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**Holiday
Trash Pick-Up**

Garbage pick-up will NOT be on Christmas Day instead pick-up will be the following day, Wednesday, December 26!!

Garbage WILL be picked up on New Year's Day, January 1st!!

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



FROST
CONSTRUCTION INC.
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
605.290.1535
custom homes | remodels | additions

Service Notice: Evelyn James

Phoenix, Arizona-A Celebration of Life for Evelyn James will be 2:00 p.m. on Monday, January 7th at the Columbia Congregational Church. Rev. Jon Damsoka will officiate. Inurnment will follow in Houghton Cemetery. Visitation will held on Sunday at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Evelyn passed away December 8, 2018 at Brookdale Senior Living in Phoenix.

Homecare Services Caregivers

Flexible, part time positions available in the Groton area. Home Care Services is looking for friendly dependable people to provide care and companionship for elderly and disabled people in their homes. You will be assisting our clients with personal care needs, meal preparations, light housekeeping, errands and other tasks. If you have a passion for helping others and need a flexible schedule, please call our office at (605) 225-1076 or 1-800-899-2578. (1218.0101)

Be Careful When You Mess With Mother Nature

By Richard P. Holm, MD

Be careful when you mess with Mother Nature. Once we began defining the human genome, we started to realize how many bacteria, fungi, and viruses live in and on our bodies. We believe that each person standing in front of us are made up of equal numbers of human cells to the number of non-human cells. These are not mere hitchhikers, they are essential to our living. Even within each human cell we have components called mitochondria that originally were bacteria. Eons ago they became incorporated and an essential part of the functioning human cell. We couldn't survive without the outsiders. Simply put, we are like a country made up of natives AND immigrants working together for the good of the whole.



The attached non-human organisms, together, make up what has been called the human microbiome or microbiota. Researchers are trying to know better what is a normal or abnormal microbiome, what causes it to be imbalanced, and what can be done to enhance a healthy microscopic environment of organisms that are getting a lift on our bodies.

A powerful example of imbalance comes when the use of antibiotics alters the microbiome and results in the emergence of a harmful and even deadly overgrowth infection by a bacterium called *Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*). The result is a very sick large intestine. Think how weeds take over a lawn when the grass is destroyed.

Aside from the invasive, severe, gut illness of *C. diff*, there are other human conditions and illnesses that may be related to an imbalanced microbiome such as: irritable bowel syndrome, psoriasis of the skin, uncomfortable infections of the vagina, obesity and rheumatoid arthritis, as well as neuropsychiatric disorders such as autism, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention deficit disorder and chronic fatigue syndrome. Research is ongoing and we have a lot more to know before we have microbiome related treatments.

We all know that, when used appropriately, antibiotics help people and save lives, but experts estimate that 20 to 50 percent of the use of these microbiome disturbing antibiotics are inappropriate or unnecessary when used in hospital settings, and that percentage is worse when used in outpatient settings.

Understanding and protecting our normal flora, our microbiome, the community of organisms that live in, on, and around us gives us a whole new way of dealing with many illnesses. We need to be very careful to use antibiotics only when absolutely necessary. Be careful when you mess with Mother Nature.

Watch On Call with the Prairie Doc® most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central on SDPTV and follow the Prairie Doc® on Facebook and YouTube for free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library.

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Fort Sisseton Historical Festival

Mark your calendars! The 2019 Fort Sisseton Historical Festival is scheduled for May 31, June 1-2, 2019. The annual three-day event allows visitors to relive history in a re-enactment of frontier life. Scenes of early settlement set the stage with muzzleloaders, riflemen and more participating in a rendezvous gathering. The rendezvous is complete with fur traders and both military and teepee encampment sites. The event also features food and craft vendors throughout the weekend and activities to showcase frontier life such as fiddle music, period oriented dance instruction classes, arts and craft shows and a costume ball.

Fort Sisseton Historic State Park is located ten miles southwest of Lake City, S.D., off US Highway 10.

A Christmas Season of Gratitude

By Governor-elect Kristi Noem

The South Dakota Capitol is magical at Christmas time. Trees line the hallways, the air lingers with the scent of pine, carols echo through the chambers. I remember the first time I brought my family to the Capitol at Christmas. Booker was just little then, and he ran from corridor to corridor looking for Santa Clause. He was convinced he'd found the North Pole.

I've yet to find Santa's Workshop in our capital city, but this season always reminds me how much I have to be grateful for.

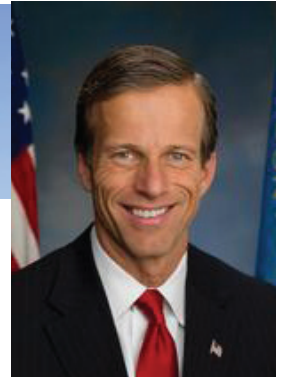
I'm grateful for the men and women in law enforcement who selflessly put on their blues every morning – not knowing what the day will bring – with a willingness to serve no matter the call. I pray each day for their safety. Take time to thank a police officer this Christmas season.

I'm grateful for the bravest among us who serve our nation overseas. Earlier this month, I was honored to participate in an activation ceremony for more than 100 members of the South Dakota Army National Guard who will spend the next 10 months in Europe defending our freedoms. The ceremony was emotional. Little kids held close to their moms and dads knowing they wouldn't get to spend Christmas with them this year. For some, it was their first time going overseas. Others had done the drill before. But each of them recognized their role in shaping history. Their service ensures we have the freedom to enjoy the opportunities that abound so richly in our state and country. I'm thankful for that. My prayers are with them and their families this Christmas time.

And ultimately, I'm grateful for the story of Christmas – the gift of Jesus, the incarnate word of God in a child. He is our opportunity for salvation, the invitation for a reunion with God. Come, let us adore him.

From my family to yours, Merry Christmas.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



A Record of Accomplishment: Chairing the Senate Commerce Committee

It's been a humbling and highly rewarding experience to have spent the last four years leading the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. While I truly wish I could continue doing so, next year I'll be serving as the chief vote counter in the Senate and taking on additional responsibilities, which means I'll have to turn the Commerce Committee gavel over to the next chairman. I won't be going far, though. I'll still serve on the committee, and with my new role, I'll be in a prime position to continue advocating for our goals and building on what we've already achieved.

The Commerce Committee is unique for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is the broad jurisdiction it has over agencies in the federal government and issues that affect Americans' day-to-day lives. The committee covers planes, trains, and automobiles – essentially every mode of transportation in the United States. It has jurisdiction over technology, the internet, mobile broadband, the space program, the U.S. Coast Guard, and oceans. Those topics just scratch the surface, which is why I've always found the Commerce Committee so interesting and relevant.

Every single day I've served as chairman, I've tried to approach the job with a core mission of creating a forward-looking agenda. I wanted to pursue policies that helped prepare our economy and workers for the jobs and opportunities of the future. I wanted to use my position on the committee to serve South Dakotans and the rest of the American people to the best of my ability and in the most effective way I possibly could. After four years, we have a strong record of accomplishment, and I'm comfortably passing the torch knowing we left it all on the field.

Over the years, the committee has taken several meaningful steps to help protect travelers and consumers by doing common-sense things like reauthorizing and modernizing nearly every transportation program in the country. As a result, these efforts will make our highways safer, our railroads more efficient, and our airways more passenger-friendly. We've fought to hold technology companies, like Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Equifax, accountable to their users. And, an issue on which nearly everyone can agree, we've targeted bad actors who've used illegal and abusive robocalls to take advantage of our friends, families, and neighbors.

On mobile broadband development, an issue I'm extremely passionate about, I've worked tirelessly to help lay the groundwork to eventually bring the world's fastest internet to South Dakota. I've spent years partnering with federal, state, and local officials to identify and overcome hurdles that are standing in the way of delivering the next generation of mobile broadband technology. I strongly believe winning the race to 5G is something we can should be able to achieve. Doing so would put South Dakota and the rest of the United States in a far more competitive position as we tackle the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Throughout my tenure as chairman, I've always tried to use the committee to highlight the amazing people and communities across South Dakota and the issues that are important to them. I've hosted and participated in field hearings, roundtables, and other events in nearly every corner of the state. I've invited fellow South Dakotans, like Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, Dakota State University President José-Marie Griffiths, and Lake Area Technical Institute President Michael Cartney, among others, to testify at hearings in South Dakota and in Washington, D.C. Their insight has been invaluable.

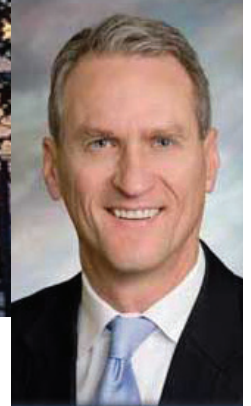
I'm proud of everything the Commerce Committee has achieved over the last four years. We've taken on difficult and consequential issues and have always tried to pursue policies where both parties could find common ground. While I won't be sitting in the chairman's seat next year, my commitment to using the Commerce Committee – and all of the committees on which I serve, for that matter – to fight for South Dakota and its issues will remain the same.

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South Dakota Governor
Dennis Daugaard



Better Than We Found It

If you visit the Capital City, you will see that the "Trail of Governors" project is placing around Pierre life-size bronze statues of every former governor. Twenty-two statues are already in place, with nine left to go.

Among the 22 statues already in place, the Trail includes former governors whom I have known personally. It also includes other governors whom I remember. Still other statues depict governors who are not so familiar: Robert S. Vessey, William McMaster, and Warren E. Green. All of these governors worked hard and achieved good things for South Dakota, but very few South Dakotans remember them today.

In the past few weeks, I have had several news reporters ask me, "What is your legacy?" Governors Vessey, McMaster, and Green were probably asked the same thing when they were leaving office. To some, that question might be, "For what will you be remembered?"

To me, the question is, "Will you leave this state better than you found it?" We sometimes benefit from the decisions made by our past governors, even if we don't know their names. We shouldn't be concerned about being remembered, but about whether our efforts have been productive and helpful.

More than anything else, I am proud that we have maintained fiscal discipline in South Dakota, and that we have taken steps to make our financial footing even stronger. South Dakota's AAA bond rating is a recognition that our state does things the right way. We are responsible stewards of state money and state assets. We structurally balance our budget, without wasting reserves or using accounting gimmicks. I know future generations will benefit from those decisions.

When I first came into office eight years ago, our state faced very difficult times – the recession had created a deficit of \$127 million. I proposed that we eliminate that deficit, in one year, by cutting expenses. We ripped off the band-aid. It wasn't an easy thing to do, but it was the right thing to do. Many legislators showed great courage in supporting those cuts. Together we put our state back on the right track.

In the years since, we have worked together many times to make our state better. We worked to bring reform to our education system, to make our funding formula fairer, and to get teacher salaries out of last place. We fought together for sales tax fairness and led the states to a historic victory in the Supreme Court. We prioritized the maintenance and repair of our highways, our bridges, and our state buildings. We created a new state park and expanded opportunities at others. We made the largest investment in drug and mental health treatment in state history. And we made our technical institutes the envy of the nation.

We did all of that together. That doesn't mean everyone agreed on everything that happened. But that's part of the process. We still have a strong legislative process in South Dakota. We don't let ideology get in the way of solving problems, and we don't let politics get in the way of professionalism, respect, and friendship. That is why our state works and it is why our legislature works. As I near the end of twenty-two years of service in this Capitol, I hope that never changes.

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Medicare Advantage directories are full of outdated, incorrect information

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

The other day came a lengthy report from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announcing worrisome findings for anyone with a Medicare Advantage plan and anyone thinking about buying one in the future. The findings are also relevant to anyone buying any kind of health insurance this year.

The ominous takeaway? The information given to consumers in the provider directories is deeply flawed, often misleading, inaccurate, and says CMS, "can create a barrier to care." Imagine choosing a plan based on the information that your doctor is in the plan's network only to find he or she is not, and you have to find a new doctor, perhaps in an inconvenient location.

Actually, finding any provider at all may be hard. CMS said that listed providers were not located at one-third of the locations indicated in the provider directories. That meant if a beneficiary tried to make an appointment with the doctor at a particular location, they'd be out of luck. Government researchers noted that sometimes providers did not work or accept the health plan at any of the locations listed in the directory.

Had the provider ever been part of the health plan's network? Good question! CMS said this was a "concern."

About half of the online directories the agency sampled had at least one inaccuracy. They included incorrect phone numbers, indications that a provider was accepting new patients when that wasn't the case, and claims that providers were practicing at locations where they were not.

All these findings, of course, raise the question: Why so many mistakes given how detrimental this bad information can be to seniors? CMS investigated that, too, and found a "general lack of internal audit and testing of directory accuracy among many Medicare Advantage organizations." The health plans apparently rely on credentialing services and vendor support to ensure directory adequacy, not exactly a reliable method, the agency concluded.

What's worse is that when CMS researchers called doctors' offices, they found directory information had been out of date for a long time, and some of the doctors listed in the networks had been retired or dead for years.

Medicare Advantage members aren't the only ones facing the dilemma of inaccurate directories complicating their choices for the coming year. The consulting firm Avalere Health just reported that 72 percent of the plans offered on HealthCare.gov, the Affordable Care Act shopping exchange, are what's called narrow network plans. "This is a trend we're seeing not just in this market but in traditional employer-sponsored insurance, and this is going to continue," says Chris Sloan, a director at Avalere. Such narrow network plans often provide no coverage for visits to doctors or hospitals that are not part of the network. That means you pay out of pocket if you use one of those providers.

Consumers are not only being hit with fewer choices and narrow networks but the information about providers may be as inaccurate for shoppers as it is for Medicare beneficiaries.

Narrow networks are a way to control costs because the insurer covers only those practitioners it's able to reach a financial agreement with. In other words, the insurer wants lower prices, and the providers want higher ones. The two sides negotiate until they arrive at a price for a service that both parties find acceptable. Each side plays a lot of games, and the final contracts are not available for public inspection.

We keep hearing that continuity of care is important, and patients in the U.S. have always valued choosing their own physicians. Remember, maintaining that choice was a big selling point for the Affordable Care Act. But rhetoric that sells legislation is not the same as actual practice.

On the other hand, fewer choices are "not necessarily a negative thing so long as consumers understand what they are buying," Sloan says.

But even that may be hard if the CMS revelations about Medicare Advantage plans are any guide.

You can find the report here: https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Health-Plans/ManagedCareMarketing/Downloads/Provider_Directory_Review_Industry_Report_Round_3_11-28-2018.pdf

What's been your experience with directories from Medicare Advantage plans? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.

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Free to Celebrate the Holidays Thanks to the Men and Women in Uniform

This holiday season, Jean and I wish all South Dakotans a very merry Christmas and happy New Year. It's a good time of the year to spend with family and friends, participating in traditions and making memories that will last a lifetime. Some of our family's favorite traditions are from Christmas, which we are now passing down to our grandkids. We look forward to introducing our traditions to our youngest grandchild, Maverick Michael Rounds, who was born earlier this year.

Nearly every year, our family gathers at our home after the Christmas Eve church service to have homemade chicken noodle soup and open gifts. Some years, we'll have more than 80 people over! My dad, Grandpa Don, always used to read the story of Christmas to the young kids, reminding us of the greatest Christmas gift of all—the birth of Jesus, the Christ Child. Grandpa Don passed away in February, so this is our first Christmas without him. We miss him every day and we're so thankful for the decades of Christmas memories we got to share with him.

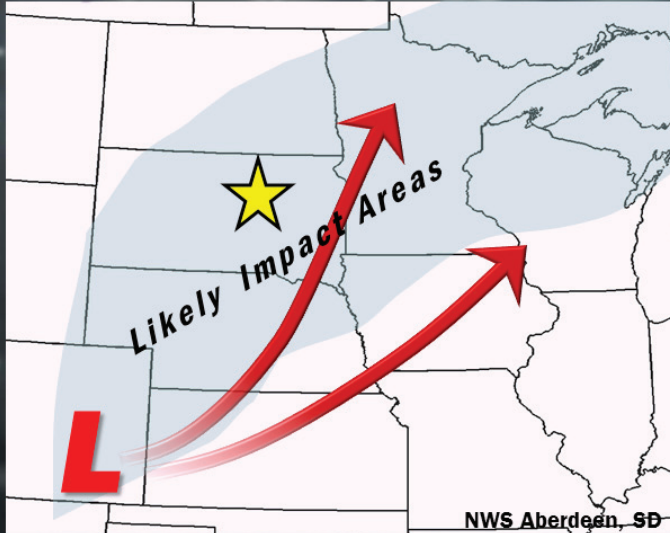
Many families across our state and throughout the country will be spending the holiday season without their loved ones who are stationed all over the globe serving in our armed forces. Without their service and sacrifice, we would not be able to celebrate the holidays freely and safely here at home. We thank everyone who wears the uniform of the United States and we pray for their safe return. We also thank their family and friends who support them while they are protecting our country.

I recently attended two deployment ceremonies for South Dakota National Guard units. One of the units is deploying stateside and the other is deploying to Europe. Some of these men and women will be separated from their loved ones during Christmas and others are departing shortly after the holidays. I appreciated the chance to wish them well and thank them for their service before they left. I encourage all South Dakotans to say "thank you" to a military member or military family member during the holiday season.

I also recently had the honor of presenting a Bronze Star Medal to the family of the late Gilbert Mjoen of Yankton. Mr. Mjoen was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious achievement in active ground combat during World War II, where he was serving in the 104th Infantry Division. He was previously awarded the Purple Heart and the Good Conduct Medal. He returned to South Dakota in 1945. I was talking to Gilbert's family at the award presentation in Yankton and they told me about the message Gilbert shared about his time in the war: he wanted future generations to be proud of the United States and to answer the call to serve if our freedoms are ever in jeopardy. We are only free because of the young men and women, generation after generation, who fight to protect our way of life in the United States.

To the Mjoen family, to our military families and to all South Dakotans, we wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous New Year.

Wintry Travel after Christmas?



WHAT



- For Our Area** ★
- Snow Accumulations Likely
 - Gusty Winds

WHEN



- Begins:** Wednesday
- Ends:** Thursday Night or Friday Morning

CONFIDENCE



- Storm Track:** Moderate
- Precipitation Potential:** High
- Exact Amounts:** Low

ACTIONS



Stay up to date with the latest forecast information as more details emerge

Published on: 12/22/2018 at 6:46AM

We continue to monitor the potential for an impactful winter storm moving into the Plains States after the Christmas holiday. Confidence on the storm track and the potential impacts are increasing. If you have post-holiday travel plans, stay up to date as more details emerge.

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Today in Weather History

December 22, 1990: Strong northwest winds, combined with air temperatures below zero, created wind chills from -40 to -65 degrees over west central Minnesota early in the day on the 22nd. Air temperatures were generally in the -20 to -25 degree range, with afternoon highs around 15 below zero.

December 22, 1990: Strong northwest winds gusted to 35 miles per hour and caused near-whiteout conditions over a wide area of southwest and west central Minnesota during the late afternoon on the 21st into the early morning of the 22nd. Several car accidents ensued. A 30-year old man was killed when he lost control of his truck and slid into a ditch in the near-blizzard conditions.

December 22, 1989: The most significant cold spell of the century for the Deep South occurred from the 22 to the 26. New Orleans experienced 64 consecutive hours at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit and a total of 81 out of 82 hours below freezing. A total of 15 hours were below 15 degrees with the lowest reading of 11 degrees on the morning of the 23rd. A low temperature of 8 degrees was recorded at Baton Rouge. Snow and sleet paralyzed transportation systems where as much as two to four inches of snow accumulated in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes. Snow and ice covered the ground in New Orleans. The greatest impact was on breakage of water pipes in homes and businesses. Over 100 fires resulted in the New Orleans area within a 24 hour period due to a loss of water pressure and improperly utilized heating sources. Ice formed over shallow lakes and waterways where commercial fishing took heavy losses. Five weather related deaths occurred in the service area during this rare Arctic outbreak.

December 22, 2002: Heavy rains prompted flooding in the mountain city of Teresopolis, located about 90 km north of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. A mudslide was responsible for 9 deaths and 50 injuries.

1839 - The second of triple December storms hit the northeastern U.S. The storm produced 25 inches of snow at Gettysburg, PA, and gales in New England, but only produced light snow along the coast. (David Ludlum)

1961 - Holiday travel was paralyzed over extreme northeastern Kansas, and adjacent parts of Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska. The storm produced 5 to 15 inches of snow, with drifts up to ten feet high. (22nd-23rd) (The Weather Channel)

1983 - On the first day of winter 75 cities reported record low temperatures for the date, with twelve of those cities reporting record low temperatures for the month as a whole. The mercury plunged to 51 degrees below zero at Wisdom MT, and Waco TX set an all-time record low a reading of 12 above zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - The first day of winter was a relatively tranquil one for much of the nation, but heralded a winter storm in the Central Rockies. The storm produced 40 inches of snow at the top of the Pomerelle Ski Resort, south of Burley ID, the heaviest snow of record for that location. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds prevailed in the foothills of Wyoming and Colorado. Winds gusted to 123 mph southwest of Fort Collins CO, and reached 141 mph at the summit of Mount Evans. An ice storm paralyzed parts of Upper Michigan during the day. The freezing rain left roads around Marquette MI blocked by cars and semi- trucks. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A total of 137 cities across the central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Thirty-five of those cities established record lows for the month of December. Morning lows of 23 degrees below zero at Kansas City MO, 26 degrees below zero at Concordia KS, and 27 degrees below zero at Goodland KS established all-time records for those three locations. Unofficial morning lows included 50 degrees below zero at Recluse WY and 60 degrees below zero at Rochford SD. Broadus MT and Hardin MT tied for honors as the official cold spot in the nation with morning lows of 47 degrees below zero. Chinook winds at Cutbank MT helped warm the temperature 74 degrees, from a morning low of 34 degrees below zero to an afternoon high of 40 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 37 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 20 °F

Sunday



Partly Sunny

High: 29 °F

Sunday
Night



Increasing
Clouds

Low: 13 °F

Monday




Mostly Cloudy

High: 32 °F

Above Normal Temperatures and Mostly
Dry Through Christmas

Windy Today

Highs Today/30s to around 40 degrees

 National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

graphic created
12/22/2018 4:45 AM

Published on: 12/22/2018 at 4:56AM

Above normal temperatures are expected today with northwest winds increasing to 20 to 35 mph. Highs will be in the 30s to around 40 degrees. There also may be a few sprinkles or flurries today.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 31 °F at 4:44 PM

Low Outside Temp: 22 °F at 7:38 AM

High Gust: 13 mph at 3:28 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 59° in 1893

Record Low: -28° in 1990

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 4°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.34

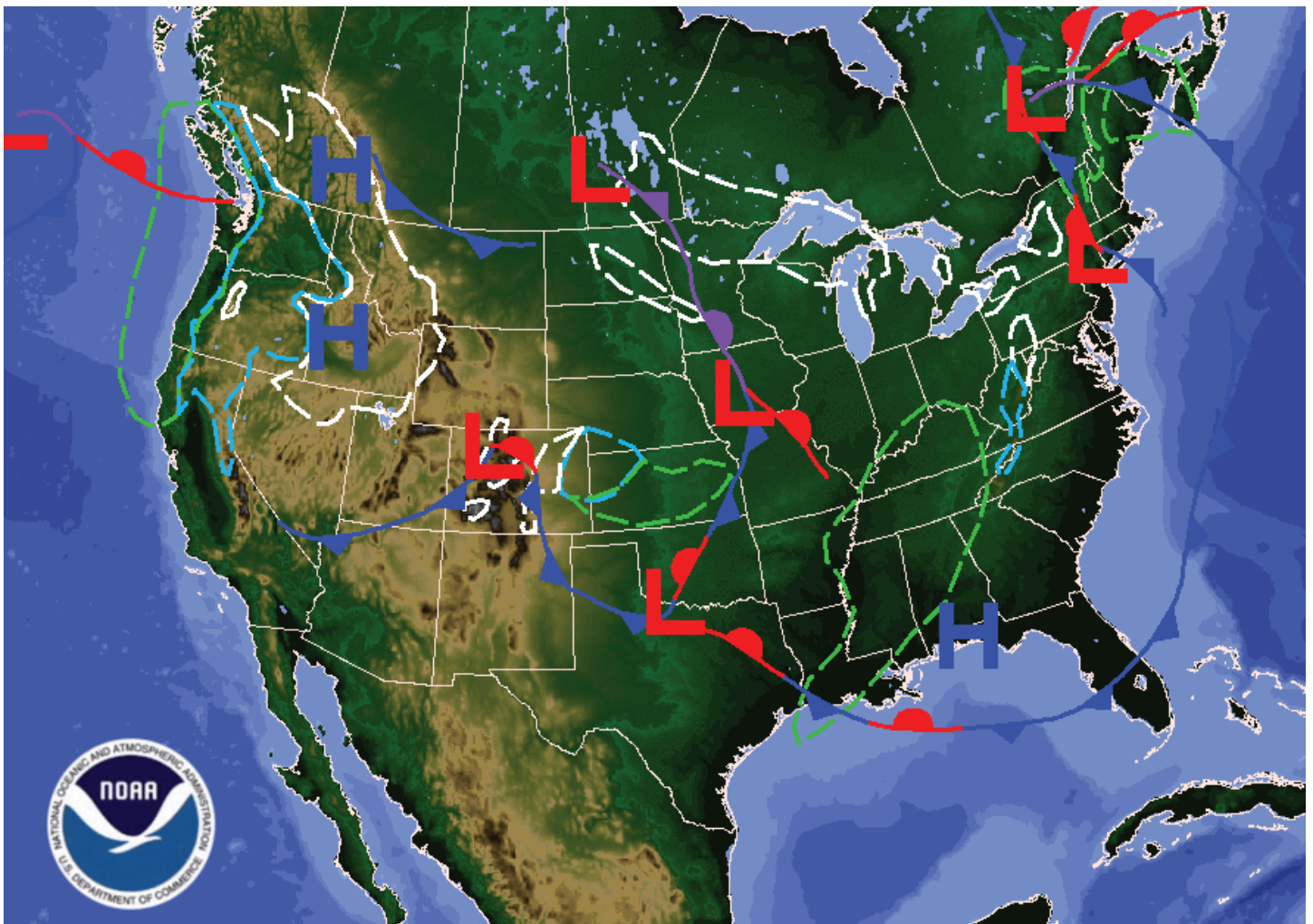
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.54

Precip Year to Date: 15.81

Sunset Tonight: 4:54 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Sat, Dec 22, 2018, issued 4:13 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Kong 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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CHRISTS DAY

On Mothers Day we focus all of our attention on our Mothers, recalling and remembering how much they struggled to raise us. Lovingly we shower gifts on them, purchase cards that describe her many sacrifices for us and the unending care she gave to us. She deserves all of the attention and recognition we can give her.

On Fathers Day, we turn our thoughts to him what he has done for us and express our gratitude for the time he spent with us. We recall his efforts to teach us to throw a ball, catch a pass, cast a fishing line or attend a special event. He, too, deserves all the attention and recognition we can give him.

We also give recognition and attention to our Grandparents, to brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and friends and relatives on their special days.

But what will we do that is really special or unique to show our appreciation and gratitude for Christ on His day this year?

Will there be an envelope under the tree with a special love-offering that recognizes His importance in our lives? Will it match the amount we gave others?

Will we sacrifice some of our time to show Gods love by being with those who would otherwise be alone and lonely on His day?

Will we share a meal with someone who is hungry? Give some clothes to those who are cold and have little? Spend time reading His story to children?

In as much as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto Me!

Prayer: Take Your peace from us Father, until and unless we show others Your love on Your day. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer and say to them, Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.

2018 Groton SD Community Events

- Groton Lion's Club Bingo- Wednesday Nights 6:30pm at the Groton Legion (Year Round)
- Nov./Dec./Jan./Feb./Mar. 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)
- Transit Fundraiser (Middle Thursday in June)
- SDSU Golf at Olive Grove
- 6/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 7/4/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 7/14/2019 Summer Fest
- 9/7/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2018 Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/10/2018 Groton American Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/01/2018 Olive Grove Golf Course 2018 Holiday Party
- Best Ball Golf Tourney
- SDSU Golf Tourney
- Sunflower Golf Tourney
- Santa Claus Day
- Fireman's Stag
- Tour of Homes
- Crazy Dayz/Open Houses
- School Events

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News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 67, Waverly-South Shore 28
Beresford 50, Chester 47
Bridgewater-Emery 74, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 36
Canistota 58, Elk Point-Jefferson 49
Colman-Egan 66, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 22
Colome 46, Freeman Academy/Marion 45
DeSmet 51, Arlington 47
Dell Rapids St. Mary 69, Estelline/Hendricks 33
Deubrook 60, Lake Preston 47
Harding County 58, Edgemont 53
Highmore-Harrold 53, Wessington Springs 34
Ipswich 48, Florence/Henry 44
Jones County 65, Burke 48
Lemmon 61, Belle Fourche 51
Lyman 64, Stanley County 60
Milbank 60, Webster 59
Mobridge-Pollock 78, Sisseton 76, OT
Sioux Falls Lincoln 44, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 42
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 77, Pierre 40
Sturgis Brown 56, Lead-Deadwood 34
Sully Buttes 72, Wall 35
Timber Lake 58, Faith 42
Tiospa Zina Tribal 69, Redfield/Doland 53
Tri-State, N.D. 59, Great Plains Lutheran 44
Upton, Wyo. 63, New Underwood 21
Watertown 51, Aberdeen Central 33
Winner 71, Parkston 42
Yankton 68, Harrisburg 59

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 38, Watertown 37
Belle Fourche 65, Lemmon 40
Bridgewater-Emery 55, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 44
Burke 63, Jones County 29
Colome 48, Freeman Academy/Marion 34
Edgemont 38, Harding County 33
Faith 69, Timber Lake 47
Highmore-Harrold 59, Wessington Springs 32
Ipswich 48, Florence/Henry 31
Mobridge-Pollock 61, Sisseton 37
New Underwood 54, Upton-Sundance, Wyo. 21
Parker 42, Elk Point-Jefferson 37
Redfield/Doland 55, Tiospa Zina Tribal 39
Sioux Falls Christian 65, Wagner 34

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Sioux Falls O'Gorman 56, Pierre 47
Sturgis Brown 44, Lead-Deadwood 29
Sunshine Bible Academy 49, Iroquois 34
Winner 68, Parkston 48
Wyndmere-Lidgerwood, N.D. 61, Wilmot 41

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

10-13-61-62-70, Mega Ball: 5, Megaplier: 3

(ten, thirteen, sixty-one, sixty-two, seventy; Mega Ball: five; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$305 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$281 million

Edwards had double-double, SoMiss rallies past South Dakota

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Cortez Edwards had 14 points and 11 rebounds and Southern Mississippi overcame a five-point halftime deficit to defeat South Dakota 66-60 on Friday night.

Southern Miss (8-4) did not attempt a free throw until the final minute when Tyree Griffin made 3 of 4 from the line to hold off the Coyotes. Griffin finished with 12 points and four assists.

Triston Simpson had 15 points for South Dakota. Cody Kelly had 11 points and eight rebounds and Stanley Umude added 11 points and seven rebounds. South Dakota (6-7) made 16 of 20 free throws.

A 3-pointer by the Golden Eagles' LaDavius Drane tied the score at 42 with 13 minutes left in the second half. Griffin tied it again with a layup a minute later. After the lead exchanged hands, Tim Rowe's 3-pointer put Southern Miss ahead to stay, 49-48 with 9:23 remaining.

Two 3-pointers by Kelly in the final minute were not enough for South Dakota to overcome a nine-point deficit.

Man housing priest charged with sex crime upsets neighbors

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man who has agreed to take in a former Rapid City priest accused of sexually touching a 13-year-old girl says some of his neighbors are upset about the situation.

John Praveen, 38, was released from jail Thursday afternoon after someone paid for his recently reduced \$10,000 cash-only bond, the Rapid City Journal reported. Brad Blauvelt, who volunteered to house Praveen, said the woman who paid the bond asked to remain anonymous.

Blauvelt says he may ask to take a leave of absence from his job as a network administrator for Rapid City Area Schools so he can stay home and supervise Praveen at all times. He said while some of his neighbors along his rural stretch of road are fine with the idea, others are "over-the-top angry."

"I think at this point I'm committed (to housing Praveen), but I have to do something to calm the neighbors down," Blauvelt said.

Praveen was charged Oct. 2 and accused of sexually touching a 13-year-old girl above the clothes during two separate incidents. He had worked at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help cathedral in Rapid City since June. He has been suspended from duties.

As part of his conditions of release, Praveen must wear an ankle monitor, not contact his alleged victim

and her family, and stay at the Blauvelt's home. He must obtain permission from the court to leave the house unless he is going to the doctor or his lawyer's office

Judge Robert Mandel agreed to lower Praveen's original \$100,000 cash-only bond to \$10,000 during a motions hearing Wednesday at the state courthouse. John Murphy, Praveen's defense lawyer, had argued that the original bond was higher than that of non-priests accused of similar crimes.

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

SD couple argues Humane Society illegally seized 10 dogs

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City couple is arguing in court that the Humane Society of the Black Hills illegally seized 10 of their dogs after they reported one had bitten another.

The Rapid City Journal reports that Robert Pasqualucci, a lawyer for Dana and Shelly Sorenson, said in court Thursday that the seizure was an abuse of authority.

But Humane Society attorney Ryan Sutton says Shelly Sorenson consented to a search and the seizure of the dogs. Judge Heidi Linngren says she needs to hear testimony before deciding if the animals were taken illegally and who ought to pay thousands of dollars incurred from caring for the dogs.

After bringing the bitten dog, Emy, to the vet, a Humane Society official seized 11 dogs to investigate if any were dangerous. A hearing is set for Jan. 9.

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

Authorities say 25-year-old Aberdeen man died in rollover

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a man who died in a one-vehicle crash southeast of Aberdeen.

The Highway Patrol says 25-year-old Tyler Fischer, of Aberdeen, died when he failed to negotiate an intersection Tuesday morning and his vehicle went into a ditch and rolled.

Fischer was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the car. He was pronounced dead at the scene. There were no other occupants in the vehicle.

Caribou Coffee reports customer data breach at 265 stores

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. (AP) — The parent company of Caribou Coffee and Bruegger's Bagels says hackers gained access to customer information at 265 of its stores, mostly in Minnesota.

The Minnesota-based company says the data breach occurred between Aug. 28 and Dec. 3. Caribou says it's possible that customer name and credit card information may have been taken.

The company didn't say how many people may have been affected. But it says about 200 of the affected stores are in Minnesota, while the rest are in Wisconsin, South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, North Carolina, Colorado, Florida, Georgia and Kansas.

The company says payments made through Caribou Coffee Perks accounts or other loyalty accounts weren't affected, nor were orders placed online with associated bagel shops.

Caribou says it believes the breach has been contained but advises customers to monitor their credit card statements and credit reports.

South Dakota reports case of rare nervous system disorder

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Health has reported its first case of a nervous system disorder called acute flaccid myelitis, or AFM.

The Argus Leader reports that the patient was reported to the Department of Health in November and was hospitalized after experiencing "mild respiratory illness" with a fever and developing muscle weakness.

No other cases in South Dakota have been reported.

AFM is a rare but serious condition that causes muscles to weaken. It is most often diagnosed in children. Symptoms include sudden muscle weakness in the arms or legs and can include facial droop or weakness, difficulty moving the eyes, drooping eyelids and difficulty swallowing or slurred speech.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says in 2018 there have been 165 confirmed AFM cases in 36 states.

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

Rapid City Journal names Tranquill new publisher

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Matthew Tranquill has been named publisher of the Rapid City Journal.

The newspaper reports that Tranquill has been the publisher of the Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, since 2016. He began his newspaper career as an advertising sales representative with The Parkersburg News Sentinel in Parkersburg, West Virginia. He was promoted to several leadership roles in the company before becoming regional advertising director for The Parkersburg News Sentinel and The Marietta Times in 2014.

Tranquill calls the Rapid City area a "beautiful place with an amazing history."

The Journal is owned by Lee Enterprises.

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

Granddaughter works to save Barry Goldwater photo collection

By ANITA SNOW, Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP) — In Alison Goldwater Ross' earliest memories of her grandfather Barry Goldwater, there's always a 35mm camera hanging from his neck.

The senator photographed more than 15,000 images of Arizona's landscapes and Native Americans over his lifetime. Twenty years after Goldwater's death, Ross wants to preserve the Republican icon's photographs, with some newly digitized images showcased this month in Arizona Highways magazine and next month at Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West.

The project was launched after Ross discussed her grandfather's work with her uncle Michael Goldwater, the family historian since the senator died in 1998 at the age of 89. Now 55 and living in Atlanta, Ross said she adored accompanying her "bigger than life" grandfather on the Arizona campaign trail and meeting celebrities like Elizabeth Taylor. Like his other grandchildren, she called him by the nickname "Paka."

"I practically had an anxiety attack just thinking about what was happening to the images. They had been sitting around for so long," said Ross, the daughter of Joanne, the oldest of the four Goldwater children.

After consulting with family members, Ross in January formed the Barry & Peggy Goldwater Foundation, which holds the rights to the photographs. The project came together with funding from the Salt River Project, a water and power provider that supports local arts and culture.

All photographic film deteriorates as it's exposed to moisture and heat, and Michael Goldwater said preserving the images had long been a concern.

"She's really doing a great job getting interest in the project," he said of his niece. "We totally support her. My father wanted his work saved for future historians and researchers."

His father Barry was born in 1909 in Arizona Territory three years before statehood and took his first pictures as a boy with his mother's Brownie, a popular box camera that introduced photography to the masses.

After his wife, Peggy, gave him a camera on their first Christmas together, Goldwater documented the diversity of Arizona's tribes and landscapes, mostly in black and white with view cameras like the Graflex and Rolleiflex. Those images included the dramatic cliffs and sculpted mesas of places like the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley, the deeply lined face of an elderly Navajo man, and two young Navajo girls tending their sheep in the snow.

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Goldwater made color photos of his family with the 35mm and had a movie camera as well.

"You can go anyplace in that state," Goldwater said in a 1985 interview about the best location in Arizona to take pictures. "Anyplace. From the Mexican border clear up to the Utah border, it's all photogenic. In the south you have the desert. You have the biggest stand of pine trees in the world in the central part. ... You can literally spend your life out there and never quite get it all."

Goldwater's work earned him a lifetime membership in the Royal Photographic Society and the praise of noted landscape photographer Ansel Adams, who described the senator as a "fine and eager" amateur photographer who was as accomplished as any professional.

Another granddaughter, Anna Goldwater Alexander, the daughter of Michael and director of photography at Wired magazine, called the senator a "statesman who recorded Arizona history through the lens of a camera" in Arizona Highways' December issue.

"When I go back through his archive today, I can't help wondering whether he realized his beautiful photographs not only documented history, but also revealed the sensitive side of his dynamic personality," Alexander wrote.

As a politician, Goldwater wrote the best-selling "Conscience of a Conservative" and in 1964 famously declared that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice" when accepting the Republican nomination. The man known as "Mr. Conservative" lost the presidential race in a landslide to Democratic incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson.

Goldwater served five terms as a senator, from 1953 to 1965 and 1969 to 1987, and was succeeded by John McCain. The former Air Force pilot who served in WWII was also known as the elder party statesman who persuaded Richard Nixon to resign in 1974 when it became clear the president would not survive the Watergate investigation.

Arizona Highways regularly showcased Goldwater's photographs over the decades, and this month's special collector's issue with 46 of his photographs quickly sold out.

"I never had the privilege of meeting the gentleman, but I feel like I know him," said Arizona Highways Editor Robert Stieve. "He has been a big part of our history since 1938."

Most of the photos showcased in the special edition also go on display Jan. 6 through June 23 at Scottsdale's Museum of the West as Photographs by Barry M. Goldwater: The Arizona Highways Collection.

Although many images remain with the family, big parts of the collection are also housed in three institutions: the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona in Tucson, the Hayden Library at Arizona State University in Tempe and the Heard Museum in Phoenix. Ross said the family commissioned the first bit of digitization, but the photography center next year will also start digitizing the hundreds of large format images there, with repair of each negative taking from two to eight hours.

Goldwater also was an avid collector of kachina dolls, wood carvings of Hopi spirits. He donated 400 of them to the Heard Museum in 1969.

Tricia Loscher, the western museum's assistant director and chief curator of the Goldwater exhibit, said that as a Heard intern in the 1990s she was tasked with cataloging his kachina dolls. With the photo show, "I feel like I'm coming full circle," she said.

Like Goldwater, Loscher is a lifelong Arizona resident, and she said she appreciated his photographs of the Southwest, images she said "could never be replicated in the Midwest, Northwest or any other place in the world."

The photographs, she said, "reflect his own brand of sensitivity and clarity, which came from being a native of Arizona, the time in which he lived and the love and respect he had for life."

Follow Anita Snow on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/asnowreports>

Partial government shutdown compounds risks for US economy

By JOSH BOAK, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Now in its 10th year, America's economic expansion still looks sturdy. Yet the partial shutdown of the government that began Saturday has added another threat to a growing list of risks.

The stock market's persistent fall, growing chaos in the Trump administration, higher interest rates, a U.S.-China trade war and a global slowdown have combined to elevate the perils for the economy.

Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said he thinks the underlying fundamentals for growth remain strong and that the expansion will continue. But he cautioned that the falling stock market reflects multiple hazards that can feed on themselves.

"What really matters is how people perceive these headwinds — and right now markets and investors perceive them as leading us into a recessionary environment," Daco said.

Many economic barometers still look encouraging. Unemployment is near a half-century low. Inflation is tame. Pay growth has picked up. Consumers boosted their spending this holiday season. Indeed, the latest figures indicate that the economy has been fundamentally healthy during the final month of 2018.

Still, financial markets were rattled Thursday by President Donald Trump's threat to shut down the government unless his border wall is funded as part of a measure to finance the government — a threat that became reality on Saturday. As tensions with the incoming Democratic House majority have reached a fever pitch, Trump warned Friday that he foresees a "very long" shutdown.

The expanding picture of a dysfunctional Trump administration grew further with the surprise resignation of Defense Secretary James Mattis in protest of Trump's abrupt decision to pull U.S. troops out of Syria — a move that drew expressions of alarm from many Republicans as well as Democrats.

How markets and government officials respond to such risks could determine whether the second-longest U.S. expansion on record remains on course or succumbs eventually to a recession:

A closer look at the risks:

ADMINISTRATION CHAOS

It has been a tumultuous few days even for a White House that has been defined by the president's daily dramas.

Trump faces an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 elections that has led to indictments and criminal convictions of some of his closest confidants. He is coping with a wave of top staff defections, having lost both his chief of staff and defense secretary. He is in the process of installing a new attorney general.

Then there is the partial government shutdown that Trump himself has pushed.

The shutdown is unlikely to hurt economic growth very much, even if it last awhile, because 75 percent of the government is still being funded. S&P Global Ratings estimates that each week of the shutdown would shave a relative minuscule \$1.2 billion off the nation's gross domestic product.

Still, the problem is that the Trump administration appears disinclined to cooperate with the incoming House Democratic majority. So the federal support through deficit spending that boosted the economy this year will likely wane, Lewis Alexander, U.S. chief economist at Nomura, said in his 2019 outlook.

That, in part, is why the economy is widely expected to weaken from its roughly 3 percent growth this year, which would be the strongest performance since 2005.

TUMBLING STOCKS

Stock investors have been trampled since October, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average sinking nearly 15 percent. The plunge followed a propulsive winning streak for the stock market that began in 2009. But investors are internalizing all the latest risks, including Trump's trade war with China and higher borrowing rates, and how much they might depress corporate profits and the economy.

"Markets people are forward-looking, so they're taking into account the latest information," said Jim O'Sullivan, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics.

Markets can often fall persistently without sending the economy into a tailspin. But O'Sullivan warned of

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a possible feedback loop in which tumbling stock prices would erode consumer and business confidence, which, in turn, could send stocks sinking further. At that point, the economy would likely worsen, the job market would weaken and many ordinary households would suffer.

TRADE WAR

For economists, this may pose the gravest threat to the economy. Trump has imposed tariffs against a huge swath of goods from China, which has retaliated with its own tariffs on U.S. products. These import taxes tend to dampen economic activity and diminish growth.

"The trade war with China is now the biggest impediment to U.S. economic growth," Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said in his forecast for the first half of 2019.

In part because of the taxes Trump imposed on Chinese imports, manufacturing growth appears to be slowing, with factory owners facing higher costs for raw materials. The president has held off on further escalating tariffs to see if an agreement — or at least a lasting truce — can be reached with China by March.

Any damage from trade wars tends to worsen the longer the disputes continue. So even a tentative resolution in the first three months of 2019 could remove one threat to economic growth.

FED RATE HIKES

The Federal Reserve has raised a key short-term rate four times this year and envisions two more increases in 2019. Stocks sold off Wednesday after Chairman Jerome Powell laid out the rationale. Powell's explanation, in large part, was that the Fed could gradually raise borrowing costs and limit potential U.S. economic growth because of the job market's strength.

The Fed generally raises rates to keep growth in check and prevent annual inflation from rising much above 2 percent. But inflation has been running consistently below that target.

If the central bank were to miscalculate and raise rates too high or too fast, it could trigger the very downturn that Fed officials have been trying to avoid. This has become a nagging fear for investors.

GLOBAL SLOWDOWN

The world economy is showing clear signs of a downshift, with many U.S. trading partners, especially in Europe and Asia, weakening or expected to expand at a slower speed. Their deflating growth can, in turn, weigh down the U.S. economy.

Several other global risks abound. There is Britain's turbulent exit from the European Union. Italy appears close to recession and is struggling to manage its debt. China, the world's second-largest economy after the U.S., is trying to manage a slowdown in growth that is being complicated by its trade war with Trump.

"Next year is likely to be challenging for both investors and policymakers," Alexander, the Nomura economist, concluded in his outlook.

Cancer the latest health woe for resilient Justice Ginsburg

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is resting in a New York hospital following surgery to remove two malignant growths in her left lung, the third time the Supreme Court's oldest justice has been treated for cancer and her second stay in a hospital in two months.

Worries over Ginsburg's health have been a constant of sorts for nearly 10 years, and for liberals, particularly in the last two. Ginsburg, the leader of the court's liberal wing and known to her fans as the Notorious RBG, has achieved an iconic status rare for Supreme Court justices.

If she did step down, President Donald Trump would have another opportunity to move a conservative court even more to the right. "Wishing Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg a full and speedy recovery!" Trump tweeted after the court's announcement Friday.

But Ginsburg has always bounced back before, flaunting her physical and mental fitness.

After past health scares, she has resumed the exercise routine popularized in a book written by her

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personal trainer and captured in a Stephen Colbert video. Weeks after cracking three ribs in a fall at the Supreme Court in November, the 85-year-old Ginsburg was asking questions at high court arguments, speaking at a naturalization ceremony for new citizens and being interviewed at screenings of the new movie about her, "On the Basis of Sex."

Ginsburg will remain in the hospital for a few days, the court said. She has never missed arguments in more than 25 years as a justice. The court next meets on Jan. 7.

While it's hard to refer to good luck and cancer diagnoses in the same breath, this is the second time for Ginsburg that cancerous growths have been detected at an apparently early stage through unrelated medical tests.

The nodules on her lung were found during X-rays and other tests Ginsburg had after she fractured ribs in a fall in her Supreme Court office on Nov. 7, the court said. In 2009, routine follow-up screening after Ginsburg's colorectal cancer 10 years earlier detected a lesion on her pancreas. Doctors operated and removed the growth they'd previously spotted, plus a smaller one they hadn't seen before. The larger growth was benign, while the smaller one was malignant.

Doctors who are not involved in Ginsburg's care said she may have gotten lucky again, although they caution it is too soon to know.

"This is just luck" that the growths were found through those rib X-rays because accidentally discovered lung tumors tend to be early-stage when surgery works best, said Dr. Giuseppe Giaccone, an oncologist at Georgetown University's Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. John Lazar, director of thoracic robotic surgery at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, said it's not uncommon to see slow-growing lung cancers in women in their 80s, and they tend to respond well to surgery and go on to die of something unrelated, he said.

Ginsburg's previous bouts with cancer were so long ago they're unlikely to be related, Giaccone said.

"If she doesn't need anything but the surgery, it is a very good sign," Lazar said.

Both doctors said patients typically spend three days or four days in the hospital after this type of operation.

On Friday, doctors at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York performed a procedure called a pulmonary lobectomy on Ginsburg. The growths they removed were determined to be malignant in an initial pathology evaluation, the court said, citing Ginsburg's thoracic surgeon, Dr. Valerie W. Rusch.

But there was "no evidence of any remaining disease" and scans taken before the surgery showed no cancerous growths elsewhere in her body, the court said. No additional treatment is currently planned, it said.

Among other health problems, she also broke two ribs in a fall in 2012 and had a stent implanted to open a blocked artery in 2014. She was hospitalized after a bad reaction to medicine in 2009.

Appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1993, Ginsburg rebuffed suggestions from some liberals that she should step down in the first two years of President Barack Obama's second term, when Democrats controlled the Senate and would have been likely to confirm her successor.

She already has hired clerks for the term that extends into 2020, indicating she has no plans to retire.

AP Medical Writer Lauran Neergaard contributed to this report.

Holiday-season gridlock in DC brings partial federal closure

By LISA MASCARO, MATTHEW DALY and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Christmas-season gridlock descended on the nation's capital Saturday like an unwelcomed present just before the holiday as America's elected leaders partially closed down the government over their inability to compromise on money for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Congressional Democrats are refusing to accede to President Donald Trump's demands for \$5 billion to start erecting his long-promised barrier, and the stalemate is a chaotic coda for Republicans in the waning days of their two-year reign controlling government.

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Vice President Mike Pence, Trump son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner and White House budget chief Mick Mulvaney left the Capitol late Friday after hours of bargaining with congressional leaders produced no apparent compromise.

Mulvaney sent agency heads a memorandum telling them to "execute plans for an orderly shutdown." He wrote that administration officials were "hopeful that this lapse in appropriations will be of short duration." That expectation was widely shared.

With negotiations expected to resume, the House and Senate scheduled rare Saturday sessions. House members were told they would receive 24 hours' notice before any vote.

The impasse blocks money for nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice.

The disruption affects many government operations and the routines of 800,000 federal employees. Roughly 420,000 workers were deemed essential and will work unpaid just days before Christmas. An additional 380,000 will be furloughed, meaning they will stay home without pay.

Federal employees already were granted an extra day of vacation on Monday, Christmas Eve, thanks to an executive order that Trump signed this past week. The president did not go to Florida on Friday as planned for the holiday.

Those being furloughed include nearly everyone at NASA and 52,000 workers at the Internal Revenue Service. About 8 in 10 employees of the National Park Service were to stay home; many parks were expected to close.

The Senate passed legislation ensuring that workers will receive back pay. The House seemed sure to follow suit.

Some agencies, including the Pentagon and the departments of Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services, were already funded and will operate as usual.

The U.S. Postal Service, busy delivering packages for the holiday season, will not be affected because it's an independent agency. Social Security checks will be mailed, troops will remain on duty and food inspections will continue.

Also still functioning will be the FBI, the Border Patrol and the Coast Guard. Transportation Security Administration officers will continue to staff airport checkpoints and air traffic controllers will be on the job.

Trump has savored the prospect of a shutdown over the wall for months. Last week he said he would be "proud" to close down the government, and on Friday said he was "totally prepared for a very long" closure. Many of Congress' most conservative Republicans welcomed such a confrontation, but most GOP lawmakers have wanted to avoid one because polling shows the public broadly opposes the wall and a shutdown over it.

Initial Republican reaction to the shutdown was muted. Among the few GOP lawmakers who issued statements as it began were Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who expressed disappointment at the lack of a deal, and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. "This is a complete failure of negotiations and a success for no one," Alexander said.

The Democratic leaders, Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California and Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, said in a statement that Trump "threw a temper tantrum and convinced House Republicans to push our nation into a destructive Trump Shutdown in the middle of the holiday season."

Trump had made clear last week that he would not blame Democrats for any closure. Now, he and his GOP allies have spent the past few days saying Democrats bear responsibility.

The president said now was the time for Congress to provide taxpayers' money for the wall, even though he long had claimed Mexico would pay for it. Mexico repeatedly has rebuffed that idea.

"This is our only chance that we'll ever have, in our opinion, because of the world and the way it breaks out, to get great border security," Trump said Friday. Democrats, who opposed major funding for wall construction, will take control of the House on Jan. 3.

Looking for a way to claim victory, Trump said he would accept money for a "Steel Slat Barrier" with spikes on the top, which he said would be just as effective as a "wall" and "at the same time beautiful."

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Senators had approved a bipartisan deal earlier in the week to keep the government open into February and provide \$1.3 billion for border security projects, but not the wall. But the House rebelled and approved a package temporarily financing the government but also setting aside \$5.7 billion for the border wall.

A test vote in the Senate on Friday showed that Republicans lacked the 60 votes needed to advance the House plan. That jump-started negotiations between Congress and the White House.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick and Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

Colorful cast of cooperators put the heat on El Chapo

By TOM HAYS and CLAUDIA TORRENS, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One was a gambling addict who got plastic surgery to change his appearance even after his predecessor died from doing the same thing. Another claims to have begun his life of crime at age 4. A third was a kid from Chicago who made a fortune off of drug running.

The three — Tirso Martinez Sanchez, Jorge Cifuentes and Pedro Flores — now share the notoriety of being the most recent cooperators to testify against the infamous Mexican drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman at a lengthy U.S. trial that’s heading into an extended holiday break.

Painting a vivid picture of the Colombian-Mexican cocaine bonanza of the 1990s and 2000s, the three admitted narcos described in federal court in Brooklyn the rewards, drawbacks and weirdness of working with the powerful boss of the Sinaloa cartel.

All did so in a coldly calculated betrayal of Guzman that could benefit them in their own drug cases but the defense says also destroys their credibility. Flores, for one, bottom-lined how he flipped on a kingpin this way: “I was trying to set him up.”

Here are some highlights of their testimony:

EL FUTBOLISTA

Like other major drug-traffickers of his era, Martinez made more money than he knew what to do with.

He testified that he used some of it to buy soccer teams in Mexico, earning him the nickname “El Futbolista,” which means “soccer player.” On the downside was a gambling habit that led him to lose a bundle betting on cock fights.

The 52-year-old witness also detailed some of the occupational hazards of living life as an outlaw. He said one of his former bosses shot himself in the head in a drunken ploy to avoid arrest, while another died on the operating table during a plastic surgery procedure to alter his appearance — an outcome that didn’t stop Martinez from getting his own face redone.

Martinez testified that, starting in 2000, he oversaw a Guzman scheme to transport cocaine all the way from Mexico to the New York City area by train using cooking oil tankers with secret compartments. He estimated he made as much as \$20 million from the cocaine train operation before he decided to quit because of “too much pressure” from Guzman over losses from seizures.

“They wanted to kill me because I had lost the train route,” he said. “I just didn’t want to keep going.”

RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Cifuentes’ testimony outlined extreme family dysfunction, describing how his father drafted him at just 4 years old to help move illegal cigarettes and booze through the port in Medellin, Colombia.

He testified that many of his eight siblings were in the drug trade and that they had “conflicts like any other family.” He admitted on cross-examination that his brother had ordered the killing of his nephew, but he explained it was because the nephew wanted to kidnap his own grandmother.

Cifuentes, 55, eventually began shipping Colombian cocaine to the Sinaloa cartel using airplanes made of carbon to deflect radar detection. He described meeting Guzman at his ranch in 2003 where there was a celebration for the second anniversary of the the drug lord’s escape from prison.

Getting there wasn’t easy: A small plane took him to a landing strip that was so short and sharply inclined

that he started praying and telling himself that if he survived he would buy Guzman a helicopter so he "would fly in a more civilized way."

At another meeting in 2009, Cifuentes said he shared a joint with Guzman, who asked how strong it was before he took a smoke. He wasn't impressed.

"This does nothing to me," he said.

THE MAN

Pedro and Margarito Flores were known simply as "the twins" in Sinaloa cartel circle — identical twin brothers from the streets of Chicago who became so good at distributing cocaine to urban centers in the U.S. that Guzman sought them out.

Pedro Flores took the witness stand last week to testify about their wildly lucrative business partnership with Guzman, still exhibiting a sense of awe about the defendant not shown by more-hardened cooperators. While others simply referred to Guzman as Chapo, Spanish for "shorty," Flores kept calling him "The Man."

Flores, 37, described how, after becoming a fugitive in Mexico, he and his brother continued running their U.S. network with enough success that he was summoned to a meeting with Guzman in mountains in Sinaloa. He and Guzman's cohorts were driving up a road to the compound when he was startled to see a naked man, apparently being tortured.

"He was tied to a tree with a chain," he said, adding that he never learned what happened to him.

In another odd twist, he recounted discussing concerns about the "cover loads" used to disguise drug shipments stashed in trucks — in this instance, 150 live sheep he had to pay \$10,000 to put out to pasture.

The stresses of the job and the dangers of a bloody civil war within the cartel convinced Flores to commit munity by contacting U.S. narcotics agents. He agreed to record telephone calls, played for the jury, in which an unsuspecting Guzman could be heard calling him his "amigo."

By associating with Guzman, he said, "I couldn't promise my family a tomorrow, you know?"

Gatwick flights operating after 2 arrested for using drone

By GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London's Gatwick Airport took strides toward running a full schedule Saturday as police questioned a man and a woman in connection with the drone intrusions that caused mayhem for tens of thousands of holiday travelers.

Police said Saturday the suspects are a 47-year-old man and a 54-year-old woman from Crawley, which is roughly five miles (eight kilometers) from the airport. They were arrested on suspicion of disrupting civil aviation in a way likely to endanger people or operations.

The airport's arrival and departure boards showed the busy airport inching towards normal but still showing an unusual number of delayed takeoffs and landings.

In a statement, Britain's second-biggest airport said it is operational but urged passengers, many of whom have been stranded since the drone incursions began on Wednesday evening, to check the status of their flights before heading to the airport.

"Passengers should expect some delays and cancellations as we continue to recover our operations following three days of disruption and are advised to check with their airline before travelling to the airport," a Gatwick spokesman said.

Airport officials say the aim is to run a full complement of 757 flights on Saturday with just under 125,000 passengers.

There have been no new drone sightings since police arrested two people late Friday night in connection with criminal use of drones.

New drone sightings Friday evening had caused fresh problems for holiday travelers at the airport, which reopened in the morning after a 36-hour shutdown only to hastily suspend flights for more than an hour in the late afternoon on one of the busiest travel days of the year. Officials said extra military capabilities allowed flights to resume after the halt.

The hope is that the airport can make up much of the backlog and get passengers where they hope to be for Christmas now that Sussex police have arrested two suspects. Those arrested have not been named and have not been charged. Police did not say where the arrests that took place late Friday were made.

"Our investigations are still ongoing, and our activities at the airport continue to build resilience to detect and mitigate further incursions from drones by deploying a range of tactics," said Superintendent James Collis.

"We continue to urge the public, passengers and the wider community around Gatwick to be vigilant and support us by contacting us immediately if they believe they have any information that can help us in bringing those responsible to justice."

The persistent drone crisis at Gatwick, located 30 miles (45 kilometers) south of London and which serves 43 million passengers a year, has had ripple effects throughout the international air travel system.

New asylum policy comes with few details, many questions

By MOISES CASTILLO and ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — The Trump administration's decision to make asylum seekers wait in Mexico while their cases wind through clogged U.S. courts was announced with crucial details still unknown — a move that creates uncertainty along the border and possibly an incentive for people to cross illegally before the change take effect.

The policy shift would force asylum seekers to stay in often-dangerous Mexican border cities as they navigate the American immigration court system.

On Friday, little had changed at Mexico's busiest U.S. border crossing, where Mauricio Gomez of Nicaragua joined about 150 others to learn if his name would be called to claim asylum.

"We are aware of the news, but nothing has happened so far," said Gomez, 41, who hoped to join a cousin in Nebraska. "We don't know when they are going to implement it."

Details were missing when the U.S. announced the policy Thursday in response to a large and growing number of Central American asylum seekers, many of them families, who are typically released in the United States while their cases are adjudicated, a process that can take years. The process at the border remains status quo until specific new procedures are put in place.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said the next step was "more legal paperwork" with Mexico.

"So, we'll work on a technical agreement with them, but we have our teams working on that now," she told Fox News on Friday.

The U.S. characterized the policy as a unilateral move, but Mexico almost simultaneously said it would grant foreigners permission to stay in the country while their asylum claims are considered in the U.S. and that they could seek work authorization. The two governments have been in discussions for months, and the timing of the twin announcements suggested a high level of cooperation and coordination.

A Homeland Security official, speaking to reporters Thursday on condition of anonymity, said some details were expected in the coming days and that the policy would be rolled out in phases at different locations on the border. The U.S. said the policy will not apply to children traveling alone or to Mexican asylum seekers.

The mechanics may get complicated: Where will immigration hearings be held and how will asylum seekers get there? How will they communicate with attorneys? How will they be returned to Mexico?

Details about implementation and "the circumstances in which people will be shuttled back and forth across the border are not at all clear," said Alan Bersin, a former Customs and Border Protection commissioner who helped negotiate repatriation agreements with Mexico as a senior Homeland Security official under President Barack Obama.

Government protocols are meant to establish uniform guidelines "rather than leave it up to the operators in the field to make it up as they go along," Bersin said.

Some U.S. authorities worry that any lag between the announcement and implementation may encourage some asylum seekers to cross illegally before the changes take effect. Illegal crossings surged between

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Trump's election and inauguration in fear of what the new president might do.

Bersin said smugglers always seek to take advantage of perceived "loopholes," and they may view a lag in implementation as an incentive.

There is also uncertainty on the legal front. Judges have blocked some of Trump's biggest strokes on immigration, the latest reminder coming Friday when a divided Supreme Court decided it would not let the administration begin enforcing a ban on asylum announced last month for anyone who illegally crosses the U.S.-Mexico border.

Andrew Selee, president of the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute, said elements of the rollout may be challenged in court as they become known. That could include issues such as whether phone access is sufficient to consult an attorney or what happens if the Mexican government is at fault for someone failing to cross the border in time for a court date.

"All of these pieces, every logistical piece, can be litigated. This can go on for years," Selee said. "I actually wonder if this will ever be implemented."

A migrant named Ismael, who declined to give his last name for fear of reprisal in his native Honduras, went to the Tijuana border crossing Friday to check his place on a list of asylum seekers kept in a tattered notebook managed by the migrants themselves. U.S. inspectors process about 100 claims a day at the crossing, and there are more than 1,800 waiting.

Ismael, who has been waiting in Tijuana for nearly three months, heard about the policy change on the news and wondered when it would take effect. He was shaken by the recent killings of two Honduran migrants in Tijuana and feels unsafe and unwelcome in the Mexican border city. But, he said, returning to Honduras would be too dangerous.

The United States has its laws, he said. "I don't agree, but if they send us back here, what can one do? Wait."

Spagat reported from San Diego. Associated Press Writer Colleen Long in Washington also contributed to this report.

LeBron James gets triple-double, Lakers top Pelicans 112-104

By DAN GREENSPAN, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James got plenty of attention this week for his comments about Anthony Davis, prompting allegations of tampering and ramping up speculation about the two superstars playing together for the Los Angeles Lakers.

It turns out James is also pretty good at playing with his current teammates.

James had 22 points, 14 assists and 12 rebounds, and the Lakers beat the New Orleans Pelicans 112-104 on Friday night.

"I'm a playmaker by nature, and nature kind of took over," said James, who got his third triple-double in his first season with the Lakers and No. 76 for his career.

Kyle Kuzma had 23 points, and Ivica Zubac set season highs with 16 points and 11 rebounds, helping Los Angeles to its sixth consecutive home win.

Davis had 30 points and 20 rebounds for the Pelicans, who lost their third straight game. Julius Randle had 21 points in his first game back at Staples Center against the Lakers after playing four seasons with them, and Jrue Holiday had 18 points and 10 assists.

Davis and James shared the court for the first time since James recently declared in an interview with ESPN that it would be "amazing" if the Lakers traded for the Pelicans' biggest star.

New Orleans coach Alvin Gentry said before the game that Davis will not be traded to the Lakers or anywhere else as long as he remains under contract to the Pelicans.

But James showed why players around the NBA might want to take him up on an invitation to join the Lakers by helping all five starters score in double figures. James had seven assists in the first quarter, his most in any quarter since joining the Lakers, and his infectious ball movement helped his new team get

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20 assists on 27 made baskets in the first half.

"He's one of the best playmaker passers our game has ever had, and I think he sees how the game is going," Lakers coach Luke Walton said. "For us, that allows guys to kind of start to get in a rhythm. If everyone sees the ball go through the net a couple times they feel good about themselves."

As pleased as he was with the offense in the first half, Walton was even more impressed with a defensive effort that limited the Pelicans to 39 points in the second half.

New Orleans shot 32.6 percent in the second half, leaving Gentry more concerned about his fifth loss in seven games than whether or not James tampered with Davis.

"I think you feel the pressure when you're not winning games," Gentry said. "We've not had a good two weeks."

STILL TALKING

James made it clear after the game he wasn't happy about the furor over his comments and didn't plan on taking a vow of silence any time soon.

"Ask me would I like to play with Kevin Durant? Absolutely," James said. "Ask if I'd like to play with Jimmy Butler. I'll say it right now. Ask about Kyrie Irving, Giannis. Ask me about Embiid, Ben Simmons, all of 'em. Luka Doncic. Ask me right now. Come on, guys, it's not rocket science. These are great players, absolutely. I'd love to play with a lot of great players. It's just who I am. And I play by the rules."

NOT TALKING

Davis took the opposite tact by brushing off James' comments after posting the second game in the NBA this season with at least 30 points, 20 rebounds and five assists.

"My job is to focus on winning and that's it," Davis said. "Nothing else. My job is to help this team win, and as of late we haven't been doing that. Anything outside of that is white noise to me, honestly."

TIP-INS

Pelicans: Davis had a bandage placed on his left pinkie finger during the first quarter and appeared to be trying to shake out the injury as the game went on. ... New Orleans committed 13 turnovers leading to 20 points for Los Angeles. The Pelicans got 11 points off 13 Lakers turnovers. ... Nikola Mirotic missed his fourth straight game because of an ankle injury.

Lakers: Zubac got the start with JaVale McGee missing his third straight game because of illness and scored eight of the Lakers' first 16 points. . Brandon Ingram scored 18 points after missing seven games because of a sprained left ankle. . Rajon Rondo had eight points and nine assists off the bench after missing 17 games because of surgery on his right hand.

UP NEXT

Pelicans: At Sacramento on Sunday.

Lakers: Host Memphis on Sunday.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/NBA> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Saudi prince's reform: Car race, concerts, but no criticism

By AYA BATRAWY, Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Women, some without headscarves, drove themselves to a Formula-E car race where thousands of young Saudis and hundreds of international visitors partied into the night at concerts by Enrique Iglesias, The Black Eyed Peas and DJ David Guetta.

It's a vision of Saudi Arabia that epitomizes Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's top-down reform efforts. The spectacle would have been unthinkable until recently in the ultra-conservative kingdom where religious police used to enforce strict gender segregation, scolded women for not covering their hair and barged into restaurants to demand music be turned off.

The concerts and car race cap several months of profound change in Saudi Arabia, including the opening of the first movie theater in April and the lifting of the world's only ban on women driving in June.

But there's a hard limit to the reforms — as revealed by the brutal killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi

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by Saudi agents close to the crown prince in October and the reported torture of several women's rights activists in detention. While the arena for fun is widening, the space for political engagement and dissent has virtually disappeared.

The 33-year-old crown prince, backed by his father King Salman, presides over a nation where he alone defines the pace and scope of change.

It's difficult to gauge the prince's domestic popularity, given the reservations and fear many have of criticizing the leadership. But his reforms are popular among young Saudis who believe their cities should offer some of the glitz and entertainment of neighboring Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

"This is a major change in Saudi Arabia and we are proud of it," said Abdelrahman al-Mahmoud, 29, a spectator at the electric car race in the capital, Riyadh. He expressed pride in a nation he feels is finally coming into its own.

When asked about the crown prince, al-Mahmoud described him as "the most popular guy" in Saudi Arabia. Pressed for his thoughts on Khashoggi's killing, he tensed up, like other Saudis interviewed at the race, and said he came to enjoy the day and didn't want to discuss politics.

The death of Khashoggi, who was killed and dismembered inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, seemed a world away from the carefree atmosphere at the race last weekend where concert-goers belted out "Long live Salman" to house beats remixed by Guetta, the DJ.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, three prominent women's rights activists are being held in Riyadh's Ha'ir Prison. They were arrested in May, enduring abuse and torture at the hands of masked interrogators in the Red Sea city of Jiddah before being transferred to Riyadh this month.

The women, among more than a dozen female activists being held, were whipped and caned on their backs and thighs, and electrocuted, according to five people with knowledge of their treatment. All spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal and to protect personal details about the detainees.

They said some of the women were forcibly touched and kissed, at least one was water-boarded and one attempted suicide during confinement. They said one woman was threatened with being raped, killed and dumped in a ditch, allegedly by a senior official wearing a mask. The detainee purportedly recognized him by some of his features.

The allegation could not be confirmed independently.

The government has denied charges of abuse as "wild claims" that are "simply wrong."

The arrest of women's rights activists, accused of vague national security crimes, was one of the incongruities in the reform agenda that Khashoggi wrote about in Washington Post columns before he was killed.

The kingdom denies the crown prince knew of the plot. He's been supported by President Donald Trump who has touted U.S.-Saudi ties. The U.S. Senate, however, passed a unanimous resolution saying it believes the crown prince is to blame for the murder. His critics point to U.S. intelligence reports and say an operation like this could not have happened without his knowledge.

The killing badly damaged Prince Mohammed's international image as a transformational leader committed to changes Saudi Arabia's allies in the West long hoped for.

Those changes are being promoted cautiously at home.

While the English-language Saudi newspaper Arab News touted the Formula-E as a "coming of age" event for the reform agenda, the more widely seen Arabic-language state TV channel only briefly carried images of the crown prince at the race and did not show the concerts or women without headscarves—images that much of the Saudi public strongly disagrees with.

For 22-year-old Maram Ali, who normally wears a headscarf in public, the race was a rare chance to literally let her hair down. Like many women at the event, she kept the required loose-fitting robe, known as an abaya, on but walked around without a head-covering.

"These changes should have happened a long time ago," she said, crediting the crown prince. "People are opening up. ... It's not like before where we were going backward and the world outside is moving forward."

The reform agenda is fueled in part by the need to power the economy in the face of lower oil prices.

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Unemployment has risen to almost 13 percent, while the cost of electricity and water have skyrocketed as subsidies are rolled back. This week, the king announced an extension of a multibillion-dollar package of monthly allowances for much of the public.

A father of two who goes by the name Abu Turki said he's been out of work for six months after he lost his job because of company cost-cutting. He supplements his government benefits, some of which run out in six months, working as a driver for the ride-hailing app Uber.

Like many Saudis, he'd heard of the Formula-E race, but for religious reasons that for decades have been propagated in this conservative nation home to Islam's holiest sites, he didn't agree with the idea of unrelated men and women mixing.

Speaking from behind a black face veil, Jawaher Othman, 55, had mixed feelings. She said the cool weather encouraged her to visit the race, but she had no intention of staying for the concert.

"May God correct their path and bless them," she said of young concert-goers. "I personally don't agree with the concerts and it's not for me, but it's not up to me ban it or say anything."

Follow Aya Batrawy on twitter at <https://twitter.com/ayaelb>

Federal shutdown begins after lawmakers fail to reach deal

By LISA MASCARO, MATTHEW DALY and ZEKE MILLER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A partial federal shutdown took hold early Saturday after Democrats refused to meet President Donald Trump's demands for \$5 billion to start erecting his cherished Mexican border wall, a chaotic postscript for Republicans in the waning days of their two-year reign controlling government.

Vice President Mike Pence, Trump son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner and White House budget chief Mick Mulvaney left the Capitol late Friday after hours of bargaining with congressional leaders produced no apparent compromise. "We don't have a deal. We're still talking," Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby, R-Ala., told reporters.

Late Friday, Mulvaney sent agency heads a memorandum telling them to "execute plans for an orderly shutdown." He wrote that administration officials were "hopeful that this lapse in appropriations will be of short duration" — an expectation that was widely shared.

With negotiations expected to continue, the House and Senate both scheduled rare Saturday sessions. House members were told they'd get 24 hours' notice before a vote.

The gridlock blocks money for nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice.

The lack of funds will disrupt many government operations and the routines of 800,000 federal employees. Roughly 420,000 workers were deemed essential and will work unpaid just days before Christmas, while 380,000 will be furloughed, meaning they'll stay home without pay.

Those being furloughed include nearly everyone at NASA and 52,000 workers at the Internal Revenue Service. About 8 in 10 employees of the National Park Service will stay home and many parks were expected to close.

The Senate passed legislation ensuring workers will receive back pay, which the House seemed sure to approve.

Some agencies, including the Pentagon and the departments of Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services, were already funded for the year in agreements reached earlier, and they will operate as usual.

The U.S. Postal Service, busy delivering packages for the holiday season, will not be affected because it's an independent agency. Social Security checks will still be mailed, troops will remain on duty and food inspections will continue.

Also still functioning will be the FBI, the Border Patrol and the Coast Guard. Transportation Security Administration officers will continue to staff airport checkpoints and air traffic controllers will also remain at work.

Trump has openly savored a shutdown over the wall for months, saying last week he'd be "proud" to

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have one and saying Friday he was "totally prepared for a very long" closure. While many of Congress' most conservative Republicans were welcoming such a confrontation, most GOP lawmakers have wanted to avoid one, since polling shows the public broadly opposes the wall and a shutdown over it.

Initial Republican reaction to the shutdown was muted. Among the few GOP lawmakers who issued statements as it began were Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who expressed disappointment at the lack of a deal, and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. "This is a complete failure of negotiations and a success for no one," Alexander said.

"Instead of honoring his responsibility to the American people, President Trump threw a temper tantrum and convinced House Republicans to push our nation into a destructive Trump Shutdown in the middle of the holiday season," said a joint statement by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

Despite saying last week he'd not blame Democrats for the closure, Trump and his GOP allies spent the last two days blaming Democrats anyway. Trump said now was the time for Congress to provide taxpayers' money for the wall, even though he's said repeatedly that Mexico will pay for it — something that country has repeatedly rebuffed.

"This is our only chance that we'll ever have, in our opinion, because of the world and the way it breaks out, to get great border security," Trump said Friday. Democrats will take control of the House January 3, and they oppose major funding for wall construction.

Looking for a way to claim victory, Trump said he would accept money for a "Steel Slat Barrier" with spikes on the top, which he said would be just as effective as a "wall" and "at the same time beautiful."

Trump called GOP senators to the White House Friday morning, but Republicans said afterward that the session did not produce a strategy.

Early this week, the Senate approved a bipartisan deal keeping government open into February and providing \$1.3 billion for border security projects but not the wall. In a GOP victory Thursday, the House rebelled and approved a package temporarily financing the government but also providing \$5.7 billion for the border wall.

Friday afternoon, a Senate procedural vote showed that Republicans lacked the 60 votes they'd need to force that measure through their chamber. That jump-started negotiations between Congress and the White House.

Republicans conceded that one of their biggest hurdles was Trump's legendary unpredictability and proclivity for abruptly changing his mind.

"The biggest problem is, we just don't know what the president will sign," said Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz.

The White House said Trump did not go to Florida on Friday as planned for the Christmas holiday.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Kevin Freking, Mary Clare Jalonick and Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

Mattis resigning as Pentagon chief after Trump disagreements

By ZEKE MILLER and LOLITA BALDOR, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned after clashing with President Donald Trump over the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria and after two years of deep disagreements over America's role in the world.

Mattis, perhaps the most respected foreign policy official in Trump's administration, will leave by the end of February after two tumultuous years struggling to soften and moderate the president's hardline and sometimes sharply changing policies. He told Trump in a letter that he was leaving because "you have a right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours."

Mattis went to the White House on Thursday with his resignation letter in hand to meet with the president and spoke to Trump for about 45 minutes, according to a senior U.S. official familiar with the incident but speaking on conditions of anonymity to discuss a private meeting.

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There was no confrontation between the two men, the official said, and there was no one issue that caused the resignation. However, the official said, Syria likely was the last straw for Mattis.

His departure was immediately lamented by foreign policy hands and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, who viewed the retired Marine general as a sober voice of experience in the ear of a president who had never held political office or served in the military. Even Trump allies expressed fear over Mattis' decision to quit, believing him to be an important moderating force on the president.

"Just read Gen. Mattis resignation letter," tweeted Florida Sen. Marco Rubio. "It makes it abundantly clear that we are headed toward a series of grave policy errors which will endanger our nation, damage our alliances & empower our adversaries."

Mattis did not mention the dispute over Syria in his letter or proposed deep cuts to U.S. forces in Afghanistan, another significant policy dispute. He noted his "core belief" that American strength is "inextricably linked" with the nation's alliances with other countries, a position seemingly at odds with the "America First" policy of the president.

The defense secretary also said that China and Russia want to spread their "authoritarian model" and promote their interests at the expense of America and its allies. "That is why we must use all the tools of American power to provide for the common defense," he wrote.

The announcement came a day after Trump surprised U.S. allies and members of Congress by announcing the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Syria, and as he continues to consider cutting in half the American deployment in Afghanistan by this summer. The news coincided with domestic turmoil as well, Trump's fight with Congress over a border wall and a looming partial government shutdown.

Trump's decision to pull troops out of Syria has been sharply criticized for abandoning America's Kurdish allies, who may well face a Turkish assault once U.S. troops leave, and had been staunchly opposed by the Pentagon.

Mattis, in his resignation letter, emphasized the importance of standing up for U.S. allies — an implicit criticism of the president's decision on this issue and others.

"While the U.S. remains the indispensable nation in the free world, we cannot protect our interests or serve that role effectively without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies," Mattis wrote.

Last year, Republican Sen. Bob Corker — a frequent Trump critic — said Mattis, along with White House chief of staff John Kelly and then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, were helping "separate our country from chaos."

Tillerson was fired early this year. Kelly is to leave the White House in the coming days.

"This is scary," reacted Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate intelligence committee, on Twitter. "Secretary Mattis has been an island of stability amidst the chaos of the Trump administration."

"Jim Mattis did a superb job as Secretary of Defense. But he cannot be expected to stand behind a President who disrespects our allies and ingratiates himself to our adversaries," said William Cohen, who served as defense secretary under Bill Clinton and knows Mattis well.

Mattis' departure has long been rumored, but officials close to him have insisted that the battle-hardened retired Marine would hang on, determined to bring military calm and judgment to the administration's often chaotic national security decisions and to soften some of Trump's sharper tones with allies.

Opponents of Mattis, however, have seen him as an unwanted check on Trump.

Mattis went to the White House Thursday afternoon to resign after failing to persuade the president in a tense Oval Office meeting to change his decision on withdrawing troops from Syria, according to two people with knowledge of the conversation but not authorized to discuss it publicly.

Another U.S. official said that Mattis' decision was his own, and not a "forced resignation." The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Trump said a replacement would be chosen soon.

"The president's national security team's job is to give him advice and it's the president's job to make a decision," said press secretary Sarah Sanders.

At the start of the Trump administration, the president had gushed about his respect for Mattis, repeatedly

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calling him "Mad Dog," despite Mattis' own public insistence that the moniker was never his. Instead, his nickname for years was CHAOS, which stood for "Colonel Has An Outstanding Suggestion," and reflected Mattis' more cerebral nature.

The two quickly clashed on major policy decisions.

During his first conversations with Trump about the Pentagon job, Mattis made it clear that he disagreed with his new boss in two areas: He said torture doesn't work, despite Trump's assertion during the campaign that it did, and he voiced staunch support for traditional U.S. international alliances, including NATO, which Trump repeatedly criticized.

Mattis was credited by some in the administration for blocking an executive order that would have reopened CIA interrogation "black sites." Trump has said the Pentagon chief convinced him it wasn't necessary to bring back banned torture techniques like waterboarding.

En route to his first visit to Iraq as defense secretary, Mattis bluntly rebuffed Trump's assertion that America might take Iraqi oil as compensation for U.S. efforts in the war-torn country.

The two also were divided on the future of the Afghanistan war, with Trump complaining from the first about its cost and arguing for withdrawal. Mattis and others ultimately persuaded Trump to pour additional resources and troops into the conflict to press toward a resolution.

U.S. officials say there now is active planning in the Pentagon that would pull as many as half the 14,000 U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by summer. They say no final decision has been made.

Trump also chafed at the Pentagon's slow response to his order to ban transgender people from serving in the military. That effort has stalled due to multiple legal challenges.

More recently, Trump bypassed Mattis' choice for the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief, was Mattis' top choice, but Trump chose Gen. Mark Milley, the chief of the Army.

The Pentagon has appeared to be caught off guard by a number of Trump policy declarations, often made through Twitter. Those include plans that ultimately fizzled to have a big military parade this month and the more recent decision to send thousands of active duty troops to the Southwest border.

Mattis has determinedly kept a low public profile, striving to stay out of the news and out of Trump's line of fire.

Those close to him have repeatedly insisted that he would not quit, and would have to either be fired or die in the job. But others have noted that a two-year stint as defense chief is a normal and respectable length of service.

Born in Pullman, Washington, Mattis enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1969, later earning a history degree from Central Washington University. He was commissioned as an officer in 1972. As a lieutenant colonel, he led an assault battalion into Kuwait during the first U.S. war with Iraq in 1991.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Mattis commanded the Marines who launched an early amphibious assault into Afghanistan and established a U.S. foothold in the Taliban heartland. As the first wave of Marines moved toward Kandahar, Mattis declared, "The Marines have landed, and now we own a piece of Afghanistan."

Two years later, he helped lead the invasion into Iraq in 2003 as the two-star commander of the 1st Marine Division. As a four-star, he led Central Command from 2010 until his retirement in 2013.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin and Robert Burns contributed.

2 arrested for drone use in London Gatwick Airport case

By GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police say two people were arrested early Saturday morning for suspected "criminal use of drones" in the Gatwick Airport case that has created nightmarish holiday travel delays for tens of thousands of passengers.

Sussex police did not release the age or gender of the two suspects arrested late Friday night and did

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not say where the arrests were made. The two have not been charged.

Police Superintendent James Collis asked the public in the Gatwick area to remain vigilant.

"Our investigations are still ongoing, and our activities at the airport continue to build resilience to detect and mitigate further incursions from drones by deploying a range of tactics," he said.

New drone sightings Friday had caused fresh problems for holiday travelers at the airport, which reopened in the morning after a 36-hour shutdown only to hastily suspend flights for more than an hour in the late afternoon on one of the busiest travel days of the year.

The reopening, closing and re-opening of Britain's second-busiest airport due to repeated drone sightings raised a host of questions for British officials, including questions about how safe it really is to fly with drones around and why it took so long to make arrests.

The Friday night flight suspension at Gatwick caused still more delays and cancellations just as the holiday travel season peaked. The persistent drone crisis at Gatwick, located 30 miles (45 kilometers) south of London, has had ripple effects throughout the international air travel system.

The latest drone sighting came after British police and transport officials said extra measures had been put in place to prevent drones from intruding on the airport, which serves 43 million passengers a year.

Military forces with special equipment have been brought in and police units are working around-the-clock. Police say a sophisticated drone operation is targeting the airport to cause maximum disruption during the holiday rush.

The motive for the drone invasion wasn't clear but British police said there are no indications it was "terror related."

Gatwick reopened at about 6 a.m. Friday after having been shut down Wednesday night and all day Thursday after authorities said drones repeatedly violated the airport perimeter, threatening the safety of incoming and outgoing planes.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said Friday morning there had been about 40 sightings of "a small number of drones" while the airport was shut down. He told the BBC that the drone disruption at Gatwick was "unprecedented anywhere in the world."

Grayling said additional "military capabilities" and a range of security measures had been put in place overnight but would not elaborate. He said the airport was considered safe for flights Friday even though the drone operator or operators had not been apprehended.

The Thursday shutdown upended the travel plans of tens of thousands of passengers, since about 110,000 people had been scheduled to pass through Gatwick that day.

After flight operations restarted Friday, the airport struggled to resolve a massive backlog of passengers and canceled, delayed or diverted flights. The number of passengers expected Friday was even higher than the previous day, and about 145 of Friday's 837 scheduled flights at Gatwick were cancelled to handle the crush.

Then Gatwick takeoffs and landings had to be suspended again as a "precaution" after reports that a drone was spotted about 5:10 p.m., the airport said.

Planes circled over London or sat at Gatwick gates, waiting to find out what would happen Friday night, before getting a new "all-clear" about 70 minutes later.

"The military measures we have in place at the airport have provided us with reassurance necessary to reopen our airfield," the airport tweeted moments after flights resumed.

The hundreds of travelers who were stuck overnight at Gatwick by Thursday's closure described freezing conditions as they slept on benches or the airport floor. Many complained they weren't being kept informed about re-routed flights.

British officials, meanwhile, were debating whether shooting down a drone was an available "tactical option" due to concerns that such an action could inadvertently hurt people on the ground.

"Shooting the drone out of the sky is probably one of the least effective options" available, said Assistant Chief Constable Steve Barry of Sussex Police.

He said police believe there was more than one drone operating around Gatwick in the last two days

and that it was possible the drones were being operated from fairly far away.

A blow to morale: Afghan generals worry about US withdrawal

By KATHY GANNON, Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Taliban welcomed news of the U.S. plan to withdraw half its troops in Afghanistan by the summer, as Afghan generals warned it would be a blow to the morale of the country's beleaguered security forces who come under daily attacks from the insurgent fighters.

The announcement seems certain to complicate efforts to reach a peace deal, mostly because it gives the Taliban leverage by allowing them to hold off until a total U.S. withdrawal, or step up their demands over a weakened Afghan government.

"I believe the Taliban will see this as a reason to stall, and therefore it disincentivizes the Taliban to actually talk to the Afghan government, which it has refused to do," said Bill Roggio, an Afghanistan analyst with the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Afghanistan's security forces rely heavily on U.S. airpower against both Taliban and an upstart Islamic State affiliate, and Afghan military officials note the announcement by the Trump administration comes as the country's security is at its worst since 2014, when more than 100,000 NATO troops pulled out of the country and handed off security to Afghans. The U.S. and NATO retreated into a training and advising role.

"A complete withdrawal of U.S. forces would very likely cause the Taliban to make gains in key areas throughout Afghanistan," Roggio said. "This likely would cause the general collapse of the (Afghan National Security and Defense Force) as a cohesive fighting force and lead to the return of the warlords."

President Donald Trump considers the war in Afghanistan a lost cause and has long pushed to pull the troops out. His decision was made public a mere few hours after he abruptly announced the U.S. was withdrawing troops from Syria.

Trump's state of mind is sure to have given a sense of urgency to U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been working to reach a negotiated end to America's longest war and has been pushing for a deal by April.

In an interview with Afghanistan's TOLO TV on Thursday — hours before the withdrawal plans were announced — he noted Trump had campaigned for president on a promise to end the Afghan war, which has already cost Americans nearly \$1 trillion. More than 2,400 American soldiers have also died in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion.

"There was little doubt that Ambassador Khalilzad was always working with limited time and a zeal of desperation to achieve something before the president pulled the plug," said Daniel Markey, senior research professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

A Taliban official told The Associated Press the announcement was a positive step. Speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press, the official said Taliban officials think the promised departure could help the peace process because it could "lead to trust building that the U.S. wants a political solution."

But there was no sign the Taliban were ready to move on the two major sticking points: Direct talks with the Afghan government and a cease fire while the two sides negotiate Khalilzad's so-called "roadmap for the future of Afghanistan."

Peace talks aside, the announced withdrawal has Afghan generals and analysts worried about the ability of the beleaguered Afghan National Security Force to stave off a Taliban insurgency unfettered by U.S. troops and their pounding air power.

The Taliban are already stronger today than they have been since their ouster in 2001, controlling or holding sway over nearly half the country.

Several high ranking Afghan military officials, who spoke on condition they not be identified because they were not authorized to speak to the media, said the morale of Afghanistan's undertrained and poorly equipped security forces was already at a dangerously low ebb. The troops routinely complain about reinforcements that arrive too late, equipment that fails and even running out of food.

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The officials called America's withdrawal a defeat, comparing it to the U.S. evacuation from Vietnam and Russia's 1989 forced withdrawal from Afghanistan that capped a failed 10-year campaign.

U.S. troops invaded Afghanistan in November 2001 in response to the Sept. 11 attacks. Their ouster of the Taliban returned to power former warlords, whose bitter infighting and runaway corruption had resulted in vast tracts of the capital Kabul being destroyed and given rise to the Taliban, who used a strict and harsh interpretation of Islam to restore calm to the country.

Ordinary Afghans have mixed feelings about the presence of U.S. and NATO troops. Many fear their departure believing it will strengthen the Taliban, yet criticize their presence for doing little to improve security, which has deteriorated. Afghans complain bitterly about their deeply corrupt government and see the U.S. — which largely bankrolls the government — as responsible.

Neighbor Pakistan, who has been harshly criticized by Trump for not doing enough to bring the Taliban to the table, had warned that a sudden departure of U.S. troops would result in chaos in Afghanistan and destabilize the region.

"The last thing it (Pakistan) wants is a radical Islamist state on its Western border, even if that eliminates or reduces Indian influence in Afghanistan," said Shuja Nawaz, author and fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center.

Associated Press writer Amir Shah in Kabul, Afghanistan contributed to this report.

This story corrects date of Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan.

A decade-long rally on Wall Street looks like it's ending

By MARLEY JAY, AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After almost 10 years, Wall Street's rally looks like it's ending.

Another day of big losses Friday left the U.S. market with its worst week in more than seven years. All of the major indexes have lost 16 to 26 percent from their highs this summer and fall. Barring huge gains during the upcoming holiday period, this will be the worst December for stocks since 1931.

There hasn't been one major shock that has sent stocks plunging. The U.S. economy has been growing since 2009, and most experts think it will keep expanding for now. But it's likely to do so at a slower pace.

As they look ahead, investors are finding more and more reasons to worry. The U.S. has been locked in a trade dispute with China for nine months. Economies in Europe and China are slowing. And rising interest rates in the U.S. could slow its economy even more.

Dysfunction in Washington isn't helping the situation, with another Trump administration cabinet member announcing his resignation this week and the government Friday night on the brink of a partial shutdown.

Stocks are now headed for their single worst month since October 2008, when the market was being battered by the global financial crisis.

December is generally the strongest time of the year for U.S. stocks. Traders often talk about a "Santa rally" that adds to the year's gains as people adjust their portfolios in anticipation of the year to come.

But not this year.

No sector of the market has been spared. Large multi-national companies join smaller domestic ones in their losses. And huge high-tech companies, once the best-performing stocks on the market, are now leading the way lower.

Technology's huge popularity during the recent boom years made it even more vulnerable as investors' moods turn sour. Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Netflix, and Google's parent company, Alphabet, have seen their market values fall by hundreds of billions of dollars.

"If you live by momentum, you die by momentum," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist for CFRA.

The Nasdaq composite, which contains a high concentration of tech stocks, has sunk almost 22 percent from its record high in late August. Several big technology companies, notably Facebook and Twitter, have also suffered as a result of scandals over matters such as data privacy and election meddling, and

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traders worry that the industry will face greater government regulation that could increase costs and affect their profits.

The major U.S. indexes fell 7 percent this week and they've sunk more than 12 percent in December.

Investors around the world have grown increasingly pessimistic about the global economy's prospects over the next few years. It's widely expected to slow down, but traders are concerned the cooling might be worse than they previously believed.

After a sharp early gain Friday, the S&P 500 index retreated 50.80 points, or 2.1 percent, to 2,416.62. The S&P 500, the benchmark for many index funds, has fallen 17.5 percent from its high in September.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average sank 414.23 points, or 1.8 percent, to 22,445.37. The Nasdaq skidded 195.41 points, or 3 percent, to 6,332.99. The Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks lost 33.92 points, or 2.6 percent, 1,292.09.

European markets rose slightly and Asian markets were mixed.

The price of oil has also fallen sharply in recent weeks, down 40 percent from the high it reached in October, amid concerns over a glut in the market and the slowing economy.

On Friday the price of U.S. crude slipped 0.6 percent to \$45.59 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the standard for international oil prices, fell 1 percent to \$53.82 a barrel in London.

In other trading:

—Wholesale gasoline was little changed at \$1.32 a gallon. Heating oil fell 1 percent to \$1.73 a gallon. Natural gas jumped 6.5 percent to \$3.82 per 1,000 cubic feet.

—Bond prices were mixed. The yield on the 2-year Treasury note fell to 2.62 percent from 2.65 percent. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note dipped to 2.78 percent from 2.79 percent.

—Gold lost 0.8 percent to \$1,258.10 an ounce and silver fell 1.1 percent to \$14.70 an ounce. Copper lost 0.8 percent to \$2.67 a pound.

—The U.S. dollar ticked higher after two days of sharp losses brought on by fears about the economy and slower increases in interest rates. The dollar rose 111.36 yen from 111.11 yen. The euro fell back to \$1.1369 from \$1.1469 and the British pound slipped to \$1.2639 from \$1.2671.

AP Markets Writer Marley Jay can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MarleyJayAP>

Pan Pylas contributed to this story from London.

Fiance accused of killing Colorado woman missing for month

By JAMES ANDERSON and MEAD GRUVER, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The fiance of a Colorado woman who has been missing since Thanksgiving Day was arrested Friday on allegations of killing the mother of his child, and police said she likely died at her house in a mountain town.

But authorities declined to say whether they had found the body of Kelsey Berreth, 29, what led to the arrest of Patrick Michael Frazee and what motive there might be for Berreth's disappearance and slaying.

Frazee, 32, was arrested at his home in the alpine town of Florissant on suspicion of murder and solicitation of murder, said Miles de Young, chief of police in neighboring Woodland Park, where Berreth lived.

"As you can tell from the arrest, sadly, we do not believe that Kelsey is still alive," De Young said.

Authorities also declined to elaborate on the solicitation of murder charge, how they believe Berreth was killed or other aspects of the investigation, which spans several states and involves the FBI.

Frazee was appointed a public defender, Adam Steigerwald, at a court hearing Friday, but the attorney didn't immediately return a phone message seeking comment. Jeremy Loew, a private lawyer who had represented him, previously said Frazee cooperated with investigators and provided DNA samples.

Police have said Frazee was the last person to see Berreth alive. The couple shared a baby daughter but didn't live together. Her mother has said financial struggles delayed them from moving in together but that her daughter was excited to get married.

The disappearance of the young pilot mystified family and friends and led to a social media push for

information on her whereabouts.

Berreth was last seen at a grocery store near her home. Surveillance video showed her walking in on Thanksgiving Day with what appears to be the couple's daughter in a baby carrier. Frazee had told police that they met that afternoon so he could pick up the child.

De Young said the girl is in protective custody and will be turned over to Berreth's family.

Authorities searched Frazee's cattle ranch and Berreth's townhome but declined to say what they found. De Young did say evidence suggests "the crime" occurred at Berreth's home and that her cellphone was found in Idaho. Investigators were working to recover the phone, which is an important clue.

Police said the only signs of Berreth after Thanksgiving were some text messages and that location data suggested the phone by Nov. 25 was near Gooding, Idaho, 800 miles (1,290 kilometers) from her house.

Her mother, Cheryl, lives in Laclede, Idaho, 580 miles (930 kilometers) north of Gooding, but police have not explained whether that has any significance in where the cellphone was discovered.

Police started looking for Kelsey Berreth on Dec. 2 at her mother's request.

Investigators who went to Berreth's house found cinnamon rolls in the kitchen and both of her cars outside. De Young said the company where Berreth worked as a flight instructor, Doss Aviation, had accounted for all their planes and that police had no reason to believe she used someone else's plane.

Cheryl Berreth told NBC News that her daughter's relationship with Frazee had been good and loving.

She said the couple had weathered some financial struggles. Frazee runs a cattle ranch, and prices for the industry have been poor, delaying their plans to find a house together, Cheryl Berreth said.

"They had plans that haven't worked out as they would have liked. But they've dealt with that and they've made things work regardless," she said.

The mother told CBS that her daughter was looking forward to being married but said the couple had not set a wedding date.

Kelsey Berreth was "a little reserved and sometimes soft-spoken" but often talked about Frazee, whom she was dating when she was a flight instructor at Springs Aviation in 2016, company owner Bobby Hosmer said.

Formal charges are pending and could take as long as 10 days to file, District Attorney Dan May said. The search and arrest affidavits will stay sealed during the investigation, he said.

Frazee was being held without bond. A judge set the next court hearing for Dec. 31.

Gruver reported from Cheyenne, Wyoming. Associated Press Writer Kathleen Foody contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show there was a typo in the name of Gooding, Idaho.

No US charges against Chinese billionaire in alleged assault

By AMY FORLITI and JEFF BAENEN, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Chinese billionaire Richard Liu will not face charges over a rape accusation by a Chinese woman studying in Minnesota because prosecutors said Friday they could not prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Liu, founder of the Beijing-based e-commerce site JD.com, was arrested Aug. 31 in Minneapolis on suspicion of felony rape and released within hours. He returned to China.

Prosecutors said that "profound evidentiary problems" would have made it "highly unlikely" that any charge could have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

In a statement, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman said that as prosecutors reviewed surveillance video, text messages, police body camera video and witness statements, "it became clear that we could not meet our burden of proof and, therefore, we could not bring charges."

After the prosecutor's decision was announced, Liu issued a statement on his Chinese social media account saying, "This proves I broke no law."

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"My interactions with this woman, however, have hurt my family greatly, especially my wife. I feel deep regret and remorse and I hope she can accept my sincere apology. I will continue to try in every possible way to repair the impact on my family and to fulfill my responsibility as a husband," Liu said in his statement, which JD.com shared in a translation he provided.

He said he did not respond to comments on the internet while the investigation was ongoing to avoid interfering with police and prosecutors.

Liu was in Minneapolis in August for a weeklong residency as part of the University of Minnesota's doctor of business administration China program. The four-year program in the university's management school is geared toward high-level executives in China and is a partnership with Tsinghua University School of Economics and Management.

Jill Brisbois, an attorney for Liu, welcomed the prosecutor's decision.

"This confirms our strong belief from the very beginning that my client is innocent," Brisbois said in a statement. He said Liu was arrested "based on a false claim," and that the investigation, "with which he fully cooperated," vindicates him.

"Even though the prosecutor determined no criminal charges were warranted, Mr. Liu's reputation has been damaged like anyone falsely accused of a crime," Brisbois said.

Wil Florin, an attorney for the woman, said prosecutors never spoke to her before deciding not to charge Liu.

Florin said prosecutors never asked to meet with the woman, a Chinese citizen studying at the University of Minnesota on a student visa, and never asked her a question.

"Instead, they waited 4 months until late Friday before the Christmas holiday and issued a press release without even giving her the common courtesy of a meeting to advise her of their intentions," Florin said.

Minneapolis Police Department spokesman John Elder said, however, that police had spoken with the woman "a number of times."

Florin later said the woman is planning to sue. In a statement, Florin said a civil jury should determine whether Liu, JD.com and their representatives "should be held accountable for the events of that night. We look forward to that jury hearing the full and complete story." He would not give details of the planned lawsuit, but told The Associated Press it would be in the U.S.

The woman has not been publicly identified. She is still enrolled at the university, Florin said.

On the night of the alleged attack, Liu and other executives went to Origami, a Japanese restaurant in Minneapolis. The woman went to the dinner as a volunteer, Florin said. She felt coerced to drink as the powerful men toasted her, he said.

Text messages reviewed by The Associated Press and portions of the woman's interviews with police show the woman claims Liu dragged her into a vehicle and made advances, despite her protests. The woman texted a friend: "I begged him don't. But he didn't listen." She said he raped her at her apartment.

Liu, known in Chinese as Liu Qiangdong, is a prominent member of the Chinese tech elite, with a fortune of \$7.5 billion. He is part of a generation of entrepreneurs who have created China's internet, e-commerce, mobile phone and other technology industries since the late 1990s. The son of peasants, Liu built a Beijing electronics shop into JD.com, China's biggest online direct retailer, selling everything from clothes to toys to fresh vegetables.

He has continued to lead the company since his arrest.

The announcement on Liu comes at a time of heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over trade and the arrest of another prominent Chinese tech executive.

China reacted angrily after Canadian authorities, at the behest of the U.S., arrested Huawei Technologies' Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver on Dec. 1.

The U.S. reportedly wants her extradited to face allegations the company evaded U.S. sanctions on Iran. Huawei is China's first global tech competitor, making it politically important to a ruling Communist Party. But the U.S. government believes that doing business with Huawei is a national security risk.

On the same day the Huawei executive was arrested, President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to a 90-day truce in their trade war while officials try to negotiate an agreement. China

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retaliated against U.S. imports such as soybeans after Trump imposed tariffs on billions of dollars in Chinese goods. The dispute has roiled stock markets and raised concern that it could hurt the global economy.

Follow Amy Forliti on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/amyforliti> .

Breaking up (with Facebook) is hard to do: Here's how

By BARBARA ORTUTAY, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Every relationship has a breaking point. Even yours with Facebook.

There's a way out, though the social network will try to win you back with promises to do better. Maybe even flowers.

For some users, though, the past two years of privacy scandals, election manipulation by Russian trolls, executive apologies and even the political disagreements with friends and relatives have become too much. The latest: an alarming New York Times report detailing the massive trove of user data that the company has shared with such companies as Apple, Netflix and Amazon.

A growing number of people say they are deleting Facebook, or at least considering it.

While Facebook has tried to address some of these problems, it's not enough for some users. Hard as it might seem to quit, especially for those entwined with it for years, it can be done.

Mostly.

GOODBYE FOREVER

Before deleting your account, rescue your posts and photos. Facebook lets you download the data you've shared with Facebook since you joined. This includes your posts and photos, as well as the "activity log" — the history of everything you've done on Facebook, such as likes and comments on posts, use of apps and searches. The download also includes your profile, messages, list of friends and ads you've clicked on.

This process should give you a good — perhaps scary — idea of what Facebook has on you.

What you won't get are photos other people shared with you, even if you've been tagged. You need to save those individually. And some stuff will remain, including what others have posted about you, your chats with others and your posts in Facebook groups (though your name will be grayed out). To delete all this, you'll need to sift through your "activity log," accessible through your profile page, and delete each item individually.

Once you've saved everything and gone through your activity log, sign in one last time. Go to <http://bit.ly/198wIoI> and click on the blue button. Facebook says the process could take a few days. Your delete request will be cancelled if you log back in during this time. Facebook says it may take up to 90 days for all the data associated with your account to be wiped, but you can't change your mind after the first few days are up.

If you used your Facebook account for third-party apps and sites, you'll need new usernames and passwords for each.

TRIAL SEPARATION

If you're not quite ready for a divorce, deactivating your account is an option. To do this, go to your account settings.

Deactivating means other people won't be able to see your profile, but if you log back in, the whole thing is canceled and you are "active" again. Ditto if you log into an outside app or site using your Facebook account.

FOMO (FEAR OF MISSING OUT)

Depending on whether you were a full-time Facebook addict or an occasional lurker, the psychological separation could prove harder or easier than the physical one. Facebook has become a one-stop shop for so many things. You can keep up with friends and family, find out about or create local events, buy and sell stuff, keep up with the news, raise money for a cause or join groups of like-minded people such as parents, porch gardeners and people with a rare disease.

There are other places to do many of these things. There's Eventbrite for events, Letgo for buying and

selling stuff, Peanut for moms to connect, Meetup to find and meet like-minded people, GoFundMe for raising money and Twitter, or, gasp, your local newspaper's website for the news. The difference is there's no single other place to do all these things, and your friends might not be there.

If you find your mind wandering back to Facebook as you go through your day, thinking how you might craft a post about a thought you've just had or an article you came across, it's OK. Let it go. It's all part of the breakup process.

And while you may not see updates about near-forgotten schoolmates or that random person you met six years ago, the people who matter most will stick around. For them, there's email, the phone, and meeting in person for coffee.

ABOUT THOSE OTHER APPS

If your boycott of Facebook has more to do with your view of the company than with tiring of the Facebook service, you might consider deleting Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger as well — they are all owned by Facebook. Deleting your Facebook account won't affect your Instagram or WhatsApp account. If you want to keep using Messenger, you can create an account using your phone number instead of your Facebook profile.

North Carolina asked feds to open vote fraud case last year

By **MICHAEL BIESECKER** and **GARY D. ROBERTSON**, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina's top elections official issued an urgent plea nearly two years ago for the Trump administration to file criminal charges against the man now at the center of ballot fraud allegations that have thrown a 2018 congressional race into turmoil.

N.C. Board of Elections Executive Director Kim Strach warned in a January 2017 letter first obtained by The Associated Press that those involved in illegally harvesting absentee ballots in rural Bladen County would likely do it again if they weren't prosecuted.

Josh Lawson, the top lawyer for the elections board, said Friday that Strach's memo was followed less than a month later with the first of several in-person meetings during which state investigators provided FBI agents and federal prosecutors with evidence accusing Leslie McCrae Dowless Jr. and others of criminal activity.

"Our findings to date suggest that individuals and potentially groups of individuals engaged in efforts to manipulate election results through the absentee ballot process," Strach wrote in the letter, dated 10 days after President Donald Trump's inauguration. "The evidence we have obtained suggest that these efforts may have taken place in the past and if not addressed will likely continue for future elections."

At the time, there was only an acting U.S. attorney in office. Later in 2017, Trump's appointee arrived, but took no action to prosecute the matter. Instead, he assigned his staff to focus on a different priority — prosecuting a handful of non-citizens who had allegedly voted.

A spokesman for Robert J. Higdon, Jr., who took over as the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina in September 2017, has declined to comment on why no charges were filed following the state's criminal referrals against Dowless and other Bladen County political operatives. Justice Department spokeswoman Kelly Laco in Washington also declined to comment on Friday.

Higdon's office issued a media release in August of this year touting charges against 19 foreign nationals it said voted in North Carolina in the 2016 presidential election, during which more than 6.9 million ballots were cast in the state. The cases were filed in the wake of Trump's false claim that he lost the 2016 popular vote to his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton because millions of illegal immigrants had cast ballots across the country.

But court filings reviewed by AP show several of the cases built by Higdon's office were against long-time legal permanent residents or those who had been granted citizenship only to have authorities later determine they had been untruthful on their applications. At least four have pleaded guilty, with the only sentence meted out so far going against an Italian man who has lived legally in the United States since 1985. The judge in the case gave him a \$200 fine and no prison time.

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State elections board Chairman Joshua Malcolm declined Thursday to evaluate how U.S. prosecutors handled the board's referral of its 2016 Bladen County elections investigation, saying the board has a "very particular role." The agency's staff has legal authority to investigate elections crimes, but cannot make arrests or file criminal charges.

After federal prosecutors took no action, documents show the elections board referred the case to state prosecutors in January 2018. No charges were filed before the November general election, which was marred by voting irregularities involving absentee ballots cast in Bladen and two neighboring counties. Authorities say Dowless is the subject of an investigation into those irregularities.

"Our role is to investigate matters ... and to refer matters to prosecutors and law enforcement officials to carry out their responsibility," said Malcolm, a Democrat. "We don't control what happens once we make a referral."

The board has refused to certify the results of the November general election for the state's 9th congressional district. Republican Mark Harris leads Democrat Dan McCready by just 905 votes in 2018's only still unresolved House election, according to unofficial results. State leaders from both parties now concede a do-over election might eventually be needed, though GOP officials have sought to put the blame for the mess squarely onto the elections board.

The board plans to weigh the evidence against Dowless and others at a Jan. 11 public hearing.

Investigators are looking into whether Dowless, 62, ran an illegal operation to collect large numbers of absentee ballots from voters in at least three counties with the intent of aiding the GOP candidates.

A convicted felon, Dowless didn't respond this week to messages seeking comment. His lawyer, Cynthia Adams Singletary, said that any speculation regarding her client and the 9th District election is premature and unwarranted. Through his attorney, Dowless has declined to be interviewed by state investigators.

Harris, the GOP congressional candidate, said in an interview last week that it was his decision to hire Dowless, though he denied knowledge of any potential wrongdoing.

Associated Press investigative reporter Michael Biesecker reported from Washington.

Follow Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck> and AP reporter Gary D. Robertson at <http://twitter.com/garydrobertson>

Lawyer: Michigan State hampered probe of its Nassar dealings

By JEFF KAROUB, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A special prosecutor on Friday accused Michigan State University of stonewalling his investigation into the school's handling of the sexual abuse scandal involving disgraced former sports doctor Larry Nassar and called for "top-down cultural change" at the school.

Bill Forsyth released a report that accuses the school of fighting the release of certain relevant documents and releasing others that were heavily redacted or irrelevant. It says such actions hampered the investigation.

"Their biggest concern was the reputation of the university," Forsyth said at a news conference in Lansing that was livestreamed.

"Just come out with what happened here," he said. "I believe they could disclose some of this without violating attorney-client privilege."

Hundreds of women and girls, most of them gymnasts, accused Nassar of molesting them when they sought treatment during his time working for Michigan State and USA Gymnastics, which trained Olympians. He received long prison terms after pleading guilty to child pornography possession and sexual abuse charges.

Forsyth and his team of prosecutors and investigators have brought criminal charges against three people, including former Michigan State President Lou Anna Simon. She was charged last month with lying to police during an investigation. One of her attorneys has said the charges are baseless.

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Michigan State spokeswoman Emily Guarrant said in a statement the school is "extraordinarily sorry" that Nassar "hurt so many people" and that it is working to change its culture. She also noted that Forsyth's report doesn't level any new criminal allegations.

According to the report, a major piece of the investigation involved interviewing survivors. Of the 280 interviewed, 13 said they reported the abuse to an identified employee at or around the time it happened, it says.

Michigan State softball, volleyball, and track and field athletes have said they told an assistant coach and trainers about Nassar's inappropriate behavior. The school in May reached a \$500 million settlement with 332 women and girls who said they were assaulted by Nassar.

Forsyth was appointed by Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette to investigate the school's handling of Nassar. The investigation is ongoing, though Forsyth said he is stepping down at the end of this month when his contract ends.

Schuette unsuccessfully ran for governor last month and is leaving his office to make way for incoming Democratic Attorney General Dana Nessel on Jan. 1. Nessel said in an emailed statement to the Lansing State Journal that she will carry on the investigation into what she called Michigan State's "callous disregard" for victims.

Investigators have said Nassar's crimes were mostly committed in Michigan at a campus clinic, area gyms and his Lansing-area home. Accusers also said he molested them at a gymnastics-training ranch in Texas, where Nassar also faces charges, and at national and international competitions.

The U.S. Olympic Committee fired chief of sport performance Alan Ashley this month after an independent investigation concluded that neither he nor former CEO Scott Blackmun elevated concerns about the Nassar allegations when they were first reported to them. The investigation report detailed an overall lack of response when the USOC leaders first heard about the allegations from the then-president of USA Gymnastics, Steve Penny.

Forsyth's report offered some solace to George Perles, a former Michigan State trustee, football coach and athletic director. A lawsuit accuses Perles of covering up a rape allegation against Nassar when Nassar was a medical student in 1992. The report says investigators "found substantial evidence contradicting" those claims.

Forsyth said his investigation has been limited to investigating the university: "Who knew what, when they knew it and what, if anything, they did about it."

His report says the university has taken steps to improve its sexual misconduct procedures, but the repeated failures were made by people, not policies.

"Until there is a top-down cultural change at MSU, survivors and the public would be rightly skeptical of the effectiveness of any set of written policies," it concludes.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Forsyth's team has brought charges against three people, not five people.

Follow Jeff Karoub on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/jeffkaroub>

Group backing private Medicare is funded by insurance giants

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group gaining influence in Washington as a champion for Medicare beneficiaries is bankrolled by major health insurance companies that are trying to cash in on private coverage offered through the federal health insurance program.

The Better Medicare Alliance claims a far-flung network of seniors, with a Facebook community of more than 380,000 and 110,000 signed up to receive email alerts. Its website displays profiles of "BMA Seniors" who describe private Medicare plans in glowing terms. The Associated Press found that one of the featured seniors, David Kievit, died in March at age 91.

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The multimillion-dollar budget for the alliance isn't supplied by seniors, but by UnitedHealthcare, Aetna and Humana, according to the group's president and its federal tax returns. The three insurance giants together account for close to 50 percent of all enrollees in private "Medicare Advantage" plans and stand to benefit as that part of Medicare keeps growing.

The organization's website and Facebook page don't say where its money comes from, making it easy to miss the industry tie.

Since its establishment in December 2014, the alliance has built its profile. It lobbies Congress and the administration and sponsors research. It has reported spending \$370,000 so far this year on lobbying Congress primarily, according to disclosure records. Among other issues, the alliance is seeking the repeal of a tax on health insurers imposed by the Obama-era health care law.

President and CEO Allyson Schwartz enjoys credibility among Democrats, having helped pass the Affordable Care Act as a Democratic congresswoman from Pennsylvania. And Republicans have long been fans of private Medicare plans, giving the alliance a foothold in both political parties.

David Lipschutz, a senior policy attorney for the Center for Medicare Advocacy, a nonprofit legal organization that represents Medicare beneficiaries, called the Better Medicare Alliance an "Astroturf group." The term refers to an organization that casts itself as a grassroots movement to mask their corporate interests.

"They represent themselves as representing Medicare beneficiaries, but they really represent the interests of the insurance industry," Lipschutz said.

Schwartz rejects any suggestion that the organization is a front for the insurance industry. She said during an interview with the AP that the alliance's funding sources "are well known," even though the names and addresses of donors were blacked out of copies of the alliance's tax returns that it provided to AP.

Federal rules permit nonprofits like the Better Medicare Alliance to shield the identities of donors. Critics say that's problematic because the public has no way of knowing whether the anonymous donors have a specific interest in a matter before the administration, Congress or the courts.

"I don't know that this entity is representative of the people who receive this type of insurance, or is it representing the interests of the businesses that offer this type of insurance," said Daniel Borochoff, the president of CharityWatch, a national watchdog group. He reviewed alliance tax documents for AP and said it appears to be "akin to a trade organization."

The alliance has received \$19.9 million in donations over the last three years, accounting for 99.9 percent of its total revenue during that period, according to the organization's tax returns for 2015 through 2017. Schwartz said when asked that the money came from UnitedHealthcare, Aetna and Humana.

"You can ask any nonprofit organization about their funders and say, 'Do they tell you what to do? Does that dictate what you do?'" Schwartz said. "You pay attention to your funders, but you ought to be making your own decisions. We do."

She said BMA has 125 "allies" that include the insurance companies, local agencies that serve seniors, patient advocacy groups, and nurse and doctor associations that all back Medicare Advantage. They include the American Medical Group Association and Meals on Wheels America.

"Our job is to find the common ground," Schwartz said.

Medicare Advantage is a growing business for insurers. About 22 million Medicare beneficiaries, or close to 2 in 5, are expected to be covered by a Medicare Advantage plan next year. The private plans promise coordinated care and generally offer lower out-of-pocket costs. They limit choice of doctors and hospitals and employ other restrictions such as prior authorization for services.

UnitedHealthcare has 25 percent of the Medicare Advantage enrollees, Humana has 17 percent and Aetna has 8 percent, according to an analysis of government data by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Schwartz earned just over \$600,000 last year in base salary, bonus pay and other compensation, an increase of \$52,000 from 2016. The alliance's board of directors determined her salary following a compensation survey of comparable nonprofits, according to the tax returns, but she makes more than the top executives who run other Medicare-related organizations.

Max Richtman, president of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, earned

\$391,185 in 2017, according to the organization's latest tax return. The group advocates against cuts to retirement security programs.

James Firman, president of the National Council on the Aging, was paid \$343,558, according to the organization's tax return that covers the year between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017, the latest available. The council is a decades-old advocacy group.

Among the senior profiles on the Better Medicare Alliance's website is one of Kievit, a World War II veteran who died in March. There's a photo of him wearing his veteran's cap, along with a brief first-person article.

His family was startled to see his photo there, said his son, John Kievit, who lives near Houston.

"I'd like to see the article updated, at least," he said.

Follow Richard Lardner on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/rplardner>

Trump call with Turkish leader led to US pullout from Syria

By **MATTHEW LEE and SUSANNAH GEORGE, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw American troops from Syria was made hastily, without consulting his national security team or allies, and over strong objections from virtually everyone involved in the fight against the Islamic State group, according to U.S. and Turkish officials.

Trump stunned his Cabinet, lawmakers and much of the world with the move by rejecting the advice of his top aides and agreeing to a withdrawal in a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week, two U.S. officials and a Turkish official briefed on the matter told The Associated Press.

The Dec. 14 call, described by officials who were not authorized to discuss the decision-making process publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, provides insight into a consequential Trump decision that prompted the resignation of widely respected Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. It also set off a frantic, four-day scramble to convince the president either to reverse or delay the decision.

The White House rejected the description of the call from the officials but was not specific.

"In no uncertain terms, reporting throughout this story is not true," National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis said. "It is clear from the context that this false version of events is from sources who lack authority on the subject, possibly from unnamed sources in Turkey."

The State Department and Pentagon declined to comment on the account of the decision to withdraw the troops, which have been in Syria to fight the Islamic State since 2015.

Despite losing the physical caliphate, thousands of IS fighters remain in Iraq and Syria, and the group continues to carry out insurgent attacks and could easily move back into territory it once held if American forces withdraw.

The Dec. 14 call came a day after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu agreed to have the two presidents discuss Erdogan's threats to launch a military operation against U.S.-backed Kurdish rebels in northeast Syria, where American forces are based. The NSC then set up the call.

Pompeo, Mattis and other members of the national security team prepared a list of talking points for Trump to tell Erdogan to back off, the officials said.

But the officials said Trump, who had previously accepted such advice and convinced the Turkish leader not to attack the Kurds and put U.S. troops at risk, ignored the script. Instead, the president sided with Erdogan.

In the following days, Trump remained unmoved by those scrambling to convince him to reverse or at least delay the decision to give the military and Kurdish forces time to prepare for an orderly withdrawal.

"The talking points were very firm," said one of the officials, explaining that Trump was advised to clearly oppose a Turkish incursion into northern Syria and suggest the U.S. and Turkey work together to address security concerns. "Everybody said push back and try to offer (Turkey) something that's a small win, possibly holding territory on the border, something like that."

Erdogan, though, quickly put Trump on the defensive, reminding him that he had repeatedly said the

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only reason for U.S. troops to be in Syria was to defeat the Islamic State and that the group had been 99 percent defeated. "Why are you still there?" the second official said Erdogan asked Trump, telling him that the Turks could deal with the remaining IS militants.

With Erdogan on the line, Trump asked national security adviser John Bolton, who was listening in, why American troops remained in Syria if what the Turkish president was saying was true, according to the officials. Erdogan's point, Bolton was forced to admit, had been backed up by Mattis, Pompeo, U.S. special envoy for Syria Jim Jeffrey and special envoy for the anti-ISIS coalition Brett McGurk, who have said that IS retains only 1 percent of its territory, the officials said.

Bolton stressed, however, that the entire national security team agreed that victory over IS had to be enduring, which means more than taking away its territory.

Trump was not dissuaded, according to the officials, who said the president quickly capitulated by pledging to withdraw, shocking both Bolton and Erdogan.

Caught off guard, Erdogan cautioned Trump against a hasty withdrawal, according to one official. While Turkey has made incursions into Syria in the past, it does not have the necessary forces mobilized on the border to move in and hold the large swaths of northeastern Syria where U.S. troops are positioned, the official said.

The call ended with Trump repeating to Erdogan that the U.S. would pull out, but offering no specifics on how it would be done, the officials said.

Over the weekend, the national security team raced to come up with a plan that would reverse, delay or somehow limit effects of the withdrawal, the officials said.

On Monday, Bolton, Mattis and Pompeo met at the White House to try to plot a middle course. But they were told by outgoing chief of staff John Kelly and his soon-to-be successor Mick Mulvaney that Trump was determined to pull out and was not to be delayed or denied, according to the officials. The trio met again on Tuesday morning to try to salvage things, but were again rebuffed, the officials said.

The White House had wanted to announce the decision on Tuesday — and press secretary Sarah Sanders scheduled a rare briefing specifically to announce it. But the Pentagon convinced Trump to hold off because the withdrawal plans weren't complete and allies and Congress had not yet been notified, according to the officials. The first country aside from Turkey to be told of the impending pull-out was Israel, the officials said.

Word of the imminent withdrawal began to seep out early Wednesday after U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Joseph Votel started to inform his commanders on the ground and the Kurds of the decision.

Following the official announcement the White House emphasized that the U.S. will continue to support the fight against IS and remains ready to "re-engage" when needed. But in a tweet, the president said U.S. troops would no longer be fighting IS on behalf of others.

"Time to focus on our Country & bring our youth back home where they belong!"

Associated Press writer Suzan Fraser contributed from Ankara, Turkey.

Supreme Court rejects Trump plea to enforce asylum ban

By MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided Supreme Court won't let the Trump administration begin enforcing a ban on asylum for any immigrants who illegally cross the U.S.-Mexico border.

Chief Justice John Roberts joined his four more liberal colleagues Friday in ruling against the administration in the very case in which President Donald Trump had derided the "Obama judge" who first blocked the asylum policy.

New Justice Brett Kavanaugh and three other conservative justices sided with the administration.

There were no opinions explaining either side's votes.

The court's order leaves in place lower court rulings that blocked Trump's proclamation in November automatically denying asylum to people who enter the country from Mexico without going through official

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border crossings.

Trump said he was acting in response to caravans of migrants making their way to the border.

The administration had also complained that the nationwide order preventing the policy from taking effect was too broad. But the court also rejected the administration's suggestion for narrowing it.

Lee Gelernt, an American Civil Liberties Union leading the court challenge, said the high court's decision "will save lives and keep vulnerable families and children from persecution. We are pleased the court refused to allow the administration to short-circuit the usual appellate process."

The high court action followed a ruling Wednesday by U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar that kept the ban on hold pending the outcome of a lawsuit challenging it. The case could take months to resolve.

The ban conflicts with an immigration law that says immigrants can apply for asylum regardless of how they enter the U.S., Tigar said.

In the first court ruling on the issue, Tigar said on Nov. 19 that U.S. law allows immigrants to request asylum regardless of whether they entered the country legally.

The ruling prompted Trump's criticism of Tigar as an "Obama judge" and led to an unusual public dispute between Trump and Roberts, who rebuked the president with a statement defending the judiciary's independence.

Tigar was nominated for the federal bench by President Barack Obama.

Dives, buzzer-beaters and kicks: 2018's AP Plays of the Year

By TIM REYNOLDS, AP Sports Writer

This was a year of moments.

Justify won the Triple Crown. The U.S. beat Canada in a shootout for gold in women's hockey at the Pyeongchang Olympics, and John Shuster pulled off a curling shot of all-time to win another gold for the red, white and blue. Stefon Diggs engineered a miracle in Minneapolis to win a playoff game for the Vikings. Roger Federer won a point at the U.S. Open without getting the ball over the net. Tiger Woods walked down the 18th fairway as a winner again. Loyola Chicago became the darlings of college basketball during the NCAA Tournament, fueled by a penchant for dramatics at the buzzer.

All of them spectacular.

Still, none of them made the list of the Plays of the Year.

These come from some of the biggest events of the year — the Stanley Cup Final, the World Cup, the Super Bowl, the AL Championship Series and the women's Final Four. One was from a volleyball player using her feet, another was a quarterback who made a winning throw but didn't touch a football. And they all stood out a bit more than most.

Here are the best plays in sports for 2018:

10. Holtby saves the Caps

Washington goalie Braden Holtby might have turned the Stanley Cup Final around with one save. Alex Tuch had a chance to tie Game 2 of the series with about two minutes left in regulation. Alone in the slot, he took a pass and had tons of open net to shoot at from right on the doorstep — only to be denied by Holtby, who stabbed his stick at the air and just managed to find the puck. "Thank God he's our goalie," Caps star Alex Ovechkin said. The Capitals went on to win the series.

9. Harden breaks ankles

Poor Wesley Johnson. Poor, poor Wesley Johnson. All he was trying to do was guard Houston star James Harden, and he ended up on the ground as an unwitting participant in a highlight for the ages. Harden crossed Johnson over and caused him to stumble to the floor — it's called "breaking ankles" in basketball vernacular — and it only got worse from there for the Los Angeles Clippers guard. Harden stared at him, held the ball for nearly three seconds, then made a 3-pointer.

8. Messi, in a flash

Argentina's Lionel Messi, even in a full sprint, simply does things that hardly anyone else in the soccer-

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playing world can pull off. He took a long pass in a World Cup game against Nigeria, controlled it with his left thigh, then tapped it forward with his left foot — the ball hadn't hit the ground yet — then stutter-stepped his way to the ball and delivered a right-footed strike into the far side of the net.

7. Bump, kick, spike

The pass from Kailey Elrod wasn't perfect, and all Talia Watson could do was get her foot on the ball and flick it skyward. By the way, this wasn't soccer. This was volleyball. The Cedar Crest College Falcons of Allentown, Pennsylvania, had match point against the College of Staten Island on Sept. 6, and Elrod's bump from the baseline was low. Watson got her foot on the ball — yes, it's legal — to extend the point, and eventually she had a more conventional set to set up a kill that capped Cedar Crest's 3-0 victory.

6. Sling and a prayer

Julian McGarvey is a quarterback at Marist College, and his best throw of 2018 had nothing to do with football. Down by two with time running out in New York state's Section 1 Class A boys basketball championship game, McGarvey intercepted a long pass, stumbled, gathered himself — some angles show that he didn't travel, either — and heaved a 70-foot desperation try that dropped to give Ardsley a 52-51 win over Tappan Zee. Ardsley went on to make the state championship game, before eventually falling.

5. LeBron saves the day

Jimmy Butler tried a layup with about three seconds left in overtime, only to have it swatted away by LeBron James who tracked the play perfectly and rejected Butler's shot with ease. And moments later, James outdid himself — again. After a timeout, James delivered Cleveland a win over Minnesota when he took an inbounds pass, turned and swished a fadeaway over Butler to help the Cavs top the Timberwolves 140-138.

4. Tua for the win

This has to be the best second-and-26 play in football history. Down by 3 in overtime, in the national championship game, one play after taking a very bad sack for a 16-yard loss, Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa connected with DeVonta Smith on a 41-yard toss on what became the final play of the Crimson Tide's 26-23 win over Georgia. Tagovailoa took over for Jalen Hurts at the half and threw for three TDs as Alabama finished off its fifth national championship in the last 10 seasons.

3. Patriots posterized — twice

The two most memorable plays of 2018 in the NFL have much in common — they were touchdowns against the New England Patriots, went viral immediately and got cool names to boot. The Philly Special was Nick Foles catching a touchdown pass from Trey Burton late in the first half of the Philadelphia Eagles' win in the Super Bowl over the Pats, and the Miami Miracle was the Dolphins connecting on a pass and two laterals before Kenyan Drake darted into the end zone to cap a 69-yard touchdown that beat New England 34-33 on the final play.

2. Arike's two miracles

Saying Notre Dame's Arike Ogunbowale had a flair for the dramatic at the women's Final Four doesn't even come close to doing what she did justice. She broke ties, and broke the hearts of Connecticut and Mississippi State. Against UConn, Ogunbowale's jumper with 1 second left put Notre Dame ahead to stay in the national semifinals — and two nights later, in the national-title game, she went to the right and let fly with a wild, high-arcing 3 that dropped at the buzzer for the win.

1. A dive into Red Sox lore

Andrew Benintendi may never make a better catch. The left fielder for the Boston Red Sox made a diving grab to end Game 4 of the AL Championship Series, a huge play on his team's run to the World Series title. Boston led 8-6 in Game 4, up 2-1 in the series, but the bases were loaded in Houston and the crowd at Minute Maid Park was roaring. Alex Bregman hit a liner that was sinking fast, and if it had gotten past Benintendi the Astros would have likely scored three runs to win. But Benintendi dove perfectly, snared the ball just above the grass and the rest is now Red Sox lore — as well as the play of the year.

Netflix named The Associated Press' Entertainer of the Year

By MARK KENNEDY, AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After a year like this, Netflix shows no signs of chilling.

The dominant online video streamer started 2018 with almost 118 million subscribers, went on to win its first feature-film Oscar, briefly surpassed Disney as the most valuable U.S. media company, lured the likes of superstar show runners Shonda Rhimes, Kenya Barris and Ryan Murphy — not to mention Barack and Michelle Obama — and is expected to end the year with 146 million subscribers and a likely best picture Oscar nominee in "Roma."

In a sign of how influential the giant streamer has become, it also got what every celebrity gets — a gentle mocking on "Saturday Night Live." The sketch comedy show's season-ending episode this month aired a fake ad highlighting Netflix's enormous effort to produce as much content as possible.

"Our goal is the endless scroll. By the time you reach the bottom of our menu, there's new shows at the top," explained the voice over.

For a dominating 12 months, Netflix has been named The Associated Press Entertainer of the Year, voted by members of the news cooperative.

"There's been so much amazing entertainment this year, and we're proud of the part we've played and humbled by this recognition from the AP," Ted Sarandos, Netflix's chief content officer, said Thursday after being told of the honor.

"We are thrilled to be working with the best creators who have helped us to entertain the world with shows, films and specials from Hollywood, Mumbai, Madrid, Seoul, Berlin and everywhere in between."

Netflix topped other candidates including Donald Glover, Ariana Grande, Bradley Cooper and Michelle Obama, among others. Previous AP Entertainer of the Year winners have included Lin-Manuel Miranda, Adele, Taylor Swift, Jennifer Lawrence, Lady Gaga, Tina Fey and Betty White.

Though Netflix doesn't release ratings, 2018 was a year when it seemed to really flex its digital muscles, showing off its deep reservoir of titles, from original unscripted shows to those produced in other countries, to even becoming a home for shows canceled elsewhere.

The company that once concentrated on sending DVDs through the mail in little red envelopes scored its first feature-film Oscar in March, with a best documentary trophy going to "Icarus," Bryan Fogel's investigation into doping in sports. (Netflix won its first ever Oscar last year with the short doc "The White Helmets.")

Netflix movies, specials and shows were all over popular culture this year, including "The Kissing Booth," "Nanette," "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," "The Kominsky Method," "The Haunting of Hill House," "GLOW," "Lost in Space," "The Great British Baking Show," "Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat" and "Queer Eye." "House of Cards" — Netflix's first original series — debuted just six years ago.

It has backed such Oscar bait as "Roma" and "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" and TV fans await more episodes from "Stranger Things," "The Crown" "Orange Is The New Black" and "Ozark." The company has even seen the phrase "Netflix and chill" part of the mainstream vocabulary.

In May, Netflix's market capitalization — or the total value of its stock — shot higher than the capitalization for mighty Disney, previously the most valuable media company in the world. The Champagne-popping moment didn't last very long but it was a sign of how a maverick company could disrupt the order.

Netflix then knocked HBO off its longtime perch — 18 years — as the most nominated Emmy Award platform, eventually earning 112 nods. The streaming behemoth would go on to tie the premium cable network with 23 wins at the Emmy Awards. Netflix also dominated the television categories at the Screen Actors Guild Awards with 15 total nods, nearly double any other network.

Top filmmaking talent like Martin Scorsese, the Coen brothers and Michael Bay are working for Netflix, and the streaming giant convinced Charlie Brooker to bring his "Black Mirror" to its platform. It hired Channing Dungey from ABC Entertainment and Kira Goldberg from 21st Century Fox. It has promised to spend more than \$8 billion on content this year alone.

In 2019, Netflix will likely face stiffer challenges from the likes of Amazon, Hulu, Apple, WarnerMedia

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and Disney, as well as needing to handle its long-term debt. But Netflix is looking for more subscribers in India and South America and the company's market value is over \$100 billion.

"At Netflix, we're always working to give our members great choice and a better entertainment experience, and we're excited about what's in store for 2019," Sarandos said.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

For more on the biggest moments of 2018, visit: <https://apnews.com/2018-TheYearinReview>

Trump signs sweeping criminal justice bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a government shutdown just hours away, President Donald Trump on Friday signed rare bipartisan legislation addressing concerns with the criminal justice system.

Trump called the bill "an incredible success for our country" and "beyond bipartisan" during an Oval Office signing ceremony.

Lawmakers and advocates also hailed it as a hugely influential package and thanked the president for supporting the issue.

The legislation will give judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders and will boost prisoner rehabilitation efforts, among other efforts.

It received the rare support of both Democratic and Republican lawmakers as well as conservative and liberal groups that rarely work together.

Playing a key role behind the scenes was Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner, whose father spent time in federal prison when he was younger.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Dec. 22, the 356th day of 2018. There are nine days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 22, 2001, Richard C. Reid, a passenger on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami, tried to ignite explosives in his shoes, but was subdued by flight attendants and fellow passengers. (Reid is serving a life sentence in federal prison.)

On this date:

In 1894, French army officer Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of treason in a court-martial that triggered worldwide charges of anti-Semitism. (Dreyfus was eventually vindicated.)

In 1917, Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, who later became the first naturalized U.S. citizen to be canonized, died in Chicago at age 67.

In 1937, the first, center tube of the Lincoln Tunnel connecting New York City and New Jersey beneath the Hudson River was opened to traffic. (The second tube opened in 1945, the third in 1957.)

In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, U.S. Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe rejected a German demand for surrender, writing "Nuts!" in his official reply.

In 1968, Julie Nixon married David Eisenhower in a private ceremony in New York.

In 1977, three dozen people were killed when a 250-foot-high grain elevator at the Continental Grain Company plant in Westwego, Louisiana, exploded.

In 1984, New York City resident Bernhard Goetz shot and wounded four youths on a Manhattan subway, claiming they were about to rob him.

In 1989, Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo), the last of Eastern Europe's hard-line Communist rulers, was toppled from power in a popular uprising. Playwright Samuel Beckett died in Paris at age 83.

In 1991, the body of Marine Lt. Col. William R. Higgins, an American hostage slain by his terrorist cap-

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tors, was recovered after it had been dumped along a highway in Lebanon.

In 1992, a Libyan Boeing 727 jetliner crashed after a midair collision with a MiG fighter, killing all 157 aboard the jetliner, and both crew members of the fighter jet.

In 2001, Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAHR'-zeyeh) was sworn in as prime minister of Afghanistan's interim government.

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a law allowing gays for the first time in history to serve openly in America's military, repealing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Ten years ago: Five Muslim immigrants accused of scheming to massacre U.S. soldiers at Fort Dix were convicted of conspiracy in Camden, N.J. (Four were later sentenced to life in prison; one received a 33-year sentence.) Toyota projected its first operating loss in 70 years due to the global economic slowdown. The president of Guinea, Lansana Conte, died nearly a quarter of a century after seizing power in a coup; he was believed to be in his 70s.

Five years ago: Mikhail Khodorkovsky (mih-hah-EEL' khoh-dohr-KAHV'-skee), the Russian oligarch who'd crossed President Vladimir Putin and ended up in jail for 10 years, told a press conference in Berlin that he planned to devote his life to securing the release of the country's political prisoners. President Barack Obama and the vacationing first family temporarily skipped the beach in Hawaii to attend the Oregon State-Akron game at the Diamond Head Classic tournament in Honolulu. (Oregon State, coached by first lady Michelle Obama's brother, Craig Robinson, lost to Akron, 83-71.)

One year ago: The wildfire that had burned its way through communities and wilderness northwest of Los Angeles became the largest blaze ever officially recorded in California; it had scorched 273,400 acres and destroyed more than 700 homes. iPhone owners from several states sued Apple for not disclosing sooner that it issued software updates deliberately slowing older-model phones so aging batteries would last longer. President Donald Trump signed the \$1.5 trillion tax overhaul into law. The U.N. Security Council unanimously approved tough new sanctions against North Korea in response to its latest launch of a ballistic missile that Pyongyang said was capable of reaching anywhere on the U.S. mainland.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Hector Elizondo is 82. Country singer Red Steagall is 80. Former World Bank Group President Paul Wolfowitz is 75. Baseball Hall of Famer Steve Carlton is 74. Former ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer is 73. Rock singer-musician Rick Nielsen (Cheap Trick) is 70. Rock singer-musician Michael Bacon is 70. Baseball All-Star Steve Garvey is 70. Golfer Jan Stephenson is 67. Actress BernNadette Stanis is 65. Rapper Luther "Luke" Campbell is 58. Country singer-musician Chuck Mead is 58. Actor Ralph Fiennes (rayf fynz) is 56. Actress Lauralee Bell is 50. Country singer Lori McKenna is 50. Actress Dina Meyer is 50. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, is 48. Actress Heather Donahue is 45. Actor Chris Carmack is 38. Actor Harry Ford is 36. Actor Greg Finley is 34. Actor Logan Huffman is 29. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jordin Sparks is 29. Pop singer Meghan Trainor is 25.

Thought for Today: "My mistakes are my life." — Samuel Beckett (1906-1989).