



**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!!

Snow storm is coming!

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



Put our experienced team to work for you!

GROTON
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GROTONFORD.COM 605-397-2311

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)

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Hunter Schaller Update

** Cheyenne Joyce Schaller sent a Christmas suit in the mail, and of course Hunter just had to put it on! Hunter had ate almost a full meal, but was ready for a nap! **

As Pastor Grams came to give a prayer last night, he talked about the scripture that was for today. The scripture telling of how Mary was so scared when God told her of Baby Jesus, and all that was to become. Jesus, our Savior, one true King. And although Mary was scared, she never once doubted God. She never lost trust or faith in the unknown. Reassured that God had a plan, a reason. Something so much greater than we could all imagine.

And frankly once again, this scripture reading and reason for the season, fit true.

Hunter continues to make steps towards improvements. Hunter is still not fully conscious, but does respond to some commands and likes to say a few little words that I won't repeat on here☐ He continues to make strides with therapy which is a no brainer. We all know those soccer legs are strong. Hunter still has a tube for feeding, but has been eating regular foods more than one meal a day instead of the feedings! We're excited! With still being not fully conscious, we do see agitated states.

Just as the scripture, we/doctors are all unsure of when Hunter will become fully conscious. But like Mary, we will do our best to keep the faith in God, because there are far greater plans in our near future and continuous days. It is "tis the season, for Christmas miracles" right?

Although we have had a thanksgiving miracle and continue to be blessed with miracles everyday with Hunter!

Keeping our sight on the real gift that was given to us this season so long ago, but a gift that continues to bless us every single day. Happy Birthday Jesus!

Wherever the holiday sends you, We hope your travels are safe and the destination is warm, full of faith, and family. Merry Christmas everyone! God bless!

WINTER STORM WARNING

Issue Date: 2:26 AM Wed, Dec 26, 2018

Expiration: 6:00 AM Fri, Dec 28, 2018

...WINTER STORM WARNING NOW IN EFFECT FROM 9 AM THIS MORNING TO 6 AM CST FRIDAY...

* WHAT...Heavy snow expected. Total snow accumulations of 12 to 16 inches expected. Winds gusting as high as 45 mph on Thursday. Blizzard conditions possible Thursday and Thursday night.

* WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota.

* WHEN...From 9 AM this morning to 6 AM CST Friday.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Travel could be very difficult to impossible. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.

A Winter Storm Warning means significant amounts of snow, sleet and ice will make travel very hazardous or impossible.

The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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Today in Weather History

December 26, 1988: Moderate to heavy snow fell across western and northern South Dakota, as well as across most of Minnesota, from the evening of the 25th through the morning of the 27th. Much of the northern one-half to two-thirds of Minnesota and the western and northern sections of South Dakota were blanketed with 6-12 inches of new snow. Numerous accidents and minor injuries were indirectly related to the snowy conditions. Several snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches at Timber Lake; 10 to 12 inches at Seneca and Hoven; 11 inches at Aberdeen; 8 inches at Pierre, Eureka and Blunt; 7 inches at Chelsea, Redfield, Cottonwood, and Rapid City; and 6 inches at Ferney, Huron, and Eden. In Minnesota, 8 inches fell in Browns Valley, 6 inches fell at Wheaton, and 5 inches accumulated at Artichoke Lake.

December 26, 1776: George Washington crossed the ice-clogged Delaware River. He marched on Trenton in the midst of snow and sleet thus surprising and captured many of the British garrisons.

December 26, 2004: A magnitude 9.1 earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia generated a tsunami that caused tremendous devastation throughout the Indian Ocean. The quake, which is the third largest in the world since 1900, caused severe damage and casualties in northern Sumatra, Indonesia, and in the Nicobar Islands, India. The tsunami that followed killed more people than any other tsunami in recorded history, with 227,898 dead or missing. The total estimated material losses in the Indian Ocean region were \$10 billion, and insured losses were \$2 billion.

1947 - New York City received a record 26.4 inches of snow in 24 hours, with as much as 32 inches reported in the suburbs. The heavy snow brought traffic to a standstill, and snow removal cost eight million dollars. Thirty thousand persons were called upon to remove the 100 million tons of snow. The storm claimed 27 lives. (26th-27th) (David Ludlum)

1983 - Miami, FL, established a December record with a morning low of 33 degrees. Just three days earlier, and again three days later, record warm temperatures were reported in Florida, with daytime highs in the 80s. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Freezing rain plagued parts of the south central U.S., from northwest Texas to southwestern Missouri. Southwestern Missouri was turned into a huge skating rink as roads became sheets of ice. Damage to tree limbs and power lines compared to a hundred tornadoes, and half of the city of Springfield was left without electricity for 24 hours. Snow, sleet and ice covered the northwest two thirds of Oklahoma. 75,000 homes were left without electricity as ice accumulated one to two inches in a 40-mile band from Duncan to Norman to Tulsa to Miami. 25,000 of those homes were still without power a week later. The storm claimed the lives of seven persons. (24th-27th) (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure produced heavy snow from North Dakota to western sections of the Great Lakes Region, with up to fourteen inches reported in the Chicago area. Cold arctic air hovered over the Plateau Region. Temperatures in the Big Smokey Valley of Nevada plunged to 31 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

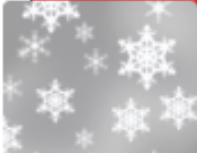




1989 - Strong northerly winds behind an arctic cold front produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region and dangerous wind chill temperatures in the northeastern U.S. Wind chill readings as cold as 40 degrees below zero were reported in New York State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major snow storm in Utah caused several fatalities due to avalanches. As much as 2 ft of snow fell in parts of the state, particularly south of Salt Lake City. Three people that were seen snowboarding in the Aspen Grove recreational area have been presumed dead, all others managed to escape or be rescued (Reuters).

Broton Daily Independent

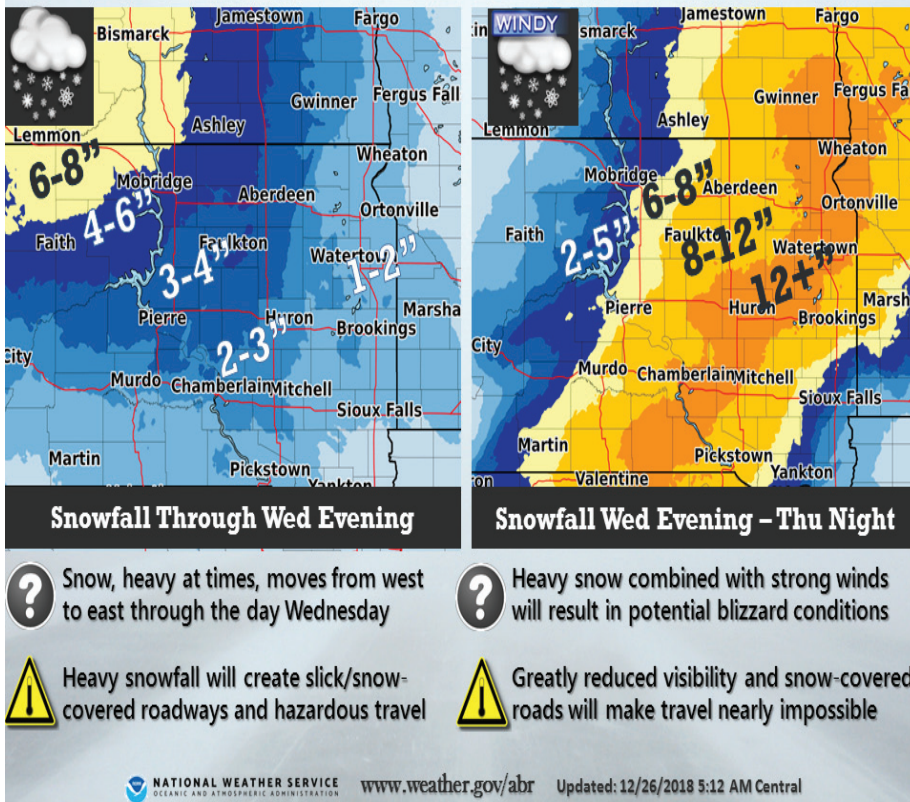
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Winter Storm Warning

Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
70% → 100%	100% 90%	100% 90%	80% → 30%	
Snow Likely then Heavy Snow	Snow then Wintry Mix	Wintry Mix and Patchy Blowing Snow	Snow and Areas Blowing Snow	Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery
High: 24 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 4 °F	High: 6 °F

Major Winter Storm Wed - Fri AM

Expect significant travel impacts



Published on: 12/26/2018 at 5:17AM

A Major Winter Storm will begin impacting the area today, but the heaviest snow and strongest winds from this system will arrive on Thursday. Blizzard conditions are possible on Thursday as greatly reduced visibilities are expected from a combination of falling and blowing snow. Hazardous travel conditions are expected to linger into Friday.

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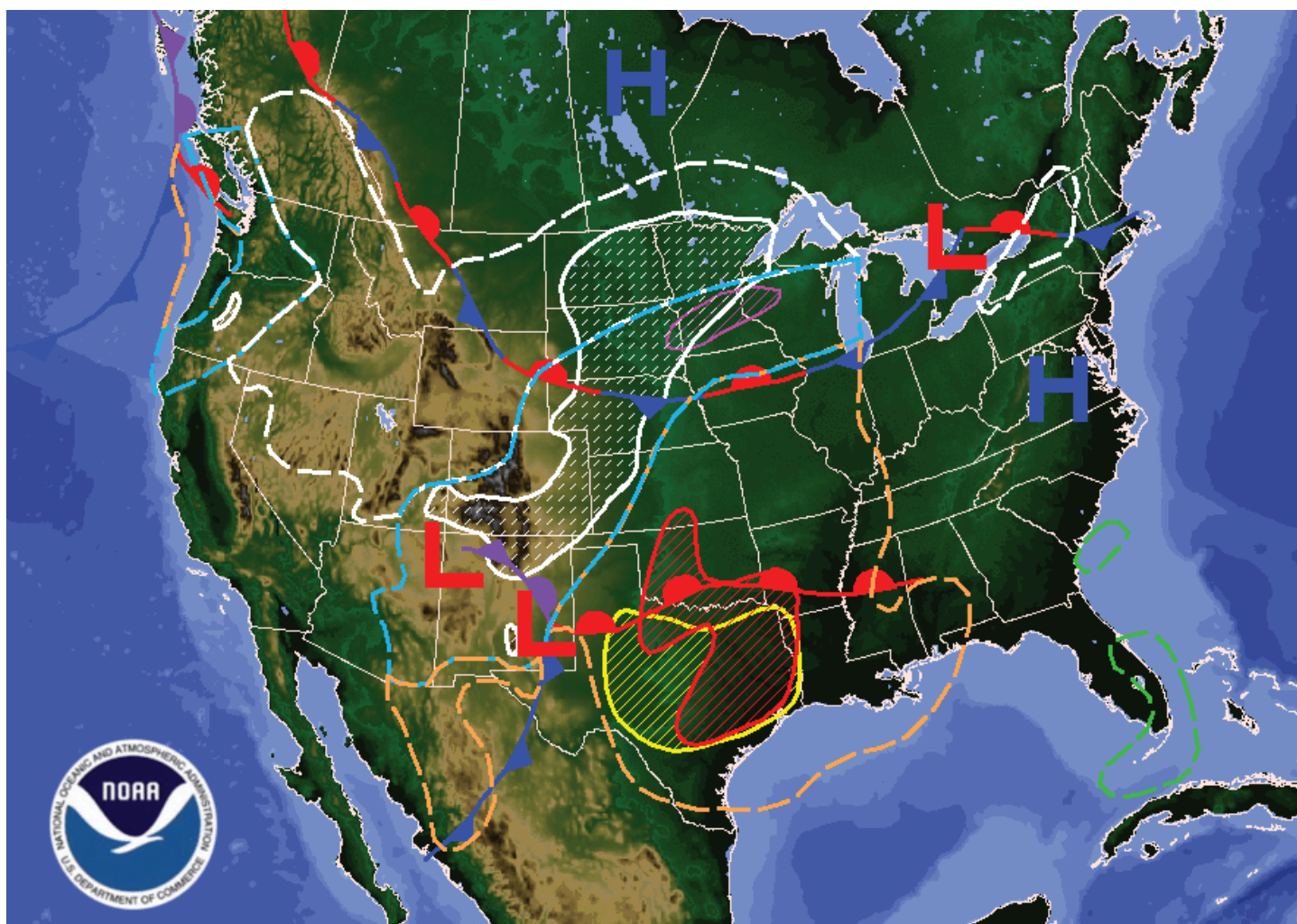
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 22 °F at 5:18 AM
Low Outside Temp: 15 °F at 10:27 PM
High Gust: 17 mph at 7:43 AM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 53° in 2011
Record Low: -29° in 1990
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 3°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.41
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.61
Precip Year to Date: 15.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:56 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Wed, Dec 26, 2018, issued 5:00 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain
Rain and T'Storms
Rain and Snow
Snow

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



WHY MOTHERS MATTER

One of the most beautiful passages in Scripture is found in Lukes Gospel. It is called The Magnificat. We have Mary proclaiming, My soul magnifies the Lord. The word soul is a special word and in Hebrew is used to reveal or describe a persons entire identity. It is the very essence or being or character of a person. In this one word, Mary reveals that all of her is committed to the Lord. The sum and substance of her life was to worship God in all of His Majesty!

If we want to study the smallest particle of Gods creation we put it under a microscope to magnify it. This enlarges, or expands, every detail of the particle so we can discover its intricacies, its subtleties and its structure. Mary was determined to put God under her microscope so she could understand Him personally, intimately and completely.

In her song she magnified her Lord not her Son. Often we become overly concerned about the way our children look rather than what they look at. Not so Mary. She recognized her responsibility as a mother and knew that if God were first in her life, He would be first in her childs life. She had her priorities right.

God entrusted Mary with the Messiah because He was at the center of her life and knew that her Son would be nurtured in what matters most in the life of a child: knowing, understanding and following His will.

Prayer: We ask, Lord, that all mothers everywhere will recognize the importance of being a mother and the trust You place in them to raise children to know You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Luke 1:46-55 My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

02-08-42-43-50, Mega Ball: 6, Megaplier: 3

(two, eight, forty-two, forty-three, fifty; Mega Ball: six; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$321 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$294 million

1 dead after small airplane crashes in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A single-engine airplane has crashed into a Sioux Falls, South Dakota, neighborhood, leaving at least one person dead and four homes evacuated.

The Argus Leader reports officials believe the person who died in Tuesday evening's crash was an occupant of the aircraft.

Sioux Falls Emergency Manager Regan Smith says officials got reports of exterior damage to one home. Smith says officials plan to continue working into the night.

The exact number of people in the plane and homes wasn't immediately clear. Grace Chinn, who lives near an affected home, says the crash "shook our whole house."

Smith says a fire at the scene was extinguished within minutes.

Winter storm expected to bring snow, poor travel conditions

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A large winter storm coming on the heels of Christmas is expected to bring snow to Nebraska, the Dakotas and Minnesota this week.

Andrew Kalin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, said Tuesday that the storm was set to start overnight in the western Dakotas and continue Wednesday into Minnesota. Kalin said the storm could deliver more than 8 inches of snow to some locations.

Kalin said southeastern South Dakota and southern Minnesota were expected to see rain or a wintry mix for the first half of the storm. A National Weather Service report issued Tuesday warned that significantly reduced visibility from snow and blowing snow should be expected, particularly on Thursday and Friday.

Kalin said poor travel conditions are expected, and people should monitor the forecast and adjust their travel plans as needed. He said that even after the snowfall stops, areas that receive significant amounts will experience blowing and drifting snow.

He added that the weather service recommends that people who must travel have emergency kits in their vehicles and follow winter-driving rules.

Sioux Falls sales tax collections exceeding expectations

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sales tax revenues in Sioux Falls are coming in higher than city officials anticipated for 2018, potentially helped by online sales tax collections.

Former Mayor Mike Huether and city councilors projected sales tax growth of 1 percent when they set this year's budget in late 2017, the Argus Leader reported. But Mayor Paul TenHaken's finance director, Shawn Pritchett, said the city is likely to close the year with a sales tax growth rate above 4 percent.

Collections jumped 9 percent in November compared to that month in 2017. Pritchett credited some of November's boost to online sales tax collections that started this fall.

"We'll be watching and tracking that very closely," he said.

It was ultimately South Dakota's case that led to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June to overturn two decades-old high court decisions that made it tougher for states to collect sales taxes for certain purchases online. The state began collections Nov. 1.

Some retailers had been voluntarily remitting the taxes. The state's sales tax obligation applies to sellers outside the state who do more than \$100,000 of business in South Dakota or more than 200 transactions annually with state residents under a law passed in 2016.

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

Searchers look for missing South Dakota snowmobilers

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — Searchers are looking for four snowmobile riders from South Dakota missing in Wyoming's Snow Range Mountains.

The search for the men resumed Tuesday in the mountains west of Laramie. Albany County Sheriff's Department spokesman Jeff Beeston says they were last seen Saturday afternoon.

Beeston says overcast skies and intermittent snow is limiting the searchers' visibility but the teams still hope to be able to use aircraft to help them look for the snowmobilers.

The sheriff's department was notified that they were missing Sunday evening after they failed to check out of their lodge in Albany as planned.

Snowmobile teams also looked for the men Monday. The sheriff's department says the search area is very large because it's not known exactly where the men planned to go.

Medical checks ordered after 2nd child migrant death

By NOMAAN MERCHANT, Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — U.S. Customs and Border Protection have ordered medical checks on every child in its custody Tuesday after an 8-year-old boy from Guatemala died, marking the second death of an immigrant child in the agency's care this month.

The death came during an ongoing dispute over border security and with a partial government shutdown underway over President Donald Trump's request for border wall funding.

The boy, identified by Guatemalan authorities as Felipe Gómez Alonzo, had been in CBP's custody with his father, Agustin Gomez, since Dec. 18. CBP said in a statement late Tuesday that an agent first noticed the boy had a cough and "glossy eyes" at about 9 a.m. Monday. He was eventually hospitalized twice and died just before midnight, the agency said.

CBP said in the statement it needs the help of other government agencies to provide health care. The agency "is considering options for surge medical assistance" from the Coast Guard and may request help from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

A CBP spokesman could not immediately answer how many children are currently in the agency's custody. But with border crossings surging, CBP processes thousands of children — both alone and with their parents — every month.

Immigration advocates and human rights groups sharply criticized CBP in the wake of Felipe's death. The body of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal, who died earlier this month, was returned this past week to her village in Guatemala for burial.

Margaret Huang, executive director of Amnesty International USA, said the Trump administration's "policies of cruelty toward migrants and asylum-seekers at the border must cease immediately before any more children are harmed."

The White House referred questions about the latest case to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,

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CBP's parent agency. CBP officers and the Border Patrol remain on the job despite the shutdown.

CBP Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said in a statement that the child's death was a "tragic loss." The agency said it has notified the DHS inspector general.

CBP issued a timeline of what it said happened before Felipe's death.

Felipe was taken with his father to a hospital in Alamogordo, New Mexico, where he was diagnosed with a common cold, according to the timeline.

The boy was released just before 3 p.m., about 90 minutes after he had been found to have a fever of 103 degrees Fahrenheit (39.4 Celsius), CBP said. He was prescribed amoxicillin and ibuprofen, and taken with his father to a holding facility at a highway checkpoint.

At about 7 p.m., agents helped clean up the boy's vomit. CBP said the father "declined further medical assistance" then.

But at about 10 p.m., the boy "appeared lethargic and nauseous again," the agency said, and agents decided to have him taken to the hospital. The boy died at 11:48 p.m. Monday, the agency said.

The hospital, the Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center, declined to comment, citing privacy regulations.

Felipe and his father were detained by CBP for about a week, an unusually long time that the agency did not fully explain Tuesday.

CBP typically detains immigrants for no more than a few days when they cross the border before either releasing them or turning them over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for longer-term detention.

Agency guidelines say immigrants generally shouldn't be detained for more than 72 hours in CBP holding facilities, which are usually smaller and have fewer services than ICE detention centers.

CBP said it apprehended Felipe and his father on Dec. 18 about 3 miles away from an official port of entry, the Paso del Norte bridge connecting El Paso and Juarez, Mexico. They were held at a processing center for almost two days, then taken to the El Paso Border Patrol station on Thursday.

CBP said it moved them to Alamogordo at about 1 a.m. Sunday "because of capacity levels at the El Paso station." Alamogordo is about 90 miles (145 kilometers) from El Paso.

The agency didn't say why it held Felipe and his father for so long, but said its officers repeatedly conducted welfare checks on them.

Oscar Padilla, the Guatemalan consul in Phoenix, said he was told by the boy's father in a telephone interview that the two had been traveling from their home in Nentón, a village about 280 miles (450 kilometers) from Guatemala City. They were planning to go to Johnson City, Tennessee.

CBP promised "an independent and thorough review of the circumstances," and the Guatemalan foreign ministry called for an investigation "in accordance with due process."

Democratic members of Congress and immigration advocates sharply criticized CBP's handling of Jakelin Caal's death and questioned whether border agents could have prevented it by spotting symptoms of distress or calling for an evacuation by air ambulance sooner.

CBP has said that it took several hours to transport Jakelin and her father from a remote Border Patrol facility to a larger station, where her temperature was measured at 105.7 degrees Fahrenheit (40.9 degrees Celsius). Emergency medical technicians had to revive her twice. She was ultimately flown to an El Paso hospital, where she died the next day.

Xochitl Torres Small, a Democrat who will represent the district starting in January, called for a thorough and transparent investigation into the children's deaths and more medical resources along the border.

"This is inexcusable," Torres Small said in a statement Tuesday. "Instead of immediately acting to keep children and all of us safe along our border, this administration forced a government shutdown over a wall."

Associated Press writers Mary Hudetz in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Sonia Perez D. in Guatemala City; and Mark Stevenson in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Indonesia says avoid coast near volcano, fearing new tsunami

By NINIEK KARMINI, Associated Press

CARITA BEACH, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed at least 430 people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami.

The big waves that followed an eruption on a volcanic island hit communities along the Sunda Strait on Saturday night. The eruption of Anak Krakatau, or "Child of Krakatoa," is believed to have set off a large landslide on the volcano, apparently on its slope and underwater, displacing water that slammed into Java and Sumatra islands.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Geophysics and Climatology Agency asked people late Tuesday to stay at least 500 meters (1,640 feet) and up to 1 kilometer (less than a mile) from the coastline along the strait, which lies between the two islands.

The agency was monitoring Anak Krakatau's eruptions as stormy weather and high surf continued to plague the area, said agency head Dwikorita Karnawati.

"All these conditions could potentially cause landslides at the cliffs of the crater into the sea, and we fear that that could trigger a tsunami," Karnawati said at a news conference. She asked that communities remain vigilant and not to panic.

The warning was reiterated by the country's disaster agency on Wednesday.

The tsunami struck without warning, taking people by surprise even in a country familiar with seismic disaster. No big earthquake shook the ground beforehand, and it hit at night on a holiday weekend while people were enjoying concerts and other beach and resort activities.

It was a sharp contrast to the disaster that struck 14 years ago off the northwestern tip of Sumatra island. An enormous magnitude 9.1 earthquake rocked the area the morning after Christmas, creating gigantic waves that surged far inland and swallowed everything in their path. The wall of water killed some 230,000 people in a dozen countries, more than half in Indonesia's Aceh province.

The devastation was vast, and the disaster was among the worst in recent history. Saturday's event, coupled with an earthquake and tsunami in September on Indonesia's Sulawesi island that killed at least 2,100 people, triggered flashbacks for some who survived the 2004 tragedy.

"When it happens, I always remember what we have been through," said Qurnaty, 54, who lost her home and several family members to the 2004 waves in the hard-hit provincial capital of Banda Aceh.

Qurnaty, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, prayed with surviving family members at a mass grave there on Wednesday's anniversary. "Every time I see them (on TV), I feel really, really sad. All we can do from here is to pray for them," she said.

Though recovery was slow, some victims of the latest tsunami said they remember the resilience of the Acehnese people, which gives them hope that they too can rebuild their homes and their lives.

"I am scared. I am traumatized by the tsunami that I only knew before from the news," said Kusmiati, who also uses one name. "Now I know how horrifying a tsunami is."

Her face was still bruised and her legs swollen after she and her husband managed to survive being hit and dragged under by the waves after fleeing a beach villa in Carita, where they were working.

Beaches were largely empty in the area, which is typically crammed with tourists, and police patrolled on motorbikes, warning people to stay away from the coast. Some residents defied the order, returning to what was left of their homes to begin cleaning up as heavy rain fell and waves pounded the shore.

"I am still afraid that the tsunami will return, so when dark comes, I stay at a temporary shelter on the hill," said Rohayati, who worked to salvage what was left of her battered house, 300 meters (985 feet) from the sea. "I hope the government can provide a tsunami warning, like a siren, for people living in coastal areas so we can be alerted of a potential tsunami and have time to save ourselves."

The country's system of tsunami detection buoys — deployed after the 2004 disaster — has not worked since 2012, with some units being stolen or vandalized.

Karnawati, of the meteorology agency, said that because the tsunami was caused by volcanic activity, it would not have been picked up by the system's seafloor sensors, which monitor movement from con-

ventional earthquakes responsible for most of Indonesia's tsunamis.

Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman for Indonesia's Disaster Mitigation Agency, said Wednesday that the volcanic activity is believed to have triggered an underwater landslide and that a large chunk of Anak Krakatau's southwest slope collapsed. This movement displaced a large volume of water, creating waves that raced toward the shore.

Residents of Sumur village, which has been slow to receive aid due to roads being cut off, remained stunned by how quickly the tsunami hit. The beach, located just a few kilometers (miles) from the tourist island of Umang near Java's western tip, is popular for snorkeling and other water activities. The tsunami decimated the area, ripping houses from their foundations and bulldozing concrete buildings.

Scientists have said the waves were recorded in several places at about 1 meter (3.3 feet) high, but Sumur residents insisted they towered more than 3 meters (10 feet), possibly as high as 5 meters (16 feet), which Sutopo also confirmed in some areas.

More than 21,000 people have been displaced from their homes and heavy equipment is urgently needed in the Sumur subdistrict near Ujung Kulon National Park to help get aid flowing and reach people who may be injured or trapped, said Nugroho.

He said the death toll was 430, with more than 1,400 people injured and at least 159 missing.

Anak Krakatau formed in the early 20th century near the site of the cataclysmic 1883 eruption of Krakatoa, which killed more than 30,000 people. It has been erupting since June and did so again 24 minutes before the tsunami, according to the geophysics agency.

Associated Press writers Margie Mason and Ali Kotarumalos in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this report.

Japan to resume commercial whaling, but not in Antarctic

By MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan announced Wednesday that it is leaving the International Whaling Commission to resume commercial hunts for the animals for the first time in 30 years, but said it would no longer go to the Antarctic for its much-criticized annual killings.

Japan switched to what it calls research whaling after the IWC imposed a moratorium on commercial whaling in the 1980s, and now says stocks have recovered enough to resume commercial hunts.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said Japan would resume commercial whaling in July "in line with Japan's basic policy of promoting sustainable use of aquatic living resources based on scientific evidence."

He added that Japan is disappointed that the IWC — which he said is dominated by conservationists — focuses on the protection of whale stocks even though the commission has a treaty mandate for both whale conservation and the development of the whaling industry.

"Regrettably, we have reached a decision that it is impossible in the IWC to seek the coexistence of states with different views," he said at a news conference.

Suga said the commercial hunts would be limited to Japan's territorial waters and its 200-mile (323-kilometer) exclusive economic zone along its coasts. He said Japan would stop its annual whaling expeditions to the Antarctic and northwest Pacific oceans. Non-signatory states are not allowed to do so, according to Japanese Fisheries Agency officials.

The IWC imposed the moratorium on commercial whaling three decades ago due to a dwindling whale population. In 1987, Japan switched to what is called research whaling, but the program has been criticized as a cover for commercial hunting since the meat is sold on the market at home.

Japanese officials said Japan, even after leaving the whaling convention, will remain as an observer to the IWC and plans to continue participating in the group's scientific meetings and annual conferences.

The environmental group Greenpeace condemned Wednesday's announcement and disputed Japan's view that whale stocks have recovered, and noted that ocean life is being threatened by pollution as well as overfishing.

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"The declaration today is out of step with the international community, let alone the protection needed to safeguard the future of our oceans and these majestic creatures," Sam Annesley, executive director of Greenpeace Japan, said in a statement. "The government of Japan must urgently act to conserve marine ecosystems, rather than resume commercial whaling."

Australia's government, often a vocal critic of Japan's whaling policies, said in a statement that it was "extremely disappointed" with Japan's decision to quit the commission.

However, New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters joined Australia in welcoming Japan's withdrawal from the southern ocean. Japan was the only country with an ambition to return to commercial whaling in the Antarctic Ocean.

Japanese Fisheries Agency official and longtime IWC negotiator Hideki Moronuki said Japan would use the IWC's method to carefully determine a catch quota on the basis of science, but declined to give an estimate. He said Japan plans to use seven existing whaling hubs on the Pacific coast for the upcoming commercial hunts.

Moronuki said Japan is starting with a modest plan because it has to figure out if or how commercial whaling can be a viable industry. "What's most important is to have a diverse and stable food supply," he said.

The Fisheries Agency said Japan plans to catch three kinds of whale that are believed to have sufficient stocks — minke, sei and Bryde's.

Japan has hunted whales for centuries, but has reduced its catch following international protests and declining demand for whale meat at home. The withdrawal from the IWC may be a face-saving step to stop Japan's ambitious Antarctic hunts and scale down the scope of whaling to around the Japanese coasts.

Japan slashed its annual quota in the Antarctic by about one third after the International Court of Justice ruled in 2014 that the country's research whaling program wasn't as scientific as it had argued. Japan currently hunts about 600 whales annually in the Antarctic and the Northern Pacific.

Fisheries officials have said Japan annually consumes thousands of tons of whale meat from the research hunts, mainly by older Japanese seeking a nostalgic meal. It's a fraction of the country's whale meat supply of about 200,000 tons before the IWC moratorium. Critics say they doubt commercial whaling can be a sustainable industry because younger Japanese may not view the animals as food.

Nonetheless, Japanese lawmakers want to promote whales not only as a source of protein but as part of Japan's cultural tradition.

"We hope the resumption of commercial whaling will lead to the economic revitalization of (whaling) communities," Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Takamori Yoshikawa told a meeting of his ruling party's whaling committee.

Kazutaka Sangen, mayor of Taiji, a central Japanese town known for dolphin hunts, welcomed the decision and vowed to stick with scientific way of stock management so that Japan's position on whaling can gain understanding from the international community.

Suga said that Japan would notify the IWC of its decision by Dec. 31 and that it remains committed to international cooperation on proper management of marine life even after its IWC withdrawal.

Associated Press writer Steve McMorran in Wellington, New Zealand, contributed to this report.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

Girl finds Santa gifts, despite Trump's 'marginal' comment

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A 7-year-old girl who talked to President Donald Trump on Christmas Eve still left out milk and cookies for Santa despite the president telling her it was "marginal" for a child of her age to still believe.

Then again, Collman Lloyd of Lexington, South Carolina, says she had never heard the word "marginal" before.

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Collman had called the NORAD Tracks Santa program Monday night to check on Santa's journey delivering toys. In an interview with the Post and Courier of Charleston, she said the scientist who answered the NORAD phone asked her if she would like to speak to the president.

Six minutes later, Trump was on the line. "Are you still a believer in Santa?" Trump asked. When she responded, "Yes, sir," the president added, "Because at 7, that's marginal, right?"

Collman didn't know what "marginal" meant and simply answered, "Yes, sir." Trump closed by saying, "Well, you just enjoy yourself."

Trump's chat with Collman was initially reported as being with a boy named Coleman. Only Trump's end of the conversation could be heard by reporters, but Collman's family later posted video of the call on YouTube.

Collman told the Post and Courier that she and her 10-year-old sister and 5-year-old brother left iced sugar cookies and chocolate milk for Santa. She reported that Christmas morning, the food was gone and presents were under the tree.

In addition to the NORAD Tracks Santa program and church services Christmas Eve, Trump participated in another holiday tradition, wishing U.S. troops stationed around the country and the globe a merry Christmas. He spoke Tuesday by video conference to members of all five branches of the U.S. military.

"I know it's a great sacrifice for you to be away from your families, but I want you to know that every American family is eternally grateful to you, and we're holding you close in our hearts, thoughts and prayers," Trump said. "We love what you do and love your work. Amazing people."

The president spent a rare Christmas in Washington because of a stalemate with Congress over government funding that left several departments and agencies shuttered since the weekend, affecting the livelihoods of some 800,000 federal employees.

Trump usually celebrates Christmas at his Florida estate. He scrapped plans to travel to Palm Beach because of the shutdown.

"I thought it would be wrong for me to be with my family," he told reporters in the Oval Office after the give and take with members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard from their stations in Guam, Bahrain, Qatar and Alaska.

"My family is in Florida, Palm Beach, and I just didn't want to go down and be there when other people are hurting," Trump said. He didn't say which family members were at the Mar-a-Lago estate.

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Koreas break ground on railways but sanctions block project

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North and South Korea broke ground Wednesday on an ambitious project to modernize North Korean railways and roads and connect them with the South, but without progress in nuclear negotiations, regular trains won't be crossing the border anytime soon.

The ceremony at the North Korean border town of Kaesong came weeks after the Koreas conducted a joint survey on the northern railway sections they hope to someday link with the South. It's one of several peace gestures agreed between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in as they push ahead with engagement amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang.

But beyond on-site reviews and ceremonies, the Koreas cannot move much further along without the removal of U.S.-led sanctions against the North.

A South Korean train carrying about 100 people — including government officials, lawmakers and aging relatives separated by the 1950-53 Korean War — rolled into the North Korean border town of Kaesong, where they were greeted by North Koreans including Ri Son Gwon, who heads an agency dealing with inter-Korean affairs.

North and South Korean officials signed a concrete railroad tie, unveiled a new signboard and observed

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a ceremonial connecting of northern and southern tracks at Kaesong's Panmun Station, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

Officials from China and Russia were also invited to witness the symbolic start of an ambitious project Seoul hopes will one day link South Korea with the Trans-China and Trans-Siberian railways. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, also attended, according to the South Korean ministry.

"The railways will not only reduce time and space but also the distance between the hearts of the South and North," South Korean transport minister Kim Hyun-mee said at the ceremony.

While stressing the importance of the project, Kim Yun Hyok, the North Korean vice railways minister, added an apparent jab at Seoul by saying that the Koreans should push further with engagement instead of "wobbling on the path while listening to what others think."

North Korea has repeatedly voiced displeasure about the slow progress in the reconciliatory projects agreed between their leaders. Seoul's enthusiasm for inter-Korean engagement has also created unease with Washington, which has called for its allies to maintain pressure until Kim takes firmer steps to irreversibly and verifiably relinquish his nuclear weapons and missiles.

The Seoul government plans to conduct further surveys on North Korean railways and roads before drawing up a detailed blueprint for the project. Actual construction will proceed depending on the progress in the North's denuclearization and the state of sanctions against the country, the ministry said.

"We plan to hold detailed negotiations with the North to coordinate on the specific levels we want to achieve in the modernization of railways and roads and how to carry out the project," said Eugene Lee, the ministry's spokeswoman.

Even if the North takes concrete steps toward denuclearization and gains sanctions relief, some experts say updating North Korean rail network could take decades and massive investment.

Seoul said it received an exemption to sanctions from the U.N. Security Council to proceed with Wednesday's ceremony as it involved South Korean transport vehicles and goods. The Koreans' joint survey of North Korean railways in November, which also required U.N. approval, marked the first time a South Korean train traveled on North Korean tracks.

The Koreans in December 2007 began freight services between South Korea's Munsan Station in Paju and the North's Panmun Station to support operations at a now-shuttered joint factory park in Kaesong. The South used the trains to move construction materials north, while clothing and shoes made at the factory park were sent south. The line was cut in November 2008 due to tensions over North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

The Kaesong factory park was shut down under the South's previous conservative government in February 2016 following a North Korean nuclear test and long-range rocket launch.

Post-holiday, partial government shutdown to gain impact

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Christmas has come and gone but the partial government shutdown is just getting started.

Wednesday brings the first full business day after several government departments and agencies closed up over the weekend due to a budgetary stalemate between President Donald Trump and Congress. And there is no end in sight.

So far, the public and federal workers have largely been spared inconvenience and hardship because government is closed on weekends and federal employees were excused from work on Christmas Eve and Christmas, a federal holiday. The shutdown began at midnight last Friday.

Trump said Tuesday that the closed parts of the government will remain that way until Democrats agree to wall off the U.S.-Mexico border to deter criminal elements. He said he's open to calling the wall something else as long as he ends up with an actual wall.

Asked when the government would reopen fully, Trump said he couldn't say.

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"I can't tell you when the government's going to be open. I can tell you it's not going to be open until we have a wall or fence, whatever they'd like to call it," Trump said, referring to Democrats who staunchly oppose walling off the border.

"I'll call it whatever they want, but it's all the same thing," he told reporters after participating in a holiday video conference with representatives from all five branches of the military stationed in Alaska, Bahrain, Guam and Qatar.

Trump argued that drug flows and human trafficking can only be stopped by a wall.

"We can't do it without a barrier. We can't do it without a wall," he said. "The only way you're going to do it is to have a physical barrier, meaning a wall. And if you don't have that then we're just not opening" the government.

Democrats oppose spending money on a wall, preferring instead to pump the dollars into fencing, technology and other means of controlling access to the border. Trump argued that Democrats oppose a wall only because he is for one.

The stalemate over how much to spend and how to spend it caused the partial government shutdown that began Saturday following a lapse in funding for departments and agencies that make up about 25 percent of the government.

Some 800,000 government workers are affected. Many are on the job but must wait until after the shutdown to be paid again.

Trump claimed that many of these workers "have said to me and communicated, 'stay out until you get the funding for the wall.' These federal workers want the wall. The only one that doesn't want the wall are the Democrats."

Trump didn't say how he's hearing from federal workers, excluding those he appointed to their jobs or who work with him in the White House. But many rank-and-file workers have gone to social media with stories of the financial hardship they expect to face because of the shutdown.

Associated Press writer Nomaan Merchant in Houston contributed to this report.

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

Trump: 'I can't tell you when' government will reopen

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that parts of the federal government will stay closed until Democrats agree to put up more walls along the U.S.-Mexico border to deter criminal elements. He said he's open to calling the wall something else as long as he ends up with an actual wall.

In a Christmas Day appearance in the Oval Office, Trump issued a lengthy defense of his desire for a wall, saying it's the only way to stop drugs and human traffickers from entering the country. In a nod to the political stakes he's facing, Trump said he wants the wall by "election time" in 2020.

The promise of a border wall was a central component of Trump's presidential campaign.

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Trump didn't say how he's hearing from federal workers, excluding those he appointed to their jobs or who work with him in the White House. But many rank-and-file workers have gone to social media with stories of the financial hardship they expect to face because of the shutdown, now in its fourth day.

Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York and Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the Democratic leaders of Congress, said Trump "wanted the shutdown, but he seems not to know how to get himself out it." Trump had said he'd be "proud" to shut down the government in a fight over the wall.

He also had said Mexico would pay for the wall. Mexico has refused.

Trump followed up on a Monday tweet in which he said he "just gave out a 115 mile long contract for another large section of the Wall in Texas." Neither the White House nor the Department of Homeland Security responded to follow-up questions, despite repeated requests.

The reference to 115 miles was unclear. Trump may have been referring to 33 miles of construction in the Rio Grande Valley that is set to begin in February, part of a total of 84 miles that Congress funded in March, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Asked who received the contract, Trump replied: "Different people, different people."

He did say he envisions a wall so tall, "like a three-story building," that only an Olympic champion would be able to scale it. He also compared Democrats' treatment of him over the wall to their defense of James Comey after Trump fired him as FBI director.

"It's a disgrace what's happening in our country but, other than that, I wish everybody a very merry Christmas," he said.

Associated Press writer Nomaan Merchant in Houston contributed to this report.

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Report: Israeli attack near Syrian capital wounds 3 soldiers

By **BASSEM MROUE**, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israeli warplanes flying over Lebanon fired missiles toward areas near the Syrian capital of Damascus late Tuesday, hitting an arms depot and wounding three soldiers, Syrian state media reported, saying that most of the missiles were shot down by air defense units.

The TV, quoting an unnamed military official, identified the warplanes as Israeli. Lebanon's the state-run National News Agency earlier reported that Israeli warplanes were flying at low altitude over parts of southern Lebanon.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said Israeli airstrikes targeted three positions south of Damascus that are arms depots for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and Iranian forces.

The reported attack near Damascus is the first since U.S. President Donald Trump announced last week that the U.S. will withdraw all of its 2,000 forces in Syria, a move that will leave control of the oil-rich eastern third of Syria up for grabs.

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Following Trump's announcement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel would "continue to act against Iran's attempts to entrench itself militarily in Syria, and to the extent necessary, we will even expand our actions there."

Nearly an hour after the attacks began, Damascus residents could still hear the air defense units firing toward targets in the air.

"The aggression is still ongoing," said a presenter on state TV, which interrupted its programs to air patriotic songs.

Later the TV quoted an unnamed military official as saying that Syrian air defenses "shot down most of the missiles before reaching their targets and the aggression damaged an arms depot and wounded three soldiers." It added that the Israeli warplanes fired the missiles from Lebanese airspace.

Israel's military spokesman's unit did not confirm the raids, but said in a statement that "an aerial defense system was activated against an anti-aircraft missile launched from Syria." No damage or injuries were reported by the Israeli military.

Israel is widely believed to have been behind a series of airstrikes in the past that mainly targeted Iranian and Hezbollah forces fighting alongside the government in Syria. Tuesday's attack is the first since a missile assault on the southern outskirts of Damascus on Nov. 29.

Russia announced it had delivered the S-300 air defense system to Syria in October. That followed the Sept. 17 downing of a Russian reconnaissance plane by Syrian forces responding to an Israeli airstrike, a friendly fire incident that stoked regional tensions.

Ilan Ben Zion contributed from Jerusalem.

Queen Elizabeth II riffs on wisdom, family's busy year

By GREGORY KATZ and FRANK AUGSTEIN, Associated Press

SANDRINGHAM, England (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II wove personal reflections into the latest edition of her annual Christmas message, saying she hoped her long life brought a measure of wisdom and noting her grandchildren's contributions to Britain's royal family.

The 92-year-old queen, the world's longest-reigning living monarch, also included the customary tribute to military personnel and wishes for world peace in the message, which was pre-recorded at Buckingham Palace and televised Tuesday.

"Some cultures believe a long life brings wisdom," Elizabeth said in the recording. "I'd like to think so. Perhaps part of that wisdom is to recognize some of life's baffling paradoxes, such as the way human beings have a huge propensity for good and yet a capacity for evil."

On a lighter note, the queen listed the House of Windsor's 2018 milestones with the same unabashed pride of someone writing their yearly Christmas letter for friends and far-flung relatives.

"It's been a busy year for my family, with two weddings and two babies, and another child expected soon. It helps to keep a grandmother well occupied," Elizabeth said, not forgetting to mention her own firstborn,

"We have had other celebrations too, including the 70th birthday of The Prince of Wales," otherwise known as heir to the throne Prince Charles.

The annual message was broadcast to many of the 53 Commonwealth countries. Elizabeth recalled that her father, King George VI, welcomed eight former British colonies at the first meeting of Commonwealth leaders in 1948.

"Even with the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good first step towards greater understanding," she said.

The queen mentioned her father, from whom she inherited the throne when he died in 1952, again while expressing gratitude for soldiers and sailors past and present. During World War I, two decades before his own unexpected ascension to the throne, he served with the Royal Navy and saw friends killed in battle, Elizabeth said.

"At Christmas, we become keenly aware of loved ones who have died, whatever the circumstances. But,

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of course, we would not grieve if we did not love.

Earlier in the day, Elizabeth and her family received cheers from a Christmas crowd when they arrived for a church service in the English countryside. A chauffeured limousine delivered the queen, while her descendants and their spouses walked from a nearby estate of the monarch's.

Prince Charles led the way, followed by his sons: Prince William and his wife, Catherine, and Prince Harry and his pregnant wife, Meghan. Harry and the former American actress known as Meghan Markle married in May and are expecting their first child in the spring.

The couple walked arm in arm next to William and Catherine. Many in the crowd wished them "Merry Christmas" as they strolled to the church in the English countryside on a cold, wintry morning.

After the 45-minute service, people gave them flowers as they headed back for a traditional Christmas lunch.

The queen's husband, Prince Philip, who is 97 and largely retired from public life, did not attend the service. Charles' wife Camilla, who is recovering from flu, also missed church.

William and Catherine's three children — Prince George, 5, Princess Charlotte, 3, and 8-month-old Prince Louis, also stayed home.

Britain's royals usually exchange small gifts on Christmas Eve, a practice popularized by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The queen typically frowns on extravagant gifts, and many of the presents are novelty items.

When the queen was younger, Christmas meant a brisk family walk through the woods on Christmas or an excursion on horseback.

Elizabeth delivered her first Christmas Day message when she took the throne in 1952. The seasonal addresses aired on the radio until she made the transition to television in 1957.

They have been broadcast during every year of her reign save one. In 1969, the queen decided her family had received enough exposure from giving a TV crew unusual access for a documentary.

That year, she issued the message in writing.

Katz reported from London.

Clashes erupt as Sudanese march on presidential palace

By HAMZA HENDAWI, Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Police used tear gas and fired in the air Tuesday to disperse thousands of protesters attempting to march on the presidential palace to demand that Omar Bashir, Sudan's president of 29 years, step down, according to activists and video clips posted online. Organizers say hundreds were injured and at least eight received gunshot wounds.

The clips purported to show crowds of several hundred each gathering on side roads and headed toward the palace on the bank of the Blue Nile in the heart of Khartoum. They sang patriotic songs and chanted "freedom," "peaceful, peaceful against the thieves" and "The people want to bring down the regime." The latter was the most popular slogan of the 2010 and 2011 Arab Spring revolts.

One clip showed the seemingly lifeless body of a protester in Khartoum being carried away and placed inside a car that drove away. The protester's head showed a gaping wound and the voice of another protester could be heard saying he was deliberately shot by a sniper. Earlier images circulated by activists showed police snipers on rooftops near the palace ahead of the march.

Another clip purported to show two other protesters suffering gunshot wounds to the head and the legs as they were being attended to in a clinic. There were no reliable casualty figures available.

The march's organizer, an umbrella of independent professional unions, said at least eight protesters received gunshot wounds, three of whom were in serious condition and that hundreds were hurt when police hit them with batons or used tear gas to disperse them.

Large numbers of security forces were deployed across much of Khartoum Tuesday in anticipation of the march, with soldiers riding in all-terrain vehicles. Police fired in the air, used tear gas and hit demon-

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strators with batons to disperse them, only for the crowds to assemble again and try and continue their march in pitched battles. Activists said the fighting continued after nightfall.

The protest was called by the umbrella of independent professional unions and supported by the country's largest political parties, Umma and Democratic Unionist. The organizers want to submit a petition demanding that Bashir, who has ruled since he seized power in a 1989 military coup, step down.

It said late Tuesday that it would continue to work for the ouster of Bashir, an objective that "we trust we are more able to collectively realize now than at any time before."

Tuesday's march follows nearly a week of protests initially sparked by rising prices and shortages of food and fuel, but which later escalated into calls for Bashir to go. The Sudanese leader was in the al-Jazeera region south of Khartoum on a previously scheduled visit Tuesday. Live TV coverage showed him addressing supporters there in a rally and the country's state news agency said he inaugurated a road and a girls' school there.

In an address in which he frequently quoted verses from the Quran, Bashir, who is an Islamist, blamed the country's economic woes on international sanctions and enemies of Sudan who don't want it to progress.

The petition the protesters wanted to submit at the palace demands that the general-turned-president hand over power to a "transitional government of technocrats with a mandate agreed upon by all segments of Sudanese society."

"We are asserting that we will continue to exercise all popular and peaceful options, including general strike and civil disobedience, to bring down the regime," it warned.

The march followed a joint statement late Monday by the United States, Britain, Norway and Canada, which said they were concerned by "credible reports" that Sudan's security forces have used live ammunition against demonstrators. They urged all parties to avoid violence or the destruction of property while affirming the right of the Sudanese people to peacefully protest to express their "legitimate grievances."

The London-based rights group Amnesty International meanwhile said it had "credible reports" that Sudanese police have killed 37 protesters in clashes during the anti-government demonstrations.

An opposition leader said over the weekend that 22 protesters were killed. The government has acknowledged fatalities without providing any figures.

The military vowed Sunday to rally behind Bashir and emphasized in a statement that it was operating in harmony with the police and Sudan's feared security agencies. Also Monday, Bashir said his government would introduce measures to remedy the economy and "provide citizens with a dignified life."

He also warned citizens against what he called "rumor mongers."

The protests over the past week have been met with a heavy security crackdown, with authorities arresting more than a dozen opposition leaders, suspending school and university classes, and imposing emergency rule or nighttime curfews in several cities. There has also been a near-total news blackout on the protests and tighter than usual censorship of newspapers.

Bashir, in his mid-70s, overthrew an elected but ineffective government when he seized power in 1989 in collaboration with Islamists. He is wanted by the International Criminal Court for committing crimes against humanity and genocide in the western Darfur region, where disgruntled ethnic African tribesmen revolted for a larger share of the nation's resources and an end to discrimination by the Arabized and mostly Muslim north.

Bashir has ordered the use of force against protesters in the past — including in the last round of unrest in January — successfully crushing them to remain one of the longest-serving leaders in the region. Although his time in power has seen one crisis after another, he is seeking a new term in office, with loyal lawmakers campaigning for constitutional amendments that would allow him to run in the 2020 election.

Sudan, a country of more than 40 million people, lost three quarters of its oil wealth when the mainly animist and Christian south seceded in 2011 after a long and ruinous civil war against the Khartoum government. More recently, a currency devaluation earlier this year caused prices to surge and a liquidity crunch forced the government to limit bank withdrawals, leading to long lines outside ATMs.