

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 1 of 57

Chicken Soup
for the Soul.



- 1- Harry Implement Ad
- 1- Mail Highway Route Relief Driver
- 1- Carlson Thank You
- 1- Chicken Soup for the Soul
- 2- HS Booster PAC Thank You
- 2- Regents Approve New System Math Pathway Model
- 3- Keeping Horses Safe from Equine Herpesvirus (EHV)
- 4- Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in South Dakota
- 4- SunDial Manor Help Wanted Ad
- 5- Today in Weather History
- 6- Today's Forecast
- 7- Yesterday's Weather
- 7- National Weather map
- 7- Today's Weather Almanac
- 8- Daily Devotional
- 9- 2018 Groton Community Events
- 10- News from the Associated Press

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

Thursday, May 10

10 a.m.: Girls golf at Madison

Friday, May 11

11 a.m.: Northeast Conference track at Webster

Carlson Thank You

THANK YOU TO all who contributed to the gift box at Lori's Pharmacy. I received 2 cutting boards, potholders, serving bowl with spoons, picture frame, 2 mugs, 2 glass pans and a pot holder/towel set. Thank you again so much for thinking of me at this special time in my life.

Holly Carlson

Harry Implement

"Family Owned & Operated Since 1935!"



(605) 395-6421

Ferney

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

Regents Approve New System Math Pathway Model

VERMILLION, S.D. – In an effort to improve student retention and graduation rates, a new instructional model for mathematics has been approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents. As a result, no public university student will be required to take traditional remedial mathematics courses by fall 2019, although several options will be available to each student. This initiative, called the 'math pathways model,' is a result of a comprehensive review on how to improve student success in mathematics at the six public universities in South Dakota.

The math pathway is a uniform, system-wide set of options for students currently placing into developmental education mathematics courses. It grants flexibility to campuses in how to best serve their students and eases course transfers across the university system.

"The biggest change to occur is that by fall of 2019 students will be enrolled in math coursework that best aligns with needs of their degree program," said Paul Turman, the regents' system vice president for academic affairs. "Those that traditionally would have enrolled in non-credit remedial math will be provided opportunities to take co-requisite math coursework with supplemental instruction. The ultimate goal of the pathway is to design courses in a way students have the support they need to be successful whatever their career path."

Under the pathway, students who did not take math their senior year of high school or non-traditional students who need a refresher in math have the option to take a non-credit math course. In addition or instead a student may choose from three different pathways.

- Mathematical reasoning pathway - for students in programs that additional math is not required. Examples of these programs include social sciences and visual arts.

- College algebra pathway -for students with coursework with a prerequisite of college algebra. Areas of study requiring this pathway include health sciences, education, and business.

- Calculus pathway –for students in programs that calculus is the foundation of the program requirements. Examples of programs requiring a calculus foundation include engineering programs, computer science, and mathematics.

"Improving math outcomes has been a high priority for the regents. For many students math, especially college algebra, can be a stumbling block on their way to college success. The desired outcome of implementing this model is to put students on the right path to completing their chosen degree," said Mike Rush, the regents' executive director and CEO.

The Groton HS Booster PAC Post-Prom Committee would like to thank the following businesses and organizations:

For donations of \$100 or more: Locke Electric, Groton American Legion Auxiliary, United Methodist Church Women, Groton Veterinary Clinic, James Valley Telecommunications, Roger and Darci Spanier, Poet Biorefining, Aberdeen Elks Lodge

For donations \$26-\$50: Kolker Law, Frost Construction, First State Bank, Diana Chapter OES No. 83, Groton Ford, Lori's Pharmacy, Milbrandt Enterprises, Wells Fargo, Harry Implement, Groton Chiropractic Clinic, Erickson Insurance Agency, Full Circle Ag, S & S Lumber, Marc and Franne Sippel, GDI News/Clean/Fit/Live.

For Donations of \$25: Columbia American Legion, Professional Management Services, Krueger Brothers Gravel & Dirt, Groton Kiwanis, Rix Farms.

For Donations of Supplies and/or Services: The Jungle, Circus Bar, Ken's Food Fair, Dollar General, A & S Hardware.

Without your generosity, this event would not happen.

Thank You!

Keeping Horses Safe from Equine Herpesvirus (EHV)

Column by Russ Daly, Professor, SDSU Extension Veterinarian, State Public Health Veterinarian

In recent weeks, equine herpesvirus (EHV) infections have affected horses in South Dakota and the surrounding region.

These horses have been associated with travel to and from events such as rodeos where they have contact with numerous horses from a wide area.

While in general, herpesvirus infections in horses are not rare, this particular strain of the virus (the "neurologic" form) can cause severe and even fatal illnesses in those affected - this illness is sometimes referred to as "equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy" or EHM.

Like the other strains, the neurologic form of the virus is quite contagious and can easily be passed from horse to horse.

Horses affected with EHM show signs of illness that begin with fever and possibly some mild respiratory issues such as runny nose, sneezing, and cough.

Over the next several days, nervous system problems may develop. These signs may include incoordination, weakness or paralysis of one or more legs (which might look like lameness), muscle tremors, loss of tail and bladder function and, finally, an inability to rise.

Infected horses spread the EHV virus mostly through breathing and fluids from the nose and mouth.

Close contact with an infected horse is usually necessary for a horse to catch the virus, but buckets, halters and other tack can carry the virus from one horse to another.

An infected horse can be a source of infection even before they start showing serious signs of illness.

Horse owners can take steps to prevent EHM from affecting their horses:

- During events, limit the horse's contact with other horses and equipment used by other horses.
- When arriving home, keep the horse separate from other horses for a period of three weeks.

This will allow for easier recognition of illness and will prevent the spread to horses that have remained at home. Limit person and equipment contact between the isolated horse and other horses. Avoid bringing the horse to events until after that time period has passed.

- Clean and disinfect any equipment, tack or trailers that accompanied the horse to the event.
- Keep horses up to date on routine preventive vaccines and parasite control.

While current "rhino" vaccines do not appear to protect against neurologic strains of EHV, preventing these other illnesses will prove valuable in restoring the health of a horse potentially affected with EHM.

In addition, all horse owners should obtain the necessary Certificates of Veterinary Inspection/health papers when horses cross state lines.

Certain horse events may require these papers regardless of the horse's origin. This practice not only ensures that horses showing early signs of illness do not travel and spread it to others, it also allows for officials to contact horse owners promptly if their horse has unknowingly been exposed to an EHV-infected horse.

When signs of EHM are suspected, a horse owner should promptly contact their veterinarian. Take care to isolate the affected horse from others as soon as possible, limit visitor traffic, and manage tack and equipment so other horses are not exposed. The veterinarian may take nasal swab samples for a diagnosis, but this is usually only successful early in the course of the disease.

There is no specific treatment or cure for EHM, so veterinarians will outline a course of supportive care. Despite these best efforts, in many horses, the disease progresses to the point where euthanasia is necessary.

For more information about EHM and your horse's health, contact your local veterinarian. The South Dakota Animal Industry Board (www.aib.sd.gov) and SDSU Extension (www.igrow.org) also have information about EHM.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 4 of 57

Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in South Dakota

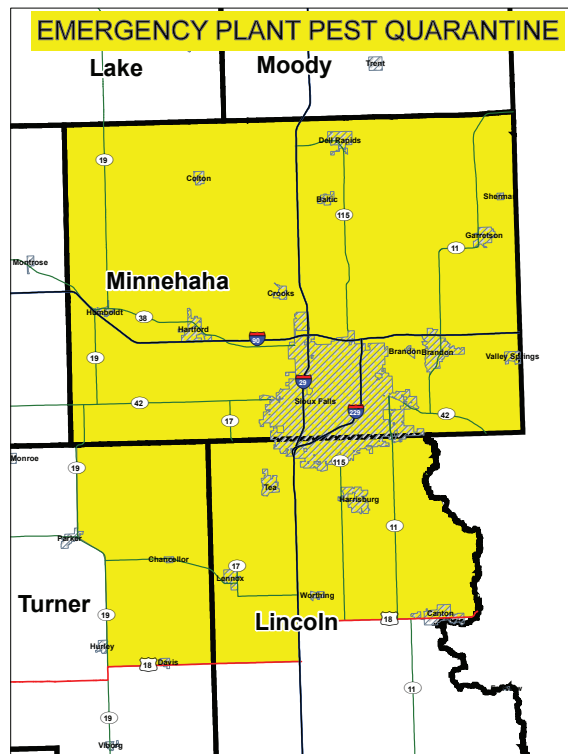
PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) has confirmed that an infestation of emerald ash borer (EAB) has been discovered in northern Sioux Falls. This is the first confirmed infestation in South Dakota. Emerald ash borer is an invasive insect that has killed tens of millions of ash trees in at least 32 states.

On May 9, 2018, Secretary Mike Jaspers implemented an Emergency Plant Pest Quarantine in order to prevent or reduce the spread of the EAB. This emergency quarantine is effective immediately.

The quarantine restricts the movement of ash materials in all of Minnehaha County, in areas north of Highway 18 in Lincoln County and north of Highway 18 and east of Highway 19 in Turner County, unless accompanied by the appropriate authorization from the SDDA. These regulated ash materials include: ash nursery stock; ash logs, lumber, wood chips or mulch, including trimmed ash tree branches; and pallets made out of ash. Movement of firewood from any hardwood species, whether intended for commercial or private use, is also restricted within the quarantine area.

Ash trees within the quarantine area should not be pruned or removed unless absolutely necessary until after Labor Day to prevent spread of EAB. As a precautionary measure, people with ash trees in good condition within the quarantine area who want to save those trees should consider treating them now. Treatment information, as well as more information on EAB and response efforts, can be found by visiting emeraldashborerinouthdakota.sd.gov the SDDA's dedicated EAB webpage.

The SDDA is hosting EAB information forums on Thursday, May 10, at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday, May 12 at 1 p.m. at the Game, Fish and Parks Outdoor Campus located at 4500 South Oxbow Avenue in Sioux Falls. These forums will provide important information for residents in the quarantine area on EAB and current efforts to limit its spread. Dr. John Ball, Forest Health Specialist for the SDDA and SDSU Extension Forester, as well as officials from the SDDA and the City of Sioux Falls, will present information and answer questions.



**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**

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 5 of 57

Today in Weather History

May 10, 1982: An F3 tornado was first sighted six miles west of Tintah, Minnesota. The storm moved into the town of Tintah and then northeastward, dissipating north of Wendell. Two farms, sites were damaged west of Tintah. Nearly one dozen farm buildings were destroyed, and 50 cows were killed. Hail as large as softballs preceded the tornado into Tintah where there was extensive damage. A school and church received heavy damage, two railroad cars were overturned, homes and grain buildings were damaged, and utility poles and trees were uprooted.

1880: A tornado estimated to be F4 intensity moved across 20 miles of Scott and Morgan Counties in central Illinois. The tornado touched down near Aley and moved northeast, passing 8 miles south of Jacksonville. The tornado was strongest in the Pisgah area, where 30 buildings were destroyed. Seven people were killed.

1905: On Wednesday, May 10th, 1905, the Oklahoma Territory was struck by one of the worst natural disasters in early American history. Tornadoes pounded the southwest part of the Territory, one of which flattened the town of Snyder. The "official" death toll is listed today as 97, but the actual number of victims may never be known. One hundred years later, this single tornado remains the second most deadly in Oklahoma history.

1953: Four, F4 tornadoes touched down in parts of eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. One F4 tornado moved northeast from northeast of Fountain City, Wisconsin to Colburn, Wisconsin. Total damage from this storm was \$1 million, and it caused ten injuries.

The second F4 tornado moved from 5 miles southwest of Chester, Iowa to 4 miles northeast of Chatfield, Minnesota. One man was killed as his barn was destroyed one mile southeast of Wykoff. A rural school was leveled 3 miles south of Chatfield as well.








The third F4 tornado moved northeast and passed about 2 miles northwest of St. Charles, Minnesota. Farms were torn up all along the track. An infant was killed, and four other people were injured in a car that was thrown 100 feet. Overall this tornado killed one person and injured 11 people.


The final F4 tornado moved across Rusk, Price, and Taylor counties in Wisconsin. Over \$150,000 worth of damage resulted. An F3 tornado moved northeast across Clayton County, Iowa. At least 60 head of cattle were killed. A farmer was carried 700 feet but suffered only minor injuries.


2010: On this day, Oklahoma experienced its largest tornado outbreak since May 3, 1999. Fifty-five twisters tore through the state, including two rated EF4. The EF4 storms took three lives and injured 81 people. Ironically, both EF4 tornadoes struck Norman, Oklahoma, home of the Storm Prediction Center and the National Severe Storms Laboratory. Fourteen additional tornadoes hit Oklahoma during May 11-13. The May 10 disaster racked up insured property losses of \$2 billion.


Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 6 of 57

Thu May 10	Fri May 11	Sat May 12	Sun May 13	Mon May 14	Tue May 15	Wed May 16
						
55°F 40°F	61°F 44°F	63°F 43°F	72°F 48°F	78°F 54°F	78°F 53°F	75°F 52°F
NE 10 MPH Precip 10%	ENE 13 MPH	NE 10 MPH	ESE 6 MPH	S 8 MPH	S 9 MPH Precip 20%	NE 11 MPH Precip 20%







National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
5/10/2018 4:46 AM

Today

50-60°

**Cooler Today
Scattered Showers
Today - Saturday**

3 Day Forecast

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		
55-65°	55-65°	65-75°

Published on: 05/10/2018 at 4:52AM

Scattered showers will affect parts of the area today through Saturday. Chances for precipitation is best tonight into Friday morning for locations along and south of Highway 212. Temperatures will remain on the cool side through Saturday.

Groton Daily Independent

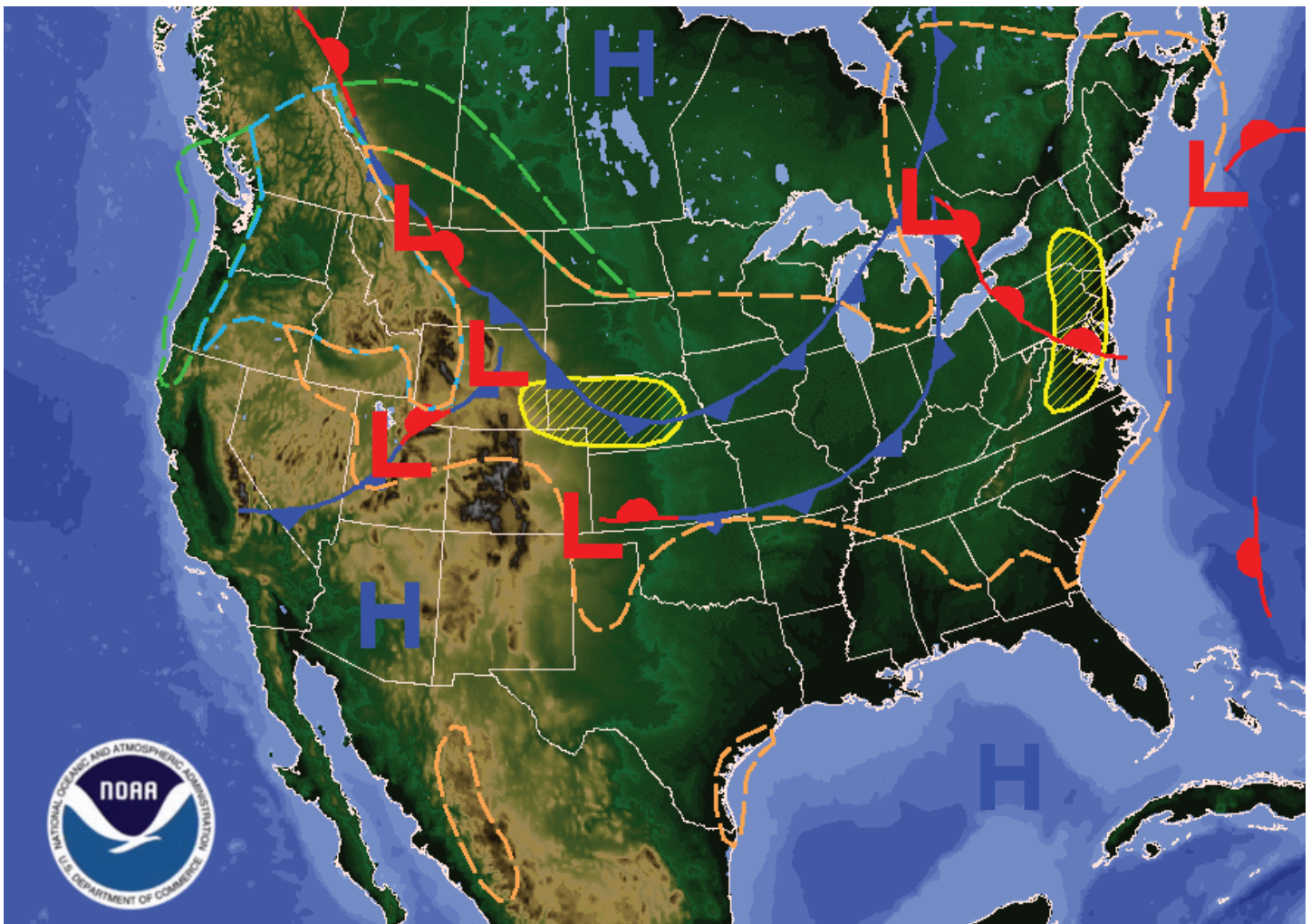
Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 7 of 57

Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 71.2 F at 3:31 PM
Low Outside Temp: 51.2 F at 11:29 PM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 25.0 Mph at 3:32 PM
Precip: 0.08

Today's Info

Record High: 95° in 1911
Record Low: 20° in 1981
Average High: 67°F
Average Low: 42°F
Average Precip in May: 1.03
Precip to date in May: 0.66
Average Precip to date: 5.06
Precip Year to Date: 3.34
Sunset Tonight: 8:51 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:08 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, May 10, 2018, issued 4:47 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 8 of 57



THE NEED FOR GOD'S HELP

Years ago, while living in California, I was walking through the aisles of a grocery store when suddenly the shelves began to shake. Items fell to the floor and the lights went out and people began to push and shove. A man standing near me shouted, "God, if I ever need Your help it's right now. Please save me!"

David must have felt that way as he faced a large and well trained army waiting for him in a heavily fortified city. His heart must have been filled with fear - and rightly so. The city was situated among rugged hills and was almost inaccessible. He knew the enemy was waiting for him, prepared and seemingly invincible. So, he too, called on God. "Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?"

Realizing the greatness of his enemy and his need for help he prayed, "Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless."

All of us face our "Edom's." It may be in the form of a dreaded disease and there are no more options. It may be the dissolution of a marriage and children will be left with feelings of fear and wonder. It may be the loss of a loved one and feelings of grief that haunt us night and day. It may be the loss of a child to an addiction. It may be the result of an accident that leaves a spouse paralyzed. It may be the confinement of a prison cell with little hope for freedom.

We all face our "Edom's." Yet, we can all pray with David, "With God we will gain the victory, and He will trample down our enemies." No enemy can escape God.

Prayer: Give us faith and fortitude, Father, to look to You for victory through Christ our Savior and Lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 108:12 Give us aid against the enemy, for human help is worthless.

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

Public comments sought on proposed Brown County hog farm

STRATFORD, S.D. (AP) — Public comments are being accepted on a proposed 7,740-hog operation in Brown County.

The American News reports that Tom Waldner with Elm Valley Farms has submitted a permit application to the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The deadline to submit comments is May 28.

The hog farm would be near Stratford. Manure generated at the facility would be applied to fields in the county.

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

Planting of corn and soybeans underway in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Planting of corn and soybeans is getting underway in South Dakota.

The federal Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that 1 percent of the soybeans is seeded and 6 percent of the corn is in the ground. Both are behind the average pace.

Planting of small grains crops in South Dakota also continues to lag. Only half of the spring wheat and oat crops are seeded. Last year at this time, the planting of both crops was close to wrapping up.

The state's winter wheat crop remains mostly in fair-to-good condition.

Topsoil moisture supplies are rated 85 percent adequate to surplus and subsoil moisture is 70 percent in those categories, both slightly down over the week.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

09-11-13-30-35

(nine, eleven, thirteen, thirty, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

02-10-28-36-45, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 2

(two, ten, twenty-eight, thirty-six, forty-five; Star Ball: two; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$45 million

Powerball

11-16-38-50-69, Powerball: 19, Power Play: 2

(eleven, sixteen, thirty-eight, fifty, sixty-nine; Powerball: nineteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$233 million

Paul TenHaken's path to Sioux Falls City Hall

By JOE SNEVE, Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Most of Sioux Falls knows Paul TenHaken.

But few know the details of how the 40-year-old founder of Click Rain went from a middle-class upbringing in rural Minnesota to being a week away from becoming Sioux Falls' 27th mayor.

Born and raised about 60 miles east on Interstate 90, TenHaken called Worthington, Minnesota, home until moving to Sioux Falls 18 years ago.

It was there, in his hometown, where he says he learned the value of both hard work and a dollar, bagging groceries at Hy-Vee to pay for a rusted-out 1980 Pontiac LaMonte.

"I paid a grand in cash for it," he said. "It had bench seats, and it was rusted out. I'd polish and shine that thing. I was so proud of it because I bought it with my own money."

Though his middle-class parents had the means to buy him the car, keep his gas tank full and his insurance up-to-date, TenHaken said they made him carry the burdens of automobile ownership himself. Like any child, it took him awhile to figure out why.

"It always frustrated me because I knew my parents had the means to help me out more, but they didn't, and it instilled in me a really strong work ethic."

The Argus Leader reports that Overcoming challenges is something he learned young as well.

Though he was colorblind, he enrolled at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, as an art major where he got his start in the digital marketing world. To get by in his graphic design classes — a primary necessity for anyone in the marketing field — he studied the color codes in the computer programs students used at the time.

It must've worked.

After graduating in 2000 and moving to Sioux Falls, TenHaken quickly made a name for himself in the city's tech and business communities.

But before the money starting flowing in from Click Rain, which he founded as a one-man startup in 2008, TenHaken used the athletic world to help him make ends meet.

TenHaken's friend Mike Heineman was transitioning into leadership of the Skyforce, Sioux Falls' semi-professional basketball team, and he was looking for someone to be the team's mascot "Thunder."

"I followed hoops religiously," TenHaken said. "I was 22 years old, and I like to have fun. And it actually paid really well."

He's also an athlete himself. A sponsored "Ironman," TenHaken has competed in dozens of high-profile, long-distance triathlons where athletes compete in swimming, running and bicycling events. And more recently he's excelled in obstacle course events called "Spartan Races," so much so he was invited to compete in a televised event on NBC in 2016.

While he had to step away from his business before entering the political arena, he said he plans to continue competing in sporting events while serving at City Hall, though he admits his opportunities to compete will be more limited.

"I'm signed up to do a half Ironman in Madison, Wisconsin, next month, and I think I'm going to still do it," he said. "I'm not in shape for it ... but I think there's an example you can set as a mayor with the things you do in your private time."

TenHaken said he hopes to incorporate his passion for physical wellness into city programming through the health department and the Live Well Sioux Falls initiative.

Through it all, he said his Christian values motivate him. And that's no secret as it's come up on the campaign trail, most starkly when he was criticized for declining an invitation to participate in a mayoral debate on a Sunday.

While his faith will be a part of his approach to leadership, he's said repeatedly it won't dictate his policies beyond being compassionate for people. And it won't keep him from doing the city's business on Sundays either, should the need arise, after he's sworn in May 15.

"I got beat up over that, but I get this is a 24-7 job — I realize when a sewer main breaks on Sunday

morning, I can't say, "Well, I got church this morning," he said. "I don't just sit on my hands on Sunday."

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

Sioux Falls refrigerated warehouse to open, expand

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A refrigerated cold-storage warehouse facility set to open soon in Sioux Falls is already planning to expand due to rising demand.

Win Chill's new 205,000-square-foot (19,000-square-meter) facility is scheduled to open May 23.

"Everything just keeps falling into place as we go along," said Jason Marquardt, Win Chill's managing partner. "We haven't had any major setbacks or roadblocks. It's been a really fun project to work on and see to completion."

Win Chill decided several months ago to spend up to \$20 million to add another 125,000 square feet (11,600 square meters), Marquardt said. The expanded space will be used to store more products at minus 20 degrees, such as ice cream.

"We had customers that needed more space than what we were building," he said. "We saw an opportunity and took it."

The expansion is slated to finish in December.

"No shortage of product, no shortage of demand," said Jeff Davis, the company's sales manager.

The facility could potentially make more than \$900,000 in state and local tax revenue a year, Davis said. The warehouse will also pay about \$400,000 in real estate taxes each year.

The company will employ about 60 full-time employees and 15 part-time employees.

The December expansion might not be the last, according to Davis.

He said the company "can put another 500,000 square feet together, and I see that happening in some form over the next three years."

Officials ID teen driver killed in South Dakota SUV rollover

EDGEMONT, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have released the name of an 18-year-old Rapid City man killed when a sport utility vehicle crashed in southwestern South Dakota last weekend.

The South Dakota Department of Public safety identifies the victim as Antonio Updike.

Updike was killed when the 2000 Subaru Outback he was driving on U.S. Highway 18 went off the road and rolled east of Edgemont early Sunday. He died at the scene.

Four teenage passengers suffered minor injuries.

No one was wearing seat belts.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating.

Emerald ash borer confirmed in northern Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An infestation of emerald ash borer has been discovered in northern Sioux Falls. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture confirmed the infestation Wednesday. It's the first confirmed infestation of the destructive tree pest in South Dakota.

State Agriculture Secretary Mike Jaspers has implemented an emergency plant pest quarantine aimed at preventing the spread of emerald ash borer.

The quarantine restricts movement of ash materials in all of Minnehaha County, in areas north of Highway 18 in Lincoln County and north of Highway 18 and east of Highway 19 in Turner County, unless accompanied by authorization from the state Agriculture Department. Movement of firewood from any hardwood species also is restricted within the quarantine area.

The invasive insect has killed tens of millions of ash trees in at least 32 states.

Judge sentences 2 men in Marshall County sexual abuse case

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Two of the five men charged in a Marshall County sexual abuse case involving a teenager have been sentenced.

The American News reports that 29-year-old Edgar Ramos was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of statutory rape and solicitation of a minor. A judge suspended a 10-year sentence for 21-year-old Damon Koop and says he must serve 90 days in jail on each charge of possession of child pornography and solicitation of a minor. Both men are from Britton.

Koop, Ramos and three other men were charged in 2017 with illegal sexual interactions with a girl who was younger than 16 at the time. Four of the men had sex with the girl even though they knew she was not old enough.

All suspects accepted plea agreements.

This story has been corrected to fix the charges against Ramos and Koop. Ramos was sentenced on statutory rape and solicitation of a minor charges, and Koop was sentenced on possession of child pornography and solicitation of a minor charges.

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

Israel hits dozens of Iranian targets in Syria after barrage

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military on Thursday said it attacked nearly all of Iran's military installations in neighboring Syria in response to an Iranian rocket barrage on Israeli positions in the occupied Golan Heights, in the most serious military confrontation between the two bitter enemies to date.

Israel said the targets of the strikes, its largest in Syria since the 1973 war, included weapons storage, logistics sites and intelligence centers used by elite Iranian forces in Syria. It also said it destroyed several Syrian air-defense systems after coming under heavy fire and that none of its warplanes were hit.

Iranian media described the attacks as "unprecedented," but there was no official Iranian comment on Israel's claims.

Israel has acknowledged carrying out over 100 airstrikes in neighboring Syria since the civil war erupted in 2011, most believed to be aimed at suspected Iranian weapons shipments bound for the Hezbollah militant group.

But in the past few weeks, Israel has shifted to a more direct and public confrontation with Iran, striking at Iranian bases, weapons depots and rocket launchers across Syria, and killing Iranian troops. Israel accuses Tehran of seeking to establish a foothold on its doorstep. Iran has vowed to retaliate.

Reflecting the scope of the overnight attacks, Russia's military said 28 Israeli jets were involved, striking at several Iranian and government sites in Syria with 70 missiles. It said half of the missiles were shot down.

Speaking at the Herzliya Conference, an annual security gathering north of Tel Aviv, Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Israel would respond fiercely to any further Iranian actions.

"We will not let Iran turn Syria into a forward base against Israel," he said. "We, of course, struck almost all the Iranian infrastructure in Syria, and they need to remember this arrogance of theirs. If we get rain, they'll get a flood. I hope that we ended this chapter and that everyone understood."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which closely monitors the civil war through sources inside Syria, said the overnight Israeli attacks struck several military posts for Syrian troops and Iranian-backed militias near the capital, Damascus, in central Syria and in southern Syria. The Observatory said the attacks killed 23 fighters, including five Syrian soldiers. It said it was not immediately clear if Iranians were among those killed.

An Iranian state television presenter announced the Israeli strikes, sourcing the information to Syria's state-run SANA news agency. The broadcaster described the Israeli attack as "unprecedented" since the 1967 Mideast war.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 14 of 57

Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 war, annexing it in 1981 in a move not recognized internationally. In 1974, Israel and Syria reached a cease-fire and a disengagement deal that froze the conflict lines with the plateau in Israeli hands.

Damascus shook with sounds of explosions just before dawn, and firing by Syrian air defenses over the city was heard for more than five hours. Syria's state news agency SANA said Israeli missiles hit air defense positions, radar stations and a weapons warehouse, but claimed most incoming rockets were intercepted.

Russia sent forces to Syria to back President Bashar Assad in 2015. But Israel and Russia have maintained close communications to prevent their air forces from coming into conflict. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traveled to Moscow on Wednesday to meet with President Vladimir Putin and discuss military coordination in Syria.

Israel said early Thursday that Iran's Quds Force fired 20 rockets at Israeli front-line military positions in the Golan Heights. Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said four of the rockets were intercepted, while the others fell short of their targets. The incoming attack set off air raid sirens in the Golan.

Conricus said Israel was not looking to escalate the situation but that troops will continue to be on "very high alert."

"Should there be another Iranian attack, we will be prepared for it," he said.

It is believed to be the first time in decades that such firepower from Syria has been directed at Israeli forces in the Golan Heights.

Iran's ability to hit back further could be limited. Its resources in Syria pale in comparison to the high-tech Israeli military and it could also be wary of military entanglement at a time when it is trying to salvage the international nuclear deal.

Iran has sent thousands of troops to back Assad, and Israel fears that as the fighting nears an end, Iran and tens of thousands of Shiite militiamen will turn their focus to Israel.

Earlier this week, Syrian state media said Israel struck a military outpost near Damascus. The Observatory said the missiles targeted depots and rocket launchers that likely belonged to Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard, killing at least 15 people, eight of them Iranians.

Last month, an attack on Syria's T4 air base in the central Homs province killed seven Iranian military personnel. On April 30, Israel was said to have struck government outposts in northern Syria, killing more than a dozen pro-government fighters, many of them Iranians.

Israel considers Iran to be its most bitter enemy, citing Iran's hostile rhetoric, support for anti-Israel militant groups and development of long-range missiles. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the international nuclear agreement with Iran, with strong support from Israel, has further raised tensions.

Israel and Iran have appeared to be on a collision course for months.

In February, Israel shot down what it said was an armed Iranian drone that entered Israeli airspace. Israel responded by attacking anti-aircraft positions in Syria, and an Israeli warplane was shot down during the battle.

But Thursday was the first time Israel openly acknowledged targeting Iran.

El Deeb reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Aron Heller in Herzliya, Israel, Zeina Karam in Beirut and Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed to this report.

Texas suit could speed DACA's path to Supreme Court

By JESSICA GRESKO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three judges have ordered the Trump administration to continue a program that has shielded hundreds of thousands of young immigrants from deportation. Now, a lawsuit filed last week in Texas seeks to shut down the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and may create a legal clash that could speed the issue's path to the Supreme Court.

President Donald Trump's decision in September to phase out the Obama-era program, called DACA, resulted in protests and a failed congressional effort to salvage it. Experts say it's a matter of when, not

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 15 of 57

if, the Supreme Court will rule on the program. It could be the second opportunity for the high court to weigh in on a high-profile decision of the president's, with a ruling on Trump's travel ban expected before the end of June.

Josh Blackman, a professor at South Texas College of Law Houston, said the Texas lawsuit filed May 1 tees up "a fast pass to the Supreme Court."

If Texas and six other states persuade a judge to issue a nationwide order barring the government from continuing DACA, that decision could conflict with existing judges' orders telling the government it must partially continue the program. That's the kind of conflict the Supreme Court generally steps in to address.

The high court has already finished hearing arguments ahead of its summer break at the end of June, and it's rare for the court to hear arguments again before October. But if judges issue conflicting orders on what the government must do with DACA, the court might be asked to make an interim, procedural decision, said Stephen Yale-Loehr, who teaches immigration law at Cornell University's law school. The Texas lawsuit "creates even more uncertainty in what is going to happen," he said.

DACA, created in 2012, has provided protection from deportation and work permits for about 800,000 young people who came to the U.S. as children and stayed illegally. A person enrolled in the program gets protection from deportation that lasts two years and can be renewed.

Judges in California and New York have ruled that the Trump administration must allow current DACA participants to renew their enrollments, but the government doesn't have to process new applications. A ruling by a judge in the District of Columbia would require the government to also process new applications, but it has been put on hold until late July.

While these lawsuits challenged Trump's decision to wind down DACA, the lawsuit filed by Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, South Carolina and West Virginia aims to end it. The states argue the creation of the program was unlawful, an overreach by President Barack Obama, a conclusion the Trump administration agrees with.

And the states filed the case in a way to put it before a potentially sympathetic judge, U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in Brownsville, Texas.

Hanen criticized the Obama administration for lax enforcement of immigration laws. And in 2015 he ruled against an expansion of DACA by Obama as well as a program that would have protected the parents of children who are in the country legally. His ruling blocking the programs was upheld by an appeals court. The Supreme Court, short a member after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, was divided 4-4 on the case in 2016, leaving the lower court's ruling in place.

University of Texas law professor Stephen Vladeck said the Texas case "increases the likelihood of conflicting orders to the government and conflicting substantive conclusions about DACA's legality."

If Hanen sides with the states, he could order the government to immediately stop processing new DACA applications or renewing old ones, which would contradict the existing orders. That would create a "pretty chaotic" situation that the Supreme Court would likely want to resolve, Vladeck said.

Beyond what happens in Texas, two courts of appeal are readying to weigh in on DACA, too. Arguments before the San Francisco-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit are scheduled for Tuesday. And arguments before the New York City-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit are expected this summer.

There is also the possibility that the Trump administration could issue a new memo, replacing one from September, with a fuller explanation of why it chose to wind down DACA, a move that would lead to another flurry of legal filings. The fact the administration hasn't yet done that, though, suggests it may be reluctant to do so.

The Trump administration has seemed eager to get the issue to the Supreme Court quickly. Earlier this year it took the unusual step of asking the high court to hear the California case before a federal appeals court had ruled on it. The high court declined to do so in late February, but it may not be able to avoid the issue for long.

"We're moving toward the Supreme Court," Vladeck said. "How quickly depends on what happens next."

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Mahathir: Clear mandate to govern Malaysia, vows reforms

By **STEPHEN WRIGHT** and **EILEEN NG**, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia's former authoritarian ruler Mahathir Mohamad, who in a stunning political comeback led opposition parties to their first election victory in six decades, said Thursday they have a clear mandate to form a government and insisted he should be immediately confirmed as prime minister.

In a lively news conference peppered with his trademark wisecracks, 92-year-old Mahathir flagged significant changes for Malaysia, which he described as being left in a "mess" by defeated Prime Minister Najib Razak and the National Front coalition.

The election result is a political earthquake for the Muslim-majority country, ending the National Front's unbroken 60-year rule and sweeping aside Najib, whose reputation was tarnished by a monumental corruption scandal, a crackdown on dissent and the imposition of an unpopular sales tax that hurt many of his coalition's poor rural supporters. It is also a surprising exception to backsliding on democratic values in Southeast Asia, a region of more than 600 million people where governments of countries including Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines have swung toward harsh authoritarian rule.

"We need to have this government today without delay," Mahathir said. "There is a lot of work to be done. You know the mess the country is in and we need to attend to this mess as soon as possible and that means today. So we expect that today, well, I'll be sworn in as prime minister."

Supporters of the incoming government took to the streets of Kuala Lumpur to celebrate their unexpected victory. Many analysts had thought the National Front might lose the popular vote but cling to a majority in parliament due to an electoral system that gave more power to its rural Malay supporters.

People stood on roadsides waving the white, blue and red flag of the opposition alliance that triumphed in Wednesday's election. Cars honked their horns as they sped past.

"I'm so happy," said Zarini Najibuddin while waving the opposition flag. "I hope we'll have a better Malaysia now. Malaysia reborn!"

But Ibrahim Suffian, co-founder of the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, said the new government will have to contend with "enormous forces of inertia and resistance from within the government elites."

"The bureaucracy and the rest of the government apparatus has never been used to this idea, having been, you know, more than 60 years under the same political party," he said.

Mahathir, prime minister for 22 years until stepping down in 2003, was credited with modernizing Malaysia but was also known as a heavy-handed leader who imprisoned opponents and subjugated the courts.

Angered by the graft scandal at state investment fund 1MDB, Mahathir emerged from political retirement and joined the opposition in an attempt to oust Najib, his former protege.

The U.S. Justice Department says \$4.5 billion was looted from 1MDB by associates of Najib between 2009 and 2014, including \$700 million that landed in Najib's bank account and a \$23 million pink diamond necklace bought for Najib's wife. He has denied wrongdoing.

Mahathir said the new government will not conduct a witch hunt, but Najib will have to face the consequences if he has broken the law.

Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asia expert at John Cabot University in Rome, said it was hugely ironic that Mahathir, who damaged Malaysia's democratic institutions with his strong-arm rule, has returned as its political savior.

"It is not just a comeback," she said. "It is about making amends about his mistakes and moving Malaysia forward."

Mahathir said the new government would seek the release and full pardon of Anwar Ibrahim, an opposition icon imprisoned on sodomy charges that Anwar and his supporters said were fabricated by the National Front to crush the opposition. Anwar, whose sentence ends on June 8, should be free to participate in politics, he said. Anwar, a former deputy prime minister in the ruling party, was also imprisoned under Mahathir following a power struggle.

On the economic front, Mahathir vowed to cancel a goods and service tax imposed since 2015 and said

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 17 of 57

the government could also renegotiate the terms of Chinese loans for infrastructure projects.

He criticized a "fake news" law pushed through parliament by the National Front during the lead-up to the election. Mahathir is being investigated under that law for claiming a plane he was to travel on was sabotaged during the campaign.

Mahathir disputed Najib's assertion during a concession speech that Malaysia's king must appoint the new prime minister because no single party has a parliamentary majority, calling it "confusion." The constitution, he said, only specifies that the prime minister must represent those with a majority in the legislature. Opposition parties won more than 135 seats in the 222-seat parliament.

In his speech, Najib, 64, said he accepted the "verdict of the people."

The National Front "will honor the principle of democracy in the parliament," he said.

Trump gives freed Americans flag-waving, wee-hours welcome

By **MATTHEW LEE, JILL COLVIN and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press**

JOINT BASE ANDREWS, Md. (AP) — Staging a made-for-TV, still-of-the-night arrival ceremony, President Donald Trump welcomed home three Americans freed by North Korea and declared their release a sign of promise toward his goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

Speaking early Thursday on an air base tarmac with the former detainees by his side, Trump called it a "great honor" to welcome the men to the U.S., but said "the true honor is going to be if we have a victory in getting rid of nuclear weapons."

Trump also thanked North Korea's Kim Jong Un for releasing the Americans and said he believes Kim wants to reach an agreement on denuclearization at their upcoming summit. "I really think he wants to do something," the president said.

First lady Melania Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other top officials joined Trump to celebrate the occasion at Joint Base Andrews near Washington. The men — Kim Dong Chul, Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim — had been released Wednesday amid a warming of relations between the longtime adversaries.

Shortly before 3 a.m. the president and first lady boarded the medical plane on which the men had traveled and spent several minutes meeting with them privately. The group then emerged at top of the airplane stairway, where the men held up their arms in an exuberant display.

As the men entered into view, U.S. service members on the tarmac burst into applause and cheers.

"This is a special night for these three really great people," Trump told reporters. On the U.S. relationship with North Korea, Trump declared, "We're starting off on a new footing."

The freed prisoners appeared tired but in excellent spirits, flashing peace signs and waving their arms as they emerged from the aircraft. When asked by reporters how it felt to be home, one of the men answered through a translator, "It's like a dream; we are very, very happy." They later gave the president a round of applause.

After Trump's remarks, the three men boarded a bus for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where they are to be evaluated and receive medical treatment before being reunited with their families.

The White House carefully choreographed the event, hoisting a giant American flag between two fire trucks on the tarmac and inviting reporters to witness the return.

The image-conscious president told reporters, "I think you probably broke the all-time-in-history television rating for 3 o'clock in the morning."

Hours later, Trump tweeted, "On behalf of the American people, WELCOME HOME!"

The highly public and politically tinged display stood in stark contrast to the low-key and very private reception that the State Department had envisioned and carried out from the moment it took custody of the men, in keeping with a tradition of trying to protect potentially traumatized victims from being thrust into the spotlight so soon after their ordeal.

Department officials took great pains on the prisoners' release in North Korea, as well as on their flights to Japan and Alaska, to keep them sequestered not only from the two journalists traveling with Pompeo

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 18 of 57

but also from staffers not immediately involved in their cases. The trio, along with medical personnel that included a psychiatrist, were cloistered in the middle of Pompeo's plane in a small section of 12 business class-size seats that was cordoned off by curtains on both ends.

State Department officials refused to discuss anything but the most basic details of their conditions, citing privacy concerns in keeping with the minimal amount of information they had released since the men were imprisoned.

Pompeo had secured their release in Pyongyang after meeting with Kim on final plans for the Trump-Kim summit. The Americans had boarded Pompeo's plane out of North Korea without assistance and then transferred in Japan to the Boeing C-40 outfitted with medical facilities for the trip back to the U.S.

Shortly after they touched down on American soil in Alaska for a refueling stop Wednesday afternoon, the State Department released a statement from the freed men.

"We would like to express our deep appreciation to the United States government, President Trump, Secretary Pompeo, and the people of the United States for bringing us home," they said. "We thank God, and all our families and friends who prayed for us and for our return. God Bless America, the greatest nation in the world."

Singapore has emerged as the likely host of the U.S.-North Korean summit, late this month or in early June, as Trump seeks to negotiate denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in his highest-stakes foreign policy effort yet.

Trump made a point of publicly thanking North Korea's leader for the prisoners' release — "We want to thank Kim Jong Un" — and hailed it as a sign of cooling tensions and growing opportunity on the Korean peninsula. Kim decided to grant amnesty to the three Americans at the "official suggestion" of the U.S. president, said North Korea's official news agency, KCNA.

North Korea had accused the three Korean-Americans of anti-state activities. Their arrests were widely seen as politically motivated and had compounded the dire state of relations over the isolated nation's nuclear weapons.

Trump entered office as an emboldened North Korea developed new generations of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles capable of hitting the continental U.S. Those advances were the subject of President Barack Obama's starkest warning shortly before Trump took office, and this is a crisis he's convinced his negotiating skills can resolve.

Crediting himself for recent progress, Trump has pointed to Kim's willingness to come to the negotiating table as validating U.S. moves to tighten sanctions — branded "maximum pressure" by the president.

The three were the latest in a series of Americans who have been detained by North Korea in recent years for seemingly small offenses and typically freed when senior U.S. officials or statesmen personally visited to bail them out.

The last American to be released before this, college student Otto Warmbier, died in June 2017, days after he was repatriated to the U.S. with severe brain damage.

Warmbier was arrested by North Korean authorities in January 2016, accused of stealing a propaganda poster and sentenced to 15 years in prison with hard labor. His parents, Fred and Cindy Warmbier, have filed a wrongful death lawsuit, accusing the government of torturing and killing their son.

"We are happy for the hostages and their families," the Warmbiers said in a statement Wednesday. "We miss Otto."

After the release of the detainees Thursday, North Korea's state-run media explicitly mentioned plans for the summit for the first time Thursday. Pyongyang has been exceptionally cautious about its public framing of Kim's recent diplomatic moves, which are a major shift from the more aggressive focus on missile launches and nuclear development that heated tensions to a boil last year.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey and Ken Thomas in Washington and Eric Talmadge in Pyongyang contributed to this report.

House bill would revive mothballed Nevada nuclear waste dump

By **MATTHEW DALY**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House is moving to approve an election-year bill to revive the mothballed nuclear waste dump at Nevada's Yucca Mountain despite opposition from home-state lawmakers.

Supporters say a bill slated for a vote Thursday would help solve a nuclear-waste storage problem that has festered for more than three decades. More than 80,000 metric tons of spent fuel from commercial nuclear power plants sit idle in 121 communities across 39 states.

The bill would direct the Energy Department to continue a licensing process for Yucca Mountain while also moving forward with a separate plan for a temporary storage site in New Mexico or Texas.

It's past time for the federal government to "fulfill its obligation and permanently dispose of the spent nuclear fuel sitting in our states, alongside our lakes, rivers and roadways," said Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill., the bill's sponsor.

"People are ready to do something rather than nothing," he added, predicting a strong bipartisan vote in favor of the bill.

President Donald Trump's administration has proposed reviving the long-stalled Yucca project 100 miles (161 kilometers) northwest of Las Vegas, but the plan faces bipartisan opposition from the state's governor and congressional delegation.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry has said the U.S. has a "moral obligation" to find a long-term solution to store spent fuel from its commercial nuclear fleet. Trump's budget proposes \$120 million to revive the Yucca project.

"We can no longer kick the can down the road," Perry said last year.

Nevada Sen. Dean Heller, a Republican who is locked in a close race for re-election, blasted the upcoming vote as "an exercise in futility."

Heller vowed that, "Under my watch, I will not let one more hard-earned taxpayer dollar go toward this failed project — just as I have in the past. Yucca Mountain is dead, it is that simple."

Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen, Heller's likely opponent in the general election, has filed an amendment that would delay any licensing activity for Yucca Mountain until the White House Office of Management and Budget conducts a study of the economic effects from alternative uses of the site.

"I'm using every tool at my disposal to put an end to this administration's reckless plans to turn Nevada into a dumping ground for highly radioactive nuclear waste," Rosen said in a statement.

She called Yucca a "failed project" and "complete waste of time and taxpayer money."

Nevada Democrats blame Heller for even allowing the vote, noting that he is a close friend of House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who controls the House schedule.

"Sen. Heller tries to brag about standing between Washington and Yucca Mountain, but our weak and ineffective senator couldn't even dissuade one of his closest friends on Capitol Hill from preparing to ram this bill through the Republican-controlled House," said Sarah Abel, a spokeswoman for Nevada Democrats.

While the fight over Yucca resumes, lawmakers say they hope to make progress on a plan to temporarily house tons of spent fuel that have been piling up at nuclear reactors around the country. Private companies have proposed state-of-the-art, underground facilities in remote areas of west Texas and southeastern New Mexico to store nuclear waste for up to 40 years.

The nuclear industry has said temporary storage must be addressed since the licensing process for Yucca Mountain would take years under a best-case scenario.

Follow Daly on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MatthewDalyWDC>

Hawaii volcano park to close amid explosion concerns

By **SOPHIA YAN** and **AUDREY McAVOY**, Associated Press

PAHOA, Hawaii (AP) — Hawaii's Kilauea volcano could soon send boulders and ash shooting out of its summit crater in the kind of explosive eruption last displayed nearly a century ago.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 20 of 57

Scientists said Wednesday the risks of an explosive summit eruption will rise in coming weeks as magma drains down the flank of the volcano toward the area where began erupting lava in a residential neighborhood last week.

A summit explosion could also release ash, steam and sulfur dioxide emissions.

Kilauea has destroyed 36 structures — including 26 homes — since it began releasing lava from vents about 25 miles (40 kilometers) east of the summit crater. There are now 15 of the vents spread through Leilani Estates and neighboring Lanipuna Gardens.

Hawaii Gov. David Ige said a geothermal energy plant near the lava outbreak was accelerating its removal of stored flammable gas.

The Puna Geothermal Venture plant has about 50,000 gallons (189,270 liters) of pentane on site but he expected this would all be removed by the end of the day Thursday.

It would be “very, very hazardous” if a volcanic vent were to open under the facility where the fuel is stored, the governor said.

The plant, which is owned by Ormat Technologies of Reno, Nevada, is across the highway from where lava has been erupting.

In the weeks ahead, the summit crater could eject blocks up to 2 yards (1.8 meters) in diameter a little less than a mile (1.6 kilometers) away, the United States Geological Survey said. It may also send pebbles shooting into the air several miles away, the USGS said. Distant towns such as Hilo, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) away, could get a dusting of ash.

The receding lava lake resembles conditions seen before a major summit eruption in 1924, said Tina Neal, scientist-in-charge at the USGS Hawaiian Volcanoes Observatory.

That explosion killed one person and sent rocks, ash and dust into the air for 17 days.

This event could occur again when the summit lava lake drops so low that groundwater is able to flow into the conduit that feeds magma to the crater. The magma would heat the water, sending steam into the air that would push any accumulated rocks out in an explosion.

Don Swanson, a geologist with the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said the magma is likely to drop below the water table around the middle of the month. Scientists don’t know how long after that it an explosion could occur.

“We suspect it’s a rapid process. We really don’t know for certain,” he told reporters on a conference call.

No one lives in the immediate area of the summit crater. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which includes the crater and surrounding region, announced Wednesday that it will shut down Friday in anticipation of the possible explosive event.

“It seems pretty safe to me right now but they’d know best,” said Cindy Woodd, who was visiting from British Columbia, Canada. “We don’t know what’s going on underground. Life and safety is what’s most important.”

Authorities previously ordered nearly 2,000 residents to leave the neighborhoods in and around the vents in the mostly rural district of Puna. But some ignored the order and stayed to watch over their property. Authorities went door-to-door in Lanipuna to get people out of their homes on Tuesday.

Police said Wednesday they arrested a man suspected of burglarizing homes in Leilani Estates. A resident saw the man leaving his house when he returned to retrieve personal belongings. The resident and a friend took the suspect to police officers who arrested him.

Some residents have refused to follow evacuation orders because of fears their homes will be looted.

McAvoy reported from Honolulu. Associated Press journalists Caleb Jones, Haven Daley and Jennifer Sinco Kelleher in Honolulu contributed to this report.

Celtics beat 76ers 114-112 in Game 5, advance to face Cavs

By JIMMY GOLEN, AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — With 2.4 seconds left and the Boston Celtics leading by one, Marcus Smart had a chance to all but clinch Game 5 of the Eastern Conference semifinals and eliminate Philadelphia by making a pair of free throws.

He missed the first.

He could have made things more difficult for the 76ers by missing the second one on purpose, and forcing them to go the length of the court with the clock running. He chucked it against the rim; it went in.

That gave the 76ers a chance to win with a desperation 3-pointer. The full-court inbounds pass went into the left corner, and who was there to intercept it, heaving it back into the air to run out the clock?

To the surprise of no one in a Celtics uniform, it was Smart.

"That's a Marcus Smart sequence. That just describes him so well," guard Jaylen Brown said after Boston beat Philadelphia 114-112 on Wednesday night to advance to the Eastern Conference finals for the second straight year. "If it came down to one guy coming up with it, everybody's got their money on Smart."

Jayson Tatum scored 25 points, Brown had 24 and Terry Rozier scored 17, sinking a pair of free throws to make it a four-point game with 9.8 seconds left after forcing Joel Embiid's turnover. Al Horford added 15 points and eight rebounds for Boston.

The Celtics will play Cleveland in the Eastern Conference finals for the second straight year. Game 1 is Sunday in Boston. It's the Celtics' first back-to-back trips to the conference finals since making it five straight times in the original Big Three era from 1984-88.

"When you get here, you're flattered by the thought of the Boston Celtics," coach Brad Stevens said. "You realize if you're going to break records here, you're going to break bad ones. Because none of the good ones are reachable."

Embiid had 27 points and 12 rebounds for the 76ers, Dario Saric had 27 points and 10 rebounds, and Ben Simmons added 18 points, eight rebounds and six assists. The 76ers rode The Process back into the playoffs for the first time since 2012, winning won 20 out of 21 games before Boston beat them three straight times to open the conference semifinals.

"The Process is never going to end," Embiid said. "This is a process to get to the playoffs, we did it. This was a process to get to the conference finals, we didn't. Next year, that's our goal."

In a game that featured 21 lead changes — the most in the playoffs this year — the Celtics scored eight straight points in the final 1:37, taking the lead on Tatum's layup with 23 seconds left. Embiid had a chance to tie it but he missed a heavily contested layup, failed to tip it back in and then grabbed that rebound, too.

Rozier knocked the ball out of his hands, off his leg and out of bounds with 10.8 seconds left.

"Just a championship play, that's all," said Rozier, who made a pair of free throws to make it 113-109 — eight straight points for Boston.

J.J. Reddick's 3-pointer cut the deficit to one, and then it was Smart's turn. Coming off the bench, he had 14 points, six rebounds, six assists and three steals.

"He's made for this," Stevens said. "He's made for these moments. We can go through the stat line all you want, but when your season's on the line and you need to do really hard things, he can do really hard things."

BLED SOE AND ROZIER

After striking up a long-distance friendship with Drew Bledsoe during the Milwaukee series, Rozier finally met the former Patriots quarterback for real.

Rozier first invoked Bledsoe's name during a trash-talking back-and-forth with Bucks guard Eric Bledsoe, pretending to confuse the two. Drew Bledsoe joined the fun by recording a video that was played for the TD Garden crowd during Game 7.

But on Wednesday, the football player was there in person, meeting Rozier before the game and sitting courtside with Celtics owner Wyc Grousbeck.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 22 of 57

NO OFFENSE TAKEN

Stevens has never put much stock in coach of the year awards.

So predictably, the news earlier Wednesday that he didn't receive a single vote for this season's National Basketball Coaches Association's trophy, which went to Toronto's Dwane Casey, didn't faze him either.

"The way that thing works is you get one vote...I looked at the sheet and there's no way that I would have voted for me over any of the other 29 people," Stevens said. "The guy that should have won got it."

Other coaches to receive votes were Brett Brown, Mike D'Antoni, Nate McMillan, Gregg Popovich, Doc Rivers, Quin Snyder and Terry Stotts.

The winner of the Red Auerbach Trophy as the NBA's Coach of the Year Award will be announced next month.

TIP-INS

76ers: Embiid was called for a technical foul for elbowing Horford under the basket midway through the third period. Horford made the free throw, and Aron Baynes made two for the original foul to give Boston a 75-63 lead, its biggest of the game to that point. ... Embiid is 0-8 on game-tying or go-ahead shots in the final minute this season, according to ESPN.

Celtics: G Shane Larkin (left shoulder sprain) was unavailable after running into a hard pick in Game 4. That left the coach Brad Stevens with an eight-man rotation. ... With seven 3-pointers in the series, Baynes has more in these five games than in the other 409 games of his career combined, according to ESPN. ... Boston was 6-for-20 in the third, with six turnovers, watching a nine-point lead wither to one. ... Tatum and Utah's Donovan Mitchell are the only two NBA rookies with seven straight playoff games of at least 20 points since Julius Erving did it in 1972.

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

Scientists: Kilauea volcano may have explosive eruption

By SOPHIA YAN and AUDREY McAVOY, Associated Press

PAHOA, Hawaii (AP) — Geologists warned Wednesday that Hawaii's Kilauea volcano could erupt explosively and send boulders, rocks and ash into the air around its summit in the coming weeks.

The risk will rise as lava drains from the summit crater down the flank of the volcano, and explosions could occur if the lava drops below the groundwater level, the U.S. Geological Survey said.

There's also potential for ash, steam and sulfur dioxide emissions.

Kilauea is one of the world's most active volcanoes.

It has destroyed 36 structures since it began releasing lava from fissures that opened in a Big Island neighborhood about 25 miles (40.2 kilometers) east of the summit crater. There are now 15 of the vents spread through Leilani Estates and neighboring Lanipuna Gardens.

In the weeks ahead, the volcano could eject blocks up to 2 yards (1.8 meters) in diameter a little less than a mile (1.6 kilometer) away, the USGS said. It may also send pebbles shooting into the air several miles away, the USGS said.

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This event could occur again when the lava lake drops so low that groundwater is able to flow into the conduit that feeds magma to the summit crater. The magma would heat the water, sending steam into the air that would push any accumulated rocks out in an explosion.

Don Swanson, a geologist with the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said the magma is likely to drop below the water table around the middle of the month. Scientists don't know how long after that it an explosion could occur.

"We suspect it's a rapid process. We really don't know for certain," he told reporters on a conference call. No one lives in the immediate area of the summit crater. The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 23 of 57

includes the crater and surrounding region, announced Wednesday that it will shut down Friday in anticipation of the possible explosive event.

"It seems pretty safe to me right now but they'd know best," said Cindy Woodd, who was visiting from British Columbia, Canada. "We don't know what's going on underground. Life and safety is what's most important."

Separately, Hawaii Gov. David Ige said a geothermal energy plant near the lava outbreak was accelerating its removal of stored flammable gas.

The Puna Geothermal Venture plant has about 50,000 gallons (189,270 liters) of pentane on site but he expected this would all be removed by the end of the day Thursday.

It would be "very, very hazardous" if a volcanic vent were to open under the facility where the fuel is stored, the governor said.

The plant, which is owned by Ormat Technologies of Reno, Nevada, is across the highway from where lava has been erupting.

Authorities previously ordered nearly 2,000 residents to leave the neighborhoods in and around the vents in the mostly rural district of Puna. But some ignored the order and stayed to watch over their property. Authorities went door-to-door in Lanipuna to get people out of their homes on Tuesday.

Police said Wednesday they arrested a man suspected of burglarizing homes in Leilani Estates. A resident saw the man leaving his house when he returned to retrieve personal belongings. The resident and a friend took the suspect to police officers who arrested him.

Some residents have refused to follow evacuation orders because of fears their homes will be looted.

Associated Press journalists Caleb Jones, Haven Daley and Jennifer Sinco Kelleher contributed to this report.

GOP efforts to move forward with Wisconsin judge riles Dems

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans are on the verge of filling the nation's longest appellate court vacancy and in the process softening a tool the GOP successfully employed to block several of President Barack Obama's nominees.

The Senate gives lawmakers a chance to weigh in on a judicial nominee from their home state by submitting a blue-colored form called the "blue slip." A positive blue slip signals the Senate to move forward with the nomination process. A negative blue slip, or withholding it altogether, signals a senator's objection and almost always stalls the nomination.

Until this year, it had been nearly three decades since the Senate confirmed a judge without two positive blue slips. The likely confirmation Thursday of Milwaukee attorney Michael Brennan to fill an opening on the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago will mark the second time it has happened this year. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., declined to return her blue slip.

The move to go ahead with a hearing for Brennan and a vote on the floor has Democrats crying foul, but as a procedural vote showed Wednesday, that's about all they can do. The Senate voted along party lines to limit debate on Brennan's confirmation, 49-47.

"I'd admonish my friends on the other side of the aisle, this is a very dangerous road you're treading," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. "As everyone knows, the winds of political change blow swiftly in America. The minority one day is the majority the next."

The warning was reminiscent of the one that Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell issued when Democrats changed the rules to lower the threshold necessary to end a filibuster for district and circuit court judges. Under the change, the Senate can cut off debate with a simple majority rather than 60 votes.

At the time, the Kentucky Republican said, "You'll regret this, and you may regret this a lot sooner than you think."

He was certainly correct. Fast forward to Wednesday, when Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, the Republi-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 24 of 57

can chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Democrats' complaints were based on an incorrect understanding of the blue slip's history.

"The blue slip courtesy is just that — a courtesy," Grassley said.

He said past chairmen of the committee had rarely used negative or unreturned blue slips as unilateral vetoes. The most recent exception was Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, who was chairman during the first six years of Obama's presidency.

"That was his prerogative," Grassley said.

Grassley said that under his tenure, the blue slip will be used to ensure the president consults with home state senators, but not as a veto for appellate court nominees. He said he was satisfied in Brennan's case that the White House consulted with both of Wisconsin's senators before the president nominated him.

Republicans have made it a top priority to confirm the president's nominees, particularly those who will serve on federal appeals courts. It's a top issue with social conservatives leading into this year's midterm elections. With Democrats slow-walking many of Trump's nominees, McConnell said last October that the blue slip process should not be used to "blackball" nominees.

The judicial vacancy Brennan would fill has been open since January 2010.

For Democrats, it was particularly galling that Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., has used his blue slip to object to Obama nominee Victoria Nourse to serve on the 7th Circuit. She eventually withdrew from consideration.

"How is Sen. Baldwin's right to consult on judges for her state any less important than Sen. Johnson's?" Schumer said. "It's mind-bending hypocrisy. It's an appalling double standard."

Johnson said more than one million of the state's residents had voted for him, and he had no role whatsoever in the nomination of Nourse "so I decided not to return the blue slip."

He said he does not believe the blue slip should be used as an absolute veto, though.

"The blue slip from my standpoint should primarily be used just as the advice and consent of one senator expressing an opinion on a judge from their state," Johnson said.

Johnson noted that he did return a blue slip for a subsequent Obama nominee to the 7th Circuit, Donald Schott.

However, there was strong resistance from Republicans in going forward with any Obama's nominees during his final year in office. Just 11 federal judges won confirmation that year.

A final vote on Brennan's nomination was expected at noon Thursday. McConnell teed up votes for six appellate court nominees this week. So far, the Senate has confirmed 34 of Trump's judicial nominees.

Russian tycoon known for Faberge eggs tied to Cohen payment

MOSCOW (AP) — Outside the rarified sphere of the super-rich, tycoon Viktor Vekselberg is mostly known in Russia for spending more than \$100 million to bring cultural artifacts back to his homeland, including an array of Faberge eggs glittering with gold and jewels.

By Vekselberg's standards, the money he laid out wasn't all that much: His fortune has been estimated at about \$14.6 billion.

But after his holding company Renova was hit by U.S. sanctions against Russia in April, his worth appeared to shrink markedly, and he reportedly has asked the Russian government for help to stay afloat.

Now Vekselberg is facing new scrutiny.

U.S. news reports said he has been questioned by the staff of Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating alleged Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election and any possible coordination with associates of President Donald Trump. And documents reviewed by The Associated Press suggest that a company associated with Vekselberg routed money to Trump lawyer Michael Cohen's consulting firm in 2017.

Vekselberg, 61, was born in Soviet Ukraine. After graduating from the Moscow Transportation Engineering Institute, he reportedly made his first significant money by selling copper salvaged from scrapped cables during the period of economic reforms under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

He built his fortune by investing in the aluminum and oil industries, taking advantage of the wide open and often questionable privatization of state companies after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 25 of 57

He secured a controlling interest in the Tyumen Oil company, one of Russia's largest oil operations, and his holding company, Renova Group, and two other holding companies later merged their assets and established the TNK-BP joint venture with British Petroleum, which later was acquired by state oil giant Rosneft. More recently, he has expanded his assets to include industrial equipment and high technology.

Renova has sizable investments in the U.S. through the investment management company Columbus Nova. The firm's operations include tech investments, real estate management and merchant banking, according to corporate and web documents.

Columbus Nova was described in a 2007 corporate document filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission as an "affiliate" of Renova. Columbus Nova is headed by Andrew Intrater, who is described as a cousin of Vekselberg in the documents reviewed by AP and in other media reports.

Intrater donated \$250,000 to Trump's inauguration in 2017, presidential finance documents show.

Before reportedly retaining Cohen, Vekselberg's firm and Columbus Nova corporate entities have spent nearly 15 years trying to gain influence in Washington. Renova, Columbus Nova and its real estate arm combined to pay nearly \$1.8 million to lobbyists between 2001 and 2015, at first concentrating on "encouraging trade and cultural exchanges" between the U.S. and Russia and later on small business issues.

A spokeswoman for the Carmen Group Inc., a lobbying operation paid more than \$1.7 million by the Vekselberg-linked firms, declined to explain its work, saying, "we do not comment on client matters."

Vekselberg was one of a group of Russian business leaders who met with former President Barack Obama in Moscow in 2007 during Obama's visit with then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev as well as then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Vekselberg was also in attendance when Putin sat during a Moscow gala in 2015 with retired U.S. Army Gen. Michael Flynn, who was Trump's national security adviser before he was fired. Flynn is now cooperating with the special counsel probe.

Official documents reviewed Tuesday by the AP appeared to show that a company associated with Vekselberg routed eight payments totaling about \$500,000 to Essential Consultants, established by Cohen between January and August 2017.

Vekselberg's spokesman, Andrey Shtorkh, told the AP on Wednesday that "neither Viktor Vekselberg nor Renova has ever had any contractual relationship with Mr. Cohen" or his consulting company. In a statement on its website, Columbus Nova said it has managed assets for Renova, but has never been owned by Vekselberg.

As a wealthy and powerful Russian, Vekselberg is presumed to operate with the tacit approval of Putin. How deep his relations are with the Kremlin is an open question.

Anders Aslund, an expert on Russia's economy, was quoted by the Russian business portal RBC as saying that Vekselberg's ending up on the U.S. sanctions list was a surprise because "he has a good reputation. ... He isn't perceived to be especially close to Putin."

But he apparently is close enough to the top to be willing to ask for help after the sanctions slashed the value of his holdings. According to the business newspaper Kommersant, he recently asked for state-owned banks to refinance 820 million euros (\$967 million) in debt that he owes to Western banks and for preferential treatment in receiving state orders.

Vekselberg got wide public attention for buying nine Faberge eggs from the estate of Malcolm Forbes and bringing the czarist-era baubles back to Russia for display in a private museum.

He also heavily funded the establishment of a Jewish museum in Moscow and financed the return to a Moscow monastery of church bells that had been scrapped under Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

Associated Press writers Stephen Braun in Washington and Garance Burke in San Francisco contributed to this report.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 26 of 57

Freed detainees head home for big welcome, featuring Trump

By MATTHEW LEE and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Freed after more than a year in prison, three Americans flew homeward from North Korea late Wednesday toward a big middle-of-the-night celebration featuring President Donald Trump — the latest sign of improving relations between longtime adversaries in the buildup to a historic summit between Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un.

Trump promised "quite a scene" at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington for the detainees, who were released as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited North Korea on Wednesday to finalize plans for the summit. Singapore was the likely site, late this month or in early June, for Trump's most ambitious foreign policy effort yet.

Shortly after they touched down on American soil in Alaska — for a refueling stop Wednesday afternoon — the State Department released a statement from the freed men.

"We would like to express our deep appreciation to the United States government, President Trump, Secretary Pompeo, and the people of the United States for bringing us home," they said. "We thank God, and all our families and friends who prayed for us and for our return. God Bless America, the greatest nation in the world."

The men had boarded Pompeo's plane out of North Korea without assistance and then transferred in Japan to a separate aircraft with more extensive medical facilities. They are expected to arrive at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington in the wee hours of Thursday morning.

Trump made a point of publicly thanking North Korea's leader for the prisoners' release — "I appreciate Kim Jong Un doing this" — and hailed it as a sign of cooling tensions and growing opportunity on the Korean peninsula. Kim decided to grant amnesty to the three Americans at the "official suggestion" of the U.S. president, said North Korea's official news agency, KCNA.

North Korea had accused Kim Dong Chul, Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim, all Korean-Americans, of anti-state activities. Their arrests were widely seen as politically motivated and had compounded the dire state of relations over the isolated nation's nuclear weapons.

Trump entered office as an emboldened North Korea developed new generations of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles capable of hitting the continental U.S. Those advances were the subject of President Barack Obama's starkest warning shortly before Trump took office, and this is a crisis he's convinced his negotiating skills can resolve.

Crediting himself for recent progress, Trump has pointed to Kim's willingness to come to the negotiating table as validating U.S. moves to tighten sanctions — branded "maximum pressure" by the president. The wee-hours ceremony Thursday was to be an early celebration for an issue that has already put the prospect of a Nobel Peace Prize on Trump's mind.

"Everyone thinks so, but I would never say it," he said Wednesday when asked if the award was deserved.

The release capped a dramatic day of diplomacy in Pyongyang. After Pompeo's 90-minute meeting with Kim Jong Un, he gave reporters a fingers-crossed sign when asked about the prisoners as he returned to his hotel. It was only after a North Korean emissary arrived a bit later to inform him that the release was confirmed.

The three had been held for periods ranging from one and two years. They were the latest in a series of Americans who have been detained by North Korea in recent years for seemingly small offenses and typically freed when senior U.S. officials or statesmen personally visited to bail them out.

The last American to be released before this, college student Otto Warmbier, died in June 2017, days after he was repatriated to the U.S. with severe brain damage.

Warmbier was arrested by North Korean authorities in January 2016, accused of stealing a propaganda poster and sentenced to 15 years in prison with hard labor. His parents, Fred and Cindy Warmbier, have filed a wrongful death lawsuit, accusing the government of torturing and killing their son.

"We are happy for the hostages and their families," the Warmbiers said in a statement Wednesday. "We miss Otto."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 27 of 57

Of the newly released detainees, Kim Dong Chul, a South Korean-born U.S. citizen, had been held the longest. The former Virginia resident was sentenced in April 2016 to 10 years in prison with hard labor after being convicted of espionage. He reportedly ran a trade and hotel service company in Rason, a special economic zone on North Korea's border with Russia.

The other two detainees hadn't been tried.

Kim Hak Song worked in agricultural development at an experimental farm run by the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, or PUST. The university is the only privately funded college in North Korea and was founded in 2010 with donations from Christian groups. He was detained last May for alleged anti-state activities.

Tony Kim, who also uses the name Kim Sang-duk, was detained in April 2017 at the Pyongyang airport. He taught accounting at PUST. He was accused of committing unspecified criminal acts intended to overthrow the government.

The family of Tony Kim thanked all those who worked for his return and also credited Trump for engaging directly with North Korea. "Mostly we thank God for Tony's safe return," the family said in a statement.

On Capitol Hill, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer celebrated the detainees' return but warned that "we'll see many more hostages" if the administration provides an incentive for imprisoning Americans.

"We are happy they've returned, but North Korea shouldn't gain by taking Americans and then releasing them," he said.

During his visit, Pompeo discussed the agenda for a potential Trump-Kim Jong Un summit. Pompeo said the summit is scheduled to last one day but could be extended by a day depending on how talks progress.

North Korea's state-run media explicitly mentioned plans for the summit for the first time. Pyongyang has been exceptionally cautious about its public framing of Kim's recent diplomatic moves, which are a major shift from the more aggressive focus on missile launches and nuclear development that drove tensions to a boil last year.

Pompeo's trip, his second to North Korea this year, had not been publicly disclosed when he flew out of Washington late Monday aboard an Air Force jetliner. Trump announced the mission Tuesday afternoon as he laid out his case for withdrawing from a landmark nuclear deal with Iran, another bitter U.S. adversary.

Accompanying Pompeo were a few senior aides, a security detail and two journalists — one from The Associated Press and one from The Washington Post.

Pompeo, who first traveled to North Korea as CIA chief in early April, was only the second sitting secretary of state to visit the nation with which the U.S. is still technically at war. The first was Madeleine Albright, who went in 2000 as part of an unsuccessful bid to arrange a meeting between then-President Bill Clinton and Kim Jong Un's father, Kim Jong Il.

A Trump-Kim meeting seemed a remote possibility just a few months ago when the two leaders were trading threats and insults over North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile tests. In March, Trump unexpectedly accepted an offer of talks after the North Korean dictator agreed to suspend nuclear and missile tests and discuss "denuclearization."

Lee reported from Pyongyang, North Korea.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Catherine Lucey, and Ken Thomas in Washington and Eric Talmadge in Pyongyang contributed to this report.

Israel accuses Iranian forces of rocket attack on Golan

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Iranian forces based in Syria fired 20 rockets at Israeli front-line military positions in the Golan Heights early Thursday, the Israeli military said, triggering a heavy Israeli reprisal and escalating already heightened tensions in what appeared to be the most serious violence in years.

The Israeli military said its Iron Dome rocket defense system intercepted some of the incoming projec-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 28 of 57

tiles, while others caused only minimal damage. There were no Israeli casualties.

Syria's capital of Damascus shook with sounds of explosions just before dawn, and firing by Syrian air defenses over the city was heard throughout the night. An Israeli official said Israel was targeting Iranian positions inside Syria. Syria's state news agency SANA quoted a Syrian military official as saying Israeli missiles hit air defense positions, radar stations and a weapons warehouse, but claiming most incoming rockets were intercepted.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz quoted an unidentified security official as saying Israel's attacks inside Syria were the most extensive since the two nations signed a disengagement agreement after the October war of 1973.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, an Israeli military spokesman, said earlier that Iran's Al Quds force fired the rockets at several Israeli bases, though he would not say how Israel determined the Iranian involvement. The incoming attack set off air raid sirens in the Israeli-controlled Golan, which was captured from Syria in the 1967 war.

Israel "views this Iranian attack very severely," Conricus told reporters. He said Israel had responded, but did not provide details.

"This event is not over," he said.

Syria's state media said Syrian air defenses intercepted "hostile Israeli missiles" early Thursday that were fired over southwestern Damascus. Hours later, state-run Al-Ikhbariya TV broadcast a live feed of Syrian air defenses firing into the sky above the capital, and loud explosions and air defense firing were heard through the night.

Syrian activists reported Israeli airstrikes hitting targets near Damascus. One video posted online showed a large explosion and shrapnel flying in the air. Residents reported loud sounds that rocked their buildings. It was not immediately clear what was hit.

An Israeli army spokesman, Avichay Adraee, said on Twitter that Israel was "acting against Iranian targets inside Syria," a rare admission by an Israeli official.

Al-Ikhbariya TV said Israel also targeted military posts in southern Suweida province, including an air base, and struck near Homs in central Syria. The state TV station said the attacks were foiled.

Iranian officials offered no immediate comment on Israel's claim about the missile fire. Iranian state media reported on the attack and the subsequent Israeli strikes in Syria, relying on foreign news reports.

Syrian media earlier said the hostilities began with Israeli fire at Syrian positions in southern Syria from across the border. Pro-Syrian media said Syrian missiles then fired at Israeli forces. One TV station, Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen, said at least 50 missiles were fired from Syria at Israeli forces in the Golan Heights. Al-Ikhbariya TV said missiles targeted 10 Israeli positions.

Syrian media said it was the first time in years that Syrians had fired at Israeli forces in the Golan Heights.

Israel has been on heightened alert in recent days, anticipating an Iranian attack following Iranian vows to retaliate to what it says are recent Israeli strikes in Syria targeting Iranian outposts.

Late Tuesday, Syrian state media said Israel struck a military outpost near the capital of Damascus. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the missiles targeted depots and rocket launchers that likely belonged to Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard, killing at least 15 people, eight of them Iranians.

Last month, an attack on Syria's T4 air base in Homs province killed seven Iranian military personnel. On April 30, Israel was said to have struck government outposts in northern Syria, killing more than a dozen pro-government fighters, many of them Iranians.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied most of the airstrikes. But for months, it has repeatedly said it will not accept a permanent Iranian military presence in Syria.

In February, Israel shot down what it said was an armed Iranian drone that entered Israeli airspace. Israel responded by attacking anti-aircraft positions in Syria, but an Israeli warplane was shot down during the battle.

Iranian forces moved into Syria after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 to back the forces of President Bashar Assad. As that war winds down, and Assad appears to be headed toward victory, Israel fears that Iran, along with tens of thousands of Iranian-backed Shiite militiamen, will carry out attacks

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 29 of 57

against Israel. President Donald Trump's announcement Tuesday that the U.S. was withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran has triggered uncertainty and threatened to spark more unrest in the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traveled to Moscow on Wednesday to meet with President Vladimir Putin and discuss military coordination in Syria.

Russia has also sent forces to Syria to back Assad. But Israel and Russia have maintained close communications to prevent their air forces from coming into conflict.

Together with Putin, Netanyahu toured a parade celebrating the anniversary of the World War II victory over the Nazis and then met the Russian president at the Kremlin for consultations.

After 10 hours together, Netanyahu said he conveyed Israel's obligation to defend itself against Iranian aggression.

"I think that matters were presented in a direct and forthright manner, and this is important. These matters are very important to Israel's security at all times and especially at this time," he said.

Israel views Iran as its archenemy, citing Iran's calls for Israel's destruction, support for militant groups across the region and growing military activity in neighboring Syria. Israel has warned that it will not allow Iran to establish a permanent military presence in Syria.

Israel's military went on high alert Tuesday and bomb shelters were ordered open in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights following reports of "irregular activity of Iranian forces in Syria." After an uneventful night, the military on Wednesday called on residents to return to "full civilian routine," meaning studies and excursions would continue as usual, although the shelters would remain open.

Amos Gilead, a retired senior Israeli defense official, told a security conference in the coastal town of Herzliya that Iran's intentions in Syria meant a wider conflagration may only be a matter of time.

"They want to build a second Hezbollah-stan," he said, referring to the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shiite militant group that last fought a war with Israel in 2006. "They are determined to do it and we are determined to prevent it. It means we are on a collision course."

Associated Press writers Sarah El Deeb and Zeina Karam in Beirut contributed to this report.

Texas biker accused of killing man who was shot by police

By EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — One of three bikers indicted on murder charges Wednesday stemming from a chaotic 2015 shooting outside a Texas restaurant is accused of killing a man who was also shot twice by police, according to ballistics evidence reviewed by The Associated Press.

The indictments against Glenn Walker and two fellow members of the Bandidos motorcycle club mark the first murder charges filed in connection to the melee that left nine bikers dead, 20 wounded and nearly 200 arrested outside a Twin Peaks restaurant in Waco.

Investigators say the shooting was sparked by rivalries between the Bandidos and Cossacks motorcycle clubs ahead of a biker meeting. Waco police monitoring the gathering said officers opened fire after fights and gunfire broke out in the parking lot.

Walker is accused of fatally shooting Richard Kirschner, a Cossacks member. An autopsy report shows Kirschner was shot three times: once in the buttocks with a pistol and twice with a rifle in the right thigh and left knee.

A pistol registered to Walker and a bullet it fired were recovered from the back of a police vehicle at the scene, according to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Kirschner's rifle wounds were traced to a Waco SWAT officer's .223-caliber rifle during a forensic firearms analysis conducted for police, according to police records previously reviewed by the AP.

The officer who used the rifle, Michael Bucher, said during an internal investigation that he saw Kirschner chasing another man with a big chain. Bucher said he fired one round and Kirschner fell, but then fired

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 30 of 57

again after he saw Kirschner get up on one knee and swing the chain. The officer said Kirschner then stayed on the ground.

Kirschner later was pronounced dead at a hospital. The autopsy report said only that Kirschner died of gunshot wounds.

Walker's attorney didn't respond to messages seeking comment Wednesday.

A grand jury in September 2016 cleared the officer, along with the two other officers who fired their weapons. The police evidence reviewed by the AP showed that two people killed during the shooting were hit only by bullets from law enforcement weapons. Two others killed were hit from Waco SWAT rifles and other firearms.

The other Bandidos members charged with murder Wednesday — Jeff Battey, a local sergeant-at-arms with the motorcycle club, and Ray Allen, the president of the Denton, Texas, chapter of the Bandidos — are accused of fatally shooting Matthew Smith, a Cossacks member who died at the scene from gunshot wounds. Battey, a former Marine, and Allen were seen by officers "triangulated" over Smith, and a pistol was found in front of each man, according to Waco police records.

An autopsy determined Smith suffered gunshot wounds in the abdomen and back. The firearms analysis for police ruled out police rifles.

Battey's attorney, Seth Sutton, said Wednesday that prosecutors failed to provide a "full and complete picture of the evidence" to the grand jury.

"We believe that justice will prevail for Mr. Battey and that he will be acquitted of all wrongdoing," Sutton said.

Allen's attorney, Brian Walker, said Allen was acting in self-defense.

He said that when Allen and other Bandidos pulled into the parking lot, "they heard shots ringing out and they had no clue what was taking place. All of a sudden this young guy comes around the corner and starts shooting at them." Walker said Allen shot back.

Glenn Walker, Battey and Allen also face rioting charges. And more than 20 other bikers were re-indicted on new charges Wednesday ranging from rioting to tampering with evidence. The lesser charges came just eight days before the statute of limitations runs out on those crimes — and a day after more than 60 cases were dropped.

The county's district attorney, Abel Reyna, said in a statement Wednesday that the indictments were the result of a review of "numerous videos and other evidence."

Surveillance footage showed numerous bikers running from the scene and ducking for cover after gunshots rang out. A smaller number could be seen pointing and firing weapons or throwing punches.

Law enforcement officers recovered dozens of firearms, knives and other weapons from the restaurant and adjacent parking lot. Dash-cam video showed that officers indiscriminately piled many of the weapons on the pavement or tossed them in the back of a police vehicle.

All of the bikers arrested following the shooting nearly three years ago were charged with engaging in organized criminal activity, a felony, with the underlying offenses of homicide and aggravated assault. They were held on \$1 million bonds in county jail, and Battey was among the first to bail out.

But prosecutors have dropped 154 of the initial 192 cases in the last four months, saying they wanted to focus on those who were "more culpable."

Only one biker — Jake Carrizal, a locomotive driver and the president of the Dallas chapter of the Bandidos — has been tried. His trial ended in a hung jury and a mistrial last fall, though he was among the bikers re-indicted on Wednesday. Carrizal is now facing a new charge of rioting.

Reyna said in February, when announcing the first round of disposed cases, that information gleaned during Carrizal's trial was "invaluable" in his office's decision to narrow the focus of its investigation.

This story has been corrected to show that the statute of limitations applies to the lesser charges, not to the murder charges.

CIA nominee says torture doesn't work as interrogation tool

By **DEB RIECHMANN** and **KEVIN FREKING**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's CIA nominee said Wednesday at her confirmation hearing that she doesn't believe torture works as an interrogation technique and that her "strong moral compass" would prevent her from carrying out any presidential order she found objectionable.

Under questioning by members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, acting CIA Director Gina Haspel said she would not permit the spy agency to restart the kind of harsh detention and interrogation program it ran at black sites after Sept. 11. It was one of the darkest chapters of the CIA's history and tainted America's image worldwide.

Senators asked how she would respond if Trump — who has said he supports harsh interrogation techniques like waterboarding and "a hell of a lot worse" — ordered her to do something she found morally objectionable.

"I would not allow CIA to undertake activity that I thought was immoral, even if it was technically legal," said Haspel, a 33-year veteran of the agency. "I would absolutely not permit it."

When asked if she agrees with the president's assertion that torture works, Haspel said: "I don't believe that torture works." She added that she doesn't think Trump would ask the CIA to resume waterboarding, which simulates drowning.

Haspel, vying to become the first female CIA director, faces what will likely be a close confirmation vote in the full Senate.

While she has deep experience, her nomination is contentious because she was chief of base of a covert detention site in Thailand where terror suspects were waterboarded. There also have been questions about how she drafted a cable that her boss used to order the destruction of videotapes of interrogation sessions conducted at the site.

After the hearing, Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a leading voice against harsh interrogation, issued a statement urging his colleagues to vote against Haspel's confirmation.

"I believe Gina Haspel is a patriot who loves our country and has devoted her professional life to its service and defense. However, Ms. Haspel's role in overseeing the use of torture by Americans is disturbing. Her refusal to acknowledge torture's immorality is disqualifying," said McCain, who was detained and beaten in prison during the Vietnam War.

He is at home in Arizona while battling brain cancer and is not expected to be able to vote. While it's unclear what effect McCain's stance will have on Haspel's confirmation, his views carry clout as a voice of principle from the only senator now serving who has been held captive during wartime.

Protesters disrupted the hearing shouting, "Prosecute the torturers!" and "Bloody Gina!" Haspel remained stone-faced as police escorted them out of the room.

"I realize that there are strong disagreements on the effectiveness of the CIA's detention and interrogation program," Haspel wrote in answers to more than 100 questions submitted by committee members and released at her hearing.

"In my view — a view shared by all nine former directors and acting directors — the CIA was able to collect valuable intelligence that contributed to the prevention of further terrorist attacks. That said, it is impossible to know whether the CIA could have obtained the same information in another way," she wrote.

She also said there is little question that the program harmed CIA officers who participated and that it damaged U.S. relations with allies.

Being in the public spotlight is new for Haspel. She spent more than 30 years working undercover, acquiring secret information from dead drops and at meetings in dusty back alleys of third-world capitals.

Still, the 61-year-old intelligence professional portrayed herself as a "typical middle-class American" with a "strong sense of right and wrong." She said she was born in Kentucky as the eldest of five children. While her family has deep roots there, she grew up as an Air Force brat, following her father to postings all over the world.

She staunchly defended her role in the 2005 destruction of the videotapes. She said that she never saw

the videos and was not depicted on them, but that the destruction was important at the time to protect the CIA personnel showed on the tapes from being targeted by militants. She said, however, that she would not support destroying them today.

The Justice Department investigated the destruction of the tapes, but no charges were filed. Six Democratic senators wrote Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Wednesday saying that all senators should be able to see the Justice Department's investigative report on the destruction of the tapes. The Democrats wrote that they "believe that no senator can consider Ms. Haspel's nomination in good conscience without first reviewing this document."

The CIA investigated too. Last month, the CIA released a 2011 memo summarizing 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.

While the CIA director technically reports to the director of national intelligence, Haspel would be the face of the nation's top spy agency and a top Trump adviser. She has received strong backing from former top intelligence officials and most Republicans. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., also announced his support Wednesday. But Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, who announced he will vote against Haspel, and several Democrats on the committee said they thought she was not as forthcoming in her responses as they had hoped.

Haspel's opponents outside Congress include Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

More than 100 former U.S. ambassadors who served both Republican and Democratic presidents sent the Senate a letter opposing Haspel, saying that despite her credentials, confirming her would give authoritarian leaders around the world the license to say U.S. behavior is "no different from ours."

The CIA director position opened up after Mike Pompeo was named secretary of state.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Trump lawyer sold 'insight' into his high-powered client

By JEFF HORWITZ, CATHERINE LUCEY AND JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Already under investigation for a payment to a porn star, President Donald Trump's longtime personal attorney is facing intensifying legal and ethical scrutiny for selling his Trump World experience and views at a hefty price to companies that sought "insight" into the new president.

One company, pharmaceutical giant Novartis, acknowledged Wednesday it paid Michael Cohen \$1.2 million for services, though they ended after a single meeting. Others, including some with major regulatory matters before the new administration, acknowledged payments totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars over at least several months.

The corporate ties could suggest Cohen was peddling his influence and profiting from his relationship with the president. They also raise questions about whether Trump knew about the arrangement.

Cohen's corporate ties were first revealed in a detailed report released by an attorney for pornographic film actress Stormy Daniels. The report alleged that Cohen used a company he established weeks before the 2016 election to receive the payments from a variety of businesses — including \$500,000 from one associated with a Russian billionaire. Financial documents reviewed by the Associated Press appear to back up much of attorney Michael Avenatti's report.

Cohen's lawyers said late Wednesday that much of the information released by Avenatti was "completely inaccurate." They told a New York judge that Avenatti made statements "in an apparent attempt to prejudice and discredit Mr. Cohen" as he seeks to intervene in a civil case Cohen brought stemming from April 9 raids on his home and office. The raids were carried out by federal agents looking for evidence in a criminal probe.

The lawyers wrote that some of the information Avenatti published Tuesday did appear to come from Cohen's actual bank records.

Avenatti responded on Twitter, saying the attorneys "fail to address, let alone contradict, 99% of the statements in what we released. Among other things, they effectively concede the receipt of the \$500,000

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 33 of 57

from those with Russian ties.”

Three companies confirmed the payments, including Novartis and AT&T, both saying Cohen’s Essential Consultants was hired to help them understand the new president during the early days of the Trump administration. Novartis said in a statement that it paid Cohen \$100,000 a month for a year-long contract, thinking the longtime New York legal “fixer” with few Washington ties could advise on health care matters. After a single meeting they decided “not to engage further.”

Some of the companies that engaged Cohen also had contact with Trump personally. AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson met with him during the transition and has visited the White House as the company has sought approval to absorb Time Warner. The current CEO of Novartis attended a dinner with Trump at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this year, though the company stressed that the agreement with Cohen’s company predated his time as CEO and he was not involved with the deal.

Just what Cohen was selling was a key question Wednesday, particularly given that public records show he is not a registered lobbyist. Cohen could enter these relationships without violating federal lobbying laws if he did not seek to influence Trump on the companies’ behalf. But hiring Trump’s personal attorney for advice on how to understand the president would be highly unusual.

Public Citizen President Robert Weissman said Cohen’s consulting work sounds more like pay-to-play lobbying.

“It stretches the imagination that the work was just for advice. There is no reason that he would have any blinding insights,” Weissman said. “Sending money to a shell company, instead of his business, that sets off some alarm bell. Nothing of this seems right.”

Some of the dealings have caught the attention of the special counsel investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election. A spokesman for Novartis said the company was contacted in November by Robert Mueller’s office regarding its agreement with Essential Consultants, which expired this year.

AT&T also said it was contacted last year by Mueller’s office “regarding Michael Cohen.” The company said it “cooperated fully, providing all information requested in November and December of 2017.” AT&T added that its consulting contract with Cohen expired at the end of the year and it has received no questions since.

Cohen also used the company to pay a \$130,000 payment to Daniels just before the 2016 election in exchange for her silence about an alleged sexual encounter with the president. Cohen is under investigation by federal prosecutors in New York, but has not been charged.

Getting into a taxi in New York City Wednesday, Cohen said of Avenatti, “His document is inaccurate,” according to NBC News.

Cohen has told associates that Avenatti’s claims are overheated, and he has maintained that he has not done anything wrong, according to a person familiar with the attorney’s views but not authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Cohen, who until January 2017 worked for the Trump Organization, was a fixture in the company’s headquarters in Trump Tower in the weeks before the president took office. Ex-campaign officials did not recall Cohen or Trump ever discussing Cohen’s plans to launch consulting firm, according to three ex-campaign officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Some who used to work for Trump defended Cohen’s actions, assuming he did not break any regulations about lobbying.

“Corporations want to pay for insight, advocacy and expertise on a White House,” said former Trump campaign aide Sam Nunberg. “Michael offered that. He didn’t do anything wrong, he did what lots of people have done over the years.”

The Treasury Department’s Office of the Inspector General said Wednesday it was investigating how allegations about Cohen’s banking records became public, a response to the memo released by Avenatti.

Inspector general counsel Rich Delmar said the agency’s actions stem from its authority as the federal agency that analyzes banking records for potential illegal activity. Under the Bank Secrecy Act, financial institutions must monitor their customers’ activities and report suspicious transactions to the government. But that information is supposed to remain confidential.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 34 of 57

Avenatti, who has not disclosed where he got his information or released any documents, declined to comment on the probe. But he has called on Cohen and Trump to release their banking records and has urged the Treasury Department to release a so-called suspicious activities report on Essential Consultants.

According to Avenatti's memo, Viktor Vekselberg, a Russian billionaire, and his cousin, Andrew Intrater, "routed" eight payments totaling about \$500,000 to Cohen's company between January and August 2017. The payments were made by Columbus Nova, an American investment company, Avenatti alleges.

Andrey Shtorkh, a spokesman for Vekselberg said in a statement that Vekselberg did not have a "contractual relationship" with Cohen or his firm.

Columbus Nova's lawyer, Richard Owens, said the company hired Cohen after Trump's inauguration in January 2017 as a business consultant "regarding potential sources of capital and potential investments in real estate and other ventures," but that it had nothing to do with Vekselberg.

At the time of the payments, there was an FBI counterintelligence investigation, which special counsel Mueller took over last May, into Russian election interference and any possible coordination with Trump associates.

Vekselberg was targeted for U.S. sanctions by the Trump administration last month. He built his fortune, currently estimated by Forbes at \$14.6 billion, by investing in the aluminum and oil industries. More recently, he has expanded his assets to include industrial equipment and high technology.

AT&T said in a statement that Essential Consultants was one of several firms it "engaged in early 2017 to provide insights into understanding the new administration." Avenatti alleged that the company made four \$50,000 payments to Cohen totaling \$200,000 in late 2017 and early 2018. AT&T said Cohen's company "did no legal or lobbying work for us, and the contract ended in December 2017."

AP Writers Jill Colvin and Richard Lardner contributed from Washington, Jake Pearson and Bernard Condon contributed from New York.

Americans were freed 1 hour before flight out of Pyongyang

By MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — After months of anticipation and drama, the release of three American detainees by North Korea played out amid high-stakes diplomacy and was only sealed about an hour before the U.S. secretary of state was wheels-up from Pyongyang.

The three men — Kim Dong Chul, Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim — walked on their own from a van and onto the plane of top diplomat Mike Pompeo. It was the culmination of Pompeo's 12-and-a-half-hour visit to the North Korean capital, which included a 90-minute meeting with leader Kim Jong Un.

Returning to his hotel from that meeting, Pompeo had given reporters a fingers-crossed sign when asked if there was good news about the detainees. A North Korean official came to the hotel shortly after to inform Pompeo that Kim had granted amnesties to the three and that they would be released at 7 p.m. local time, according to a senior U.S. official present for the exchange. Carl Risch, the assistant secretary of state for consular affairs, and a doctor went to another hotel to pick up the men and bring them to the airport, the official said.

They finally left custody at 7:45 p.m., and by 8:42 p.m. they were flying home.

As soon as the plane cleared North Korean airspace, Pompeo called President Donald Trump to inform him of the releases with the men all apparently in good health; then other officials notified their families.

Even before Pompeo's plane had touched down for a stopover at Yokota Air Base in neighboring Japan, the president announced to the world by Twitter that the "3 wonderful gentlemen" were free.

In a statement released by the State Department, the former detainees expressed their "deep appreciation" to the U.S. government, Trump, Pompeo and the American people "for bringing us home."

They are the latest in a series of Americans to be held in North Korea for alleged anti-state activities in recent years, only to be freed during the visit of a high-level U.S. official or statesman. Their releases draw a line under an issue that had weighed on plans for a historic summit between Kim and Trump that

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 35 of 57

will focus on North Korea's nuclear weapons.

"We're granting amnesty to the three detained Americans," the North Korean emissary told Pompeo at Pyongyang's Koryo Hotel, according to the senior U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss the exchange. "We issued the order to grant immediate amnesty to the detainees."

"That's great," the secretary of state replied.

The North Korean official then advised that the releases would follow a "very brief ceremony" — which he described as more like a legal process. The official closed with a gentle warning for the U.S. to prevent a repeat: "You should make care that they do not make the same mistakes again," the official said. "This was a hard decision."

North Korea's official news agency, KCNA, said early Thursday that Kim "accepted an official suggestion of the U.S. president for the release of Americans who have been detained in the DPRK for their anti-DPRK hostilities," referring to the initials of the authoritarian nation's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The dispatch also made the first official mention by the North of plans for the Trump-Kim summit.

The Trump administration has made clear it regarded the arrests as politically motivated, and had been bitterly critical of North Korea's refusal to grant consular access to the three, other than a brief visit by a U.S. envoy last June. The envoy had repatriated college student Otto Warmbier, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison with hard labor for stealing a propaganda poster. Warmbier died in June 2017, days after he arrived back in the U.S. with severe brain damage.

Since then, pressure to win the releases of the other three men, whom the administration has referred to as "hostages," has intensified.

Relatively little is known about the men, all Korean-Americans, and the circumstances in which they ended up in North Korean custody.

Kim Dong Chul, a former Virginia resident who had reportedly run a company on North Korea's border with Russia, had been sentenced in April 2016 to 10 years in prison with hard labor after being convicted of espionage. Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim, who had both taught at a university in Pyongyang that was founded with donations from Christian groups, had been held for about one year and apparently had not been tried.

Tony Kim's son Sol Kim, a graduate student in California, is the only relative of the detainees to have appealed in public for their freedom. On learning of the release of Tony, who also uses the name Kim Sang-duk, his family expressed gratitude and credited Trump for engaging directly with North Korea.

Washington and Pyongyang have remained in a state of war since the fighting in the 1950-53 Korean War ended and do not have formal diplomatic ties, complicating efforts to handle the cases of American detainees. Typically, Swedish diplomats based in North Korea handle U.S. consular affairs.

Pompeo, the most senior U.S. official to meet with a North Korean leader since 2000, was making his second visit to the isolated nation in five weeks — and less than two weeks after becoming top diplomat. Some in Washington had expressed disappointment that Pompeo's first trip, made in secret when he was still CIA director, did not win the freedom of the three captives.

Pompeo said Wednesday he was "thrilled" the men were now out.

"Though we're not quite back home yet, I welcomed them back," he said, recounting his first words with the men after they were freed. "They were happy to be with us on this plane to be sure," he said.

The three boarded under their own steam, when most of the U.S. delegation had already got on the plane. They were seated with medical personnel in a curtained off area of the aircraft.

After arriving at the stop in Japan, the men transferred to another plane with more medical facilities and were expected to land at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington in the wee hours of Thursday, where Trump planned to greet them.

Police look for victims of suspected Michigan serial killer

By **MIKE HOUSEHOLDER** and **COREY WILLIAMS**, Associated Press

MACOMB TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — A Michigan man serving life in prison for killing a 13-year-old girl is a suspected serial killer, police said Wednesday as they dug up part of a forest in a search for as many as seven other girls who have been missing for decades.

Using earth-moving equipment, as well as shovels and rakes, authorities have spent two days excavating a wooded site about 30 miles (50 kilometers) northeast of Detroit in the belief that Arthur Ream buried all of his victims in the same general area.

The police commissioner in nearby Warren appealed to the inmate to help investigators find the remains. "You want to be a man about it?" Bill Dwyer said. "Let's help the families out. Give them some closure. That's what it's all about."

Ream is no stranger to the area. Following his 2008 conviction for killing Cindy Zarzycki, he led investigators to her remains, which had been buried there for more than 20 years.

The current search area spans about 24 acres. Searchers are trying to narrow that down to a more manageable size, police said.

Police interviewed Ream a few months ago after fellow prisoners said he boasted about killing four to six other people. He later failed a lie-detector test, Dwyer said.

Ream, who turned 69 on Wednesday, was sentenced in 1998 to 15 years in prison for criminal sexual conduct and taking indecent liberties with a child less than two years earlier.

Attorney R. Timothy Kohler, who was appointed by a judge to represent him in his 2008 murder trial, said his former client is "not a likable guy" and not healthy.

"He smoked excessively and was overweight. I didn't want to particularly hear his story, other than my sense that he was denying any allegation of intentionally murdering" Cindy.

"He claimed his innocence. He never told me that he did anything. Frankly, I don't think I was interested in knowing that," Kohler said.

Cindy was last seen on April 20, 1986, after going to a Dairy Queen in Eastpointe, a mostly blue-collar suburb north of Detroit.

Other possible victims include 12-year-old Kimberly King, who disappeared in 1979 while visiting her grandmother in Warren; Kim Larrow, who was 15 when she was last seen in 1981 in Canton Township, west of Detroit; and Kellie Brownlee, who was 17 when she vanished in 1982 from suburban Novi.

Authorities are also searching for additional victims who have not been publicly identified.

During Ream's murder trial, prosecutors said he told Cindy that he was taking her to a surprise birthday party for his son, who was her boyfriend at the time. Scott Ream's birthday actually was months earlier.

Even after leading police to her remains, Ream denied killing her. He told a police detective in 2008 that Cindy was with his son the day she died and claimed she fell from an open elevator at his carpet warehouse in Warren.

Her father hopes Ream tells police where other bodies might be found.

"I pray for him every day that his heart softens," Edward Zarzycki said Wednesday at the excavation site. King's sister, Konnie Beyma, wants the same.

"Please just tell us where she is so we can move on," Beyma told reporters. "That's all. Let us take her and bury her next to my grandmother."

Williams reported from Detroit.

Sanctions on Iran could cost US, European companies billions

By **DAVID KOENIG** and **ANGELA CHARLTON**, Associated Press

European and American companies could lose billions of dollars in commercial deals canceled and a major new export market undercut by the U.S. decision to re-impose sanctions on Iran.

President Donald Trump's decision will likely most hurt aircraft makers, oil companies and auto manufac-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 37 of 57

turers. The final impact, however, remains unclear because of possible exemptions for some companies and even new negotiations on a revised Iran nuclear agreement, experts say.

Since the Iran nuclear accord was struck in 2015, it has been mostly European companies that moved back in to sign deals with Iran. Europe traditionally has had closer business and diplomatic ties than the U.S., where the legacy lingers from the seizure of hostages at the American embassy in Tehran nearly 40 years ago.

The leaders of Britain, France and Germany tried but failed to persuade Trump to stick with the deal. The reaction from some in Europe was bitter.

Carl Bildt, the former prime minister of Sweden who is now co-chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations, complained that new sanctions "are hardly hitting any U.S. companies, but aim primarily at European ones." Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Union's executive body, said the U.S. "no longer wants to cooperate with other parts of the world" and should be supplanted by the EU on the international stage.

Trump fulfilled a campaign promise by announcing that he will withdraw the U.S. from the nuclear deal. As a consequence, companies worldwide must stop doing business with Iran or risk U.S. fines or other punishment.

U.S. sanctions bar U.S. banks and companies from doing business with Iran. The sanctions also limit foreign companies from dealing with Iran by prohibiting them from using American banks in their operations if they do not sever links with Iran.

Aircraft manufacturers stand to be big losers, with the pain shared between Chicago-based Boeing and Europe's Airbus. U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the companies' existing licenses to sell planes to Iran would be invalidated. Airbus falls under U.S. rules because its planes include U.S.-made components.

Airbus has already delivered three planes out of a 100-jet order placed in December 2016 by Iran's national carrier, Iran Air. The planes are worth around \$19 billion at list prices.

Boeing later announced deals with Iran Air and Aseman Airlines totaling 110 planes said to be worth \$20 billion. However, list prices are routinely exaggerated, and aviation consultancy Avitas valued the deals at \$9.5 billion, given normal discounts.

The aircraft makers will avoid serious damage. The Iranian deals represented a blip in Boeing's business. Boeing never added the planes to its backlog — and if it had, they would have represented less than 2 percent of its 5,800 orders.

Boeing prepared investors for the setback. CEO Dennis Muilenburg said last month that losing the Iranian sales wouldn't slow down production.

"Airbus booked the orders and started delivering planes. Boeing played it safe and did neither, which may have been smart," said Richard Aboulafia, an analyst with airline-industry consultant Teal Group near Washington, D.C. He also said that Iran's demand for new planes was vastly overrated all along.

In the long term, however, "Iran is the big hope of aviation manufacturers" because of its large population — about 80 million — and middle class, its oil assets, and an aging aircraft fleet in need of upgrades, said Adam Pilarski, an Avitas analyst.

The U.S. says the sanctions will also sharply curtail sales of oil by Iran, the world's fifth-largest oil producer. There will be a 180-day period for countries to wrap up existing contracts and achieve "significant reductions" in their purchases of Iranian crude, although Mnuchin did not spell out what the administration meant by the term.

French oil company Total SA has been the most aggressive Western oil company to move back into Iran, signing a \$5 billion, 20-year agreement there in July. A Chinese oil company also has a deal to develop the country's massive South Pars offshore natural gas field. Total did not respond to requests for comment.

France's Total, Anglo-Dutch Royal Dutch Shell and Italy's Eni were more active in Iran than U.S. companies, which were still limited by other sanctions unrelated to Iran's nuclear program, including a trade embargo.

The price of oil rose sharply on Wednesday to its highest since 2014 on expectations that the new sanctions will crimp Iranian exports. Brent crude, the standard for pricing international oil, rose \$2.11, or 2.8

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 38 of 57

percent, to \$76.96 a barrel in London. Benchmark U.S. crude gained \$2, or 2.9 percent, to \$71.06 a barrel in New York, the highest level since late 2014.

Analysts estimate that the re-imposition of sanctions could reduce Iran's exports by between 200,000 and 600,000 barrels per day. That might seem insignificant in a global supply of about 98 million barrels a day. Oil prices have been rising, however, as a worldwide glut of crude is burned off by strong global demand and limits on drilling by Saudi Arabia and other major producers. Any crimp in supply is likely to drive prices higher.

Saudi Arabia immediately pledged to help offset the loss of Iranian crude, saying it "remains committed to supporting the stability of oil markets, benefiting producers and consumers alike." Analysts also expect that U.S. companies will respond to higher prices by drilling more.

Analysts say oil prices are already high enough to cause a drag on the economy.

"An oil price increase is a hit to consumers in the form of higher gasoline prices, which means weaker spending on other items," said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "The key question going forward will be what happens to oil production in Saudi Arabia," one of the few countries capable of offsetting lost Iranian production.

Mnuchin told reporters that the Trump administration has talked to "various parties" who would be willing to provide enough oil to offset Iran. He did not name the countries.

In other sectors, French carmaker PSA Peugeot Citroen agreed in 2016 to open a plant producing 200,000 vehicles annually in Iran, and says it is studying the implications of the U.S. move. Fellow automaker Renault signed a \$778 million deal to build 150,000 cars a year at a factory outside of Tehran but has declined to comment so far.

German industrial equipment manufacturer Siemens, which has multi-billion-dollar contracts with Iran for rail, power plant and other projects, said it is assessing the possible impact but expects it to be immaterial. It said it will comply with any sanctions.

Companies and countries with commercial deals with Iran would have either 90 or 180 days to wind down those activities, depending on the sector and type of products sanctioned. Firms would not be allowed to strike new deals with Iran.

U.S. officials said certain waivers can be negotiated, but they did not say what goods or countries might qualify.

Most of the companies should be able to withstand the loss of deals in Iran. PSA Peugeot Citroen, for example, sold more than 3.6 million vehicles worldwide last year.

Closer ties with Europe have helped Iran. Exports to the EU grew almost tenfold since the sanctions were lifted, from 1.25 billion euros (\$1.48 billion) in 2015 to 10.14 billion euros last year. The flow of goods to Iran grew more modestly, from 6.47 billion euros to 10.8 billion euros.

Koenig reported from Dallas and Charlton from Paris. Martin Crutsinger in Washington, D.C., Jon Gambrell in Dubai, Frank Jordans in Berlin, Raf Casert in Brussels and Matt Ott in New York contributed to this report.

Governor's trial hinges on photo that may or may not exist

By JIM SALTER, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — For all of the sensational allegations in the invasion-of-privacy case against Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens — an extramarital affair, bondage, blackmail — the verdict may come down to the technical workings of the iPhone, the definition of "transmission," and the whereabouts of a photo that may or may not exist.

Jury selection begins Thursday in the felony case against the 44-year-old Republican, who is accused of taking an unauthorized photograph of a blindfolded and partially naked woman while she was bound to exercise rings in his basement in 2015, before he was elected.

The woman, a hairdresser with whom Greitens has admitted having an affair, told investigators she saw a flash through the blindfold and heard what sounded like a photo being taken. Greitens allegedly

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 39 of 57

told her, "You're never going to mention my name, otherwise there will be pictures of (you) everywhere."

The woman, whose name has not been released, said that she became upset and that Greitens told her he deleted the picture.

But the trial could prove to be like a murder case without a body: Prosecutors acknowledged in court Monday that they have not found such a photo. And Greitens has repeatedly declined to say if he took a picture.

In addition to the invasion-of-privacy case, Greitens faces separate criminal charges of misusing a charity donor list for political purposes, and the Legislature will convene in special session this month to consider impeachment.

Beyond the question of whether the photo exists are some highly technical issues that could be pivotal: What happens to an iPhone picture if it's deleted? Does it go to the cloud, and if so, can it be retrieved? And what exactly constitutes transmission of a photo?

The last question is important because under Missouri law, simply taking an unauthorized photo of someone in a full or partial state of nudity is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year behind bars. It is a felony carrying up to four years in prison if the image is distributed to someone else or if a person "transmits the image in a manner that allows access to that image via computer."

There is no evidence Greitens shared or posted any photo. At Monday's court hearing, prosecutor Robert Steele said authorities planned to call an expert who would explain that "transmission from the pixels to the CPU, or the memory card, is a transmission." That would mean that any cellphone photo involves transmission.

Defense attorney Michelle Nasser, at the hearing, called that definition "convoluted and bizarre."

"Your Honor, that is not at all what is meant in the statute," Nasser told Judge Rex Burlison, who ruled against allowing the expert witness, saying the jury will decide what constitutes transmission.

Michelle Richardson of the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology suggested in an interview that the prosecutors' interpretation differs from what the drafters of the law intended.

"It seems to me if they wanted to say all images taken on connected devices were covered, they could have just said that," Richardson said.

Greitens was indicted in February, and prosecutors initially asked that the trial begin in the fall, citing the need to gather more evidence. The key missing piece of evidence was, and remains, the alleged photo.

On Tuesday, a forensics examiner was at the courthouse extracting data from Greitens' phone. Richardson said that even if a photo is deleted, it isn't erased from the phone's memory and can be retrieved.

Many phones are also set to automatically back up photos to the cloud, storing data on the internet through places like Apple's iCloud or Google Photos. Phone users can opt out of storing data to the cloud, but many don't.

Prosecutors could seek a search warrant against Apple or Google to try to find the photo. It's unclear if they've done so. A spokeswoman for the prosecutors would not comment, nor would an Apple representative. A message left with Google was not returned.

Richardson said the process of seeking data from the cloud is common enough that large companies such as Apple and Google have dedicated attorneys and technology professionals who work specifically with law enforcement, and "my understanding is the process usually moves pretty quickly."

Burlison on Wednesday ruled that the woman can be referred to by her name at trial. Until now, she has been referred to in court and in filings only by her initials. Prosecutors wanted her to be referred to as "the victim," a term that defense attorney Jim Bennett said would be "prejudicial."

Also Wednesday, the court announced it will allow media to take still photos in the courtroom, but only for the first 10 minutes of the first day of the trial. No video or audio will be permitted.

Could disgraced attorney general be charged with a crime?

By COLLEEN LONG, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Detailed accusations that state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman abused women were enough to force him to resign, but are they enough to charge him with a crime?

Investigators say they are just beginning to look into the allegations made by four women who told The New Yorker magazine they were slapped, choked and verbally abused by the Schneiderman, often during sexual intercourse. The women strongly rejected the Democratic politician's explanation that any abuse was the result of consensual, intimate "role-playing."

One of the women told the magazine Schneiderman hit her so hard her ear bled, and another said he left on her face a mark that was still visible the next day. At least one said she took a photo of her injury.

The chief of detectives for the New York Police Department, Dermot Shea, said investigators would interview the women in detail, but he couldn't say whether any charges would result.

Legal experts say that based on the stories, the most likely charge would be a lower-level assault. And since Schneiderman was accused of choking at least one woman, he could potentially be prosecuted under a 2010 law he helped pass, which made choking a misdemeanor. The statute of limitations is two years to bring charges for such crimes.

Strangulation or an assault that causes a serious physical injury has a five-year window to bring charges.

If investigators find evidence Schneiderman verbally abused someone but did not cause visible physical injury, it would be considered harassment, a violation that has a statute of limitations of one year. That could come into play because some of the abuse the women allege happened in 2016 and possibly earlier.

Another complication is that the women didn't go to the police at the time, which is common among victims of domestic violence.

"People think it's so simple to leave. But it's really very complicated," said Judy Harris Kluger, a former sex crimes prosecutor and current executive director of Sanctuary for Families, which aids domestic-violence victims. "Let's start holding the men accountable and stop saying, 'Why don't the women walk away?'"

She noted that there's an added stigma of violence that occurs during sex: Women often feel as though they can't say anything in the moment and are embarrassed later by what happened.

On Tuesday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he was taking the case away from Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. and was appointing a special prosecutor, Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas. All three are Democrats.

Cuomo's decision came about seven weeks after he asked the attorney general's office to look into how Vance handled a 2015 harassment investigation against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein that resulted in no criminal charges. Both moves were highly unusual, and some critics have accused Cuomo of meddling in the work of independent prosecutors for political gain.

On Tuesday, Cuomo said he appointed the special prosecutor because "I don't even want the whiff of the perception of conflict of interest or impropriety."

Vance strongly objected.

"Charging and jurisdictional decision making should be left to independent prosecutors who are answerable to their local constituents," Vance wrote. "Interference with law enforcement investigations by an elected chief executive should always be viewed with great care, especially these days, given the propensity of our elected executive at the federal level in Washington to make statements and take actions that jeopardize the independence of our criminal justice system."

The governor's counsel, Alphonso David, issued a scathing response Wednesday, accusing Vance of a "blatant conflict of interest."

"Your original actions and omissions in the Harvey Weinstein matter caused the distrust of women's organizations," he wrote. "That distrust is your creation, not ours."

Schneiderman's resignation Monday night, just three hours after The New Yorker's story appeared, was a stunningly swift fall for a politician who put himself at the forefront of the #MeToo movement and had cast himself as a defender of women. His accusers said the hypocrisy of his speaking out on such issues

was part of what pushed them to come forward.

Schneiderman, a frequent critic of President Donald Trump, has denied abusing anyone. His attorney, Isabelle A. Kirshner, declined to comment.

The 63-year-old Schneiderman, who is divorced and has a daughter, emerged from his Manhattan apartment building Wednesday for the first time since the scandal broke. He rushed through a pack of news photographers, telling them, "Thank you. Have a nice day."

Associated Press writer Jennifer Peltz contributed to this report.

NBC says no culture of harassment in its news division

By DAVID BAUDER, AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — NBC's internal investigation following Matt Lauer's firing says it doesn't believe there is a culture of sexual harassment at the news division and that current news executives weren't aware of the former "Today" show anchor's behavior until the complaint that doomed him.

Investigators also said more needs to be done to ensure that the more than 2,000 employees at NBC News can talk about bad behavior without fearing retaliation, leading NBC News Chairman Andy Lack to establish a way this can be done outside the company.

Despite releasing the report publicly, NBC was criticized for not allowing outsiders to look at its practices. Some suggested it damages the report's credibility.

"No one is going to be fully candid when speaking to management for fear of losing their jobs," said Eleanor McManus, a co-founder of Press Forward, an organization of women who worked in the news industry and experienced sexual misconduct.

"News organizations, journalists and media all hold corporations, governments and individuals to higher standards in similar instances, so it's concerning that NBC would not choose to follow those same standards itself."

The review by lawyers means "that care was taken at every step — to avoid liability," said Jennifer Drobac, an Indiana University professor and expert in employment law. "If this investigation also promotes a safer work environment, then that is an added benefit for all."

NBC Universal's general counsel, Kimberley Harris, conducted the investigation. Harris' report was primarily concerned with Lauer, and no specific complaints about others were discussed. There was no mention of a former NBC News employee's accusation last month that former "Nightly News" anchor Tom Brokaw made unwanted advances on her, which he has denied.

NBC said the work of its all-female investigative team was reviewed and approved by two outside firms.

"NBC Universal's investigation was thorough, objective and conducted at the corporate level, outside the News division," said Hilary Smith, network spokeswoman.

Lauer was fired in November after it was found he had an inappropriate sexual relationship with another NBC employee. Three additional women subsequently complained about Lauer.

Investigators found no evidence that anyone "in position of authority" at NBC News knew that Lauer had sexual relationships with others in the company until the Nov. 27 complaint by a woman about an affair that began at the 2014 Winter Olympics. Still, two of the four women who complained about Lauer said they believed someone in management knew about his behavior.

Former "Today" anchor Ann Curry had said in a news interview that she had gone to management to say they should watch Lauer after another woman had told her Lauer had harassed her. But NBC's report said Curry declined to reveal to investigators whom she spoke to and that no current or past managers interviewed by investigators said they'd spoken to her about the issue.

Curry was not immediately available to clarify that on Wednesday.

The report said Lauer, who is married, was flirtatious and engaged in sexual banter in the office. Several women said he had complimented them on their appearance in a sexually suggestive way.

Investigators threw cold water on a published report that a button allowed Lauer to lock his office door

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 42 of 57

without getting up from his desk. The button closed the door, but didn't lock it, the report said.

Some of the 68 people interviewed said they were aware of other rumored extramarital affairs in the news division. Most were already known and dealt with; some are being looked into, the report said.

"The investigation team does not believe that there is a widespread or systemic pattern of behavior that violates company policy or a culture of harassment in the News Division," Harris' report said.

The report discussed reasons why some at NBC are reluctant to come forward with complaints — including glass-walled Human Resources offices that made them question whether their concerns would be kept quiet. In a memo to staff, Lack said employees can now bring misconduct reports to an outside law firm that has already helped NBC set up workplace training that has taken place since Lauer's firing.

"I am immensely proud of NBC News, its history and the work we do," Lack said. "But, stepping back from the investigation, that history also includes a time when people were not comfortable coming forward to voice complaints about repugnant behavior. That is not acceptable."

Lack said more than 80 percent of the staff had undergone new training in workplace behavior since Lauer's firing, and that all employees are expected to be done by June 30.

The former NBC News reporter who accused Brokaw of misconduct, Linda Vester, wrote in The Washington Post on Wednesday that NBC should have gone outside the company for its investigation. Vester also said a letter supporting Brokaw that circulated among NBC News employees — and was signed by the likes of Rachel Maddow and Andrea Mitchell — could have a chilling effect.

"NBC News's actions had the effect of communicating to other victims that they wouldn't be believed and would be better off staying silent," Vester wrote.

GOP immigration moderates seek to force House votes on issue

By ALAN FRAM, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans with moderate views on immigration defied party leaders and took steps Wednesday toward forcing campaign-season House votes on the issue. One top maverick said they had enough support to succeed.

The effort meant that a congressional drive to help young "Dreamer" immigrants that seemed to have lost steam earlier this year could be resurrected in the run-up to November's elections for House and Senate control. That could spell fresh headaches for GOP leaders, whose party is divided between backers of President Donald Trump's hard-line views and more pragmatic members.

The rebellious lawmakers want the House to vote in June on four bills including a bipartisan compromise, a conservative proposal and a liberal plan. Many of the legislators demanding action face potentially competitive re-election races in congressional districts with large numbers of Hispanic, suburban or agriculture-industry voters with pro-immigration views.

"We feel very importantly that this has got to happen now, and we're willing to drive that vote," said one leading proponent, Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Calif.

Denham and another leader of the effort, Rep. Carlos Curbelo, R-Fla., met with House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., who has opposed their effort. Denham said he told Ryan his group has enough backing to prevail.

"The speaker is a very respectful person," Curbelo said of how Ryan responded. "He does not threaten people, at least not that I'm aware of. He just told us that he didn't think this was the best way to proceed."

Earlier this year, competing bills aimed at protecting young immigrants and toughening border security collapsed in the Senate, including one backed by Trump. The measures never received House votes.

Both parties had seemed ready to turn the battle into a campaign issue, with Democrats accusing GOP candidates of being anti-immigrant and Republicans accusing Democrats of being soft on illegal immigration.

But Republican immigration moderates wary of being politically exposed if the House abandons the issue have continued pushing leaders for votes, and they seemed to have momentum in their favor Wednesday.

Curbelo, Denham and others filed a petition Wednesday that would force votes on four immigration bills if they gained the signatures of 218 House members, a majority of the chamber's full membership.

By late afternoon, 17 Republicans had signed on and virtually all 193 Democrats were expected to add

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 43 of 57

their names. That meant at least 25 Republicans were needed to reach a total of 218.

Under House rules, the earliest the chamber would consider the moderates' proposal for votes is late June. Of the four immigration measures, the bipartisan compromise is considered likeliest to prevail. Ryan has tried unsuccessfully to round up enough support for the conservative alternative and has said he doesn't want votes on immigration legislation that Trump won't sign.

Asked about the moderates' effort, Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong said, "We continue to work with our members to find a solution that can both pass the House and get the president's signature."

It is possible that, rather than facing the embarrassment of a petition successfully forcing votes, Ryan would seek a compromise measure. But he's failed to find middle ground all year.

Even if the House approves something, its fate would be uncertain in the Senate, where no proposal from either side has garnered enough votes to break opponents' filibusters.

Denham introduced a legislative version of his proposal in March and had 248 co-sponsors, including virtually all Democrats and more than 50 Republicans.

GOP leaders hope to persuade some of those Republicans to not sign the petition, and some have already said they won't back it. They say the petition would wrest control over the House agenda away from Ryan. Members of the majority party seldom back such petitions for that very reason, and few succeed.

Democrats have pushed this year to protect from deportation hundreds of thousands of young immigrants who have been shielded by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. That program lets immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children stay in the country for renewable two-year periods.

Trump ended DACA, created under President Barack Obama, in March, though federal judges have kept it functioning during legal battles expected to last months.

A conservative House bill would let DACA recipients stay in the U.S. temporarily but would also reduce legal immigration, allow construction of Trump's proposed border wall with Mexico and crack down on sanctuary cities that don't cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

The liberal DREAM Act — Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors — would give the young immigrants, commonly known as "Dreamers," a chance at citizenship.

The bipartisan compromise by Reps. Will Hurd, R-Texas, and Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., would offer a way for "Dreamers" to remain in the U.S. legally but would not offer citizenship. It would take steps toward toughening border security but would not specifically authorize Trump's wall.

For the fourth bill, Ryan could offer any plan he wants.

Under the procedure the moderates are using, the bill that passes with the most votes would prevail.

Opposition win ends Malaysia party's 60-year hold on power

By EILEEN NG and STEPHEN WRIGHT, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — An alliance of Malaysian opposition parties led by the country's 92-year-old former authoritarian leader Mahathir Mohamad won a fiercely contested general election, ending the 60-year rule of the Malay-dominated National Front.

The result is a political earthquake for Muslim-majority Malaysia, sweeping aside the government of Prime Minister Najib Razak, whose reputation was tarnished by a monumental corruption scandal and the imposition of an unpopular sales tax that hurt many of his coalition's poor rural supporters.

It is also a surprising exception to backsliding on democratic values in Southeast Asia, a region of more than 600 million people where governments of countries including Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines have swung toward harsh authoritarian rule.

Official results show the opposition parties, which banded together as the Alliance of Hope, surpassed the 112 seats needed for a majority in parliament.

Mahathir in a televised address Thursday said a representative of Malaysia's constitutional monarchy had contacted the opposition to acknowledge its victory. A prime minister would be sworn in within a day, he said, which would make Mahathir the world's oldest elected leader. He said Thursday and Friday would be public holidays, another slap for Najib, who on election eve had promised public holidays if his coalition won.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 44 of 57

Mahathir was credited with modernizing Malaysia during his 22 year rule that ended in 2003 but was also known as a heavy-handed leader who imprisoned opponents and subjugated the courts. Remarkably robust for 92, he pledged that the new government would not seek "revenge" against political opponents. It would, however, seek to restore the rule of law and prosecute those who had breached it, he said.

Analysts said the win by the opposition was a resounding rejection of Malaysia's political status quo.

"This is a repudiation of Najib's government from all walks of life from the very rural northern states to the more industrial southern coast," said Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asia expert at John Cabot University in Rome.

Angered by the graft scandal, Mahathir emerged from political retirement and joined the opposition in an attempt to oust Najib, his former protege.

The U.S. Justice Department says \$4.5 billion was looted from state investment fund 1MBD by associates of Najib between 2009 and 2014, including \$700 million that landed in Najib's bank account. He has denied wrongdoing.

The opposition also made big gains in state elections including winning Johor state, where the dominant Malay party in the long-ruling National Front coalition was founded.

"The person who has made this happen is Mahathir. He has been a significant game changer. He made people feel that a transition of power is possible," said Welsh, in Kuala Lumpur to observe the polls.

Analysts previously said the National Front might lose the popular vote but hold onto a majority in parliament due to an electoral system that gives more power to rural Malays, the party's traditional supporters.

Faced with a reinvigorated opposition, the government used all the levers of power to further tilt the playing field in its favor, critics and analysts said.

Redrawn electoral boundaries were rushed through parliament last month, pushing likely opposition voters into districts that already support the opposition and dividing constituencies along racial lines.

A recently passed "fake news" law was an attempt to stifle debate and criticism, opponents said.

Najib has not publicly reacted to the election result. His aide told media Najib would hold a press conference later in the day.

"For the first time we can actually talk about establishing a true democracy based on the rule of law," said Ambiga Sreenevasan, a prominent lawyer and rights activist. "The true heroes are the Malaysian people because they came out in overwhelming numbers so there could be no cheating," she said.

The National Front lost its two-thirds majority in parliament in 2008 polls and lost the popular vote in 2013, though it still won 60 percent of seats that year.

Mahathir's victory was surreal for his family.

"It seemed so difficult. Impossible. I didn't dare think even though I was out there and I saw the crowds," said his daughter Marina Mahathir. "He is a veteran, he knows how to do this."

Ivy Sam in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia contributed reporting.

Google suspends all ads related to Irish abortion referendum

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Google is suspending all advertising connected to Ireland's abortion referendum as part of moves to protect "election integrity," the company announced Wednesday.

The move came a day after Facebook banned foreign-backed ads in the Irish campaign, amid global concerns about online election meddling and the role of internet ads in swaying voters.

Google said that starting Thursday, it would no longer display ads related to the May 25 vote on whether to repeal Ireland's constitutional ban on most abortions.

The prohibition on ads connected to the Irish vote applies to both Google and YouTube, which the company owns.

The online search leader, which is based in Mountain View, California, declined to say how much advertising revenue it was giving up because of the decision.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 45 of 57

The role of online ads in elections is under scrutiny following revelations that Russian groups bought ads on leading services such as Google and Facebook to try to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. Many of the ads were designed to sow confusion, anger and discord among Americans through messages on hot-button topics.

Karin von Abrams, a London-based analyst with the research firm eMarketer, said banning ads represented a short-term safeguard from potential backlash and reputational damage.

"They won't want to forego election-related revenues in the longer term, but they do need to get their houses in order, rather than risk further troubles at this stage," von Abrams said in an email Wednesday.

Google's statement followed Facebook's decision Tuesday to ban foreign advertisements around the abortion referendum, which has drawn worries about the influence of North American groups.

Both Google and Facebook are working on measures to improve transparency before November's U.S. midterm elections, including tools to show the home country of advertisers.

Ireland bars political donations from abroad, but the law has not been applied to social media advertising. Anti-abortion groups based in the United States are among the organizations that have bought online ads in Ireland during the referendum campaign.

Irish lawmaker James Lawless, technology spokesman for the opposition Fianna Fail party, welcomed the moves by Google and Facebook, but said "they are rushed and they are coming at the 11th hour," with just two weeks until voting day.

"It's a step in the right direction, but it's an awful pity we couldn't have done this six months ago," said Lawless, who has introduced a bill to Ireland's parliament that would require all online advertisers to disclose the publishers and sponsors behind ads.

Largely Catholic Ireland has Europe's strictest restrictions on abortion, which is legal only when a woman's life is in danger. Several thousand Irish women travel each year to get abortions in neighboring Britain.

Voters are being asked whether they want to retain the constitutional ban or repeal it and make parliament responsible for creating abortion laws.

Lawless said he had concerns about some of the online advertising from both sides in the referendum campaign.

"Some quite disingenuous ads have been going around in recent weeks targeting people who are in the middle that aren't always from who they seem to be from," he said.

"What we really need is legislation and we need a proper, robust thought-out approach" to the problem, he said.

AP Technology Writer Mae Anderson in New York contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to show that vote is two weeks rather than less than two weeks away.

Porn star's lawyer says Russian paid Trump attorney Cohen

By JILL COLVIN and CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stormy Daniels' lawyer says he has information showing that President Donald Trump's longtime personal attorney received \$500,000 from a company associated with a Russian billionaire within months of paying hush money to the porn star who claims a long-ago affair with Trump.

Lawyer Michael Avenatti also said hundreds of thousands of dollars streamed into Trump attorney Michael Cohen's account from companies, including pharmaceutical giant Novartis, AT&T and Korea Aerospace, with U.S. government business interests. Those three companies have confirmed the connection.

Avenatti isn't disclosing the source of his information or releasing documentation. But in a seven-page memo, Avenatti details what he says were wire transfers into and out of the account Cohen used to pay Daniels \$130,000 in October 2016 to stay silent about her alleged tryst with Trump in 2006. He denies having an affair with Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford.

Financial documents reviewed Tuesday by The Associated Press appeared to back up Avenatti's report.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 46 of 57

The memo says Viktor Vekselberg, a Russian billionaire, and his cousin "routed" eight payments totaling approximately \$500,000 to Cohen's company, Essential Consultants, between January and August 2017. The reason for the payments was not immediately known.

Avenatti's memo says the deposits into the account controlled by Cohen were made by Columbus Nova, an American investment company headed by Vekselberg's cousin, Andrew Intrater, and affiliated with the Renova Group, which Vekselberg controls.

Andrey Shtorkh, a spokesman for Vekselberg and the Renova Group, said in a statement that "neither Victor Vekselberg nor Renova has ever had any contractual relationship" with Cohen or Essential Consultants.

He said questions about a relationship between Columbus Nova and Cohen would have to be answered by Intrater "because Columbus Nova is a company owned and managed by him."

Columbus Nova's lawyer, Richard Owens, said in a statement the company is "solely owned and controlled by Americans." He said that after Trump's inauguration in January 2017, the company hired Cohen as a business consultant "regarding potential sources of capital and potential investments in real estate and other ventures," but that it had nothing to do with Vekselberg.

"Neither Viktor Vekselberg nor anyone else, other than Columbus Nova's owners, were involved in the decision to hire Cohen or provided funding for his engagement," he said.

Cohen and his lawyer did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Cohen is under investigation by federal prosecutors in New York, but hasn't been charged.

At the time of the payments, there was an FBI counterintelligence investigation, which special counsel Robert Mueller took over last May, into Russian election interference and any possible coordination with Trump associates.

Vekselberg was targeted for U.S. sanctions by the Trump administration last month. He built his fortune, currently estimated by Forbes at \$14.6 billion, by investing in the aluminum and oil industries. More recently, he has expanded his assets to include industrial equipment and high technology.

Eric Althoff, a spokesman for Novartis, a multinational pharmaceutical company, said it entered into a one-year agreement with Essential Consultants in February 2017 to focus on health care policy.

He said in an emailed statement Wednesday that Novartis hired Cohen for \$100,000 a month, but determined after a single meeting with Cohen that he wouldn't be of use. Novartis still paid out the \$1.2 million contract.

"The decision was taken not to engage further," he said, but the contract could not be terminated, so the payments continued.

Althoff said Novartis complied with requests for information about the payments from Mueller's investigators in November.

AT&T said in a statement that Essential Consultants was one of several firms it "engaged in early 2017 to provide insights into understanding the new administration."

Avenatti alleged that the company made four \$50,000 payments to Cohen totaling \$200,000 in late 2017 and early 2018.

AT&T said Cohen's company "did no legal or lobbying work for us, and the contract ended in December 2017." Cohen is not a registered lobbyist, according to public records.

Such a confidential relationship would not violate federal lobbying laws if Cohen did not seek to influence Trump on the companies' behalf. But hiring the president's personal attorney for advice on how to woo Trump would be highly unusual, especially given that Cohen was never formally involved in the campaign or Trump's administration.

Making the arrangement even stranger, the blue chip companies' payments to Cohen were routed to Essential Consultants, the company Cohen used to buy Daniels' silence about her alleged affair with Trump.

Trump's Justice Department has sued to block AT&T from an \$85 billion merger with Time Warner, saying it would hurt competition and consumers would have to pay more to watch their favorite shows.

Korea Aerospace, which is alleged to have paid Cohen \$150,000 in November 2017, confirmed it paid Cohen's company for a business deal.

A company spokesman in Seoul, who declined to be named citing office rules, said Korea Aerospace

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 47 of 57

Industries had a contract with Essential Consultants for legal advice on accounting standards. The payment was made under a "legal" deal between the two, said the spokesperson, who refused to answer questions about the size or dates of any payments.

The Avenatti memo alleges the company paid Cohen \$399,920 in late 2017 and early 2018 in four payments — each amounting to \$99,980.

Trump had dinner with Novartis' soon-to-be CEO Vasant Narasimhan, along with other European executives, at the World Economic Forum in Davos shortly after the date of the final payment.

Larry Noble, senior director of the Campaign Legal Center, said there's nothing technically wrong with companies like Novartis and AT&T hiring people like Cohen to provide insight into the president's thinking. But he said the arrangement described by Avenatti "certainly doesn't look good."

"Why would you go to the president's private fixer?" he asked. "He's not known for policy and he's not in the administration. You're going to someone who can get you access and tell you about the person of the president. That's unusual."

Associated Press writers Chad Day and Jeff Horwitz in Washington, Jonathan Lemire and Jake Pearson in New York, and Mike Balsamo in Los Angeles and Youkyung Lee in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Mets undercut 1st-inning rally by batting out of order

By **JOE KAY, AP Sports Writer**

CINCINNATI (AP) — The Mets batted out of order in the first inning against the Reds on Wednesday, undercutting a rally.

Wilmer Flores batted second and struck out against Sal Romano for the second out of the inning. Asdrubal Cabrera came up next — following the batting order announced pregame — and doubled to left.

When cleanup hitter Jay Bruce came to the plate, umpire Gabe Morales took out the lineup card the Mets had turned in and called an out for batting out of turn.

The Mets' lineup card was different than the announced order, showing Cabrera batting second and Flores third.

More AP baseball: <https://apnews.com/tag/MLBbaseball>

Trump warns Iran against resuming nuclear program

By **CATHERINE LUCEY and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump warned Iran on Wednesday against resuming its nuclear weapons program, a day after announcing that he was withdrawing the U.S. from the landmark Iran nuclear deal.

"I would advise Iran not to start their nuclear program," Trump told reporters at the start of a Cabinet meeting when asked about the potential consequences. "I would advise them very strongly. If they do there will be very severe consequence."

The comments came a day after Trump announced he was withdrawing the U.S. from the accord with Iran, abruptly restoring harsh sanctions in the most consequential foreign policy action of his presidency. He declared he was making the world safer, but he also deepened his isolation on the world stage and revived doubts about American credibility with a rationale that contradicted the analyses of U.S. and foreign intelligence sources.

The 2015 agreement, which was negotiated by the Obama administration and included Germany, France and Britain, had lifted most U.S. and international economic sanctions against Iran. In exchange, Iran agreed to restrictions on its nuclear program, making it impossible to produce a bomb and establishing rigorous inspections.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 48 of 57

But Trump, a severe critic of the deal dating back to his 2016 presidential campaign, said Tuesday in a televised address from the White House that it was "defective at its core."

On Wednesday, he claimed the deal "was going to lead to nuclear proliferation all over the Middle East" and bragged the sanctions would be among the strongest "that we've ever put on a country."

Trump also pointed to Iran's actions in countries including Syria and Yemen.

"With all of the places they're involved, it's bedlam and death and we can't allow that to happen," he said, adding: "They've gotta understand life. 'Cause I don't think they do understand life."

U.S. allies in Europe had tried to keep Trump in and lamented his move to abandon it. Iran's leader ominously warned his country might "start enriching uranium more than before."

The sanctions seek to punish Iran for its nuclear program by limiting its ability to sell oil or do business overseas, affecting a wide range of Iranian economic sectors and individuals.

Major companies in the U.S. and Europe could be hurt, too. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said that licenses held by Boeing and its European competitor Airbus to sell billions of dollars in commercial jetliners to Iran will be revoked. Certain exemptions are to be negotiated, but Mnuchin refused to discuss what products might qualify.

He said the sanctions will sharply curtail sales of oil by Iran, which is currently the world's fifth largest oil producer. Mnuchin said he didn't expect oil prices to rise sharply, forecasting that other producers will step up production.

Iran's government must now decide whether to follow the U.S. and withdraw or try to salvage what's left with the Europeans. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said he was sending his foreign minister to the remaining countries but warned there was only a short time to negotiate with them.

Trump also left open the possibility of a new deal, and told reporters Wednesday: "We'll make either a really good deal for the world or we're not going to make a deal at all. He predicted Iran would choose to negotiate eventually, or face consequences.

The administration said it would re-impose sanctions on Iran immediately but allow grace periods for businesses to wind down activity. Companies and banks doing business with Iran will have to scramble to extricate themselves or run afoul of the U.S. government.

Meanwhile, for nations contemplating striking their own sensitive deals with Trump, such as North Korea, the withdrawal will increase suspicions that they cannot expect lasting U.S. fidelity to international agreements it signs.

Former President Barack Obama, whose administration negotiated the deal, called Trump's action "misguided" and said, "The consistent flouting of agreements that our country is a party to risks eroding America's credibility and puts us at odds with the world's major powers."

Yet nations like Israel and Saudi Arabia that loathed the deal saw the action as a sign the United States is returning to a more skeptical, less trusting approach to dealing with adversaries.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed Trump's announcement as a "historic move."

Trump said Tuesday that documents recently released by Netanyahu showed Iran had attempted to develop a nuclear bomb in the previous decade, especially before 2003. Although Trump gave no explicit evidence that Iran violated the deal, he said Iran had clearly lied in the past and could not be trusted.

Iran has denied ever pursuing nuclear arms.

In a burst of last-minute diplomacy, punctuated by a visit by Britain's top diplomat, the deal's European members had given ground on many of Trump's demands for reworking the accord, according to officials, diplomats and others briefed on the negotiations. Yet the Europeans realized he was unpersuaded.

In Iran, many are deeply concerned about how Trump's decision could affect the already struggling economy. In Tehran, Rouhani sought to calm nerves, smiling as he appeared at a petroleum expo. He didn't name Trump directly, but emphasized that Iran continued to seek "engagement with the world."

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee, Jill Colvin, Zeke Miller and Ken Thomas in Washington and Amir Vahdat and Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

Iran's top leader, lawmakers lash out at US on nuclear deal

By **NASSER KARIMI** and **AMIR VAHDAT**, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader chastised President Donald Trump on Wednesday over his decision to pull America out of the 2015 nuclear deal, while lawmakers lit a paper U.S. flag on fire inside parliament, shouting, "Death to America!"

The government backlash reflected broad public anger in Iran over Trump's decision, which threatens to destroy the landmark agreement. While Iranian officials, including the parliament speaker, say they hope Europe will work with them to preserve the deal, many are pessimistic.

In comments before school teachers, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Trump: "You cannot do a damn thing!" The exhortation from Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters, follows a pattern of Iranian leaders declaring their nation's ability to resist foreign pressure or interference.

Khamenei described Trump's speech Tuesday announcing his decision as having "over 10 lies," without elaborating on them. He also said Trump's remarks threatened both Iran's people and its theocratic government.

"The body of this man, Trump, will turn to ashes and become the food of the worms and ants, while the Islamic Republic continues to stand," Khamenei said.

Earlier Wednesday, the lawmakers, including a Shiite cleric, held the flaming flag alight as their colleagues joined their chants. They also burned a piece of paper representing the nuclear deal and stomped on the papers' ashes.

Later, dozens of hardliners set fire to a U.S. flag during a protest in front of the former U.S. embassy and called for a retaliatory response.

While U.S. flag-burning is common in Iran and harsh criticism of America has been a staple of Iranian parliamentary politics for years, it was the first time political observers could remember anything being burned inside the parliament itself.

The 2015 agreement imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in return for the lifting of most U.S. and international sanctions.

However, the deal came with time limits and did not address Iran's ballistic missile program or its support for militant groups across the region branded as terrorists by the West. Trump has repeatedly pointed to those omissions in referring to the accord as the "worst deal ever." Proponents of the deal have said those time limits were meant to encourage more discussion with Iran in the future that could eventually address other concerns.

Late Tuesday night, President Hassan Rouhani said he'd be sending Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to the countries still in the deal — China, France, Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom.

Iran hopes the European Union will pass laws to protect European firms from any potential U.S. sanctions. EU officials have suggested they'll do what they can to salvage the agreement.

Still, Rouhani made a point of stressing that Iran, at any time, could resume its nuclear program.

"If necessary, we can begin our industrial enrichment without any limitations," the Iranian leader said. "Until implementation of this decision, we will wait for some weeks and will talk with our friends and allies and other signatories of the nuclear deal, who signed it and who will remain loyal to it. Everything depends on our national interests."

After the flag burning, parliament speaker Ali Larijani said responsibility for saving the deal fell on the EU and other world powers still in the accord.

"The period is only a window in which the EU can prove if it has enough weight for settling international issues," he said.

Larijani also urged the country's nuclear agency to prepare for "resumption of all aspects of nuclear activities."

Khamenei questioned whether Europe had the will or the ability to save the nuclear deal.

"I do not trust these three countries," he said, apparently referring to France, Germany and Britain. "If you succeed in getting guarantees (from them), then, no problem, go ahead. If you cannot, then it is not

possible to continue in this way.”

Many Iranians are worried about what Trump’s decision could mean for their country.

The Iranian rial is already trading on the black market at 66,000 to the dollar, despite a government-set rate of 42,000 rials. Many say they have not seen any benefits from the nuclear deal.

Iran’s poor economy and unemployment sparked nationwide protests in December and January that saw at least 25 people killed and, reportedly, nearly 5,000 arrested.

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

AP coverage of the Iran nuclear deal: <https://apnews.com/tag/Irannuclear> .

Trump says ‘great night’ after ex-con loses WV primary

By STEVE PEOPLES and JOHN RABY, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Republican voters rejected ex-convict Don Blankenship in a West Virginia Senate primary in which he sold himself as “Trumpier than Trump” but was vigorously opposed by Trump himself. GOP voters in Indiana, meanwhile, chose wealthy businessman Mike Braun over two sitting congressmen to lead the party’s charge against a vulnerable Democratic senator in the fall.

President Donald Trump and his allies cheered the West Virginia result, which helped avert a potential political disaster for a GOP already bracing for major losses in the November midterm elections.

Trump said on Twitter Wednesday that Republicans “had a great night.” He added: “Tremendous voter energy and excitement, and all candidates are those who have a great chance of winning in November.”

In both cases, Trump’s party appears to have avoided the missteps that doomed candidates in high-profile Senate races in the past. Clinging to a 2-seat Senate majority, Republicans are well positioned to challenge at least two Senate Democrats this fall — West Virginia’s Joe Manchin and Indiana’s Joe Donnelly — who are facing re-election in the heart of Trump country.

The day’s slate of early season elections tested the limits of the anti-establishment fervor that has defined the Trump era.

Hopelessly behind in West Virginia, Blankenship conceded defeat in the contest to determine Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin’s general election challenger. The Republican president fought in the campaign’s final days to defeat Blankenship, a retired coal executive, who remained popular among some West Virginia Republicans despite having served a year in prison for his role in a deadly mine disaster and attacked the Asian heritage of the top Senate Republican’s wife.

State Attorney General Patrick Morrisey claimed the nomination instead, promoting his record of challenging policies of the administration of former President Barack Obama and deflecting criticism of his roots in New Jersey, where he lost a 2000 congressional race.

“Mr. President, if you’re watching right now, let me tell you, your tweet was huge,” Morrisey said in his nomination address, referring to Trump’s election eve call for voters to shun Blankenship’s candidacy. “You’ve been to the state now four times. I’d like you to come back as many times as you can between now and November.”

Vice President Mike Pence congratulated Morrisey on Twitter, saying, “The great people of WV need a senator who supports the #MAGA agenda.”

The key Senate contests headlined primary elections across four states on Tuesday that will help shape the political landscape in this fall’s midterm elections. Control of Congress is at stake in addition to state governments across the nation.

In a possible sign of party unrest, however, Rep. Robert Pittenger lost in North Carolina to the Rev. Mark Harris, a Baptist pastor he narrowly beat two years ago. Pittenger is the first incumbent to lose his seat this primary season.

In most cases, the Republican candidates on the ballot had competed to be seen as the most conservative, the most anti-Washington and the most loyal to the Republican president.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 51 of 57

In Indiana, Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly will face off in November against Braun, a multimillionaire owner of a national auto parts distribution business who loaned more than \$5.4 million of his own money to his campaign. Braun credited his victory to voter disenchantment with "business as usual" and said he hoped to join other Republican senators who came from outside politics.

Another Indiana contest was less contentious: Greg Pence won the primary for the congressional seat his younger brother, Vice President Mike Pence, once held. Greg Pence is a Marine veteran and owner of two antique malls who once ran the now-bankrupt chain of Tobacco Road convenience stores. He'll be the favorite to win the seat in November.

In Ohio's high-profile governor's race, Democrats nominated Obama-era consumer watchdog Richard Cordray while Republicans selected state Attorney General Mike DeWine.

An Ohio state senator won the Republican primary to succeed retiring Rep. Pat Tiberi. The race had become a proxy fight between Tiberi, a GOP moderate, and conservative Republican Rep. Jim Jordan. Tiberi's candidate, Troy Balderson of Zanesville pulled out a win.

And on the local level, a woman who accused Trump of sexually harassing her more than a decade ago claimed the Democratic nomination in a race to represent an area southeast of Toledo in the state House of Representatives. Democrat Rachel Crooks, a 35-year-old university administrator, ran unopposed, but must next win a November general election to become the first Trump accuser to hold elected office.

A bright spot for Republicans in swing-state Ohio: GOP turnout was considerably stronger than Democratic voting in the open governor's race. With nearly two-thirds of the vote counted, 567,000 Republicans cast votes, to 412,000 Democrats.

U.S. Rep. Jim Renacci, with Trump's support, won the Republican primary to challenge Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown in November.

Yet none of Tuesday's other contests was expected to have more impact on the midterm landscape than West Virginia, where Blankenship had embraced Trump's tactics — casting himself as a victim of government persecution and seizing on xenophobia, if not racism — to stand out in a crowded Republican field that included Attorney General Morrissey and Congressman Evan Jenkins.

Before his loss was official, Blankenship promised to explore his options in the general election — including whether state election law might allow him to launch a third-party bid that could undermine Morrissey's candidacy. State officials noted that West Virginia's "sore loser" law leaves Blankenship with virtually no option to run in the general election.

No matter Tuesday's winner, Trump's team was keeping pressure on Manchin. A pro-Trump political action committee America First was airing ads promoting Gina Haspel, Trump's nominee to be CIA director, and urging residents to call Manchin to support her confirmation.

Manchin coasted to the Democratic nomination, but he remains a top Republican target this fall.

Speaking Tuesday night at his Charleston headquarters, he said he expects Trump to get involved in the contest, despite Manchin's "good relationship" with the president. The Democrat said he would campaign as he always has: a bipartisan problem solver who works "for West Virginians."

Trump and his party invested significant time and resources to attack Blankenship in recent weeks. The head of the Senate Republican campaign arm highlighted Blankenship's criminal history. And a group allied with the national GOP, known as Mountain Families PAC, spent more than \$1.2 million in attack ads against Blankenship.

The retired businessman was released less than a year ago from a prison term for a 2010 mine explosion that left 29 men dead. Blankenship led the company that owned the mine and was sentenced to a year in prison for conspiring to break safety laws, a misdemeanor.

He repeatedly blamed government regulators for the disaster, casting himself as the victim of an overzealous Obama-era Justice Department — an argument Trump regularly uses to dismiss federal agents investigating his campaign's ties to Russia.

Even as Blankenship rebuffed Trump's criticism this week, he described himself as "Trumpier than Trump" and played up his outsider credentials.

"We just started from so far behind with the hangover of the explosion we couldn't make it up," Blan-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 52 of 57

kenship said late Tuesday, noting that the probation stemming from his prison term would formally end in a matter of minutes.

"I haven't really thought about what I'm going to do tomorrow," he continued. "Probation ends at 12:01 a.m. tonight. Tomorrow, I may be in Aruba before sunset. I don't know."

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Charleston, West Virginia, and John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio, contributed to this report.

A sticky mess: liquid chocolate spills onto Polish highway

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — A tractor-trailer has overturned on a Polish highway, spilling tons of liquid chocolate that are solidifying into a huge sticky mess.

The private broadcaster TVN24 showed images of an overturned truck surrounded by brown chocolate covering six lanes on the A2 motorway, blocking traffic in both directions.

Rescue officials said the liquid chocolate was solidifying as it cooled and would require large amounts of hot water to clear away.

Senior brigadier Bogdan Kowalski with the fire brigade of Slupca, a town in western Poland, said, "the cooling chocolate is worse than snow."

TVN24 reported from the site of the accident that the driver was taken to a hospital with a broken arm. The accident occurred in the morning when there was little traffic and nobody else was hurt.

Chinese court sentences Anbang founder to 18 years for fraud

SHANGHAI (AP) — A court in Shanghai sentenced the founder of the Chinese insurance company that owns New York City's Waldorf Hotel to 18 years in prison on Thursday after he pleaded guilty to fraudulently raising billions of dollars from investors, state media reported.

Shanghai's No. 1 Intermediate People's Court also ordered the confiscation of 10.5 billion yuan (\$1.6 billion) in assets from Wu Xiaohui, the former chairman of Anbang Insurance Group, which had gained a reputation for ambitiously expanding into hotels, real estate and insurance from Canada to South Korea.

Wu, who founded privately owned Anbang in 2004, has been accused of misleading investors and diverting money for his own use. He was detained last year and regulators seized control of Anbang in February. He was shown on state TV in March admitting guilt.

Wu initially had denied his guilt at his one-day trial, according to an earlier court statement.

According to Xinhua, Wu concealed his ownership of shares in companies controlled by Anbang, filed false statements with financial authorities and lured investors by offering rates of return above that offered elsewhere. Much of the business relied on selling insurance products to raise investment capital.

It said he used more than 100 companies under his control to manage funds and authorities later recovered bank savings, real estate and other assets. Wu used his position to misappropriate 10 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion) in Anbang's deposits, according to Xinhua's lengthy report.

Xinhua said the court determined the length of the sentence according to the facts of the case, the severity of the crime, and its "degree of social harm." It said more than 50 people were present at the sentencing, including Wu's relatives and journalists.

Anbang last month said it was receiving a \$9.6 billion bailout from a government-run fund. That would mean the government fund owns 98 percent of the company, wiping out most of the equity stake once held by Wu and other shareholders.

The company had engaged in a global asset-buying spree in recent years, raising questions about its stability. Anbang discussed possibly investing in a Manhattan skyscraper owned by the family of U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner. Those talks ended last year with no deal.

The negotiations with Kushner Cos. about 666 Fifth Ave. prompted members of the U.S. Congress to raise ethics concerns.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 53 of 57

The Anbang case is one of a string of scandals in what had been a stodgy Chinese insurance industry long-dominated by state-owned insurers. The industry's former top regulator was charged in September with taking bribes and other insurers have been accused of reckless speculation in stocks and real estate.

The Communist Party has made reducing financial risk a priority this year after a surge in debt prompted rating agencies last year to cut Beijing's credit rating for government borrowing.

Anbang is being run by a committee of officials from China's insurance regulator, central bank and other agencies. They have said its obligations to policyholders and creditors are unaffected.

Over the years, Anbang grew to more than 30,000 employees with 35 million clients. It diversified into life insurance, banking, asset management, leasing and brokerage services.

Speculation is rife over possible sales of Anbang's assets, which, in addition to the iconic Waldorf — purchased for almost \$2 billion — include Dutch insurer Vivat NV, the San Francisco Westin St. Francis and hotels, real estate and insurance holdings in Canada, Belgium and South Korea.

White House hosts AI summit with tech firms

By The Associated Press

Top U.S. tech executives and researchers are planning to press the Trump administration to invest in artificial intelligence and craft policies they hope will strengthen the economy without displacing jobs.

The White House is hosting the "Artificial Intelligence for American Industry" event Thursday. Google, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft are among dozens of tech firms attending. Top universities are also pitching for investment in basic research.

The meeting comes as some technology experts have criticized President Donald Trump and his administration for not paying enough attention to science and technology. They worry that the U.S. could fall behind.

Dean Garfield, CEO of the Information Technology Industry Council, says it's been disappointing not to have more of a national movement around AI. But he says it's "better late than never."

California flower town wrestles with odor amid shift to pot

By AMY TAXIN, Associated Press

CARPINTERIA, Calif. (AP) — This picturesque coastal town cradled by mountains and sandy shores is a scene out of a Southern California postcard. Residents of Carpinteria say they feel lucky to live in what they consider a slice of paradise.

But change is in the air. And sometimes, they say, it stinks.

That's because marijuana has become a new crop of choice in the farmlands surrounding this tight-knit community of 14,000, which has long helped fuel the U.S. cut flower industry.

Residents say a thick, skunk-like odor from the marijuana plants settles over the valley in the evenings and before dawn. To keep out the stench, they have tried stuffing pillows under doors, lighting incense and shutting windows, a reluctant choice since it also keeps out the cool ocean breezes that are part of the town's allure.

"We don't want a marijuana smell," said Xave Saragosa, a 73-year-old retired sheriff's deputy who was born and raised in the town and lives near a greenhouse that grows marijuana. "We want fresh air."

Saragosa said the odor pervades his hillside home at night and keeps his wife up coughing.

Carpinteria, about 85 miles (137 kilometers) from Los Angeles, is in the southeast corner of Santa Barbara County, a tourist area famous for its beaches, wine and temperate climate. It's also becoming known as a haven for cannabis growers.

The county amassed the largest number of marijuana cultivation licenses in California since broad legalization arrived on Jan. 1 — about 800, according to state data compiled by The Associated Press. Two-thirds of them are in Carpinteria and Lompoc, a larger agricultural city about an hour's drive to the northwest.

Virtually all of Carpinteria's licenses are for small, "mixed-light" facilities, which essentially means green-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 54 of 57

houses.

The result is a large number of licenses but small total acreage. Only about 200 acres of the county's farmland is devoted to marijuana, compared with tens of thousands sown with strawberries and vegetables, said Dennis Bozanich, who oversees the county's marijuana planning.

The area's greenhouses have their roots in Carpinteria's cut flower industry, which was sapped after the U.S. government granted trade preferences to South American countries in the 1990s to encourage their farmers to grow flowers instead of coca, the plant used to make cocaine.

In an ironic twist, some California flower growers weary of import competition have started trying to grow cannabis, a plant that, like coca, is deemed illicit by the federal government. Others have sold their greenhouses to marijuana investors.

"We have literally no carnation production in the United States any longer because South America grows them so cheaply," said Kasey Cronquist, chief executive of the California Cut Flower Commission. "Farmers had to move crops, and that is what we have seen happen over time — they've gone to crops that are more valuable or more difficult for Ecuador and Colombia to ship."

Domestic cut flower growers saw their share of the U.S. market drop to 27 percent in 2015 from 58 percent in 1991. Sales of imported cut flowers grew to more than \$1 billion during the same period, according to data compiled by the commission.

Greenhouses that once produced flowers are seen as ideal for marijuana. In Carpinteria's climate, the greenhouses heat and cool easily and inexpensively, and the plants thrive. It takes only about three months to grow cannabis in pots of shredded coconut husks, so farmers can get multiple harvests each year.

In the hills of the so-called Emerald Triangle of Northern California, where most of the state's pot is grown, there is a single harvest each year.

Some farmers see cannabis as a plant that can help preserve the area's farming culture, said Mollie Culver, a consultant for the Cannabis Business Council of Santa Barbara County. Many growers live locally and welcomed the county's recently crafted regulations requiring odor abatement, she said.

"Santa Barbara isn't like cannabis run amok," said Jared Ficker, a partner at advocacy group California Strategies who consults with local cannabis growers. "It is actually the most compliant market we've seen in the state."

Some residents said the stench has decreased in recent months as some growers installed systems aimed at reducing the smells. Others said the problem persists.

The county passed rules in February requiring growers to submit odor abatement plans and designate a representative to handle complaints. They are expected to take effect in some county areas this year and in Carpinteria following a review by state coastal regulators.

Californians voted to legalize marijuana in 2016, but counties and cities have a say on whether they allow cannabis production, distribution or sales.

Even before the ballot measure, Santa Barbara County recognized a number of farmers were growing marijuana to supply the state's medical market. So officials started looking at establishing odor, security and other rules.

"We have a lot of people who are interested in being compliant and getting into the regulated market," Bozanich said. "If we can continue that kind of relationship where they're going to stay in the regulated market," it will be easier to target and eliminate black market growers, he said.

All of the county's licenses are to grow medical marijuana, Bozanich said, though the state allows some crossover into the adult market.

In Carpinteria, some residents worry property values will fall if the town keeps reeking of pot. They hope the smell will fade as more growers install odor control systems and those who don't are shut down.

Toni Stuart, an 80-year-old retired Episcopal priest, said the odor doesn't creep into the area near the beach where she lives, but she worries about the community changing.

"I would not like Carpinteria to be the 'cannabis capital' of Southern California. I like it the way it is. It's a very quiet, unpretentious beach town," she said.

"If people want to grow cannabis instead of flowers or avocados or macadamia nuts — I suppose that's

their right. But they've got to think about their neighbors."

Follow Taxin at <https://twitter.com/ataxin> . Find complete AP marijuana coverage here: <https://apnews.com/tag/LegalMarijuana>

Aide to Iowa governor touts Apple deal, gets job at company

By RYAN J. FOLEY, Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — A top aide to Gov. Kim Reynolds took a management job with tech giant Apple months after helping promote a \$208 million incentive package for the company's planned Iowa data center as a good deal for taxpayers.

Tim Albrecht left as Reynolds' deputy chief of staff to begin work at Apple in March as a regional manager of strategic initiatives. Albrecht's position is "unrelated" to the \$1.3 billion complex the company is building outside Des Moines, a deal the administration negotiated, announced and defended when Albrecht was Reynolds' senior adviser, according to the governor's office.

Supporters of the Apple project have argued that it's a landmark development for the fast-growing city of Waukee that will strengthen the state's tech industry. Critics, including some economists and Democrats running for governor, have blasted the \$208 million in tax breaks pledged by the city and state, saying they're far too generous for a project that will only create 50 full-time jobs once construction is complete.

Albrecht, a longtime GOP public relations professional, was involved in planning and reviewing information for an Aug. 24 press conference in which Reynolds and Apple CEO Tim Cook announced the project to applause outside the Capitol, the governor's office confirmed.

"Welcome to Iowa, Apple!" Albrecht tweeted along with a photo from that event, among more than two dozen tweets he sent from his personal account over a one-month period promoting the deal.

Many of those were retweets of news articles and state officials characterizing the deal as a "win-win for Iowa" and great investment.

Reynolds' press secretary Brenna Smith said Albrecht is working in Apple's education department, which has contracts to sell products to K-12 schools, universities and other government agencies. She said the office didn't publicize Albrecht's departure because it hasn't announced personnel changes since Reynolds took office last year.

"Tim is one of the most respected communicators in Iowa, and the governor is grateful for his many years of service to the state," Smith said.

Albrecht, who made \$121,000 annually in his state job, referred questions to Apple representatives, who declined to comment on Albrecht's hiring, job duties and salary.

Megan Tooker, director of the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board, said Albrecht is not barred from working for Apple but must comply with laws designed to prevent ex-state officials from cashing in on their influence. For instance, for two years after leaving state employment, officials cannot lobby their former agencies or be paid by companies "in relation to any case, proceeding or application" with which they were involved in government.

Albrecht, 40, spoke by phone with Tooker on Feb. 20 about his prospective employment, according to an email exchange obtained under the open records law. Tooker sent him links to applicable laws and the board's key prior opinion on the matter. She said she hasn't heard from him since and that he didn't request a formal opinion for his situation.

The prior opinion she sent him addressed the employment of Jeff Boeyink, who resigned as chief of staff to Gov. Terry Branstad in 2013 and became one of Iowa's most powerful lobbyists. Boeyink, who worked with Albrecht in Branstad's office, was paid by Apple to lobby on its behalf during the legislative session that concluded Saturday, records show .

Albrecht's position at Apple might be legal but will look problematic to the public, said attorney Gary Dickey, former general counsel to Democratic Gov. Tom Vilsack.

"A person who uses his state employment to financially enrich a company — and then goes to work for that company — certainly violates the spirit of the rule," he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 56 of 57

Apple chose Iowa to build two data centers on 2,000 acres of land that will serve users of Siri, iMessage and other products. Iowa was attractive because of its wind energy production and location typically free from earthquakes and blackouts. Waukege agreed to cut Apple's property taxes by 71 percent over 20 years — a break worth \$188 million. A state board approved \$19.6 million in tax credits through its High Quality Jobs program. Apple has pledged to fund millions in public improvements in Waukege in coming decades, beginning with a youth sports complex.

The incentives have been criticized for months by some members of both parties as overly generous, including a former Republican primary opponent of Reynolds. Democratic candidate for governor Fred Hubbell has run television ads that display the words, "Apple played Iowa for suckers." A tax bill approved Saturday by the Republican-controlled Legislature requires the state to review all tax credit programs related to economic development.

Iowa State University economist Dave Swenson said the Apple deal comes at the expense of all other taxpayers. "As to Albrecht's good fortune, why am I not surprised?" he said.

Asian markets track Wall Street gains, oil prices advance

By YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian markets were moderately higher Thursday, tracking solid overnight gains on Wall Street despite lingering concerns about the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and trade tensions between Asia and the U.S.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.3 percent to 22,486.01. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained nearly 0.3 percent to 6,123.50 while South Korea's Kospi added 0.3 percent to 2,451.48. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 0.9 percent to 30,805.88 and the Shanghai Composite gained 0.2 percent to 3,165.11. Shares were higher in most other markets apart from Singapore.

WALL STREET: The S&P 500 index rose 1 percent to 2,697.79, nudging into positive territory for the year. The Dow Jones industrial average posted its fifth gain in a row, 0.8 percent, to 24,542.54. The Nasdaq added 1 percent to 7,339.91 and the Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 0.6 percent to 1,596.05.

THE QUOTE: "Markets are trading within a range bound by a number of factors. Rising yields, a strengthening dollar and some geopolitical uncertainty aren't allowing it to run its own race. This is causing investors to tread with caution," Oriano Lizza, sales trader at CMC Markets in Singapore, said in a commentary.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude oil added 59 cents to \$71.73 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It climbed \$2.08, or 3 percent, to \$71.14 per barrel on Wednesday. That's the highest level in nearly three and a half years. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 58 cents to \$77.79 per barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar strengthened to 109.69 yen from 109.65 on Wednesday. The euro fell to \$1.1872 from \$1.1877.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, May 10, the 130th day of 2018. There are 235 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On May 10, 1968, the "Night of the Barricades" began in Paris' Latin Quarter as tens of thousands of student protesters erected obstacles against riot police; in the pre-dawn hours of May 11, the police moved in, resulting in violent clashes that left hundreds of people injured. Preliminary peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam began in the French capital.

On this date:

In 1611, Sir Thomas Dale arrived in the Virginia Colony, where, as deputy governor, he instituted harsh

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, May 10, 2018 ~ Vol. 25 - No. 300 ~ 57 of 57

measures to restore order.

In 1775, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, along with Col. Benedict Arnold, captured the British-held fortress at Ticonderoga, New York.

In 1818, American patriot Paul Revere, 83, died in Boston.

In 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured by Union forces in Irwinville, Georgia.

In 1869, a golden spike was driven in Promontory, Utah, marking the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States.

In 1924, J. Edgar Hoover was named acting director of the Bureau of Investigation (later known as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI).

In 1933, the Nazis staged massive public book burnings in Germany.

In 1940, during World War II, German forces began invading the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and France. The same day, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned, and Winston Churchill formed a new government.

In 1960, the nuclear-powered submarine USS Triton completed its submerged navigation of the globe.

In 1978, Buckingham Palace announced that Princess Margaret and the Earl of Snowdon were divorcing after 18 years of marriage.

In 1984, the International Court of Justice said the United States should halt any actions to blockade Nicaragua's ports (the U.S. had already said it would not recognize World Court jurisdiction on this issue).

In 1994, Nelson Mandela took the oath of office in Pretoria to become South Africa's first black president. The state of Illinois executed serial killer John Wayne Gacy, 52, for the murders of 33 young men and boys.

Ten years ago: Presidential candidate Barack Obama erased Hillary Rodham Clinton's once-imposing lead among Democratic superdelegates as he added endorsements from Utah, Ohio, Arizona and the Virgin Islands. A tornado in Picher, Oklahoma, killed eight people. Jenna Bush married Henry Hager, the son of a Virginia Republican party official, at the Bush family ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Five years ago: The Internal Revenue Service apologized for what it acknowledged was "inappropriate" targeting of conservative political groups during the 2012 election to see if they were violating their tax-exempt status. U.S. government scientists said worldwide levels of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas blamed for global warming, had hit a milestone, reaching an amount never before encountered by humans.

One year ago: All but ignoring the unfurling drama over Russia and the U.S. election, President Donald Trump sought to advance prospects for cooperation between the former Cold War foes in Syria and elsewhere in a rare Oval Office meeting with Vladimir Putin's top diplomat, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (sir-GAY' lahv-RAWF').

Today's Birthdays: Author Barbara Taylor Bradford is 85. Rhythm-and-blues singer Henry Fambrough (The Spinners) is 80. Actor David Clennon is 75. Writer-producer-director Jim Abrahams is 74. Singer Donovan is 72. Singer-songwriter Graham Gouldman (10cc) is 72. Singer Dave Mason is 72. Actor Mike Hagerty is 64. Sports anchor Chris Berman is 63. Actor Bruce Penhall is 61. Former Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., is 60. Actress Victoria Rowell is 59. Rock singer Bono (BAH'-noh) (U2) is 58. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., is 58. Rock musician Danny Carey (Tool) is 57. Actor Darryl M. Bell is 55. Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks is 55. Model Linda Evangelista is 53. Rapper Young MC is 51. Actor Erik Palladino is 50. Rock singer Richard Patrick (Filter) is 50. Actor Lenny Venito is 49. Actor Dallas Roberts is 48. Actress Leslie Stefanson is 47. Actor-singer Todd Lowe is 46. Country musician David Wallace (Cole Deggs and the Lonesome) is 46. Actress Andrea Anders is 43. Race car driver Helio Castroneves is 43. Rock musician Jesse Vest is 41. Actor Kenan Thompson is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jason Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 38. Rock musician Joey Zehr (The Click Five) is 35. Singer Ashley Poole (Dream) is 33. Actress Odette Annable is 33. Actress Lindsey Shaw is 29. Actress Lauren Potter is 28. Olympic gold medal swimmer Missy Franklin is 23.

Thought for Today: "Creative minds always have been known to survive any kind of bad training." — Anna Freud, Austrian-born psychoanalyst (1895-1982).