

# Groton Daily Independent

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“The challenging part is in the beginning; it's a leap of faith. But I think the most important thing is to just do it.

**Start.”**

-Tom Szaky

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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.

## JOHNSON AGENCY

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Jay Johnson, Broker

[www.johnsonagencygroton.com](http://www.johnsonagencygroton.com)

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Groton, SD 57445 Home: 605/397-8565



### Service Notice:

#### Beverly Dorfschmidt

Mass of Christian Burial for Beverly Dorfschmidt, 91, of Groton will be 2:00 p.m., Monday, July 23rd at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Groton. Father Mike Kelly will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the church on Sunday from 2-4 p.m. and for one hour prior to services on Monday.

Bev passed away Wednesday, July 18, 2018 at Avera Mother Joseph Manor, Aberdeen.

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**Alex Morris was the pitcher yesterday in Northville at the first game of the region Legion tournament. He gave up one run, three hits, two walks and had seven strike-outs. Groton had nine runs on eight hits. Bennett Shabazz led the way with three hits. Groton had a tremendous defensive effort. Groton defeated Warner-Ipswich-Northville, 9-1.** (Photo

by Tricia Keith)

**The second game was between Clark and Claremont/Britton. Claremont/Britton won 9-2 over Clark. Groton will face Claremont/Britton at 7 p.m. today in Northville.**



**Brandon Keith with a base hit**



**Wyatt Locke was the catcher for the whole game.**

(Photo by Tricia Keith)



**Austin Jones gets hit by the pitch to get on base.** (Photo

by Tricia Keith)

**Super awesome play!!! Ball hit to wall by WIN. Bennett gets the ball throws to Brandon. Brandon throws ball home to get runner out for 3rd out of inning.**



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**Bennett Shabazz with one of his three hits on the night.** (Photo by Tricia Keith)



**Darren Shabazz with a nice hit.** (Photo by Tricia Keith)



**The team huddles in between the innings.** (Photo by Tricia Keith)

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## Deadlines Approaching for SD State Fair Entries

HURON, SD - Deadlines for all South Dakota State Fair open class entries are right around the corner. The static entry deadline is Tuesday, July 31.

"No matter what your talent or hobby, the State Fair is the place for you to let it shine. Whether you have an intricate quilt, upcycled furniture item, perfectly round and red tomato, or a photograph, I encourage you to check out the open class static exhibit premium books and see where you might fit in," said Peggy Besch, SD State Fairgrounds manager.

Exhibitors are encouraged to use the online entry process available at [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com). For those mailing in entry forms, entries postmarked on July 31 will be accepted. Remember to include payment and completed W9 form (include SSN) with your entry.

Other upcoming deadlines include open class livestock entries on Wednesday, Aug. 1. Late fees will apply to entries received after the deadline.

Premium books are available online at [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com).

The 2018 South Dakota State Fair will run from Thursday, Aug. 30, through Monday, Sept. 3. Channel Seeds Preview Day will be Wednesday, Aug. 29. This year's theme is "Experience the Magic." For more information on State Fair events, contact the fair office at 800.529.0900, visit [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com) or find us on Facebook or Twitter.

Agriculture is a major contributor to South Dakota's economy, generating \$25.6 billion in annual economic activity and employing over 115,000 South Dakotans. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's mission is to promote, protect and preserve South Dakota agriculture for today and tomorrow. Visit us online at [sdda.sd.gov](http://sdda.sd.gov) or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



**Sun Dial Manor in Bristol  
is accepting applications for  
full time and part time CNA's.  
12 hr. shifts - days and nights  
(SIGN ON BONUS OFFERED)  
DIETARY OPENINGS  
Full time cook, 8 hr. shifts  
(WITH SIGN ON BONUS)**

**For more information,  
Call 605/492-3615**

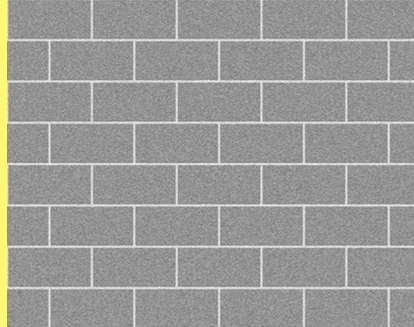
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## MIDWEST MASONRY & CONCRETE PUMPING



**NEW OR REPLACED  
SIDEWALK**



**BLOCK WALLS**



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**DRIVEWAY**

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## Today in Weather History

July 20, 1951: From the southeast residential section of Watertown, an estimated F2 tornado moved east, passing near Kranzburg and Goodwin. The storms destroyed one home and several barns.

July 20, 2002: A powerful severe thunderstorm moved over Rapid City and across the adjacent plains east of town. Downburst winds and the associated gust front caused damage along a nearly 30-mile long path. Extensive tree damage occurred throughout the eastern half of the city with countless trees and branches more than 24-inch diameter fell. Two roofs were torn off by the winds. Flying debris damaged numerous cars and buildings. The NWS office in downtown Rapid City measured an 80 mph wind gust, with meteorologists noting winds were sustained at 60 to 70 mph for 5 minutes. Ellsworth AFB wind equipment measured a 106 mph wind gust from the thunderstorm as it passed.








1915: A record high temperature of 115 degrees occurred in Yosemite Valley at the National Park Headquarters, California (around 4,000 feet elevation). This reading was the warmest day in a streak of 7 consecutive days of 110 degrees or higher at Yosemite Valley from the 19th through the 25th.

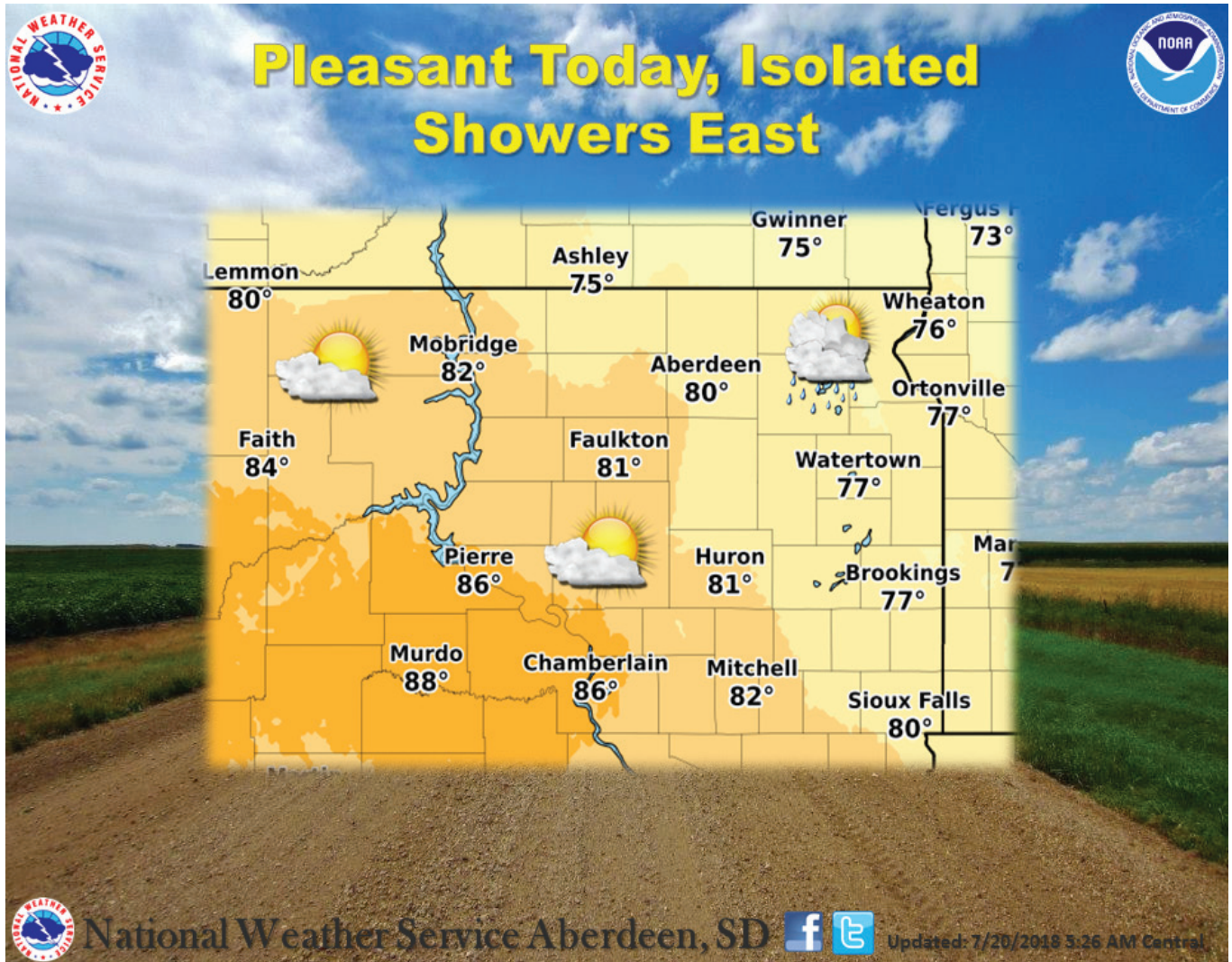
1977: A flash flood hits Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on this day in 1977, killing 84 people and causing millions of dollars in damages. This flood came 88 years after the infamous Great Flood of 1889 that killed more than 2,000 people in Johnstown.

2005: Hurricane Emily made landfall in northern Mexico. When the central pressure fell to 29.43 inches of mercury, and its sustained winds reached 160 mph on the 16th, Emily became the strongest hurricane ever to form before August, breaking a record set by Hurricane Dennis just six days before. It was also the earliest Category 5 hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic basin, beating Hurricane Allen's old record by nearly three weeks.

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| Today   | Tonight   | Saturday  | Saturday Night  | Sunday   | Sunday Night  | Monday  |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mostly Sunny  | Mostly Clear  | Sunny   | Mostly Clear  | Slight Chance T-storms then Chance Showers   | Chance Showers  | Mostly Sunny  |
| High: 79 °F   | Low: 57 °F  | High: 81 °F   | Low: 62 °F  | High: 82 °F  | Low: 63 °F  | High: 81 °F   |



Published on: 07/20/2018 at 5:29AM

High pressure will be building into the region today, bringing a northerly breeze and fairly pleasant temperatures. A mid-level wave of energy will drop south across eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota, bringing isolated light showers or thundershowers. No severe storms are expected today.

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## Yesterday's Weather

**High Outside Temp: 73.0 F at 12:24 PM**

**Heat Index:**

**Low Outside Temp: 61.4 F at 10:36 PM**

**High Gust: 31.0 Mph at 2:17 PM**

**Precip: 0.08**

## Today's Info

**Record High: 111° in 1934**

**Record Low: 43° in 1970**

**Average High: 84°F**

**Average Low: 60°F**

**Average Precip in July: 1.66**

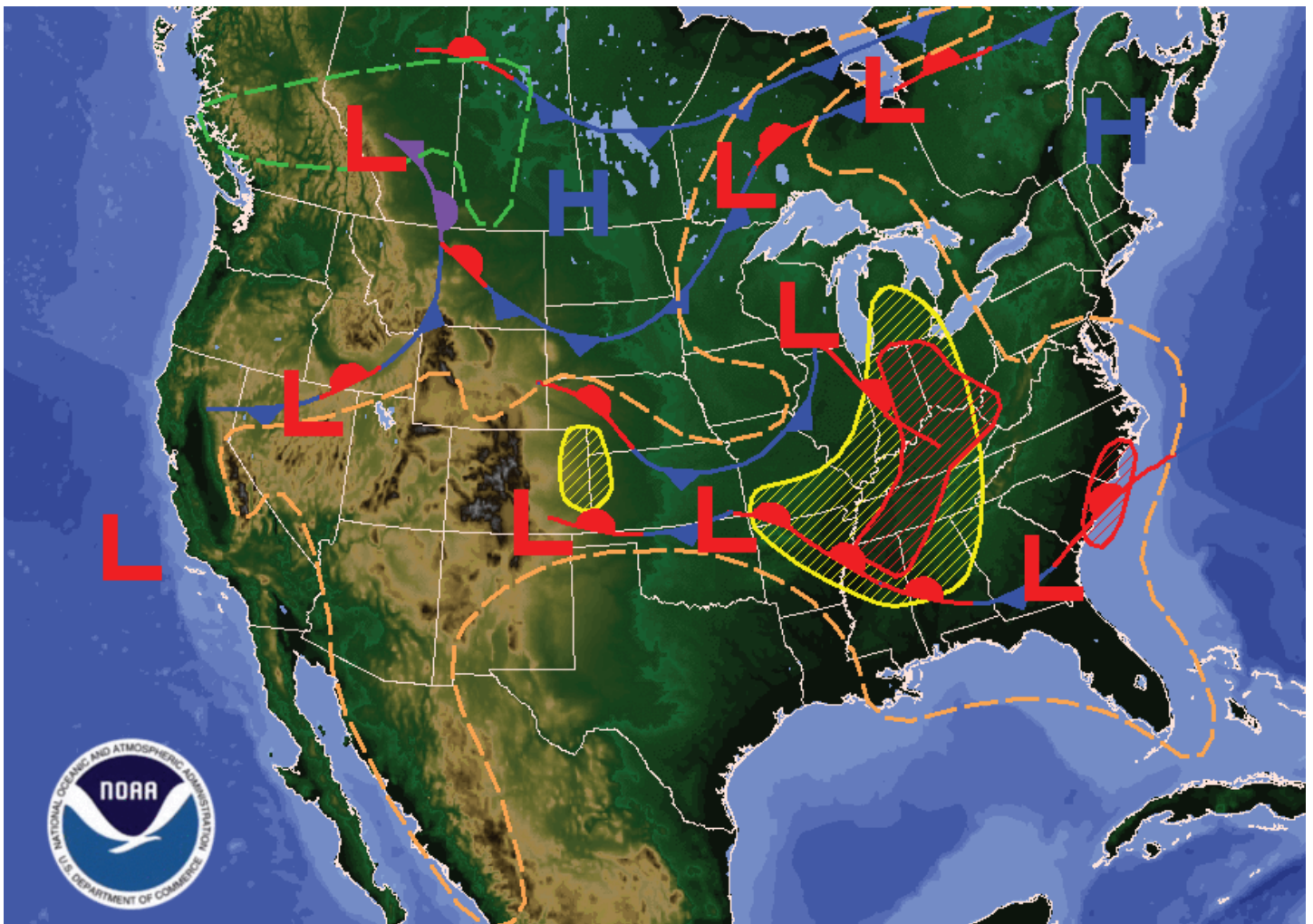
**Precip to date in July: 3.82**

**Average Precip to date: 12.51**

**Precip Year to Date: 9.63**

**Sunset Tonight: 9:15 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:06 a.m.**



### Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Jul 20, 2018, issued 4:44 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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## FIRST, CRY FOR HELP

As Christians, we are a people with many privileges - perhaps many more than we are aware of. But no doubt the highest privilege is the privilege of prayer. No doubt, the greatest tragedy of our lives will be to neglect to pray.

Someone once compared prayer to a fireman going to put out a fire with no water for his hose or a person who is poverty-stricken not knowing what to do with a blank check or a piece of gold.

Jesus prayed. He felt the need to pray and spent much time in prayer. Prayer was so very important to Him that He made it a great part of His life. Imagine - the Creator of the universe praying! Prayer to Him was like breathing: He did it constantly and continually. He knew that He would not survive unless He was in constant contact with His Father.

Unfortunately, prayer for many of us is something we do after "things" are set in motion, start to go wrong or "explode." The day begins and before we know it "things" are going astray. So, we stop and ask God to "get here quickly before things are beyond my control."

Wisely the Psalmist wrote, "I rise before dawn and cry for help, I have put my hope in Your Word." Before he did anything he began his day in prayer and placed his hope in God and not man. What a powerful thought. What a great idea. What a way to live. What great advice!

"Lord, the sun is waiting to rise and I have all these things to do today. I know it's a long list and many things can go wrong. So, I look to You first for hope and help."

Prayer: May we realize, Father, how different our lives would be if we began each day with You seeking Your help! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.

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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



## Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

### Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, July 19

#### State should slow down graduation changes

Government is not accustomed to moving fast, which is fine when change is brewing. Major policy changes or sweeping legislation should be carefully considered with those most impacted being given every opportunity to participate in the process.

This is particularly the case when it comes to a public education system that is charged with preparing youth — a most precious resource — for a future that eventually will have an impact on every element of society.

Deliberations of that nature, however, were largely cast aside by South Dakota's Board of Education Standards that on Monday approved new high school graduation requirements despite pleas from school officials to slow down.

The board's decision to create a new "base diploma" and add three new graduation categories first came to the public's attention on June 5 when the proposed changes were announced. The board also set a public comment deadline of July 16, the day the new standards were approved under the watchful eye of Gov. Dennis Daugaard, whose office spearheaded the proposal.

From the start, school officials wanted more time to consider the overhaul of graduation requirements. On Monday, Rapid City Area Schools Superintendent Lori Simon asked the board "to slow down the process a little bit more" and suggested "a thoughtful study by a task force," which the governor has used in the past when proposing significant legislation.

After around just two hours of discussion, however, Simon's concerns were dismissed for what state education officials call more flexible graduation standards. There is one more hurdle to cross on Aug. 20 when the legislative Rules Review Committee votes on final approval.

If approved, school districts — without any state financial assistance — will have to offer the base diploma that no longer requires students to take geometry, algebra II, world history, geography, chemistry or physics, and a language arts elective. The total credits required in literature and writing would be cut by a half-credit. High schools also will have to offer three new graduation paths — Advanced, Advanced Career and Advanced Honors.

The fear of educators and others is that most students will take the path of least resistance in pursuit of their diploma, which will make it more difficult for them to be accepted into college if that becomes their goal.

That, however, appears to be of little concern to the governor and the education board. In fact, the goal of the changes seems to be getting students to think about attending technical school before they finish high school.

The state is experiencing a shortage of the kind of workers that technical schools educate and train. These schools are a key part of the state's educational system and prepare students for jobs that are critical to the state's economic health.

The question, however, is whether a student as young as 14 will pursue the base diploma as part of a career choice or because it is a less challenging way to earn a diploma? Is it even reasonable to believe that young teenagers are ready to decide if they want to be a doctor, accountant or electrician?

These are important questions that were never fully discussed in the public arena. While it is perfectly acceptable for the state to look at ways to bolster its workforce, it is difficult to understand why this major policy change was fast-tracked and the concerns of educators now on the receiving end of an unfunded mandate were not given more weight.

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In an ideal world, the legislative Rules Review Committee, whose members include Alan Solano of Rapid City, will not rubber-stamp changes that if approved would be fully implemented by 2020. More discussions with educators and input from the public can only improve the best way to move forward.

Otherwise, the state may be creating a system that closes rather than opens more doors for students.

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## American News, Aberdeen, July 18

### Library needs more ideas to be open Sundays

The public would like the library to be open on Sundays.

The city would like the library to be open on Sundays.

Now, the library needs to come up with a plan to do just that — and just asking for more money to staff Sundays is not the solution.

To get the maximum benefit from the new K.O. Lee Aberdeen Public Library, it should be open on weekends. It would better serve the community if patrons and families could swing by on either Saturdays or Sundays.

July 9, library Director Shirley Arment asked the Aberdeen City Council for an additional \$13,846 for the library's 2018 budget. That unbudgeted money would cover the hiring of one full-time library technician and allow the library to be open from 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays.

For 2019, the library would ask for an additional \$55,000 for staffing the Sunday hours, plus custodial staff.

Otherwise, Arment said, the options the library has to staff Sundays include pay overtime to cover the hours, or cut hours someplace else.

Arment said the current library employees are not willing to work on Sundays.

Councilwoman Jennifer Slight-Hansen said the library did not present evidence to justify hiring another full-time employee.

The council requested that the library board provide more information and justification for the hiring request.

We have some of our own ideas to staff Sundays, too:

— Close Mondays. The interest and discussion has always been in having Sunday hours. Many businesses drop another day — often Mondays — to accommodate. The Dacotah Prairie Museum does, for instance. The question remains: Is it better to be open on a day the most adults and kids have free, or are weekday hours good enough?

— School-year hours. Aberdeen summers are full of things to do. Winters . not so much. Kids are cooped in, and parents are stir crazy. Students of all ages are busy working on their projects and homework. Wouldn't it make more sense to be open on Sundays at least during those months that there might be a greater need?

— Move an existing employee to Sundays. We have some experience with this, as a business that operates every day, all year long. The employees get a voice but, at the end of the day, management must make hard decisions. Generally speaking, folks will get with the program when asked to do what is required; if they don't, the next hire will.

We implore the library board to get creative to get the library open on Sundays.

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## Madison Daily Leader, Madison, July 18

### Wind power growth still evident in S.D.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission has approved a new 300-megawatt wind farm north of here, which will boost the state's capacity by about 30 percent.

Some observers have thought there was a limit to how well wind power generation would do in South Dakota, but the capacity is still growing, and maybe even accelerating.

The pessimism for wind power isn't because there isn't enough wind in the state. There is. It was more that it wasn't available at the right times; our spring winds come when temperatures are mild and electricity for heating and cooling is at a low point. The hot, windless days in the summer are when the most



electricity is needed for cooling.

Besides efficiency, there are other concerns over large-scale wind farms, including noise, bird mortality and aircraft dangers.

Nevertheless, wind energy appears to be working for South Dakota, as about 30 percent of our electricity now comes from wind. The number of jobs in wind tower manufacturing, maintenance and other related fields have been growing.

Combined with substantial hydroelectric power generation in the state, South Dakotans get a substantial portion of their electricity from "clean" sources.

The new wind farm in Grant and Codington Counties — not that far from Lake County — will include 72 turbines, which would be the third largest in the state. Only wind farms in Brookings/Deuel Counties at 105 turbines and Jerauld/Aurora/Brule Counties at 101 turbines are larger.

We don't have any wind farms in Lake County, so we aren't sure about the "not in my backyard" concerns if one were proposed here. But overall, it appears that our abundance of wind is producing nicely overall for South Dakota.

## Sioux Falls residents can now mix beer with ax throwing

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls has added beer drinking while hurling axes to the city's list of entertainment options.

The Sioux Falls City Council on Tuesday approved Escape 605's request to sell beer and wine at its new location, where customers will be able to throw axes at targets, the Argus Leader reported.

Co-owner Adam Stockberger said the proposed ax-throwing area will bring a new element to the escape room experience.

"It's a craze that's kind of sweeping the nation," he said. "We sell hour experiences, and we have a limit of one drink per hour."

Stockenberger said the business will keep beverages out of the ax-throwing cages. He said it's a safety precaution not found where drinking and other recreational activities with sharp objects mix, such as bars with steel-tipped darts.

"I'd rather be hit by a dart than a hatchet," said Councilor Theresa Stehly, who cast the lone opposing vote.

She questioned whether the city has a precedent of allowing alcohol consumption at gun or archery ranches.

"I'm personally very uncomfortable with this ... so if it's a location that has ax throwing, to me that's problematic," she said.

Escape 605's new location is expected to open later this summer.

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

## Trade tensions weigh on outlook for rural parts of 10 states

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Weak economic growth is expected to continue in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states, but all the recent trade disputes may shrink profits.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss says the new tariffs are hurting grain prices, which were already weak.

The overall economic index for the region declined to 53.8 in July from June's 56.1.

That score still suggests growth because it is above 50, while any score below 50 indicates a shrinking economy.

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

The bankers say they're concerned about the ongoing trade tensions with China and the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The confidence index fell to 42.7 in July from June's 48.8.

## **Rapid City-based Regional Health abruptly changes leadership**

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City-based nonprofit health care system has abruptly changed leadership. Regional Health's Board of Directors voted to remove Brent Phillips as president and CEO effective immediately, according to a news release on Wednesday. The board replaced Phillips, who had a year left on his contract, with Paulette Davidson, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Davidson will now serve as acting president and CEO of the health system, which includes five hospitals, 24 clinic locations and nearly 5,000 physicians and caregivers.

The health system's statement didn't give a reason for the change, but board chairwoman Lia Green said the move is due to "a personnel issue."

Phillips became head of Regional Health in 2015. Several controversies occurred during his tenure.

Nearly 100 doctors at Regional Health Rapid City Hospital called for Phillips to step down in April 2017, after a "vote of no confidence" in his leadership. The board had expressed "full confidence" in Phillips less than a month after. Green said that the vote of no confidence played no role in Phillips' removal.

Rapid City Hospital's decision last year to change its mental health policies was also met with criticism. The hospital announced it wouldn't admit patients suffering from mental illness who haven't been injured if its behavioral health center is full. The decision sparked a large outcry in the community and led to the formation of the West River Behavioral Health Alliance, a group that works to identify resources to meet increasing mental health needs in western South Dakota.

The newspaper also uncovered recently that Rapid City Hospital had been improperly dumping its medical waste at the city landfill despite repeated warnings and fines.

Regional Health has since changed several trash handling processes and is in compliance with city rules, according to city officials.

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

## **Heavy rain causes flooding in eastern South Dakota**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Heavy rain has caused flooding and road closures in parts of eastern South Dakota.

The National Weather Service says that as of Thursday morning, 8.8 inches of rain had fallen in Aurora. The town is in Brookings County where a flash flood warning was issued.

The Argus Leader reports Brookings County emergency manager Robert Hill says Highway 14 was temporarily closed near Brookings, which got 6.6 inches of rain. County roads 27, 34 and 35 were also barricaded due to unsafe driving conditions.

Meteorologists say scattered showers and thunderstorms are still possible Thursday afternoon and evening.

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

## **Remodeler of collapsed building files for bankruptcy**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Sioux Falls company that was remodeling the Copper Lounge building when it collapsed in December 2016 has filed for bankruptcy protection.

The Argus Leader reports Hultgren Construction's Chapter 11 filing will enable the company to reorganize as it faces several lawsuits. Bankruptcy attorney Robert Kugler says the company will distribute "what assets that are available" to claimants "as quickly and as efficiently as possible."

The building collapsed Dec. 2, 2016, killing a construction worker and trapping a woman for hours.

An insurance company that says it paid out nearly \$5 million in connection with the collapse has sued several entities it claims was responsible.

Hultgren is among those being sued by Cincinnati Insurance Co. The insurer provided coverage to Boomerang Investments, which bought the building just before it collapsed.



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

## Woman accused of taking granddaughter has charges reduced

TYNDALL, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have reduced charges against a Tyndall woman accused of unlawfully removing her 1-year-old grandchild from a daycare.

Forty-two-year-old Angela Heier initially was charged with first-degree felony kidnapping, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reports that prosecutors have dropped the charge and replaced it with two misdemeanors. Heier's due in court July 30 on charges of trespassing and disorderly conduct, which together carry a maximum punishment of slightly more than a year behind bars.

Authorities say a baby sitter called authorities May 10 to report a woman had taken a child from a residence in Scotland and driven away at a high speed. Deputies used Heier's cellphone to find her hours later in Volin. The child was returned to the parents.

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

## Rapid City man gets 12 years for car attack that injured man

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man who drove a car into a group of people at an outdoor basketball court has been sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Authorities say 20-year-old Lantz Apple struck 17-year-old Dayton Mesteth with his car last October and tried to hit the victim a second time. It's not clear what motivated the attack. Mesteth suffered a broken leg.

Apple in June pleaded guilty to aggravated assault in a deal with prosecutors who had charged him with attempted murder.

The Rapid City Journal reports he was sentenced Wednesday. Judge Robert Gusinsky said the incident was "pretty darned close to a terroristic attack" and it's fortunate no one else was hurt.

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

## Pittsburgh man killed in North Dakota plane crash identified

FORT RICE, N.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a Pennsylvania man who died in the crash of a small plane in North Dakota.

The Morton County Sheriff's Office says 35-year-old Daniel Miller, of Pittsburgh, died Tuesday afternoon when the Cessna 152 crashed into the Missouri River near Fort Rice while he was taking low-altitude photographs.

A dive team recovered the plane and Miller's body on Wednesday. The Bismarck Tribune reports the plane is registered to an aerial photography business based in Watertown, South Dakota.

The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating the crash.

## Defendant pleads not guilty in reservation slaying

KYLE, S.D. (AP) — A New Mexico man has pleaded not guilty in a fatal shooting on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

A federal grand jury indicted 19-year-old Palani Bull Bear on four charges, including second-degree murder. Bull Bear, of Albuquerque, is accused of killing 19-year-old Bryce Red Owl during a confrontation in Kyle June 27. Bull Bear is also accused of shooting at another man, Tolin Gregg, who was not hurt.

The Rapid City Journal reports the FBI says Bull Bear told investigators he encountered the men on horseback in Kyle and that they were "drunk and acting stupid" and an argument broke out. According to the FBI, Bull Bear said Red Owl tried to grab him so he shot him and fired several rounds in Gregg's direction.

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

## At least 11 die when duck boat capsizes in Missouri lake

BRANSON, Mo. (AP) — At least 11 people, including children, died after a boat carrying tourists capsized and sank on a lake during a thunderstorm in a country music mecca in southwest Missouri, the sheriff said.

The Stone County Sheriff's office said early Friday that six people remain missing after the Ride the Ducks boat sank on Table Rock Lake in Branson Thursday night, updating the number from five. Missouri State Patrol divers will resume the search for them Friday.

Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader said seven other people have been hospitalized.

A spokeswoman for the Cox Medical Center Branson said four adults and three children arrived at the hospital shortly after the incident. Two adults are in critical condition and the others were treated for minor injuries, Brandei Clifton said.

Rader said stormy weather likely made the boat capsize. Another duck boat on the lake made it safely back to shore.

Steve Lindenberg, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Springfield, Missouri, said the agency issued a severe thunderstorm warning for the Branson area Thursday evening. Lindenberg said winds reached speeds of more than 60 mph (100 kph).

"It's a warning telling people to take shelter," he said.

Rader said an off-duty sheriff's deputy working security for the boat company helped rescue people after the boat capsized. Dive teams from several law enforcement agencies assisted in the effort.

The National Transportation Safety Board said investigators will arrive on the scene Friday morning.

Suzanne Smagala with Ripley Entertainment, which owns Ride the Ducks in Branson, said the company was assisting authorities with the rescue effort. Smagala added this was the Branson tour's only accident in more than 40 years of operation.

Branson is about 200 miles (320 kilometers) southeast of Kansas City and is a popular vacation spot for families and other tourists looking for entertainment ranging from theme parks to live music. An EF2 tornado that bounced through downtown Branson in 2012 destroyed dozens of buildings and injured about three dozen people, but killed no one.

Duck boats, which can travel on land and in water, have been involved in other deadly incidents in the past. Five college students were killed in 2015 in Seattle when a duck boat collided with a bus, and 13 people died in 1999 when a duck boat sank near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Safety advocates have sought improvements since the Arkansas deaths. Critics argued that part of the problem is that too many agencies regulate the boats with varying safety requirements.

Duck boats were originally used by the U.S. military in World War II to transport troops and supplies, and later were modified for use as sightseeing vehicles.

## Russia says Putin, Trump discussed referendum in Ukraine

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump discussed a possible referendum in separatist-leaning eastern Ukraine during their Helsinki summit earlier this week, Russia's ambassador to the U.S. said Friday.

Ambassador Anatoly Antonov revealed the discussions amid confusion and concern in the U.S. about what the two presidents agreed behind closed doors.

"This issue (of a referendum) was discussed," he said, adding without elaborating that Putin made "concrete proposals" to Trump on solutions for the four-year Ukraine conflict, which has killed more than 10,000 people.

The move may be seen as an effort to sidestep European peace efforts for Ukraine and increase pressure on the Ukrainian government in its protracted conflict with pro-Russian separatists in the Donbass region.



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Trump tweeted that the two men discussed Ukraine, but has not mentioned a referendum or revealed specifics. The U.S. and Russia have been on opposing sides of the conflict in Ukraine, unleashed after a popular uprising against a pro-Russian president and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Ukraine and European powers did not immediately comment Friday, but are not expected to support a referendum in the Donbass, where pro-Russian separatists hold sway. They have been committed to a 2015 peace deal signed in the Belarusian capital of Minsk that has helped reduce the fighting but failed to find a lasting political solution.

Putin has sought to ally with Trump at a time when U.S. ties to Europe are fraying, and both presidents are critical of the EU and NATO. German Chancellor Angela Merkel pushed back Friday at Trump's questioning of NATO's central tenet of collective defense.

Ambassador Antonov called Monday's summit in Helsinki a "key event" in international politics and laughed off suggestions that the two men made any "secret deals."

Antonov insisted that diplomatic discussions should remain discreet in order to be effective, but gave a few details of their discussions on arms control and said the summit notably made progress on U.S.-Russian cooperation on Syria's future.

He also said Moscow is ready to discuss a possible visit by Putin to Washington after a surprise invitation from Trump.

Antonov said it's important to "deal with the results" of their first summit before jumping too fast into a new one, but that "Russia was always open to such proposals. We are ready for discussions on this subject."

The Kremlin has the final say, but hasn't responded yet to the proposal Trump made Thursday.

The Russian ambassador to Washington also denounced "anti-Russian anger" in the United States and the "severity" of the U.S. criticism of Trump's performance at the summit.

He reiterated denials of Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election — interrupting a questioner to say "We didn't interfere!" He also reiterated denials of Russian involvement in the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in Britain.

Meanwhile, Antonov also pushed for the release of a gun rights activist accused of being a covert agent in the U.S., calling her arrest a "farce."

U.S. federal prosecutors accused Maria Butina this week of being a covert Russian agent and working to infiltrate U.S. political organizations, including the National Rifle Association, before and after Donald Trump's election as president.

Butina, 29, denies wrongdoing, and the Russian Foreign Ministry started an online campaign for her release.

Dmitry Kozlov in Moscow and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed.

## Trump-Putin II: Planning fall event in aftermath of Helsinki

By ZEKE MILLER, KEN THOMAS and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unbowed by swirling criticism of his summit encounter with Vladimir Putin, President Donald Trump swiftly invited the Russian leader to the White House this fall for a second get-together. Putin's ambassador to the U.S. said Moscow is open to discussing such a meeting, even as confusion abounds over exactly what they discussed the first time.

Cleanup has continued from Monday's two-hour private meeting in Helsinki, Finland, with Trump belatedly saying Putin's "incredible offer" of shared U.S.-Russia investigations was no good after all.

A White House meeting would be a dramatic extension of legitimacy to the Russian leader, who has long been isolated by the West for activities in Ukraine, Syria and beyond and is believed to have interfered in the 2016 presidential election that sent Trump to the presidency. No Russian leader has visited the White House in nearly a decade.

Trump asked National Security Adviser John Bolton to invite Putin, and "those discussions are already underway," Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Thursday. Trump earlier had tweeted that he

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looked forward to "our second meeting" as he defended his performance at Monday's summit, in which the two leaders conferred on a range of issues including terrorism, Israeli security, nuclear proliferation and North Korea.

"There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems ... but they can ALL be solved!" Trump tweeted.

In Moscow, Anatoly Antonov, Russian ambassador to the U.S., said it is important to "deal with the results" of their first summit before jumping too fast into a new one. But he said, "Russia was always open to such proposals. We are ready for discussions on this subject."

The Kremlin has the final say, but hasn't responded yet to Trump's invitation.

News of Trump's invitation to Putin appeared to catch even the president's top intelligence official by surprise.

"Say that again," National Intelligence Director Dan Coats responded, when informed of the invitation during an appearance at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

"OK," he continued, pausing for a deep breath. "That's going to be special."

The announcement came as the White House sought to clean up days of confounding post-summit Trump statements on Russian interference in the 2016 election. Trump's public doubting of Russia's responsibility in a joint news conference with Putin on Monday provoked withering criticism from Republicans as well as Democrats and forced the president to make a rare public admission of error.

Then on Thursday, the White House said Trump "disagrees" with Putin's offer to allow U.S. questioning of 12 Russians who have been indicted for election interference in exchange for Russian interviews with the former U.S. ambassador to Russia and other Americans the Kremlin accuses of unspecified crimes. Trump initially had described the idea as an "incredible offer."

The White House backtrack came just before the Senate voted overwhelmingly against the proposal. It was Congress' first formal rebuke of Trump's actions from the summit and its aftermath.

Asked about the Putin invitation, Alaska Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan said "I wouldn't do it, that's for damn sure."

"If the Russians want a better relationship, trips to the White House aren't going to help," he added. "They should stop invading their neighbors."

Mixed messages from Trump have increased worries in Congress that the White House is not taking seriously the threat that senior officials say Russia now poses to the upcoming 2018 midterm elections.

Democrats in the House sought Thursday to extend a state grant program for election security but were blocked by Republicans. There is \$380 million approved in the current budget for the program, which is intended to help states strengthen election systems from hacking and other cyberattacks.

Democratic lawmakers erupted into chants of "USA! USA!" during the debate,

As for Putin's offer on investigations, Sanders it was "made in sincerity" and the U.S. hopes he will have the indicted Russians "come to the United States to prove their innocence or guilt."

Just a day earlier, the White House had said the offer was under consideration, even though the State Department called Russia's allegations against the Americans, including former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, "absurd."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Thursday of the proposed Russian questioning, "That's not going to happen."

"The administration is not going to send, force Americans to travel to Russia to be interrogated by Vladimir Putin and his team," Pompeo said in an interview with The Christian Broadcasting Network.

Senate Republicans joined Democrats in swiftly passing a resolution, 98-0, that put the Senate on record against the questioning of American officials by a foreign government.

Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell hastily arranged the vote as lawmakers unleashed an avalanche of resolutions and other proposed actions expressing alarm over Trump's meeting with Putin and the White House's shifting response.

Coats said Thursday he wished the president hadn't undermined the conclusions of American intelligence agencies while standing next to Putin and felt it was his duty to correct the record. He restated the U.S.

intelligence assessment about Russian meddling and Moscow's "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

While they had met privately on three occasions in 2017, Trump opened the door to a potential White House meeting with Putin earlier this year. The Kremlin had said in April that the president had invited the Russian leader to the White House when they spoke by telephone in March. At the time, White House officials worked to convince a skeptical president that the Nordic capital would serve as a more effective backdrop — and warned of a firestorm should a West Wing meeting go through.

Still, Trump has expressed a preference for the White House setting for major meetings, including floating an invitation to Washington for North Korea's Kim Jong Un after their meeting in Singapore last month.

Putin would be setting foot inside the building for the first time in more than a decade.

He last visited the White House in 2005, when he met President George W. Bush, who welcomed the Russian leader in the East Room as "my friend."

President Barack Obama welcomed then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to the White House in 2010, and took him on a burger run at a joint just outside the capital.

Putin, in his first public comments about the summit, told Russian diplomats that U.S.-Russian relations are "in some ways worse than during the Cold War," but that the meeting with Trump allowed a start on "the path to positive change."

Meanwhile, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said she still has not seen evidence that Moscow tried to help elect Trump. She said at the Aspen Forum that Russia is attempting to "cause chaos on both sides."

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Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann in Aspen, Colorado, and Mary Clare Jalonick, Matthew Daly, Tami Abdollah, Darlene Superville and Susannah George in Washington contributed to this report.

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Follow Miller on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@ZekeJMiller> , Thomas at <http://twitter.com/@KThomasDC> , and Mascaro at <http://twitter.com/@LisaMascaro>

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This story has been corrected to show vote now underway, not canceled.

## **US, allies set to evacuate Syrian aid workers from southwest**

**By MATTHEW LEE and SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials say the United States is finalizing plans to evacuate several hundred Syrian civil defense workers and their families from southwest Syria as Russian-backed government forces close in on the area.

Two officials familiar with the plans said Thursday that the U.S., Britain and Canada are spearheading the evacuation that would transport members of the White Helmets group to transit camps in neighboring countries. From there, they will be sent to third countries, including Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and possibly Canada, according to the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter.

The officials, and a member of the White Helmets who is due to be evacuated from Quneitra province, said the operation appears to be imminent as the Syrian army continues to gain ground in its latest offensive. The White Helmets, who have enjoyed backing from the U.S. and other Western nations for years, are likely to be targeted by Syrian forces as they retake control of the southwest, according to the officials.

The officials said planning for the evacuation has been underway for some time but accelerated after last week's NATO summit in Brussels.

"These are hard hours and minutes," the White Helmets volunteer in Quneitra said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear for his life. "This is the worst day of my life. I hope they rescue us before it is too late."



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The evacuation is expected to take place from Quneitra, which straddles the frontier with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and where the civil defense team is trapped. It is the last sliver of land still outside government control in the region.

Since the government offensive began in June, the area along the frontier with the Golan Heights has been the safest in the southwestern region, attracting hundreds of displaced people because it is along the disengagement line with Israel demarcated in 1974 after a war. The Syrian government is unlikely to fire there or carry out airstrikes.

Negotiations are also ongoing to evacuate armed rebels and their families who don't want to accept the return of the rule of Bashar Assad's government to Quneitra, which the rebels have controlled for years. The fighters will be evacuated to the northern part of Syria, where the opposition still holds sway.

Except for that sliver of land, the southern tip of the southwestern region lies along the border with Jordan and the Golan Heights and is occupied by an Islamic State-affiliated group. The area is expected to be the target of the next government advances and the civil defense teams don't operate there.

The White Helmets are not without controversy. They only operate in opposition-held areas, where government services are almost non-existent and aerial bombings are recurrent. Syrian government supporters accuse them of being politically affiliated with the rebel groups. Russia and the Syrian government have repeatedly accused them of staging chemical attacks in opposition areas, a charge that has never been proven.

They have continued to receive U.S. support even as President Donald Trump presses ahead with his plans to withdraw all American forces from Syria as soon as Islamic State forces are routed.

In June, the State Department freed up a small portion — \$6.6 million out of some \$200 million — in frozen funding for Syria stabilization programs to keep the White Helmets operating through the end of this year.

In other parts of Syria, where government control has been restored, civil defense volunteers have almost always evacuated to other opposition-controlled areas. It is not clear why this time they will be evacuated out of the country.

El Deeb reported from Beirut.

## Iowa tornadoes hit unexpectedly, causing damage and injuries

By SCOTT MCFETRIDGE and DAVID PITT, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A flurry of unexpected tornadoes swept through central Iowa, injuring at least 17 people, flattening buildings in three cities and forcing the evacuation of a hospital.

Residents — and even weather forecasters — were taken by surprise Thursday as the tornadoes hit Marshalltown, Pella and Bondurant. Ten people were injured in Marshalltown and seven at a factory near Pella, but no deaths were reported.

Alex Krull, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Des Moines, said forecasting models produced Thursday morning showed only a slight chance of strong thunderstorms later in the day.

"This morning, it didn't look like tornadic supercells were possible," Krull said. "If anything, we were expecting we could get some large hail, if strong storms developed."

Marshalltown, a city of 27,000 people about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northeast of Des Moines, appeared to have been hit the hardest. Brick walls collapsed in the streets, roofs were blown off buildings and the cupola of the historic courthouse tumbled 175 feet (53 meters) to the ground.

The only hospital in Marshalltown was damaged, spokeswoman Amy Varcoe said. All 40 of the patients at UnityPoint Health were being transferred to the health system's larger hospital in Waterloo as well as one in Grundy Center, she said.

The emergency room in the smaller Marshalltown hospital remained open to treat patients injured in the storm, Varcoe said. Ten people hurt in the storm had been treated, she said. She did not know how serious those patients' injuries were.

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Marshalltown resident Stephanie Moz said she, her husband and 2-month-old baby were in the downtown clothing store she owns when tornado sirens went off. The family sought shelter in the building's basement and heard "cracking and booms and explosions" as the tornado passed.

The storm broke out a window, ruining clothing and hats on display there, and destroyed her husband's vehicle. But she said she's relieved.

"We went through a tornado and survived," Moz said. "I'm happy."

Additional funnels were reported as the storm moved east of Des Moines past Altoona, Prairie City and Colfax.

National Weather Service meteorologist Rod Donavon said two primary storms spawned the series of tornadoes. One developed in the Marshalltown area, causing damage there, while the other started east of Des Moines and traveled through Bondurant and into Pella.

The exact number of tornadoes and their strength will be determined later.

Iowa State Rep. Mark Smith, who lives in Marshalltown, told Des Moines station KCCI-TV that the area likely will be declared a disaster area. Smith said much of downtown was damaged. He said his house and neighborhood were spared, but surrounding homes were hit.

"There are houses with windows out, houses without roofs," he said. "It's just an absolute mess."

Another tornado hit agricultural machinery maker Vermeer Manufacturing in the town of Pella, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southeast of Des Moines. People were still working at the plant at the time. The storm scattered huge sheets of metal through a parking lot and left one building with a huge hole in it.

Seven people injured at the plant were taken to Pella Regional Health Center, hospital spokeswoman Billie Rhamy said. They all were released after being treated for their minor injuries, Rhamy said.

Gov. Kim Reynolds told WHO-TV in Des Moines that two of Vermeer's buildings in Pella were demolished in the storm. She said Vermeer was hosting 500 customers for an appreciation day when the weather hit. She credited the company's security team with moving them all to safety.

Reynolds added that in Marshalltown, the state is providing a communications trailer and workers to help maintain emergency communications there. She said Marshalltown's building housing its local communications system was damaged.

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Associated Press writer Margery Beck in Omaha, Nebraska, contributed to this report.

## **NFL, NFLPA freeze anthem rules amid backlash to Miami policy**

**By ROB MAADDI, AP Pro Football Writer**

The NFL's two-month old national anthem policy is on hold.

Hours after The Associated Press reported that Miami Dolphins players who protest on the field during the anthem could be suspended for up to four games under a team policy issued this week, the league and the players union issued a joint statement late Thursday night saying the two sides are talking things out.

"The NFL and NFLPA, through recent discussions, have been working on a resolution to the anthem issue. In order to allow this constructive dialogue to continue, we have come to a standstill agreement on the NFLPA's grievance and on the NFL's anthem policy. No new rules relating to the anthem will be issued or enforced for the next several weeks while these confidential discussions are ongoing," the statement read. "The NFL and NFLPA reflect the great values of America, which are repeatedly demonstrated by the many players doing extraordinary work in communities across our country to promote equality, fairness and justice. Our shared focus will remain on finding a solution to the anthem issue through mutual, good faith commitments, outside of litigation."

The issue has dominated headlines over the past two seasons, caused division and alienated some fans.

The NFL rule that was passed in May forbid players from sitting or taking a knee if they are on the field or sidelines during "The Star-Spangled Banner," but allowed them to stay in the locker room if they wish. The policy said teams would be fined if players didn't stand during the anthem while on the field. The league left it up to teams on how to punish players.

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None of the team policies had been made public until the AP obtained a copy of Miami's nine-page discipline document. It included a one-sentence section on "Proper Anthem Conduct" and was provided to the AP by a person familiar with the policy who insisted on anonymity because the document is not public. It classifies anthem protests under a large list of "conduct detrimental to the club," all of which could lead to a paid or unpaid suspension, a fine or both.

The Dolphins said in a statement: "The NFL required each team to submit their rules regarding the anthem before their players reported to training camp. We will address this issue once the season starts. All options are still open."

Miami can choose not to issue any suspension nor fine any player guilty of "conduct detrimental to the club." Other violations under that label include drug use or possession, gambling, breaking curfew and riding motorcycles as a driver or passenger from the start of camp until the last game of the season.

Jets acting owner Christopher Johnson said shortly after the league announced its policy that he will not punish his players for any peaceful protests — and would pay any potential fines incurred by the team as a result of his players' actions.

The new league rules were challenged this month in a grievance by the players union. The NFLPA said the NFL policy, which the league imposed without consultation with the players union, is inconsistent with the collective bargaining agreement and infringes on player rights. Now, the two sides are hoping to reach a solution without litigation.

Dolphins veteran receiver Kenny Stills took a knee with a hand on his heart during the anthem throughout last season. Defensive tackle Jordan Phillips put his arm around Stills before one game. Two other players who knelt — safety Michael Thomas and tight end Julius Thomas — are no longer with the team.

Defensive end Robert Quinn, who raised his fist during the anthem while with the Rams, is now with the Dolphins.

"Players who are on the field during the Anthem performance must stand and show respect for the flag and the Anthem," says the 16th and final bullet point on Miami's list of conduct considered detrimental, below disparaging teammates, coaches or officials including NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

The NFL started requiring players to be on the field for the anthem in 2009 — the year it signed a marketing deal with the military.

In 2016, then-49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began protesting police brutality, social injustice and racial inequality by kneeling during the national anthem, and the demonstration spread to other players and teams.

Critics led by President Donald Trump called the players unpatriotic and even said NFL owners should fire any player who refused to stand during the anthem. Some players countered that their actions were being misconstrued and that they are seeking social change rather than protesting the anthem itself.

Trump's criticism led more than 200 players to protest during one weekend, and some kept it up throughout the season.

The league and a coalition of players have been working in tandem to support player initiatives for a variety of social issues. The NFL is committing \$90 million over the next seven years to social justice causes in a three-segment plan that involves league players.

Kaepernick didn't play at all last season and still hasn't been picked up by another team. He threw 16 touchdown passes and four interceptions in his final season in 2016. Safety Eric Reid, one of Kaepernick's former teammates and another protest leader, is also out of work.

Both have filed collusion grievances against the NFL.

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AP Sports Writer Steven Wine in Miami, AP Sports Writer Dennis Waszak in New York and AP Pro Football Writer Barry Wilner in New York contributed to this report.

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For more AP NFL coverage: <http://pro32.ap.org> and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](http://twitter.com/AP_NFL)



## Trump slams rate increases by independent Federal Reserve

By ZEKE MILLER, JOSH BOAK and KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday cast aside concerns about the Federal Reserve's independence, saying he was "not happy" with the Fed's recent interest rate increases.

Trump told CNBC in an interview: "I don't like all of this work that we're putting into the economy and then I see rates going up."

Last month, the Fed raised its benchmark rate for a second time this year and projected two more increases in 2018. Its rate hikes are meant to prevent the economy from overheating and igniting high inflation. But rate increases also make borrowing costlier for households and companies and can weaken the pace of growth. In particular, the Fed's most recent rate hikes could dilute some of the benefit of the tax cuts Trump signed into law last year.

The president acknowledged that his comments about the Fed would likely raise concerns. The central bank has long been seen as needing to operate free of political pressure from the White House or elsewhere to properly manage interest rate policy.

The Fed's dual mandate is to maximize employment and stabilize prices. By maintaining its independence, the central bank can make politically contentious decisions to combat economic challenges, like the huge bond purchases it made after the 2008 financial crisis to help drive down long-term rates to support the economy. That policy drew rebukes from many Republican lawmakers.

In February, Jerome Powell, Trump's hand-picked choice, became Fed chairman. Last week, Powell said in an interview with the radio program Marketplace that he didn't expect to face pressure from the White House.

"We have a long tradition here of conducting policy in a particular way, and that way is independent of all political concerns," Powell said. "We do our work in a strictly nonpolitical way, based on detailed analysis, which we put on the record transparently."

He added, "No one in the administration has said anything to me that really gives me concern on this front."

The reaction to Trump's remarks in the financial markets was muted. The U.S. dollar fell to 112.46 yen from 112.84 yen earlier, and yields on Treasuries dipped slightly.

After Trump's interview with CNBC was made public, Lindsay Walters, a White House spokeswoman, said the president "respects the independence of the Fed."

"The president's views on interest rates are well-known, and his comments today are a reiteration of those long held positions, and public comments," Walters said.

Speaking about Fed policy in his interview with CNBC, Trump said he is "letting them do what they feel is best."

But his comments raised alarms, including with some former Fed officials who saw in his remarks a possible effort to apply public pressure on the central bank.

"I am not pleased," said Carl Tannenbaum, a former Chicago Fed official and chief economist at Northern Trust. "The remarks certainly aren't an immediate threat to Fed independence, but they break with the tradition of respectful distance."

Randall Kroszner, a former Fed governor, said the central bank has withstood political pressure before and will continue to do so under Powell's leadership.

"The Fed has often faced political pressures — from Congress, presidents, Treasury secretaries and innumerable outside groups," said Kroszner, an economics professor at the University of Chicago. "My experience at the Fed is consistent with what Jay Powell recently said — being non-political is deep in the Fed's DNA — and I believe that Jay will keep it that way."

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump was highly critical of the Fed and accused its policymakers of keeping rates at ultra-low levels to favor Democrats. But he also told CNBC during the campaign that he is a "low interest-rate-person."

Past efforts to apply political pressure on the Fed have sometimes hurt the economy. President Richard

Nixon encouraged Arthur Burns, the Fed chairman at the time, to help boost economic growth ahead of Nixon's 1972 landslide re-election. That episode ultimately triggered runaway inflation that took a decade to tame and required raising the Fed's policy rate above 15 percent — more than eight times the rate's current average.

George H.W. Bush's administration complained that he felt the Fed's failure to cut rates more quickly in 1992 contributed to his re-election defeat that year.

When Robert Rubin led President Bill Clinton's National Economic Council, he adopted a rule of never commenting on the Fed's actions — a policy that was subsequently followed by the George W. Bush and Obama administrations.

AP Economics Writer Martin Crutsinger contributed to this report.

## **Sheriff: 11 people dead after Missouri tourist boat accident**

BRANSON, Mo. (AP) — At least 11 people, including children, died after a boat carrying tourists on a Missouri lake capsized and sank Thursday night, the local sheriff said.

Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader said five people remain missing and seven others were hospitalized after a Ride the Ducks boat sank on Table Rock Lake in Branson.

A spokeswoman for the Cox Medical Center Branson said four adults and three children arrived at the hospital shortly after the incident. Two adults were in critical condition and the others were treated for minor injuries, Brandei Clifton said.

Rader said the stormy weather was believed to be the cause of the capsizing. Another duck boat on the lake was able to safely make it back to shore.

Steve Lindenberg, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Springfield, Missouri, said the agency issued a severe thunderstorm warning for the Branson area Thursday evening. Lindenberg said winds reached speeds of more than 60 mph.

"It's a warning telling people to take shelter," he said.

Rader said an off-duty sheriff's deputy working security for the boat company helped rescue people after the accident.

Dive teams from a number of law enforcement agencies were assisting in the effort, but the sheriff said the divers ended their search for the night.

The National Transportation Safety Board said on Twitter that investigators will arrive on the scene Friday morning.

Suzanne Smagala with Ripley Entertainment, which owns Ride the Ducks in Branson, said the company was assisting authorities with the rescue effort. Smagala added this was the Branson tour's first accident in more than 40 years of operation.

Branson is about 200 miles (320 kilometers) southeast of Kansas City and is a popular vacation spot for families and other tourists looking for entertainment ranging from theme parks to live music.

Duck boats, known for their ability to travel on land and in water, have been involved in other deadly incidents in the past. They include one in 2015 in Seattle in which five college students were killed when a boat collided with a bus, and one in 1999 that left 13 people dead after the boat sank near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Safety advocates have sought improvements to the boats since the Arkansas incident. Critics argued that part of the problem is numerous agencies regulate the boats with varying safety requirements.

Duck boats were originally used by the U.S. military in World War II to transport troops and supplies, and later were modified for use as sightseeing vehicles.

## Did Trump and Putin agree to anything? Only they know

By **MATTHEW LEE, AP Diplomatic Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin may have reached several historic agreements at their summit in Finland this week. Or, they may not have. It depends on who you talk to. Three days later no one was quite sure.

With no details emerging from the leaders' one-on-one discussion on Monday — other than the vague outline they offered themselves — officials, lawmakers and citizens in the U.S. in particular are wondering what, if anything, was actually agreed to. Both Trump and Putin have declared the meeting a grand success that is soon to reap great rewards in numerous geopolitical realms, yet even the most complete accounting of the talks — one provided by Putin — suggests that any outcomes are far from certain.

And, the fact that a high-profile, high-stakes summit between the commanders in chief of the world's two biggest nuclear powers could be held without a solid achievement or failure to point to has flummoxed many.

In the U.S., frustration with the lack of information has raised already heightened suspicions of Trump. Democratic lawmakers have pushed to subpoena the notes of the State Department interpreter who translated for Trump or compel her to testify. Republicans have blocked the move. Officials said Thursday the White House and State Department were also likely to fight such a move as a breach of executive authority, making the appearance of the notes unlikely until they are published in a historical record decades from now.

So for now, everyone but Trump and Putin and perhaps a handful of their close confidants are in the dark. Even Trump's own intelligence chief, Dan Coats, said Thursday, "I don't know what happened in that meeting."

"It is utterly amazing, utterly amazing, that no one knows what was said," Chuck Schumer, the top-ranking Democrat in the Senate, said. "This is a democracy. If your president makes agreements with one of our leading — if not our leading — adversary, his Cabinet has to know about it and so do the American people."

Typically, a summit, especially one between two major powers, will occur after weeks and months of meticulous planning at lower levels with an eye toward producing demonstrable results. Agenda topics, talking points, desired outcomes and even major portions of significant agreements are normally negotiated in advance so the relevant agencies of both countries are aware of any potential policy changes. In some cases, the actual summit meeting and leaders' signatures on a piece of paper or a joint communique are mere formalities as the hard work has already been done by subordinates.

Those conventions have been upended by Trump's buccaneering approach to affairs of state — the kind of approach he thinks worked in his landmark summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last month. But this time there was no joint statement to formalize the outcome of the talks — just a meandering, 45-minute press conference where Trump stoked controversy by appearing to side with Putin over U.S. intelligence agencies' assessment that Russia meddled in the 2016 election.

Russia's ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov, expressed hope Thursday that "the verbal agreements between Putin and Trump will be fulfilled" — though the substance of any such understandings remain murky, not least because the main business was conducted in the two hours of discussions between the two leaders with only translators joining them.

On Thursday, the Trump administration poured cold water on at least one proposal from Putin: that Russia be allowed to interview Americans the Kremlin accused of crimes — the quid pro quo for allowing U.S. investigators to interrogate Russian intelligence officials recently indicted in the U.S. for alleged election interference.

"That's not going to happen," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said of the Russian proposal in an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network.

Still, from Putin's perspective, the summit put Moscow and Washington on "the path to positive change." In recent days he has spoken of finding broad consensus with Trump on ensuring security along Syria's border with Israel and on arms control issues. Russia's defense and foreign ministries, meanwhile, have



both said they are ready to start putting those agreements into action.

Trump himself has also put a positive spin on the summit. He says a second meeting with Putin will usher in the implementation of the laundry list of items they discussed in Helsinki. Those, he said in a tweet, include terrorism, security for Israel, nuclear proliferation, cyberattacks, trade, Ukraine, Middle East peace and North Korea. "There are many answers, some easy and some hard, to these problems ... but they can ALL be solved!" he said.

Pressed for details, however, the White House could not provide any.

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders mentioned Syria, Iran, Israel, arms control, Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its meddling in 2016 U.S. election as having been discussed. But turning those issues from topics of discussion into action apparently remains a work in progress.

"This is the beginning of the dialogue with Russia and our administration and theirs and we're going to continue working through those things," she told reporters at the White House on Wednesday.

Just minutes later, the State Department offered its own take on the Helsinki meeting, saying that no agreements were reached; just general proposals on matters mainly related to economic and strategic cooperation.

Spokeswoman Heather Nauert said three proposals were made: one for a high-level working group with U.S. and Russian business leaders to be convened; another for the creation of an "expert council" of academics, current and former diplomats and military officials from both countries to look broadly at U.S.-Russia relations, and a third one for the U.S. and Russian national security councils to hold a series of follow-on meetings.

"You know, these are certainly all modest proposals," she said. "The president had said going into this that we wouldn't solve all the world's problems in one meeting, in one conversation with the Russian government but we think it's a pretty good place to start."

At the Pentagon, officials were still waiting to see if their marching orders in Syria would change as a result of the summit.

The commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East said Thursday he had not received new guidance from the Pentagon on cooperating with Russia in Syria.

"We have received no further direction than we've currently been operating under," Gen. Joseph Votel said in a video-teleconference from his headquarters in Tampa, Florida. He said he's taking a "steady-as-she-goes" approach in Syria in the absence of new instructions.

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Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann in Aspen, Colorado., contributed to this report.

## **Zuckerberg's Holocaust comment puts Facebook on the spot**

**By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — Denying the Holocaust happened is probably OK on Facebook. Calling for a mob to kill Jews is not.

Mark Zuckerberg's awkward and eyebrow-raising attempt this week to explain where Facebook draws the line illustrates the complexities social media platforms face as they take on the unwanted role of referee in this age of online misinformation, manipulation and hate speech.

Facebook, with 2.2 billion users, disallows such things as nudity, the selling of guns, credible threats of violence, and direct attacks on people because of their race, sex or sexual orientation.

Hours after the Facebook founder's comments about Holocaust deniers aired on Wednesday, the company announced it will also start removing misinformation that could lead to bloodshed. The policy will begin in Sri Lanka and expand to Myanmar, where Facebook users have been accused of inciting anti-Muslim violence.

But beyond those guidelines, there are large gray areas. What, exactly, qualifies as supporting terrorist groups versus merely posting about them? Or mocking someone's premature death — something that is also prohibited?

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If Facebook were to ban Holocaust denial, it might also be called on to prohibit the denial of other historical events, such as the Armenian genocide or the massacre of Native Americans by European colonizers. This, Facebook might argue, could lead to a slippery slope where the company finds itself trying to verify the historical accuracy of users' posts.

So, where it can, Facebook stays out of policing content.

While thousands of Facebook moderators around the world are assigned to review potentially objectionable content, aided by artificial intelligence, executives like to say the company doesn't want to become an "arbiter of truth" and instead tries to let users decide for themselves.

This is why fake news isn't actually banned from Facebook, though you might see less of it these days thanks to the company's algorithms and third-party fact-checking efforts. Instead, Facebook might label disputed news stories as such and show you related content that might change your mind.

YouTube recently started doing this too. Twitter has been even more freewheeling in what sorts of content it allows, only recently ramping up a crackdown on hate and abuse.

"Facebook doesn't want to put time and resources to policing content. It's costly and difficult," said Steve Jones a professor of communications at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "It's a difficult job, I'm sure an emotionally draining job, and given the scale of Facebook, it would take a lot of people to monitor what goes through that platform."

At the same time, Jones said he has his doubts that throwing more moderators (Facebook's goal is to increase the number from 10,000 to 20,000 this year) and more technology at the problem would make a difference. He said he has no idea how Facebook can fix things.

"If I knew," he said, "I'd probably be sitting next to Mr. Zuckerberg asking for a big fat check."

Why these companies try to stay out of regulating speech goes back to their roots. They were all founded by engineers as tech companies that shun labels such as "media" and "editor." Facebook's chief operating officer, Sheryl Sandberg, even said in an interview last year that, as a tech company, Facebook hires engineers — not reporters and journalists.

Then there's the legal shield. While a newspaper can be held responsible for something printed on its pages, internet companies by law are not responsible for the content others post on their sites. If they start policing content too much — editing, if you will — tech companies risk becoming media companies.

Zeynep Tufekci, a prominent techno-sociologist, said on Twitter that the notion that you can "fight bad speech with good speech" doesn't really work in a Facebook world, if it ever did.

"Facebook is in over its head," she tweeted Thursday, but she also confessed that "nobody has a full answer."

In an interview with Recode, Zuckerberg, who is Jewish, said posts denying the Nazi annihilation of 6 million Jews took place would not necessarily be removed. Zuckerberg said that as long as posts are not calling for harm or violence, even offensive content should be protected.

While this has been a longstanding position at the company, Zuckerberg's statement and his reasoning — that he doesn't think Holocaust deniers are "intentionally" getting it wrong — caused an uproar.

The Anti-Defamation League said Facebook has a "moral and ethical obligation" not to allow people to disseminate Holocaust denial.

Zuckerberg later tried to explain his words, saying in an email to Recode's Kara Swisher that he personally finds "Holocaust denial deeply offensive, and I absolutely didn't intend to defend the intent of people who deny that."

Still, for now the policy is not changing.

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AP Technology Writer Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this story.

## Trump aims to end automatic protections for some species

By MATTHEW BROWN, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The Trump administration on Thursday proposed ending automatic protections for threatened animals and plants and limiting habitat safeguards meant to shield recovering species from harm.

Administration officials said the new rules would advance conservation by simplifying and improving how the landmark Endangered Species Act is used.

"These rules will be very protective," said U.S. Interior Department Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, adding that the changes would reduce the "conflict and uncertainty" associated with many protected species.

The proposals drew immediate condemnation from Democrats and some wildlife advocates.

Critics said the moves would speed extinctions in the name of furthering its anti-environment agenda. Species currently under consideration for protections are considered especially at risk, including the North American wolverine and the monarch butterfly, they said.

"It essentially turns every listing of a species into a negotiation," said Noah Greenwald with the Center for Biological Diversity. "They could decide that building in a species' habitat or logging in trees where birds nest doesn't constitute harm."

A number of conflicts have arisen in the decades since the 1973 passage of the Endangered Species Act, ranging from disruptions to logging to protect spotted owls in the Pacific Northwest, to attacks on livestock that have accompanied the restoration of gray wolves in the Rocky Mountains and upper Midwest.

Some species including gray wolves and grizzly retained protection for years after meeting their original recovery goals, often due to court orders resulting from environmentalists' lawsuits.

The proposed changes include potential limits on the designation of "critical habitat" for imperiled plants and animals; an end to a regulatory provision that gives threatened plants and animals the same protections as species at greater risk of extinction; and streamlining inter-agency consultations when federal government actions could jeopardize a species.

Collin O'Mara, president of the National Wildlife Federation, welcomed the potential for the changes to spur greater collaboration between landowners, government officials and conservationists — even as he cautioned against ending automatic protections for threatened species.

"This is not all good or all bad," he said.

O'Mara said crafting case by case species management plans is an appropriate alternative to the blanket protections now given automatically to threatened and endangered species. Until those plans are completed, he said, broad protections against harming plants and animals should stay in place.

More than 700 animals and almost 1,000 plants in the U.S. are shielded by the law. Hundreds more are under consideration for protections.

Fewer than 100 species have been taken off the threatened and endangered lists, either because they were deemed recovered or, in at least 10 cases, went extinct.

Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke have been strong advocates for oil and gas drilling and other types of development, frequently criticizing environmental policies they say hinder economic activity. Zinke also has sought to portray himself as a conservationist in the vein of President Teddy Roosevelt who will protect the nation's natural resources.

The administration's proposals follow longstanding criticism of the Endangered Species Act by business groups and some members of Congress. Republican lawmakers are pushing legislation to enact broad changes to the law, saying it hinders economic activities while doing little to restore species.

One of the chief architects of that effort, U.S. Sen. John Barrasso, a Republican from Wyoming who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, said the administration's proposals were "a good start" but indicated more work was needed.

"The administration is limited by an existing law that needs to be updated," Barrasso said. "The changes I have proposed will empower states, promote the recovery of species, and allow local economies to thrive."

The Pacific Legal Foundation, a conservative law firm headquartered in California, lobbied for some of the changes.



Foundation attorney Jonathan Wood said the proposals would relieve apprehensions among property owners who in the past have been reluctant to get involved in species conservation efforts.

Follow Matthew Brown on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/matthewbrownap](http://www.twitter.com/matthewbrownap) .

## Disney streaming could get boost as Comcast drops Fox bid

By MAE ANDERSON, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Comcast is dropping its bid for Fox's entertainment businesses, paving the way for Disney to boost its upcoming streaming service by buying the studios behind "The Simpsons" and X-Men. Getting Fox would help the House of Mouse compete with technology companies such as Amazon and Netflix for viewers' attention — and dollars.

Disney needs compelling TV shows and movies to persuade viewers to sign up and pay for yet another streaming service. It already has classic Disney cartoons, "Star Wars," Pixar, the Muppets and some of the Marvel characters. With Fox, Disney could add Marvel's X-Men and Deadpool, along with programs shown on such Fox channels as FX Networks and National Geographic. Fox's productions also include "The Americans," "This Is Us" and "Modern Family."

The deal would help Disney further control TV shows and movies from start to finish — from creating the programs to distributing them through television channels, movie theaters, streaming services and other ways people watch entertainment. Disney would get valuable data on customers and their entertainment-viewing habits, which it can then use to sell advertising.

For Comcast, dropping the pursuit of Fox lets it focus on getting European pay-TV operator Sky, a deal that would help the Philadelphia-based cable and media company expand beyond the U.S.

Fox shareholders are to vote on the Disney deal on July 27.

Cable and telecom companies have been buying the companies that make TV shows and movies to compete in a changing media landscape. Although internet providers like AT&T and Comcast directly control their customers' access to the internet in a way that Amazon, YouTube and Netflix do not, they still face threats as those streaming services gain in popularity.

AT&T bought Time Warner last month for \$81 billion and has already launched its own streaming service, Watch TV, with Time Warner channels such as TBS and TNT, among other networks, for \$15 a month.

Expect something similar from Disney after the deal closes. In addition to boosting the Disney streaming service, expected to debut next year, the deal paves the way for Marvel's X-Men and the Avengers to reunite in future movies. Though Disney owns Marvel Studios, some characters including the X-Men had already been licensed to Fox.

Disney would also get a controlling stake in the existing streaming service Hulu.

Separately, Disney said it will release new episodes of the "Star Wars" animated series "The Clone Wars" on its upcoming streaming service. The original "Clone Wars" series ran for six seasons, with the final one as a Netflix exclusive.

Comcast said Thursday that it would not raise its \$66 billion offer for Fox. The Walt Disney Co. had topped Comcast's bid by offering \$71 billion. The U.S. Department of Justice has approved Disney's bid as long as Disney, which owns the national sports network ESPN, sells Fox's 22 regional sports networks. Disney may still need regulatory approvals outside the U.S.

Disney CEO Bob Iger said he was "extremely pleased" with Comcast's announcement.

"Our focus now is on completing the regulatory process and ultimately moving toward integrating our businesses," he said in a statement.

GBH Insights analyst Daniel Ives called Comcast's move "the final chapter in this soap opera." He said Comcast's focus now is on getting Sky "to build a strong beachhead content strategy in Europe."

Sky operates in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the U.K. It has 22.5 million customers, attracted by offerings such as English Premier League soccer and "Game of Thrones."

Fox has been trying to buy the 61 percent of Sky it doesn't already own. The idea was to sell Sky to

Disney as part of the broader deal. Last week, Comcast made a bid that values Sky at \$34 billion, compared with \$32.5 billion in Fox's offer.

Disney said in a regulatory filing last week that Fox might not raise its bid to compete with Comcast's offer, meaning Comcast is likely to end up with Sky and Disney the rest of Fox that's up for sale. That includes other international properties, including the Star India satellite service. Some Fox businesses, including Fox News Channel and the Fox television network, will remain with media mogul Rupert Murdoch and his family.

## Flint water crisis prompts call for more federal oversight

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and JOHN FLESHER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal watchdog is calling on the Environmental Protection Agency to strengthen its oversight of state drinking water systems nationally and respond more quickly to public health emergencies such as the lead-in-the water crisis in Flint, Michigan.

In a 74-page report released Thursday, the EPA's inspector general report pointed to "oversight lapses" at the federal, state and local levels in the response to Flint's contaminated drinking water.

"While oversight authority is vital, its absence can contribute to a catastrophic situation," the inspector general, Arthur A. Elkins, said in a statement. His office has concluded the EPA was too slow and passive in responding to the Flint crisis.

The finding comes as the Trump administration seeks to cut the EPA's budget, including some drinking-water programs. The administration also has called for reining back federal environmental regulation overall and transferring more oversight authority of some programs to the states.

The EPA said in a statement it agrees with the inspector general's recommendations and is adopting them "expeditiously."

"The agency is actively engaging with states to improve communications and compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act to safeguard human health," the statement said.

But the internal watchdog said the agency's proposal for stepping up oversight falls short.

Flint's tap water became contaminated in 2014 after officials switched from the Detroit system to the Flint River to save money, exposing many residents to lead, a potent neurotoxin. Children are particularly vulnerable, and the EPA says there is no safe level of lead.

EPA officials had stressed they had wanted to foster a collaborative partnership with Michigan, the report said. In Flint, the quest for "partnership limited effective EPA oversight."

Rep. Dan Kildee, who was traveling to Flint on Thursday to inspect work done on the city's water system, said the state bore most of the blame for the slow response to the health crisis, but also said "the EPA should have been more aggressive."

"EPA should not have taken the state of Michigan at its word" that everything was fine with Flint's water, said Kildee, D-Mich. "Water quality is too serious a question ... without doing more to assure the rule is being properly enforced."

The switch to the Flint River was to be temporary, until the city could connect to a planned regional pipeline from Lake Huron. At that time, the impoverished majority-black city of nearly 100,000 residents was under control of an emergency financial manager appointed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder.

Residents complained the river water smelled and tasted bad and was causing skin rashes and other health problems. Local officials insisted it was safe.

After tests showed high levels of lead in a home in April 2015, Miguel Del Toral, a water regulations official in EPA's Chicago office, contacted officials with Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality. Del Toral also alerted superiors at EPA who decided not to make the information public, instead prodding the state agency to act behind the scenes. After a draft of Del Toral's report was leaked, EPA's regional administrator apologized to the city.

In emails later released through public-records requests, Del Toral voiced frustration over EPA's slow

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pace and described the agency as a “cesspool.”

State officials finally acknowledged the lead contamination in September 2015 after doctors reported high levels of lead in Flint children’s blood and Virginia Tech University researchers said their testing of Flint water samples found some with lead levels meeting EPA’s definition of “toxic waste.”

Snyder ordered the National Guard to distribute bottled water and filters, requested federal aid and eventually accepted the resignation of his top environmental official. Flint returned to the Detroit water system.

In January 2016, the EPA notified Michigan that its actions were inadequate and ordered stronger intervention. The agency’s regional administrator in Chicago, Susan Hedman, resigned the next month. The preliminary inspector general’s review later that year found that the regional EPA office should have had “a greater sense of urgency” and was too deferential to the state.

Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy acknowledged during congressional hearings that her agency should have been more aggressive in testing the water and requiring changes but said the federal agency “couldn’t get a straight answer” from Michigan officials about what was being done in Flint.

“We were strong-armed. We were misled,” McCarthy said. “We were kept at arm’s length. We could not do our jobs effectively.”

Republican lawmakers accused McCarthy and the Obama EPA of incompetence and neglect.

Snyder ended water distribution in Flint last April, saying water quality had improved significantly. The state environmental agency this week said tests during the latest six-month monitoring showed lead levels were beneath the action threshold and better than those of some other Michigan cities.

The Michigan attorney general’s office has filed criminal charges against 15 state and local officials in the Flint matter, which also has spawned numerous lawsuits.

Flesher reported from Traverse City, Michigan.

This story has been corrected to reflect that the inspector general’s last name is Elkins, rather than Elkin.

## Montenegro more puzzled than affronted by Trump’s attention

By **PREDRAG MILIC, Associated Press**

PODGORICA, Montenegro (AP) — World War III? Not us, say the puzzled people of Montenegro.

Public officials in this tiny European nation didn’t know what to say initially when U.S. President Donald Trump suggested that NATO’s newest and smallest member, which has a military with fewer than 2,000 members, could be the spark that sets off a global Armageddon.

That the leader of the world’s dominant superpower would characterize the 620,000 or so Montenegrins as “very strong” and “very aggressive people” rendered their government speechless. It found its voice Thursday, and what came out was less a battle cry than a chorus of “Kumbaya.”

“We build friendships, and we have not lost a single one,” read a statement issued in the capital, Podgorica, in response to the media’s clamoring for comment. “It does not matter how big or small you are, but to what extent you cherish the values of freedom, solidarity and democracy.”

Living in a region that has seen more than its share of volatile conflicts, Montenegrins say they are much more interested in tourism than war. Montenegro, a former Yugoslav republic like Slovenia, the home country of U.S. first lady Melania Trump, is known for its long Adriatic Sea beaches.

“I laughed when I heard that and figured it could be a good advertisement,” retiree Slavka Kovacevic, 58, said of Trump’s depiction while taking a break from her morning shopping.

Trump ventured his thoughts on Montenegro during an interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson conducted Monday after the summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. They were discussing NATO’s mutual defense pact.

If Montenegro, for example, were provoked, having NATO behind it could embolden “a tiny country with very strong people” to engage, the president said.

“They are very strong people. They are very aggressive people, they may get aggressive, and congratu-

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lations, you are in World War III," he added.

The comment was not the first time Trump had taken notice of Montenegro in a way that attracted oversized attention. At a NATO summit last year, his first as president, Trump shoved Montenegrin Prime Minister Dusko Markovic out of the way while trying to get in front for a leaders' group photo.

Back then, Markovic refused to make a fuss over the American president's manners. Markovic also took the high road regarding Trump's comments this week. He noted in a parliamentary debate Wednesday that Trump spoke within the context of questioning NATO financing and was not trying to put down a particular ally.

"Therefore, the friendship and the alliance of Montenegro and the United States of America is strong and permanent," Markovic's government said in its statement Thursday.

Trump's views have some basis in history. Montenegro, which means "Black Mountain," does boast of a heroic warring tradition forged over centuries of conquest and contemporary conflicts in the troubled Balkans.

Montenegro was a rare country in the region to retain a level of autonomy during the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Its past ties to Russia, with whom Montenegro shared a predominantly Slavic and Orthodox Christian culture, were so strong that its leaders were said to have declared a war on Japan in 1904 just to support Russia.

Montenegro became part of Yugoslavia after World War I. During the breakup of Yugoslavia, Montenegro was bombed by NATO forces in 1999 before it split from Serbia in 2006.

"I just want to remind all the American public opinion and President Trump that Montenegro was an ally with American soldiers in two wars, in the first world war and the second world war," former parliament speaker Ranko Krivokapic told The Associated Press.

"Montenegrins are not aggressive ... but the nation of brave warriors," he said.

As it happens, the governor of the U.S. state of Maine, Paul LePage, was visiting Montenegro in hopes of strengthening ties with business and political leaders when the president's interview aired. Maine is six times as big as Montenegro and has had a partnership with the country since 2006. LePage says it originally focused on disaster relief, emergency management and border security.

The Balkans have a difficult history, but "everybody likes Montenegro," the governor said in a video the U.S. Embassy in Montenegro posted Tuesday. The embassy followed up Thursday with its own statement, saying "the United States is proud to call Montenegro an ally."

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters seeking clarification of the president's thoughts on NATO commitments in general and Montenegro in particular Wednesday that any elaboration would have to come from the White House.

"I can tell you that the president reiterated our ironclad commitment to NATO's collective defense last week" at a NATO leaders' meeting in Brussels, Nauert said. "Their summit declaration that came out at the end of the summit stated clearly that any attack against one ally will be regarded as an attack against all."

Although its land mass and military are small, Montenegro was seen as an important addition to NATO when it defied Russia and joined last year. Along with having been a Russian ally in the Balkans, the country sits on a southern stretch of the Adriatic Sea that Moscow has been keen to control.

Montenegrin authorities accused Russia of being behind a foiled coup in 2016 that was intended to kill the country's pro-NATO prime minister. Russia has denied the allegation. Given the recent tensions, some Montenegrin observers worried Trump's comments might need to be taken seriously.

Former parliament speaker Krivokapic described Trump's remark as "very strange."

"I hope (it was) just a mistake, nothing else," Krivokapic said. "And I hope that Montenegro was not part of (the) Helsinki talks."

The reaction of Miljan Kovacevic, 34, a lawyer in Montenegro, was more akin to his prime minister's post-shove aplomb.

"He is the president of America, but he has not done too well with his statements lately," Kovacevic shrugged.

\_\_\_Jovana Gec contributed from Belgrade.



## Turmoil slows rebuilding of Puerto Rico's power grid

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN and DANICA COTO, Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Ten months after Hurricane Maria destroyed Puerto Rico's electric grid, the local agency responsible for rebuilding it is in chaos and more than \$1 billion in federal funds meant to strengthen the rickety system has gone unspent, according to contractors and U.S. officials who are anxious to make progress before the next hurricane.

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority has seen two chief executive officers and four board members resign in less than a week in a messy fight over how much the bankrupt agency should pay its CEO. The agency's fourth CEO since the hurricane lasted less than 24 hours on the job last week before resigning amid public outrage over his \$750,000 salary.

Gov. Ricardo Rossello on Wednesday named the former head of Puerto Rico's water and sewer agency as the fifth head of the electric company since Maria, at a salary of \$250,000 a year. Jose Ortiz starts work Monday.

"In spite of missteps in the past, everybody will see that we have the right person at the right time," Rossello said.

The turmoil has fueled delays in launching \$1.4 billion worth of work that includes replacing creaky wooden power poles vulnerable to collapse in the next storm, the chief federal official in charge of rebuilding Puerto Rico told The Associated Press.

"There is no permanent work that's been done," said Mike Byrne, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's assistant administrator for field operations. "What I'm worried about is the next level, the permanent work, the going in and building the grid the way I've been tasked to do by Congress."

From shut-down medical equipment to the spread of waterborne diseases, the cascading effects of power grid failure likely led to hundreds of deaths in the aftermath of the Category 4 hurricane, although the exact number remains a subject of debate and ongoing investigation.

"The one reason why so many people died in the aftermath of the hurricane was the lack of energy," said opposition Sen. Eduardo Bhatia. "And the lack of energy comes from how fragile the system was because of years of neglect."

Several hundred Puerto Ricans remained without power Thursday in the longest-running blackout in U.S. history. The entire island remains vulnerable because much of the massive damage from the storm was resolved with temporary fixes likely to fail in the next hurricane.

These include thousands of weakened and damaged poles and power lines that were reused in the absence of new supplies. In some cases, lines were bolted to trees.

The Puerto Rico power authority notified three large mainland U.S. companies in March that they had been selected to carry out \$1.4 billion worth of contracts that includes finishing emergency restoration work and beginning the long-term task of overhauling the power grid. Nearly four months later, the agency has not issued the final orders required to send the linemen into the field to do the permanent work, according to federal officials and some contractors.

The power authority has not explained why, and a spokesman did not return repeated AP calls for comment.

As with virtually all post-hurricane disaster relief in Puerto Rico, the work is contracted and paid for by bankrupt local agencies using money disbursed by FEMA from billions appropriated by Congress.

The board created by Congress to oversee Puerto Rico's finances and bankruptcy-like proceedings reviews the government's major contracts. In May, it found problems with the contracts of two of the power companies chosen to do the first stages of permanent work. These include vague descriptions of the scope of the project and a lack of detailed evaluation of costs.

Ortiz, the power authority's new head, indicated potential problems with at least one of the contractors, Cobra, a subsidiary of Oklahoma-based Mammoth Energy. Cobra has been awarded more than \$1.8 billion in federal money, at rates of about \$4,000 per worker per day in many cases. Ortiz said the cost of the contractors would be getting a second look.

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"It will be reevaluated," he told reporters Wednesday. "Certainly the numbers merit being looked at very closely."

Cobra representatives declined to comment.

The problems at the power authority are prompting calls for urgent change to Puerto Rico's decades-old system of putting its power generation and transmission under the control of a government agency run by the governor's appointees rather than an independent, government-regulated corporation, as occurs in virtually all other parts of the United States.

Rossello has proposed privatizing the generation of energy and awarding concessions to private contractors for power transmission and distribution. Puerto Rico legislators have approved a measure that would allow for those changes, and they expect to approve another bill in coming months to establish a regulatory framework.

For many on and off the island, that isn't fast enough.

"PREPA needs to be depoliticized in order to be a functional, modern and reliable utility. The people of Puerto Rico deserve at least that much," said Utah Republican Congressman Rob Bishop, who oversees Puerto Rico issues as chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources. The committee will hold a July 25 hearing on the power company's future.

Agency employees say that for decades, near-total control by the governor's office has led to the power authority being stuffed with unqualified, politically connected managers. Political influence also drove a string of unrealistic, expensive projects that were cancelled by subsequent administrations.

The electric company was also used as a piggybank for the commonwealth's government by providing years of power to government agencies that didn't pay their bills, and highly discounted rates to important island businesses like major hotels.

Essential maintenance like trimming trees back from power lines and replacing decrepit poles was delayed for years, even decades.

In May 2017, Puerto Rico filed for the biggest municipal bankruptcy ever in the U.S. The government carries a \$70 billion public debt load, which includes more than \$9 billion held by Puerto Rico's power company.

Bankrupt and debilitated by mismanagement, the Puerto Rican electric grid was already in a state of near-collapse when Maria devastated the island in September and left millions without power.

That has been followed by a cascade of CEO departures at the power authority.

First to go was Ricardo Ramos, amid allegations that he hired an underqualified power contractor, Whitefish. His temporary successor was replaced by Walter Higgins, a veteran power executive.

But on July 11, just four months into the job, Higgins resigned. Among the factors influencing his decision, he said, was that compensation details stipulated in his contract could not be met. A month earlier, Puerto Rico's justice secretary had said it would be illegal for a public employee like Higgins to receive bonuses on top of his \$450,000 salary.

Power company officials then named board member Rafael Diaz as the new CEO, with a \$750,000-a-year salary. Diaz lasted only a day, resigning along with four other board members after Gov. Rossello criticized his salary and said those unwilling to adjust their compensation expectations amid an 11-year recession should step down.

The rapid turnover has set off alarm among ordinary Puerto Ricans and criticism from Rossello's political opponents.

"The economy is being affected, the quality of life is being affected and the lives of people who depend on the electrical system are being put at risk," said Rolando Ortiz, who oversees an association of mayors from the opposition Popular Democratic Party.

Byrne, the FEMA administrator, said stability was urgently needed at the power authority in order to protect Puerto Rico from future disasters.

"This is a whole machine of activity that needs to take place," Byrne said. "It needs a director, it needs leadership it needs capability."

"The sooner we get moving, the better for all involved," he said.

Michael Weissenstein on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mweissenstein>

Danica Coto on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/danicacoto>

## Source: New York launches tax probe of Trump Foundation

By DAVID KLEPPER, Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York state tax officials have opened an investigation into the Trump Foundation to determine whether President Donald Trump or his charity violated state law.

The probe into whether the Republican president or his foundation committed any violations or made misrepresentations to the state with respect to tax liability began about a month ago. It was confirmed Thursday to The Associated Press by an official with knowledge of the case. The official was not authorized to speak publicly about active investigations and spoke of condition of anonymity.

If evidence of alleged crimes is found, the matter could be referred to prosecutors, who could pursue criminal charges and seek the release of Trump's tax returns.

"For the Trump Foundation, the law is the law. It doesn't matter who you are, the law is the law," Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Thursday in response to questions about the probe.

The investigation, first reported by The New York Times, follows Democratic state Attorney General Barbara Underwood's lawsuit alleging Trump illegally tapped his Trump Foundation to settle legal disputes, help his campaign for president and pay for personal and business expenses, which included spending \$10,000 on a six-foot portrait of himself.

The attorney general's office is seeking \$2.8 million in restitution and other unspecified penalties in its civil suit. It said that it had referred to its findings to the IRS and the Federal Election Commission for possible further action.

The White House has dismissed the lawsuit as politically motivated and Trump has called the case "ridiculous," tweeting "I won't settle this case!"

A criminal investigation would allow state prosecutors to broaden their probe, a jump in authority that often requires a referral from the governor or a state agency.

The attorney general's office said Wednesday that it wasn't ruling out seeking broader authority, but that criminal probes related to taxes often involve tax evasion, which the president is not accused of. It also said a shift to a criminal probe could help efforts by Trump lawyers to get a judge to delay the civil case.

"As our lawsuit against the Trump Foundation illustrates, we intend to hold the Foundation and its directors accountable for all violations of state law," said spokeswoman Amy Spitalnick. "We continue to evaluate the evidence to determine what additional actions may be warranted, and will seek a criminal referral from the appropriate state agency as necessary."

Trump said during his campaign that he couldn't release his federal tax returns because he was being audited, though experts and Internal Revenue Service officials have said such audits don't bar taxpayers from releasing their returns.

Cuomo will grant Underwood the power to pursue a criminal investigation if she requests it, his administration announced Wednesday.

The president is fighting two other lawsuits that could force him to release his returns, both alleging that he has violated a constitutional ban on accepting foreign government payments in allowing diplomats and other government representatives to hold parties and stay at his hotels. Trump's lawyers say the constitution's so-called emoluments clause does not apply to normal business transactions requiring payment for services.

Democratic lawmakers also have introduced legislation that would require the state to release five years of tax information for any president or vice president who files a New York state return. Another bill would require any presidential candidate to release his or her tax returns as a requirement to appear on the state ballot.

Neither bill received a full vote.

## For Russia, Trump is creating more problems than he solves

By ANGELA CHARLTON, Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Having Donald Trump in the White House is looking increasingly like a liability for the Kremlin, rather than an asset. But don't expect President Vladimir Putin to say that out loud.

Russia's official assessment of Trump's high-stakes summit with Putin is carefully upbeat. In his first public comment on it, Putin on Thursday declared it "successful."

That stands in sharp contrast to the rain of criticism the U.S. president has faced at home. And as the days pass and Trump's comments about Monday's summit become more and more contradictory, Moscow appears to be quietly losing hope for a thaw in Russian-U.S. ties under Trump.

Putin doesn't blame Trump for that. He blames Trump's opponents.

"Certain forces are trying to disavow the results of the meeting in Helsinki," and hamper progress on what they discussed, such as limiting their nuclear arsenals or ending the war in Syria, Putin said.

In a meeting at the Foreign Ministry with Russia's ambassadors to other countries, Putin warned them to "take to this into account" in dealing with the U.S.

The U.S.-Russia relationship is "in some ways worse than during the Cold War," Putin said, "It's naive to think that the problems would be solved in a few hours."

The Helsinki summit allowed them to start on "the path to positive change," he said, but added that he was cautious about the longer term.

"We will see how things develop further," Putin said, evoking those in the U.S. trying to prevent any improvement in relations and "putting narrow party interests above the national interest."

The lively debate in Washington is unthinkable in Russia, where Putin has never faced real political opposition and leads a country that has never had a democratic transition of power.

While he and Trump seem to be cut from the same cloth, they come from very different worlds.

In public, Russian officials have been consistent in their praise of the summit and criticism of Trump's opponents, while also exercising caution about taking aim at Trump himself.

Behind the scenes, however, some members of the political and business elite have a different assessment.

"Trump's behavior was a total disaster for long-term prospects of the normalization of the U.S.-Russia relationship," said Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie Moscow Center.

Trump has come under widespread domestic criticism about the meeting with Putin both from Democratic opponents and some Republicans. He has made contradictory statements over whether he believes Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.

"He's made things much worse," Gabuev said.

Trump tweeted Thursday that his critics in the media "are pushing so recklessly hard and hate the fact that I'll probably have a good relationship with Putin."

Indeed, when Trump came to office, many Russians hoped he would pave the way for lifting sanctions and ending years of tensions. But now, Gabuev said, "whether this bet on Trump for the long term is a smart one is hard to see."

In a possible dig at Trump's unpredictable presidency, Putin on Thursday lauded Russia's "consistent, responsible, independent foreign policy."

Putin had both good and bad things to say about Trump in a broad speech about foreign policy.

The Russian leader praised Trump's mediation efforts in North Korea, but slammed his protectionist trade policies and the decision to pull out of the international accord curbing Iran's nuclear activities.

He also lashed out at Europe and U.S.-dominated NATO, saying Russia would hit back with an "equivalent response" to the alliance's bases near Russia's borders and other "aggressive steps." He didn't elaborate.

Russian politicians also criticized proposals by U.S. lawmakers to question Trump's interpreter from the Helsinki summit about what topics the men discussed privately.

At his joint news conference with Putin, Trump said they discussed Syria "at length" but was vague about the outcome. The Russian Defense Ministry has said it is ready to implement what it called agreements on increased cooperation with the U.S. military in Syria. But U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has given



no public indication since the summit of plans to work more closely with the Russian military in Syria.

Konstantin Kosachev, head of the upper house of the Russian parliament's foreign affairs committee, said the idea of questioning the translator about what was said privately sets a dangerous precedent that threatens the "the whole idea of diplomacy," according to Russian news agencies.

Kosachev also said if the summit turns out to be a failure, it won't be the fault of Putin or Trump.

"There is no doubt about the Russian side's ability and readiness to fulfill the results of this summit, but there is doubt regarding the American side, and it not is connected to things President Trump personally wants to achieve or avoid," he said.

"It is connected to his ability to fulfill these agreements, which, to my mind, is artificially restricted by the U.S. Congress and some U.S. agencies, let alone intelligence services," Kosachev added.

If Putin's speech to the envoys raised serious issues, the Foreign Ministry, known by its Russian acronym MID, used the occasion to make a sardonic quip.

Its official Twitter account posted a photo of a long line of the ambassadors heading into the Putin speech at the ministry's ornate headquarters. The caption, accompanied by a winking emoji, said: "When you can't wait to meddle in someone's elections — Russian diplomats going to work at MID."

## Farmers fret and wait as US-China trade war escalates

By **STEVE KARNOWSKI** and **BLAKE NICHOLSON**, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Many anxious American farmers are delaying purchases and investment while hoping for a truce in a U.S.-China trade war that has left their crops at a competitive disadvantage overseas.

The longer the Trump administration's tariffs remain in place, the more China's retaliatory tariffs against American exports stand to hurt U.S. soybean and pork producers.

President Donald Trump's administration on July 6 carried out its threat to impose 25 percent tariffs on \$34 billion worth of Chinese products, alleging that Beijing steals or pressures U.S. companies to hand over technology. China responded with similar duties on the same amount of U.S. imports — including soybeans and pork. The administration July 10 announced a second possible round targeting \$200 billion worth of goods. Beijing vowed "firm and forceful measures" in response.

"From a farmer's perspective all you can do is wait and hope, which aren't very good options," said Michael Petefish, who grows soybeans and corn near Claremont in southern Minnesota. "If you can afford not to be selling your beans now, just put them in the bin and store them and wait for better markets. That's about all you can do."

Wanda Patsche and her husband, Chuck Patsche, stand to be doubly affected. They grow corn and soybeans and raise pigs near Welcome in southern Minnesota. She said the main thing they and their neighbors have done to cushion themselves is to delay investment in their farming operation.

"There will be no equipment purchases, no improvements, just holding our own. Basically a holding pattern. And hoping things are going to get worked out fairly quickly," she said.

Farmers often hedge against price downturns by selling part of their crop on the futures market, locking in an early price for crops they'll harvest in the fall. Patsche said she and her husband marketed a little of their 2018 crop, so they can count on a profit for those bushels, but they'd take a loss if they sold any more at current prices. So they're hoping the markets get some good news that will send prices back up.

Greg Bartz, who farms near Sleepy Eye in southern Minnesota's Brown County, said he sold most of his 2018 corn and soybean crop earlier this year before trade fears sent prices plunging. He pointed out that that's a gamble that can backfire if prices ultimately go up.

"You never know, and you don't know what production is going to be, either," said Bartz, the county's Farm Bureau president.

One of the few things farmers can do for now is to make themselves heard. Petefish and other farmers from the American Soybean Association and the American Farm Bureau Federation descended on Capitol Hill on July 11 to tell lawmakers and staffers how they stand to become collateral damage in the trade war unless there's a resolution soon.

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"A lot of people aren't very optimistic, unfortunately," said Petefish, president of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association. "They're not sure of the end game, and that's what everyone is trying to ascertain: What is the plan?"

They also included Joe Ericson, whose family grows soybeans, corns and wheat near the eastern North Dakota town of Wimbledon. Ericson, president of the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, said the tariffs put farmers like him who are Trump supporters in an awkward position.

"I fully support my president, but it's tough to defend it," he said. "We don't really defend tariffs; we defend fair trade. We wish there were other ways he could go about finding a solution."

Petefish has been telling people how the price plunge is already costing farmers like him. Soybeans have dropped more than \$2 a bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade in the last few weeks due to the trade tensions. That means the 2017 beans left in his bins are suddenly worth a lot less.

"On my farm it's the equivalent of \$250,000 ... in lost value," he said.

And that hit comes on top of already low commodity prices that have cut farm incomes by 50 percent since 2012, he said.

"If you're not already in the red, this will push you into the red for this year," he said.

The ultimate impacts may become clearer this fall. At that point many farmers may have to sell at least part of their new crops at the market price, as low as it may be, just to pay bills.

"We forward-contracted a lot of our stuff, but if it continues on, next year will be tighter," Ericson said. "If you did a good job marketing I think you'll be OK. A lot of people selling right off the combine — that's going to hurt them. When the combines start rolling, that's when you'll really start seeing it."

Trump trade adviser Peter Navarro last month said the administration would have farmers' backs, Petefish recalled.

"Right now farmers don't know what that means," he added.

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Nicholson reported from Bismarck, North Dakota.

## Asian markets fall as China, US ready for more tariffs

By ANNABELLE LIANG, Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Asian markets wobbled Friday on signs that China and the U.S. were preparing to impose more tariffs on each other's products.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 lost 0.5 percent to 22,652.42 and South Korea's Kospi dropped less than 0.1 percent to 2,281.69. Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 0.6 percent to 27,858.02. The Shanghai Composite Index edged 0.1 percent lower to 2,769.06. Australia's S&P-ASX 200 bucked the regional trend, adding 0.4 percent to 6,286.00.

WALL STREET: U.S. indexes finished mostly lower. The S&P 500 index lost 0.4 percent to 2,804.49 on Thursday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gave up 0.5 percent to 25,064.50. The Nasdaq composite dipped 0.4 percent to close at 7,825.30. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks gained 0.6 percent to 1,701.31. Smaller companies tend to do better than larger ones when trade tensions flare up because they do a greater proportion of their sales in the U.S.

YUAN DECLINES: The People's Bank of China set the Chinese currency's central parity rate to 0.9 percent weaker against the dollar on Friday. This sent ripples through Asian markets. If the yuan continues to depreciate, goods exported to China will become more expensive to consumers there. Chinese exports would also be relatively cheaper, possibly balancing out suggested increases in tariffs by the Trump Administration.

ANALYST'S TAKE: "One theory is that the PBOC is depreciating the yuan because it has not enough ammunition to fight a dollar-for-dollar increase in tariffs. The markets are very risk-off. There is a loss in confidence right now," said Francis Tan, an economist at UOB Bank.

AUTO TARIFFS REJECTED: The U.S. Commerce Department sought feedback on President Donald Trump's plans to consider taxing auto imports on Thursday. Critics lined up to urge the administration to

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reject auto tariffs. They argued that the taxes would raise car prices, squeeze automakers by increasing the cost of imported components and invite retaliation from U.S. trading partners - and allies - like the European Union and Canada. The Alliance of Auto Manufacturers rejected the levies on car, truck and auto parts imports, saying the view was shared by over 2,200 comments it had received.

**WEEK AHEAD:** Investors are keeping an eye on the European Central Bank policy meeting and data on how the U.S. economy performed in the second quarter. They will also be looking out for more U.S. corporate earnings, such as those from tech giants like Google, Amazon and Facebook.

**INTEREST RATES:** In an interview with CNBC on Thursday, President Trump said that he was "not happy" about Federal Reserve's recent interest rate increases. The Fed has raised its benchmark rate for a second time this year and projected two more increases in 2018. Its rate hikes are meant to prevent the economy from overheating and igniting high inflation. But rate increases also make borrowing costlier for households and companies and can weaken the pace of growth. The president acknowledged that his comments about the Fed would likely raise concerns, as the central bank has long been operating free of political pressure.

**CURRENCIES:** Trump's comments caused the greenback to decline slightly. The U.S. dollar extended its losses on Friday, easing to 112.35 yen from 112.46 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1655 from \$1.1644.

**OIL:** Benchmark U.S. crude dropped 12 cents to \$68.12 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Thursday, the contract settled at \$68.24 a barrel. Brent crude, used to price international oils, remained flat at \$72.58.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 20, the 201st day of 2018. There are 164 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On July 20, 1944, an attempt by a group of German officials to assassinate Adolf Hitler with a bomb failed as the explosion only wounded the Nazi leader. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was nominated for a fourth term of office at the Democratic convention in Chicago.

On this date:

In 1861, the Congress of the Confederate States convened in Richmond, Virginia.

In 1923, Mexican revolutionary leader Pancho Villa was assassinated by gunmen in Parral.

In 1942, the first detachment of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps — later known as WACs — began basic training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The Legion of Merit was established by an Act of Congress.

In 1954, the Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into northern and southern entities.

In 1968, the first International Special Olympics Summer Games, organized by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, were held at Soldier Field in Chicago.

In 1969, astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin became the first men to walk on the moon after reaching the surface in their Apollo 11 lunar module.

In 1976, America's Viking 1 robot spacecraft made a successful, first-ever landing on Mars.

In 1977, a flash flood hit Johnstown, Pennsylvania, killing more than 80 people and causing \$350 million worth of damage. The U.N. Security Council voted to admit Vietnam to the world body.

In 1982, Irish Republican Army bombs exploded in two London parks, killing eight British soldiers, along with seven horses belonging to the Queen's Household Cavalry.

In 1989, Burmese activist Aung San Suu Kyi (soo chee) was placed under house arrest by the military government of Myanmar.

In 1990, Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, one of the court's most liberal voices, announced he was stepping down.

In 2012, gunman James Holmes opened fire inside a crowded movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight showing of "The Dark Knight Rises," killing 12 people and wounding 70 others. (Holmes was

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later convicted of murder and attempted murder, and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

Ten years ago: Pope Benedict XVI wrapped up a six-day World Youth Day Festival in Sydney, Australia, by challenging young people to shed the greed and cynicism of their time to create a new age of hope for humankind. Pdraig Harrington became the first European in more than a century to win golf's British Open two years in a row.

Five years ago: People rallied in dozens of U.S. cities, urging authorities to press federal civil rights charges against George Zimmerman, the former neighborhood watch leader found not guilty in the shooting death of unarmed teen Trayvon Martin. Five employees of an Italian cruise company were convicted of manslaughter in the Costa Concordia shipwreck that killed 32 people, receiving sentences of less than three years. Longtime White House correspondent Helen Thomas, 92, died in Washington.

One year ago: O.J. Simpson was granted parole after more than eight years in prison for a hotel room heist in Las Vegas. (He was released on October 1.) Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he would remain in office, a day after President Donald Trump rebuked him for recusing himself from the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign.

Today's Birthdays: Actress-singer Sally Ann Howes is 88. Author Cormac McCarthy is 85. Rockabilly singer Sleepy LaBeef is 83. Former Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski, D-Md., is 82. Actress Diana Rigg is 80. Artist Judy Chicago is 79. Rock musician John Lodge (The Moody Blues) is 75. Country singer T.G. Sheppard is 74. Singer Kim Carnes is 73. Rock musician Carlos Santana is 71. Rock musician Jay Jay French (Twisted Sister) is 66. Rock musician Paul Cook (The Sex Pistols, Man Raze) is 62. Actress Donna Dixon is 61. Rock musician Mick McNeil (Simple Minds) is 60. Country singer Radney Foster is 59. Actor Frank Whaley is 55. Actor Dean Cain is 54. Rock musician Stone Gossard (Pearl Jam) is 52. Actor Reed Diamond is 51. Actor Josh Holloway is 49. Singer Vitamin C is 49. Actress Sandra Oh is 47. Actor Omar Epps is 45. Actor Simon Rex is 44. Actress Judy Greer is 43. Actor Charlie Korsmo is 40. Singer Elliott Yamin (yah-MEEN') (American Idol) is 40. Supermodel Gisele Bundchen is 38. Rock musician Mike Kennerty (The All-American Rejects) is 38. Actor Percy Daggs III is 36. Actor John Francis Daley is 33. Country singer Hannah Blaylock (Edens Edge) is 32. Dancer-singer-actress Julianne Hough is 30. Actress Billi Bruno is 22.

Thought for Today: "The regret on our side is, they used to say years ago, we are reading about you in science class. Now they say, we are reading about you in history class." — Neil Armstrong, American astronaut (1930-2012).