Barnes, chairman of the bipartisan committee charged with investigating whether to try to impeach and remove the first-term Republican governor from office. The charity donor list "was taken without permission and used inappropriately for political gain."

Transcripts of an aide's testimony indicate that Greitens' campaign lied when it settled a Missouri Ethics Commission complaint last year by categorizing the charity list as an in-kind donation valued at \$600 provided on March 1, 2015, by Daniel Laub, who had functioned as Greitens' campaign manager.

"The whole document made me sick," Laub said in an April 18 deposition. "One, because it was misrepresented; and two, because now I was in a round of news stories falsely portraying what happened."

The House report also indicates that Greitens began consulting with and paying political advisers before he officially created a campaign committee in February 2015, raising more questions about whether he skirted state campaign finance laws.

Catherine Hanaway, an attorney who lost to Greitens in the 2016 Republican primary, issued a statement on behalf of Greitens' campaign committee saying that Barnes never asked or allowed it to provide testimony.

Former Missouri Supreme Court Chief Justice Edward "Chip" Robertson Jr., who is counsel to the House committee, in response said the House will issue subpoenas to campaign personnel. In a statement, he said the committee report had its desired effect: causing those affiliated with Greitens' team "to offer to do what they have so far refused to do when asked — to provide information to the committee."

Hanaway also defended the decision to report Laub as the source of the charity list by noting that the list already was in his possession when Greitens officially created his political committee.

"This is, at its core, a minor campaign finance issue," Hanaway said.

Greitens already faces a felony charge of tampering with computer data for allegedly disclosing the charity donor list to his political fundraiser in 2015 without the St. Louis-based charity's permission. Greitens has not been charged with filing a false campaign report, which is misdemeanor crime, but authorities are reviewing the matter.

Greitens also faces a May 14 trial in St. Louis on a felony invasion-of-privacy indictment for allegedly taking and transmitting a nonconsensual photo of an at least partially nude woman in March 2015. Greitens has acknowledged having a consensual affair with his former hairdresser but has denied criminal wrongdoing.

The House investigatory committee released an initial report April 11 with the woman's testimony that Greitens restrained, slapped and threatened her during sexual encounters that at times left her crying and afraid.

The latest report, like the first one, simply lays forth facts without drawing conclusions about impeachment.

The Associated Press first reported in October 2016 that Greitens' campaign had obtained a list of individuals, corporations and other nonprofits that had given at least \$1,000 to The Mission Continues. The AP reported that Greitens raised about \$2 million from those who had previously given significant amounts to the charity.

At the time Greitens told the AP: "No, we were not working off of a Mission Continues donor list." But he acknowledged soliciting campaign money from some people he had gotten to know while working at

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the charity.

The House report indicates Greitens actually was working off a Mission Continues list of top donors. Email records show the donor list was emailed May 8, 2014, to Greitens and other Mission Continues employees, including Krystal Taylor, who simultaneously worked for Greitens' personal promotional company, The Greitens Group. Taylor is now Krystal Proctor.

Although federal law bars 501(c)(3) charities such as The Mission Continues from intervening in political campaigns on behalf of candidates, a Greitens attorney has suggested Greitens was entitled to the list because he built it "donor by donor, friend by friend."

The Mission Continues president, Spencer Kympton, testified that the list was covered by a nondisclosure agreement signed by Greitens in November 2012 and included donors cultivated through a variety of means, not just by Greitens.

The report details multiple instances in which Greitens allegedly directed the charity list to be shared for political purposes, including during meetings in 2014 to discuss his upcoming gubernatorial campaign. Proctor said she also provided it at Greitens' direction to Laub and political consultant Michael Hafner in January 2015.

When Meredith Gibbons was hired as Greitens' campaign finance director, documents show that Proctor sent her an April 22, 2015, email with The Mission Continues donor list attached — a transmission that was the basis for the charge filed last month.

After the AP's story in October 2016, former Democratic Party Chairman Roy Temple filed an ethics complaint asserting that the charity list should have been reported by Greitens' campaign. In an April 2017 settlement with the Missouri Ethics Commission, Greitens' campaign agreed to pay a small fine and amended its finance reports to show the list as a donation from Laub.

But Laub testified that he wasn't the source of the list and didn't realize he was agreeing to say he was when Greitens' campaign aide Austin Chambers called him in April 2017.

Laub said Chambers had explained that "we need to put someone's name down who was on the campaign at the time" to settle an ethics complaint. Laub said he assumed he was agreeing to being listed as the campaign manager — not as the source of the list.

Chambers, who took over for Laub as campaign manager in fall 2015, on Wednesday called Laub "a disgruntled former employee."

"To say that I provided false information, or misled Laub to go along with false information, is absolutely untrue," Chambers said.

The report also notes that Greitens was making political moves long before he officially formed a campaign committee in February 2015. A political consultant sent him a donor list of a potential gubernatorial rival, then-Auditor Tom Schweich, in October 2013, and Laub and Hafner began informally advising Greitens in early 2014.

Laub testified that he was hired in December 2014 by Greitens' limited-liability corporation "to prepare his political plans" and help with a book tour. Hafner said he began officially working for Greitens as a political adviser in January 2015, paid either directly by Greitens or The Greitens Group.

State law says candidates must form a campaign committee with the Missouri Ethics Commission whenever they raise or spend more than \$500.

Trump hires lawyer who represented Clinton in impeachment

By CHAD DAY and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday hired a veteran attorney who represented Bill Clinton during his impeachment process as the White House shifted to a more aggressive approach to a special counsel investigation that has reached a critical stage.

The White House announced the hiring of lawyer Emmet Flood after disclosing the retirement of Ty Cobb, who for months has been the administration's point person dealing with special counsel Robert Mueller.

It's the latest shakeup for a legal team grappling with unresolved questions on how to protect the

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president from legal and political jeopardy in Mueller's Russia probe, which is nearing the one-year mark.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said that Cobb had been discussing the decision for weeks and would retire at the end of May and that Flood would be joining the White House staff to "represent the president and the administration against the Russia witch hunt."

"I'm deeply grateful to the president and the chief of staff for this opportunity to serve my country," Cobb told The Associated Press on Wednesday night. "It's been a privilege, and I'm confident that the matter will be in good hands with Emmet Flood."

The replacement of Cobb with Flood may usher in a more adversarial stance toward the Mueller team as Trump's lawyers debate whether to make the president available for an interview with the special counsel and brace for the prospect of a grand jury subpoena if they refuse.

Although Cobb does not personally represent the president, he has functioned as a critical point person for Mueller's document and interview requests, coordinated dealings with prosecutors and worked closely with Trump's personal lawyers. He has repeatedly urged cooperation with the investigation in hopes of bringing it to a quick end, and he has viewed his role as largely finished now that interviews with current and former White House officials have been completed.

Yet Flood, who was embroiled in the bitterly partisan Clinton impeachment fight 20 years ago, may well advocate a more confrontational approach. His law firm, Williams & Connolly, is one of Washington's most prominent, with a reputation for aggressive advocacy for its clients and a history of tangling with the government. It has also represented senior White House officials, including presidents.

Flood, a former law clerk to the late Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia, has defended former Vice President Dick Cheney in a lawsuit brought by former CIA official Valerie Plame and represented President George W. Bush in executive-privilege disputes with Congress - suggesting he is well-versed in the powers of the presidency and may invoke those authorities as the Mueller investigation moves forward.

Flood was always the top choice of White House counsel Don McGahn for the job Cobb was given last summer, according to a person familiar with the hiring decision who described Flood as a "fighter." The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Cobb and McGahn hold different views on how cooperative the White House should be with the special counsel investigation.

Cobb's retirement, though not a surprise, was nonetheless the latest evolution for a legal team marked by turnover.

Trump's lead personal lawyer, John Dowd, left in March. Another attorney whom Trump tried to bring on ultimately passed because of conflicts, and the president two weeks ago added former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and a pair of former prosecutors, Martin and Jane Raskin, to work alongside mainstay lawyer Jay Sekulow.

Critical decisions lie ahead. The president's legal team has not committed him to an interview with Mueller, who has dozens of questions on a broad array of topics he'd like to ask. Trump initially said he was eager for an interview, but he hasn't said so recently. His view of Mueller soured further after raids last month that targeted one of his personal lawyers, Michael Cohen, in a separate investigation.

Those interview negotiations are hugely consequential, especially after Dowd confirmed to the AP this week that Mueller's team in March raised the prospect of issuing a grand jury subpoena for Trump, an extraordinary move that would seek to force a sitting president to testify under oath.

It was not immediately clear in what context the possibility of a subpoena was raised or how serious Mueller's prosecutors were about such a move. Mueller is probing not only Russian election interference and possible coordination with Trump associates but also possible obstruction of justice by Trump after he took office.

If Mueller's team decides to subpoena Trump, the president could still fight it in court or refuse to answer questions by invoking his Fifth Amendment protection from self-incrimination.

Trump lashed out against the investigation in familiar fashion Wednesday, tweeting: "There was no Collusion (it is a Hoax) and there is no Obstruction of Justice (that is a setup & trap)."

Also Wednesday, Trump echoed the concerns of a small group of House conservatives who have been

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criticizing the Justice Department for not turning over certain investigation documents.

"What are they afraid of?" Trump tweeted. "At some point I will have no choice but to use the powers granted to the Presidency and get involved!"

It was unclear what Trump meant by "get involved."

Several Republican House committee chairmen have recently negotiated deals with the Justice Department to turn over documents related to Russia investigations into Trump and to a 2016 investigation into Democrat Hillary Clinton's emails.

The Justice Department says that "dozens of members and staff from both parties" have viewed thousands of classified documents and House staff members have temporary office space in the department to review additional materials.

But some lawmakers who sit on those committees remain unsatisfied, particularly members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus. Some of them have asked for an unredacted version of a Justice Department document that sets out the scope for Mueller's probe, a request that the department immediately denied because it pertains to an ongoing investigation.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Trump's remarks on porn star payment differ from Giuliani's

By The Associated Press

Remarks by President Donald Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani differ over the matter of the \$130,000 payment by Trump's attorney Michael Cohen to porn star Stormy Daniels, who alleges a sexual tryst with Trump in 2006.

TRUMP'S EXCHANGE WITH A REPORTER ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

APRIL 5, 2018

Reporter: "Mr. President, did you know about the \$130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels?"

Trump: "No."

Reporter: "Then why did Michael Cohen make this if there was no truth to her allegations?"

Trump: "Well, you'll have to ask Michael Cohen. Michael's my attorney and you'll have to ask Michael."

Reporter: "Do you know where he got the money to make that payment?"

Trump: "No, I don't know."

GIULIANI'S EXCHANGE WITH FOX NEWS HOST SEAN HANNITY

MAY 2, 2018

Giuliani said the payment of \$130,000 to Daniels "is going to turn out to be perfectly legal. That money was not campaign money. Sorry, I'm giving you a fact now that you don't know. It's not campaign money, no campaign finance violation."

Hannity: "So, they funneled it through the law firm."

Giuliani: "They funneled it through the law firm, and the president repaid it."

He later added: "When I heard Cohen's retainer of \$35,000 when he was doing no work for the president, I said, 'That's how he's repaying it, with a little profit and a little margin for paying taxes for Michael.'"

Asked if Trump knew about the arrangement, Giuliani said: "He didn't know about the specifics of it, as far as I know. But he did know about the general arrangement, that Michael would take care of things like this, like I take care of things like this for my clients. I don't burden them with every single thing that comes along. These are busy people."

Asia shares fall as markets mull Fed, await China trade meet

By **KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer**

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian stock markets were mostly lower Thursday as investors analyzed the Fed's decision to stand pat on interest rates. The focus was turning to talks beginning Thursday between U.S. and Chinese officials in Beijing aimed at resolving festering trade tensions.

KEEPING SCORE: Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng index slumped 1.9 percent to 30,146.44 and South Korea's Kospi dipped 0.3 percent to 2,498.45. The Shanghai Composite in mainland China shed 0.6 percent to 3,064.33 but Australia's S&P/ASX 200 advanced 0.8 percent to 6,098.30. Shares in Taiwan and Southeast Asia were lower. Japan's markets were closed for a holiday.

TRADE TRIP: A U.S. delegation led by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was due to arrive in Beijing on Thursday for two days of talks with senior Chinese leaders in an effort to calm worsening friction over the trade imbalance between the world's two biggest economies.

NO CHANGE: In leaving rates unchanged, as investors and analysts had expected, the Fed said it expects to continue gradually raising them. The U.S. central bank also said inflation is approaching its 2 percent target after years of remaining undesirably low, though policymakers didn't suggest they're overly concerned that inflation will overshoot that.

QUICK TAKE: "With much of the good news in the equity world currently factored in, investors are left mulling over the paradoxical landscape of stellar earnings but higher interest rates and the threat of trade war," said Stephen Innes, head of Asian trading at OANDA. "This struggle is unlikely to end anytime soon."

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks ended lower after a sell-off in the final hour of trading. The S&P 500 index fell 0.7 percent to 2,635.67. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 0.7 percent to 23,924.98. The Nasdaq composite slid 0.4 percent to 7,100.90.

ENERGY: Oil's rally fizzled. Benchmark U.S. crude slipped 12 cents to \$67.81 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract jumped 1 percent to settle at \$67.93 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 15 cents to \$73.21 per barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar weakened to 109.68 yen from 109.86 yen in late trading Wednesday. The euro rose to \$1.1978 from \$1.1952.

Blockbuster hopes Russell Crowe's jockstrap helps business

By **MARK THIESSEN, Associated Press**

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A celebrity jockstrap that's been the buzz of Alaska for nearly two weeks went on display Wednesday at one of the nation's last Blockbuster video stores in an effort to ramp up business.

"I tell you, we're going to get a lot of traffic, is what I'm expecting," said Kevin Daymude, general manager of Blockbuster Alaska.

He expects the store to get a lot of calls: "Did you get it in? Can we go see it?" he said.

The jockstrap has a strange history since actor Russell Crowe wore it in the 2005 movie "Cinderella Man." It recently became part of a celebrity auction, which Crowe has dubbed 'the divorce auction,' where it caught the eye of the host of HBO's "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver."

Oliver purchased the jockstrap and some other items and sent them to Anchorage, which has one of the last remaining big box store video chains. The video store is trying to stave off streaming movie services, which are gaining popularity as more broadband capability comes to the nation's most remote state.

Oliver also sent along the robe and boxing shorts worn by Crowe in the movie as well as the actor's hood from "Robin Hood," his vest from "Les Misérables" and a director's chair with Crowe's name on it.

But the prize is the leather jockstrap, and Daymude believes it might have a unique place in movie folklore.

"The very first jockstrap memorabilia I can think of, yes," he said.

And as for the most asked question so far, no, he doesn't know if they washed it before sending it, but he would like to think they did.

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Daymude admits it was "be awesome" if Crowe were ever to show up at the store, but in the meantime he'd like to send photos of the display to him as a thank you.

And as for Oliver, Daymude said he would like to thank him by sending him copies of the movies that features the memorabilia Oliver sent to Alaska.

"I don't know if he's ever seen the movies, but I figure we can send him the movies and he can watch them," Daymude said.

A message seeking comment from HBO wasn't immediately returned Wednesday.

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh camps await new danger: rain

By JULHAS ALAM, Associated Press

KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh (AP) — The Rohingya refugees have escaped soldiers and gunfire. They have escaped mobs that stormed through their villages, killing and raping and burning. They have fled Myanmar, their homeland, to find shelter in sprawling refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh.

Now there's a new danger: rain.

The annual monsoon will soon sweep through the immense camps where some 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have lived since last year, when they poured across the border in search of safety. The clusters of bamboo and plastic huts, built along endless waves of steep hills, are now facing a deluge that, in an average year, dumps anywhere from 40 to 60 centimeters (16 to 24 inches) of rain per month.

"I will not be able to light a fire. The wells will flood and I won't be able to get water. The outhouses will be destroyed. The house might also break down," sobbed Rahana Khatun, 45, who fled Myanmar last year with her husband and five children. "What will happen to us then?"

"I have fled my country. I am grateful to Allah for the little I have here in Bangladesh," she said. "But now the rains are coming and I am so worried!"

Government authorities and aid agencies have warned of a catastrophe if there are heavy rains this year. The monsoon usually reaches Bangladesh in April and reaches its peak between June and August, bringing almost daily downpours. Occasional rains have already hit the camps this year, with the full monsoon expected in the coming weeks. Aid agencies are now pre-positioning supplies across the camps, since flooding could easily block paths to food, water and medical care. With most of the area's foliage long gone, stripped away by refugees looking for firewood, little natural protection remains against mudslides.

The early rains have already loosened the dirt on steep hillsides, and tons of earth has shifted in some places. While a handful of people have been relocated, most remain at risk.

"There are no more trees, no more roots, so there could be massive landslides, burying people that live at the bottom of the hills" and carrying away those who live on hilltops, said UNICEF spokesman Benjamin Steinlechner. "So that is the major risk."

An even bigger worry is cyclones forming in the nearby Bay of Bengal.

Cyclones used to regularly kill thousands in Bangladesh, with the storms sweeping through low-lying areas and devastating everything in their path. The country has made remarkable progress against the storms over last few decades, installing networks of warning systems and fortified shelters. But there are no reinforced shelters in the camps.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society estimates that at least 100,000 refugees will be exposed to extreme dangers during the monsoon.

"If there is a cyclone, there really is not much more we can do," said Steinlechner. "People will be blown away, houses will be blown away. That's the risk everybody in the camp is facing right now."

"We are reaching out to the people right now to make sure that they know where to go in case they find themselves in an emergency situation," he said.

Construction workers are building 200 new homes in part of the Kutupalong camp. The homes, funded by overseas donors, will have concrete floors, bamboo walls and tarpaulin roofs. Other workers are planting grass and trees around the homes to help prevent erosion and landslides.

But even those homes, some of the best for kilometers (miles) around, won't be able to withstand a

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major storm.

"It's not enough, not at all," said Dipu Dhali, a construction foreman. "Only 200 families will be relocated here, but what will happen to thousands of other families?"

While some Rohingya refugees have lived in Bangladesh for decades, hundreds of thousands more fled here after Myanmar security forces launched a scorched-earth campaign in late August in response to attacks by a Rohingya insurgent group. Thousands of people are believed to have been killed in the crack-down, which many rights activists believe was a calculated attempt to drive Rohingya from the country.

Rohingya are denied citizenship in overwhelmingly Buddhist Myanmar, where they have long faced persecution. Many in Myanmar see them as illegal migrants from Bangladesh, and deride them as "Bengalis." Most have long lived in poverty in Myanmar's Rakhine state, next to Bangladesh.

In the camps, residents are doing whatever they can to prepare for the rains, using sandbags, ropes and bamboo.

Hazera Begum helped her husband on a recent day to reinforce their home, in the steep hills of the Balukhali camp, with more bamboo and plastic sheeting. They know they can't completely protect themselves, and are simply hoping for the best.

"Rainy days are coming," she said.

Arizona teachers rally as funding vote nears to end strike

By MELISSA DANIELS and BOB CHRISTIE, Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Striking Arizona teachers who won a big pay increase but came up substantially short of achieving their demands for more school funding flooded the Arizona Capitol for a fifth day Wednesday hoping it will be the last they are out of their classrooms.

The Republican-controlled Legislature was considering a state budget that promises the first installment of a 20 percent pay increase by 2020 and a partial restoration of cuts to education funding, but many teachers said if the lawmakers failed to act Wednesday, they would not go back to work.

A day full of delays led strike organizers to ask teachers to return Thursday, and some school districts that had planned to re-open cancelled classes. The House and Senate planned late-night debates on the budget package.

Teachers didn't get everything they wanted, but believe they made major inroads. They had sought an immediate 20 percent pay raise, competitive pay for support professionals, guaranteed annual raises, funding returned to 2008 levels and no new tax cuts until Arizona reaches the national per-pupil funding average.

"We here in Arizona have banded together as educators, we've set up a grass-roots movement with 1,700 schools involved, 1,700 liaisons, and if we're ever called to come back we will come back together and we'll come back stronger," middle school teacher Scott Gebbie said.

He was among thousands of #RedforEd movement educators at the Capitol on Wednesday.

The tentative budget deal between legislative leaders and Republican Gov. Doug Ducey is a major victory for teachers, who were offered only a 1-percent raise in the governor's initial budget proposal. The offer set for debate and likely passage by late Wednesday remains substantially unchanged from the one announced two weeks before teachers walked out last Thursday.

Lawmakers did tweak it with changes to the rosy economic projections Ducey relied on to make funding more sustainable. And a top Republican lawmaker gave teachers credit for keeping the pressure on.

"I think that they had a promise from us that we were going to do something," House Majority Leader John Allen said. "Our track record of delivering that promise has not always been perfect, so I don't think they wasted their time."

Ducey, who is seeking re-election and faced the wrath of teachers for pushing tax cuts while the state's teacher pay and school funding remains among the lowest in the nation, also will likely declare victory. The Republican Governors Association is already running ads touting Ducey as providing major new school funding "without raising taxes."

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The grass-roots group called Arizona Educators United that called the strike was created in early March as a wave of teacher protests over low pay and school funding swept across the nation. From its beginnings in West Virginia, it spread to Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona and most recently Colorado.

But Arizona's schools closures likely affected the most students, more than 800,000, and the first day of the strike saw a crowd estimated at 50,000 march to the state Capitol.

Teachers say they're not happy with what they've been offered, even though they realize this is what they will get this year.

"It bothers me a lot, but we'll be back in November and we'll be doing a lot of work between now and then getting the people in who will support education and will stop these tax cuts, and we will have the money," said Sarah Barrett, an early childhood special education teacher in Mesa, who said her school doesn't have the money to fix its air conditioning.

She said she is a Republican but is fed up with the state Legislature and with Ducey. "I didn't put him in, but I for sure will make sure he gets out, because this is ridiculous," Barrett said. "We deserve better."

On Tuesday, the ad-hoc group and the Arizona Education Association told teachers to return to work Thursday if the budget is passed.

Educators had to change their tactics after budget approval appeared imminent, association president Joe Thomas said. Now, the movement will pivot to longer-term efforts, such as a ballot initiative to create an increased funding stream and electing lawmakers who support public education funding.

Thomas said Wednesday he's confident that educators and their supporters will remain mobilized

"The writing is on the wall, they're going to ignore the students and teachers and plight of the schools, and they're going to put through the budget they want," he said.

9 Puerto Ricans killed in final flight of 60-year-old C-130

By **RUSS BYNUM** and **DANICA COTO**, Associated Press

PORT WENTWORTH, Ga. (AP) — A crew of nine Puerto Ricans were flying an Air National Guard C-130 into retirement in Arizona when it crashed onto a highway in Georgia on Wednesday, and authorities said there are no survivors.

The plane crashed onto state highway 21 moments after taking off from the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport, narrowly missing people on the ground and sending an orange and black fireball into the sky.

"It miraculously did not hit any cars, any homes," Effingham County Sheriff's spokeswoman Gena Bilbo said. "This is a very busy roadway."

Eight hours after the crash, she added: "To our knowledge there are no survivors."

The huge plane's fuselage appeared to have struck the median, and pieces of its wings, which spanned 132 feet (40 meters), were scattered across lanes in both directions. The debris field stretched 600 feet (183 meters) in diameter, Bilbo said. The only part still intact was the tail section, said Chris Hanks, a spokesman for the Savannah Professional Firefighters Association.

The plane was more than 60 years old, said Isabelo Rivera, Adjutant General of Puerto Rico's National Guard. Belonging to the 156th Air Wing, it was used to rescue U.S. citizens stranded in the British Virgin Islands following Hurricane Irma and ferry supplies to the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria last year.

"The planes that we have in Puerto Rico -- it's not news today that they are the oldest planes on inventory" of all National Guard planes nationwide, Rivera said. Puerto Rico's National Guard has five other similar planes, two of which need maintenance and aren't being used, he said.

It's too early to say what might have caused the accident, he said. The plane last received maintenance at the base in Savannah in April.

All nine crew members had helped with hurricane recovery efforts as part of the 198th Fighter Squadron, nicknamed the Bucaneros, which flies out of Base Muniz in the northern coastal city of Carolina, Rivera said.

"This pains us," Rivera said of the deaths. They aren't releasing names until all the families have been

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contacted, but "most of them already know and have come to the base."

Motorist Mark Jones told the Savannah Morning News that he saw the plane hit the road right in front of him, about a mile (less than two kilometers) from the airport.

"It didn't look like it nosedived, but it almost looked like it stalled and just went almost flat right there in the middle of the highway," Jones said, describing how people stopped and got out of their cars following the explosion.

"I'm still shook up and shaking. My stomach is in knots because I know they're people just like me. I wasn't that far from it and I could have just kept going and it would have been me and we wouldn't be talking right now," Jones said.

The U.S. territory's Gov. Ricardo Rossello expressed his sadness, tweeting that "our prayers are with the families of the Puerto Rican crew."

President Donald Trump tweeted that he had been briefed on the crash, and sent "thoughts and prayers for the victims, their families and the great men and women of the National Guard."

Coto reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Associated Press writer Jeff Martin in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Can Trump be forced to testify? Legal precedents suggest yes

By MARK SHERMAN and ERIC TUCKER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Can a president be forced to testify?

While the Supreme Court has never definitively ruled on the subject, the answer appears to be yes.

The question was tested during the Watergate scandal in 1974, when justices held unanimously that a president could be compelled to comply with a subpoena for tapes and documents. After the ruling, President Richard Nixon turned the materials over to prosecutors and then resigned.

Twenty-three years later, in allowing Paula Jones' sexual harassment suit to go forward against President Bill Clinton, Justice John Paul Stevens wrote: "We have made clear that in a criminal case the powerful interest in the 'fair administration of criminal justice' requires that the evidence be given under appropriate circumstances lest the 'very integrity of the judicial system' be eroded."

In the same case, Stevens also said that presidents have given testimony and produced documents often enough that "such interactions ... can scarcely be thought a novelty."

In 1998, independent prosecutor Ken Starr served a subpoena on Clinton that ordered him to testify about his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Clinton soon agreed to testify voluntarily, an arrangement Starr went along with because it headed off a potential challenge to the subpoena on constitutional grounds.

That testimony led to Clinton's impeachment on charges he lied under oath and obstructed justice. The occasion also was the first in which a sitting president testified under oath in a criminal investigation in which he was a potential target.

Whether President Donald Trump will be the second as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe remains to be seen. Mueller is investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election, whether Trump's campaign coordinated with Russia in any way and whether Trump obstructed justice after the election.

As Trump's lawyers have negotiated with Mueller's team over the terms of a possible interview, Mueller raised the prospect in March of issuing a grand jury subpoena for his testimony, his former attorney said. Attorney John Dowd told The Associated Press on Tuesday that Mueller's team had broached the subject.

As the Clinton case demonstrates, the issuance of a subpoena would not mean the end of negotiations over an interview.

But if he were subpoenaed and did not want to testify, Trump could always invoke his constitutional right not to testify against himself and decline to answer questions. But that act would pose significant political risk.

"As a practical matter, the president would have the ability to refuse to answer practically any question,"

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said Bill Jeffress, a veteran Washington defense lawyer who was involved in Nixon's defense. "He has to give his name, his occupation, and that sort of thing. But any questions about his official activities or campaign activities, he can just refuse to answer."

Trump could seek a court order to quash the subpoena, though it's not clear that he would have any success.

Jeffress said he knows of no law that would "remotely prohibit" subpoenaing a president for testimony.

"The idea that the president would be immune from testifying in a serious criminal prosecution is probably a nonstarter," he said.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 3, the 123rd day of 2018. There are 242 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On May 3, 1978, spam email was born as Gary Thuerk (thurk), a marketing executive for the Digital Equipment Corp. of Maynard, Massachusetts, transmitted an unsolicited sales pitch for a new line of computers to 400 prospective customers on ARPANET, a precursor to the internet; the stunt generated some business, as well as complaints. "Sun Day" took place on a Wednesday as thousands of people extolling the virtues of solar energy held events across the country.

On this date:

In 1515, Pope Leo X promulgated the bull "Inter sollicitudines" allowing the Catholic Church to review and censor books.

In 1791, the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania adopted a constitution.

In 1810, English poet Lord Byron, inspired by the Greek myth of Hero and Leander, swam across the Hellespont, a strait in present-day Turkey.

In 1916, Irish nationalists Padraic Pearse, Thomas Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh were executed by a British firing squad; they were among 16 people put to death for their roles in the Easter Rising.

In 1937, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Gone with the Wind."

In 1948, the Supreme Court, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to blacks or members of other racial groups were legally unenforceable.

In 1952, the Kentucky Derby was televised nationally for the first time on CBS; the winner was Hill Gail, ridden by Eddie Arcaro.

In 1960, the Harvey Schmidt-Tom Jones musical "The Fantasticks" began a nearly 42-year run at New York's Sullivan Street Playhouse.

In 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher was chosen to become Britain's first female prime minister as the Tories ousted the incumbent Labour government in parliamentary elections.

In 1986, in NASA's first post-Challenger launch, an unmanned Delta rocket lost power in its main engine shortly after liftoff, forcing safety officers to destroy it by remote control.

In 1999, some 70 tornadoes roared across Oklahoma and Kansas, killing 46 people and injuring hundreds.

In 2007, British girl Madeleine McCann vanished during a family vacation in Portugal nine days before her fourth birthday; her disappearance remains unsolved.

Ten years ago: Barack Obama defeated Hillary Rodham Clinton by seven votes out of more than 4,500 cast in the Guam Democratic presidential caucuses, meaning the candidates split the pledged delegate votes. Big Brown won the Kentucky Derby by 4 3/4 lengths. (Filly Eight Belles finished second and then broke both front ankles; she was euthanized on the track.)

Five years ago: President Barack Obama cast Mexico as a nation ready to take "its rightful place in the world" and move past the drug battles and violence that had defined its relationship with the United

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States; the president then headed to Costa Rica, where he told a press conference he didn't foresee any circumstance requiring the U.S. to send ground troops into Syria. Gunmen killed Chaudhry Zulfikar, Pakistan's lead prosecutor investigating the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto (BEN'-uh-zeer BOO'-toh), as he drove to court in the capital.

One year ago: President Donald Trump met at the White House with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas (mahk-MOOD' ah-BAHS'), promising "to do whatever is necessary" to forge an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. FBI Director James Comey told Congress that revealing the reopening of the Hillary Clinton email probe just before Election Day came down to a painful, complicated choice between "really bad" and "catastrophic" options, but in hindsight would have acted no differently. Actress Daliah Lavi, 74, died in Asheville, North Carolina.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alex Cord is 85. Singer Frankie Valli is 84. Idaho Gov. Butch Otter is 76. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, is 75. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 72. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is 69. Pop singer Mary Hopkin is 68. Singer Christopher Cross is 67. Country musician Cactus Moser (Highway 101) is 61. Rock musician David Ball (Soft Cell) is 59. Former Sen. David Vitter, R-La., is 57. Country singer Shane Minor is 50. Actress Amy Ryan is 50. Actor Bobby Cannavale (ka-nuh-VAL'-ee) is 48. Music and film producer-actor Damon Dash is 47. Country musician John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band) is 47. Country-rock musician John Neff is 47. Country singer Brad Martin is 45. TV personality Willie Geist (TV: "Today") is 43. Actress Christina Hendricks is 43. Actor Dule (doo-LAY') Hill is 43. Country singer Eric Church is 41. Actress Tanya Wright is 40. Dancer Cheryl Burke is 34. Soul singer Michael Kiwanuka is 31. Actress Jill Berard is 28. Actress Zoe De Grand Maison is 23. Rapper Desiigner (cq) is 21.

Thought for Today: "A man can become so accustomed to the thought of his own faults that he will begin to cherish them as charming little 'personal characteristics.'" — Helen Rowland, American writer, journalist and humorist (1876-1950).