

Groton Daily Independent

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“If happiness is the goal – and it should be – then adventures should be a top priority.”

-Richard Branson

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

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- 1- Blocker Construction Ad
- 1- Recycling Trailer
- 2- Olive Grove Firecracker Golf Tournament
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Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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Olive Grove Firecracker Golf Tournament

Championship Flight

- 68- Steve Millard and Lisa Shriver
- 70- Joe and Ruth Gorneau
- 70- Brad and Dar Larson
- 73- Brad and Brenda Waage
- 74- Darren and Brett Lorenz
- 74- Jarod and Kristi Fliehs
- 76- Tim and Barb Gillick

First Flight

- 73- Mark and Kara Herman
- 75- Reid and Nicole Johnson
- 75- Pat Martin and Tammy Doerr
- 76- Mark Papstein and Susie Sousa
- 76- Randy and Sue Stanley
- 78- Doug and Vicki Jorgensen
- 78- Jason and Sarah Lutz
- 80- Rich and Tammy Zimney
- 81- Lorin and Julie Fliehs
- 83- Steve and Betty Dunker

Second Flight

- 81- Kyle Spencer and Deidra Kolb
- 82- Brad and Paula Krueger
- 83- Lance and Cindy Frohling
- 83- Rod and Arliss Kluess
- 83- Larry and Peggy Birchem
- 85- Jesse and Krissi Zak
- 86- Travis and JJ Johnson
- 86- Jon and Mandilyn Fliehs
- 92- Sheldon and Tara Gilchrist
- 92- Bob and Mavis Rossow
- 97- Bob and Judy Sundling

Women's Closest to Pin #4: Tami Zimney

Longest Putt #9: Brad Krueger

Men's Closest to Pin #8: Doug Jorgensen



**Putting Contest
Winner**

Brad Larson
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Championship Flight Winner
Lisa Shriver and Steve Millard**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



**First Flight Winner
Kara and Mark Herman**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Second Flight Winner
Deidra Kolb and Kyle Spencer**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Thank You

Groton Care and Rehab would like to sincerely thank the community for your unending support!

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DIETARY OPENINGS

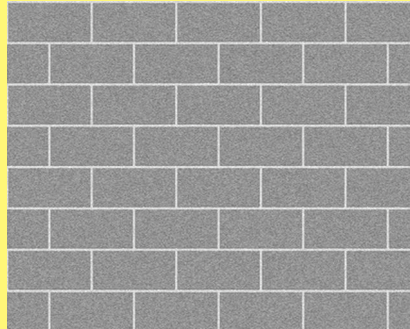
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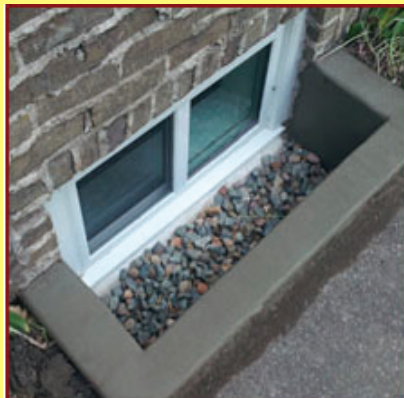
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Today in Weather History

1891 - Sixteen horses were killed by hail, and many more have to be put to death due to injuries from a hailstorm at Rapid City, SD. (The Weather Channel)

1900 - A spectacular three day fire began when a bolt of lightning struck a refinery in Bayonne NJ. (David Ludlum)

1916 - A hurricane produced 82 mph winds, an 11.6 foot tide, and a barometric pressure of 28.92 inches at Mobile, AL. (David Ludlum)

1937 - The temperature at Medicine Lake, MT, soared to 117 degrees to establish a state record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1937 - Midale and Yellow Grass in Saskatchewan hit 113 degrees to establish an all-time record high for Canada that same day. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - The morning low at Death Valley CA was 103 degrees, and the high that afternoon was 120 degrees. (The Weather Channel)








1987 - Severe thunderstorms raked south central Kansas for the second morning in a row. Thunderstorm winds again gusted to 80 mph at Clearwater, and in the Wichita area reached 100 mph. Twenty-five persons were injured at a trailer park at El Dorado Lake. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes in Montana and three in North Dakota. Baseball size hail was reported at Shonkin, MT, and wind gusts to 85 mph were reported south of Fordville, ND. Twenty cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Fargo ND with a reading of 106 degrees. Muskegon, MI, equalled their July record with a high of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Moisture from what once was Tropical Storm Allison triggered thunderstorms over the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, which deluged Wilmington, DE, with a record 6.83 inches of rain in 24 hours, including 6.37 inches in just six hours. Up to ten inches of rain was reported at Claymont, northeast of Wilmington. July 1989 was thus the wettest month in seventy years for Wilmington, with a total of 12.63 inches of rain. Alamosa CO reported an all-time record high of 94 degrees, and Pierre, SD, hit 113 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

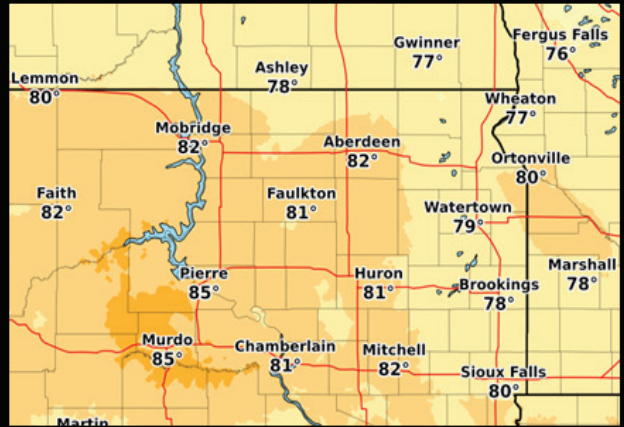
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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Chance T-storms	Mostly Clear	Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Chance T-storms
High: 82 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 84 °F	Low: 68 °F	High: 94 °F	Low: 71 °F	High: 91 °F

Pleasant Temperatures Today

South Dakota Weather History
 The COOP 4 miles northwest of Gann Valley measured a temp of 120° on July 5, 1936, setting a state record. A COOP 17 miles WSW of Fort Pierre tied the record on July 15, 2006.



COOPERATIVE OBSERVERS' METEOROLOGICAL RECORD:

Month of July, 1936 Station, Gann Valley, Butte County, South Dakota
 State, South Dakota Latitude, 44° 21' Longitude, 79° 51' Time used on this form, General

TEMPERATURE										PRECIPITATION		WIND		CLOUDS		HOURS OF SUNSHINE		CHARACTER OF WEATHER		TEMPERATURE				
DATE	Max. min.	Range	Wind dir. and force	Time of day	Amount	Direction	Time of day	Amount	Direction	Time of day	Amount	Direction	Time of day	Amount	Direction	Time of day	Amount	Direction	Time of day	Amount	Direction	Time of day	Amount	
1	88-57																							
2	86-54																							
3	83-61																							
4	80-65																							
5	73-76																							
6	73-76																							
7	76-72																							
8	76-72																							
9	76-72																							
10	76-72																							

MEAN MAXIMUM: 106.4
 MEAN MINIMUM: 68.4
 MEAN: 87.4
 MAXIMUM: 120.0
 MINIMUM: 56.0
 GREATEST DAILY RANGE: 50
 PRECIPITATION: Total 1.26 inches, Greatest in 24 hours 0.82 inches
 SNOW: Total snowfall 0 inches
 On ground 15th: inches
 As end of month: inches

GANN VALLEY SD 7/36

Gann Valley COOP for July, 1936

Pleasant temperatures are expected today with highs in the upper 70s, to the mid-80s.

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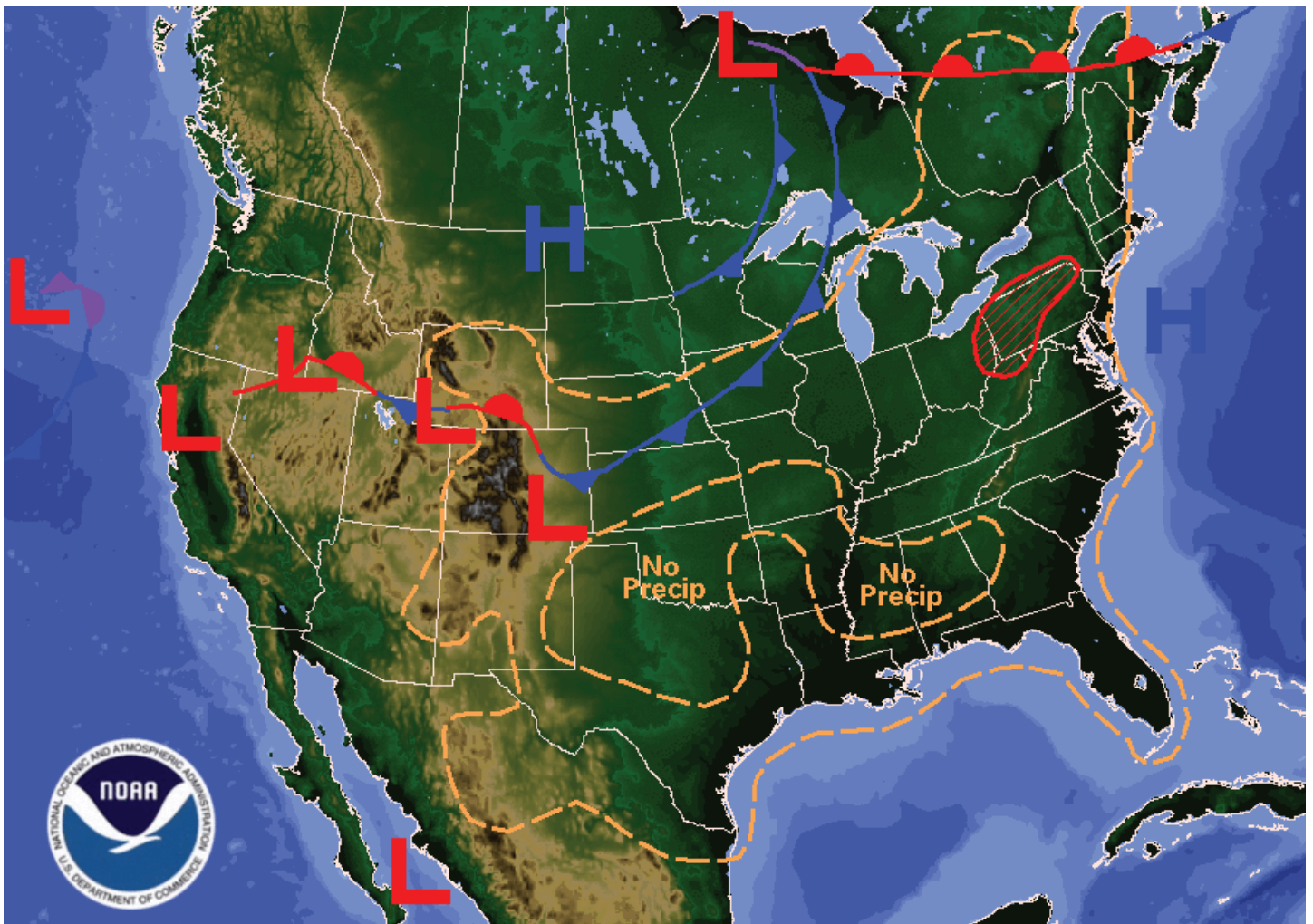
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 86.2 F at 4:17 PM
Low Outside Temp: 63.0 F at 4:32 AM
High Gust: 44.0 Mph at 4:16 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 108° in 1936
Record Low: 35° in 1915
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in July: 0.43
Precip to date in July: 1.50
Average Precip to date: 11.28
Precip Year to Date: 7.32
Sunset Tonight: 9:25 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:52 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Jul 05, 2018, issued 4:48 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Hammond with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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



A QUESTION WITH NO ANSWER

A radio talk show host in California once asked his listeners a troubling question. "What," he asked, "would you do with the rest of today if you knew it was the last day you had to live?"

Immediately they responded. "I would go to an organ donor bank as soon as possible and donate all of my organs to help others who were dying," said the first caller.

The second one said, "I'd cram as many daring and exciting things as possible in my remaining few hours. I would take every risk since it wouldn't matter if I lived or died. I'd have fun."

"I'd call my wife and children and tell them that I loved them very much and ask them if they needed anything from me before I died," said the third caller.

The fourth caller said, "I'd begin reading my Bible and make sure my heart was right with God before I meet Him. I want everything to be O.K. before we meet."

Each of us has a date with death. We do not know the day or the hour of that final day when our heart will stop beating. The Psalmist reminded us of this fact when he wrote, "How long must your servant wait?" However, no date or hour was revealed. He received no answer.

Whether we have one day or many days is known only to God. He alone has that number in His Book of Life and He is responsible for the number of days we will live.

But each of us is responsible for making certain that our hearts are right with God before that date arrives. In between "now and then" we are to live each day for Him.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to recognize the uncertainties of life and the certainty of death and make all things right. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 119:84a How long must your servant wait?

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2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- 11/18/2017-3/31/2018 Groton Lion's Club Wheel of Meat- Saturday Nights 7pm at the Groton Legion (Fall/Winter Months)
- 1/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 4/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 5/4/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 5/27/2019 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

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News from the Associated Press

Rapid City man sentenced for methamphetamine distribution

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has been sentenced to 17 1/2 years in federal prison for conspiring to distribute meth in western South Dakota.

The South Dakota U.S. attorney's office says 34-year-old Daniel Richards was convicted of conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance. U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Viken also sentenced Richards to 5 years of supervised release.

Authorities say that starting in May 2017 Richards conspired with other people to distribute between 5 and 15 kilograms of meth in the western part of the state. Others involved in the case are awaiting trial.

Minnehaha Sheriff's Office seeking woman who escaped custody

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office says a woman in custody on several drug possession warrants has escaped while at a hospital.

The sheriff's office said Thursday that Leighlonnie Goodsell was last seen going westbound from Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls. Officials say they don't believe there's any danger to the public.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

10-15-19-22-27

(ten, fifteen, nineteen, twenty-two, twenty-seven)

Estimated jackpot: \$99,000

Lotto America

04-12-16-22-44, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 4

(four, twelve, sixteen, twenty-two, forty-four; Star Ball: three; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.44 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$283 million

Powerball

04-07-15-41-44, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(four, seven, fifteen, forty-one, forty-four; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$70 million

Noem, Sutton support tax cuts after online sales tax ruling

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's two top candidates for governor are talking tax cuts rather than new spending after a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the state's favor that could yield millions of dollars in online sales taxes.

Republican Kristi Noem's campaign said in a statement that she backs a current law that requires a 2016 sales tax hike for teacher pay be scaled back if the state collects from out-of-state online retailers. Under the law, the state's 4.5 percent rate is to be rolled back by one-tenth of a percent for every additional \$20 million the state reaps, with a floor of 4 percent.

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"While some significant questions remain regarding the decision's implications, the state Legislature has been clear in its intention: as revenue comes in, the half-cent increase in state sales tax should incrementally disappear," Noem campaign manager Justin Brasell said. "Kristi plans to uphold that commitment."

But Democratic candidate Billie Sutton said in a statement that he would explore tax breaks such as lowering food or property taxes. Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba has also said he wants to use the money to reduce food sales taxes.

"With the revenues resulting from the online sales tax case, my top priority is tax relief," Sutton said, adding that if elected he would work with lawmakers to reprioritize existing state revenues to invest in education and workforce development.

Sutton said changing the existing rollback in law is "in the hands of the Legislature."

It was a South Dakota case that led to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June to overturn two decades-old high court decisions that have made it tougher for states to collect sales taxes for certain purchases online, a situation they said costs them revenues each year.

South Dakota has estimated it loses about \$50 million annually to e-commerce.

5 people dead, 1 seriously injured in South Dakota car crash

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating after five people died in a two-vehicle crash in South Dakota.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol says a 12-year-old girl was also seriously injured in the crash that occurred around 1:20 a.m. Wednesday near Yankton, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) southeast of Sioux Falls.

A Yankton police officer was trying to stop an Acura Integra on Highway 50 when the car's headlights shut off and it crossed into oncoming lanes, colliding with a Nissan Sentra.

The 27-year-old man driving the Acura and the car's passenger died at the scene. Three people in the Nissan also died: a 40-year-old woman, a 43-year-old man and a 10-year-old girl. A 12-year-old female passenger was airlifted to a Sioux Falls hospital for life-threatening injuries.

Officials haven't released their names, pending family notifications.

Rescuers race to drain water inside Thai cave before rains

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA, Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — With more rain coming, Thai rescuers are racing to pump out water from a flooded cave before they can extract 12 boys and their soccer coach with minimum risk, officials said Thursday.

A firefighter who has been working on draining the water said parts of a passage leading to the chamber where the group was found Monday was still flooded to its ceiling, making diving the only way out.

"What we worry most is the weather," Chiang Rai provincial Gov. Narongsak Osatanakorn told reporters. "We can't risk having the flood back into the cave."

The boys, aged 11-16, and their 25-year-old coach went exploring in the Tham Luang Nang Non cave in the northern province after a soccer game June 23. Monsoon flooding cut off their escape and prevented rescuers from finding them for 10 days. The boys, although skinny, have been described as in good health. Authorities have said the soccer players are being looked after by Thai navy SEALs, including medics, staying with them inside the cave.

Narongsak said he asked the SEALs in charge of extraction plans to estimate what sort of a risk would be involved to take them out and "what kind of readiness we can have today and decide if we can take that chance." He said the 13 may not be extracted at the same time, depending on their condition. They've practiced wearing diving masks and breathing, in preparation for the possibility they may have to dive.

"This morning, I have asked for 13 sets of (diving) equipment to be prepared and checked the equipment lists and place them inside (the cave) in case we have to bring them out in this condition with less than 100 percent readiness," he said.

Officials prefer to get the boys out as soon as possible because heavy rain expected by Saturday almost

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surely will raise water levels again in the cave, making passage in some areas even more difficult, if not impossible.

They are hoping that an upgraded draining effort can lower the water in an area where it is still at or near the ceiling. The idea is to get some headroom so the boys would not be reliant on scuba apparatus for a long stretch and could keep their heads above water.

The navy has released videos of the boys, showing them smiling and interacting with the personnel sent into the cave to bring supplies, treat their injuries and keep them company.

One Thai navy SEAL team member who spent time with the boys said the young soccer players "were always asking about the World Cup." "I told them that all the big teams had gone home," the navy SEAL member said.

Seeing the boys has boosted the mood of their family members, and officials are working to install an internet cable to the cave so that parents can talk to their children.

Kian Kamluang, whose 16-year-old son, Pornchai, is in the cave, said she had thought there was a 50 percent chance that her son would be found.

"It's like he has been given a new life," she said, adding that she'll never let her son go into a cave or near water again.

Cave rescue experts have said it could be safest to simply supply the boys where they are, and wait for the flooding to subside. That could take months, however, given that Thailand's rainy season typically lasts through October.

Experienced divers are wary of taking out the boys through the dark and dangerous waters still in the cave, especially since they are untrained.

"We are talking kilometers of transport under the water with zero visibility," said Claus Rasmusen, a certified cave diving instructor based in Thailand who has been helping Thai SEAL team with logistics. "It's difficult."

He said it was awkward, but possible, to teach them minimal skills.

"Nobody will teach anyone a full cave course, but trying to get them comfortable with masks, with the breathing, (is) completely different," he said. "Creating an environment that can make them safely get away, that's feasible."

2nd Novichok poisoning likely not deliberate, police say

By **MATT DUNHAM** and **GREGORY KATZ**, Associated Press

AMESBURY, England (AP) — British officials investigating a second case of poisoning with the nerve agent Novichok in southwestern England said Thursday they suspect the victims were not directly targeted but sickened as a consequence of the previous attack.

Police announced late Wednesday that specialists have determined that a couple in their 40s were poisoned by the same lethal toxin — developed by the Soviet Union — that almost killed Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in March. The new victims are both critically ill in the same hospital that treated the Skripals.

"The working assumption would be that these are victims of either the consequence of the previous attack, or something else, but not that they were directly targeted," security minister Ben Wallace told the BBC.

"I think what we said at the time was that this was a brazen and reckless attack in the heart of a very peaceful part of the United Kingdom, and that is part of the anger I feel about the Russian state ... that they chose to use clearly a very, very toxic, highly dangerous weapon."

The unexplained poisoning of two British citizens with no immediately apparent link to Russia has raised public health concerns in the Salisbury area, where a massive decontamination effort took place after the Skripals were found to have been poisoned with Novichok.

Prime Minister Theresa May has blamed the Russian state for the attack on the Skripals — an assertion the Kremlin denies. Wallace said the Russian government could "put this wrong right" by providing details about the Skripal poisoning. He called on Moscow to provide information and "tell us what happened. What they did."

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"I'm waiting for the phone call from the Russian state," he said. "The offer is there. They are the ones who could fill in all the clues to keep people safe."

The new case has surfaced at a sensitive time as England's soccer team is advancing in the World Cup, a global competition staged this year in Russia. It also comes days before a NATO summit expected to focus in part on worsening relations between Russia and the West.

The Kremlin's spokesman says Russia is concerned but has had nothing to do with either case.

"Russia has categorically denied and continues to categorically deny the possibility of any kind of involvement to what was happening there," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Thursday.

Peskov noted Britain has rejected Russia's offer for a joint probe, adding that "the British side has not presented any evidence of Russia's involvement in this, besides unfounded accusations."

Home Secretary Sajid Javid is chairing a meeting of the British government's COBRA emergency committee on Thursday morning. He will brief the House of Commons on the matter afterward.

Local police declared the case a "major incident" Wednesday, four days after the couple — identified by friends as 44-year-old Dawn Sturgess and 45-year-old Charlie Rowley — were found collapsed at a residential building in Amesbury, eight miles (13 kilometers) from Salisbury, where the Skripals were poisoned.

Britain's senior counter-terrorism police official Neil Basu said police do not know whether the nerve agent came from the same batch that left the Skripals fighting for their lives.

"The possibility that these two investigations might be linked is clearly a line of inquiry for us," he said late Wednesday night.

Initially, the investigation was led by local police, but Basu said counterterrorism detectives were taking charge after the substance was identified as Novichok. He said 100 officers had been assigned to the case.

Police said officers were initially called Saturday morning about a collapsed woman, then were summoned back in the evening after a man fell ill at the same property. Police at first thought the two had taken a contaminated batch of heroin or crack.

Police cordoned off a home in Amesbury, believed to be Rowley's, and other places the pair visited, including a church, a pharmacy and a park in Salisbury, near where the Skripals were found.

The Skripals' illness initially baffled doctors after they were found unconscious on a park bench in Salisbury. Scientists at the Porton Down defense laboratory concluded they had been poisoned with Novichok, a type of nerve agent developed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It was believed to have been on the front door of Sergei Skripal's home.

Andrea Sella, professor of inorganic chemistry at University College London, said Novichok nerve agents "are designed to be quite persistent — they hang around in the environment, neither evaporating or decomposing quickly.

"That means that if a container or a surface was contaminated with this material it would remain a danger for a long time and it will be vital to trace the movements of this couple to identify where they might have come into contact with the source," he said. "So while the public at large are at very low risk from this material, until the source is found there is a remote chance that someone else might come into contact with it."

After spending weeks in critical condition, the Skripals slowly got better and were released from the hospital and taken to an undisclosed location for their protection. Doctors say they don't know the long-term prognosis.

Katz reported from London. Danica Kirka and Jill Lawless in London contributed to this story.

This story has been corrected to give the first name of the police official as Neil rather than Neal.

Trapped in Thai cave, youngsters must grapple with stress

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and GRANT PECK, Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — At a gilded temple in Thailand's mountainous north, Ekapol Chanthawong honed a skill that will serve him well as he sits trapped underground in a dark cave: meditation.

Before the 25-year-old was a coach to the young boys on the Wild Boars soccer team — 12 of whom are trapped alongside him — he spent a decade as a saffron-robed Buddhist monk. He still stays at the temple from time to time and will meditate with the monks there each day.

"He could meditate up to an hour," said his aunt, Tham Chanthawong. "It has definitely helped him and probably helps the boys to stay calm."

More than 288 hours have passed since Ekapol and the boys got trapped in Tham Luang Nang Non cave by monsoon floodwaters on June 23 after they went exploring. The group was discovered July 2 after 10 days totally cut off from the outside world, and while they are for the most physically healthy, experts say the ordeal has likely taken a mental toll that could worsen the longer the situation lasts.

"It's very likely that while the boys were in the cave but not yet discovered by rescuers that they experienced various degrees of anxiety, fear, confusion, vulnerability and dependency, and perhaps hopelessness," said Paul Auerbach, of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Stanford University's medical school.

Videos taken inside the cave show the boys, aged 11-16, and their coach interacting with Thai navy SEAL divers, who have been sent in to supply them, provide medical care and to keep them company. Though they are visibly skinny and weak, the boys and their coach appear to be in good spirits, smiling for the camera as the SEALs crack jokes.

Still the group is unable to leave and there is no timeline for their extraction. The only way out of the cave at this time would be for the boys to dive through the same complicated route of narrow passageways that their rescuers entered, something that is extremely dangerous even for expert divers let alone children with no such experience. Yet it is something being considered with storms on the way that could worsen the floods.

Cave rescue experts have said it could be safest to simply supply the boys where they are for now, and wait for the water to go down either naturally or by pumping. That could take months, however, given that Thailand's rainy season typically lasts through October.

"Being discovered was a moment of elation," Auerbach said, "but that is now followed by the reality that a difficult technical rescue might be necessary, which carries with it disappointment for the boys and a new set of fears."

Experts say the Wild Boars come into their situation with some advantages, including their youth, their group identity and, yes, their coach's experience with mediation.

"Adolescents are especially social creatures, and having friends with them as well as their coach would be a tremendous help," said David Spiegel, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University's medical school.

The boys and their coach are known to be a tight-knit group who go on adventures, including swimming in waterfalls, cycling trips through the mountains, river rafting and cave exploring.

Experts say Ekapol's meditation — a mainstay of the Buddhist faith — likely served the group well.

"I'd speculate it could be helpful — even if it functioned solely as a way for the children to feel like their coach was doing something to help them," said Michael Poulin, a professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Buffalo. "Feeling loved and cared for is paramount."

Spiegel agreed that meditation could help those trapped manage their mental state, "allowing their fearful and negative thoughts to flow through them like a storm passing, rather than fighting their fear."

Aisha Wiboonrungrueng, whose 11-year-old son Chanin is trapped in the cave, has no doubt that Ekapol's calm personality has influenced the boys' state of mind.

"Look at how calm they were sitting there waiting. No one was crying or anything. It was astonishing," she said, referring a video that captured the moment the boys were found.

Omar Reygadas, who spent 69 days trapped underground in Chile in 2010 with 32 other miners, said

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faith and prayer, as well as humor were very important to the miners at times when they doubted they would get out.

"They shouldn't be ashamed to be scared," he said of the boys. "Because we were scared, too. Our tears also ran. Even as adult men, we cried."

If safety concerns force the boys to stay in the cave for an extended period, it will be important to their mental health for there to be organization and daily routines, said John Fairbank, a psychiatry professor and co-director of the UCLA-Duke University National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

He said that could include "daily hygiene routines, regular meal times, age-appropriate cognitive activities, regular physical exercise to the extent feasible in limited space, religious/spiritual practices, and specific times for daily briefings on their situation and for communicating with their families."

All the experts agreed that the group will continue to face challenges even after they make it out of the cave.

Thailand's Department of Mental Health said hospitals are making preparations to care for the boys' and will monitor them until their mental health is fully regained. They are also working with the families to prepare for how to interact with the boys once they get out, such as not digging for details about what they endured.

"Their re-entry into the world outside the cave will predictably be one of massive attention from family, friends and the media," Auerbach said, noting it could be overwhelming. "The world soon loses interest and moves on to the next story, so it is extremely important that these survivors not be forgotten and be closely monitored so that they can receive the best possible support."

China rejects 'blackmail' on eve of US tariff hike

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — China rejected "threats and blackmail" ahead of a threatened U.S. tariff hike, striking a defiant stance Thursday in a dispute companies worry could flare into a full-blown trade war and chill the global economy.

A government spokesman said Beijing will defend itself if U.S. President Donald Trump goes ahead Friday with plans to raise duties on \$34 billion of Chinese goods in the escalating conflict over technology policy.

The dispute reflects foreign frustration with China's state-led industrial development strategy, which Washington, Europe, Japan and other trading partners say hurt their companies and violate its market-opening commitments. Americans worry that rising Chinese technological prowess might erode U.S. industrial leadership and prosperity.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's government has issued a list of U.S. goods for possible retaliation, but the Commerce Ministry said it will wait to see what Washington does.

"China will not bow in the face of threats and blackmail, nor will it be shaken in its resolve to defend global free trade," said ministry spokesman Gao Feng at a news conference.

"China will never fire the first shot," Gao said. "However, if the United States adopts taxation measures, China will be forced to fight back to defend the core interests of the nation and the interests of the people."

Friday's tariff hikes are the first stage in threatened U.S. increases on up to \$450 billion of imports from China over complaints Beijing steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over technology.

Xi's government has expressed confidence China can hold out against U.S. pressure, but companies and investors are uneasy.

Trade worries are adding to anxiety over cooling economic growth and tighter lending controls that have hit real estate and other industries. The main Chinese stock market index has tumbled 12 percent over the past month.

Chinese exporters of tools, lighting and appliances say U.S. orders have shrunk as customers wait to see what will happen to prices.

Ningbo Top East Technology Co., which makes soldering irons in Ningbo, south of Shanghai, used to export 30 percent of its output to the United States, according to its general manager, Tong Feibing. He

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said American orders have fallen 30 to 50 percent compared with a year ago.

The company wants customers to split the cost of the tariff hike, but few are willing, said Tong.

"There is a chance the company will lose money and might go bankrupt," said Tong. "I will do whatever I can, including layoffs."

The ruling Communist Party has insisted on making changes at its own pace while sticking to a state-led industrial strategy seen as the path to prosperity and global influence. Officials in Beijing reject accusations of theft and say foreign companies have no obligation to hand over technology. But rules on auto manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and other industries require companies to operate through state-owned Chinese partners and share know-how with potential competitors or teach them how to develop their own.

Beijing has announced changes this year including easing limits on foreign ownership in insurance and some other fields. But none directly addresses the complaints that are fueling its conflict with Washington.

The U.S. also has irked some of its closest allies by hiking import duties on steel, aluminum and autos from Europe, Japan, Canada and Mexico.

"The global trade conflict is at risk of a serious escalation," said Adam Slater of Oxford Economics in a report.

Tariffs imposed so far by all sides affect about \$60 billion of goods, or 0.3 percent of world trade, according to Slater. He said that would rise to a full 4 percent of the global total if Washington, Beijing and other governments follow through on tariff threats.

Forecasters say a full-blown conflict could knock up to 0.5 percent off global economic growth through 2020 if Washington and Beijing impose tariff hikes on \$250 billion of each other's goods.

AP researcher Yu Bing in Beijing contributed.

Montana Sen. Tester 'welcomes' Trump by touting passed bills

By MATT VOLZ, Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — U.S. Sen. Jon Tester gave President Donald Trump a tongue-in-cheek welcome to Montana Thursday by taking out a full-page ad in more than a dozen newspapers thanking him for signing 16 bills the Democrat sponsored or co-sponsored.

Trump was scheduled to hold a rally in Great Falls on Thursday to campaign for Tester's Republican challenger, State Auditor Matt Rosendale. The president has made the Montana Senate race a priority after he blamed Tester for derailing the nomination of his first Veterans Affairs nominee, White House physician Ronny Jackson.

Tester's ad, which ran in the Great Falls Tribune and in newspapers across rural northern and eastern Montana, sought to undermine the president's efforts to boost Rosendale by pointing out that he and the president agree on several issues.

"Welcome to Montana, and thank you President Trump for supporting Jon's legislation to help veterans and first responders, hold the VA accountable, and get rid of waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government," the ad read.

The Tester campaign also planned a statewide radio ad campaign to run through the weekend touting his bills that Trump has signed.

Tester is one of 10 Senate Democrats running for re-election in states that Trump won in the 2016 election. Trump singled out Tester in April, saying the farmer from Big Sandy "will have a big price to pay" for releasing allegations against VA nominee Jackson that included drunkenness, overprescribing medication and fostering a hostile work environment. Jackson denied the claims, but withdrew his nomination.

Montana is the latest stop on Trump's midterm campaign tour, designed to boost Republicans as well as advocate for his first 18 months in office. He recently made a similar trip to North Dakota and is expected to keep traveling throughout the summer.

In Great Falls, Trump plans to promote his record on the economy and national security, said a person familiar with the president's plans, adding that Trump would stress his recent moves on immigration and

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foreign policy as well as the low unemployment rate. The person was not authorized to discuss the plans publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The president is also expected to paint Tester as an "obstructionist" and embrace Rosendale as a better fit for the state that he won by 20 points.

The visit comes less than two weeks after his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., campaigned for Rosendale in Billings.

Rosendale, who is seeking to deny Tester a third term and give Montana an all-Republican congressional delegation, said Trump has focused on the race because of Tester's "liberal obstruction."

Montana, a purple state that elects both Republicans and Democrats to statewide offices, strongly supported Trump in the 2016 election, leading both candidates to compete for Trump supporters. Rosendale said he'll back Trump's agenda, while Tester said he'll support the president when it's in the state's interests and oppose him when it's not.

Tester planned to spend Thursday listening to farmers' and business owners' concerns about Trump's import tariffs and was expected to be driving back to his farm when the president spoke, spokeswoman Marnee Banks said.

Associated Press writer Catherine Lucey in Washington contributed to this report.

Americans celebrate July 4 with fireworks, parades, salutes

NEW YORK (AP) — With backyard barbecues and fireworks, Americans celebrated Independence Day by participating in time-honored traditions that expressed pride in their country's 242nd birthday.

But this quintessential American holiday was being marked with a sense of a United States divided for some, evidenced by competing televised events in the nation's capital.

From New York to California, July Fourth festivities ranged from the lively and to the lighthearted, with Macy's July Fourth fireworks and Nathan's Famous hot dog eating contest.

The day's events also were stately and traditional, with parades lining streets across the country and the world's oldest commissioned warship firing a 21-gun salute to mark the 242 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

For some Western states, however, the holiday was a bit more muted as high wildfire danger forced communities to cancel fireworks displays.

Here are some highlights of Wednesday's festivities:

OLDEST WARSHIP

The USS Constitution has sailed in Boston Harbor and fired its guns again to mark Independence Day.

The world's oldest commissioned warship still afloat left its berth at the Charlestown Navy Yard on Wednesday morning. It glided through the harbor to mark 242 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The ship, nicknamed Old Ironsides, traveled to Fort Independence on Castle Island to fire a 21-gun salute. The ship's commander saluted the crowds gathered there.

A Navy sailor on board recited the Declaration of Independence during the cruise.

A HISTORIC PARADE

Crowds lined the streets in a Rhode Island town to see what's billed as the nation's oldest continuous Fourth of July celebration. Begun in 1785, the Bristol parade typically attracts about 100,000 people to the seaside town.

This year's was a scorcher: Temperatures hovered near 90 degrees when the parade began late Wednesday morning, and some marchers were treated for heat exhaustion and taken off the route.

DUELING CELEBRATIONS

The country's longest-running live national July Fourth television tradition is PBS' broadcast of music and fireworks from the U.S. Capitol's West Lawn. But it's facing new counterprogramming this year from the White House, which is hosting its own concert and view of the National Park Service's fireworks show.

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PBS' "A Capitol Fourth" has the bigger stars, including The Beach Boys, Jimmy Buffett, Pentatonix, Chita Rivera, Luke Combs and The Temptations. It will be hosted by John Stamos.

The entertainers on the 90-minute White House event airing on the Hallmark Channel include singer-songwriter Sara Evans, pianist Lola Astanova and two former "American Idol" finalists. Both shows will include the fireworks display from the National Park Service.

First lady Melania Trump said the White House show would allow Americans to "tune in from their homes and be part of the festivities." PBS declined to comment.

LIGHTING UP THE NIGHT SKIES

In New York, the Macy's fireworks show over the East River promises 25 minutes of sparkle and ahhh plus the West Point Band and entertainers including Kelly Clarkson, Ricky Martin and Keith Urban on NBC's broadcast.

But some places in the American West have canceled their planned July Fourth fireworks because of high wildfire danger, and others are doing drone light displays instead of pyrotechnics.

In Colorado, the wildfire danger forced some communities to cancel their fireworks. However, other shows will still go as planned in Denver, Colorado Springs and Fort Collins.

The small mountain town of Silverton, in southwestern Colorado, called off the fireworks part of its annual Independence Day party, but the rest of Wednesday's celebration is still on, including live music a water fight with firefighters. Aspen will have a fire-proof drone light display above town.

NEW AMERICANS, DIVIDED AMERICA

This was the first Fourth of July that many people were able to call themselves U.S. citizens after participating in naturalization ceremonies across the country.

In New Hampshire, more than 100 people from 48 countries became U.S. citizens during a ceremony at the Strawberry Banke museum in Portsmouth as part of the museum's annual American Celebration. A ceremony also was held aboard the USS New Jersey, where dozens of people from countries including Vietnam and Bangladesh were sworn in.

The new citizens pledged allegiance to a country where some people lament that the ability to debate respectfully the toughest issues of the day seems hopelessly lost.

Several people were arrested Wednesday after hanging a banner from the Statue of Liberty's pedestal that called for abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Later, a protester climbed the statue's base, forcing the evacuation of Liberty Island, and stayed there for hours before police removed her.

LGBTQ PARADE PARTICIPANTS

Utah LGBTQ groups marched for the first time in a prominent July Fourth festival in the conservative city of Provo after years of organizers blocking them from participating.

The groups were met by cheers and rainbow flags as they marched Wednesday morning in the America's Freedom Festival parade.

Participants included a center for LGBTQ youth and an organization that works to bridge divides between the LGBTQ community and the Mormon church.

The groups' parade application was initially denied this year by festival organizers who said participants cannot focus on political or social issues but should instead focus on patriotism.

County officials threatened to pull \$100,000 in taxpayer money from the privately organized event until festival organizers struck a deal allowing the groups to participate.

HOT DOG EATING HISTORY

Defending champions Joey "Jaws" Chestnut and Miki Sudo held on to their titles at the Nathan's Famous July Fourth hot dog eating contest. They each downed dozens of wieners and buns in front of thousands of spectators at the annual seaside affair at New York's Coney Island.

Chestnut surpassed his previous record by two hot dogs, gobbling down 74 franks and buns in 10 minutes. He won the Mustard Belt and his 11th title.

Sudo held on to her title as the top women's competitor, chomping 37 franks and buns to take home the top prize for the fifth consecutive year.

FIREWORKS ACCIDENTS

A large tree branch fell on spectators during a fireworks display in western Illinois late Tuesday, killing two men and injuring five other people. Rock Island County sheriff's officials said dozens of people were sitting near the tree at the time.

In Maryland, a man was hospitalized with "catastrophic injuries" to his hands after setting off fireworks at a large outdoor party where several attendees took illegal fireworks, investigators said.

Trump praises military for keeping US 'safe, strong, proud'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday praised the U.S. military for keeping America "safe, strong, proud, mighty and free" and used the Independence Day holiday to thank them for being willing to put their lives on the line in defense of the nation.

"Two hundred and 42 years ago on July 4, 1776, America's founders adopted the Declaration of independence and changed the course of human history," said Trump, addressing hundreds of military families attending a White House picnic from a balcony overlooking the South Lawn of the White House.

"But our freedom exists only because there are brave Americans willing to give their lives, to defend it and defend our great country," added Trump, who was accompanied by his wife, Melania. "America's liberty has been earned through the blood, sweat and sacrifice of American patriots."

Trump and the first lady later returned to the balcony toward the end of a nationally televised concert from the South Lawn and stayed for the annual fireworks show on the National Mall. Trump pumped both fists several times at the end of the show before he went back inside the White House.

Trump was not expected on Wednesday to interview candidates for the Supreme Court, taking a holiday respite from the intense process. He has spoken with seven candidates, according to the White House, and will announce his choice for a successor to retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy on Monday.

Before greeting guests on the lawn during the picnic, Trump praised service members and their families as "truly unbelievable people."

"Thank you for keeping America safe, strong, proud, mighty and free," he said.

The White House invited some 1,500 military families to the picnic, according to the first lady's office, with 5,500 more invited for the fireworks. Several Cabinet secretaries attended the picnic, including embattled Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Entertainers appearing at the 90-minute concert that was televised by the Hallmark Channel included singer-songwriter Sara Evans, pianist Lola Astanova and former "American Idol" finalists Jonny Brenns and Jax.

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

Protester's climb shuts down Statue of Liberty on July 4

By JENNIFER PELTZ and JAKE PEARSON, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A protest against U.S. immigration policy forced the evacuation of the Statue of Liberty on the Fourth of July, with a group unfurling a banner from the pedestal and a woman holding police at bay for hours after she climbed the base and sat by the statue's robes.

The woman and at least a half-dozen demonstrators who displayed the banner were arrested, while the climb forced thousands of visitors to leave the iconic American symbol on the nation's birthday.

About 100 feet (30 meters) aboveground, the woman engaged in a four-hour standoff with police before two officers climbed up to the base and went over to her. With the dramatic scene unfolding on live television, she and the officers edged carefully around the statue toward a ladder, and she climbed down about 25 feet (8 meters) to the monument's observation point and was taken into custody.

The woman, Therese Okoumou, told police she was protesting the separation of immigrant children from parents who cross the U.S.-Mexico border illegally, according to a federal official who was briefed on what

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happened but wasn't authorized to discuss it and spoke on the condition of anonymity. A message left at a possible phone number for Okoumou wasn't immediately returned.

The climber was among about 40 demonstrators who earlier unfurled a banner calling for abolishing the federal government's chief immigration enforcement agency, said Jay W. Walker, an organizer with Rise and Resist, which arranged the demonstration.

Walker said the other demonstrators had no idea the woman would make the ascent, which wasn't part of the planned protest.

"We don't know whether she had this planned before she ever got to Liberty Island or whether it was a spur-of-the-moment decision," Walker said.

Regardless, he said he felt the publicity would help the group's cause.

A spokesman for the National Park Service, which runs the monument, saw it differently.

"I feel really sorry for those visitors today" who had to leave or couldn't come, spokesman Jerry Willis said. "People have the right to speak out. I don't think they have the right to co-opt the Statue of Liberty to do it."

The climber ascended from the observation point, Willis said. Visitors were forced to leave Liberty Island hours before its normal 6:15 p.m. closing time, he said.

Earlier and farther below, at least six people were taken into custody after unfurling a banner that read "Abolish I.C.E.," referring to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, whose officers arrest and deport immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally, among other duties.

Willis said federal regulations prohibit hanging banners from the monument.

Rise and Resist opposes President Donald Trump's administration and advocates ending deportations and family separations at the border.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has said the president's immigration policy is a step forward for public safety.

Under Trump's zero-tolerance policy, the government has begun requiring border agents to arrest and prosecute anyone caught entering the country illegally. That resulted in more than 2,000 children being separated from their parents within six weeks this spring.

Under public pressure, Trump later halted his policy of taking children from their detained parents. A federal judge in California ordered the Trump administration late last month to reunite the more than 2,000 children with their parents in 30 days.

"Abolish ICE" has become a rallying cry at protests around the country and for some Democratic officeholders seeking to boost their progressive credentials. But Trump, a Republican, said on Twitter last week that abolishing ICE will "never happen!"

The Statue of Liberty has long been a welcoming symbol for immigrants and refugees coming to the U.S. It also has been a setting for protests and other actions that forced evacuations.

Last February, someone hung a banner reading "Refugees Welcome" from the observation deck. The sign was taken down about an hour after being discovered.

A year earlier, a West Virginia man was sentenced to time served after calling in a bomb threat that forced the evacuation of Liberty Island, sending 3,200 people on boats back to lower Manhattan and New Jersey.

In 2000, 12 people protesting the Navy's use of the Puerto Rican Island of Vieques for bombing exercises were arrested after a man climbed out on the spires of the statue's crown and attached flags and banners to it.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed from Los Angeles.

As Trump weighs options, Pence meets with court contenders

By CATHERINE LUCEY, KEN THOMAS and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Mike Pence has met with some of the contenders for the Supreme Court vacancy created by Justice Anthony Kennedy's retirement, The Associated Press has learned.

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The meetings took place in recent days, according to a person familiar with the search process. The person did not specify which candidates Pence met with and spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday to describe the private search process.

President Donald Trump has spoken with seven potential candidates and is set to announce his decision on Monday.

Trump has said he'll choose his nominee from a list of 25 candidates vetted by conservative groups. Top contenders include federal appeals judges Brett Kavanaugh, Raymond Kethledge, Amul Thapar and Amy Coney Barrett — all of whom spoke with Trump on Monday.

Trump has also spoken with Thomas Hardiman, who has served with Trump's sister on the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, according to a person familiar with the conversation who also was not authorized to publicly discuss it.

Another candidate considered a top contender is Joan Larsen, who serves on the federal appeals court in Cincinnati.

The president spoke by phone with Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah on Monday. He's the only lawmaker on Trump's list.

Trump's choice to replace Kennedy — a swing vote on the nine-member court — has the potential to remake the court for a generation as part of precedent-shattering decisions on abortion, health care, gay marriage and other issues. Recognizing the stakes, many Democrats have lined up in opposition to any Trump pick, and Republican lawmakers and activists are seeking to shape the president's decision.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., has told colleagues he may not vote for Kavanaugh if the judge is nominated, citing Kavanaugh's role during the Bush administration on cases involving executive privilege and the disclosure of documents to Congress, said a person familiar with Paul's conversations who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Some conservatives have pointed to Kethledge as a potential justice in the mold of Neil Gorsuch, Trump's first Supreme Court nominee last year. Both Kethledge and Gorsuch once served Kennedy as law clerks, as did Kavanaugh. Kethledge, a Michigan Law graduate, would add academic diversity to a court steeped in the Ivy League.

Since Trump said his short list includes at least two women, speculation has focused on Barrett, a former law clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia and a longtime Notre Dame Law School professor who serves on the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Conservative groups rallied around Barrett after her confirmation hearing last year featured questioning from Democrats over how her Roman Catholic faith would affect her decisions.

On Wednesday, Sen. Susan Collins, a moderate Republican from Maine, reiterated that she could not vote for a nominee with a "demonstrated hostility" to *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision that established a woman's right to an abortion.

"I think I've made it pretty clear if a nominee has demonstrated hostility to *Roe v. Wade* and has said that they're not going to abide by that long-standing precedent, that I could not support that nominee," Collins told reporters at a holiday parade in Bangor.

But Collins said she also wouldn't blindly vote to confirm someone she thinks is unworthy in other respects — even if he or she supports *Roe v. Wade*.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller in Washington and Marina Villeneuve in Portland, Maine, contributed to this report.

Trump pressed aides on Venezuela invasion, US official says

By JOSHUA GOODMAN, Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — As a meeting last August in the Oval Office to discuss sanctions on Venezuela was concluding, President Donald Trump turned to his top aides and asked an unsettling question: With a fast unraveling Venezuela threatening regional security, why can't the U.S. just simply invade the

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troubled country?

The suggestion stunned those present at the meeting, including U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and national security adviser H.R. McMaster, both of whom have since left the administration. This account of the previously undisclosed conversation comes from a senior administration official familiar with what was said.

In an exchange that lasted around five minutes, McMaster and others took turns explaining to Trump how military action could backfire and risk losing hard-won support among Latin American governments to punish President Nicolas Maduro for taking Venezuela down the path of dictatorship, according to the official. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the discussions.

But Trump pushed back. Although he gave no indication he was about to order up military plans, he pointed to what he considered past cases of successful gunboat diplomacy in the region, according to the official, like the invasions of Panama and Grenada in the 1980s.

The idea, despite his aides' best attempts to shoot it down, would nonetheless persist in the president's head.

The next day, Aug. 11, Trump alarmed friends and foes alike with talk of a "military option" to remove Maduro from power. The public remarks were initially dismissed in U.S. policy circles as the sort of martial bluster people have come to expect from the reality TV star turned commander in chief.

But shortly afterward, he raised the issue with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, according to the U.S. official. Two high-ranking Colombian officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid antagonizing Trump confirmed the report.

Then in September, on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly, Trump discussed it again, this time at greater length, in a private dinner with leaders from four Latin American allies that included Santos, the same three people said and Politico reported in February.

The U.S. official said Trump was specifically briefed not to raise the issue and told it wouldn't play well, but the first thing the president said at the dinner was, "My staff told me not to say this." Trump then went around asking each leader if they were sure they didn't want a military solution, according to the official, who added that each leader told Trump in clear terms they were sure.

Eventually, McMaster would pull aside the president and walk him through the dangers of an invasion, the official said.

Taken together, the behind-the-scenes talks, the extent and details of which have not been previously reported, highlight how Venezuela's political and economic crisis has received top attention under Trump in a way that was unimaginable in the Obama administration. But critics say it also underscores how his "America First" foreign policy at times can seem outright reckless, providing ammunition to America's adversaries.

The White House declined to comment on the private conversations. But a National Security Council spokesman reiterated that the U.S. will consider all options at its disposal to help restore Venezuela's democracy and bring stability. Under Trump's leadership, the U.S., Canada and European Union have levied sanctions on dozens of top Venezuelan officials, including Maduro himself, over allegations of corruption, drug trafficking and human rights abuses. The U.S. has also distributed more than \$30 million to help Venezuela's neighbors absorb an influx of more than 1 million migrants who have fled the country.

Trump's bellicose talk provided the unpopular leader with an immediate if short-lived boost as he was trying to escape blame for widespread food shortages and hyperinflation. Within days of the president's talk of a military option, Maduro filled the streets of Caracas with loyalists to condemn "Emperor" Trump's belligerence, ordered up nationwide military exercises and threatened with arrest opponents he said were plotting his overthrow with the U.S.

On Wednesday, Maduro cited the AP's article to reaffirm his long-standing claim that the U.S. has military designs on Venezuela and its vast oil reserves. At a military promotion ceremony in Caracas, he called on troops to remain vigilant, criticizing what he called the "supremacist and criminal vision of those who govern the U.S."

"A military intervention on the part of the U.S. empire will never be a solution to Venezuela's problems," he said.

Even some of the staunchest U.S. allies were begrudgingly forced to side with Maduro in condemning Trump's saber rattling. Santos, a big backer of U.S. attempts to isolate Maduro, said an invasion would have zero support in the region. The Mercosur trade bloc, which includes Brazil and Argentina, issued a statement saying "the only acceptable means of promoting democracy are dialogue and diplomacy" and repudiating "any option that implies the use of force."

But among Venezuela's beleaguered opposition movement, hostility to the idea of a military intervention has slowly eased.

A few weeks after Trump's public comments, Harvard economics professor Ricardo Hausmann, a former Venezuelan planning minister, wrote a syndicated column titled "D Day Venezuela," in which he called for a "coalition of the willing" made up of regional powers and the U.S. to step in and support militarily a government appointed by the opposition-led national assembly.

Mark Feierstein, who oversaw Latin America on the National Security Council during the Obama administration, said that strident U.S. action on Venezuela, however commendable, won't loosen Maduro's grip on power if it's not accompanied by pressure from the streets. However, he thinks Venezuelans have largely been demoralized after a crackdown on protests last year triggered dozens of deaths, and the threat of more repression has forced dozens of opposition leaders into exile.

"People inside and outside the administration know they can ignore plenty of what Trump says," Feierstein, who is now a senior adviser at the Albright Stonebridge Group, said of Trump's talk of military invasion of Venezuela. "The concern is that it raised expectations among Venezuelans, many of whom are waiting for an external actor to save them."

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

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Thai official says boys may be taken out of cave in stages

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA, Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — A Thai official overseeing the rescue operation of a soccer team trapped in a flooded cave said the 12 boys and their coach may not all be extracted at the same time depending on their health.

Chiang Rai provincial Gov. Narongsak Osatanakorn said Wednesday that "all 13 may not come out at the same time. If the condition is right and if that person is ready 100 percent, he can come out." He said authorities will evaluate their readiness each day and if there is any risk will not proceed.

The teammates and their coach were seen in latest video sitting with Thai navy SEALs in the dark cave, their skinny faces illuminated by a flashlight. The boys, many wrapped in foil warming blankets, take turns introducing themselves, pressing their hands together in a traditional Thai greeting and saying their names and that they are healthy.

Narongsak said that the boys have been practicing wearing diving masks and breathing, but he doesn't believe they have attempted any practice dives.

The boys, aged 11-16, and their 25-year-old coach disappeared after they went exploring in the Tham Luang Nang Non cave in northern Chiang Rai province after a soccer game June 23. The teammates, who were trapped inside when heavy rains flooded the cave, were found by rescue divers Monday night during a desperate search that drew assistance from experts around the globe.

Authorities said the boys, who had also been shown Tuesday in a video shot by the British diver who discovered them, were being looked after by seven members of the Thai navy SEALs, including medics, who were staying with them inside the cave. They were mostly in stable condition and have received high-protein drinks.

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In all of the videos, the boys appeared in good spirits. In the most recent video, a navy SEAL is shown treating minor cuts on the feet and legs of the boys with antibiotic ointment. Several of the boys are seen smiling as they interact with the navy SEAL, who cracks jokes.

Seeing the boys has boosted the mood of their family members, and officials are working to install an internet cable to the cave so that parents can talk to their children.

Kian Kamluang, whose 16-year-old son, Pornchai, is in the cave, said she had thought there was a 50 percent chance that her son would be found.

"It's like he has been given a new life," she said, adding that she'll never let her son go into a cave or near water again.

Those waiting for the boys to come out included a group of students who are friends with some of the boys trapped inside, who sang a song in front of the entrance to show their support.

Several religious figures have also shown up, the most popular being a famous Buddhist monk, Kruba Boonchum, who when he first visited the scene had predicted that the boys would be found this week.

He returned Wednesday to offer prayers for their safe rescue, and as measure of the respect in which he was held, was allowed access to the cave, which is generally off-limits to outsiders.

SEAL commander Rear Adm. Arpakorn Yookongkaew said that there was no rush to bring the group out of the cave, since they're safe where they are. The current flooding situation means the boys would have to dive, which rescue experts have said could be extremely dangerous.

While efforts to pump out floodwaters are continuing, some Thai officials have indicated that heavy rains forecast for this weekend could force them to decide the boys should swim and dive out using the same complicated route of narrow passageways through which their rescuers entered.

Authorities said they were still exploring other options, such as scouring the mountainside for other ways into the cave and finding faster ways to pump water from the cave.

Cave rescue experts have said it could be safest to simply supply the boys where they are for now, and wait for the water to go down. That could take months, however, given that Thailand's rainy season typically lasts through October.

Experienced divers are wary of taking out the boys through the dark and dangerous waters still in the cave, especially since they are untrained.

"We are talking kilometers of transport under the water with zero visibility," said Claus Rasmusen, a certified cave diving instructor based in Thailand who has been helping Thai SEAL team with logistics. "It's difficult."

He said it was awkward, but possible, to teach them minimal skills.

"Nobody will teach anyone a full cave course, but trying to get them comfortable with masks, with the breathing, (is) completely different," he said. "Creating an environment that can make them safely get away, that's feasible."

Poland's isolation deepens as Supreme Court law takes effect

By VANESSA GERA and MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's international isolation and political uncertainty at home deepened on Wednesday as a purge of the Supreme Court's justices took effect, with the chief justice defiantly refusing to step down.

First President Malgorzata Gersdorf arrived for work as usual at the court in Warsaw, vowing to continue her constitutionally mandated term, which runs through 2020. The court's judges support this view.

A large crowd of anti-government protesters cheered Gersdorf on and vowed to defend the constitutional order and fight what they see as the erosion of their democratic system.

Protesters gathered again at night in Warsaw and in other cities, with Lech Walesa, the legendary pro-democracy activist and Solidarity leader of the 1980s, addressing the cheering crowd in front of the Supreme Court building.

"He who breaks the constitution and the division of powers is a criminal, they are criminals," he said.

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"We must do everything to send these people away and vote to choose different people."

While Gersdorf was allowed in to the modern glass Supreme Court building in Warsaw and oversaw a meeting with other judges, it was not clear how she could continue in her role following a new law that lowers the mandatory retirement age to 65 from the previous 70.

Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the ruling party leader, said in an interview published Wednesday by the *Gazeta Polska* daily that the judges' "action" will result in "shameful disaster" for them. An adviser to President Andrzej Duda insisted Gersdorf has no choice but to step down.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki faced a grilling in the European Parliament for what many European lawmakers see as Poland's violations of democratic standards with a broader overhaul of the judiciary that gives the ruling party vast political control over courts and judges.

Manfred Weber, a German member of the conservative European People's Party group, hailed Poland's great democratic legacy, praising the 10 million Poles who joined Solidarity in the struggle against communism in the 1980s.

"Their great achievement — a sovereign, democratic Poland — is at stake today," Weber said.

He also mentioned the ruling party's transformation of state media into a propaganda tool and the prosecution of peaceful anti-government protesters, even as authorities have failed to act against nationalists who had attacked protesters.

Socialist leader Udo Bullmann praised Gersdorf for defending the Polish constitution, and criticized Morawiecki for dismantling "the last bastion of the judiciary in Poland."

Guy Verhofstadt, president of an alliance of liberals, said that putting judges under political control was reminiscent of Soviet practices and that Poland should abandon its "illiberal" illusions.

"I ask you personally, really, to turn the wheel and bring Poland back into the family of democratic nations," Verhofstadt told Morawiecki.

Morawiecki defended the changes the populist Law and Justice party has brought to the justice system, insisting his government is working to make judges more accountable to the democratic will of the people and that Poland's democracy "has never been as alive as it is today."

Though calm, he did not take the criticism well.

"We are a proud nation and we know the price of freedom," he said. "It is not good when proud nations are being lectured to by others, because that produces deadlocks."

Speaking later to reporters he insisted the forced retirements were "perfectly in line with the constitution."

In the debate, Morawiecki also got support from some who backed Warsaw's arguments that an overreaching EU was meddling in a sovereign state's internal affairs.

The new law is forcing approximately one-third of the court's 73 sitting judges to step down, unless they obtain special permission from the president to remain.

After having taken control of common courts and the constitutional court, Law and Justice now takes control of the top court, which handles appeals for all civil and criminal cases and authorizes election results.

Protesters expressed fears the party will use its political sway over the court to falsify elections.

"We have the right to live in a free country with a constitution," said Monika Czerniakowska, 50. She said once a government violates the constitution, "anything can happen. Look what's happening in Hungary. How far can we go?"

On Wednesday, 63 justices were working, meaning that 10 of the 27 being forced into retirement have accepted their retirement under the new law, according to the court's press office.

"I still hope that the legal order will be restored in Poland," Gersdorf said as she arrived at the court.

The European Commission, which polices compliance with EU laws, opened an infringement procedure Monday against Poland over the Supreme Court law.

Government critics now are putting their hopes in the EU to preserve the rule of law in their homeland — a message that was reflected in the chants and slogans at the protest.

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Trump hails 'American heroes' who helped US win independence

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press**

STERLING, Va. (AP) — President Donald Trump wished America a happy Fourth of July holiday Wednesday and reserved special praise for the "American heroes" whose sacrifice he said helped the nation win her independence 242 years ago.

Trump tweeted a short video that included well wishes from him and first lady Melania Trump. The Trumps were hosting a White House picnic for military families later Wednesday, followed by a concert and viewing of the fireworks on the National Mall.

"Our freedom has been earned through the blood and sweat and sacrifice of American heroes," Trump said.

Trump left the White House on Wednesday morning clad in a white short-sleeved shirt, dark slacks and a cap and was driven west across the Potomac River in the direction of the private golf club he owns in Northern Virginia.

The White House did not immediately confirm that Trump is at the club. Reporters were not allowed to accompany him to his destination, as is the case with virtually all presidential travel.

Trump got into the Independence Day spirit a day earlier by celebrating active-duty service members during a military tribute Tuesday night in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. At the "Salute to Service" charity dinner, Trump praised "Americans of every generation" who have served in the armed forces.

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

Ex-Malaysia leader Najib charged with breach of trust, graft

By **EILEEN NG, Associated Press**

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was charged Wednesday with criminal breach of trust and corruption, two months after a multibillion-dollar graft scandal at a state investment fund led to his stunning election defeat.

He pleaded not guilty to all charges. "I claim trial," he said in a barely audible voice as he stood in the dock at the High Court in Kuala Lumpur. A judge set bail at 1 million ringgit in cash (\$250,000) and ordered Najib to surrender his two diplomatic passports.

The patrician and luxury-loving Najib, wearing a suit and a red tie, appeared calm and smiled as he was escorted into the court complex. He was arrested Tuesday by anti-graft officials over the suspicious transfer of 42 million ringgit (\$10.4 million) into his bank accounts from SRC International, a former unit of the 1MDB state investment fund that U.S. investigators say was looted of billions by associates of Najib.

Najib was charged with abuse of power leading to gratification under Malaysia's anti-corruption law and three counts of criminal breach of trust. Each charge has a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. Whipping is also a penalty but Najib would be exempt because of his age.

Anger over the 1MDB saga led to the shocking defeat of Najib's long-ruling coalition in May 9 elections and ushered in the first change of power since independence from Britain in 1957.

Malaysia's new attorney general, Tommy Thomas, who is heading the prosecution, said the 1MDB case has attracted global attention and "brought shame to the country." Najib's lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah protested the comment calling it "nonsense" and "coffeeshop talk."

Najib, 64, has accused Malaysia's new government of seeking "political vengeance."

At a news conference after the hearing, Najib said a trial was "the best chance for me to clear my name after all the slander and accusations." It is set to start Feb. 8, subject to confirmation at a preliminary hearing next month.

Deputy Prime Minister Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said the rule of law must be followed in the prosecution of Najib.

"I don't think it's fair for anyone to be judged on a media trial — this is important," Wan Azizah said Wednesday at a conference in Mongolia. "The other thing is that, however I feel, I want the court to be

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independent and, therefore, give him all the avenue he has under the law to defend himself.”

Wan Azizah is the wife of reformist leader Anwar Ibrahim. Anwar was convicted in 2015 of a sodomy charge that he said was concocted to destroy his political career, and was freed in May after obtaining a royal pardon.

Najib set up 1MDB when he took power in 2009 but the fund amassed billions in debts and is being investigated in the U.S. and several other countries.

New Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad reopened investigations into 1MDB that were stifled under Najib’s rule.

Najib and his wife were questioned last month over the SRC case by the anti-graft agency and were barred from leaving the country.

The attorney general’s case says the \$10 million that Najib allegedly received via SRC was a bribe for approving government guarantees of loans totaling 4 billion ringgit (nearly \$1 billion) in 2011 and 2012 that apparently became part of the ransacking underway at 1MDB.

Police have also seized jewelry and valuables valued at more than 1.1 billion ringgit (\$272 million) from properties linked to Najib.

U.S. investigators say \$4.5 billion was stolen and laundered from 1MDB by Najib’s associates, including some \$700 million that landed in Najib’s bank account. While in power, Najib said the \$700 million was a donation from the Saudi royal family.

Najib’s lawyer Muhammad asked for the case to be expedited.

Najib “is anxious to clear his name,” he told the High Court. “We are pretty confident about this case.”

Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asia expert at John Cabot University in Rome, said Najib’s arrest was the “inevitable outcome” after he lost power.

“It shows the resolve of the new government to address previous abuses of power. It has been done judiciously so far and speaks to a needed reckoning for Malaysia and a key step toward a cleaner governance,” she said in an email.

Sanctioned Russian oligarch linked to Cohen has vast US ties

By **GARANACE BURKE** and **STEPHEN BRAUN**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Long before Viktor Vekselberg was tied to a scandal over the president and a porn star, the Russian oligarch had been positioning himself to extend his influence in the United States.

Working closely with an American cousin who heads the New York investment management firm Columbus Nova, Vekselberg backed a \$1.6 million lobbying campaign to aid Russian interests in Washington. His cousin Andrew Intrater served as CEO of a Vekselberg company on that project, and the two men have collaborated on numerous other investments involving Vekselberg’s extensive holdings.

Now, Intrater’s investment firm is wrestling with the fallout from financial sanctions the U.S. Treasury Department lodged in April against Vekselberg, one of a group of oligarchs tied to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Columbus Nova has insisted it only managed Vekselberg’s vast assets. But an Associated Press review of legal and securities filings shows that the cousins sometimes collaborated in a more deeply entwined business relationship than was previously known.

Spokesmen for Columbus Nova have told the AP that the firm’s business relationship with Vekselberg has been indefinitely halted by the sanctions, which targeted Russian oligarchs accused by Treasury of playing “a key role in advancing Russia’s malign activities.”

All Vekselberg assets in the U.S. are frozen and U.S. companies forbidden from doing business with him and his entities. The deadline to sever those relationships was June 4, but talks between Columbus Nova and the government are continuing, the firm’s spokesmen said. A Treasury Department spokesman declined to comment.

The Columbus Nova spokesmen said the firm is also seeking permission from Treasury to retrieve any assets entwined with Vekselberg’s Renova Group, which the U.S. firm has called “its biggest client.”

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Extricating Columbus Nova's holdings from Vekselberg's is not so simple. The sanctions apply to all assets in which Vekselberg has more than a 50 percent stake — including some investment funds managed by Columbus Nova in which the firm has an ownership interest, the spokesmen said. They discussed the matter on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the ongoing discussions.

A Russian citizen who has had a U.S. green card and homes in New York and Connecticut, Vekselberg once told an American diplomat he felt "half-American." Vekselberg heads the Renova Group, a global conglomerate encompassing metals, mining, tech and other assets that is based in Moscow.

He wields an estimated \$13 billion fortune that supports Silicon Valley startups, programs at a California state park, a Western-themed resort amid the Joshua trees near Scottsdale, Arizona — and a loan to a Baptist church in Savannah, Georgia.

"I think all along Vekselberg thought a big chunk of his life was going to be anchored here in the United States and he, like other Russia businessmen, has made strategic investments in his philanthropic work to be in better standing here," said former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul.

Vekselberg also has cemented tech deals using a Kremlin-funded foundation — raising national security concerns years before special counsel Robert Mueller began probing contacts between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and Russian intermediaries. His opaque corporate structure, which includes an array of hard-to-trace shell companies, has fallen under Mueller's scrutiny, according to several media reports.

Vekselberg hired Trump's lawyer Michael Cohen as a consultant in January 2017, just months after Cohen paid off the adult film actress known as Stormy Daniels, who has alleged she had an affair with Trump.

But some experts familiar with Vekselberg's financial holdings wonder if the government is adequately tracking his U.S. assets, let alone the companies or foundations managing his money under other names.

"Given how hidden these companies are in a network of shell companies, it is entirely possible that Vekselberg has a majority stake in businesses that are still functioning in the United States that the government doesn't even know about," said Peter Harrell, a sanctions expert and former deputy assistant secretary at the State Department.

Vekselberg's spokesman, Andrey Shtorkh, did not detail how the billionaire was addressing the sanctions. Shtorkh stressed that the oligarch did not create or control Columbus Nova and gave up his green card more than a decade ago.

"It quickly became obvious that he had little time for more than brief visits to the United States," Shtorkh said.

MAKING WESTERN INROADS

Vekselberg was born in what is the modern-day Ukraine, and built his fortune investing in aluminum and oil, taking advantage of the privatization of state companies after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The 61-year-old billionaire burnished his reputation in the West in 2010 when he was appointed president of the Skolkovo Foundation, a nonprofit initiative funded by the Russian government and private investors to build a high-technology research hub aimed at luring digital entrepreneurs to Russia.

While Putin and Vekselberg have not always been strongly allied, the project now appears to have the Russian president's backing. In January, Putin highlighted a Skolkovo effort as the type of "forward-looking projects" that would receive government support. In a June 2017 meeting at the Kremlin, Putin praised Skolkovo's work.

In June 2010, Vekselberg traveled to Silicon Valley with then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to try to gain a foothold for the Skolkovo Foundation. He signed a deal with Cisco CEO John Chambers for Cisco to invest \$1 billion over 10 years in Skolkovo projects and met with Russian expatriates who urged him to set up a Skolkovo office nearby.

Skolkovo appeared to be a family concern. When members of the same expatriate association gathered in Manhattan to promote U.S. venture capital investment in Russia, the featured speakers included Intrater. And in a presentation dated June 2013 on Skolkovo's website, Columbus Nova was described as one of several corporate venture funds financing Skolkovo participants. The foundation declined to comment, deferring to Shtorkh, who said that Vekselberg did not have control over the foundation's decisions.

In 2011, an office near Stanford University was established for the Skolkovo Foundation and two sister

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funds, amid President Barack Obama's call for a "reset" in Russia relations.

Vekselberg also spawned another foundation to benefit Fort Ross, a California state park that was once a Russian settlement. The foundation and affiliates donated at least \$3.2 million to the park's programs and activities between 2010 and 2017, according to the foundation's website.

As Obama's effort to reboot diplomatic relations sputtered, federal officials began raising alarms about the Skolkovo Foundation's ties to Putin.

The FBI's Boston division gave tech startups a frank warning in an April 2014 column published in a trade journal.

"The foundation may be a means for the Russian government to access our nation's sensitive or classified research, development facilities and dual-use technologies," wrote Lucia Ziobro, assistant special agent in charge of the FBI's Boston office.

SPOTLIGHT GROWS

Media attention zeroed in on Vekselberg and Intrater in May when Michael Avenatti, the attorney for porn actress Stormy Daniels, released a memo claiming the cousins routed about \$500,000 through Columbus Nova to a shell company set up by Trump attorney Cohen.

Avenatti claimed that just before the 2016 presidential election, Cohen used the same shell company, Essential Consultants LLC, to pay the adult film star \$130,000 to keep silent about her allegation of a one-night stand with Trump a decade earlier.

Eleven days before Trump's inauguration, Vekselberg and Intrater jointly met with Cohen, one of several meetings between Trump intimates and high-level Russians during the 2016 campaign and transition. During the meeting in Cohen's office in Trump Tower, Vekselberg and Cohen discussed U.S.-Russia affairs, said a person familiar with the meeting who spoke anonymously because he was not authorized to discuss the session.

According to financial records reviewed by the AP, the meeting occurred the same month that Intrater's firm began making payments to Cohen's LLC that totaled \$500,000, delivered in eight installments ending in August 2017.

In a statement on its website, Columbus Nova denied that Vekselberg played any role in its payments to Cohen.

Intrater's firm, which described itself in a company website entry as "a multi-strategy investment firm managing over \$15 billion of assets," has handled Vekselberg's financial holdings for nearly two decades, company spokesmen say.

But as far back as 2000—during Columbus Nova's start up—Intrater also worked for Vekselberg as CEO of a subsidiary of the Russian's Renova Group conglomerate. Between 2000 and 2004, the New York-based subsidiary, Renova Inc., commissioned a Washington lobbying firm to work for both Vekselberg and Russian interests.

Shtorkh acknowledged Renova Inc. is owned by the billionaire. According to a lobbying contract reviewed by AP and validated by spokesmen for Columbus Nova, Intrater served as Renova Inc.'s CEO for at least three years even as he built up his own investment firm.

The Columbus Nova spokesmen described Renova Inc. as a "rep firm," a marketing company that represented Vekselberg's conglomerate in the U.S. They added that Intrater took on his Renova Inc. role as a client service to Vekselberg as part of his asset management role for the Russian.

In April 2001, Intrater signed a contract with Washington lobbying firm Carmen Group Inc., representing the Vekselberg company. The lobbying firm said in congressional filings that it had been hired to "encourage trade and cultural exchanges between the United States and Russia."

The contract also said the Carmen Group was hired to "organize congressional and other high-level U.S. government delegations to meet with foreign government and business leaders abroad and in the U.S." Columbus Nova spokesmen said no U.S. delegations were brought to Russia.

Carmen Group was paid \$1.58 million; a spokeswoman for the lobbying firm declined to detail its work. While the Columbus Nova spokesmen acknowledged Intrater has served on advisory boards of several

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companies where Vekselberg owed majority stakes, they said Intrater took those positions because of his role managing assets for Columbus Nova.

Intrater joined the board of one such firm in the mid-2000s, becoming a director — and briefly, chairman — of an American cable company that transformed into a Moscow-based firm after a Vekselberg-financed takeover. Between 2004 and 2007, the cousins teamed up in the acquisition of Moscow CableCom Corp., a U.S.-based cable company once known as the Andersen Group that now serves several Russian cities.

Intrater joined the board after Columbus Nova routed \$51 million from the New York firm's investors to Moscow Cablecom the cable firm in 2004. That same year, Vekselberg's Renova Group took a stake. By July 2007, Vekselberg's company had financed the cable firm's acquisition in an estimated \$152 million deal.

Documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission list both Vekselberg and Intrater as key figures in the cable firm acquisition. But Columbus Nova representatives said that some filings made by the now-defunct Moscow CableCom Corp contained errors, including overstating the role of a Columbus Nova corporate entity in one round of investments.

WINDING DOWN ASSETS

Vekselberg's unfettered access to the U.S. withered when his assets in America were frozen under sanctions April 6, causing him nearly \$1 billion in losses, Forbes estimated.

The Treasury Department included a Russia-based corporate entity owned or controlled by Vekselberg in its sanctions, but warned that the list shouldn't be viewed as a complete inventory of companies linked to the oligarch.

Two of Vekselberg's largest companies — Renova Management AG and the engineering firm Sulzer, both based in Switzerland — swiftly and publicly corrected course to lessen his control or financial interests.

Some entities associated with the oligarch in the United States have been less forthcoming.

Shtorkh said Vekselberg is an investor in a venture fund called Maxfield Capital, which lists a San Francisco office on its website. A Maxfield Capital representative in Russia said the fund was taking steps to fully comply with sanctions requirements, but offered no specifics.

"Vekselberg's money directly or indirectly represents quite a hefty chunk of all assets under management," said Michael Minkevich, who managed deals for the fund in Silicon Valley until January. "They definitely need to find some way to cut any ties."

Shtorkh said Vekselberg had a limited partnership interest in the Cayman Islands-based fund and did not have control over Maxfield Capital.

As for Vekselberg's park foundation, its director did not respond to emails or voicemails.

Sarah Sweedler, president of another nonprofit that received funding from Vekselberg's foundation to run programming at Fort Ross, said her group has no outstanding business with the foundation and has not communicated with its staff since the sanctions hit.

Vekselberg also has ties to two other foundations operating in the U.S. The Link of Times Foundation USA Inc. did not respond to voicemails or emails seeking comment, and the administrator of the Mariinsky Foundation of America Inc. said Vekselberg was removed from the board of directors last year.

The Skolkovo Foundation's activities have not been disrupted by U.S. sanctions, Shtorkh added.

Sean Kane, a former senior official with the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, said it was unusual but not unprecedented for a sanctioned person to have such extensive personal and business relationships inside the United States.

OFAC regulations require companies to do their own checking to ensure they aren't doing business with sanctioned entities. But Kane said that problems sometimes surface years later because it is so difficult to unravel complex corporate structures.

Kane, who now is in private practice in Washington, said that "nobody has the time or resources to be tracking how these people are moving their money 24/7. Any entanglements that U.S. foundations and companies have with sanctioned individuals such as Vekselberg will need to be looked at very carefully."

Burke reported from Menlo Park, California. Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow and Raphael Satter in London contributed to this report.

China push to end reliance on US tech at trade fight's core

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese telecoms giant ZTE Corp.'s brush with death after Washington barred it from buying U.S. components was a stark reminder that China's industries still depend on American technology despite Beijing's efforts to catch up.

The Trump administration accuses China of using theft to fill some of those technology needs and is poised to hike tariffs Friday on its goods in a spiraling conflict that could chill global trade. But at the same time, ZTE and other Chinese tech companies pay billions of dollars annually for high-tech U.S. parts and patent rights.

China's ambitious plans to end that dependence by creating its own innovators in fields from robotics to electric cars to biotech are fueling fears of a loss of American industrial leadership. That has worsened tensions in a fraught U.S.-Chinese relationship as business partners, customers and increasingly as competitors.

ZTE's chairman said the April ban over its exports to Iran and North Korea could destroy China's No. 2 maker of network gear. To regain access, the company agreed to pay a \$1 billion fine, replace its executive team and embed U.S.-chosen compliance officers in the company.

ZTE is far from alone. China assembles some 90 percent of the world's smartphones, computers and other electronics. But most of the revenue flows to American companies that supply computer chips and other technology.

In the broader economy, Chinese banks, airlines, farms and other industries need U.S. technology from jetliners to drugs to software.

Its trading partners complain that Beijing's initiatives to create global competitors in fields from biotech to robots to electric cars are built on know-how the Chinese government has stolen or pressured foreign companies to hand over.

U.S. President Donald Trump has responded by threatening tariff hikes on up to \$450 billion of Chinese goods, but Beijing struck a defiant note on Thursday, rejecting "threats and blackmail."

"China will not bow in the face of threats and blackmail, nor will it shake its resolve to defend global free trade and the multilateral system," a Commerce Ministry spokesman, Gao Feng, said at a news conference.

He said China would not "fire the first shot" but would fight back to defend its interests.

Communist leaders see advanced technology as a path to prosperity and to restoring national greatness.

"Self-reliance is the base of the struggle for the Chinese nation to stand among the peoples of the world," President Xi Jinping said in a speech in March to members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering.

"Independent innovation is the only way for us to ascend the world's technological pinnacle," the official Xinhua News Agency quoted Xi as saying.

One key Chinese weakness is in semiconductors, used in everything from smartphones to cars. High costs and research challenges mean China still needs years to create its own.

"I don't think there is a lot of progress," said Nikhil Batra, who follows the telecom equipment industry for IDC.

Trade data suggest China imported as much as \$26 billion worth of integrated circuits last year, according to Kenny Liew of BMI Research.

China does have some success stories, including Huawei Technologies Ltd., the biggest global seller of switching gear for phone companies and the No. 3 smartphone brand. The company has developed its own Kirin line of chip sets to power some of its phones, reducing reliance on U.S.-based Qualcomm Corp.'s Snapdragon and other foreign suppliers.

Still, such successes are rare. Chinese companies are prolific patent applicants but researchers say many are for minor improvements or "me too" imitations.

Beijing's plans highlight an array of areas where Chinese companies lag behind. They call for state-led development in fields from energy and robotics to artificial intelligence and biotechnology.

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In areas as basic as new seeds and agricultural biotech, business groups complain Beijing blocks access to U.S. and other imports while it tries to build up alternative suppliers.

Chinese leaders fail to see how damaging their tactics appear to Western governments, said Scott Kennedy of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"My sense is this is hard for the Chinese to recognize because it would require them to admit that their industrial policies are not the 'win-win' package they claim to offer," said Kennedy in an email.

Chinese leaders are especially uneasy about relying on foreign technology to keep the nation's secrets.

Banks have been ordered to use Chinese-made information security products, though industry experts say novice Chinese suppliers cannot provide the safety they need.

Headline-grabbing initiatives like "Made in China 2025," call for creating Chinese global competitors in robotics, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and other fields.

Yet such an approach can be wasteful and might be self-defeating, researchers say.

The European Union Chamber of Commerce said in a report last year that mediocre but subsidized companies might flood the market, squeezing out truly innovative Chinese suppliers.

The shock of ZTE's clash with Washington might help Chinese planners by jolting local companies into cooperating more actively with initiatives to create tech suppliers, said IDC's Batra.

"They don't want to be in a similar situation," he said

According to BMI's Liew, China accounts for almost 40 percent of sales by U.S. chip makers such as Micron Technology Inc., Texas Instruments Inc., Intel Corp. and Qualcomm.

Beyond that, China pays \$24 billion a year for foreign patent and copyright licenses, according to government data. Its own companies collect less than \$2 billion for rights to their own technology.

By contrast, American companies received \$124.3 billion last year for intellectual property licenses.

"There are very few technological areas in which Chinese companies are completely independent," Liew said in an email. Even Huawei, with a "strong competitive advantage," still needs some U.S. components.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 5, the 186th day of 2018. There are 179 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 5, 1947, Larry Doby made his debut with the Cleveland Indians, becoming the first black player in the American League three months after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in the National League. In the game against the Chicago White Sox at Comiskey Park, Doby, pinch-hitting for Bryan Stephens, struck out in his first at-bat during the seventh inning; Chicago won 6-5.

On this date:

In 1687, Isaac Newton first published his Principia Mathematica, a three-volume work setting out his mathematical principles of natural philosophy.

In 1811, Venezuela became the first South American country to declare independence from Spain.

In 1865, the Secret Service Division of the U.S. Treasury Department was founded in Washington, D.C. with the mission of suppressing counterfeit currency.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the National Labor Relations Act.

In 1940, during World War II, Britain and the Vichy government in France broke off diplomatic relations.

In 1946, the bikini, created by Louis Reard (ray-AHRD'), was modeled by Micheline Bernardini during a poolside fashion show in Paris.

In 1954, Elvis Presley's first commercial recording session took place at Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee; the song he recorded was "That's All Right."

In 1962, independence took effect in Algeria; the same day, civilians of European descent, mostly French, came under attack by extremists in the port city of Oran.

In 1977, Pakistan's army, led by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, seized power from President Zulfikar Ali

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Bhutto (ZUL'fih-kahr ah-LEE' BOO'toh). (Bhutto was executed in 1979.)

In 1984, the Supreme Court weakened the 70-year-old "exclusionary rule," deciding that evidence seized in good faith with defective court warrants could be used against defendants in criminal trials.

In 1991, a worldwide financial scandal erupted as regulators in eight countries shut down the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Actress Mildred Dunnock died in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, at age 90.

In 2011, a jury in Orlando, Florida, found Casey Anthony, 25, not guilty of murder, manslaughter and child abuse in the 2008 disappearance and death of her 2-year-old daughter, Caylee.

Ten years ago: Venus Williams won her fifth Wimbledon singles title, beating younger sister Serena 7-5, 6-4 in the final. Gas station owner Kent Couch flew a lawn chair rigged with helium-filled balloons more than 200 miles across the Oregon desert, landing in a field in Cambridge, Idaho.

Five years ago: Pope Francis cleared two of the 20th Century's most influential popes to become saints in the Roman Catholic church, approving a miracle needed to canonize Pope John Paul II and waiving Vatican rules to honor Pope John XXIII. Enraged Islamists pushed back against the toppling of President Mohammed Morsi, as tens of thousands of his supporters took to the streets vowing to win his reinstatement and clashed with their opponents in violence that killed some three dozen people.

One year ago: The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that two laws passed by Congress did not end the right to a bond hearing for unaccompanied immigrant children who are detained by federal authorities.

(Stations: Single name "Joe" is correct)

Today's Birthdays: Actress Katherine Helmond is 89. Actress Shirley Knight is 82. Singer-musician Robbie Robertson is 75. Julie Nixon Eisenhower is 70. Rock star Huey Lewis is 68. Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Rich "Goose" Gossage is 67. Country musician Charles Ventre is 66. Singer-songwriter Marc Cohn is 59. Actor John Marshall Jones is 56. Actor Dorien Wilson is 56. Actress Edie Falco is 55. Actress Jillian Armenante is 54. Actress Kathryn Erbe (er-BEE') is 53. Actor Michael Stuhlbarg (STOOL'-bahrg) is 50. Country musician Brent Flynn (Flynnville Train) is 49. Rapper RZA (RIH'-zuh) is 49. Rhythm and blues singer Joe is 45. Rock musician Bengt Lagerberg (The Cardigans) is 45. Actor Dale Godboldo is 43. Rapper Bizarre is 42. Rapper Royce da 5'9" is 41. Rock singer Jason Wade (Lifehouse) is 38. Actor Ryan Hansen is 37. Country musician Dave Haywood (Lady Antebellum) is 36. Rock musician Nick O'Malley (Arctic Monkeys) is 33. Actor Jason Dolley is 27.

Thought for Today: "Without promotion something terrible happens: Nothing!" — P.T. Barnum, American showman (born this date 1810, died 1891).