

Groton Daily Independent

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Lewandowski Bridal Shower

Come and Go Bridal Shower honoring Bride to Be, Sarah Lewandowski, Saturday, June 2, 2018 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church – Groton. Lance Dennert and Sarah are registered at Bed, Bath and Beyond and Target.

Friday, May 18

12:30 p.m.: Elementary Track and Field Day at Doney Field

Sunday, May 20

2 p.m.: Graduation

Removal, Grinding, Chipping, Trimming

605-725-WOOD

Mason Dinger: 605-216-6098

Trevor Zeck: 605-216-8910



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

Nine Groton athletes qualify for the state track meet; Doeden wins in four events at region

The regional track meet was held Thursday at Webster and Groton Area qualified several athletes for the state track meet set for May 25 and 26 in Spearfish and Rapid City respectively. Jonathan Doeden won in four events at the regional track meet and qualified for state in the 110m and 300m hurdles, the long jump and ran the first leg of the winning 400m relay team. Other state qualifiers are Gia Gengerke in long jump, Harleigh Stange in the long jump and triple jump, and Jessica Bjerke in the discus and shot, the boys 400m Relay team of Jonathan Doeden, Lucas Hinman, Austin Jones and Thomas Cranford and Luke Thorson in discus.

Girl's Division:

Team Points: 1, Roncalli, 205; 2, Milbank, 160.67; 3, Redfield/Doland, 114; 4, Webster Area, 102; 5, Groton Area, 100.33; 6, Sisseton, 31; 7, Tiospa Zina, 3.

100m Hurdles: Prelims: 5, Cassandra Townsend, 18.93; Finals: 6, Cassandra Townsend, 19.31.

300m Hurdles: Cassandra Townsend, 59.63.

100m Dash: Prelims: 8, Kenzie McInerney, 14.13; Jodi Hinman, 14.25; Tiara DeHoet, 14.30; Finals: 7, Kenzie McInerney, 14.18.

200m Dash: Jodi Hinman, 30.66; Tiara DeHoet, 32.48.

400m Dash: 5, Payton Maine, 1:08.66; 7, Jodi Hinman, 1:11.57.

800m Run: 5, Amelie Hartwig, 2:46.64; Desiree Blevins, 3:27.03.

1600m Run: Alex Stange, 6:47.53; Desiree Blevins, 7:07.66.

400m Relay: 3, Groton (Harleigh Stange, Kenzie McInerney, Eliza Wanner, Gia Gengerke), 53.44.

800m Relay: 3, Groton (Harleigh Stange, Payton Maine, Eliza Wanner, Gia Gengerke), 1:51.89.

1600m Relay: 5, Groton (Eliza Wanner, Kenzie McInerney, Lina-Marie Suhr, Amelie Hartwig), 4:38.05.

3200m Relay: 4, Groton (Amelie Hartwig, Lina-Marie Suhr, Riley Gengerke, Alex Stange), 11:30.49.

1600m Sprint Relay: 3, Groton (Eliza Wanner, Kenzie McInerney, Lina-Marie Suhr, Riley Gengerke), 4:52.23.

High Jump: 4 (tie), Nicole Marzahn, 4-5; 4 (tie), Gia Gengerke, 4-5; 8 (tie), Alex Stange, 4-3.

Long Jump: 1, Gia Gengerke, 15-4.25; 4, Nicole Marzahn, 14-7.25.

Triple Jump: 7, Nicole Marzahn, 29-8.5.

Discus: 1, Jessica Bjerke, 106-11; 4, Jennie Doeden, 99-9; 8, Kaycie Hawkins, 85-0.

Shot Put: 1, Jessica Bjerke, 34-3.50; 3, Jennie Doeden, 32-6.25; 8, Kaycie Hawkins, 29-2.25.

Boy's Division

Team Points: 1, Milbank, 198.75; 2, Roncalli, 143.25; 3, Sisseton, 114; 4, Groton Area, 100.75; 5, Redfield/Doland, 77.25; 6, Webster Area, 77.

110m Hurdles: Prelims: 1, Jonathan Doeden, 15.51; 3, Paxton Bonn, 17.71; Finals: 1, Jonathan Doeden, 15.15; 3, Paxton Bonn, 17.71.

300m Hurdles: 1, Jonathan Doeden, 41.68.

100m Dash: Prelims: 7, Thomas Cranford, 11.77; 9, Darien Shabazz, 12.13; Finals: 7, Thomas Cranford, 11.79.

200m Dash: 7, Darien Shabazz, 25.05; Thomas Cranford, 25.30.

400m Dash: Darien Shabazz,

58.11; Douglas Heminger, 1:03.87.

800m Run: 7, Isaac Smith, 2:29.93; Douglas Heminger, 2:44.28.

1600m Run: 4, Isaac Smith, 5:08.39.

400m Relay: 1, Groton (Jonathan Doeden, Lucas Hinman, Austin Jones, Thomas Cranford), 45.87.

800m Relay: 5, Groton (Trevor Harry, Darien Shabazz, Austin Jones, Thomas Cranford), 1:42.61.

1600m Relay: 6, Groton (Mitchell Koens, Jackson Cogley, Jacob Lewandowski, Isaac Smith), 4:13.81.

3200m Relay: 4, Groton (Mitchell Koens, Jackson Cogley, Jacob Lewandowski, Isaac Smith), 9:41.17.

1600m Sprint Relay: 4, Groton (Trevor Harry, Jackson Cogley, Jacob Lewandowski, Mitchell Koens), 4:20.88.

High Jump: 3, Paxton Bonn, 5.4; 4, Austin Jones, 5-2; 8 (tie) Jackson Cogley, 5-2.

Long Jump: 1, Jonathan Doeden, 20-1.25; 8, Paxton Bonn, 17-5.25; Trevor Harry, 16-1.25.

Triple Jump: 7, Trevor Harry, 35-0.25; Austin Jones, 34-3.50; Paxton Bonn, 32-9.5.

Discus: 3, Luke Thorson, 113-8; 7, Grady O'Neill, 100-6; Caleb Furney, 94-1.

Shot Put: 6, Luke Thorson, 38-5.5; Grady O'Neill, 36-0.5; Caleb Furney, 34-2.5.

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All three Groton golfers were medalists at the Northeast Conference golf meet held at Redfield. Pictured left to right are Portia Kettering, Ashley Flihs, Coach Joel Guthmiller and Payton Colestock.



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 Job Opportunities C.N.A.s ~ Nurses Part-Time Cook

Sign-on Bonus

☆☆☆ \$1,500 for CNAs ☆☆☆

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



GROTON
CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

1106 N. 2nd Street, Groton

Amendment Y seeks to fix Marsy's Law

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — While most of the interest in the June 5 primary is directed to Republicans seeking nominations for the governorship and the U.S. House of Representatives, there is one measure on the ballot open to all registered voters in the state.

Amendment Y seeks to provide a fix for the unintended consequences that sprang up when voters approved Marsy's Law in 2016.

Designed to protect the rights of crime victims, passage of Marsy's Law caused some counties to invest heavily in victims' rights personnel who then spent much of their time contacting the victims of petty crimes. Law enforcement officers found themselves handcuffed when it came to releasing the locations of crimes, essentially drying up their source of crime tips from the public.

Amendment Y allows law enforcement to share information in order to solve crimes and allows victims to opt in to the Marsy's Law rights rather than having them apply automatically. The amendment also prevents anyone who feels their Marsy's Law rights have been violated from filing a lawsuit.

"It really strengthen victims' rights," said Mark Mickelson, speaker of the state House of Representatives and the sponsor of House Joint Resolution 1004, the measure that put Amendment Y on the June ballot.

Marsy's Law named for murder victim

Marsy's Law is named for Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas, a California college student who was stalked and killed by an ex-boyfriend. Marsy's Law ballot measures have been bankrolled by her brother, billionaire Henry Nicholas.

Marsy's Law measures have been passed in five states—South Dakota, North Dakota, Illinois, Ohio and California. It's on the November ballot in five more states—Oklahoma, Nevada, Kentucky, Georgia and Florida.

South Dakota would be the first of the Marsy's Law states to tweak the legislation. While originally seeking to overturn Marsy's Law, Mickelson negotiated Amendment Y with the backers of the victims' rights legislation.

"We support Amendment Y because it protects those rights while enhancing the ability of law enforcement agencies to work together and solve crimes," said Sarah Shriver, South Dakota Communications Director for Marsy's Law for All.

Unintended consequences pile up

After the passage of Marsy's Law, the larger counties in South Dakota invested in more victims' rights personnel. Many of the victim notifications they make are for minor crimes, but they are still required by the law.

Mickelson said allowing victims to opt in to Marsy's Law will allow those counties to cut expenses or redirect their efforts to offer more help to the victims of felonies. The Sioux Falls Republican estimates that Marsy's Law is costing counties between \$500,000 and \$1 million annually.

One consequence causing heartburn for media outlets is the Department of Public Safety's decision to wait three days before releasing the names of accident victims.

According to Jenna Howell, an attorney with DPS, an opinion from the attorney general allowed accident victims to opt in on whether to invoke their rights. Howell said victims need some time to handle the anguish of a major accident.

"We don't think it's fair to have them decide on the side of the road," Howell said.

That leaves media outlets relying on other sources. In Watertown, an accident victim's name was unavailable to the Public Opinion for its story, but was presented in the same edition in the victim's obituary.

"There's something wrong with the system when the government isn't releasing the names but we're getting the name from the funeral home," said Roger Whittle, editor of the Public Opinion.

"If it's a particularly bad crash, we'll learn who's involved through social media," said Elisa Sand, a reporter for the Aberdeen American News, "but we'd rather get that information from law enforcement."

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DPS isn't likely to change the way it reports accidents, according to Howell, even if Amendment Y passes. "Marsy's law isn't binding on social media or the public," Howell said. "It's just binding on the government." Amendment vote during primary an oddity

Mickelson said he pushed for including the vote on Amendment Y on the June ballot to save counties money and to open up records for the families of accident victims who are still waiting for reports.

If Amendment Y passes in June, it would go into effect July 1. If it was on the November ballot, Mickelson explained, it would not go into effect until July of 2019.

"If we did it in November, we'd have to wait a whole year," Mickelson said. "That's why we decided to do it in June."

Special elections aren't uncommon for the state, Mickelson said, noting Gov. Bill Janklow's use of a special election for the sale of the State Cement Plant.

According to Kristin Gabriel of the Secretary of State's office, "It is uncommon to have a ballot question on the primary election ballot in South Dakota. This is the first time the Legislature has placed a statewide ballot on the primary ballot."

That decision wasn't well received by all the members of the Legislature. House Joint Resolution 1004 originally passed through the House 65-0. It was then passed 22-13 in the Senate after being amended to include Amendment Y in the June election. Because of the amendment, HJR1004 had to return to the House where it passed 61-6.

The amendment was enough for a "nay" vote from Spencer Hawley, House Minority Leader from Brookings.

"I support the changes to Marsy's Law," Hawley said, "but I am against moving a constitutional amendment to a primary. Usually there is a very low turnout and the Democratic side there are not very many primaries this year."

One lone anti-Amendment Y voice

The special election is just one of the problems that Cory Heidelberger has with Amendment Y. Heidelberger runs the liberal blog Dakota Free Press in Aberdeen where he is a Democratic candidate for state Senate. He's also likely the only person speaking out against Amendment Y.

Heidelberger cites the \$200,000 the Legislature appropriated for the special election as a sign that Marsy's Law is costing the state even more than Amendment Y backers say it is.

"It's costing us more to do this than a regular election in November," Heidelberger said, noting that Republican primaries dominate the June 5 ballot this year. "It's kind of a way for the Republicans to pick their voters."

Heidelberger said Mickelson's first inclination was the right one—Marsy's Law should be overturned.

"These rights written into Marsy's Law give certain individuals rights at the expense of the accused," Heidelberger said. "That's a violation of the presumption of innocence."

Heidelberger also balks at the notion that the passage of Amendment Y will save money, particularly if all or many victims keep asking for their rights under Marsy's Law.

"No one can tell how much this amendment will save us," Heidelberger said. "Tell us how much we're saving or go write a better bill."

All of South Dakota's registered voters are eligible to cast their ballots on Amendment Y on June 5.

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6th graders that received a superior rating on their solo at contest
Back row: Kyleigh Englund (Tenor Sax), Emily Clark (Snare Drum and Mallets), Ashlyn Sperry (Clarinet), Lydia Meier (Trumpet), Cadence Feist (Alto Sax), Lane Tietz (Snare Drum and Mallets)

Front row: Jackson Garstecki (Trombone), Abby Jensen (Flute), Anna Bisbee (Flute), Faith Flihs (Snare Drum and Mallets), Shea Jandel (Clarinet). (Courtesy Photo)



6th graders that received an excellent rating on their solo at contest

Students in the back row all received an excellent plus rating: Sydney Leicht (Tenor Sax), Hannah Monson (Snare Drum and Mallets), Ryan Groeblichhoff (Trumpet).

Back row: Bryson Wambach (Alto Sax), Michael Powers-Dinger (Alto Sax). (Courtesy Photo)

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JH Students received a superior rating on their solo

Back Row: Megan Flihs (Snare Drum and Mallets), Stella Meier (Alto Sax), Ellie Weismantel (Snare Drum and Mallets), Hannah Gustafson (Trombone), Cassandra Schultz (Trumpet), Tina Zoellner (Alto Sax), Ethan Clark (Baritone), Cole Bisbee (Baritone), Jacob Lewandowski (Snare Drum)

2nd Row: Julianna Kosel (Flute), Trista Keith (Mallets), Rease Jandel (Bass Clarinet), Cadance Tullis (Snare Drum and Mallets), Sierra Ehresmann (Trumpet), Kennedy Anderson (Clarinet), Jack Dinger (French Horn), Ethan Pigors (Trumpet)

1st Row: Kamryn Flihs (Tenor Sax), Jackson Cogley (Snare Drum), Landon Kokales (Trumpet), Caleb Hanten (Trombone), Andrew Marzahn (Trombone), Travis Townsend (Trumpet), Carter Barse (Alto Sax) (Courtesy Photo)



JH Students received an excellent rating on their solo

Kansas Kroll (Trombone- Excellent Plus), Shaylee Peterson (Clarinet- Excellent Plus), Ava Kramer (Trumpet), Trista Keith (Snare Drum- Excellent Plus), Brooke Gengerke (Snare Drum- Excellent Plus), Jacob Lewandowski (Mallets-Excellent Plus), Cole Simon (Alto Sax- Excellent Plus), Kaleb Antonsen (Alto Sax), Danny Feist (Tuba- Excellent Plus), Michael Aalseth (Trombone- Excellent Plus) (Courtesy Photo)

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JH Students received a superior plus rating on their solo
Sierra Ehresmann (Trumpet), Jacob Lewandowski (Snare Drum), Cole Bisbee (Baritone), Jack Dinger (French Horn) (Courtesy Photo)

The middle school music contest was held recently at Webster with several Groton Area students earning awards. Desiree Yeigh is the junior high director and the middle school lesson instructors are Desiree Yeigh and Austin Fordham. Yeigh wanted to give a special thanks for the piano accompanists AnneMarie Smith, Emily Thompson and Mr. Cody Swanson. We would also like to give a special thanks to Desiree Yeigh for being an accompanist.

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Today in Weather History

May 18, 1918: An estimated F2 tornado moved NNE from 5 miles NNW of Ferney, across the eastern edge of Groton. Homes were unroofed, and barns were destroyed. Nine farms lost buildings. One man was injured in a barn, another in a car that was thrown from the road. Estimated damage was set at \$60,000. Tornadoes were also seen in Lincoln and Sanborn Counties in South Dakota.

Also, an estimated F2 tornado moved northeast through the townships of Akron and Artichoke in Big Stone County, Minnesota. About 300 farms had tornado damage. The funnel dissipated on Artichoke Lake.

May 18, 1960: Pierre received 1.96 inches of rain in less than 30 minutes which caused flash flooding. About 30 basements were flooded with extensive cave-in damage at one home. Flash flooding from 2 to 3 inches of rain occurred near Presho, washing out county roads, three bridges, and a grain storage bin. Gettysburg also received 2.5 inches of rain.

May 18, 1996: A brief F0 tornado touchdown and cut a narrow path from 2 miles east of Willow Lake with no damage reported.

A 100 mph wind gust blew down 38 large trees on Highway 81 from the junction of Lake Norden corner on Highway 28 to the intersection of the Hayti corner. Also, four double posted and five single posted signs were broken off, and one single posted steel sign was bent over.

1825 - A tornado (said to have crossed all of the state of Ohio) smashed into the log cabin settlement of Burlington, northeast of Columbus. (David Ludlum)

1883: The massive tornado outbreak on record in Illinois affected the northern and central parts of the state. At least 14 strong to violent tornadoes touched down killing 52 people. The largest death toll from a single tornado was 12, with 50 injuries, from an estimated F4 tornado which moved from near Jacksonville to 5 miles west of Petersburg. This tornado destroyed the town of Literberry. Another tornado, with an estimated F4 intensity, killed 11 people and injured 50 along its path from the south edge of Springfield northeast to near Kenney. This particular tornado reportedly drove 10 inches by 12-inch oak timbers 10 feet into the ground. Another estimated F4 tornado in far northern Illinois touched down near Capron and tracked for 17 miles before lifting in far southern Wisconsin. Lastly, an estimated F4 tornado tracked 20 miles through Kenosha and Racine Counties in Wisconsin. Eight people were killed, and 85 were injured. Click [HERE](#) to view a YouTube video.

1960 - Salt Lake City UT received an inch of snow. It marked their latest measurable snowfall of record. (The Weather Channel)

1980: Mount Saint Helens erupted, spewing ash and smoke sixty-three thousand feet into the air. Heavy ash covered the ground to the immediate northwest, and small particles were carried to the Atlantic coast.

1987 - Thunderstorms in Kansas, developing along a cold front, spawned tornadoes at Emporia and Toledo, produced wind gusts to 65 mph at Fort Scott, and produced golf ball size hail in the Kansas City area. Unseasonably hot weather prevailed ahead of the cold front. Pomona NJ reported a record high of 93 degrees, and Altus, OK, hit 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Low pressure anchored over eastern Virginia kept showers and thunderstorms over the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Flash flooding was reported in Pennsylvania. Up to five inches of rain drenched Franklin County PA in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central Gulf Coast States to the Lower Missouri Valley during the day and evening. Thunderstorms spawned sixteen tornadoes, and there were 74 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

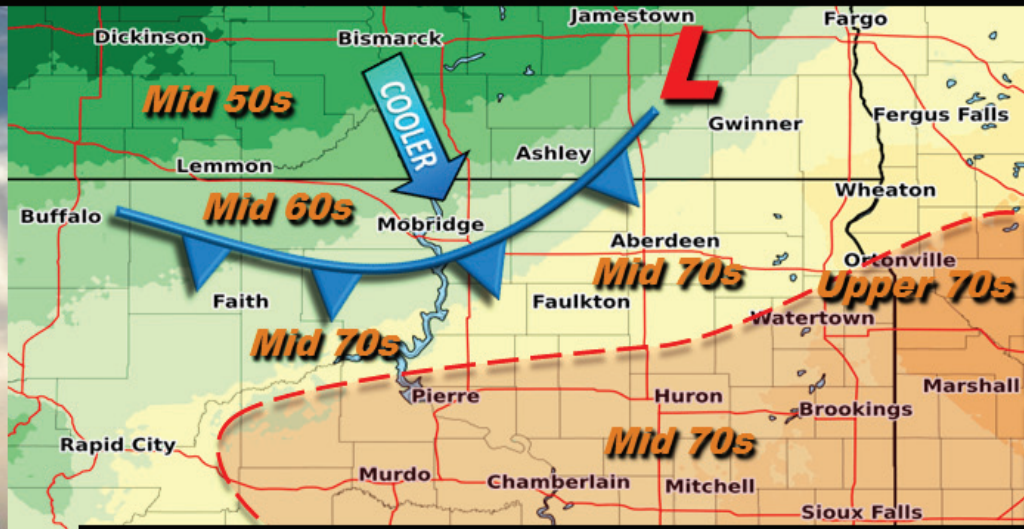
1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the central U.S. spawning a sixteen tornadoes, including a dozen in Nebraska. Thunderstorms also produced hail four inches in diameter at Perryton TX, wind gusts to 84 mph at Ellis KS, and high winds which caused nearly two million dollars damage at Sutherland NE. Thunderstorms deluged Sioux City IA with up to eight inches of rain, resulting in a record flood crest on Perry Creek and at least 4.5 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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| Fri May 18 | Sat May 19 | Sun May 20 | Mon May 21 | Tue May 22 | Wed May 23 | Thu May 24 |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | | | | |
| 77°F | 60°F | 68°F | 73°F | 78°F | 79°F | 78°F |
| 47°F | 42°F | 44°F | 52°F | 56°F | 57°F | 67°F |
| S 15 MPH Precip 30% | NNE 19 MPH Precip 30% | NE 11 MPH | E 10 MPH | S 9 MPH Precip 10% | E 10 MPH Precip 20% | ESE 13 MPH Precip 30% |

Additional Showers & Storms Today



Limited Severe Weather Threat

Turning Cooler For The Weekend



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
5/18/2018 4:53 AM

Published on: 05/18/2018 at 5:00AM

Low pressure and a cold front will slowly move across the area drawing in cooler/stable air. Ahead of the front, we can still see some showers and weak thunderstorms today along with mild temperatures and a touch of humidity.

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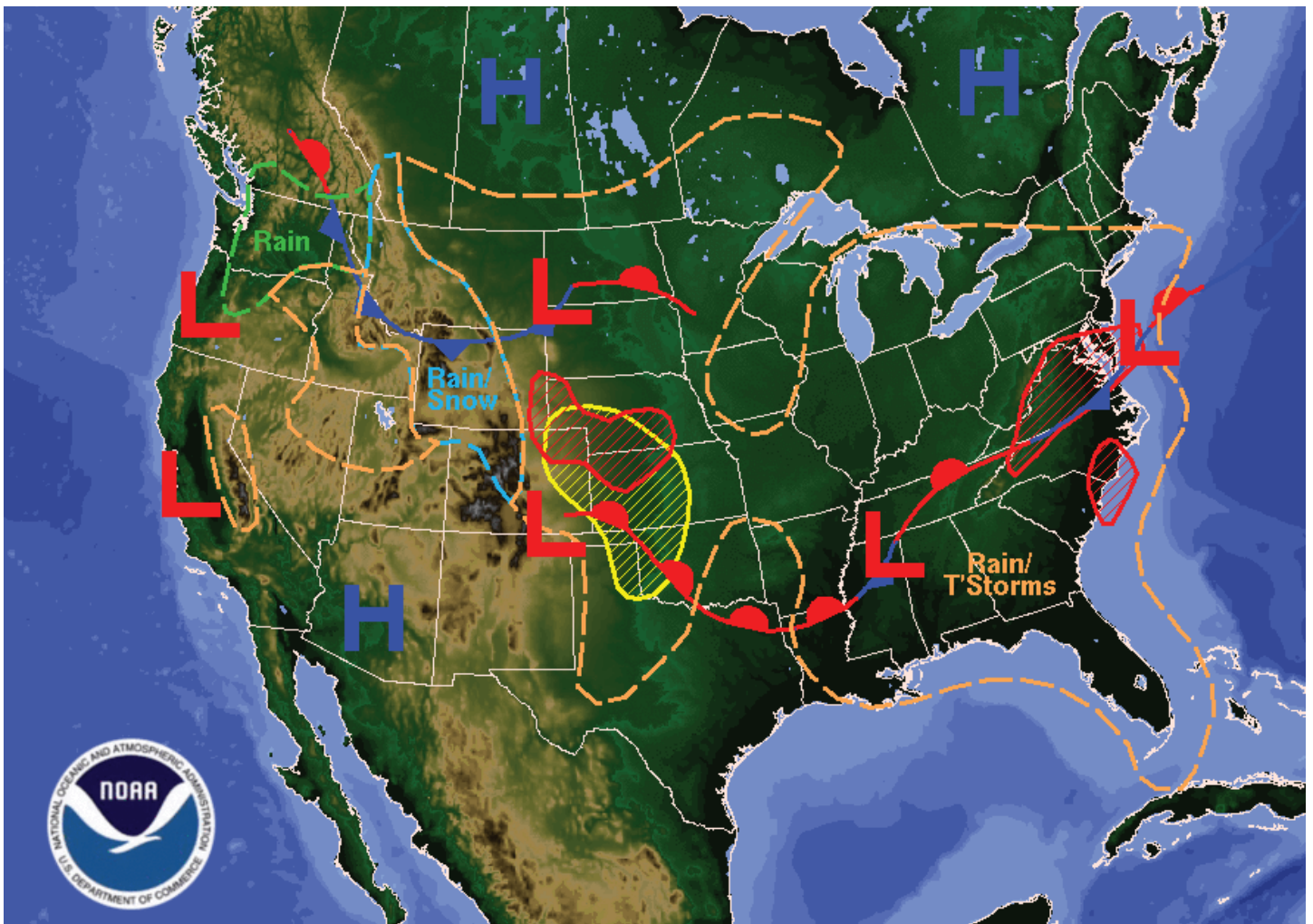
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 85.9 F at 3:19 PM
Low Outside Temp: 61.0 F at 11:29 PM
Wind Chill:
High Gust: 31.0 Mph at 12:49 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 100° in 1934
Record Low: 26° in 2015
Average High: 69°F
Average Low: 45°F
Average Precip in May: 1.85
Precip to date in May: 1.31
Average Precip to date: 5.88
Precip Year to Date: 3.99
Sunset Tonight: 9:01 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, May 18, 2018, issued 4:54 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) |

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INCOMPARABLE!

The agnostics wonder if there is a God. The materialists boast that they do not need a god. There are even some who do not want to know if there is a God because they do not want to face Him. Christians, however, are thankful for God because they could not live without Him.

In wonderment, the Psalmist and the Christian ask a reasonable question: "Who is like the Lord our God?" And the answer is: "No one!"

Who is like Him in power? He is the "All-Powerful One." The word "impossible" is not in His vocabulary. Whatever needs to be done He can do. He cannot fail or He would not be God. He is a God who is loving, faithful, merciful, filled with grace and willing to forgive and restore the fallen. While He cannot lie, sin or act contrary to His nature, He can do anything. And one day He will "make all things new."

Who is like Him in knowledge? He is the "All Knowing One." God is intuitive and infallible and has knowledge of Himself and all other beings and events. Past, present and future are an open book to Him. He sees, knows and understands everything from beginning through eternity.

Our God is incomparable because God is God. No one will ever judge Him because He is above all and in all. Yet, at the same time "He stoops down" - or, actually humbles himself - "to look down on the heavens and the earth."

From the moment we are born and He looks into our crib until the moment we die and enter His presence, our gracious God is forever with us. Who, indeed, is like Him?

Prayer: We thank You, Heavenly Father, that You are Who You are, yet love us in spite of our sins and failures. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 113:5-6 Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

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

South Dakota electricity providers seek wildfire prevention

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota electricity providers are considering measures to prevent trees from falling onto power lines five years after the third-largest wildfire in the Black Hills was started by a broken power line.

Flames from the 2013 Legion Lake Fire spread from Custer State Park into Wind Cave National Park and onto private property, ultimately scorching 84 miles (135 kilometers) of forest and grassland.

The fire's circumstances are directing electricity providers to seek out how to reduce the risk of trees falling onto their power lines, the Rapid City Journal reported .

There are an estimated 4 million trees that stand outside of the Black Hills Electric Cooperative's right-of-way, but are close enough to fall onto power lines, said Mike Chase, the cooperative's manager of marketing.

"It keeps our manager up at night during fire season, that's for sure," Chase said. "It keeps all of us worrying about something happening in a storm."

Robert Novembri, a utility vegetation management consultant, said it's impossible to remove every tree that could possibly strike a power line. He suggested trimming or removing some tall and healthy trees just beyond right-of-way corridors. But such a project would require cooperation from utility providers, electric cooperatives, landowners and land managers from federal and state agencies, he said.

"Obviously, if we want to have electricity and utilize electricity, we're going to have power lines, and some of those are going to go through the Black Hills," said Chris Nelson, a South Dakota public utilities commissioner. "It's always a balancing act between how much forest you want to cut for the right-of-way, versus the safety that you want to maintain with the power lines."

Obvious solutions, such as burying power lines or widening the right-of-way, are often cost-prohibitive or impractical, said Novembri.

"Ultimately, it would be best for everybody if there could be a dialogue amongst the different entities involved about how to best attack this," said Butte Electric Cooperative CEO John Lee.

"There's got to be some sort of a common-sense approach to this," he said. "Something has to change."

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

Homecoming set for returning South Dakota soldiers in Pierre

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The public is invited to attend a welcome home ceremony for 15 soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard.

The soldiers with the Guard's 200th Engineer Company are returning from a nine-month deployment to Syria. The unit is based in Pierre, Chamberlain and Mobridge.

The ceremony is scheduled for Saturday at 5 p.m. at the T.F. Riggs High School Theater in Pierre. Speakers include Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Pierre Mayor Steve Harding and South Dakota National Guard adjutant general Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch.

While deployed, the soldiers repaired bridges throughout the region to ensure free movement for U.S. military and coalition forces.

The soldiers are completing demobilization requirements at Fort Bliss, Texas, before returning to South Dakota.

This is the third deployment for the unit since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Former tribal executive sentenced to prison for embezzlement

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A former executive board member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe has been sentenced to more than a year in prison for embezzlement.

Sixty-six-year-old Barbara Kirk of Sisseton was sentenced in federal court to 16 months in prison. Kirk also was ordered to pay more than \$100,000 in restitution and serve three years of supervised release.

According to court documents, Kirk and others stole money from the Old Agency District, a subdivision of the tribe. Kirk and others were accused of writing checks to themselves for payroll, stipends and travel.

The defendants were accused of stealing more than \$360,000 from the district.

The Aberdeen American News reports Kirk was indicted in 2016 along with fellow board members Thomas Adams and Leslie Barse Sr. Barse and Adams were sentenced earlier.

Judge orders owners of giant house to tear down in 30 days

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A judge has given the owners of a disputed giant house in Sioux Falls 30 days to tear it down.

Judge John Pekas ordered Josh and Sarah Sapienza to demolish or move the house by June 16.

The judge previously ruled the house was not compliant with building standards for national historic districts. In January, the South Dakota Supreme Court ruled the owners must make the home conform to the neighborhood's historical standards.

The Argus Leader reports an attorney for the Sapienzas asked for more time. He says the couple has submitted new plans to the Sioux Falls Board of Historic Preservation for its June meeting.

But an attorney for neighbors Pierce and Barbara McDowell says his clients have been living with the towering home for more than three years.

Survey shows improving economy rural parts of 10 states

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A monthly survey of bankers shows that the economy is slowly improving in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss says that while commodity prices have improved recently, they remain below breakeven for a large share of grain farmers.

The overall Rural Mainstreet index slipped slightly to 56.3 in May, up from 53.5 in April. It's the highest level since July 2013. Any score above 50 suggests a growing economy in the months ahead, while a score below 50 indicates a shrinking economy.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

More than one-third of bank CEOs identified rising regulatory costs as the top economic challenge to their operations over the next five years.

Sioux Falls school wish list could hit \$150M

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A task force has compiled a wish list of Sioux Falls school construction and renovation projects that could hit \$150 million.

The 30-member panel met Wednesday night to look at how best to address crowded classrooms in Sioux Falls public schools, the Argus Leader reported. The \$150 million request was not given the go-ahead, but the task force decided to accept the package as a placeholder while it considers the amount voters could be asked to pay.

Members did agree on building a new elementary, middle and high school. The task force also set priorities on more than a dozen multi-million dollar projects to be considered. Topping the panel's list was funding a \$4.7 million land purchase to replace Whittier Middle School.

The task force agreed to recommend building a new \$43 million middle school on the east side of Sioux Falls, specifically in the southeast. Members also said they would recommend construction of an \$84.7

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million high school on the city's west side.

Under the panel's plan, the northwest side of Sioux Falls also would see a \$17.5 million elementary school built in that area.

All three main high schools are overcapacity. Enrollment projections also show a need for a new middle school by 2022 and a new elementary school by 2024, according to information presented to task force members.

Voters could be asked to approve a bond issue to pay for the projects as early as this fall. The task force meets May 30 before presenting the plans to the Sioux Falls School Board.

If the plans receive approval, the school board will have to consider re-drawing boundaries that determine where Sioux Falls students go to school, Superintendent Brian Maher said.

"If we pass a bond issue, that's the next big rock for this district to take on," Maher said.

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

Army Guard soldiers back in Rapid City after overseas duty

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Three South Dakota Army National Guard soldiers are back home after serving nine months in Romania and Bulgaria.

The firefighter soldiers with the Rapid City-based 216th Engineer Detachment returned home Wednesday. They had gone overseas last year to support U.S. and international operations in Europe.

It was the second mobilization since 9/11 for the 216th, which served in Iraq from December 2003 to June 2005.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, May 17

Policies need to be reviewed in wake of wildfire

Critical questions have been raised since the Legion Lake Fire torched 54,000 acres — or 84 square miles — in the southern Black Hills.

Was a Black Hills Energy power line too close to the Ponderosa Pine that crashed on it as winds blew at 50 mph? Are too many large slash piles left behind by loggers that sit for too long awaiting destruction? Should firefighting operations have been better staffed last winter considering the prime fire conditions that existed?

The biggest question, however, might have to do with the tactics used when punishing winds stoked a wildfire that would become the third largest recorded in the Black Hills.

The fire started around 7:30 a.m. on Dec. 11 in Custer State Park when the 70-foot pine fell on the power line and sparks were carried away by winds that would blow for days. After the fire reached 2,500 acres, the Rocky Mountain Blue Team saw an opportunity in the early stages of a brewing firestorm.

It decided to implement what amounted to a prescribed burn, which typically requires extensive planning with a keen eye on the weather. The plan called for creating containment lines and to let the fire burn 16,000 acres of rugged country.

It was undoubtedly seen as a way to make the best of a challenging situation.

But the wind and dry conditions continued to fuel the wildfire and by day three it was at 45,000 acres and threatened livestock, pastures and personal property. Evacuations were ordered for the small towns of Fairburn and Buffalo Gap. Ranchers had to leave their land. The fire was not fully contained until Dec. 19 and would claim livestock, fences and outbuildings.

While it is impossible to say if a more aggressive approach would have kept the fire in Custer State Park given the conditions, it is clear firefighters took a big risk with their decision.

It takes months of planning to prepare for a prescribed burn. Area fire departments, landowners and

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media are typically notified, and the weather is monitored with wind being a prime concern.

In the case of an ongoing wildfire, however, it was impossible to meet those sensible requirements yet the decision was made to proceed even though it was too windy to use air tankers on the first two days of the fire.

In the end, firefighters did a great job in difficult conditions as no homes were destroyed or lives lost. The question remains, however, if the decision to let the fire burn was the right one.

The Forest Service and firefighters need to consider changing their policies on Black Hills wildfires. The area is growing in population and that needs to be given as much weight as the health of the forest when it is already burning.

Madison Daily Leader, Madison, May 14 **Should South Dakota get into sports betting?**

We wrote last December about the state of New Jersey challenging a federal law that bars most states from authorizing sports gambling (Nevada is a notable exception), and the Supreme Court agreed to hear it.

The court did, and today issued its ruling: The federal law has been struck down, effectively legalizing sports gambling throughout the country.

New Jersey, of course, will start taking bets as quickly as it can, and other states are eager to follow. Pennsylvania governor Tom Wolf said gambling revenue will be good for his state's budget. The legislature had tentatively made sports betting legal, awaiting the Supreme Court ruling.

Those who are happy with the ruling include casino operators, state government officials, some professional team owners and others who see dollar bills coming to them. Discouraged are the NCAA, other team owners, some players' associations, counseling services for addicted gamblers and others.

Consider us on the side of those discouraged by the ruling.

Most of the laws prohibiting gambling on sports were established in the last century, beginning with the famous "Black Sox" scandal of 1919, when gamblers paid Chicago White Sox players to throw the World Series.

A college basketball point-shaving scandal in 1951 revolved around City College of New York and other schools. It had long-lasting effects on not only the individuals involved, but the schools themselves.

The influence of gamblers and organized crime in professional and amateur sports was considered immoral, and in some cases, dangerous.

We can't predict what South Dakota will do, but we certainly hope citizens won't be able to place legal bets on the DSU Trojans or MHS Bulldogs. The potential for wrongdoing, corruption or conspiracy between a local gambler and a local athlete isn't something we want to face.

Given South Dakota's history with gambling in Deadwood, at Native American casinos and a statewide lottery, we don't expect the state legislature to suddenly reject a new gambling opportunity. But we think it should.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Yankton, May 14 **Port Yankton tries a new course**

Supporters of the Port Yankton proposal to eventually get a gaming/entertainment facility in this community have vowed to try the idea again, this time by taking their case directly to the people with a petition drive.

It's a good idea to try this route, given the energy that had been expended last year prior to the proposal's quick exit in Pierre this past winter. If proponents had given up on the idea so quickly, it would have said a lot about what they see as the true merits of the proposal.

This move will also entail a lot of mobilization in order to gather enough valid signatures — which will likely be in the neighborhood of 27,000 names; the number will be determined after this fall's elections — to get the proposal for a constitutional amendment on the 2020 ballot. To make that, the signatures have to be filed by November 2019, which would be the first step in a long procedural process to get on the ballot.

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The first attempt to get on the ballot, which was going through the legislative avenue, met a quick demise in Pierre. It moved out of committee without recommendation and then died in the Senate.

In some ways, trying to win over a handful of legislators can be more difficult than swaying a large swath of voters, so the petition process may produce different results.

In a story in Saturday's Press & Dakotan about the new attempt to get the proposal on the ballot, a lot of familiar rhetoric was used. It was mentioned yet again that there were a lot of people who were in support of it, and we heard that the biggest beef for some lawmakers is that they believed the idea should go through the petition process the same way the Deadwood gaming proposal did 30 years ago.

The story also reported there will be attempts to reach out to possible partners, like other tribes, to make the Port Yankton proposal work in some fashion. That, too, sounded familiar.

Frankly, it all feels a little like the same kind of optimism we were hearing this past winter before the idea was sidelined before it ever got running. And those other partners that Port Yankton boosters tried to woo seemed resolutely opposed to the proposal — mostly, it appeared, to protect their own gaming interests.

But supporters also said they learned some lessons through last winter's experience.

If this is going to work, those lessons must be taken to heart.

Every bit of that learning process may be needed, as it could be even tougher to get a constitutional amendment passed in 2020. The public will vote this fall on an idea to require a 55-percent vote to change the constitution, and another proposal may put strict limits on the sources of revenue for campaigns.

Port Yankton has a long road ahead of it, and supporters now must make the case to the public about the benefits this project can produce for the state. And it will have to be a very, very convincing case (depending on what happens this November) for this idea to become a reality.

(Interestingly, one of the arguments proponents have used is that gambling is already available on the Internet, among other places. In a broad sense, Monday's U.S. Supreme Court decision about sports wagering might add some weight to that talking point.)

The determination appears to be there. It will be needed.

Gov. Dugaard appointing longtime Huron attorney to bench

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Dennis Dugaard is appointing longtime Huron attorney Kent Shelton to the bench.

Shelton will become the newest judge in South Dakota's Third Circuit Court. Dugaard says he's "a respected member of the bar and a well-known member of the Huron community."

Shelton has been in private practice in his native Huron since 1990. He has worked in criminal defense, family law, real estate and property, estate planning and corporate law. He has a law degree from the University of Montana.

Shelton will succeed Judge Jon Erickson, who is retiring in June. The Third Circuit includes the counties of Beadle, Brookings, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Kingsbury, Grant, Hamlin, Hand, Jerauld, Lake, Miner, Moody and Sanborn.

Fatal weekend crash near Yankton involved stolen vehicle

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A weekend rollover crash north of Yankton that killed one person and injured another involved a stolen vehicle.

Yankton County Sheriff Jim Vlahakis and Yankton Police Chief Brian Paulsen confirmed to the Daily Press & Dakotan that the sport utility vehicle that crashed about 7 p.m. Sunday had been stolen from a residence in Yankton earlier that day.

The Highway Patrol says the SUV crossed the centerline on U.S. Highway 81, made minor contact with another vehicle and swerved out of control, eventually rolling in the ditch.

Twenty-one-year-old passenger Lucille Casiano, of Sisseton, was pronounced dead at a Sioux Falls hospital.

The 23-year-old Sisseton man driving the car was taken to a Yankton hospital with injuries the patrol says are serious but not life-threatening. Charges are pending against him..

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

South Dakota Board of Regents launches search for new leader

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's Board of Regents has launched the search for a new executive director and CEO.

Current leader Michael Rush is resigning at the end of the month. He said in April that he and the board that oversees the public higher education system "came to a mutual decision" about his departure.

The board on Thursday said it was inviting nominations and applications for Rush's successor. The board also announced a constituent panel to help review candidates.

Fire damages truck repair business in Box Elder; no one hurt

BOX ELDER, S.D. (AP) — Fire has damaged a truck repair business in Box Elder.

Firefighters responded to Excel Truck and Trailer Repair shortly before 2 a.m. Thursday. They kept the fire confined to the business's main structure.

Damage was labeled as moderate. No one was hurt. There was no immediate word on the cause of the fire.

Bill to double size of national cemetery awaits Trump's OK

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A bill to double the size of the Black Hills National Cemetery in western South Dakota is headed for President Donald Trump's approval after the U.S. House passed the legislation.

About 200 acres of land currently held by the Bureau of Land Management will be transferred to the national cemetery that's overseen by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The additional land is northwest of the current cemetery along Interstate 90 near Sturgis.

The Senate passed the measure last December. The Rapid City Journal reports the House did so on Wednesday.

About 28,600 veterans and their loved ones are buried at the cemetery that opened in 1948. The cemetery includes veterans from South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska and Montana.

Mitchell police have suspect in custody in armed robbery

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have a suspect in custody in an armed robbery at a laundry business in Mitchell.

Police Sgt. Dean Knippling tells The Daily Republic that a suspect was arrested about seven hours after the holdup at Plaza Cleaners about 3:30 a.m. Wednesday.

The suspect was arrested for an unrelated reason and wasn't immediately charged in the robbery.

Authorities say a male with a handgun held up Plaza Cleaners early Wednesday, then also tried to rob a person near another business as he fled the scene. No one was hurt in either incident. Schools in the area were locked down during the search for the suspect.

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

Police: Man arrested after firing shots at Trump golf club

By FREIDA FRISARO, Associated Press

DORAL, Fla. (AP) — A man shouting about Donald Trump entered the president's south Florida golf course early Friday, draped a flag over a lobby counter and exchanged fire with police before being arrested, police said.

One officer received an unspecified injury, officials said.

Police were notified of an "active shooter" in the Trump-owned club about 1:30 a.m., Doral Police Chief

Hernan Organvidez told news reporters. He said officers from Doral and Miami-Dade confronted him immediately and exchanged gunfire with the man who was "neutralized" and taken into custody.

Miami-Dade Police Director Juan Perez said the man was shouting about Trump, and "actively shooting."

"He was yelling and spewing some information about President Trump and that's what we know so far. And he had an American flag that he did drape over the counter," Perez said.

Trump was not at the club at the time.

Perez said a Doral officer received an unspecified injury.

"You know, these officers did not hesitate one second to engage this individual that was actively shooting in the lobby of the hotel," he said. "They risked their lives knowing that that they had to get in there to save lives in that hotel."

Perez said the Secret Service was on the scene, and the FBI was on the way, but that local police were in charge for the time being.

As day was breaking, the large golf facility in the growing suburb was surrounded by a heavy police presence and news helicopters hovered over the scene. The entrances were blocked, and yellow caution tape was stretched across the main gate. A Miami-Dade crime scene truck was parked inside the gate.

The golf resort previously known as the Doral Resort & Spa was purchased by the Trump Organization in 2012. Its signature course is the Blue Monster at Doral.

The Trump National Doral, which includes several buildings for lodging and an expansive clubhouse, is among the largest hotels in the Miami suburb. It's about 8 miles (13 kilometers) from Miami International Airport.

Its website describes it as an 800-acre resort with 643 total guest rooms, more than 100,000 square feet (9,300 square meters) of event space and four golf courses.

This story has been corrected to say Chief Perez said Secret Service was on the scene.

Prince Charles to walk Markle down aisle at royal wedding

By **DANICA KIRKA** and **GREGORY KATZ**, Associated Press

WINDSOR, England (AP) — Prince Charles will walk Meghan Markle down the aisle when she marries his son Prince Harry — a gesture of welcome to the American actress as she joins the royal family.

Kensington Palace said Friday that Markle asked the heir to the British throne to offer the supporting elbow Saturday at St. George's Chapel in Windsor once Markle's father was unable to attend after falling ill.

Charles "is pleased to be able to welcome Ms. Markle to the Royal Family in this way," the palace said.

The news came amid the final wedding preparations. Union Jacks have been unfurled, security barriers are up and fans are already moving in to capture the prime viewing positions in Windsor, 25 miles (40 kilometers) west of London.

Buckingham Palace announced that the Duke of Edinburgh will attend the royal wedding, just a few weeks after undergoing a hip replacement operation. The 96-year-old Prince Philip has largely retired from public duties and it had not been clear whether he would be feeling well enough to attend.

The last-minute announcements came after days of speculation. Markle's mother, Doria Ragland, was the bookies' favorite to escort the bride, but Prince Charles has a lifetime of experience in appearing at large-scale public events amid intense scrutiny.

It's not the first time a royal bride hasn't been walked down the aisle by her father. The monarch's sister, the late Princess Margaret, was walked down the aisle by Prince Philip. Queen Victoria walked two daughters down the aisle.

Having the father of the groom escort the bride is yet another twist in a royal wedding that is proving to be different from many others. Normally such occasions are carefully choreographed well in advance.

But things began to unravel last week after it emerged that Thomas Markle allegedly staged paparazzi photos in what celebrity website TMZ said was an effort to improve his image and show him to be a loving father preparing for the big day. Markle later said he wouldn't attend the wedding because he would

be recovering from surgery following a heart attack.

Speaking from Windsor, TMZ's Sean Mandell told the BBC that Thomas Markle was hurt by negative headlines and inaccurate portrayals.

"He was trying to explain his side of things," Mandell said.

Light coats of gritty ash fall near erupting Hawaii volcano

By CALEB JONES and SOPHIA YAN, Associated Press

VOLCANO, Hawaii (AP) — Authorities handed out around 2,000 masks for protection as people living near Hawaii's Kilauea volcano braced for pulverized rock, glass and crystal to rain down after an explosive eruption at the peak's summit.

Lindsey Magnani, her fiance Elroy Rodrigues and their two children picked up masks for their family Thursday afternoon at Cooper Center in Volcano, Hawaii.

Magnani said both of her children — Kahele Rodrigues, 2, and Kayden Rodrigues, 3 months old — were doing OK, but her and her fiance had both been sneezing all day.

"This morning it smelled like sulfur so we had to close all the windows," Magnani said.

Most residents found only thin coatings of ash, if they saw any at all, as winds blew much of the 30,000-foot (9,100-meter) plume away from people.

"It was a grit, like a sand at the beach," said Joe Laceby, who lives in the town of Volcano a few miles to the northeast of Kilauea's summit. The ash was a bit of an irritant, he said, but "not too bad."

Laceby sealed windows and cracks in his home with cellophane wrap to keep out ash and volcanic gases. He has gas masks to protect himself from the toxic fumes and ash.

The explosion at Kilauea's summit came shortly after 4 a.m. Thursday following two weeks of volcanic activity that sent lava flows into neighborhoods and destroyed at least 26 homes. Scientists said the eruption was the most powerful in recent days, though it probably lasted only a few minutes.

Geologists have warned that the volcano could become even more violent, with increasing ash production and the potential that future blasts could hurl boulders the size of cows from the summit.

Winds kept the ash away from the Volcano Winery, tasting room manager Lani Delapenia said. A thin coating of white soot had blanketed tables and vines the day before, on Wednesday, but none wafted over the day of the 30,000-foot plume. The strength and direction of the wind makes all the difference, she said.

"The Volcano Village, and us at the winery, are doing well and we hope people still come and visit us and order wine because we are still pumping wine out," Delapenia said.

The vineyard also has a great view of the plume, she said.

Julia Neal, operator of Pahala Plantation Cottages about 28 miles (45 kilometers) southwest of the summit crater, said people have been picking up ash masks from county civil defense workers at the local community center. Some people working outside were wearing them. People with asthma were staying inside, she said.

The eruption reminded her of 2008, when Kilauea also had large summit eruptions and sent ash and gas over her community.

A light dusting fell Thursday, but the town had more ash a couple of days ago when people had to wash it off their cars, she said.

"People are renovating one of the historic buildings across the street. The school kids just stopped by. They're getting ready to graduate. Life is going on quite vibrantly here with people taking these precautions," she said.

The National Weather Service issued an ash advisory and then extended it through early evening, and county officials distributed ash masks to area residents. Several schools closed because of the risk of elevated levels of sulfur dioxide, a volcanic gas.

Dr. Josh Green, a state senator who represents part of the Big Island, said the immediate risk health risk comes from ash particles in the air. Anyone with respiratory difficulties, such as asthma or emphysema, should limit exposure to the ash, he said.

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The Federal Aviation Administration extended a restriction on aircraft from entering the airspace up to 30,000 feet above sea level. The earlier limit was up to 10,000 feet (3,000 meters). The prohibition applies to a 5-mile (8-kilometer) radius around the crater.

Thursday's eruption did not affect the Big Island's two largest airports in Hilo and in Kailua-Kona.

The crater spewing ash sits within Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which has been closed since May 11 as a safety precaution over risks of a violent eruption.

Scientists warned May 9 that a drop in the lava lake at the summit might create conditions for a large explosion. Geologists predicted such a blast would mostly release trapped steam from flash-heated groundwater.

Kilauea has also been erupting lava into neighborhoods 25 miles (40 kilometers) to the east of the summit crater since May 3. It opened a new lava vent in the area — the 21st such fissure — on Thursday.

Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, has been erupting continuously since 1983. It's among the five volcanoes that form the Big Island, and it's the only one actively erupting. An eruption in 1924 killed one person and sent rocks, ash and dust into the air for 17 days.

Associated Press journalists Jennifer Kelleher and Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu, Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska, and Seth Borenstein in Washington, D.C., and Alina Hartounian in Phoenix contributed to this report.

Egypt's president announces Rafah crossing open for Ramadan

By **ASHRAF SWEILAM** and **FARES AKRAM**, Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt has opened the Rafah border crossing with Gaza for the entire Muslim holy month of Ramadan, President Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi announced on Twitter, in what would be the longest uninterrupted period of time since 2013.

The move is meant as a humanitarian gesture during the annual holiday, one of the few occasions in which Egypt allows some Gazans stranded by a 2007 Egypt-Israel blockade to leave and return to the territory ruled by the militant Islamic group Hamas.

The announcement late Thursday came just days after Israeli forces shot and killed 59 Palestinians and injured more than 2,700 during mass protests along the Gaza border.

El-Sissi wrote on his official Twitter account that the opening would "alleviate the burdens of the brothers in the Gaza Strip."

Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh said Friday the opening of Rafah was the result of talks with Egyptian officials in a visit to Cairo on Sunday.

"We are witnessing the outcome through steps Egypt has taken and we hope they continue, develop and increase," he said at a Friday prayer sermon in Gaza City.

The crossing has been open since Saturday so el-Sissi's announcement is technically an extension and Egyptian authorities said 510 people crossed on Wednesday, the majority coming from Gaza into Egypt.

On Thursday, 541 people crossed from Egypt into Gaza along with dozens of trucks carrying cement, steel, power engines and medical and food aid from the Red Crescent, the officials said.

Last month, Hamas' Interior Ministry said more than 20,000 people were on exit waiting lists. Through this week, an average of 500 travelers a day moved through the border, mostly leaving.

On Friday, travelers were slowly moving toward the crossing, a bus arriving about every hour with people whose names appeared on lists provided by Hamas officials, who oversee who goes through the border.

Ahmed Habib, 45, a Palestinian who holds an Egyptian passport, has been trying for a year to visit relatives in Ismailia, Egypt.

"We thank President Sisi ... this decision came in the right time because we are really suffering," he said as his bus waited outside the gate in Rafah. "Closing the crossing complicates the suffering."

Monday marked the deadliest day of cross-border violence in Gaza since a 2014 war between Israel and Hamas. Capping weeks of protests, about 40,000 Gaza residents descended on the border area. The high

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number of wounded has overwhelmed the Gaza health system.

El-Sissi said in televised comments earlier this week that Egypt has been communicating with Israel and the Palestinians in an effort "to stop the bloodshed." He urged Israel to "understand that the Palestinian reactions are legitimate and they should handle it very carefully."

In 2007, Hamas wrested control of Gaza by force, provoking the Israeli-Egyptian blockade that severely restricted the movement of most of Gaza's 2 million inhabitants.

The Rafah crossing is Gaza's main gate to the outside world but has only had sporadic openings since the 2013 ouster of Egypt's elected Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, a high-ranking member of Hamas' parent group, The Muslim Brotherhood. While Egypt has been struggling with Islamic insurgency for decades, militant attacks increased after Morsi's ouster, giving Egyptian authorities more justification to tighten movement to and from Gaza.

Over the years, Egypt has opened the crossing for a few days every two to three months. The announcement doesn't change much in the daily flow of people, an official at the crossing said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the press.

Traveling has mostly been restricted to humanitarian cases, with priority given to medical patients, students admitted to outside universities and Palestinians with residency permits in third countries about to expire. Palestinian-Egyptians and dual-nationals are also eligible to apply.

El-Sissi's announcement is not expected to ease the lengthy, complicated security procedures that turn Palestinians' trip to the Rafah crossing into a hardship. Egypt's security and intelligence services have lists of Palestinians allegedly involved in the Islamic insurgency and anti-government attacks during the 2011 uprising that forced longtime President Hosni Mubarak to step down.

Under the banner of combating terrorism, Egypt began razing the town of Rafah in 2014 and demolished most of the residential buildings nearby except for the southern section to curb underground tunnel smuggling of fighters and weapons. Tens of thousands of Rafah residents have been evacuated. Egypt blamed Hamas for smuggling fighters and weapons into Egypt from Gaza through underground tunnels.

The measures were meant to create a buffer zone as part of Egypt's efforts to purge northeastern Sinai of Islamic militants following the 2014 Islamic State group bombings that left dozens of soldiers dead. So far, Egypt has created a 5-kilometer (3 mile) buffer zone and is in a process of expanding it to 7 kilometers (4.3 miles).

Besides the buffer zone, Egypt has declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew across northeastern Sinai including Rafah, which means travelers arriving after 7 p.m. at the crossing have to wait until 6 a.m. the next morning to leave.

The Egyptian army continues to fight Islamic insurgents in northern Sinai.

___ Associated Press writer Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report. Akram contributed from Gaza.

CIA gets first female chief with confirmation of Gina Haspel

By DEB RIECHMANN and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veteran spy Gina Haspel will become the first female director of the CIA after six Democrats joined Republicans in a Senate confirmation vote that overrode concerns about her role in the spy agency's harsh interrogation program after 9/11.

Thursday's 54-45 vote split both parties, and the margin was the closest for a CIA nominee in the nearly seven decades that a nod from the Senate has been required. Haspel, who has spent nearly all of her 33-year CIA career in undercover positions, is the first career operations officer to be confirmed since William Colby in 1973.

Haspel, 61, is a native of Kentucky but grew up around the world as the daughter of an Air Force serviceman. She worked in Africa, Europe and classified locations around the globe and was tapped as deputy director of the CIA last year. She worked under former CIA director Mike Pompeo until President Donald Trump moved him to secretary of state.

Haspel was backed by many in the CIA rank-and-file and was robustly supported by senior intelligence

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officials, including six former CIA directors and three former national intelligence directors, who said she earned the chance to take the helm of the nation's premier spy agency. National Intelligence Director Dan Coats said Haspel has integrity and both frontline and executive intelligence expertise. "We salute Director Haspel, a trailblazer who today becomes the first woman to lead the CIA," he said.

Her opponents argued that it wasn't right to promote someone who supervised a covert detention site in Thailand where terror suspects were waterboarded, an interrogation technique that simulates drowning. They said the U.S. needed to slam closed what was one of the CIA's darkest chapters that tainted America's image with allies abroad.

Several senators said Haspel was not forthcoming in answering questions about her role in the torture program or the CIA's decision to destroy video-taped evidence of the sessions. They also had questions about her rejection of the now-banned techniques.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said in a floor speech that Haspel "offered up almost the classic Washington non-apology." He asked how the Senate could take seriously Haspel's "conversion on torture?"

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said the world was watching the confirmation vote, which he called a "referendum on torture." He said the so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques" the CIA used at black sites, including slamming detainees against walls and confining them in coffin-shaped boxes, amounted to "government-sanctioned torture."

Haspel has vowed never to restart such a program and says her "strong moral compass" would prevent her from carrying out any presidential order she found objectionable. That was enough to coax some senators into the "yes" column. But Leahy said he still questioned her judgment and lamented that she has never publicly condemned torture as "immoral."

He wondered aloud what Haspel would do if she's asked to do something that goes against America's core values. "Should we trust that she will have the moral compass to stand up and say 'No?'" he asked. "Based on what we've seen, I do not."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said the nomination was not just about Haspel, but the U.S. grappling with its past mistakes.

"The bottom line is this: No one has ever been held accountable for the torture program and I do not believe those who were intimately involved in it deserve to lead the agency," Feinstein said before casting her vote against Haspel.

Since Trump nominated Haspel, her confirmation has been clouded by debate over the CIA's former interrogation program. A protester in the Senate visitor gallery briefly disrupted speeches ahead of the vote with shouts against the CIA.

Three Republicans opposed her: Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who is battling cancer and did not vote; Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky; and Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona.

Six Democrats, however, were heartened by her pledge to never restart harsh interrogation programs, even if Trump requested. They said they voted for Haspel because they thought her experience was essential in confronting today's threats from U.S. adversaries like Russia, North Korea, China and Iran.

Among Democrats supporting Haspel were several up for re-election this fall in states where Trump is popular, including Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Sen. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Sen. Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Sen. Bill Nelson in Florida. Also voting yes were Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the ranking member of the intelligence committee.

"This has not been an easy decision," Warner said, adding that he'd met and talked with Haspel many times in the past several weeks. He said he's convinced that Haspel could and would stand up to Trump, who has voiced support for waterboarding and has said "torture works."

After the vote, human rights groups quickly issued statements denouncing the confirmation and the now-defunct program.

"The Senate has now rewarded that atrocious conduct by promoting someone that reportedly administered it to lead one of the government's most powerful agencies," said Daphne Eviatar at Amnesty International USA.

S. Korea downplays N. Korea's threats to cancel talks

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea said Friday it believes North Korea remains committed to improving relations despite strongly criticizing Seoul over ongoing U.S.-South Korean military drills and insisting it will not return to talks unless its grievances are resolved.

South Korean Unification Ministry spokesman Baek Tae-hyun said Seoul expects North Korea to faithfully abide by the agreements between its leader, Kim Jong Un, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in at their summit last month. The leaders issued a vague vow on the "complete denuclearization" of the peninsula and pledged permanent peace.

"We are just at the starting point and we will not stop or waver as we move forward for peace in the Korean Peninsula," Baek said.

North Korea has taken repeated verbal shots at Washington and Seoul since canceling a high-level meeting with South Korea on Wednesday and threatening to scrap next month's planned summit between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump, saying it won't be unilaterally pressured into relinquishing its nuclear weapons.

The North's threat cooled what had been an unusual flurry of diplomatic moves from a country that last year conducted a provocative series of weapons tests that had many fearing the region was on the edge of war. It also underscored South Korea's delicate role as an intermediary between the U.S. and North Korea and raised questions over Seoul's claim that Kim has a genuine interest in dealing away his nukes.

Analysts said it's unlikely that North Korea intends to scuttle all diplomacy. More likely, they said, is that it wants to gain leverage ahead of the talks between Kim and Trump, scheduled for June 12 in Singapore.

Kim has declared his nuclear force is complete and announced a halt to nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests while inviting foreign journalists to witness the dismantling of his nuclear test site between May 23 and 25. North Korea invited journalists from the United States, South Korea, China, Russia and Britain to witness the dismantling process, but on Friday it did not respond after Seoul sent a list of South Korean journalists who were picked to go, the Unification Ministry said.

Baek spoke hours after Ri Son Gwon, chairman of a North Korean agency that deals with inter-Korean affairs, accused South Korea's government of being "an ignorant and incompetent group devoid of the elementary sense of the present situation, of any concrete picture of their dialogue partner and of the ability to discern the present trend of the times."

In comments published by the North's Korean Central News Agency, Ri said the "extremely adventurous" U.S.-South Korean military drills were practicing strikes on strategic targets in North Korea, and accused the South of allowing "human scum to hurt the dignity" of the North's supreme leadership.

Ri was apparently referring to a news conference held at South Korea's National Assembly on Monday by Thae Yong Ho, a former senior North Korean diplomat who defected to the South in 2016. Thae said it's highly unlikely that Kim would ever fully relinquish his nuclear weapons or agree to a robust verification regime.

Ri said it will be difficult to resume talks with South Korea "unless the serious situation which led to the suspension of the North-South high-level talks is settled."

Senior officials from the two Koreas were to sit down at a border village on Wednesday to discuss how to implement their leaders' agreements to reduce military tensions along their heavily fortified border and improve overall ties, but the North canceled the meeting.

In Washington, Trump said Thursday that nothing has changed with respect to North Korea after its warning. He said North Korean officials are discussing logistical details of the meeting with the U.S. "as if nothing happened."

Trying to address the North Korean concerns, Trump said if Kim were to agree to denuclearize, "he'll get protections that would be very strong."

But Trump warned that failure to make a deal could have grave consequences for Kim. Mentioning what happened in Libya when it gave up its nuclear program, Trump said, "That model would take place if we

don't make a deal."

"The Libyan model isn't the model we have at all. In Libya we decimated that country." Trump added. "There was no deal to keep Gadhafi."

Some analysts say bringing up Libya, which dismantled its rudimentary nuclear program in the 2000s in exchange for sanctions relief, jeopardizes progress in negotiations with the North.

Kim took power weeks after former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's gruesome death at the hands of rebel forces amid a popular uprising in October 2011. North Korea has frequently used Gadhafi's death to justify its own nuclear development in the face of perceived U.S. threats.

Trump to deny funds to clinics that discuss abortion

BY JILL COLVIN and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration will resurrect a Reagan-era rule that would ban federally funded family planning clinics from discussing abortion with women, or sharing space with abortion providers.

The Department of Health and Human Services will announce its proposal Friday, a senior White House official said Thursday, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to confirm the plans before the announcement.

The policy has been derided as a "gag rule" by abortion rights supporters and medical groups, and it is likely to trigger lawsuits that could keep it from taking effect. However, it's guaranteed to galvanize activists on both sides of the abortion debate ahead of the congressional midterm elections.

The Reagan-era rule never went into effect as written, although the Supreme Court ruled that it was an appropriate use of executive power. The policy was rescinded under President Bill Clinton, and a new rule went into effect that required "nondirective" counseling to include a range of options for women.

Abortion is a legal medical procedure. Doctors' groups and abortion rights supporters say a ban on counseling women trespasses on the doctor-patient relationship. They point out that federal family planning funds cannot be currently used to pay for abortion procedures.

Abortion opponents say a taxpayer-funded family planning program should have no connection whatsoever to abortion.

"The notion that you would withhold information from a patient does not uphold or preserve their dignity," said Jessica Marcella of the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, which represents family planning clinics. "I cannot imagine a scenario in which public health groups would allow this effort to go unchallenged."

She said requiring family planning clinics to be physically separate from facilities in which abortion is provided would disrupt services for women across the country.

But Kristan Hawkins of Students for Life of America said, "Abortion is not health care or birth control and many women want natural health care choices, rather than hormone-induced changes."

Abortion opponents allege the federal family planning program in effect cross-subsidizes abortion services provided by Planned Parenthood, whose clinics are also major recipients of grants for family planning and basic preventive care. Hawkins' group is circulating a petition to urge lawmakers in Congress to support the Trump administration's proposal.

Known as Title X, the nation's family-planning program serves about 4 million women a year through clinics, at a cost to taxpayers of about \$260 million.

Planned Parenthood clinics also qualify for Title X grants, but they must keep the family-planning money separate from funds used to pay for abortions. The Republican-led Congress has unsuccessfully tried to deny federal funds to Planned Parenthood, and the Trump administration has vowed to religious and social conservatives that it would keep up the effort.

Associated Press writer David Crary in New York contributed to this report.

'Excited and scared': Hawaii volcano spews huge cloud of ash

By CALEB JONES and SOPHIA YAN, Associated Press

VOLCANO, Hawaii (AP) — A volcano on Hawaii's Big Island erupted anew Thursday with little sound and only modest fury, spewing a steely gray plume of ash about 30,000 feet (9,100 meters) into the sky that began raining down on a nearby town.

The explosion at the summit of Kilauea came shortly after 4 a.m. following two weeks of volcanic activity that sent lava flows into neighborhoods and destroyed at least 26 homes. Scientists said the eruption was the most powerful in recent days, though it probably lasted only a few minutes.

Geologists have warned that the volcano could become even more violent, with increasing ash production and the potential that future blasts could hurl boulders the size of cows from the summit.

Toby Hazel, who lives in Pahoa, near the mountain, said she heard "a lot of booming sounds." Those came after days of earthquakes.

"It's just time to go — it really, really is," she said, preparing to leave town. "I feel so sorry for the people who don't go, because they don't have the money, or don't want to go to a shelter and leave their houses."

Some people in the community closest to the volcano slept through the blast, said Kanani Aton, a spokeswoman for Hawaii County Civil Defense, who spoke to relatives and friends in the town called Volcano.

At least one person who was awake heard nothing. Epic Lava tour operator John Tarson is an early riser and only learned about the eruption after receiving an alert on his phone. The plume, a towering column of ash reaching into a hazy sky, looked different than others he's witnessed, because of its sheer height.

"What I noticed is the plume was just rising straight into the air, and it was not tipping in any direction," he said. "We've been expecting this, and a lot of people are going to see it and get excited and scared."

Tour guide Scott Wiggers didn't hear the eruption either and wasn't aware anything happened. Later in the morning, he picked up four travelers for a tour and headed toward the volcano with the hopes of seeing "some action." But it was raining too hard for them to see much.

The only sign of the eruption he encountered was ash covering the back bumper of his truck.

Joe Laceby, who lives several miles from the summit in a town aptly called Volcano, didn't hear the noise. "There was a little bit of shaking there right after, but I never heard like an explosion or anything," he said.

Julia Neal, operator of Pahala Plantation Cottages, said a light dusting of white ash fell in the town of Pahala about 28 miles (45 kilometers) west of Kilauea's summit. It wasn't as much as she expected, she said. Pahala is the closest town west of the summit crater.

Residents as far away as Hilo, about 30 miles from Kilauea, were starting to notice the volcano's effects. Pua'ena Ahn, who lives in Hilo, complained about having labored breathing, itchy, watery eyes and some skin irritation from airborne ash.

The National Weather Service issued an ash advisory and then extended it through early evening, and county officials distributed ash masks to area residents. Several schools closed because of the risk of elevated levels of sulfur dioxide, a volcanic gas.

The immediate health risk comes from ash particles in the air, said Dr. Josh Green, a state senator who represents part of the Big Island.

Anyone with respiratory difficulties, such as asthma or emphysema, should limit exposure to the ash, Green said.

"People need to stay inside until the winds shift and the ash has settled," he said.

Extended exposure to sulfur dioxide can increase risk of bronchitis and upper respiratory infections in the long run, according to findings of a study Green worked on with other experts published in 2010 in the Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health.

The Federal Aviation Administration extended a restriction on aircraft from entering the airspace up to 30,000 feet (9,100 meters) above Kilauea's summit. The earlier limit was up to 10,000 feet (3,000 meters). The prohibition applies to a 5-mile (8-kilometer) radius around the crater.

Thursday's eruption did not affect the Big Island's two largest airports in Hilo and in Kailua-Kona.

The crater spewing ash sits within Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which has been closed since May 11 as a safety precaution over risks of a violent eruption.

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Scientists warned May 9 that a drop in the lava lake at the summit might create conditions for a large explosion. Geologists predicted such a blast would mostly release trapped steam from flash-heated groundwater.

Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, has been erupting continuously since 1983. It's among the five volcanoes that form the Big Island, and it's the only one actively erupting. An eruption in 1924 killed one person and sent rocks, ash and dust into the air for 17 days.

Scientists cannot say why the eruption is happening now, given that Kilauea has been active for 35 years. "There's so many variables. It's complicated, like a bad Facebook relationship status," said volcanologist Janine Krippner of Concord University in West Virginia. "Something will eventually change, like it has over and over and over again."

Robert Hughes owns the Aloha Junction Bed and Breakfast, about a mile and a half from the crater. He said he didn't hear anything and has yet to spot ash.

His business has been hit hard by fears of the volcano, a major attraction for visitors. He's lost hundreds of reservations and had just three guests Thursday instead of the 12 to 14 he typically serves.

"In the old days, people used to love to come see the volcano. They'd even take their little postcards, burn one corner in the lava flow, mail them off, stuff like that," he said. "Now they're acting like it's all super-dangerous and everything, but it just kind of oozes out."

Associated Press journalists Jennifer Kelleher and Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu, Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska, and Seth Borenstein in Washington, D.C., and Alina Hartounian in Phoenix contributed to this report. Associated Press writer Sophia Yan reported from Honolulu.

Trump to deny funds to clinics that discuss abortion

BY JILL COLVIN and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is resurrecting a Reagan-era rule that would ban federally funded family planning clinics from discussing abortion with women, or sharing space with abortion providers.

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However, it's guaranteed to galvanize activists on both sides of the abortion debate ahead of the congressional midterm elections.

Gina Haspel confirmed as new CIA director

By LISA MASCARO and DEB RIECHMANN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veteran spy Gina Haspel will become the first female director of the CIA after six Democrats joined Republicans in a Senate confirmation vote on Thursday that overrode concerns about her role in the spy agency's harsh interrogation program after 9/11.

The 54-45 vote split both parties, and the margin was the closest for a CIA nominee in the nearly seven decades that a nod from the Senate has been required. Haspel, who has spent nearly all of her 33-year CIA career in undercover positions, is the first career operations officer to be confirmed since William Colby in 1973.

Haspel, 61, is a native of Kentucky but grew up around the world as the daughter of an Air Force serviceman. She worked in Africa, Europe and classified locations around the globe and was tapped as deputy director of the CIA last year. She worked under former CIA director Mike Pompeo until President Donald Trump moved her to secretary of state.

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Haspel was backed by many in the CIA rank-and-file and was robustly supported by senior intelligence officials, including six former CIA directors and three former national intelligence directors, who said she earned the chance to take the helm of the nation's premier spy agency. National Intelligence Director Dan Coats said Haspel has integrity and both frontline and executive intelligence expertise. "We salute Director Haspel, a trailblazer who today becomes the first woman to lead the CIA," he said.

Her opponents argued that it wasn't right to promote someone who supervised a covert detention site in Thailand where terror suspects were waterboarded, an interrogation technique that simulates drowning. They said the U.S. needed to slam closed what was one of the CIA's darkest chapters that tainted America's image with allies abroad.

Several senators said Haspel was not forthcoming in answering questions about her role in the torture program or the CIA's decision to destroy video-taped evidence of the sessions. They also had questions about her rejection of the now-banned techniques.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said in a floor speech that Haspel "offered up almost the classic Washington non-apology." He asked how the Senate could take seriously Haspel's "conversion on torture?"

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said the world was watching the confirmation vote, which he called a "referendum on torture." He said the so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques" the CIA used at black sites, including slamming detainees against walls and confining them in coffin-shaped boxes, amounted to "government-sanctioned torture."

Haspel has vowed never to restart such a program and says her "strong moral compass" would prevent her from carrying out any presidential order she found objectionable. That was enough to coax some senators into the "yes" column. But Leahy said he still questioned her judgment and lamented that she has never publicly condemned torture as "immoral."

He wondered aloud what Haspel would do if she's asked to do something that goes against America's core values. "Should we trust that she will have the moral compass to stand up and say 'No?'" he asked. "Based on what we've seen, I do not."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said the nomination was not just about Haspel, but the U.S. grappling with its past mistakes.

"The bottom line is this: No one has ever been held accountable for the torture program and I do not believe those who were intimately involved in it deserve to lead the agency," Feinstein said before casting her vote against Haspel.

Since Trump nominated Haspel, her confirmation has been clouded by debate over the CIA's former interrogation program. A protester in the Senate visitor gallery briefly disrupted speeches ahead of the vote with shouts against the CIA.

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Six Democrats, however, were heartened by her pledge to never restart harsh interrogation programs, even if Trump requested. They said they voted for Haspel because they thought her experience was essential in confronting today's threats from U.S. adversaries like Russia, North Korea, China and Iran.

Among Democrats supporting Haspel were several up for re-election this fall in states where Trump is popular, including Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Sen. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Sen. Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Sen. Bill Nelson in Florida. Also voting yes were Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the ranking member of the intelligence committee.

"This has not been an easy decision," Warner said, adding that he'd met and talked with Haspel many times in the past several weeks. He said he's convinced that Haspel could and would stand up to Trump, who has voiced support for waterboarding and has said "torture works."

After the vote, human rights groups quickly issued statements denouncing the confirmation and the now-defunct program.

"The Senate has now rewarded that atrocious conduct by promoting someone that reportedly administered it to lead one of the government's most powerful agencies," said Daphne Eviatar at Amnesty International USA.

Ahead of Trump summit, Kim Jong Un crafts a careful message

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un have one big thing in common as they prepare for what would be the first ever U.S.-North Korea summit next month in Singapore: They both claim to deserve total credit.

In a country where there is no Twitter but lots of fake news, North Koreans are getting a very different take than American media-watchers on what got the two leaders to the negotiating table and what they will be trying to accomplish.

What North Koreans are hearing is that Kim is calling all the shots. That he's a strategic genius whose bold nuclear policies have opened the door to Korean-led peace talks with the South. And that he has finally succeeded in forcing the leader of the most powerful country in the world to acknowledge their country's new status.

It's a message that fits in nicely with what North Koreans always hear: that their leaders are essentially infallible.

But unlike some Trump backers who have already begun talking about a possible Nobel Prize, North Korea's media have been exceedingly cautious not to set expectations for specific concessions from Trump too high or to divulge government positions that might need to be walked back or reframed if the talks don't go as planned.

The North's media didn't even make their first explicit announcement of the Trump summit until last week.

That news came May 10, the day after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang to work out details of the release of three American prisoners and finalize the summit's venue and its June 12 date. The North's ruling party newspaper put a photo of Kim shaking his hand on its front page.

The media were at it again this week, warning that hard-liners like Trump's new National Security Adviser John Bolton are ruining the atmosphere of detente by suggesting Pyongyang must unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons before any easing of trade sanctions can begin.

North Korea's often-stated policy is the exact opposite: that its precondition for denuclearization is an end to Washington's "hostile policy and nuclear threats."

Caution over the handling of Trump news aside, the North's media have been pretty clear in suggesting something big is going on.

They made quite a fuss — albeit after most of the rest of the world had already seen the news — of Kim's summit with China's President Xi Jinping and later his summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on the south side of the Demilitarized Zone, in April. They have also repeatedly stressed the country is in the process of shifting to Kim's "new strategic line."

What the North Korean people, accustomed to seeing Washington as the root of all their problems, make of these developments is undoubtedly more complicated and nuanced.

Largely because of the lack of a free and robust media, Pyongyang is a hotbed of gossip.

It's a safe assumption that with even just scattered bits and pieces of news, the North is by now virtually awash in rumors and that there is an intense curiosity about how relations with Washington are changing, at least among the more educated, affluent urban population.

More than most Americans, average North Koreans have good reason to care.

If the summit goes well, they could see the lifting of economic sanctions that will make their daily lives easier in tangible, essential ways, such as more and cheaper goods at the stores and eased restrictions on what they can do and say. If it doesn't, they could well bear the brunt of food and fuel shortages, stepped-up work requirements or even preparations for a military conflict.

State media, of course, is also not their only source of information.

Much of the news getting out to the broader population is likely trickling down through the hierarchy of the ruling party. It is then disseminated out to the broader membership, believed to number several million, before spreading to others officially or through conversations or around-the-water-cooler sorts of ways.

That process was set in motion in earnest last month, when Kim called a meeting of the party's central

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committee and announced his decision to suspend nuclear tests and ICBM launches. The committee is comprised of more than 100 senior party members and a roughly equivalent number of alternates whose task is to make sure that party policies are understood and implemented throughout the country.

Outside of North Korea, the announcement was widely reported as a major pre-summit concession. But that wasn't the way it was presented to the party by Kim.

Kim's pitch was that under his leadership the country had in just five years completed its development of nuclear weapons, which he called a "miraculous victory" that meant there was no more need for testing and paved the way for the country to turn its attention to economic growth.

North Korea, Kim announced, would never use nuclear weapons or transfer nuclear weapons or nuclear technology "unless there are nuclear threats and nuclear provocations" against it. He added that the North's nuclear weapons are "a powerful treasured sword for defending peace" that guarantee future generations "can enjoy the most dignified and happiest life in the world."

Kim's message to his own people so far, in other words, sounds a lot like the opposite of denuclearization. And that's a position Trump probably won't want to take credit for if Kim decides to bring it with him to Singapore.

Talmadge has been the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief since 2013 and has traveled to the North dozens of times. Follow him on Instagram and Twitter: @EricTalmadge

Ex-boyfriend of blast victim arrested on explosives charge

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and AMANDA LEE MYERS, Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — Spa owner Ildiko Krajnyak was opening a package that had piled up with mail during her recent trip to her native Hungary when it exploded.

News reports of the blast quickly reached Stephen Beal, her ex-boyfriend and a partner in the Southern California business.

At the urging of his new girlfriend, Beal phoned police and then let them search his house. They found more than 100 pounds (45 kilograms) of explosive material and charged him Thursday with possessing an unregistered destructive device.

While not charged with the fatal explosion, the arrest puts Beal in custody as authorities investigate what they believe was a targeted bombing.

Beal, a model rocket hobbyist, told investigators he had not made any bombs and did not have material for an explosion as powerful as the one he saw in news coverage.

Beal, 59, did not enter a plea during his initial appearance in U.S. District Court in Santa Ana and his case was continued to Monday. His public defender refused to comment.

The criminal complaint was accompanied by an affidavit from an FBI special agent that briefly described the relationship between Beal and Krajnyak, as well as the grisly blast.

The two had met online in June 2016 and dated about a year and a half. Photos on his Facebook page showed them living it up in far-flung places: a beach in Cuba, restaurants in Portugal, and riding jet skis in Mexico.

The romance cooled earlier this year after disputes over exclusivity and finances, FBI Special Agent Evan Jesch wrote.

They remained business partners, with Beal serving as spa manager, and the two operated a separate cosmetics firm. State records show Beal and Krajnyak were officers in a skin care business called I&S Enterprises.

Beal was listed on the spa's lease because Krajnyak and her estranged husband had filed for bankruptcy, he said. Beal paid the \$1,500 monthly rent and half the spa's operating costs. He had to loan Krajnyak money some months to cover her costs.

Beal was once an investment banker who turned to acting after his wife's death several years ago, said friend and neighbor Steven Young. Beal appeared in several small films.

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"You can't imagine him doing what we've been hearing," Young said, referring to the blast. "I don't recall him ever being visibly angry at anything. He's been a good neighbor and a good friend."

Nathan Beal said it was "highly unlikely" his father was guilty of any charge related to a destructive device. The father and son build sport rockets fuelled by a propellant commercially available at hobby stores. The biggest of the rockets used about 5 pounds (2.3 kilograms) of fuel in multiple motors.

Stephen Beal told authorities he hadn't been involved with rockets since 2004. He said he had once made fireworks and mortars, but quit that after Sept. 11 because he said he "did not want to give the wrong impression."

When confronted with photos of the IEDs recovered, Beal initially denied recognizing them but later explained exactly where they were found.

"Beal also claimed that he had not made any bombs or anything that would catch on or cause fire," Jesch wrote.

Beal's wife died in 2008 and his adult children had moved out of the house, Young said. Beal seemed happier after meeting Krajnyak and spoke of her frequently.

"I think he was happy to have found someone he could connect with," said Young, who never met Krajnyak.

Krajnyak, 48, a cosmetologist, had just returned to California after visiting family in her native country. Laszlo Krajnyak choked up while speaking from his home in Tiszaujvaros about his sister's recent visit. Last month, he had come to the U.S. to help with her business that offered services such as facials, waxing and wrinkle treatments.

Friends and neighbors created an online campaign to pay for Krajnyak's funeral and to fly her son home from Seattle where he attends college.

Her son, Keanu Vestil, 20, arrived home Thursday afternoon and said he was overwhelmed by the support. "All of this is still very raw," he said. "There are just so many things we don't know yet."

The spa in Aliso Viejo, about 50 miles (81 kilometers) south of Los Angeles, had just reopened when the blast rocked the two-story office building. Krajnyak was blown out of the building in the fiery explosion that shook the surrounding area.

A mother and daughter from Hungary who Krajnyak had just treated were the only other people in the spa at the time.

The younger woman said she was at the counter preparing to pay when Krajnyak picked up one of about three or four brown cardboard boxes on the floor and opened it.

The blast knocked her and her mother off their feet. Her mother told police she saw "everything on fire."

Both women, who were not named, were seriously injured and had to undergo surgery.

Bomb technicians found a 9-volt battery, a cellphone and loose wires at the origin of the blast.

One official briefed on the investigation told The Associated Press that Krajnyak was the intended recipient of an explosive package. The official was not authorized to disclose details about the investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Balsamo reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press journalists Amy Taxin in Orange, John Antczak and Brian Melley in Los Angeles, Kester Eddy in Budapest, Hungary, and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Trump defends 'animals' remark, says he'll always use it

By JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday defended his use of the word "animals" to describe some immigrants who enter the country illegally, saying he would continue to use the term to refer to violent gang members in spite of a sharp rebuke from Democratic leaders.

Answering a reporter's question during a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, Trump said his comment a day earlier had clearly been directed at members of the MS-13 gang.

"MS-13, these are animals coming onto our country," Trump said, repeating his language from Wednesday.

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He added: "When the MS-13 comes in, when the other gang members come into our country, I refer to them as animals. And guess what? I always will."

Trump has been under fire for comments he made Wednesday while railing against California for its so-called sanctuary immigration policies. Trump was speaking at a roundtable with local California officials when he responded to a comment that had referenced MS-13.

"We have people coming into the country, or trying to come in — and we're stopping a lot of them," Trump said after Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims complained about state restrictions that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities. "You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people. These are animals."

Trump has repeatedly referred to members of the violent street gang as "animals" in speeches, rallies and at White House events. He has also used the term to describe terrorists and school shooters.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., responded on Twitter to the president, saying, "When all of our great-great-grandparents came to America they weren't 'animals,' and these people aren't either."

And House Minority leader Nancy Pelosi said, "Every day that you think you've seen it all, along comes another manifestation of why their policies are so inhumane."

Mexico's foreign ministry sent a formal diplomatic letter to the U.S. State Department complaining that Trump's comments were "absolutely unacceptable." The foreign ministry released a statement saying such comments create a difficult climate for Mexicans living in the United States.

But White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders defended the president's comments, arguing the word "animals" didn't go far enough.

"This is one of the most vicious and deadly gangs that operates by the motto of, 'Rape, control and kill,'" she said, adding that, "If the media and liberals want to defend MS-13, they're more than welcome to. Frankly, I don't think the term that the president used was strong enough."

Trump was joined at the Wednesday White House meeting by mayors, sheriffs and other local leaders from California who oppose the state's immigration policies and who applauded his administration's hard-line efforts.

"This is your Republican resistance right here against what they're doing in California," said Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez, coopting a term used by Democrats opposed to Trump's presidency. She, like others, said the president and his policies were far more popular in the state than people realize.

They were criticizing legislation Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law last year that bars police from asking people about their immigration status or helping federal agents with immigration enforcement. Jail officials can transfer inmates to federal immigration authorities if they have been convicted of one of about 800 crimes, mostly felonies, but not for minor offenses.

Brown insists the legislation, which took effect Jan. 1, doesn't prevent federal immigration officials from doing their jobs. But the Trump administration has sued to reverse it, calling the policies unconstitutional and dangerous. Some counties, including San Diego and Orange, have voted to support the lawsuit or have passed their own anti-sanctuary resolutions.

Republicans see backlash to the law as a potentially galvanizing issue during the midterm elections, especially with Trump's anti-immigrant base. And Trump has held numerous events in recent months during which he's drawn attention to California's policies.

During the session, Trump thanked the officials, saying they had "bravely resisted California's deadly and unconstitutional sanctuary state laws." He claimed those laws are forcing "the release of illegal immigrant criminals, drug dealers, gang members and violent predators into your communities" and providing "safe harbor to some of the most vicious and violent offenders on earth."

Brown responded on Twitter, writing that Trump "is lying on immigration, lying about crime and lying about the laws of CA."

The Democratic governor added: "Flying in a dozen Republican politicians to flatter him and praise his reckless policies changes nothing. We, the citizens of the fifth largest economy in the world, are not impressed."

Associated Press writers Alan Fram in Washington, Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

N. Korea unlikely to return to talks with South over drills

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea strongly criticized South Korea over ongoing U.S.-South Korean military exercises on Thursday and said it will not return to talks with its rival until Seoul resolves its grievances.

The comments came a day after North Korea canceled a high-level meeting with the South because of the drills and threatened to scrap next month's historic meeting between its leader, Kim Jong Un, and President Donald Trump, saying it has no interest in a "one-sided" affair meant to pressure it to abandon its nuclear weapons.

The North's threat cooled what had been an unusual flurry of diplomatic moves from a country that last year conducted a provocative series of weapons tests that had many fearing the region was on the edge of war. It also underscored South Korea's delicate role as an intermediary between the U.S. and North Korea and raised questions over Seoul's claim that Kim has a genuine interest in dealing away his nukes.

Analysts said it's unlikely that North Korea intends to scuttle all diplomacy. More likely, they said, is that it wants to gain leverage ahead of the talks between Kim and Trump, scheduled for June 12 in Singapore.

In quotes published by the North's official Korean Central News Agency, Ri Son Gwon, chairman of a North Korean agency that deals with inter-Korean affairs, accused South Korea's government of being "an ignorant and incompetent group devoid of the elementary sense of the present situation, of any concrete picture of their dialogue partner and of the ability to discern the present trend of the times."

Ri said the "extremely adventurous" U.S.-South Korean military drills were practicing strikes on strategic targets in North Korea, and accused the South of allowing "human scum to hurt the dignity" of the North's supreme leadership.

Ri was apparently referring to a news conference held at South Korea's National Assembly on Monday by Thae Yong Ho, a former senior North Korean diplomat who defected to the South in 2016. Thae said it's highly unlikely that Kim would ever fully relinquish his nuclear weapons or agree to a robust verification regime.

Ri said it will be difficult to resume talks with South Korea "unless the serious situation which led to the suspension of the North-South high-level talks is settled."

Hours earlier, South Korea said it was pushing to reset the high-level talks with North Korea and planning to communicate closely with the U.S. and North Korea to increase the chances of a successful summit between Trump and Kim on resolving the nuclear standoff.

The South urged the North to faithfully abide by the agreements reached between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in in their summit last month, where they issued a vague vow on the "complete denuclearization" of the peninsula and pledged permanent peace.

Senior officials from the two Koreas were to sit down at a border village on Wednesday to discuss how to implement their leaders' agreements to reduce military tensions along their heavily fortified border and improve overall ties, but the North canceled the meeting.

In Washington, Trump said Thursday that nothing has changed with respect to North Korea after the warning from Pyongyang. He said North Korean officials are discussing logistical details about the meeting with the U.S. "as if nothing happened."

Trying to address the North Korean concerns, Trump said if Kim were to agree to denuclearize, "he'll get protections that would be very strong."

But Trump warned that failure to make a deal could have grave consequences for Kim. Mentioning what happened in Libya, Trump said, "That model would take place if we don't make a deal."

"The Libyan model isn't the model we have at all. In Libya we decimated that country," Trump added.

"There was no deal to keep Gadhafi."

Trump said he is "willing to do a lot" to provide security guarantees to Kim. "The best thing he could do is make a deal."

Annual military drills between Washington and Seoul have long been a major source of contention between the Koreas, and analysts have wondered whether their continuation would hurt the detente that, since an outreach by Kim in January, has replaced the insults and threats of war. Much larger springtime drills took place last month without the North's typically fiery condemnation or accompanying weapons tests, though Washington and Seoul toned down those exercises.

The North's news agency said the U.S. aircraft mobilized for the current drills include nuclear-capable B-52 bombers and stealth F-22 fighter jets, two of the U.S. military assets it has previously said are aimed at launching nuclear strikes on the North. The allies say the drills are defensive in nature.

Seoul's Defense Ministry said F-22s are involved in the drills, but not B-52s. Ministry spokesman Lee Jin-woo said B-52s had never been part of plans for this year's drills, focused on pilot training, denying media speculation that Washington and Seoul withdrew the bombers in reaction to North Korea's allegation.

Kim told visiting South Korean officials in March that he "understands" the drills would take place and expressed hope that they'll be modified once the situation on the peninsula stabilizes, according to the South Korean government.

Despite Kim's outreach, some experts have been skeptical that he would completely give up a nuclear program that he has pushed so hard to build. The North previously vowed to continue nuclear development unless the United States pulls its 28,500 troops out of South Korea and withdraws its so-called "nuclear umbrella" security guarantee for South Korea and Japan.

School bus torn apart in dump truck collision, killing 2

By DAVID PORTER, MICHAEL R. SISAK and SETH WENIG, Associated Press

MOUNT OLIVE, N.J. (AP) — A school bus taking children on a field trip to a historic site collided with a dump truck on Thursday, ripping the bus apart and killing a student and a teacher.

The crash left the bus lying on its side on the guardrail of Interstate 80 in Mount Olive, its undercarriage and front end sheared off and its steering wheel exposed. Some of the victims crawled out of the emergency exit in the back and an escape hatch on the roof. More than 40 people were taken to hospitals.

Fifth-grade student Theo Ancevski, who was sitting in the fourth row of the bus and was treated at a hospital for cuts and scrapes, said he heard a scraping sound and the bus "toppled over."

"A lot of people were screaming and hanging from their seatbelts," he said.

Gov. Phil Murphy said one adult and one student were killed. Their names had not been released. Murphy said the truck driver was hospitalized, but officials didn't reveal his condition.

The front end of the red dump truck was mangled in the wreck, which took place about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of New York. The truck was registered to Mendez Trucking, of Belleville, and had "In God We Trust" emblazoned on the back of it.

The bus had entered westbound Interstate 80 from southbound U.S. Highway 206, police said. Cleanup crews loaded its wreckage onto a flat-bed truck on Thursday night as they cleared the roadway.

Police didn't release details of how the crash happened, but the trucking company had a string of crashes in recent years and a higher than average rate of violations that sidelined its vehicles, according to federal safety data.

There were 45 people, including 38 students, on the bus. Forty-three people from the bus and the truck driver were hospitalized, some in critical condition.

The bus was owned by the school district and had seatbelts, according to Paramus schools superintendent Michele Robinson. There is no federal requirement for seatbelts on full-sized school buses, but six states including New Jersey require them.

The bus was one of three taking students from East Brook Middle School to Waterloo Village, a historic site depicting a Lenape Indian community and once-thriving port about 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the crash

scene. The other buses made it to the site but returned to the school about 50 miles (80 kilometers) away.

Some of the children were inside the bus and some were outside when first responders arrived, said Jeff Paul, director of the Morris County Office of Emergency Management.

"We had patients laying all over the median and on the interstate," Paul said. "There were all kinds of injuries, every injury type you could expect in a crash of this magnitude."

Thuy Nguyen, a nurse from Paramus, said she rushed to the school, where her son was taking a test after hearing the news.

"My heart just dropped. You hear the name of the school ... ," she said before trailing off.

Robinson said the district was cancelling school trips for the rest of the year.

Mendez Trucking has about 40 drivers and trucks, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Its trucks had been in seven crashes, none fatal, during the last two years before Thursday's crash, the FMCSA says. Messages left with the company weren't returned.

Mendez has a higher than average vehicle out-of-service rate, which means inspections found violations that had to be corrected before the vehicles could be returned to service. Mendez's rate was 37.9 percent, according to the FMCSA, while the national average is 20.7 percent.

A Mendez-owned dump truck driven by a driver police say had a suspended license struck and killed a French fashion stylist in New York in January 2011, according to court records.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 118 people on school buses were killed in crashes from 2007 to 2016, the last year for which data is available. Of those killed, 68 were passengers, including 58 school-age children, and 50 were drivers. School bus crashes killed 902 people in other vehicles over that span.

Porter reported from Morristown, and Sisak reported from Philadelphia. Associated Press writers Shawn Marsh in Trenton, Mike Catalini in Paramus and Christina Paciolla, Jeff McMillan, Alexandra Villarreal and Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia contributed to this report as did investigative researcher Randy Herschaft in New York.

Rhino in San Diego pregnant, could help save subspecies

By JULIE WATSON, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A southern white rhino has become pregnant through artificial insemination at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park — giving hope for efforts to save a subspecies of one of the world's most recognizable animals, researchers announced Thursday.

Scientists will be watching closely to see if the rhino named Victoria can carry her calf to term over 16 to 18 months of gestation.

If she does, researchers hope someday she could serve as a surrogate mother and could give birth to the related northern white rhino, whose population is down to two females after decades of decimation by poachers. The mother and daughter northern white rhinos that live in a Kenya wildlife preserve are not capable of bearing calves.

The last northern white male rhino, named Sudan, was euthanized in March at the Kenya preserve because of ailing health related to his old age.

Victoria is the first to become pregnant of six female southern white rhinos the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research is testing to determine if they are fit to be surrogate mothers. If they pass the testing, they could carry northern white rhino embryos sometime within the next decade as scientists work to re-create northern white rhino embryos.

There are no northern white rhino eggs so creating an embryo would require using genetic technology.

The San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research has the cell lines of 12 different northern white rhinos stored in freezing temperatures at its "Frozen Zoo."

Scientists hope to use frozen skin cells from the dead northern white rhinos to transform them into stem cells and eventually sperm and eggs. Then the scientists would use in vitro fertilization to create embryos

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that would be put in the six female rhinos.

"The confirmation of this pregnancy through artificial insemination represents an historic event for our organization but also a critical step in our effort to save the northern white rhino," said Barbara Durrant, director of reproductive Sciences at the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research.

But more challenges lie ahead, with artificial insemination of rhinos in zoos rare so far and resulting in only a few births.

Victoria is a healthy 3,747-pound (1,700-kilogram) rhino estimated to be 7 years old.

She and the other five female rhinos that range in age from 4 to 7 years old were all born in the wild and relocated to San Diego's Safari Park in 2015. Scientists will be perfecting artificial insemination techniques and embryo transfer techniques on the females, which undergo weekly ultrasounds. Durrant recently spotted the beginning of tiny limbs of Victoria's baby during her recent ultrasound. She is two months pregnant.

"We will know that they have proven themselves to be capable of carrying a fetus to term before we would risk putting a precious northern white rhino embryo into one of these southern white rhinos as a surrogate," Durrant said.

The ultimate goal — which could take decades — is to create a herd of five to 15 northern white rhinos that would be returned to their natural habitat in Africa.

Some groups have said in vitro fertilization is being developed too late to save the northern white rhino, whose natural habitat in Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Congo and Central African Republic has been ravaged by conflicts in the region. They say the efforts should focus on other critically endangered species with a better chance at survival.

The southern white rhino and another species, the black rhino, are under heavy pressure from poachers who kill them for their horns to supply illegal markets in parts of Asia.

There are about 20,000 southern white rhinos in Africa.

This version corrects that there are no frozen northern white rhino eggs, not a limited amount of eggs, and corrects weight of Victoria to 3,747 pounds not 747 pounds.

Laurel, Yanny or ... covfefe? White House joins in on debate

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is joining in on the viral debate over whether people hear the names "Laurel" or "Yanny" in a much-shared audio clip.

The White House on Thursday released a video featuring various members of the staff weighing in.

Senior adviser Ivanka Trump says, "So clearly Laurel." Strategic-communications director Mercedes Schlapp says, "Yanny's the winner, Laurel's the loser."

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway pokes fun at her endless willingness to spin and bend the truth for the president, saying, "It's Laurel. But I could deflect and divert to Yanny if you need me to."

Vice President Mike Pence wants to know: "Who's Yanny?"

The video ends with President Donald Trump deadpanning, "I hear covfefe" — a reference to a botched tweet he wrote last year that was never explained.

Beset by leaks, White House talks firings, not apologies

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A West Wing aide's morbid remark about gravely ill Sen. John McCain has not yielded widespread White House soul searching. Instead it has produced a push to fire those responsible for leaking that story and others that have bedeviled President Donald Trump's administration.

Nearly a week after Kelly Sadler dismissed McCain's opinion on Trump's CIA nominee during a closed-door meeting by saying "he's dying anyway," a torrent of criticism has rained down upon the White House. The administration has repeatedly declined to publicly apologize, but the fallout has shaken the West Wing, where the focus remains on who leaked to the media.

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Trump is demanding that whoever let the story go public be fired, according to a White House official and an outside Trump adviser. Neither was authorized to speak publicly about private conversations.

Leaks have long been a problem for Trump's White House, but this one has drawn particular scrutiny within the building due to the staying power of the damaging story. Several senior officials, including chief of staff John Kelly and counselor to the president Kellyanne Conway, have called closed-door meetings to warn junior staffers that a shake-up could be in the offing. The mood has grown increasingly tense.

"It's an honor and a privilege to work for the president and to be part of his administration. And anybody who betrays that I think is a total and complete coward and they should be fired," said White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders this week. "We've fired people over leaking before."

Rumors have been circulating over who is responsible for the leak, and chatter about aides looking for the exits has picked up, though previous declarations of crackdowns did not yield shake-ups or end the leaks. Trump has claimed the reports of leaking are exaggerated, but he also suggested in a provocative tweet this week that those who do so are "traitors." National Security Adviser John Bolton said that some leakers were "national security risks" and said Kelly was organizing an effort to cut them down.

"The president has to have advisers around him who can have open candid discussions and then not read about him the next day in the newspapers or watch them on television," Bolton told Fox News Radio.

Conway said Thursday she knew the identity of some of the leakers but did not say what repercussions might be forthcoming.

She told Fox News that there is "99.8 percent of the information some of us know in this place that never gets leaked.

Leaks are nothing new to any White House, but they have been far more pervasive in the Trump administration. In the president's eyes, the number of unflattering leaks has been evidence that a "Deep State" of career officials scattered throughout the government is conspiring against him. But Trump — who has been known to leak himself — has had a love-hate relationship with the practice long before he came to Washington.

"When I worked for Mr. Trump, I worked under the maxim that he liked leaks. I never cleared them ahead of time, but I would tell him later so he'd have deniability," said Sam Nunberg, a former Trump campaign official. "Sometimes he loved them, sometimes he screamed about them. But he never told me to stop. He loves the media, loves being talked about, he loves how a leak gets his name in the news."

Campaign infighting and West Wing rivalries have led to nasty leaks about fellow staffers, while other revelations to the press appeared to be motivated by attempts to influence — or undermine — the president.

Sanders called a heated communications staff meeting last week to discuss the Sadler incident, during which Sadler received the support of several staffers, including Mercedes Schlapp, the White House's director of strategic communication. Schlapp has been a candidate to become communications director, a post that has been open since the resignation of Hope Hicks, a departure that some White House staffers believe has further eroded morale.

Schlapp's husband, Matt, the chairman of the American Conservative Union, says that a senior staff must have honest conversations without worrying that the information is going to be made public.

Leaks, he said, "can be used as a weapon to take out people you don't like, rivals on the staff. And at the end, it really destroys the ability of the president to push hard on his agenda because everything is distracted."

Ari Fleischer, press secretary for President George W. Bush, said the current tone has been set by Trump, both on leaks and the lack of apologies.

"If the president created an inclusive environment where everyone was sure they'd be heard, there would be few leaks. But if the president creates an environment where the staff will infight and wrestle, the staff will leak," said Fleischer. "And if the White House apologized now, they'd immediately be asked about every other time they haven't apologized."

A number of White House aides believe it was a mistake not to publicly apologize to McCain and believe doing so would have cut into the shelf-life of a story that, despite Stormy Daniels and the Russia investigation, has managed to carve out a consistent share of cable news coverage. But they privately acknowledge

that it would have unleashed the president's wrath.

Trump has long prided himself on never apologizing, believing it shows weakness, and has often displayed enmity for McCain. During the election campaign, he declared that McCain, who was a prisoner of war for more than five years, was not a war hero, and he has publicly and privately blamed the Arizona senator, who is battling cancer, for submarining the Republican health care bill last year.

Trump's White House has followed that lead, avoiding apologies while defending some of Trump's most incendiary remarks like his comments about Mexican immigrants.

One time a White House staffer did acknowledge a mistake was in February, when deputy press secretary Raj Shah admitted that "we all could have done better" when discussing the White House's handling of Rob Porter, the staff secretary who was accused of abusing two ex-wives.

Trump, who watched the briefing that day from his private dining room just off the Oval Office, was incensed by the remark and later chewed out Shah for making it, according to two White House officials.

Associated Press writer Catherine Lucey contributed reporting.

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New Niger video shows harrowing escape of US forces

By LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dramatic new drone video of the Niger ambush that killed four American soldiers shows U.S. forces desperately trying to escape and fighting for their lives after friendly Nigerien forces mistook them for the enemy.

It describes how the fleeing troops set up a quick defensive location on the edge of a swamp and -- thinking they were soon to die -- wrote messages home to their loved ones.

The video, released by the Pentagon with explanatory narration, includes more than 10 minutes of drone footage, file tape and animation that wasn't made public last week when the military released a portion of the final report on the October attack. The video depicts for the first time the harrowing hours as troops held off their enemy and waited for rescue.

There were 46 U.S. and Nigerien troops out on the initial mission in the west African nation, going after but failing to find a high-value militant, then collecting intelligence at a site where the insurgent had been. The team was heading home when it was attacked by more than 100 militants just outside the village of Tongo Tongo. During the firefight, a number of the Nigeriens escaped by truck, but four U.S. and four Nigerien troops were gunned down.

The video depicts seven American forces and four Nigeriens fleeing on foot, under heavy mortar and small arms fire. They crossed through a swamp, and at about 12:50 p.m. on Oct. 4, they hunkered down at the edge of a clearing.

"They wrote short messages to loved ones on personal devices, believing they would soon be overrun," the video narrator says. Just 21 minutes later, two unarmed U.S. drones arrived overhead and established contact with the team, and after another seven minutes, two French Mirage aircraft screamed across the sky at a low altitude, in a show of force to frighten the enemy. A number of militants can be seen moving quickly away.

After nearly three hours of waiting, French helicopters arrived, and an American soldier can be seen on the video moving out into the clearing, waving a U.S. flag to help the aircraft locate them.

The video shifts to an overhead view near the team waiting at the clearing, and two trucks can be seen moving into the frame. The drone video zooms in on them, and flashes of gunfire light up the screen.

A friendly Nigerien response force had arrived to help, and mistook the team for enemy insurgents. For 48 seconds they fired on the team with automatic weapons, until they were able to confirm their identity. No one was injured in that brief gunfight.

During the same time, U.S. Africa Command had launched a search and recovery mission for the one

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U.S. soldier who was missing, Army Sgt. La David Johnson. The bodies of the others who were killed had been recovered, but Johnson, 25, of Miami Gardens, Florida, could not be found.

About two days later, Nigerian military forces located Johnson's body, in the heavy brush under a thorny tree, where he had hidden and fought in his final stand against the enemy. The video shows the Nigeriens carefully carrying his body to the back of a waiting truck, and later transferring him to a helicopter.

Also killed in the ambush were: Staff Sgt. Bryan C. Black, 35, of Puyallup, Washington; Staff Sgt. Jeremiah W. Johnson, 39, of Springboro, Ohio, and Staff Sgt. Dustin M. Wright, 29, of Lyons, Georgia. Two American soldiers and eight Nigerian forces were wounded.

The investigation of the incident by U.S. Africa Command found there were a number of failures associated with the mission, but none directly caused the enemy ambush. It also described multiple acts of heroism, as the members of the outmanned and outgunned Army Special Forces team struggled to protect and rescue each other.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has directed the Army and U.S. Special Operations Command to conduct reviews, which could result in awards of valor or disciplinary actions.

Navy Capt. Jason Salata, spokesman for Special Operations Command, said Mattis requested a review "of the training and policies pertinent to Special Forces soldiers that may impact their ability to effectively train foreign partners."

He said the review, which began immediately, will look at counterterrorism operations, personnel policies that affect units preparing to deploy and any administrative requirements that are relevant.

'Major, major game-changer': Ebola spreads to big Congo city

By SALEH MWANAMILONGO and CARLEY PETESCH, Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) — Congo's Ebola outbreak has spread to a crossroads city of more than 1 million people in a troubling turn that marks the first time the vast, impoverished country has encountered the lethal virus in an urban area.

"This is a major, major game-changer in the outbreak," Dr. Peter Salama, the World Health Organization's deputy director-general of emergency preparedness and response, warned on Thursday.

A single case of Ebola was confirmed in Mbandaka, a densely populated provincial capital on the Congo River, Congo's Health Minister Oly Ilunga said late Wednesday. The city is about 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Bikoro, the rural area where the outbreak was announced last week.

Late Thursday, Congo's Ministry of Health announced 11 new confirmed Ebola cases and two deaths tied to cases in the country's northwest, including one in a suburb of Mbandaka.

A total of 45 cases of Ebola have now been reported in Congo in this outbreak: 14 confirmed, 21 probable and 10 suspected, the ministry said, after results from lab tests returned Thursday.

There has been one new death in Bikoro, where the first death took place. That new death had epidemiological ties to another case. The other death was a suspected case in Wangata, a suburb of Mbandaka on the Congo River, the ministry said. No details were given on the death's links to the newly confirmed case.

Only one of the 25 dead has been confirmed as Ebola, it said, adding that no new health professionals have been contaminated. One nurse had died, and three others were among suspected cases since the outbreak began.

Medical teams have been rushing to track down anyone thought to have had contact with infected people, while WHO is shipping thousands of doses of an experimental vaccine.

Until now, the outbreak was confined to remote rural areas, where Ebola, which is spread by bodily fluids, travels more slowly.

"We're certainly not trying to cause any panic in the national or international community," Salama said. But "urban Ebola can result in an exponential increase in cases in a way that rural Ebola struggles to do."

Mbandaka, a city of almost 1.2 million, is in a busy travel corridor in Congo's northwest Equateur province and is upstream from the capital, Kinshasa, a city of about 10 million. It is an hour's plane ride from Kinshasa or a four- to seven-day trip by river barge.

Salama also noted Mbandaka's proximity to neighboring countries, including Central African Republic and Republic of Congo.

"The scenario has changed, and it has become most serious and worrying, since the disease is now affecting an urban area," said Henry Gray, emergency coordinator in Mbandaka for Doctors Without Borders.

The aid organization said 514 people believed to have been in contact with infected people are being monitored. WHO said it is deploying about 30 more experts to the city.

Those exposed will for the first time in Congo receive Ebola vaccinations, the health minister said. WHO has sent 4,000 doses to Congo and said it will dispatch thousands more in the coming days as needed.

"This is a concerning development, but we now have better tools than ever before to combat Ebola," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, said of the new urban case.

The vaccine has been shown to be highly effective against Ebola. It was tested in Guinea during the outbreak that killed more than 11,300 people in West Africa from 2014 to 2016.

WHO has said it will use the "ring vaccination" method. It involves vaccinating contacts of those feared infected, contacts of those contacts, and health care and other front-line workers.

This is the ninth Ebola outbreak in Congo since 1976, when the disease was first identified. The virus is initially transmitted to people from wild animals, including bats and monkeys.

There is no specific treatment for Ebola. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and at times internal and external bleeding. The virus can be fatal in up to 90 percent of cases, depending on the strain.

Petesch reported from Dakar, Senegal. AP reporter Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed to this report.

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This story has been corrected to reflect that Wangata is a suburb of Mbandaka.

Cases against bikers struggle 3 years after Waco shootout

By EMILY SCHMALL, Associated Press

WACO, Texas (AP) — Texas prosecutors who have failed to convict a single person in the three years since a Waco shooting left nine bikers dead are trying a new tack of targeting fewer cases, but attorneys for the bikers say the evidence is so shaky and the lead prosecutor's credibility so damaged that it will be difficult to make the remaining charges stick.

The May 17, 2015, shooting also left 20 wounded and nearly 200 arrested at the Twin Peaks restaurant. Investigators say it was sparked by rivalries between the Bandidos and Cossacks motorcycle clubs ahead of a meeting. Waco police monitoring the gathering said officers opened fire after fights and gunfire broke out. Ballistics evidence shows that police bullets struck four of the nine dead, at least two of them fatally.

Prosecutors initially indicted 154 bikers, using a conspiracy law that is difficult to apply because it requires proof beyond all reasonable doubt that three or more people acted together to support a criminal organization.

In the two weeks before the anniversary on Thursday of the deadliest biker shooting in U.S. history, prosecutors in Waco dismissed 98 indictments and have narrowed the cases to 25. Three of those are murder charges against Bandido members Glenn Walker, Ray Allen and Jeff Battey.

A problem for the prosecution is that McLennan County District Attorney Abel Reyna is a lame duck, having lost a Republican primary race in March after being accused of mishandling the biker cases. A new prosecutor won't be elected until November. Instead of resigning or keeping a low profile until then, Reyna has moved more aggressively.

"One would have thought that repudiation in the March primary would have resonated," said Clinton Broden, an attorney for one of the bikers still being prosecuted. "Instead, Reyna appears intent on being the last player at the blackjack table at 3 in the morning who keeps doubling down until he is out of chips."

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Reyna declined an interview request from The Associated Press.

Then there are issues with the evidence that emerged at the only biker trial since the shooting, defense attorneys said.

One of the alleged murder weapons was recovered by a U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agent from the backseat of a Waco SWAT police car, cross-contamination that makes it harder to prove who killed whom.

Prosecutors have charged Walker in the death of Richard Kirschner, a Cossack. But police records previously reviewed by the AP show a Waco SWAT officer, Michael Bucher, shot Kirschner twice with his rifle. An autopsy report says there were three gunshot wounds. Walker's pistol was later recovered from a pile of weapons police reports and dashcam footage shows were tossed into the back of Bucher's vehicle by officers. The ATF wasn't able to positively identify any fingerprints on Walker's pistol.

Multiple fingerprints found on the same gun would make an analysis of who fired that gun more difficult, said ATF spokeswoman Nicole Strong.

Prosecutors have charged Allen and Battey in the death of Matthew Mark Smith, another Cossack.

Allen's attorney, Brian Walker, said Allen fired his weapon in self-defense after Battey was shot in the shoulder. An autopsy report shows that Smith was shot twice, but a firearms analysis couldn't determine the source of the bullets or which gun fired the kill shot.

Under Texas law, a person can be found guilty of murder even when not directly responsible for the death during the commission of another felony crime.

The one trial so far, of Jake Carrizal, the president of the Dallas chapter of the Bandidos, was also fraught with questions over whether prosecutors had fully shared all evidence in the case, and ended in a mistrial.

Reyna and his first assistant, Michael Jarrett, delayed subsequent trials, arguing that it would be unethical to proceed without reviewing evidence from a federal racketeering case against the former president and vice president of the Bandidos in San Antonio.

In what could be a positive development for the Waco prosecutors, jurors in San Antonio on Thursday convicted both men on all 13 counts, including murder. A spokesperson in Reyna's office said before the convictions that Waco prosecutors had not reviewed evidence from that trial. Defense attorneys said that proceeding with the new charges suggests that prosecutors' cases are not likely to be bolstered by the federal evidence.

"These guys sitting in Waco desperately needed to be superstars and it destroyed them," said Paul Looney, a Houston attorney who had represented some of the bikers whose cases were dismissed.

Some 130 bikers, shown in surveillance footage running from the fire or trying to save bikers with gunshot wounds, have filed civil suits against the authorities.

Bikers' defense attorneys and outside legal experts have criticized Reyna's decision to immediately arrest and later indict so many people on a single charge. Among the critics is Brian Roberts, who was brought in as a special prosecutor in four cases in which Reyna recused himself. Roberts dismissed the first case for lack of evidence.

"That day (of the shooting) should have been the beginning of the investigation, not the end of it," he said.

About 40 people in leather vests bearing the names of independent mom-and-pop motorcycle clubs gathered at the McClennan County courthouse steps Thursday on the anniversary of the shooting.

"After three years he's (prosecutor) not through with us yet. He has brought out the shovel to bury us with," said Sandra Lynch, a member of Los Pirados motorcycle club, who had booked the Twin Peaks patio the day of the shooting.

Gambling, tech firms scramble for foothold in sports betting

By WAYNE PARRY, Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — The prospect of legal sports betting throughout the United States has prompted a flurry of deals among gambling and technology firms who want a foothold in the billion-dollar industry.

Casinos, race tracks, daily fantasy sports companies and others are itching to offer bets in person and online after the Supreme Court ruled Monday that states could begin allowing wagers. That's led companies all over the world to seek ways to team up.

Some casinos need mobile apps or someone to set lines and run sports books that operate much differently than slot machines and table games. Many tech firms, daily fantasy sports companies and others need gambling licenses and experience with significant regulation. Other companies that handle data security and payment processing are also joining the fray.

The industry is preparing for most of the betting to happen on smartphones, just like in Europe. That would also be new for most U.S. states, as internet gambling has been limited to just three states in recent years.

"This is a multibillion-dollar industry that has been operating in darkness and can now be brought into the light with legalization and regulation," said Richard Schwartz, president of Rush Street Interactive, which operates SugarHouse Online Casino, a gambling site for New Jersey residents that offers slots and table games.

Churchill Downs, the race track that runs the Kentucky Derby, said Wednesday it inked deals with a tech company for its platform and the Golden Nugget casino in Atlantic City for its license in New Jersey. It bought Presque Isle Downs & Casino in Pennsylvania in March and owns two casinos in Mississippi, with plans to offer sports betting in all three states.

Dublin-based gambling firm Paddy Power Betfair has an online casino in New Jersey but is considering merging its U.S. business with FanDuel, the popular daily fantasy sports company, in a deal with clear upside for both sides. Betfair would gain a well-known American brand with millions of customers built on technology that could be used for sports betting. FanDuel, meanwhile, would need expertise on complex regulation if it hopes to gain a casino license, a move that most fantasy sports companies tried for years to avoid by arguing that fantasy sports doesn't amount to gambling.

Anticipation of the ruling even prompted some companies to squash their differences and focus on the potential windfall. London-based bookmaker William Hill had threatened to use its stock to derail a buyout between two online gambling infrastructure firms in Las Vegas. But it later agreed to support the purchase of NYX Gaming by Scientific Games.

The opportunities are vast for companies that can help customers turn from illegal bookies and offshore operations, said Laila Mintas, deputy president of Sportradar, a New York company that works with more than 70 sports federations and leagues around the world on fraud detection, including the NBA, NHL and MLS.

"It opens the door for all different stakeholders such as the states, the leagues, the casino and lottery industry to act quickly and to benefit," she said.

Mattias Stetz, Rush Street's chief operating officer, said it plans to offer traditional betting on final scores, along with betting on developments within each game like which team will score next or who will commit the next foul. That's the fastest growing segment of sports betting and popular in Nevada, the only state that had been taking single-game sports bets before the Supreme Court ruling.

Major casino companies MGM Resorts International and Caesars Entertainment and Tropicana Entertainment (recently bought by Eldorado Resorts) all announced plans to offer sports betting outside Nevada, as did the soon-to-open Hard Rock and Ocean Resort casinos in Atlantic City.

David Katz, equity analyst at Jefferies, said Penn National Gaming and Caesars Entertainment are in a better position than their peers because of their many locations in multiple states, "particularly where there is a high probability of sports betting becoming legal sooner rather than later."

Caesars is in a particularly advantageous position, he said, because it has been doing its own bookmaking for years, combining experience with a large amount of volume.

AP Business Writer Damian Troise in New York contributed to this report.

Follow Wayne Parry at <http://twitter.com/WayneParryAC>

Markle's dad too ill for wedding but mom has tea with royals

By GREGORY KATZ and MARTIN BENEDYK, Associated Press

WINDSOR, England (AP) — Ending days of speculation, Meghan Markle said Thursday that her father will not be able to attend her wedding to Prince Harry due to health problems. The news came as British military personnel rehearsed for a gala procession through Windsor that will follow Saturday's ceremony, which will be televised live around the world.

"Sadly, my father will not be attending our wedding," Markle said in a statement. "I have always cared for my father and hope he can be given the space he needs to focus on his health."

Markle also thanked "everyone who has offered generous messages of support" and said she and Harry are looking forward to "sharing our special day with you on Saturday."

Kensington Palace has not revealed any details about Thomas Markle's health issues, but the celebrity website TMZ says the 73-year-old retired Hollywood cinematographer is hospitalized in California after undergoing a procedure to clear blocked coronary arteries. He reportedly told the website he was OK after three stents had been inserted, but needed to rest.

Thomas Markle had been scheduled to walk his daughter down the aisle when she weds her prince Saturday in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

No replacement for him as been officially named but it's possible that Doria Ragland, the bride's mother, could fill that role instead. The bride may also choose to walk down the aisle by herself.

Ragland has had a series of whirlwind visits with senior royals since her arrival from California.

She met Harry's brother, Prince William, and his wife Kate and their two oldest children, Prince George, 4, and Princess Charlotte, 3, at Windsor Castle on Thursday afternoon. Palace officials said Harry and Meghan Markle were also present, and that the meeting was followed by a rehearsal dinner.

Ragland also had tea with Harry's father, Prince Charles, and his wife Camilla the day before. She will meet Harry's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, for tea Friday at Windsor Castle, the palace said.

Officials did not say if Prince Philip, the queen's husband, will be present at the tea. He is recovering from hip replacement surgery.

Harry and Markle, who have remained out of the public eye in recent days, were spotted being driven onto the grounds of Windsor Castle on Thursday afternoon.

On the streets of Windsor, military personnel rehearsed their procession through the town, watched by thousands of enthusiastic royal fans.

The wedding day festivities will include a 25-minute carriage ride outside the grounds of Windsor Castle by the newlyweds after the ceremony. More than 2,600 members of the public have been invited onto the castle grounds to watch the procession.

Thursday's practice session aimed to work out the precise timings of Saturday's procession. The British pride themselves on carrying off complex parades with aplomb, and it would not do for the couple to arrive at their wedding reception even a few minutes late.

"It's very important to have a dress rehearsal, for everyone involved. It gives the guys a sense of timings for the day, how fast they need to move, how slow they need to move. It also helps the horses themselves, showing them the environment," said Adam Blackmore-Heale, a member of the Household Cavalry.

A large military contingent is taking part in the procession, reflecting Harry's years of military service, including tours in Afghanistan.

The church service will be conducted by the Rev. David Conner, the dean of Windsor. He said Thursday

that Harry and Markle are deeply committed to each other.

"They're very serious about their relationship and that's why I think they particularly want to see it grounded in a religious ceremony, in a Christian ceremony," he said.

Doubts about whether Markle's father would come to the wedding surfaced earlier in the week when TMZ reported he would not come because he was embarrassed by reports that he had staged photos showing him being measured for his wedding suit. That story also included a report that he had suffered a recent heart attack.

The drama surrounding Thomas Markle, and harsh comments about the bride made by estranged members of her extended family who were not invited to the wedding, have dominated British tabloid coverage of the royal wedding.

Daily Mail columnist Sarah Vine on Thursday castigated Harry's Kensington Palace press operation for not doing more to prevent Markle's relatives from sniping at her.

"Could they not have taken at least a few steps to get them on-side?" she said.

Katz reported from London. Danica Kirka in London also contributed.

For complete AP royal wedding coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/tag/Royalweddings>

US has a daunting to-do list to get ready for NKorea summit

By CATHERINE LUCEY, ZEKE MILLER AND MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Who sits where? What's on the agenda? Will they eat together? What's the security plan?

President Donald Trump and his team have a daunting to-do list to work through as they prepare for next month's expected summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump's plan to meet with Kim may have come as a surprise decision, but his team hopes to leave nothing to chance when they come together in Singapore. They're gaming out policy plans, negotiating tactics, even menu items.

With two unpredictable leaders, it's hard to anticipate every possibility. But White House aides are expecting hard-ball negotiating tactics — already in evidence this week as the North Koreans cast fresh doubt on the sit-down.

The president said Thursday that preparations were underway: "Our people are literally dealing with them right now in terms of making arrangements for the meeting."

The two sides, he said, "are continuing to negotiate in terms of location, the location as to where to meet, how to meet, rooms, everything else. They've been negotiating like nothing happened."

Leader summits on this level are a massive undertaking. Much like icebergs, only a small fraction of the work is visible above the waterline. And when the meeting involves the heads of two technically still-warring states, the list of logistical concerns expands, including sensitive items like the number and deployment of security officers. Officials on both sides are still determining the format for the meeting or meetings, whether Trump and Kim will share a meal, and the extent of any one-on-one interactions.

All of that comes as the U.S. formulates its strategies for the talks, including what the U.S. is prepared to give up and how precisely to define "denuclearization" on the Korean Peninsula — Trump's stated goal.

"I would say there are hundreds if not thousands of hours put into summit preparations," said Patrick McEachern, a public policy fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a former State Department official.

Scott Mulhauser, a former chief of staff at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, said that in the leadup to summit meetings, staffs try to anticipate the various negotiating positions their counterparts might take, adding that "if you're not gaming that out, you're not preparing adequately."

Trump is relying heavily on his top diplomat, Mike Pompeo, in preparing for the summit. Pompeo has met with Kim twice in Pyongyang, once as secretary of state and once as CIA chief, and has spent more time with the reclusive leader than any other American official. The amount of face time Pompeo has had

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with Kim rivals even that of most Asian leaders, apart from the Chinese.

Pompeo assembled a working group to handle negotiations with North Korea led by a retired senior CIA official with deep experience in the region. That team, based at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, remains the center of the administration's North Korea expertise.

Planning for the summit started quickly after Trump announced on Twitter his plans to meet with Kim, but kicked into higher gear after John Bolton became Trump's national security adviser last month. In addition to Pompeo's two trips to Pyongyang, U.S. officials have also been coordinating with the North Koreans through what's known as the "New York channel" — North Korean diplomats posted to their country's mission to the United Nations.

A key question is the format for the meeting if the two countries are able to proceed to full-fledged nuclear negotiations, U.S. officials have said. That includes decisions about whether to keep the talks limited to the U.S. and North Korea or whether to bring other governments into the process, such as South Korea, China, Russia and Japan. Also key is what the U.S. will negotiate away.

"One thing that is unclear to us is what the U.S. is willing to negotiate in exchange for North Korea's promises on denuclearization," said Jean Lee, director of the North Korea program at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a former Associated Press bureau chief in Pyongyang. "The North Koreans are going to be armed and very ready to negotiate. The Trump administration needs to be ready as well."

One initial hurdle that Pompeo managed to clear during his second visit to Pyongyang was the venue for the summit. North Korea was adamant that Kim not be put in any kind of situation where his security could be at risk, U.S. officials said. North Korean officials pushed very hard for the meeting to be in Pyongyang, so Kim would not have to leave the country and they could have 100 percent control over access and communications, according to the officials.

When North Korea objected to Trump's preferred choice of the demilitarized zone on the border between North and South Korea, the U.S. countered with Singapore. Some White House officials also opposed the DMZ choice, believing the optics on Korean rapprochement would distract from the focus on denuclearization.

U.S. officials said they believed one reason the North Koreans agreed to Singapore was that Kim had just returned from a successful trip to China the day before Pompeo arrived for his second visit. Many analysts, including U.S. officials, believe that Kim's flight to the Chinese port of Dalian — the first trip abroad by aircraft by a North Korean leader in decades — was likely a test of the country's ability to safely transport Kim by air. Kim's previous trips to China had all been by train, as was the custom of his father.

The North formally signed off on Singapore while Pompeo was in Pyongyang. Even before Trump announced the summit site by tweet a day after Pompeo's return, White House officials who traveled with Pompeo to Pyongyang were already on the ground in Singapore to begin working out summit logistics.

Very few people have had much direct contact with the North Koreans, so there are few people for the Trump administration to check with for guidance.

Bill Richardson, the former New Mexico governor and U.N. ambassador who has negotiated with the North Koreans, had one suggestion. He said that in the meeting setting, the North Koreans will be very formal, so building a rapport between the two will be vital.

His main advice: "Try to find some private time between President Trump and Kim Jong Un."

Lack of paper trail a concern amid fears of election hacking

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — As the midterm congressional primaries heat up amid fears of Russian hacking, roughly 1 in 5 Americans will be casting ballots on machines that do not produce a paper record of their votes.

That worries voting and cybersecurity experts, who say lack of a hard copy makes it difficult to double-check results for signs of manipulation.

"In the current system, after the election, if people worry it has been hacked, the best officials can do is say, 'Trust us,'" said Alex Halderman, a voting machine expert who is director of the University of Michigan's

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Center for Computer Security and Society.

Georgia, which holds its primary on Tuesday, and four other states — Delaware, Louisiana, New Jersey and South Carolina — exclusively use touchscreen machines that provide no paper records allowing voters to confirm their choices.

Such machines are also used in more than 300 counties in eight other states: Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas, according to Verified Voting, a nonprofit group focused on ensuring the accuracy of elections.

In all, about 20 percent of registered voters nationwide use machines that produce no paper record.

Many election officials in states and counties that rely on those machines say they support upgrading them but also contend they are accurate. In many jurisdictions, the multimillion-dollar cost is a hurdle.

The focus comes as states gear up for the first nationwide elections since Russian hackers targeted 21 states ahead of the 2016 presidential contest. U.S. intelligence agencies have said that there is no evidence any vote tallies were manipulated but that Russians and others are intent on interfering in American elections again.

Last week, the Senate Intelligence Committee issued a report that recommended replacing machines that don't produce a paper record of the vote.

Some states already have taken that step or are doing so.

Virginia last year banned paperless touchscreen machines two months before the state's gubernatorial election. This year, Kentucky ordered that all new machines produce a paper trail.

Congress has allocated \$380 million to help states with election security upgrades, but that is just a fraction of what would be needed to replace all paperless machines.

Louisiana is soliciting bids to replace the state's nearly 10,000 such machines ahead of the 2020 election, though all the money has yet to be allocated. Funding also is an issue in Pennsylvania, where Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf has ordered that counties planning to replace their electronic voting systems buy machines that leave a paper trail.

"It's important because everybody needs to have confidence in the voting process," Wolf said. "And given what is alleged to have happened in 2016, I think there's some concern that maybe people aren't as confident as they should be."

The rest of the country uses either paper ballots that are filled out by hand and then read by an optical scanner, or a touchscreen machine that prints out a ballot so voters can verify their selections before inserting it into another machine to record their votes.

Since 2016, 46 Texas counties have upgraded their electronic machines, according to the secretary of state's office. Of those, only 11 went to systems with a paper trail.

San Jacinto County north of Houston is among those that continued with a paperless system when it bought new touchscreen machines. County election administrator Vicki Shelly said that voters have not raised concerns and that she is confident in the new equipment.

"There's a lot of checks and balances," she said.

In Georgia, the cost to switch to paper-based machines in the state's 159 counties ranges from \$25 million to more than \$100 million, depending on the technology adopted. The state is eligible to receive a little over \$10 million from Washington.

Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp has said extensive security measures and cyber defense upgrades make the state's current system reliable. Those measures include outside security monitoring, regular checks for system vulnerabilities and a backup of voter data that is stored in a secure location.

Amanda Strudwick, a 43-year-old nurse from Decatur, said she has to take Georgia election officials at their word.

"If somebody wants to screw it up, they can do it," she said at an early voting center in metro Atlanta. "That does not mean opting out of voting. Too many people have fought throughout history for my right to vote."

Concerns over Georgia's voting machines have been prominent in the race for the state's next election chief, with both Democratic and Republican candidates saying the equipment should be replaced.

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GOP candidate Josh McKoon released a campaign video showing him taking a baseball bat to a voting machine. During a recent debate, he said close elections such as the 2017 Atlanta mayor's race require a recount that involves paper records, not just running the tallies on the voting machines a second time. "Having the paper ballot that can be read and verified for the voter is essential," he said.

Associated Press writers Michael Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey; Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Will Weissert in Austin, Texas, contributed to this report.

Follow Christina Almeida Cassidy on Twitter at http://twitter.com/AP_Christina

Trump: If FBI spied on my campaign, 'bigger than Watergate!'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump lent credence Thursday to reports that FBI informants had infiltrated his presidential campaign, saying that "if so, this is bigger than Watergate!"

Trump made the comment on the anniversary of Robert Mueller's appointment as special counsel to head the Justice Department investigation into possible coordination between Russia and Trump campaign official. Trump has repeatedly called the investigation a "witch hunt."

"Wow, word seems to be coming out that the Obama FBI 'SPIED ON THE TRUMP CAMPAIGN WITH AN EMBEDDED INFORMANT,'" Trump tweeted. "Andrew McCarthy says, 'There's probably no doubt that they had at least one confidential informant in the campaign.' If so, this is bigger than Watergate!"

McCarthy, a contributing editor at the National Review, wrote an article published last week headlined "Did the FBI Have a Spy in the Trump Campaign?"

The New York Times reported separately this week that at least one government informant met several times with Carter Page and George Papadopoulos, both former foreign policy advisers on Trump's Republican campaign. The newspaper attributed the information to current and former FBI officials.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said if the reports are proved true, "it should certainly be looked into."

The Watergate scandal in the early 1970s occurred following a break-in by five men at Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate building in Washington and subsequent attempts by the administration of President Richard Nixon to hide its involvement. Nixon, a Republican, ultimately resigned from office as a result of the ensuing investigation.

Meanwhile, Trump's attorney Rudy Giuliani said that the president still wants to testify in the Russia probe.

Speaking Thursday on "Fox and Friends," the former New York mayor said Trump will only sit down with Mueller if "we feel there's a way to shorten this thing." He added that Trump remains eager to offer his "side of the case."

Giuliani has been urging Mueller's team to wrap up the investigation now that the probe has reached the one-year mark.

Giuliani's team has been weighing whether to allow Trump to sit for an interview with Mueller. He said the legal team is "pretty comfortable, in the circumstances of this case, that they wouldn't be able to subpoena him personally."

While the Supreme Court has never definitively ruled on the subject, it appears that a sitting president could be forced to testify. In 1974, justices held unanimously that a president could be compelled to comply with a subpoena for tapes and documents.

If Trump were subpoenaed and did not want to testify, he could always invoke his constitutional right not to testify against himself and decline to answer questions. But that act would pose significant political risk.

Giuliani also repeated that Mueller's team has indicated it would not attempt to indict Trump, as he told The Associated Press on Friday. Justice Department legal opinions from 1973 and 2000 have suggested that a sitting president is immune from indictment and that criminal charges would undermine the commander in chief's ability to do the job.

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Giuliani told Fox News Channel's Laura Ingraham on Wednesday that Mueller "has all the facts to make a decision" after 12 months investigating Russian meddling in the election and possible collusion with Trump's campaign.

"Mueller should now bring this to a close," said Giuliani. "It's been a year. He's gotten 1.4 million documents, he's interviewed 28 witnesses. And he has nothing, which is why he wants to bring the president into an interview."

"It's about time to say enough. We've tortured this president enough," he added, describing the investigation as being "like a big weight" on the president's back.

So far, the special counsel's office has charged 19 people — including four Trump campaign advisers — and three Russian companies. Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, and his deputy campaign chairman, Rick Gates, have pleaded guilty and are now cooperating with the probe.

Trump, however, has panned it as a "witch hunt" intended to discredit his presidency and has insisted that Russia had nothing to do with his winning campaign.

Giuliani, who is working for the president pro bono, said Wednesday that the probe "is not good for the American people, and the special counsel's office doesn't seem to have that sort of understanding that they're interfering with things that are much bigger than them."

Sea otters rebound but struggle to regain historic range

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, Associated Press

MOSS LANDING, Calif. (AP) — While threatened southern sea otters bob and sun in the gentle waves of this central California estuary, wildlife experts up and down the West Coast are struggling to figure out how to restore the crucial coastal predator to an undersea world that's falling apart in their absence.

Southern sea otters, nearly wiped out by centuries of industrial-scale hunting for their fur pelts, have rebounded from as few as 50 survivors in the 1930s to more than 3,000 today, thanks to federal and state protection.

But there's a problem. Southern sea otters, a top carnivore that normally helps keep other populations in check and ecosystems in balance, "are kind of stuck," says Teri Nicholson, a senior research biologist at the nearby Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Despite decades of government protection, southern sea otters today still occupy only about a fourth of their historic range. Federal wildlife policy calls for waiting for the otters to spread out again on their own. The otters' habitat hasn't really budged beyond their current central California enclave, however, over the past 20 years.

"At this point, I think for the population to increase, the range needs to expand," said Karl Mayer, manager of the aquarium's sea-otter program. It doesn't really make sense, Mayer said, "to stuff more otters into a limited environment."

Mayer spoke as his boat putt-putted among sea otters, harbor seals and pelicans crowding the salt-water estuary called Elkhorn Slough.

At the former whaling town of Moss Landing, the restored slough forms part of the southern sea otters' modern-day range: 300 miles of coast along the middle of California.

On this morning, male sea otters clasp paws with one another for stability in the water as they snooze together and warm their bellies in the spring sun. Deeper into the waterway, female otters float with their young perched on their chests, or with newborn otters — even more buoyant than adults thanks to their thick fur — bobbing alongside them like corks.

A hungry sea gull stalks one female otter gnawing on a fat innkeeper worm. Her otter pup watches wide-eyed.

Though small by marine mammal standards, sea otters are the largest members of the weasel family and males can grow to nearly 100 pounds (45 kilograms). Their fur, the densest on earth, keeps them warm.

Efforts to get the southern sea otters back into more of their old range reflect growing global recognition of the benefits of restoring top predators to their historic territory.

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After supporting wolf extermination in Yellowstone in the first half of the 20th century, for example, the U.S. government by the second half was aiding wolves' reintroduction to the national park. The wolves' hunting have cut what were too-large herds of deer and elk. The result has been a rebound at Yellowstone for all kinds of life — beavers, fish, even aspen trees, some ecologists say.

Wildlife officials have made efforts around the world to restore predators ranging from birds of prey to bears, sometimes controversially when people believe the animals are a threat to them or their livelihoods.

Some in the fishing industry oppose the sea otter's comeback. Fishermen in Alaska accuse the growing northern otter populations there of consuming the red sea urchin humans eat as sushi. Wildlife experts counter that the entire coastal ecosystem, including the valuable shellfish, faces collapse without otters and other predators to keep things in balance.

Even when humans support the restoration of a predator, it isn't easy.

Sometimes, "it's the Humpty-Dumpty syndrome," said Bill Ripple, an Oregon State University ecologist and professor who has found that only half of efforts to restore land carnivores are successful.

"During these cascading events that follow the loss of the predators in the first place, we can sometimes see the ecosystem fail to function," Ripple said. "And sometimes it's not real easy to put those ecosystems back together."

When it comes to southern sea otters, all but wiped out long ago, "we don't even know what a normal environment looks like," said Lilian Carswell, who coordinates marine conservation and sea-otter recovery at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Populations of voracious purple sea urchins have exploded along the West Coast, owing to the more than century-long absence of the sea otter from much of its old range, and to a mysterious die-off this decade among sea stars, another coastal predator.

Their numbers unchecked, purple urchins have helped destroy more than 90 percent of Northern California bull-kelp forest since 2014, said Cynthia Catton, an environmental scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Kelp forests are vital to coastal life, serving as underwater hiding places, food stores and nurseries.

When otters venture into the undersea areas eaten bare by urchin, they are easily spotted by one of their main predators, the great white shark.

Great-white shark attacks on southern sea otters have surged at least eight-fold this century, becoming the biggest killers of the otters, marine experts say.

The sea otters, unique among marine mammals, are more fur than blubber, so sharks typically only take a test bite and move on. But the otters often die anyway.

In areas with kelp cover for the otters, shark bites drop to almost nothing, Nicholson and aquarium colleagues found in a March report in the journal *Ecography*.

To help the kelp, commercial divers along Northern California's Mendocino coast are tending a precious stand of kelp forest, plucking off the purple sea urchins by hand and using suction hoses to vacuum them up, says Catton.

Unlike red urchins, the spiny purple urchins are no one's idea of a favorite meal, whether human or otter. Experts are trying potential commercial uses for them, including compost, in hopes of incentivizing their large-scale removal.

And at Monterey Bay Aquarium, where workers since 1984 have rescued and returned to the wild about 280 stranded otters, otter-tenders are trying to habituate rescued young ones to seeking out purple sea urchins over crabs and other more appetizing fare.

Ultimately, California otter experts may one day recommend simply loading otters into vehicles and giving them rides to remaining kelp forests to repopulate.

Meantime, scientists scratch their heads over what else to try.

West Coast creatures had millions of years to evolve their interdependent lives, Carswell said. The last few centuries of human development were enough to pull apart that network of otter, kelp, urchin, shark, and other species.

"In some ways, we're in an age of restoration," she said. "In the marine environment especially, I feel

like we have an emphasis and chance at restoration, and a chance to turn things around.”

Ethics director forwards concerns to DOJ over Cohen payment

By **BERNARD CONDON** and **TAMI ABDOLLAH**, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump revealed in his financial disclosure that he reimbursed personal attorney Michael Cohen as much as \$250,000 for unspecified “expenses,” with no mention of a \$130,000 payment to porn actress Stormy Daniels to keep quiet about a sexual tryst she said they had.

The head of the nation’s ethics office on Wednesday questioned why Trump didn’t include this in his previous year’s sworn disclosure and passed along his concerns to federal prosecutors.

“I am providing both reports to you because you may find the disclosure relevant to any inquiry you may be pursuing,” David Apol, acting director of the Office of Government Ethics, wrote to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

Apol wrote that he considers Trump’s payment to Cohen to be a repayment on a loan and that it was required to be included in Trump’s June 2017 disclosure.

But Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani told Fox News Channel’s Laura Ingraham that he didn’t think the repayment “had to be disclosed at all because I think it was an expenditure that he reimbursed.”

He also the president was “fully aware” of his decision to reveal the fact that Trump had reimbursed Cohen in a previous Fox News appearance and “endorsed the strategy.”

“We wouldn’t do it without him,” Giuliani said on “The Ingraham Angle.” “He’s the client, after all, and has tremendous judgment about things like this. And I think it — that the OGE, the Office of Government Ethics, basically agreed with us that it had been fully disclosed.”

“The fact is that that president disclosed everything that he could disclose. He can’t disclose more than he knows. And we’re very comfortable with it,” he added.

But ethics experts say that if that payment was knowingly and willfully left out, Trump could be in violation of federal ethics laws.

“This is a big deal and unprecedented. No president has been previously subject to any referral by (Office of Government Ethics) to DOJ as a result of having failed to report an item on their public financial disclosure report,” said Virginia Canter, a former ethics official in the Clinton and Obama White Houses who is now with the watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

How Trump dealt with the Daniels hush money in his disclosure has been closely watched, particularly after Giuliani gave interviews earlier this month saying the president had reimbursed Cohen in a series of payments after the campaign was over. Trump and Giuliani have clashed over what the president knew and when he knew it.

In a footnote in tiny type on Page 45 of his 92-page disclosure, Trump said he reimbursed Cohen for “expenses” ranging from \$100,001 to \$250,000. The report said the president did not have to disclose the payment but was doing so “in the interest of transparency.”

While the disclosure didn’t specify the purpose of the payment, Cohen has said he paid \$130,000 to Daniels in the weeks before the 2016 presidential election to keep her from going public about her allegations that she had sex with the married Trump in 2006.

Daniels’ lawyer, Michael Avenatti, tweeted, “Mr. Trump’s disclosure today conclusively proves that the American people were deceived.”

The tweet continued: “This was NOT an accident and it was not isolated. Cover-ups should always matter.”

The Trump Organization referred questions about the disclosure report to the president’s lawyer Sheri Dillon of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. Dillon didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Cohen footnote appears in a report giving the first extended look at Trump’s revenue from his properties since he became president. In all, Trump’s vast array of assets — hotels, resorts, books, licensing deals and other business ventures — generated revenue last year of at least \$453 million. The report estimated the holdings are worth at least \$1.4 billion.

His Washington, D.C., hotel near the Oval Office, a magnet for diplomats and lobbyists, took in \$40 mil-

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lion. His Doral golf course and resort in Miami took in \$75 million. His Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, received \$25 million, and his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, generated \$15 million.

Some of the 12-month figures for his properties are down from his previous report, but that earlier report covered about 16 months and so it is not directly comparable.

The figures are before expenses and so give no indication of how much profit the president made off the properties.

Trump has at least \$315 million in debt, about the same as he reported a year ago. One of his biggest lenders is Ladder Capital, which has lent more than \$100 million. Trump owes Deutsch Bank as much as \$175 million.

The debt figures are given in broad ranges in the report and capped at \$50 million, so it's unclear just how much Trump actually owes. The president's tax returns would give a clear picture, but Trump has broken with tradition by refusing to make them public.

When Trump took office, he refused to fully divest from his global business, another break with presidential tradition. Instead, he put his assets in a trust controlled by his two adult sons and a senior executive. Trump can take back control of the trust at any time, and he's allowed to withdraw cash from it as he pleases.

His report shows that Trump received \$64,840 from the Screen Actors Guild pension fund. Trump has appeared in several movies, including "Home Alone 2" and "Zoolander."

For operating New York's Wollman Rink in Central Park, the president took in \$9.3 million.

Though it was published three decades ago, Trump's "The Art of The Deal" last year generated as much as \$1 million.

Abdollah and Associated Press writer Richard Lardner contributed from Washington.

Rise of Chinese middle class fuels interest in craft beers

By **SAM McNEIL and FU TING, Associated Press**

SHANGHAI (AP) — "Panda Beer," "Little General," "Flying Fist IPA," and "Mandarin Wheat" are among the offerings on tap at a craft beer exhibition this week in Shanghai dedicated to expanding the palette of Chinese consumers and promoting sales of high-end brews.

The 2018 Craft Beer of China Exhibition features breweries like Rasenburg Beer, Myth Monkey Brewing, Lazy Taps, Goose Island and Boxing Cat Brewery that are sharing tips on the latest technology and sales trends as Chinese shift from legacy brews to more experimental, refined, and expensive flavors.

From taps at the expo flowed creative mixes of flavors and traditions, a swirling cocktail of Chinese ingredients, barley, hops and spices from around the world.

"After drinking it (craft beer), it feels much better than the domestic industry beer, and then you just can't leave it," said Yu Shiqi, a 40-year old craft beer consumer at the expo who dreams of brewing his own.

There's money to be made in China, which drinks a quarter of all beer worldwide, and small-batch brewers and giant multinational are cashing in. Though craft beer is far from upstaging local beer behemoths like Tsingtao that dominate the \$28 billion national beer market, it is rising in popularity as small breweries open up in China's major metropolitan areas like Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

Craft beers are typically more expensive than mass-market, low-alcohol content brews like Budweiser and China's Yanjing. But as China's middle class grows, so too does its tastes for finer products.

A couple of years ago, craft beer made up only 0.3 percent of total beer consumption. It has since risen to about 5 percent, said Darren Guo, one of the exhibition's organizers, who expect to see 30 percent growth in the craft beer market every year until 2020. "Beer culture is pretty much on the beginning or starting level."

Laurel Liu, sales director of Beijing-based Jing-A brewery, says she gets calls from small towns asking how to start up a craft brewery.

"You don't even expect them to have craft beer there but now they do," Liu said. "I'm really surprised and happy to see now that craft beer in China is a thing and it's really easier to access these products now."

More money was spent on beer in China than the USA in 2017, according to beer industry research firm Drink Sector. Craft breweries were "rapidly increasing" although foreign imports continue to dominate the high-end beer sector.

The Belgian-Brazilian firm Anheuser-Busch InBev, the makers of Budweiser, has invested heavily in China, building breweries and acquiring craft breweries like Shanghai's Boxing Cat. Anheuser Busch also owns Goose Island, which is based in Chicago.

Michael Jordan, brew-master at Boxing Cat, and his staff experiment with flavors like egg tart, green tea, peppercorn, chai, kiwi, hibiscus and sweet potato.

Jordan chalks up some of the success of craft brewing in China to President Xi Jinping sharing a pint of IPA, or Indian Pale Ale, in 2015 in the UK with then-prime minister David Cameron.

"The 'Xi phenomenon' really kind of opened people's eyes to IPA," he said.

Malaysia seizes luxury bags, cash, jewelry in probe of ex-PM

By EILEEN NG, Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian police confiscated 284 designer handbags and 72 suitcases containing cash, jewelry and other valuables Friday as part of a corruption and money-laundering investigation into former Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Commercial crime chief Amar Singh said the valuables were seized in a search that began late Thursday at apartments linked to Najib at an upscale condominium in Kuala Lumpur.

Singh said the seizure was part of investigations into a corruption scandal at the 1MDB state fund, which is also being probed by the U.S. and other countries.

U.S. investigators say Najib's associates stole and laundered \$4.5 billion from the fund, some of which landed in Najib's bank account, and that \$23 million was used to buy a pink diamond necklace for his wife. Najib, whose coalition was ousted in a stunning election defeat last week, denies any wrongdoing.

Television networks showed police carting away orange boxes containing handbags and luggage of various sizes from the condominium. Each orange box has a label and a picture of the bag.

The labels on some of the boxes seen by The Associated Press describe the bags as a "navy blue crocodile skin with diamond," a "blue with diamante" crocodile skin Hermes and a gray crocodile skin Hermes. All appeared to be new and were bought abroad, including in Paris and Switzerland in 2013 and 2015.

Singh said the seizure included Birkin Hermes bags, cash in various currencies, watches and a "big amount" of jewelry. Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, is known in Malaysia for her love for Birkin bags, which luxury publications say cost from \$12,000 to more than \$200,000.

Singh declined to say who the apartments belonged. He said the "search was conducted in relevance to our 1MDB investigations."

Police conducted simultaneous raids at several other locations including Najib's family house, his former office as prime minister and an official residence. Documents related to 1MDB were taken from the office and police are still trying to crack open a safe in Najib's house, he said.

He declined to say if the haul would lead to an indictment for Najib. The search for evidence continues, he said.

New Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who led an opposition alliance to victory in May 9 polls that ended the 60-year rule of Najib's coalition, has reopened the probe into 1MDB.

Mahathir, 92, has said an initial investigation showed the scale of wrongdoing by Najib's administration was more serious than thought. He has said that arrests will be made when there is evidence, and there would be "no deal" with Najib. Mahathir was premier for 22 years until 2003 but made a political comeback amid anger over the 1MDB scandal.

Police spent 20 hours beginning late Wednesday searching Najib's house, and his lawyer said items such as handbags and clothing were taken away. Several police cars arrived at Najib's house Friday morning, fueling speculation his arrest may be imminent. Najib and his wife have been barred from traveling overseas.

Mahathir has said the government will seek to retrieve billions of dollars laundered from 1MDB to repay

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government debts that have piled up over the years. The government has also told the current attorney general, who cleared Najib of wrongdoing in 2016, to go on leave, and has relieved the country's treasury chief, who is also the 1MDB chairman.

The government has set up a five-member committee, including a former attorney general and an adviser to Indonesia's Financial Services Authority, to handle the 1MDB case.

Asian stocks marginally higher on backdrop of US-China talks

By **YOUKYUNG LEE, AP Business Writer**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Asian stock markets were marginally higher on Friday as U.S. and Chinese officials held a new round of talks seeking to avert a trade war between the world's two largest economies.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 added 0.4 percent to 22,925.04 and South Korea's Kospi index also added 0.2 percent to 2,452.48. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index rose 0.1 percent to 30,965.82. The Shanghai Composite Index advanced 0.2 percent to 3,161.40. But Australia's S&P/ASX 200 fell 0.2 percent to 6,081.40. Stocks rose in Taiwan and were mixed in Southeast Asia.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "A lack of data lies ahead of this Friday, leaving the U.S.-China trade developments the key item to occupy the market's attention into the end of the week," said Jingyi Pan, a market strategist at IG in Singapore. "This all leaves risk assets with little guide of a direction."

TRADE TALKS: The Trump administration has proposed tariffs on up to \$150 billion in Chinese products to punish Beijing for forcing American companies to turn over technology in exchange for access to the Chinese market. China has countered by targeting \$50 billion in U.S. products. Neither country has imposed the tariffs.

TRUMP: While fielding questions from reporters Thursday afternoon, Trump suggested the talks may not end up averting a trade war with China: "Will that be successful? I tend to doubt it," Trump said.

WALL STREET: U.S. stock indexes closed slightly lower, with the S&P 500 index down 0.1 percent to 2,720.13. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 0.2 percent to 24,713.98. The Nasdaq composite fell 0.2 percent to 7,382.47. But the Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks picked up 0.6 percent to 1,625.29.

OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude oil rose 8 cents to \$71.57 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract finished flat at \$71.49 per barrel in the previous session. Brent crude, used to price international oil, gained 22 cents to \$79.52 per barrel in London. It closed at \$79.30 a barrel in the previous day, up 2 cents, after briefly touching above \$80 a barrel, its highest level since November 2014.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 110.95 yen from 110.76 yen. The euro strengthened to \$1.1801 from \$1.1795.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 18, the 138th day of 2018. There are 227 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 18, 1953, Jacqueline Cochran, 47, became the first woman to break the sound barrier as she piloted a Canadair F-86 Sabre jet over Rogers Dry Lake, California.

On this date:

In 1152, Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, married Henry, Duke of Normandy (the future King Henry II), two months after her marriage to King Louis VII of France was annulled.

In 1642, the Canadian city of Montreal was founded by French colonists. (On this date in 1765, one-quarter of Montreal was destroyed by a fire.)

In 1652, Rhode Island became the first American colony to pass a law abolishing African slavery; however, the law was apparently never enforced.

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In 1781, Peruvian revolutionary Tupac Amaru II, 43, was forced to witness the execution of his relatives by the Spanish in the main plaza of Cuzco before being beheaded.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, endorsed "separate but equal" racial segregation, a concept renounced 58 years later by *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

In 1926, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson vanished while visiting a beach in Venice, California. (McPherson reappeared more than a month later, saying she'd escaped after being kidnapped and held for ransom, an account greeted with skepticism.)

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a measure creating the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In 1944, during World War II, Allied forces occupied Monte Cassino in Italy after a four-month struggle with Axis troops.

In 1967, Tennessee Gov. Buford Ellington signed a measure repealing the law against teaching evolution that was used to prosecute John T. Scopes in 1925.

In 1973, Harvard law professor Archibald Cox was appointed Watergate special prosecutor by U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson.

In 1980, the Mount St. Helens volcano in Washington state exploded, leaving 57 people dead or missing.

In 1998, the U.S. government filed an antitrust case against Microsoft, saying the powerful software company had a "choke hold" on competitors that was denying consumers important choices about how they bought and used computers. (The Justice Department and Microsoft reached a settlement in 2001.)

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush lectured the Arab world about everything from political repression to the denial of women's rights in a speech at the Egyptian resort of Sharm El-Sheik. Kenny Chesney was named entertainer of the year by the Academy of Country Music for the fourth straight time. Russia won its first title at the world hockey championships since 1993 with a 5-4 win over Canada.

Five years ago: A car driven by an 87-year-old man plowed into dozens of hikers during a parade in Damascus, Virginia, injuring about 50 people. (The driver, who suffered from a medical condition, was not charged.) French President Francois Hollande (frahn-SWAH' oh-LAWND') signed a law authorizing same-sex marriages and adoption by gay couples. Oxbow, ridden by Hall of Fame jockey Gary Stevens, led from start to finish to win the Preakness; Kentucky Derby winner Orb came in fourth.

One year ago: President Donald Trump denounced the appointment of a special counsel to investigate his campaign's potential ties with Russia, repeatedly calling it an unprecedented "witch hunt" that "hurts our country terribly." A driver who told police he was high on drugs plowed through a pedestrian-packed sidewalk in New York's Times Square; a Michigan teen was killed, and 22 other people were injured. Roger Ailes, who created and ruled Fox News Channel for two decades before being ousted for alleged sexual harassment, died in Palm Beach, Florida, at age 77.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Bill Macy is 96. Actress Priscilla Pointer is 94. Hall of Fame sportscaster Jack Whitaker is 94. Actor Robert Morse is 87. Actor Dwayne Hickman is 84. Baseball Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson is 81. Actress Candice Azzara is 77. Bluegrass singer-musician Rodney Dillard (The Dillards) is 76. Baseball Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson is 72. Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., is 70. Country singer Joe Bonsall (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 70. Rock musician Rick Wakeman (Yes) is 69. Rock singer Mark Mothersbaugh (Devo) is 68. Actor James Stephens is 67. Country singer George Strait is 66. Actor Chow Yun-Fat is 63. International Tennis Hall of Famer Yannick Noah is 58. Rock singer-musician Page Hamilton is 58. Contemporary Christian musician Barry Graul (MercyMe) is 57. Contemporary Christian singer Michael Tait is 52. Singer-actress Martika is 49. Comedian-writer Tina Fey is 48. Rapper Special Ed is 44. Rock singer Jack Johnson is 43. Country singer David Nail is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Darryl Allen (Mista) is 38. Actor Matt Long is 38. Actor Allen Leech is 37. Christian-rock musician Kevin Huguley (Rush of Fools) is 36. Christian singer Francesca Battistelli is 33. Actor Spencer Breslin is 26. Actress Hala Finley is nine.

Thought for Today: "People find life entirely too time-consuming." — Stanislaw J. Lec, Polish writer (1909-1966).