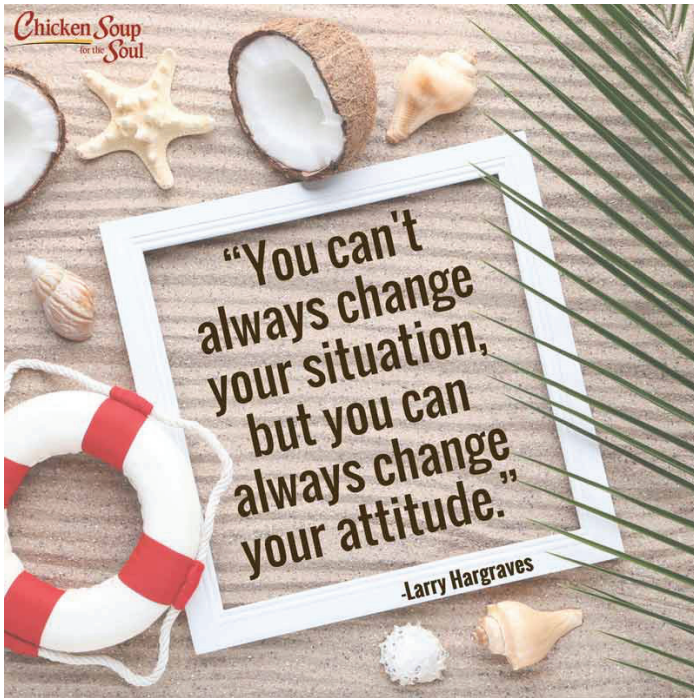


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Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

School Board Meeting 7 p.m.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
U 8 SB at Mellette 5:00 (1)
U10 SB @ Mellette 6:00 (1)
U12 SB @ Mellette 7:00 (2)

			  
Oven Fresh Sandwiches	Hot Desserts	Snack Melts	
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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

As we continue our breakdown of the Minnesota Vikings' roster heading into the 2018 season, we turn our attention to the linebackers. The Vikings have two superstars at linebacker – one of which needs a new contract – but the rest of the position features players eager to prove they deserve a spot on the Vikings' final 53-man roster. The team had six linebackers on their opening day roster last season, and with eleven linebackers on the roster right now, there will certainly be plenty of competition at the position.

Starters

Eric Kendricks – Entering his fourth season in the NFL, the Vikings gave Kendricks a 5-year, \$50 million contract, locking up their middle linebacker for the foreseeable future. Kendricks is on the smaller side for a linebacker (6'0", 232 pounds) but he is one of the most instinctual linebackers in the NFL and is a solid tackler who also has above-average coverage skills.

Anthony Barr – Drafted one year before Kendricks, Barr is entering the last year of his rookie contract and both he and the team are hoping to get a long-term contract in place. Barr is a very good linebacker who flashes moments of brilliance and has made three consecutive Pro Bowls. He will likely receive a contract similar to Kendricks', and it wouldn't surprise me if the contract is announced soon.

Ben Gedeon – Drafted in the fourth-round of last year's draft, Gedeon grabbed ahold of the third linebacker spot and played admirably last season. The Vikings will enter training camp with him penciled in as a starter, but out of all the starting linebacker spots, this is the one that will be open to competition.

Potential Backups

Kentrell Brothers – Entering his third season in the NFL, Brothers was hoping to compete for a starting linebacker spot this offseason after playing in all 16-games last year (mostly on special teams). However, he was hit with a four-game suspension to start the season. He will likely have his spot back once he is reinstated, but his chances of becoming a starter are now considerably lower.

Reshard Cliett – Drafted in the sixth-round of the 2016 draft by the Houston Texans, Cliett is now on his seventh team in the NFL. A speedy but undersized linebacker, Cliett has never played a snap in the NFL and will be hard pressed to make the Vikings' final roster.

Garret Dooley – Signed as an undrafted rookie, Dooley doesn't have the speed and athleticism to fit what Mike Zimmer usually looks for in his linebackers. However, Dooley has good instincts and above-average strength and will likely spend a year or two on the practice squad until he is ready for the NFL.

Devante Downs – Drafted in the seventh-round this year, Downs is a bigger linebacker who also has the speed required to play in the NFL. Injuries cut his senior season short at Cal, but before the injury he was playing very well. How quickly he learns the role will determine if he starts his career as a backup or on the practice squad.

Mike Needham – Weighing only 224 pounds, Needham will need to hit the gym hard if he wants to make it in the NFL.

Brett Taylor – Likely not drafted because he played for a small school in college (Western Illinois), Taylor has the size and speed to be a contributor for the Vikings' defense. He will have to work on his coverage and agility, however, if he plans to make the final roster.

Eric Wilson – An undrafted rookie last season, Wilson proved he has what it takes to play in the NFL by earning a backup spot and playing on special teams in all 16 games last season. Wilson is undersized but has a nose for the ball and is very productive when he isn't being engulfed by blockers.

Antwone Williams – A fifth-round pick by the Lions in 2016, many thought Williams could earn a starting spot in Detroit – until he was cut after one season. He signed with the Vikings and spent last year on the practice squad, but he has a real shot to get a promotion to the final roster if he can prove he can excel on special teams.

Don't miss next week's article, where we will focus on the cornerbacks! If you have any questions or comments, please reach out to me on Twitter (@JordanWrightNFL). Skol!



Army Corps Sees Firsthand our Concerns about Missouri River Management

With summer in full swing, many South Dakotans have been taking advantage of the warm weather with some R&R along the Missouri. Jean and I have enjoyed spending time on the river with the kids and grandkids. However, I continue to be concerned about the Army Corps of Engineers' management of the river. With recent near-record rainfall in parts of the state and reports of significant flooding along the Missouri River System both north and south of us, many of us throughout the state continue to be concerned about the potential for flooding again this year.

As Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Subcommittee on Oversight, which has jurisdiction over the Corps, I have remained engaged with Corps officials on the management practices. Oftentimes, I've called into question whether the Corps is actually putting flood control ahead of everything else when making decisions. It is important that the Corps fully understands that when they mismanage output, they can seriously impact the lives of individuals who live and work along the river.

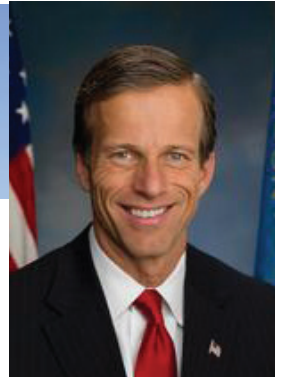
The dams throughout the Missouri River System generate a significant amount of energy for tens of thousands of citizens across the Midwest. Compared to solar and wind power, hydroelectric power is a more reliable source of energy. As these renewable sources become a larger part of our energy portfolio, the power generated from the dams has become more heavily relied on to meet our energy needs. This additional strain has led to more wear-and-tear on our dam system, requiring more maintenance, as well as dramatic fluctuations in flow levels. The occurrence of daily fluctuations raises the risk of property damage along the river due to flooding and could also impact the fish and spawn that recreational fisherman along the river depend on for a successful fishing season.

Just before the 4th of July holiday, I had the opportunity to host Colonel John L. Hudson, commander of the Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, in Pierre to discuss our concerns firsthand. During our meeting, I relayed to him our concerns that the Corps did not adequately prioritize flood control earlier in the season. This has led to high water levels across the state, from Mobridge to Dakota Dunes to the Lower Brule Reservation, where they await Congress to complete its work on legislation that will authorize a project to help them stabilize the shoreline along the river, which will help decrease the threat of flooding.

While the Corps is now operating in exclusively flood control mode this year, we question whether flood control management should have taken greater priority earlier in the season. If they would have begun letting out more water earlier, we may not have the same concerns about flooding as we do currently.

South Dakotans know the important role the Missouri River plays in our lives. We use it for fishing, irrigation, recreation and more. Failing to properly manage the river by the Army Corps of Engineers puts our livelihood in jeopardy. As Chairman of the EPW Subcommittee on Oversight, I will continue to keep a close watch on the action the agency is taking to make certain flood control is number one, and that we continue to be able to fully utilize the river, both now and in the future.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



One Step Closer to the President's Desk

The 2018 farm bill is one step closer to the president's desk after the Senate passed its version of the farm bill at the end of June by an overwhelming vote of 86-11. These days, it's not easy to pass a bill with such broad bipartisan support, but I think the strong vote is not only a testament to the strength of the bill itself, but also shows that Congress recognizes the importance of getting a new farm bill signed into law before the current bill expires this fall.

The kind of certainty and clarity that only a new farm bill can provide is critical to farmers and ranchers in South Dakota. The Senate bill isn't perfect – no bill is – but it goes a long way toward helping the agriculture community in our state and around the country. We still have some work ahead of us, but I intend to keep pressure on my colleagues, as I've been doing since I started introducing my farm bill proposals back in March 2017.

Of the numerous proposals to reform and strengthen the farm bill that I've laid over the last 19 months, which have covered nearly every title of the overall farm bill, one dozen of them were adopted by my Senate colleagues. In terms of legislating, that's a strong batting average, and I have South Dakota's farmers and ranchers to thank for their suggestions, advice, and support throughout this process.

Several of my proposals were included in the bill before it even made it to the Senate floor. For example, my Soil Health and Income Protection program, which would create a new voluntary income protection program for farmers and serve as a short-term alternative to the popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), was in the base bill. At the committee markup, my colleagues adopted my Improved Soil Moisture and Precipitation Monitoring Act, which will make the U.S. Drought Monitor a better, stronger tool for all who rely on it. And several more proposals, including my provision to allow greater haying and grazing flexibility on CRP acres, were unanimously



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approved on the Senate floor.

Again, and I can't say it enough, if it wasn't for South Dakota's farmers and ranchers, who know far better than anyone else what's needed to strengthen agriculture policy, we wouldn't have had this kind of success.

One of those ranchers is Jodie Anderson, the executive director of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association. Of the Senate farm bill, she said, "South Dakota beef producers rely on the conservation and disaster tools provided in the farm bill, and we thank Sen. Thune for his diligence in ensuring the farm bill is finished on time to provide the certainty our producers need to help feed the world."

Scott VanderWal, the president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, said, "It's critical for Congress to pass a strong farm bill that puts the priorities of South Dakota agriculture at the top of the list. Thanks to Sen. Thune's leadership, the Senate bill addresses many of those priorities ..."

The bill that the Senate just approved is the fourth farm bill I've helped write during my time serving the people of South Dakota in Congress. While we've still got some work to do before we can hang up the reins and start looking toward the 2023 farm bill, I'm optimistic about what lies ahead.



Advocating for Accountability

Just over six months ago, taxpayers got a new tax code. It's led to tremendous economic growth along with higher wages and better benefits for many. But alongside a new tax code, you deserve a new, more accountable IRS.

There's no question the IRS has been broken for some time. We've seen repeated instances of mismanagement and abuse. In response, I've pushed to get rid of an IRS slush fund in order to give taxpayers greater say over how IRS-collected fees are used. We've passed legislation to end bonuses to IRS employees until the agency starts to fix its terrible customer service record. And we've enacted new accountability measures to make sure taxpayers are never again targeted for their political beliefs.

Most recently, I've led efforts to prohibit the IRS from rehiring employees who had already been fired for misconduct. It seems like common sense: if someone is fired for falsifying documents or violating a client's privacy, they shouldn't be rehired. But at the IRS, hundreds of employees – including those who've mistreated taxpayer data – have been rehired, jeopardizing the privacy of our most sensitive financial information.

Concerns about this hiring practice began building in 2016 when the Treasury Department released a report showing the IRS had rehired more than 200 individuals who had previously been terminated for misconduct or performance issues over a 15-month period. Among other findings, the Treasury Department reported two rehired employees had falsified employment forms by omitting former convictions. Another had been terminated for threatening coworkers. And yet another had "DO NOT REHIRE" stamped on their employment folder after missing about eight weeks' worth of work. Additionally, more than 100 were rehired after losing their job because of poor performance.

What's more, about one in five of the rehired employees had new performance issues when they returned to the IRS, according to the federal report. And still, the IRS has shown a complete disregard for changing the practice. Instead, the agency claims that prior conduct or performance issues do not play a significant role in deciding the candidates they choose to hire.

This is not how you responsibly run an agency – especially one that handles sensitive financial information.

The legislation I introduced is practical and straightforward and forces the IRS to adopt commonsense employment practices. More specifically, it strictly prohibits the rehiring of employees previously fired for certain forms of misconduct, particularly those that pose a threat to the privacy of our taxpayer information.

My bill originally passed two years ago in the House, but the Senate wasn't able to act on the legislation before the end of the congressional session. As such, I reintroduced it and was glad to see the House Ways and Means Committee gave my legislation unanimous support in late June. Next, it will be voted on in the full House, where I'm optimistic it will earn widespread support before again landing on the Senate's doorstep.

The IRS should work as a customer-service agency. Its employees should treat you with respect and your taxpayer information with the reverence it deserves too. Without question, we have a long way to go to repair this broken, mismanaged agency. But I'm hopeful that reform by reform we can make the IRS genuinely accountable to you.

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Changes in tax law aren't helping Medicare

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

Is Medicare going broke? That scary thought raced through the media a few weeks ago when the program's trustees issued their annual report to Congress.

The media reported the "news" in its predictable fashion; painting a bleak picture of the program some 59 million older and disabled Americans depend on for their health care. Every year the media fail to give the full or nuanced picture of what's happening, instead opting for dramatic headlines announcing the program is broke. This year is no different.

"Medicare is not going broke," says Tricia Neuman, senior vice president at the Kaiser Family Foundation. "It does face a financing challenge." By 2026 the program will be able to pay only 91 percent of covered benefits for hospital services. "But it's not true to say the program is going broke."

First, it's important to understand that policymakers are talking only about shortfalls in the Part A trust fund, which pays for inpatient hospital care. That care is financed by payroll taxes paid by employers and their employees. Part B, which pays for outpatient care, lab tests and physician services, is financed by beneficiary premiums and general tax revenues, and those sources can be adjusted as needed.

Why this year's gloomy predictions?

A lot of those financial challenges identified this year by the program's trustees have been caused by recent changes in the law, Neuman told me. Some changes reduce the revenue that supports Medicare, and others increase the costs of preserving health care for all Americans.

Changes in the tax law passed late last year result in lower than expected revenues. Trustees noted that lower payroll tax revenue, which results from lower wages and lower economic growth projections for the future, also played a role in their assessment.

The new tax law also repeals the individual mandate that called for almost all Americans to have health insurance or pay a financial penalty. The mandate was never popular with the public, but eliminating it has consequences for Medicare. Neuman said the repeal of the mandate is expected to lead to higher spending out of the Part A trust fund to cover uninsured Americans when they need hospital treatment. Medicare helps cover those costs.

Higher than expected payments to Medicare Advantage plans also figure into the trust fund shortfall. This is due to the relatively aggressive way in which those plans document or "code" the health conditions of members of their plans. This results in higher payments from Medicare.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 also adversely affected the Medicare trust fund by repealing the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) designed to lower program spending. The board had been expected to make recommendations about spending that could trigger automatic spending cuts. Because of opposition from the health care community, the IPAB never got off the ground. Last summer a group of sellers, including drug and device companies, hospitals, and insurers, waged a campaign to convince Congress to wipe the IPAB off the books. Lawmakers did that in February, eliminating a potential path for Medicare to control its costs.

Neuman says it's important to remember that Congress "has faced even worse shortfalls and in the past has taken action to strengthen the trust fund. That used to be standard to keep the program stronger."

So to sum up, Congress itself has worsened the state of the Medicare trust fund and made the program less stable, a point rarely discussed in the gloom and doom news accounts about the trust fund going broke. That's not to say that the Part A trust fund can't use an infusion of money as more Americans turn 65 while the cost of medical services continues to rise without serious cost control.

Marilyn Moon, a former Medicare trustee, told me it wouldn't take much to put the program on a sound financial footing. But it would require an increase in the payroll tax, which is never discussed as a solution. Instead the answer seems to be to encourage more Americans to join Medicare Advantage plans, a private market alternative to Medicare that requires beneficiaries to shoulder more of their medical costs.

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But as someone who just went through a serious illness, spent four months in the hospital, and racked up bills totaling more than more than \$4 million, I can attest to the value of traditional Medicare.

It's worth recalling what President Lyndon Johnson said when he signed Medicare into law in 1965. "No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they (Americans) have so carefully put away over a lifetime." Nor would young families see their own incomes and hopes eaten away as they carry out moral obligations to their parents.

That's reason enough to make sure the Part A trust fund is well funded.

--30--

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Watermelon Roundup

The driver of this Wholesale Produce truck had a rough ride as he entered the ditch and went up the approach east of Andover. The accident happened at the road that turns east then north to Pierpont just before the curve heading south on US12. Crews spent hours Sunday morning cleaning up the mess. No word on the condition of the driver.



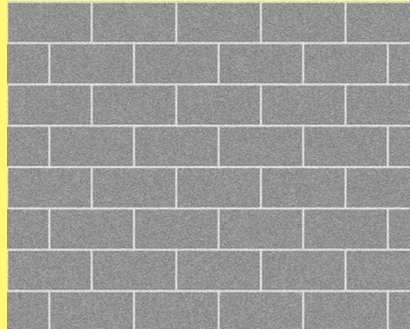
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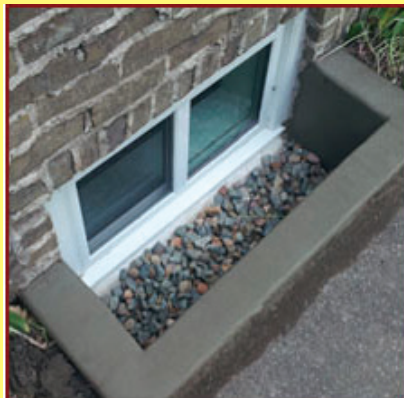
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Slightly Cooler Today But Still Above Normal

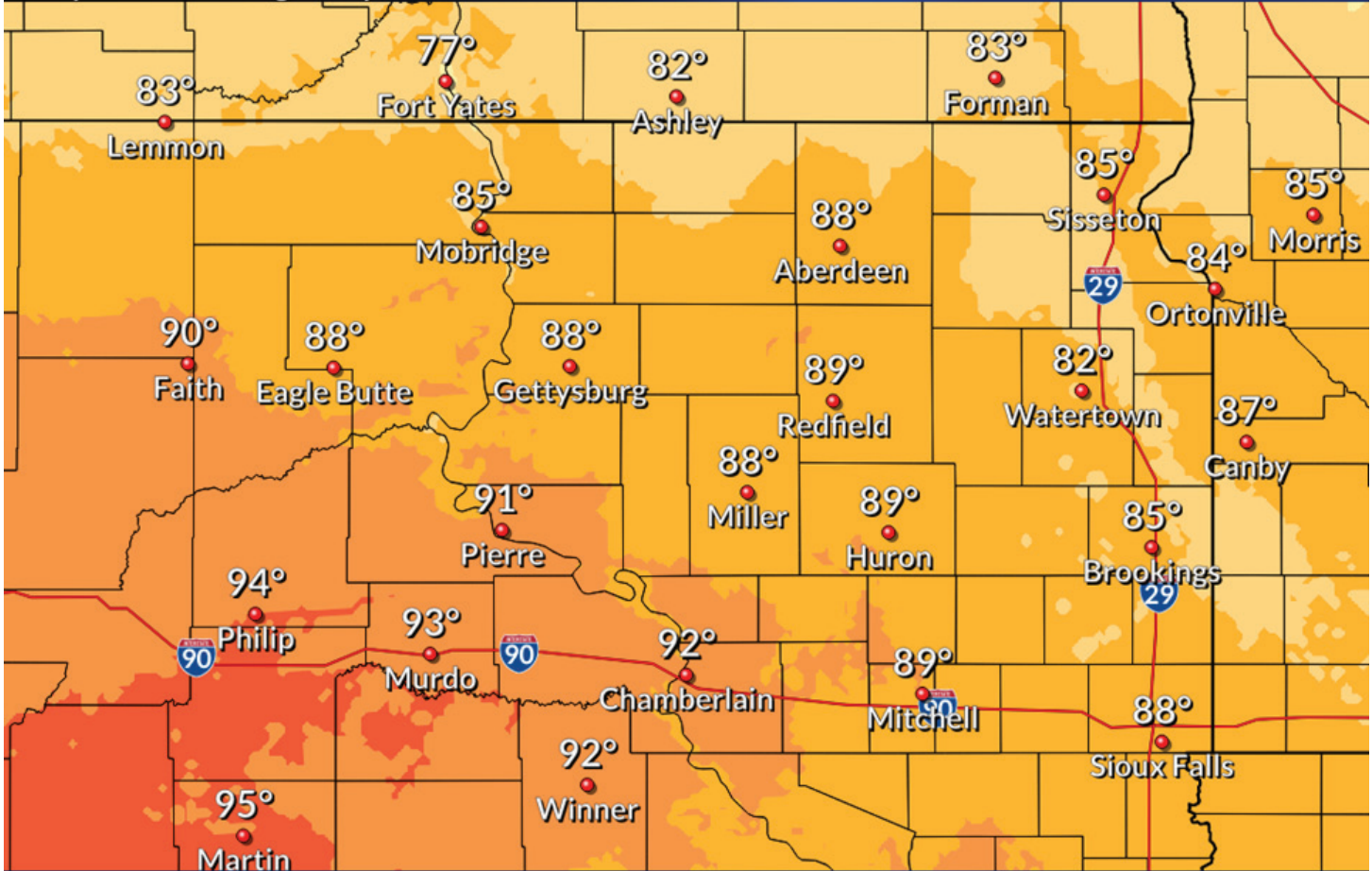
Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD



Today's Afternoon High Temperature

Issued Jul 09, 2018 5:35 AM CDT



NWSAberdeen

weather.gov/abr

Published on: 07/09/2018 at 5:47AM

Slightly cooler temperatures are expected today with highs in the 80s and low 90s.

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Today in Weather History

July 9, 1938: A deadly, estimated F4 tornado moved ESE across the eastern edge of Andover to the north of Bristol. Seventeen buildings were destroyed at Andover, and at least one home was completely swept away. Seven homes and a church also suffered damage. An elderly person was killed at the western edge of Andover, and a couple died in a home at the southern edge of town. About two hours later, another estimated F4 tornado moved ENE from 2 miles northeast of White, South Dakota in Brookings County to Hendricks, Minnesota. Only one person was injured from this storm.

July 9, 1972: Wind gusts up to 89 mph caused considerable damage in the Pierre and Oahe Dam area. A drive in movie screen was destroyed. A camper trailer was turned over pinning seven members of a family inside. Five of them were hospitalized. Numerous trees were uprooted at the Oahe Dam campground. A tourist information building was caved in. Hail broke out car windows on ten vehicles.

July 9, 2009: Severe storms developed over Fall River County and moved eastward across southwestern and south central South Dakota. The storms produced large hail and strong wind gusts. Two tornadoes were observed in Todd County, and two tornadoes touched down in southern Tripp County. A small EF-1 tornado tracked across Dog Ear Township from 311th Avenue to near the intersection of 289th Street and 312th Avenue, or a little over a one-mile track. The storm blew down large cottonwood trees.

July 9, 2013: A pair of severe storms moved across northeastern South Dakota during the evening hours of the 9th. These storms caused extensive damage to crops, mainly west of Frederick in Brown County where beans and corn fields were destroyed. As the storms moved from Barnard, through Columbia, and into the Groton area, the hail increased to baseball size. There was also some structural damage to siding along with broken windows.

1860 - A hot blast of air in the middle of a sweltering summer pushed the mercury up to 115 degrees at Fort Scott and Lawrence, KS. (David Ludlum)

1882 - Ice formed on the streets of Cheyenne, WY, during a rare summer freeze. (David Ludlum)

1936 - The temperature hit an all-time record high of 106 degrees at the Central Park Observatory in New York City, a record which lasted until LaGuardia Airport hit 107 degrees on July 3rd in 1966. (The Weather Channel)

1968 - Columbus, MS received 15.68 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1979: Hurricane Bob was born in the Gulf of Mexico, becoming the first Atlantic Hurricane to be given a male name.

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Michigan. A tornado near Munising, MI, destroyed part of a commercial dog kennel, and one of the missing dogs was later found unharmed in a tree top half a mile away. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Alpena, MI, and Buffalo, NY, suffered through their sixth straight day of record heat. The percentage of total area in the country in the grips of severe to extreme drought reached 43 percent, the fourth highest total of record. The record of 61 percent occurred during the summer of 1934. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms produced very heavy rain in southern Lower Michigan and northern Indiana. Up to 5.6 inches of rain was reported in Berrien County, MI. Sioux Falls SD reported a record high of 108 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1997: Torrential rains in the Carpathian Mountains caused severe flooding in the Czech Republic, Poland, and German. In all, 104 people died as a result of the deluge. In the aftermath, authorities from each country blamed the others for the extent of the disaster.

2007: The Argentine capital experiences its first major snowfall since June 22, 1918, as a wet snow spreads a thin white mantle over the area. The storm hits on Argentina's Independence Day holiday thus adding to a festive air. Thousands of Argentines cheer the event, throwing snowballs in the streets. Local radio stations dust off an old tango song inspired by the 1918 snowfall: What a night!

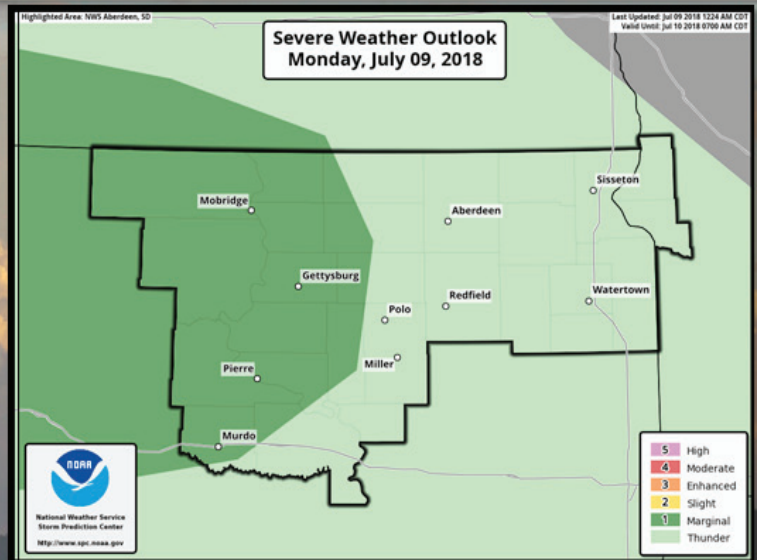
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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
Patchy Dense Fog then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Chance Showers then Slight Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Hot	Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny
High: 87 °F	Low: 66 °F	High: 92 °F	Low: 72 °F	High: 93 °F	Low: 66 °F	High: 86 °F

Strong Storms Possible Late This Evening

The main threats being strong winds and hail this evening and overnight, especially across central and north central South Dakota



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 7/9/2018 4:23 AM Central

Published on: 07/09/2018 at 4:28AM

A few storms are possible late this evening through tonight. Some storms maybe strong with hail and damaging winds the main threats.

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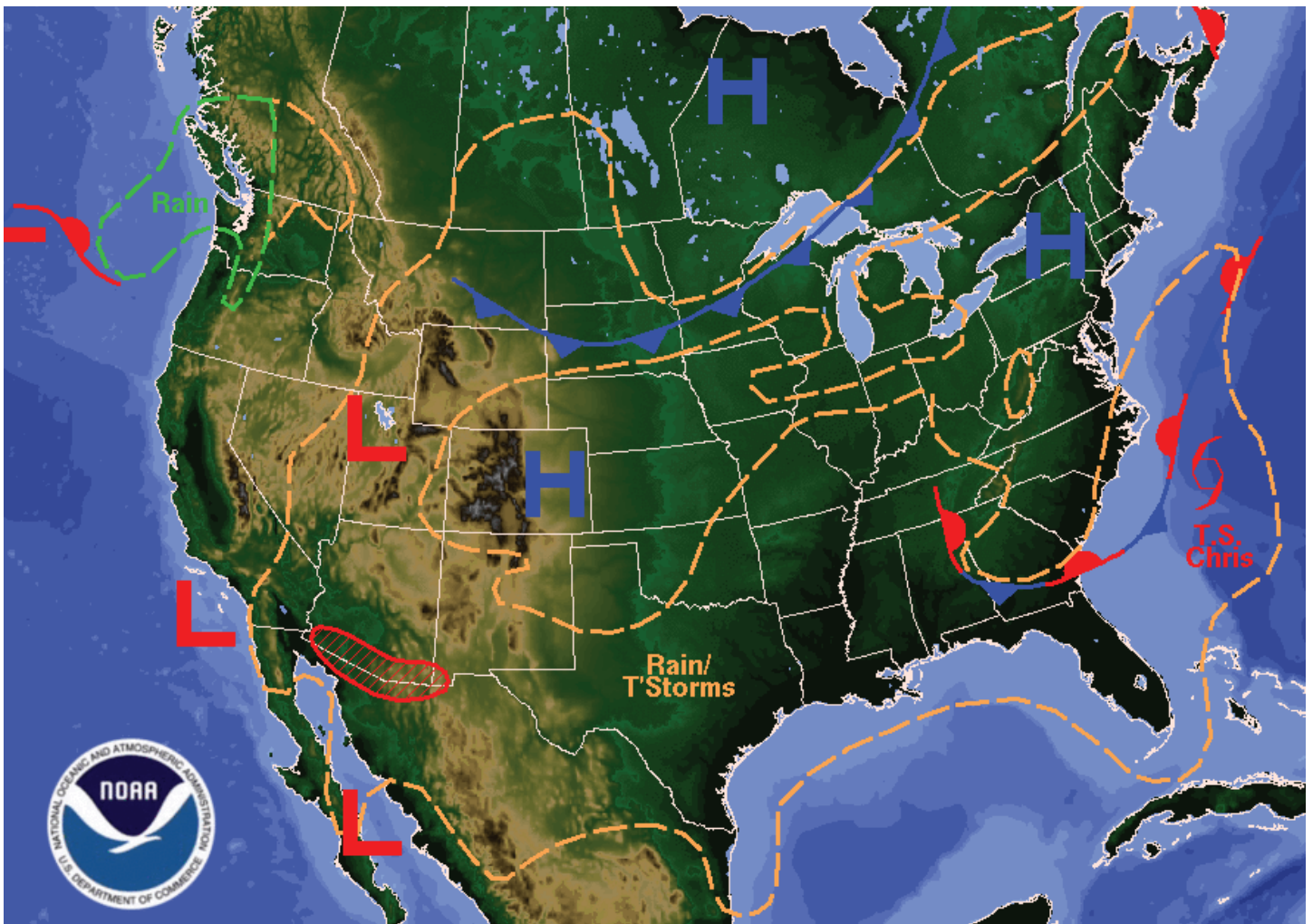
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 92.6 F at 3:57 PM
Heat Index: 109 at 2:34 PM
Low Outside Temp: 73.4 F at 6:29 AM
High Gust: 27.0 Mph at 7:55 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 115° in 1936
Record Low: 42° in 1981
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July: 0.75
Precip to date in July: 1.82
Average Precip to date: 11.60
Precip Year to Date: 7.64
Sunset Tonight: 9:23 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:55 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, Jul 09, 2018, issued 4:51 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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

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WHAT DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

We often hear that "the Bible is the best-selling book in the world." But having said that has little significance if it has no influence in and on the lives of its owners. It is one thing to own a Bible, it is quite another thing to live by its teachings, accept its plan of salvation and live a life that honors God.

There was a time in the history of the world when it was the most influential book ever written. It was the most honored book that was ever published and was more highly respected than any other book in the world. It was held in high esteem by everyone - whether they knew its Author or not.

With little doubt the Bible has been relegated to an inferior role in the world. It has been replaced by scholars who worship scientific knowledge. In their eyes, if a fact cannot be proven, it cannot be believed. Often the factual foundation for what many believe may be badly flawed. They say with certainty, however, that what they believe will be proven some day - just wait. Science never fails.

It is interesting that many ridicule the Bible for scientific reasons. But consider this: The Bible was never written to teach science, but it is scientifically correct. It was not written to teach history, but its contents are historically accurate. It was not written to teach psychology, but its contents are psychologically sound.

The Bible was written to give us an understanding of God and His truth. "I have more understanding than all my teachers," said the Psalmist. "You have taught me."

Prayer: Help us, Father, to put our trust in You and Your truth for in it we find salvation and life everlasting. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 119:99a & 119:102b I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

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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

News from the Associated Press

South Dakota survival complex includes 'showroom bunker'

By **SETH TUPPER**, Rapid City Journal

EDGEMONT, S.D. (AP) — The plains around here spread out like an ocean, so it's fitting that the man who wants to plant a survival community on those plains is comparing his concrete bunkers — including his newly outfitted showroom bunker — to underwater vessels.

"This is fully autonomous," he told the Rapid City Journal. "Each one is effectively like a submarine."

The man is Robert Vicino, of Del Mar, California. During the past couple of years, it has been widely reported by the Journal and others that Vicino's company, The Vivos Group, is trying to lease 575 former military munitions bunkers in southwest South Dakota to doomsday preppers, for use in case of an asteroid strike, a nuclear war or any other catastrophic event. Lease prices are as much as \$25,000 upfront, plus \$1,000 annually thereafter, and lessees are expected to outfit the empty bunkers themselves.

The global publicity has been met with some skepticism and predictions that the project will fizzle, and that the expansive grounds of the former munitions depot 8 miles south of Edgemont will remain nothing but a cattle pasture punctuated by hundreds of earth-covered, igloo-like structures.

After all, who would pay \$25,000 for an empty concrete bunker in one of the remotest corners of the country?

According to the inveterate salesman Vicino, plenty of people will, and many already have. He declined to disclose how many leases he has sold, and the Journal has no way to verify his claims, but he said the first phase of the project is nearly sold out. That first phase consists of the "F" block of bunkers, one of seven lettered blocks of bunkers being offered for lease.

Vicino's commitment to the project is evidenced by his showroom bunker, which the Journal recently in advance of Vicino's second annual xFest. The week-long event is an opportunity for the public to see the showroom bunker and camp on the grounds in exchange for a \$25-per-person entry fee.

Inside the showroom bunker, Vicino has transformed 2,200 square feet of empty space into a living arrangement with room for at least 16 people and furnishings to rival the comforts of home.

Just inside the bunker's massive concrete door, there is a mud room between two closets. One closet will house an air filtration system, and the other houses a water-pressurization and filtration system, and a hot water heater.

Piping is being laid to bring water from two deep wells that were drilled by the military to serve the munitions depot — which was essentially a giant warehouse complex for bombs and other weaponry — while it was active from 1942 to 1967.

Beyond the mudroom is a large common area with a full kitchen, dining tables, and a sitting area. Beyond that, the rest of the bunker has been divided into a total of nine rooms on either side of a central hallway.

One room has a television and comfortable couch; several rooms have beds, including a kids' room with bunk beds; there is a full bathroom with a composting toilet (Vicino said some lessees might install septic systems); and other rooms are empty and open for conversion to whatever purpose a prepper might desire. Each room has carpet or vinyl flooring, and the concrete walls are painted with various colors.

Above the rooms, in the gap between their flat ceilings and the top of the domed bunker, Vicino said there is attic space for a year's worth of food and supplies.

At the very back of the bunker, a utility room houses three barrels of diesel fuel for a generator. The generator is in a concrete-block-walled closet within the utility room, and an exhaust fan blows the generator's fumes out a small chimney atop the bunker.

There was a fume-like smell in the bunker during the tour. When asked if the smell might be coming from the generator and might therefore be dangerous, Vicino said all the fumes were being blown out the chimney. A man with Vicino said the smell was the scent of new construction.

Vicino said the generator is designed to run for six hours daily to charge a battery, which would then

power the bunker at other hours.

The earthen-covered bunkers need little to no climate control, Vicino said, but he said an air-handling system could capture and recycle heat given off by the generator in winter, and force warm air outside during the summer.

Vicino said the bunker could be locked down and self-sustaining for up to a year. But he will not permit anyone to live in the bunkers until a catastrophic event occurs; in the meantime, he said, government regulations prevent the use of windowless bunkers as permanent residential dwellings.

Vicino said his experience outfitting the showroom bunker demonstrated that other bunkers could be similarly outfitted in a few weeks with a crew of four at a cost of about \$75,000, on top of lease payments. The showroom bunker itself has already sold for \$150,000, Vicino said, to a customer who wanted to buy a pre-furnished bunker.

Vicino is also offering an alternative lease option, with an upfront payment of \$7,500 per person, for shared bunkers to house up to 24 people.

The 575 bunkers for lease are owned by a ranching company that grazes cattle on the land around them. Vicino is leasing the bunkers from that company, and then sub-leasing the bunkers to his customers. The rest of the bunkers on the massive site — there are said to be 802 in all — are under the control of other owners and are not being offered for lease by Vicino.

His bunkers alone stretch across 18 square miles, each one at least 400 feet apart, in a layout that Vicino said was originally intended to prevent accidental explosions from becoming a chain-reaction disaster.

The South Dakota bunker complex, which Vicino calls Vivos xPoint, is one of several survival-shelter projects that Vicino said he has under various states of development in places including Indiana, the Rocky Mountains, Germany and South Korea.

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

South Dakota man runs programs to help feed residents

By SAM FOSNESS, The Daily Republic

CHAMBERLAIN, S.D. (AP) — As Brian Hodgins scrapes off his grill, making way for pork tenderloins and burgers to feed attendees at River City Friday Nights in Chamberlain, he prepares to cook for a cause.

Hodgins, a general manager at Chamberlain Food Center, has been impacting the community by creating programs like “Shop of the Cop” and “Helping Ends Meat,” which are geared toward helping less fortunate kids and families through free-will donations.

“In Chamberlain, there is a serious need for helping kids with less fortune, and bringing programs to the community that help these kids is something I take very seriously,” Hodgins told The Daily Republic.

After Hodgins learned about a food vendor opening for this summer’s second River City Friday Night, he jumped on the opportunity. He’s donating \$1 out of each meal served to “Shop of the Cop.”

“Shop of the Cop,” is a program Hodgins brought to the community when he joined Chamberlain Food Center in April 2017. The program aims to give underprivileged kids in families that are unable to afford holiday expenses an opportunity to celebrate Christmas.

“Some kids in the community will wake up on Christmas morning this year, and it will be just another day,” he said. “Helping these kids get a chance to celebrate Christmas while allowing them to get a positive image of local law enforcement means the world to me.”

Hodgins sets aside proper funds through donations to have a law enforcement officer take each kid to Shopko and buy gifts within a budget.

Dan Comfert, owner of Chamberlain Food Center and CFC Food and Fuel, joined Hodgins and serve what they believe could be close to 1,000 guests on a recent evening in downtown Chamberlain for River City Friday Nights.

“There is a lot of low income families around here, and Brian has made such a big impact since he joined me and became a manager,” Comfert said. “This community supports us so well, and this is the least we

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can do to give back.”

RCFN kicked off on June 15, as downtown Chamberlain hosts the event each Friday night for five consecutive weeks. Each night is themed differently, and Friday’s theme was Military and Public Service Night, which has special significance for Hodgins.

“My father was a law enforcement officer killed in the line of duty, so the theme for this Friday’s River City Friday Nights means a lot to me, and I’m proud to be a part of it,” Hodgins said.

Comfert and Hodgins also had donation jars at their booth for “Helping Ends Meat,” a program that ensures every child will get a full lunch, not a “shame” lunch.

Hodgins was approached by an affiliate with South Dakota’s Backpack lunch program, which helps public schools provide free or reduced meals to children at risk of hunger and prompted him to come up with “Helping ends Meat.”

“I wanted to make sure every kid had a hot meal at lunch, instead of a cold cheese sandwich,” Hodgins said.

Hodgins is in the middle of working on his program “Helping Ends Meat,” with K-6 Chamberlain Principal Rocky Almond.

Mike Normile, executive director at the Chamberlain Chamber of Commerce, said Chamberlain Food Center was recognized as the 2017 Business of the Year.

“Brian has brought some very interesting programs that have helped impact our community, and Chamberlain is very fortunate to have him in the community,” Normile said.

Comfert and Hodgins plan to continue making their impact on the community they’ve served, as Chamberlain Food Center will be hosting a ribfest in the near future and raise money through free-will donations that will go toward the “Helping Ends Meat” program.

“I’m so grateful to have the opportunity to give back to the community and make an impact in the lives of people in Chamberlain,” Comfert said.

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

Woman dies in single-vehicle rollover in Harding County

BUFFALO, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a 55-year-old woman is dead after a one-vehicle crash in Harding County.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol says the accident happened Saturday afternoon north of Buffalo. The driver was southbound on U.S. Highway 85 when she lost control of the vehicle, which went into the east ditch and rolled.

The driver was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

The name of the victim has not been released.

Rapid City police start youth basketball league

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Rapid City Police Department has organized a basketball league aimed at keeping kids busy and out of trouble.

Black Hills Federal Credit Union sponsored two basketball hoops for the Night Court program, the Rapid City Journal reported. Scheels has provided basketballs while Volunteers of America purchased insurance.

The program began with almost 60 kids in its first week and grew to 17 teams in its third week.

Lt. Brian Blenner, who’s been a juvenile officer for two years, said he’s noticed that teen males have the highest arrest rates.

“If they’re not involved in orchestra, choir, football, basketball or some activity, that’s when we start seeing them,” he said.

Blenner said he hopes the program will improve connections between children and public safety officers.

“So we wanted to do what they wanted to do: and that’s basketball,” he said.

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Shannon Morgan's son is participating in the program.

"My son's father is on parole for the umpteenth time," Morgan said. "So this gives him an opportunity to build a different kind of relationship with police."

The games last for about 10 minutes or when the first team to reach 11 points.

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

ACLU: Less than half of child reunions will meet deadline

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union said it appears the Trump administration will miss a court-ordered deadline to reunite young children who were separated at the border with their parents in more than half of the cases.

The ACLU said late Sunday the administration provided it with a list of 102 children under 5 years old and that "appears likely that less than half will be reunited" by Tuesday's deadline.

The Justice Department asked U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw for more time last week but the judge on Friday did not grant a blanket extension, saying only that he would consider certain exceptions. He told the two sides to discuss possible exceptions and report to him Monday. The Justice Department was working through the weekend on a path toward unification and was preparing a progress report for the court.

Children were increasingly separated from their parents after Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in May that a zero-tolerance policy on illegally entering the country was in full effect. While parents were criminally prosecuted, children were placed in custody of the Health and Human Services Department.

Trump reversed course on June 20 amid an international outcry and said families should remain together.

On June 26, Sabraw set deadlines of Tuesday to reunite children under 5 with their families and July 26 for older children. Sabraw, who was appointed by President George W. Bush, wrote that the "situation has reached a crisis level" and that the "chaotic circumstances" were of the government's own making.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said Thursday there were "under 3,000" children separated from their parents. Previously, he said 2,047.

"It's extremely disappointing that the Trump administration looks like it will fail to reunite even half the children under 5 with their parent," said ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt. "These kids have already suffered so much because of this policy, and every extra day apart just adds to that pain."

The ACLU sued in March on behalf of a Congolese woman who was separated from her daughter for five months after seeking asylum at a San Diego border crossing and a Brazilian asylum-seeker who was separated from her son after an arrest for illegal entry in August near the Texas-New Mexico border.

Ambulance leaves Thai cave on 2nd day of rescue operation

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and KAWEEWIT KAEWJINDA, Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — An ambulance with flashing lights left the site of a flooded cave in northern Thailand where a youth soccer team has been trapped for two weeks, just hours after the second phase of a rescue operation was launched on Monday.

The ambulance drove toward a helipad, where a helicopter was seen taking off shortly after to the cheers of the crowd below. The same process was used Sunday for at least one of the four boys rescued in the first attempt at getting the 12 boys and their coach out of the underground complex.

Chiang Rai acting Gov. Narongsak Osatanakorn said the second phase began at 11 a.m. and authorities "hope to hear good news in the next few hours." Nine people remained trapped in the cave, including the team's coach, as of Monday morning.

"All conditions are still as good as they were yesterday," Narongsak told a news conference. "The boys' strength, the plan — today we are ready like before. And we will do it faster because we are afraid of the rain."

Authorities have been rushing to extract the boys, ages 11-16, and their coach from the cave as the an-

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nual monsoon bears down on the mountainous region in far northern Chiang Rai province. Workers have been laboring around the clock to pump water out of the cave, and authorities said Monday that heavy downpours overnight did not raise water levels inside.

The four boys pulled from the cave Sunday in an urgent and dangerous operation that involved them diving through the cave's dark, tight and twisting passages were happy and in good health, authorities said. "This morning they said they were hungry and wanted to eat khao pad grapao," Narongsak said, referring to a Thai dish of meat fried with chili and basil and served over rice.

Still, the four were undergoing medical checks in a hospital in the provincial capital and were not yet allowed close contact with relatives due to fear of infections. Relatives were able to see them through a glass partition, the governor said.

The boys and their coach went exploring in the massive Tham Luang Nang Non cave on June 23 after a soccer practice, and were cut off when a rainstorm flooded the cave. A massive international search operation was launched and it took 10 days to locate the boys, who had taken shelter on a dry slope deep in the complex.

The search and rescue operation has riveted people both in Thailand and internationally, with journalists from across the globe traveling to this town along the border with Myanmar to report on the ordeal.

Interior Minister Anupong Paojinda had said early Monday that the same group of expert divers who took part in Sunday's rescue would return to extricate the others because they know the cave conditions and what to do. He had said fresh air tanks needed to be laid along the underwater route.

Authorities have said extracting the entire team from the cave could take up to four days, but Sunday's success raised hopes that it could be done faster.

Sunday's mission involved 13 foreign divers and five Thai navy SEALs. Two divers accompanied each of the boys, all of whom have been learning to dive only since July 2, when searchers found them.

Cave rescue experts have said they consider an underwater escape to be a last resort, especially with people untrained in diving.

The death Friday of a former Thai navy SEAL underscored the risks. The diver, the first fatality of the rescue effort, was working in a volunteer capacity and died on a mission to place air canisters along the passage to where the boys are, necessary for divers to safely travel the five- to six-hour route.

There were several concerns that prompted authorities to move forward with the plan to dive the boys out. One was that it was unknown how safe and dry the area where they had taken shelter would stay as Thailand's rainy season, which lasts until at least late October, picks up pace.

The other, and perhaps more worrying, was that oxygen levels in the complex were falling close to dangerous levels.

Trump says he 'can't go wrong' with his top court contenders

By CATHERINE LUCEY, Associated Press

MORRISTOWN, N.J. (AP) — President Donald Trump is going down to the wire as he makes his choice on a replacement for retiring Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, but he says with his final four options "you can't go wrong."

Trump spoke to reporters Sunday afternoon as he concluded a weekend in New Jersey spent deliberating his decision at his private golf club amid furious lobbying and frenzied speculation. Relishing the suspense, Trump insisted he still hadn't locked down his decision, which he wants to keep under wraps until a 9 p.m. Monday announcement from the White House.

"I'm very close to making a final decision. And I believe this person will do a great job," Trump said. Asked by reporters how many people were being considered, the president said: "Let's say it's the four people ... they're excellent, every one."

While Trump didn't name the four, top contenders for the role have included federal appeals judges Brett Kavanaugh, Raymond Kethledge, Amy Coney Barrett and Thomas Hardiman. The White House has been preparing information materials on all four, who were part of a longer list of 25 names vetted by

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conservative groups.

Trump tweeted later Sunday that he was looking forward to the announcement and said an "exceptional person will be chosen!" He is hoping to replicate his successful announcement of Justice Neil Gorsuch last year.

The president has spent the days leading up to the decision mulling the pros and cons of the various options with aides and allies. He expressed renewed interest in Hardiman — the runner-up when Trump nominated Gorsuch, said two people with knowledge of his thinking who were not authorized to speak publicly. But the situation appeared to remain fluid.

Hardiman has a personal connection to the president, having served with Trump's sister on the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia. He also has a compelling personal story: He went to the University of Notre Dame as the first person in his family to go to college. He financed his law degree at the Georgetown University Law Center by driving a taxi.

Some conservatives have expressed concerns about Kavanaugh — a longtime judge and former clerk for Kennedy — questioning his commitment to social issues like abortion and noting his time serving under President George W. Bush as evidence he is a more establishment choice. But his supporters cite his experience and wide range of legal opinions. He is also former law clerk to Kennedy, as is Kethledge.

Barrett — a longtime Notre Dame Law School professor who became a federal judge last fall — excited social conservatives since she was questioned about her Roman Catholic faith in her nomination hearings last year, but her brief time on the bench has raised questions about her experience

Kethledge serves as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit in Cincinnati, Ohio. He co-authored a book with Army veteran Mike Erwin of The Positivity Project published last year called "Lead Yourself First: Inspiring Leadership Through Solitude."

Trump has enjoyed teasing details of his process in recent days, saying Thursday that he was down to four people and "of the four people, I have it down to three or two." On Saturday, he tweeted that a "Big decision" was coming soon. On Sunday he was back to citing "the four people."

The president and White House officials involved in the process have fielded calls and messages and have been on the receiving end of public pleas and op-eds for or against specific candidates since Kennedy announced on June 27 that he would retire this summer.

Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Roy Blunt of Missouri said Sunday that they believe any of the top four contenders could get confirmed by the GOP-majority Senate.

"They're good judges," Blunt said on NBC's "Meet the Press." He added: "I think they'd be fine justices of the Supreme Court. I do think the president has to think about who is the easiest to get confirmed here. And I expect we will do that on sort of a normal timetable, a couple of months."

Outside adviser Leonard Leo, currently on leave from the Federalist Society, said on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday that this kind of jockeying is standard, noting that "every potential nominee before announcement gets concerns expressed about them by people who might ultimately support them."

In blow to May, UK's top Brexit official quits government

By JILL LAWLESS, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's most senior official in charge of negotiating the country's exit from the European Union resigned Sunday, accusing Prime Minister Theresa May of undermining Brexit with her plan to keep close trade ties with the bloc.

Brexit Secretary David Davis quit just two days after May announced she had finally united her quarrelsome government behind a plan for a divorce deal with the EU.

In a blow to the beleaguered prime minister, Davis told May in a letter that the government's proposals for close trade and customs ties "will leave us in at best a weak negotiating position, and possibly an inescapable one."

Davis's late-night resignation undermined May's already fragile government, which has lost several ministers in the past year over sexual misconduct allegations and other scandals. Davis was a strong pro-Brexit

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voice in a Cabinet divided between supporters of a clean break with the bloc and those who want to keep close ties with Britain's biggest trading partner.

May's office said a replacement for Davis would be announced Monday.

His departure could embolden Brexit-supporting Conservative lawmakers — who have long considered May too prone to compromise with the EU — to challenge her leadership.

The staunchly pro-Brexit Conservative lawmaker Andrea Jenkyns tweeted: "Fantastic news. Well done David Davis for having the principal and guts to resign."

Jenkyns said Steve Baker, a junior minister in the Brexit department, had also quit. There was no immediate comment from Baker.

Less than nine months remain until Britain leaves the bloc on March 29, 2019, and the EU has warned Britain repeatedly that time is running out to seal a divorce deal.

On Friday, Davis and the rest of May's fractious Cabinet finally agreed on a plan for future trade ties with the EU.

May is due to brief lawmakers Monday on the plan hammered out during a 12-hour meeting at Chequers, the prime minister's country retreat. It seeks to keep the U.K. and the EU in a free-trade zone for goods, and commits Britain to maintaining the same rules as the bloc for goods and agricultural products.

Some Brexit-supporting lawmakers are angry at the proposals, saying they will keep Britain tethered to the bloc and unable to change its rules to strike new trade deals around the world.

In his resignation letter, Davis said the "common rule book" policy hands control of large swathes of our economy to the EU and is certainly not returning control of our laws in any real sense."

He said he was worried the government's negotiating approach would "lead to further demands for concessions" from Brussels.

"It seems to me that the national interest requires a secretary of state in my department that is an enthusiastic believer in your approach, and not merely a reluctant conscript," he wrote.

In a letter to Davis, May disagreed with his characterization of her plans, saying the deal she seeks "will undoubtedly mean the returning of powers from Brussels to the United Kingdom."

Conservative lawmaker Jacob Rees-Mogg, a leader of the party's "hard Brexit" faction, compared May's plan to an egg so softly boiled that it "isn't boiled at all."

"A very soft Brexit means that we haven't left, we are simply a rule-taker," he said.

Some Brexiteers dream of replacing May with a staunch Brexiteer, such as Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, who in the past has disagreed publicly with his boss.

Johnson has not commented publicly since Friday. But some senior pro-Brexit ministers have backed May's plan. Environment Secretary Michael Gove said Sunday that it did not contain everything he wanted but "I'm a realist."

"All those of us who believe that we want to execute a proper Brexit, and one that is the best deal for Britain, have an opportunity now to get behind the prime minister in order to negotiate that deal," he told the BBC.

What to expect in the Supreme Court confirmation battle

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The coming battle over a Supreme Court nominee promises to be a bruising one. Republicans are eager for conservatives to gain a firm majority on the court. Democrats are voicing alarm about what the new justice could mean for charged issues such as abortion rights and gay rights. The stakes are enormous, and advocacy groups that don't have to unveil their donors are spending heavily to shape the fight.

President Donald Trump's top contenders for the vacancy appear to be federal appeals judges Amy Coney Barrett, Thomas Hardiman, Brett Kavanaugh and Raymond Kethledge.

Trump planned to announce his pick Monday night. Regardless of his choice, it's likely that the closely divided Senate will be holding a momentous confirmation vote just weeks before the midterm election.

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A look at what to expect:

FINDING THE VOTES

Republicans may have a narrower margin for error than they did when the Senate confirmed Trump's first Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, by a vote of 54-45 in April 2017.

Democratic Sen. Doug Jones of Alabama has replaced Republican Sen. Luther Strange, cutting the GOP's Senate majority to 51-49. Meanwhile, Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona is battling brain cancer and has not been back to the Capitol since December.

That increases the focus on two Republicans — Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. Both support a woman's right to have an abortion and will be looking for assurances that the nominee would not overturn the Roe v Wade decision establishing abortion rights. Trump pledged in 2016 that he would be "putting pro-life justices on the court."

On the Democratic side, the focus will be on Sens. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. All three voted to confirm Gorsuch and are up for re-election in states that Trump won handily. Whatever they decide will upset a large group of voters in their home states.

If Collins and Murkowski vote "no" and Democrats all vote "no," the nomination would be blocked. If McCain were to miss the vote, only one GOP defection would be needed to block the nomination if all Democrats were opposed.

OLD WOUNDS

Democrats are still stinging from Republicans refusing to even grant a hearing to President Barack Obama's choice to serve on the Supreme Court, Merrick Garland.

They are calling on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to wait until after the November election to schedule a hearing and vote. McConnell has rejected that possibility, saying the decision to not fill the vacancy under Obama was prefaced on it being a presidential election year.

Democrats say McConnell is being hypocritical in moving forward with the nomination. While that argument won't sway Republicans, their strategy could stiffen Democratic resolve to oppose the nominee. Liberal advocacy groups are challenging Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., to keep the Democrats united.

SENATE RELATIONS

Much of the groundwork for a successful confirmation comes in private meetings that the nominee will have with individual senators in the coming weeks. For lawmakers who are not on the Judiciary Committee, it may be their only chance to talk with the nominee personally before a final vote. Gorsuch met with nearly three-quarters of the Senate in advance of his hearings.

The process is arduous, with the private meetings giving way to days of testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has 11 Republicans and 10 Democrats.

Hearings for the most recent nominees to the Supreme Court have lasted four or five days, though there were 11 days of hearings for Robert Bork's nomination in 1987.

On average, for Supreme Court nominees who have received hearings, the hearing occurred 39 days after the nomination was formally submitted, according to the Congressional Research Service.

The Judiciary Committee need not approve the nomination for it to advance. A negative recommendation or no recommendation merely alerts the Senate that a substantial number of committee members have reservations.

THE FIGHT OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL

Before the president has even made his announcement, advocacy groups are making clear they will play an important role in the coming fight.

Groups that support abortion rights are planning a "Day of Action" for August 26, the anniversary of the 1920 adoption of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote.

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The liberal advocacy group Demand Justice will spend \$5 million on ads through September and began airing spots Thursday in Maine and Alaska aimed at pressuring Collins and Murkowski. "Why won't she rule out voting for Trump's anti-choice picks?" both ads ask.

It also plans to run ads next week in Manchin's, Donnelly's and Heitkamp's home states with a softer tone, asking them to continue protecting people with pre-existing health conditions by opposing a nominee who'd threaten that.

Meanwhile, the conservative Judicial Crisis Network is targeting vulnerable Democratic incumbents in its ad campaigns. The deep-pocketed group advertised against Senate confirmation of Garland and spent millions more advocating for Gorsuch.

A 'Supreme' show: Trump savors big reveal for court choice

By CATHERINE LUCEY and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

BERKELEY HEIGHTS, N.J. (AP) — A family separation crisis of his own making continues at the border. His Environmental Protection Agency chief just quit amid mounting scandals. And he's about to meet with an adversary accused of meddling in the 2016 election.

But President Donald Trump has every confidence that on Monday night, the nation's attention will be right where he wants it.

After more than a week of pitched speculation, Trump will go on prime-time television to reveal his choice to fill the Supreme Court seat vacated by retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy, selecting a conservative designed to rally Republican voters in a midterm election year. And with that, the optics-obsessed president will be in his comfort zone — taking center stage in a massive show.

Nearly 18 months after Trump set in motion Justice Neil Gorsuch's nomination, the reality star-turned-president is more seasoned, more embittered and increasingly comfortable exerting his will over the machinery of government and his own staff. His upcoming "Supreme" show is the latest example of Trump's push to remake the federal bench with young conservative judges, a crusade he believes will energize GOP voters concerned about the state of the judiciary.

Trump is largely following the same playbook this time as when he successfully rolled out Gorsuch's nomination in January 2017. White House aides have strict instructions to keep information under wraps so Trump himself can make the big reveal. The president was gleeful when Gorsuch's name didn't leak out early.

"So was that a surprise?" Trump said, after announcing his decision.

Still, there are differences this time. In the last go-around, the White House relied heavily on outside consultants to push Gorsuch over the finish line. Despite a staff exodus that has left key vacancies across the West Wing, the White House this time is retaining more control over the nomination and confirmation processes. A war room of communications, legal and research staff has been assembled in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to promote and defend the nominee.

Trump has reveled in building up suspense in the days leading up to his speech, offering fragments of information here and there but strategically keeping the guessing game alive. Drawn from a public list of 25 candidates approved by conservative groups, the president's top contenders include federal appeals court judges Brett Kavanaugh, Raymond Kethledge, Amy Coney Barrett and Thomas Hardiman. The White House has been preparing confirmation materials on all four.

Drawing out the suspense the day before his announcement, Trump told reporters in New Jersey on Sunday that he was "getting very close to making a decision." He then said it would be "decided tonight or tomorrow."

Past announcements of Supreme Court nominees were not made in prime time. President Barack Obama announced the selection of Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor from the White House during the day.

More than 33 million viewers watched Trump announce Gorsuch last year. The audience edged the 31.3 million who watched Obama's final State of the Union address but was dwarfed by the 56.5 million

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who saw Obama announce the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011, among the decade's most-watched presidential speeches.

The theatrics surrounding Trump's court selection should come as no surprise. His presidency is rife with made-for-TV moments. With Trump, a Cabinet meeting becomes a freewheeling speech to the nation, and a walk to Marine One turns into an impromptu news conference. He recently strode out the door of the White House to participate in a Fox News live broadcast from the driveway. And his Singapore summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was staged as a massive media event.

"Everything Trump does gets more sensational than with past presidents," said Jeffrey McCaul, a communications professor at DePauw University. "I'm sure he's hoping for a huge prime-time audience, and he'll probably get it."

Trump has also packed his administration with cable television veterans. National security adviser John Bolton is a former Fox contributor, and economic adviser Larry Kudlow is a former CNBC personality. Trump's latest White House addition is former Fox News executive Bill Shine, the new deputy chief of staff for communications.

Theatrics aside, advisers stress that Trump's judicial selection process has been serious. He interviewed six top prospects and has been reviewing his options with lawmakers and outside advisers. In addition, Vice President Mike Pence met in person with Kethledge, Barrett and Kavanaugh, said a person familiar with the process who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

In an administration light on policy achievements, the president often views media attention — and positive headlines — as a victory unto itself.

But Trump recognizes that the court pick offers both sizzle and substance, giving him the opportunity to tip the balance on the court toward conservatives for decades.

Douglas Brinkley, a history professor at Rice University, said the nomination has the added benefit of dominating the news, potentially overshadowing coverage of migrant children separated from their parents at the border.

Said Brinkley: "It's been a tough summer until this gift that Kennedy gave him."

Miller reported from Washington.

4 rescued from Thai cave in risky operation; 9 remain inside

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and KAWEEWIT KAEWJINDA, Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — Expert divers Sunday rescued four of 12 boys from a flooded cave in northern Thailand where they were trapped with their soccer coach for more than two weeks, as a dangerous and complicated operation unfolded amid heavy rain and the threat of rising water underground.

Eight boys and the coach remained inside the Tham Luang Nang Non cave as authorities paused the international effort to replenish air tanks along the treacherous exit route.

Extracting everyone could take up to four days, but the initial success raised hopes that could be done. "The operation went much better than expected," said Chiang Rai acting Gov. Narongsak Osatanakorn, who is overseeing the mission.

He told reporters the four rescued boys were taken to the hospital in the town of Chiang Rai, the provincial capital, for evaluation, and the next phase of the operation will resume after about 10-20 hours.

The names of the rescued boys were not released.

His announcement, at a news conference more than an hour after helicopters and ambulances were seen rushing from the cave area, drew cheers and applause.

Narongsak had dubbed Sunday to be "D-day" as the complicated effort was launched in the morning.

He said 13 foreign divers and five Thai navy SEALs were taking part in the key leg of the rescue: taking the boys from where they have been sheltering and through dark, tight and twisting passageways filled with muddy water and strong currents.

Two divers were to accompany each of the boys, all of whom have been learning to dive only since July

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2, when the first searchers found them.

Cave rescue experts consider an underwater escape to be a last resort, especially with people untrained in diving.

The death Friday of a former Thai navy SEAL, Saman Gunan, underscored the risks. The diver, the first fatality of the rescue effort, was working in a volunteer capacity and died on a mission to place oxygen canisters along the route.

But Narongsak said earlier that recent mild weather and falling water levels had created optimal conditions for an underwater evacuation. Those conditions won't last if the rain resumes, he said.

After the four boys were removed from the cave, heavy rain started falling.

The potential for rising water and the dwindling oxygen levels added to the urgency of getting the team out. Efforts to pump water out of the cave have been set back by heavy downpours.

Narongsak said Saturday that experts told him new rain could shrink the unflooded space where the boys are sheltering to just 10 square meters (108 square feet).

The next phase of the operation would start sometime Monday after rescue teams replenish the supply of oxygen tanks along the route.

On Sunday night, Thai navy SEALs posted a celebratory note on their Facebook page, saying: "Have sweet dreams everyone. Good night. Hooyah."

The boys and their coach, whose team is known as the Wild Boars, became stranded when they were exploring the cave after a practice game on June 23.

Monsoon flooding cut off their escape route and prevented rescuers from finding them for almost 10 days.

The ordeal has riveted Thailand and captured the world's attention. The search and rescue operation has involved dozens of international experts and rescuers, including a U.S. military team.

Elon Musk's Space X rocket company tested a "tiny kid-sized submarine" that could potentially help the children through the narrow, flooded cave passageways. A spokesman for Musk's Boring Co. tunneling unit, which has four engineers at the cave, said in an email Sunday that Thai officials had requested the device. If the tests were successful, the sub would be placed on a 17-hour flight to Thailand. He posted a video of a diver testing the device in a pool.

President Donald Trump tweeted Sunday: "The U.S. is working very closely with the Government of Thailand to help get all of the children out of the cave and to safety. Very brave and talented people!"

The boys sounded calm and reassuring in handwritten notes to their families that were made public Saturday. The notes were sent out with divers who made an 11-hour, back-and-forth journey.

One of the boys, identified as Tun, wrote: "Mom and Dad, please don't worry, I am fine. I've told Yod to get ready to take me out for fried chicken. With love."

"Don't be worried," wrote another boy, Mick. "I miss everyone. Grandpa, Uncle, Mom, Dad and siblings, I love you all. I'm happy being here inside, the navy SEALs have taken good care. Love you all."

One particularly touching note from another boy said: "I'm doing fine, but the air is a little cold, but don't worry. Although, don't forget to set up my birthday party."

In a letter of his own, coach Ekapol Chanthawong apologized to the boys' parents for the ordeal.

"To the parents of all the kids, right now the kids are all fine, the crew are taking good care. I promise I will care for the kids as best as possible. I want to say thanks for all the support and I want to apologize to the parents," he wrote.

The Latest: Helicopter lands close to hospital near cave

MAE SAI, Thailand (AP) — The Latest on the rescue of a youth soccer team from a flooded cave in Thailand (all times local):

5:40 p.m.

Thai public television has aired live video of a medivac helicopter landing close to a hospital in the city of Chiang Rai, near the site of the cave where a youth soccer team has been trapped for more than two weeks.

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Medics appeared to remove one person on a stretcher but hid the person's identity behind multiple white umbrellas. An ambulance was seen leaving the scene immediately afterward early Monday evening.

Less than an hour earlier, an ambulance with flashing lights had left the cave complex, hours after the start of the second phase of an operation to rescue the soccer team.

As of Monday morning, nine people remained trapped in the cave, including the 12-member team's coach, after four boys were rescued on Sunday, the first day of the rescue operation.

5:15 p.m.

An ambulance with flashing lights has left a cave complex in northern Thailand hours after the start of the second phase of an operation to rescue a youth soccer team trapped inside the flooded cave for more than two weeks.

After the ambulance was seen leaving the complex at around 5 p.m. Monday, a helicopter took off. Authorities have said helicopters were ready to take cave evacuees to a hospital. It was unclear who was inside the ambulance or the helicopter.

Chiang Rai acting Gov. Narongsak Osatanakorn, who is heading the rescue, had said the second phase began at 11 a.m. Monday and authorities "hope to hear good news in the next few hours."

Nine people remained trapped in the cave, including the team's coach, after four boys were rescued on Sunday, the first day of the rescue operation.

3 p.m.

Thai authorities say they have resumed operations to rescue members of a boys' soccer team trapped in a flooded cave after successfully getting four of the boys out Sunday.

They said the four boys already rescued are hungry but in good health in a hospital.

The second operation started at 11 a.m. local time Monday. It takes several hours.

Officials said at a news conference that the parents of the rescued boys, whose names have not been released, have not yet been allowed to have physical contact with them, pending more extensive examination of their physical condition.

Eight boys are still inside the cave and along with the team coach. The operation to get them out was supposed to resume only after new oxygen tanks could be placed along their route of escape, which is partially underwater.

11:35 a.m.

Australia's foreign minister says 19 Australian personnel are involved in the Thailand cave rescue operation including a doctor who's played an essential part in assessing which boys can leave and in what order.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop told reporters in Australia that anesthetist and experienced cave diver Richard Harris is working with the Thai medical team inside the cave "to make the decisions about the order in which the boys were to be extracted."

Expert divers Sunday rescued four of 12 boys from a flooded cave in northern Thailand where they were trapped with their soccer coach for more than two weeks. Crews will have to replenish air tanks along the route before rescuing the others.

10:35 a.m.

Thailand's interior minister says the same divers who took part in Sunday's rescue of four boys trapped in a flooded cave will also conduct the next operation as they know the cave conditions and what to do.

In comments released by the government, Interior Minister Anupong Paojinda said officials were meeting Monday morning about the next stage of the operation and how to extract the remaining nine people from the cave in the country's north.

Anupong said divers need to place more air canisters along the underwater route to where the boys and their coach have been trapped since June 23. He said that process can take several hours.

He said the boys rescued Sunday are strong and safe but need to undergo detailed medical checks.

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8:45 a.m.

Rescuers at a Thai cave where eight boys and their soccer coach remain trapped have awoken to cloudy skies, after a night in which heavy monsoon rains lashed the mountainous region for several hours.

It was not immediately clear Monday how the overnight rains had impacted water levels inside the flooded cave. Officials have said storms forecast for Chiang Rai province in Thailand's far north had factored into their decision to go ahead with a complicated and dangerous plan to have the boys and their coach dive out of the cave.

Thailand's Meteorological Department said there was a 60 percent chance of rain Monday with thunderstorms forecast throughout the week.

Four of the boys were rescued on Sunday, and authorities said the next phase could begin any time within a 10-hour window that began about 7 a.m. Monday.

8 a.m.

Elon Musk's Space X rocket company is testing a "kid-sized submarine" that could be sent to help boys trapped in a flooded Thailand cave.

Musk posted videos on Twitter of the aluminum sub being tested at a swimming pool Sunday midafternoon California time. If the tests are successful, the sub would be placed on a 17-hour flight to Thailand.

Four of the boys were rescued on Sunday, and authorities are now working to replenish air tanks along the cave's treacherous exit route. They say rescuing the eight remaining boys and their soccer coach could take up to four days.

A spokesman for Musk's Boring Co. tunneling unit, which has four engineers at the cave, has said Thai officials requested the device, which could potentially help the children through narrow, flooded cave passageways.

2:10 a.m.

Officials say it could take up to four days to complete the rescue of eight boys and their soccer coach from inside a northern Thailand cave.

Authorities temporarily stopped their efforts Monday to replenish air tanks along the cave's treacherous exit route.

Expert divers on Sunday managed to get four of the 12 boys to safety. They were quickly transported to a hospital in the town of Chiang Rai, the provincial capital.

The names of the rescued boys were not released.

Rescuers have been navigating a dangerous and complicated plan to get the children out under the threat of heavy rain and rising water underground.

The entire group had been trapped for more than two weeks.

Looting follows violent fuel protests in Haitian capital

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Looters pillaged burned and vandalized shops in Haiti's capital Sunday following two days of violent protests over the government's attempt to raise fuel prices.

Journalists saw young men stripping shelves bare in some supermarkets that were charred from the protests. Several bodies lay among debris scattered in the streets.

With the situation still chaotic, the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince on Sunday warned U.S. citizens to shelter in place. It noted that many airline flights had been cancelled and said, "The airport has limited food and water available."

"Telecommunications services, including Internet and phone lines, have been affected throughout Haiti," the embassy added. "It may be difficult to reach people through normal communication methods."

American Airlines, which had canceled 10 flights since Saturday, said three of its planes had left Sunday from Port-au-Prince and the northern city of Cap-Haitien bound for Miami and New York. Dozens of people

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remained stranded at the airport in Port-au-Prince, unable to return to their hotels or other accommodations due to the blockage of streets and lack of transportation.

The cancellation of flights stranded church groups and volunteers from a number of U.S. states, including South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

Chapin United Methodist Church in South Carolina posted online that its mission team was safe but stranded. Marcy Kenny, assimilation minister for the church, told The State newspaper that the group hoped the unrest would abate enough for them to safely make it to the airport.

A North Carolina doctor and his son were part of another medical mission group that was unable to leave. Shelley Collins told WRAL-TV that her husband, James, and their son made it to an airport but could not fly out.

Police Director-General Michel-Ange Gedeon ordered officers to crack down on what he called "bandits who disturb the peace and security of the country."

At least three people were killed in protests Friday, and police said the bodies of four people were found Sunday in the streets of the Delmas district, though they didn't say if that was related to the protests.

The government on Saturday scrapped plans to raise fuel prices to 38 percent to 51 percent.

'Ant-Man and the Wasp' buzzes to \$76 million debut

By JAKE COYLE, AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Despite its heroes' diminutive size, "Ant-Man and the Wasp" opened with typical Marvel might at the box office, with an estimated \$76 million in ticket sales.

According to studio estimates Sunday, the "Ant-Man" sequel easily surpassed the \$57 million debut of the 2015 original in North America. The 20th film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe — and the 20th to debut no. 1 at the box office — "Ant-Man and the Wasp" comes on the heels of two mammoth Marvel successes this year: "Black Panther" and "Avengers: Infinity War."

While the first "Ant-Man," starring Paul Rudd, had a rocky road to release due to a late director change, the rollout of the sequel, directed by Peyton Reed, was smoother. Cathleen Taff, head of distribution for Disney, credited a marketing campaign that played up the film as a more modest, funny and light-hearted change-of-pace for Marvel following the grandiosity of "Infinity War."

"It came in solidly within of our range and definitely sized-up the sequel," said Taff.

"Ant-Man and the Wasp," with a reported production budget of about \$160 million, may have performed well enough to firmly establish its place among Marvel's more main-line superheroes. Reviews were good (86 percent fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and audiences gave it an A-minus CinemaScore. Ticket sales overseas added another \$85 million.

Befitting the summer season, the weekend's top five films were all sequels. The weekend's other new wide release was Blumhouse Productions' "The First Purge," the fourth film in the low-budget horror franchise about an annual 12-hour period of lawlessness. With July 4th falling on a Wednesday and thus depriving Hollywood of a holiday weekend, Universal opted to release "The First Purge" on Wednesday, while "Ant-Man" waited for the customary Thursday night previews.

"The First Purge" debuted with \$32 million over the five-day frame, and \$18.5 million for the weekend. Particularly following 2016's "The Purge: Election Year," the franchise has made satirical jabs at social commentary. "First Purge," a Staten Island-set prequel, focuses on the ritual's origins as a method of culling minorities.

"Blumhouse just continues to overdeliver for us," said Jim Orr, distribution chief for Blumhouse's distribution partner, Universal. "The Purge franchise continually comments on issues that are current in society, obviously through a kind of dark and distorted lens. Tying it to the July Fourth holiday made a lot of sense."

Some Los Angeles theaters overperformed, executives said, likely due to those seeking air conditioning during the Southern California heat wave. But whether due to travel- or weather-related reasons, nationwide ticket sales were unexpectedly soft on Saturday. The weekend was about 10 percent off the pace of the same weekend last year, when "Spider-Man: Homecoming" opened, according to comScore. But the

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summer box office overall, up 13.5 percent from last year, remains robust.

The films that trailed "Ant-Man" hit their own milestones. Disney's "Incredibles 2" passed "Finding Dory" to become Pixar's top-grossing film domestically, not accounting for inflation. It earned \$29 million in its fourth weekend, bringing its domestic total to \$504 million and its worldwide haul to \$773 million.

With \$28.6 million in its third weekend, Universal's "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom" crossed \$1 billion worldwide. It's done especially well internationally, which has made up 69 percent of the dinosaur sequel's global footprint.

As a clear alternative to the multiplex offerings, the "Mister Rogers" documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor" continued to perform as an art-house sensation. Ranking ninth for the weekend (in between "Tag" and "Deadpool 2"), the Focus Features release earned \$2.6 million in 893 theaters over the weekend. With \$12.4 million in five weeks, it's the year's top documentary at the box office, edging out the Ruth Bader Ginsburg doc "RBG."

Boots Riley's surreal satire "Sorry to Bother You," starring Lakeith Stanfield and Tessa Thompson, made one of the year's best debuts, per-screen. The acclaimed Annapurna Pictures release opened with \$717,302 on 16 screens, good for a per-screen average of \$44,831. The directorial debut of the hip-hop pioneer Riley, "Sorry to Bother You" is about a black telemarketer who's catapulted into success after he adopts a "white voice."

Movie theaters in China were packed by a based-on-a-true-story black comedy about a man who becomes a savior to leukemia patients by smuggling cheaper generic drugs from India. The Chinese film "Dying to Survive," which has drawn comparisons to the AIDS drama "Dallas Buyers Club," opened with \$146 million in the world's second largest movie market, according to comScore. .

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to comScore. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday also are included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Ant-Man and the Wasp," \$76 million (\$85 million international).
2. "Incredibles 2," \$29 million (\$35.7 million international).
3. "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," \$28.6 million (\$27.6 million international).
4. "The First Purge," \$17.2 million (\$10.9 million international).
5. "Sicario: Day of the Soldado," \$7.3 million (\$3 million international).
6. "Uncle Drew," \$6.6 million.
7. "Ocean's 8," \$5.3 million (\$7.7 million international).
8. "Tag," \$3.1 million (\$2.9 million international).
9. "Won't You Be My Neighbor," \$2.6 million.
10. "Deadpool 2," \$1.7 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at international theaters (excluding the U.S. and Canada), according to comScore:

1. "Dying to Survive," \$146 million.
2. "Ant-Man and the Wasp," \$85 million.
3. "Incredibles 2," \$35.7 million.
4. "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," \$27.6 million.
5. "Sanju," \$12.2 million.
6. "The First Purge," \$10.9 million.
7. "Happy Dad and Son 3: Adventure in Russia," \$10 million.
8. "Animal World," \$8.5 million.
9. "Ocean's 8," \$7.7 million.
10. "Witch," \$4.1 million.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Off to Europe: Trump to meet worried NATO heads, then Putin

By JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the established global order on shaky footing, President Donald Trump's weeklong trip to Europe will test already strained bonds with some of the United States' closest allies, then put him face to face with the leader of the country whose electoral interference was meant to help put him in office.

Trump departs Tuesday on a four-nation tour amid simmering disputes over trade and military spending with fellow Western democracies and speculation about whether he will rebuke or embrace Russian President Vladimir Putin. He meets the Russian leader in Helsinki as the finale of a trip with earlier stops in Belgium, England and Scotland.

Trump has shown little regard for America's traditional bonds with the Old World, publicly upbraiding world leaders at NATO's new headquarters a year ago for not spending enough on defense and delivering searing indictments of Western trading partners last month at an international summit in Canada. On this trip, after meeting with NATO leaders in Brussels, he'll travel to the United Kingdom, where widespread protests are expected, before he heads to one of his Scottish golf resorts for the weekend.

In the run-up to his trip, the president did little to ease European concerns by delivering fresh broadsides against NATO, an intergovernmental military alliance of 29 North American and European countries aimed at countering possible Russian aggression.

"I'll tell NATO: 'You've got to start paying your bills,'" Trump pledged at a rally last week in Montana in which he bemoaned that Americans were "the schmucks that are paying for the whole thing."

He then laced into German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who will be in attendance in Brussels, complaining about how much the United States put toward Germany's defense: "And I said, you know, Angela, I can't guarantee it, but we're protecting you, and it means a lot more to you. ... I don't know how much protection we get from protecting you."

At the same time, he declared that "Putin is fine" and that he had been preparing for their summit "all my life."

Experts fear the trip could produce a repeat of the dynamics from Trump's last trip abroad, when he admonished Group of Seven allied nations at a summit in Canada before heading to Singapore, where he showered praise on one of America's longest-standing adversaries, North Korea's Kim Jong Un.

"What people are worried about this trip is he'll have equally difficult interactions with his NATO counterparts," including Merkel and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, said James Goldgeier, a visiting senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and professor at American University, who is an expert in NATO and security alliances.

"The main concern is he will spend much of the time berating them on not spending enough on defense" before having "a love fest with Putin, like he did with Chairman Kim," Goldgeier said. He added that if Trump is warmer toward Putin than the leaders of the military alliance that was founded to protect Europe from Soviet threats, it would go "a long way to undermining NATO, undermining the trans-Atlantic relationship, undermining our relationship with our allies."

Trump is expected to continue to press NATO nations to fulfill their commitments to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. Trump has argued that countries not paying their fair share are freeloading off the U.S. and has threatened to stop protecting those he feels pay too little.

NATO estimates that 15 members, or just over half, will meet the benchmark by 2024 based on current trends. Trump sent letters to the leaders of several NATO countries ahead of his visit, warning that it would become "increasingly difficult to justify to American citizens why some countries fail to meet our shared collective security commitments."

The ties between the U.S. and many of its longest-standing allies have frayed since Trump took office and put his "America first" agenda into practice. He has pulled the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement as well as the Iran nuclear deal, slapped tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, and threatened additional

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tariffs on products like automobiles.

Although administration officials point to the long-standing alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom, Trump's itinerary will largely keep him out of central London, where significant protests are expected. Instead, a series of events — a black-tie dinner with business leaders, a meeting with Prime Minister Theresa May and an audience with Queen Elizabeth II — will happen outside the bustling city, where Mayor Sadiq Khan has been in a verbal battle with Trump.

Woody Johnson, Trump's ambassador to the U.K., said the president is aware of the planned protests but insisted that Trump "appreciates free speech" in both countries.

The G-7 world leaders' meeting in Canada last month ended in tumult when Trump suddenly retracted his endorsement of the group's final joint statement after his departure and railed against Trudeau by midflight tweet en route to Singapore for his summit with Kim, a meeting that critics said legitimized Kim on the world stage without securing a clear pathway to the denuclearization.

"The president was willing to offer concessions to Kim without getting anything specific or concrete in return," said Jeffrey Rathke, deputy director of the Europe Program at the nonpartisan Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He said the decision had sparked "kind of a frenzy" about what concessions Trump might be willing to offer Putin without NATO signoff.

On Putin's wish list: an end to U.S. military exercises in Europe and the scaling back of U.S. forces there. The summit also will offer Putin a chance to try to persuade Trump to lift some of the sanctions imposed on Russia over its 2014 annexation of Crimea, its support for separatists fighting the government in eastern Ukraine and its alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Trump has already met with Putin twice as president, including a meeting on the sidelines of a summit in Germany that stretched for more than two hours. But plans for a full-fledged summit had been delayed amid the FBI and congressional probes into whether Trump campaign aides coordinated with Russia to help Trump win the election. Trump has dismissed those probes as nothing but a "witch hunt."

Saying that he wants to improve relations with Moscow, Trump has repeatedly cast doubt on conclusions by the nation's intelligence agencies that Russia tried to help him win the 2016 election, noting that Putin has "strongly" denied being behind the interference. U.S. officials said the two sides this time would be discussing Russian election meddling, Russia's incursions in the Ukraine and involvement in Syria.

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California, long a holdout, adopts mass immigration hearings

By ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A federal judge was irritated when an attorney for dozens of people charged with crossing the border illegally asked for more time to meet with clients before setting bond.

It was pushing 5 p.m. on a Friday in May, and the judge in San Diego was wrestling with a surge in her caseload that resulted from the Trump administration's "zero-tolerance" policy to prosecute everyone who enters the country illegally.

"It's been a long week," U.S. Magistrate Judge Nita Stormes said, suggesting that the court needed more judges and public defenders.

On Monday, the court will try to curb the caseload by assigning a judge to oversee misdemeanor immigration cases and holding large, group hearings that critics call assembly-line justice. The move puts California in line with other border states, and it captures the strain that zero tolerance has put on federal courts, particularly in the nation's most populous state, which has long resisted mass hearings for illegal border crossing.

Immigration cases were light for the first few months of the year in the Southern District of California. There were no illegal-entry cases in February, only four in March and 16 in April, according to the clerk's office. But when zero tolerance took full effect, the caseload skyrocketed to 513 in May and 821 in June.

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Those numbers pale when compared to other border districts that have been doing mass hearings for years. The Southern District of Texas' four border-area courts handled nearly 9,500 illegal-entry cases in the eight weeks after zero tolerance took full effect, though those courts saw their numbers balloon too. The District of Arizona carried more than three times California's number of cases in May.

The mass hearings can be traced back to December 2005, when the Border Patrol introduced "Operation Streamline" in Del Rio, Texas, to prosecute every illegal entry. Over the next three years, the practice spread to every federal court district along the border except California, whose federal prosecutors argued that scarce resources could be better spent going after smuggling networks and repeat crossers with serious criminal histories.

In Tucson, Arizona, a judge sees up to 75 defendants a day, about five to seven at a time, in hearings that last about two hours. The immigrants show up in the clothes they wore when they were arrested, wearing headphones for translation.

In the McAllen, Texas, federal courthouse 73 people who were cuffed at the ankles lined up in six rows of wood benches. They pleaded guilty at the same time in a morning session last month. About two-thirds were sentenced to the few days of time served. The rest got between 10 and 60 days because they had been previously deported or had criminal convictions.

Carol Lam, the U.S. attorney in San Diego when Streamline began until 2007, said zero-tolerance programs are "ultimately ineffective," saying they boost conviction numbers but don't have a proportionate impact on reducing crime.

"The sentences become much shorter to the point where everyone is getting time served or a few weeks in custody, and they're turned around and come back in again," she said. "At the end of the day, the system grinds down to a halt and things start deteriorating."

Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has held up Streamline as a model, was the first attorney general to seriously challenge California's position. In May, he announced that the Homeland Security Department would refer every arrest for prosecution, which led to widespread separation of children from their parents. Adam Braverman, the newly appointed U.S. attorney in San Diego, had no room to push back.

When prosecutors in California began trying more cases in May, Chief District Judge Barry Moskowitz formed a committee of attorneys and government agencies to minimize the impact, writing that the increased load would cause "strains, issues and problems."

The court has struggled to get people X-rayed for safety reasons, attorneys say. Jail space has been lacking, requiring some defendants to be housed at jails in Santa Ana and San Bernardino — at least an hour's drive away — and some in San Luis, Arizona, a nearly four-hour drive from San Diego. Court often runs beyond business hours, once lasting until 10 p.m.

The U.S. attorney's office in San Diego said in a statement that it was "committed to securing the border and enforcing criminal immigration laws in a way that respects due process and the dignity of all involved."

The office noted that other districts along the border — in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas — have operated this way for about a decade. Prosecutors from San Diego visited Tucson last month for a firsthand look.

Defense attorneys object to the new court. Reuben Camper Cahn, executive director of Federal Defenders of San Diego Inc., called it separate but unequal and compared it to slavery tribunals.

"They will appear in chains ... their cases will be heard en masse," he wrote the chief judge.

"In this moment, all of us — citizens, lawyers, jurists — must seek the better angels of our nature to navigate the challenges presented," Cahn wrote last month. "If the Court does this, it will surely reject the (Justice Department's) abhorrent proposal."

Associated Press Writer Astrid Galvan in Phoenix contributed to this report.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 9, the 190th day of 2018. There are 175 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 9, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was read aloud to Gen. George Washington's troops in New York.

On this date:

In 1540, England's King Henry VIII had his 6-month-old marriage to his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, annulled.

In 1816, Argentina declared independence from Spain.

In 1850, the 12th president of the United States, Zachary Taylor, died after serving only 16 months of his term. (He was succeeded by Millard Fillmore.)

In 1918, 101 people were killed in a train collision in Nashville, Tennessee. The Distinguished Service Cross was established by an Act of Congress.

In 1937, a fire at 20th Century Fox's film storage facility in Little Ferry, New Jersey, destroyed most of the studio's silent films.

In 1951, President Harry S. Truman asked Congress to formally end the state of war between the United States and Germany. (An official end to the state of war was declared in October 1951.)

In 1962, pop artist Andy Warhol's exhibit of 32 paintings of Campbell's soup cans opened at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles.

In 1974, former U.S. Chief Justice Earl Warren died in Washington at age 83.

In 1982, Pan Am Flight 759, a Boeing 727, crashed in Kenner, Louisiana, shortly after takeoff from New Orleans International Airport, killing all 145 people aboard and eight people on the ground.

In 1986, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography released the final draft of its report, which linked hard-core porn to sex crimes.

In 1995, Jerry Garcia performed for the final time as frontman of the Grateful Dead during a concert at Chicago's Soldier Field (Garcia died a month later).

In 2001, a divided court in Chile ruled that Gen. Augusto Pinochet could not be tried on human rights charges because of his deteriorating health and mental condition, a ruling that effectively brought the 85-year-old former dictator's legal troubles to an end.

Ten years ago: Citing new DNA tests, prosecutors cleared JonBenet Ramsey's parents and brother in the 1996 killing of the 6-year-old beauty queen in Boulder, Colo. Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, battling a brain tumor, walked into the Senate to cast a dramatic vote in favor of long-stalled Medicare legislation. Iran test-fired nine missiles, including ones capable of hitting Israel. Gunmen stormed a guard post at the U.S. consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, touching off a firefight that killed three police officers and three assailants.

Five years ago: Egypt's military-backed interim leader, Adly Mansour, named economist Hazem el-Beblawi as prime minister, ending days of political deadlock. Francesco Schettino (frahn-CHEHS'-koh skeh-TEE'-noh), the former captain of the luxury liner Costa Concordia, went on trial for the 2012 shipwreck off Giglio that claimed 32 lives. A massive memorial service in Arizona honored 19 members of the Prescott-based Granite Mountain Hotshots who died when a wind-fueled, out-of-control fire overran them. Defensemen Scott Niedermayer and Chris Chelios, along with forward Brendan Shanahan, were elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame; they were joined in the class of 2013 by Geraldine Heaney, the third woman to be enshrined in the hall, and the late Fred Shero, the coach who'd led the Philadelphia Flyers to the Stanley Cup in 1974 and '75.

One year ago: A cease-fire arranged by the United States, Russia and Jordan took effect in three war-torn provinces of southern Syria. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi (HY'-dahr ahl ah-BAH'-dee) celebrated with Iraqi troops in Mosul after they drove Islamic State militants from some of their last strongholds.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Ed Ames is 91. Former Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is 86.

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Actor James Hampton is 82. Actor Brian Dennehy is 80. Actor Richard Roundtree is 76. Singer Dee Dee Kenniebrew (The Crystals) is 73. Author Dean Koontz is 73. Football Hall of Famer O.J. Simpson is 71. Actor Chris Cooper is 67. TV personality John Tesh is 66. Country singer David Ball is 65. Business executive/TV personality Kevin O'Leary (TV: "Shark Tank") is 64. Rhythm-and-blues singer Debbie Sledge (Sister Sledge) is 64. Actor Jimmy Smits is 63. Actress Lisa Banes is 63. Actor Tom Hanks is 62. Singer Marc Almond is 61. Actress Kelly McGillis is 61. Rock singer Jim Kerr (Simple Minds) is 59. Actress-rock singer Courtney Love is 54. Rock musician Frank Bello (Anthrax) is 53. Actor David O'Hara is 53. Actress Pamela Adlon is 52. Rock musician Xavier Muriel is 50. Actor Scott Grimes is 47. Actor Enrique Murciano is 45. Rock singer-musician Isaac Brock (Modest Mouse) is 43. Musician/producer Jack White is 43. Rock musician Dan Estrin (Hoobastank) is 42. Actor-director Fred Savage is 42. Country musician Pat Allingham is 40. Actress Linda Park is 40. Actress Megan Parlen is 38. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kiely Williams (3lw) is 32. Actor Mitchel (cq) Musso is 27. Actress Georgie Henley is 23.

Thought for Today: "A good storyteller is a person who has a good memory and hopes other people haven't." — Irvin S. Cobb, American humorist (1876-1944).