

Groton Daily Independent

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Raging blizzard immobilizes region

A raging blizzard set in Thursday afternoon, reducing visibility to a couple of blocks in town and forcing state snow plows off the roads. By night fall, major highways were drifting in as mother nature had a ball.

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!

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Front Porch Manager Wanted

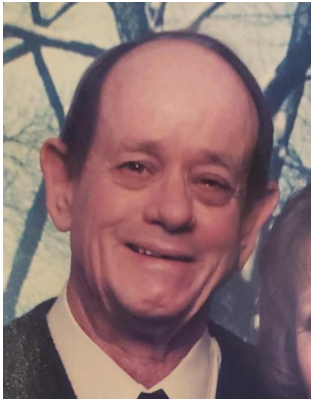
Immediate opening for Restaurant General Manager at The Front Porch Bar & Grill in Langford SD. Hiring bonus available! Salary DOE. Must be 21 years old. Contact Suzie Easthouse at (605) 493-6570 or email resume by to langfordfrontporch@venture-comm.net. (1227.0111)

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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The Life of Harold Stout

Harold Calvin (Butch) Stout passed into eternal life with his savior, Jesus Christ, on Friday December 21, 2018 in Las Vegas after a short hospitalization. A memorial Service will be held at 11 AM, Saturday December 29, 2018, at First Baptist Church, 5360 Calle Valle Vista, Fort Mohave AZ. Burial will be at a later date.

Butch was born on Feb 25, 1943 in Needles California. He was raised in the Needles area by Harold and Bea Stout and spent nearly all of his life living in the Valley. He worked at Mohave Farms for 30 years until his retirement. For the past 25 years, he has been an active member of First Baptist Church, Ft. Mohave, serving as Deacon, Elder and bible study leader. Butch was a man of integrity, who led strongly, loved passionately and served God and his Family faithfully

Grateful for having shared his life are: His loving wife of 41 years, Karen Stout of Ft. Mohave; Children Linda (Edward) Leonard of Seattle WA , Richard (Paula) Stout of East Amherst NY, Louise (Carl) Schwab of Andover SD, Julie Stout of Groton SD, and Patricia (John) Pappas of Ft. Mohave AZ; Sisters, Becky (Ray) Fradette of Kent WA, Carol (Stan) Crabtree of Ceres CA and 1 brother Virgil Stout of Phoenix AZ, and 17 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Butch was preceded in death by his parents and one daughter Darlene Jaekley



Snow Removal Notice

With the impending winter storm, Groton City residents are reminded to remove all vehicles, trailers, campers, etc. from city streets.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.



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!!

Posted on the Brown County SD Office of Emergency Management Facebook Page at 1:30 a.m.

Prayers for Firefighters from Groton, Columbia, Aberdeen Rural and Aberdeen City who have been out since 10:00 on a structure fire. Terrible roads, very limited visibility, with below zero wind chills are testing these FF's tonight.

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Today in Weather History

December 28, 2000: Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph, gusting to around 65 mph, occurred across central and north central South Dakota in the morning. The high winds resulted in blizzard conditions at some locations just east of the Missouri River. Further east, in northeast South Dakota, northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph combined with newly fallen snow to generate blizzard conditions from the morning into the early afternoon hours. Travel was terrible in many places, and many motorists found themselves in ditches. There were also several non-injury accidents.

December 28, 1879: Tay Bridge is the main-line railway across the Tay River in Scotland, between the city of Dundee and the suburb of Wormit in Fife. During the evening hours of December 28, 1879, winds were said to blow at right angles to the bridge. Witnesses said the storm was as severe as they had seen in 20 to 30 years. The winds at Glasgow and Aberdeen were measured at 71 mph. Winds were estimated to be 80 mph in Dundee. A passenger train departed at 7:13 pm was said to disappear three minutes later. The train was found at the bottom of the river, along with the high rafters and much of the ironwork of their supporting piers. There were no survivors. The Court of Inquiry report concluded that "The fall of the bridge was occasioned by the insufficiency of the cross bracing and its fastenings to sustain the force of the gale."

1839 - The third storm in two weeks hit the northeastern U.S. It brought two more feet of snow to Hartford, CT, and Worcester, MA. Whole gales swept the coast causing many wrecks. (David Ludlum)

1897 - The temperature at Dayville, OR, hit 81 degrees to establish a state record for December. (The Weather Channel)

1924 - Iowa experienced its coldest December morning of record. Morning lows averaged 25 degrees below zero for the 104 weather stations across the state.

1955 - Anchorage, AK, was buried under 17.7 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for that location. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1958 - Albuquerque, NM, received 14.2 inches of snow to establish a 24 hour record. (28th-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Upper Great Lakes Region. Up to twenty inches of snow buried southern Minnesota, and 20 to 40 mph northwesterly winds produced snow drifts six feet high, and reduced visibilities to near zero at times in blowing snow. There were a thousand traffic accidents in Michigan during the storm, resulting in thirty-five injuries. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds behind a cold front claimed three lives in eastern Pennsylvania, and injured a dozen others in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Maryland. Winds gusted to 87 mph at Hammon-ton NJ and in the Washington D.C. area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls continued to bring snow to the Great Lakes Region, with heavy snow reported near Lake Superior and Lake Ontario. Syracuse NY received 8.5 inches of snow to push the total for the month past their previous December record of 57 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)






2003 - A severe snow storm hit northern California and southern Oregon. As much as 2 feet of snow fell along Interstate 5 closing a 150-mile stretch of the interstate, stranding hundreds of travelers. Winds from the storm caused power outages to more than 200,000 customers in California and Oregon. One man died of a heart attack after helping other drivers. (CNN)

2004 - Los Angeles (downtown) broke a daily rainfall record for the month of December (5.55 inches). This was the third wettest calendar day in Los Angeles since records began in 1877.

2005 - An outbreak of severe thunderstorms across portions of the southeast United States on the 28th produced hail, high winds and a few tornadoes. The states of Georgia and Tennessee were the most affected. (NCDC)

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Patchy Blowing Snow and Blustery then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 4 °F	Low: -26 °F	High: 14 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 35 °F

**Windy This Morning
Clearing – Calm – Cold Today/Tonight**



Highs: Single Digits & Teens Above Zero
Lows: Zero to 25 Below



Published on: 12/27/2018 at 10:22PM

Winds are on the slow and steady decline this morning with improving visibility and less blowing and drifting. As Arctic high pressure moves in we can expect temperatures to continue to fall or remain steady in the single digits or teens today, and then crash this evening thanks to all the fresh snow cover. Readings in the James valley could easily dip in the teens and 20s below zero!

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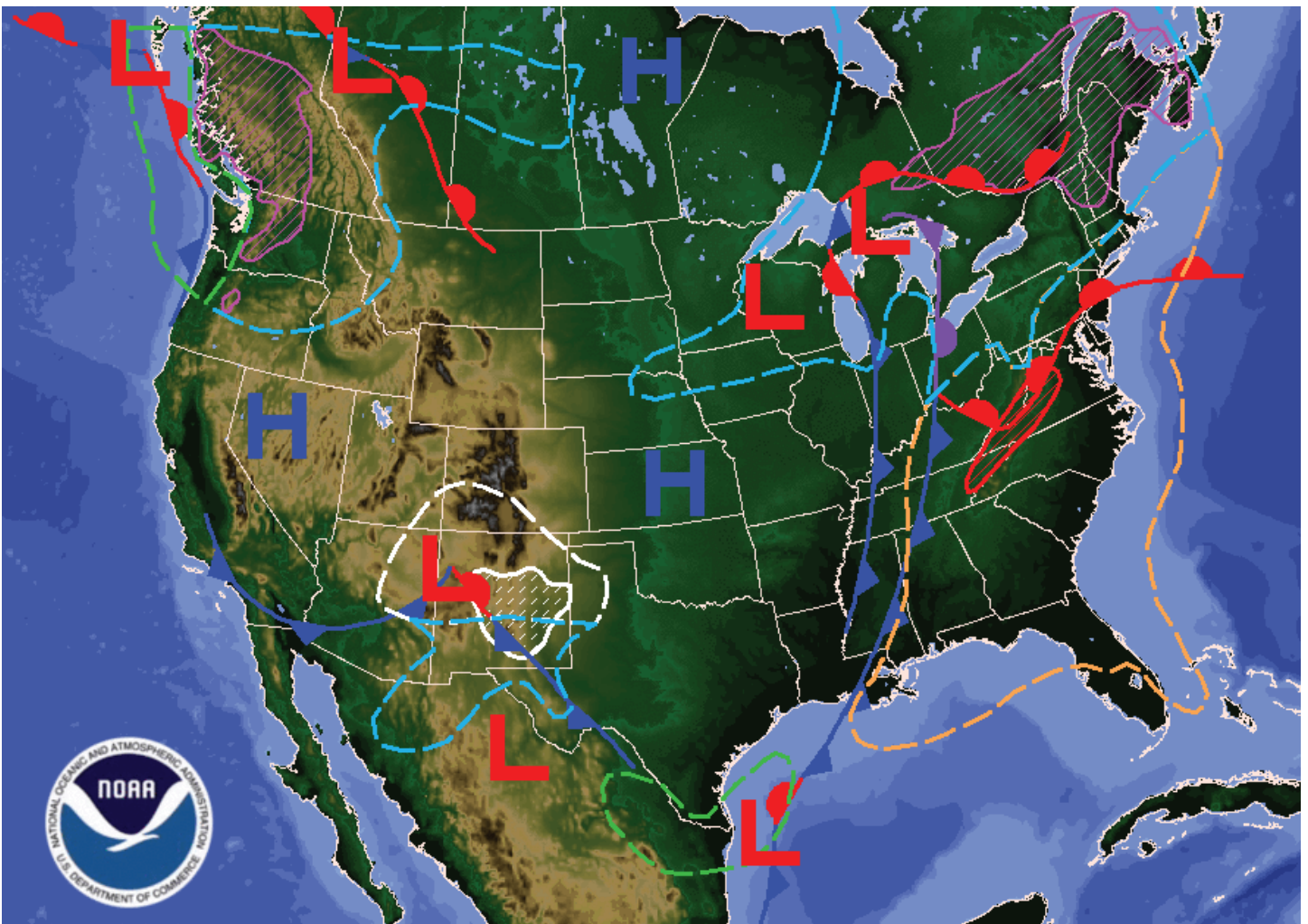
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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 29 °F at 12:00 AM
Low Outside Temp: 11 °F at 9:12 PM
High Gust: 35 mph at 10:27 PM
Precip: About 10" has fallen in the area

Today's Info

Record High: 57° in 1898
Record Low: -24° in 1924
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 3°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.45
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 21.65
Precip Year to Date: 15.81
Sunset Tonight: 4:58 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Fri, Dec 28, 2018, issued 4:38 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 PARENTING MATTERS

There is limited information in Scripture that describes the home life of Jesus. Every now and then we get a glimpse of something. But there can be little doubt that God and His teachings were at the center of everything.

We read that Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. No doubt His knowledge of and reverence for the Law and Prophets shaped His life and His reverence and relationship with His Heavenly Father and others.

Lukes Gospel tells us about a family trip to the temple. On the way home, they noticed that He was not with them. When they returned to the temple they found Him listening to and answering questions of the learned teachers. At the tender age of twelve Jesus demonstrated to others the deep understanding of Gods Word that obviously came from His parents.

Mary and Joseph realized that they were obligated to God for the welfare of His only begotten Son. While He was waiting to begin His public ministry He listened to their teachings and followed their examples of Godly living.

Parents can never overlook or underestimate the influence and impact they have on their children. Parents must follow the example of Joseph and Mary in raising their children.

Prayer: We pray, Father, that parents will realize how important the gift of a child is and the trust You place in them to raise them to know, love, trust and serve You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

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

Storm blamed for fatal Minnesota crash

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A powerful winter storm that has left roads snow covered and slippery in parts of the Upper Midwest is blamed for a Minnesota crash that killed one person and injured nine others.

Sherburne County sheriff's officials say a small bus collided with an SUV on a road east of Big Lake about 3 p.m. Thursday. Forty-seven-year-old Marilyn Balogi, of Zimmerman, was killed. She was a passenger on the bus. Seven other bus passengers as well as the bus driver and the SUV driver were injured and taken to area hospitals.

The Minnesota State Patrol says it responded to 167 crashes, 259 spinouts and 13 jackknifed semis on Thursday. A blizzard warning issued by the National Weather Service remained in effect for much of the Dakotas and part of Minnesota through Friday morning.

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Hoop City Classic

Mountain Brook, Ala. 94, Lower Brule 35

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

Storm whips up blizzards, dumps snow in Dakotas, Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Post-holiday travelers were finding driving difficult as a winter storm dumped heavy snow and whipped up gusty winds across parts of the Dakotas and Minnesota on Thursday.

Up to 11 inches (28 centimeters) of snow had fallen in the Moorhead-Alexandria area of western Minnesota by mid-afternoon Thursday, and it was still snowing, said meteorologist Tyler Hasenstein of the Twin Cities National Weather Service.

The line of snow ended just northwest of the Twin Cities around Elk River, Hasenstein said. The snowfall peaked around 3 inches (8 centimeters) at the Minneapolis airport, then rain starting early Thursday melted the snowpack.

Officials in North Dakota issued a no-travel advisory for the eastern part of the state due to icy roads and reduced visibility. Blustery winds were causing blizzard conditions in Jamestown, North Dakota, and in northern South Dakota, where transportation officials reported visibility was down to a quarter-mile along a stretch of Highway 10.

Bus service for Fargo, North Dakota, and neighboring Moorhead, Minnesota, was suspended Thursday afternoon because of worsening road conditions. Service is expected to resume Friday with a normal schedule.

The National Weather Service issued blizzard warnings for central South Dakota, eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota. The storm was expected to drop more than a foot of snow in the region before ending Friday.

The Minnesota State Patrol tweeted that road conditions are poor across much of western Minnesota. Transportation officials said road conditions across much of the central and northern areas of the state are completely covered with ice and snow, with windy conditions causing even more travel issues. The Minnesota Department of Transportation said it might be better to wait for conditions to improve if travel isn't necessary.

The weather service said an estimated 18 inches of snow had fallen by early Thursday afternoon near Finland on Minnesota's North Shore.

The North Dakota Highway Patrol issued a travel alert for parts of North Dakota including Bismarck and

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Devils Lake due to whiteout conditions. Eastern North Dakota was expected to deal with winds gusting up to 50 mph, creating blizzard conditions mainly in the Red River Valley.

University campuses, courthouses and municipal buildings across North Dakota are among the places closed on Thursday, including the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks.

Crews remove wreckage of Sioux Falls fatal plane crash

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Crews have removed the wreckage of a plane crash in Sioux Falls that killed the two people on board.

Police said Thursday that a company contracted by federal investigators has finished recovery efforts and that the area around the crash site has been reopened.

The crash on Tuesday killed Vaughn and JoAnn Meyer, a Sioux Falls couple known for their philanthropy. Both were 68 years old.

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash, which happened in a residential neighborhood. No one on the ground was hurt.

Wentworth Aircraft Inc. of Crystal, Minnesota, began clearing the wreckage Wednesday night. Police say the company is contracted by the NTSB.

The Argus Leader reports the plane parts will be taken to Minneapolis for investigation.

Girl's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school girl's preseason poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records, total points and last week's ranking.

Class AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Brandon Valley	(14)	5-0	89	1
2. O'Gorman	(5)	4-1	79	2
3. Harrisburg	4-0	60	3	
4T. Stevens	4-1	26	5	
4T. Washington	5-1	26	4	

Others receiving votes: Brookings 3, Lincoln 2.

Class A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. St. Thomas More	(18)	3-0	94	1
2. Lennox	(1)	5-1	75	2
3. Winner	5-0	59	3	
4. Aberdeen Roncalli		4-0	27	4
5. Hamlin	5-0	8	RV	

Others receiving votes: Vermillion 11, McCook Central/Montrose 6, Todd County 2, Miller 2, Belle Fourche 1.

Class B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Ethan	(13)	4-0	89	1
2. Warner	(6)	4-0	82	2
3. De Smet	6-0	56	3	
4. Corsica-Stickney	4-0	35	4	
5. Faith	4-0	9	RV	

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Boy's Basketball Polls By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school boy's preseason poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records, total points and last week's ranking.

Class AA

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Yankton (19)	5-0	95	1	
2. Lincoln 4-0	75	2		
3. Huron 4-1	50	5		
4. Stevens 3-2	24	4		
5. Roosevelt	3-2	17	2	

Others receiving votes: Brandon Valley 13, Sturgis 7, Watertown 2, Washington 1, O'Gorman 1.

Class A

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs
1. Tea Area (19)	4-0	95	1	
2. SF Christian	4-0	76	2	
3. St. Thomas More		3-0	53	3
4. Stevens 3-1	38	4		
5. Red Cloud	5-1	14	5	

Others receiving votes: Sioux Valley 4, Dakota Valley 2, Aberdeen Roncalli 2, Lennox 1.

Class B

Rank-School	FPV	Rcd	TP	Pvs	
1. Bridgewater-Emery		(17)	4-0	93	1
2. Clark-Willow Lake		(1)	4-0	71	2
3. White River (1)		6-0	64	3	
4. Timber Lake	5-0	35	4		
5. Aberdeen Christian		5-0	12	5	

Others receiving votes: Sully Buttes 6, Dell Rapids St. Mary 3, Kimball-White Lake 1.

South Dakota snowmobile riders rescued in southern Wyoming

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — Four snowmobile riders from South Dakota are doing well after being rescued in southern Wyoming.

The men had to snowshoe part of the way out Wednesday because rescuers weren't able to get their snowmobiles all the way to them because of the rugged terrain. The Albany County Sheriff's Department says rescuers, including some from Colorado, were able to bring in snow shoes for them to use to get to the waiting snowmobiles. They made it back to the trailhead by nightfall.

The men were reported missing Sunday. An Air Force helicopter spotted them on Christmas in Carbon County but wasn't able to land because of the terrain.

The sheriff's department says the men weren't injured and survived by rationing food, building a fire, melting snow for water and building a shelter.

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National Guard from 4 states will help with cyber operations

DENVER (AP) — National Guard soldiers from Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota and Utah are deploying to Fort Meade, Maryland, as part of a cyber protection team supporting U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

The Colorado guard said Thursday Cyber Protection Team 174 will help the Defense Department with network security and cyber defensive operations.

The deployment will last a year.

The team's assignment is to help commanders operate freely in the cyber domain as well as on the ground while denying adversaries that ability.

The Colorado National Guard will hold a departure ceremony on Friday.

Sioux Falls man arrested for concealed gun at airport

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls man has been arrested for bringing a gun to the regional airport. Sioux Falls Police Capt. Loren McManus says the 34-year-old man is accused of possessing a concealed pistol without a permit. Police say the man was going through security at Sioux Falls Regional Airport on Wednesday when officers found the unloaded gun in his backpack.

McManus says police believe the man accidentally brought the gun to the airport.

Noem to name Hughes County sheriff Corrections secretary

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov.-elect Kristi Noem is appointing a county sheriff to serve as the secretary of the state Department of Corrections.

The incoming Republican governor said Thursday that Michael Leidholt will be named to the post. Leidholt has been Hughes County sheriff for 24 years and has been in law enforcement since 1975.

Noem says she's thrilled to work with Leidholt to broaden correctional options, cut the likelihood of repeat offenders and keep victims at the justice system's center. Leidholt says the state must improve its systems to avert crime and strengthen parole, rehabilitation and re-entry programs.

Noem will be sworn in Jan. 5.

Syria military says it entered flash-point Kurdish-led town

By SARAH EL DEEB, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's military announced Friday it entered the flash-point Kurdish-held town of Manbij and raised the national flag there, where Turkey has threatened an offensive.

A Kurdish official said the government troops arrived only at the front lines.

Ilham Ahmed, the senior Kurdish official, said the U.S. troops who patrol the town and the tense front line with Turkey-backed fighters have not withdrawn from Manbij. She said an agreement is being worked out with the Russians and the Syrian government that in case of a full U.S. withdrawal, the government would take over.

"The aim is to ward off a Turkish offensive," Ahmed said. "If the Turks' excuse is the (Kurdish militia), they will leave their posts to the government."

There was no immediate comment from Turkey or the U.S., whose troops have been patrolling the town and the tense front line between Manbij and adjacent towns where Turkey-backed fighters were based.

A resident of Manbij who spoke to The Associated Press from the town on condition of anonymity said there was no sign of government troops.

Pro-state Syrian TV aired footage from inside Manbij of commercial streets on a rainy day, but didn't show any troops. It aired images of a military convoy driving late at night, reportedly to Manbij.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Syrian troops have deployed around Manbij on the front line with the Turkey-backed fighters to the west.

The announcement and the conflicting reports reflect that all sides are scrambling to reach an agreement

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on how to replace U.S. troops following the surprise announcement by President Donald Trump.

The announcement by the Syrian military was quickly welcomed by the Kremlin, whose spokesman Dmitry Peskov called it a "positive step" that could help stabilize the situation.

The Syrian military declaration came shortly after the main Syrian Kurdish militia invited the government to seize control of Manbij to prevent a Turkish attack.

The Syrian Kurdish group, which had partnered with the U.S. since 2014 to fight the Islamic State group, have sought new allies, reaching out to the government and the Russians to protect their Kurdish-administered areas in north Syria.

The Syrian government has said it welcomes the Kurdish group returning under its authority. But government officials have stated they will not consider an autonomous area, a main demand for the Kurds.

Meanwhile, Syrian troops have massed outside of Manbij and in southeastern Syria, where the U.S.-led coalition and Kurdish fighters are battling remnants of IS.

Syria's entry into Manbij comes a day before Moscow is to host top Turkish officials to discuss the crisis in Syria after the United States announced its withdrawal

Turkey, which views the Kurdish militia as a terrorist group, had been threatening a military operation against Manbij. Turkey and its allied fighters have been amassing troops around Manbij in recent days.

The threats triggered the U.S. announcement it would withdraw troops from Syria. A timetable for the withdrawal has not yet been made public.

Associated Press writer Nataliya Vasilyeva contributed from Moscow.

Latino support for GOP steady despite Trump immigration talk

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**, Associated Press

LITTLETON, Colo. (AP) — Pedro Gonzalez has faith in Donald Trump and his party.

The 55-year-old Colombian immigrant is a pastor at an evangelical church in suburban Denver. Initially repelled by Trump in 2016, he's been heartened by the president's steps to protect religious groups and appoint judges who oppose abortion rights. More important, Gonzalez sees Trump's presidency as part of a divine plan.

"It doesn't matter what I think," Gonzalez said of the president. "He was put there."

Though Latino voters are a key part of the Democratic coalition, there is a larger bloc of reliable Republican Latinos than many think. And the GOP's position among Latinos has not weakened during the Trump administration, despite the president's rhetoric against immigrants and the party's shift to the right on immigration.

In November's elections, 32 percent of Latinos voted for Republicans, according to AP VoteCast data. The survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters — including 7,738 Latino voters — was conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Other surveys also found roughly one-third of Latinos supporting the GOP. Data from the Pew Research Center and from exit polls suggests that a comparable share of about 3 in 10 Latino voters supported Trump in 2016. That tracks the share of Latinos supporting Republicans for the last decade.

The stability of Republicans' share of the Latino vote frustrates Democrats, who say actions like Trump's family separation policy and his demonization of an immigrant caravan should drive Latinos out of the GOP.

"The question is not are Democrats winning the Hispanic vote — it's why aren't Democrats winning the Hispanic vote 80-20 or 90-10 the way black voters are?" said Fernand Amandi, a Miami-based Democratic pollster. He argues Democrats must invest more in winning Latino voters.

The VoteCast data shows that, like white voters, Latinos are split by gender — 61 percent of men voted Democratic in November, while 69 percent of women did. And while Republican-leaning Latinos can be found everywhere in the country, two groups stand out as especially likely to back the GOP — evangelicals and veterans.

Evangelicals comprised about one-quarter of Latino voters, and veterans were 13 percent. Both groups

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were about evenly split between the two parties. Mike Madrid, a Republican strategist in California, said those groups have reliably provided the GOP with many Latino votes for years.

"They stick and they do not go away," Madrid said. Much as with Trump's own core white voters, attacks on the president and other Republicans for being anti-immigrant "just make them dig in even more," he added.

Sacramento-based Rev. Sam Rodriguez, one of Trump's spiritual advisers, said evangelical Latinos have a clear reason to vote Republican. "Why do 30 percent of Latinos still support Trump? Because of the Democratic Party's obsession with abortion," Rodriguez said. "It's life and religious liberty and everything else follows."

Some conservative Latinos say their political leanings make them feel more like a minority than their ethnicity does. Irina Vilariño, 43, a Miami restaurateur and Cuban immigrant, said she had presidential bumper stickers for Sen. John McCain, Mitt Romney and Trump scratched off her car. She said she never suffered from discrimination growing up in a predominantly white south Florida community, "but I remember during the McCain campaign being discriminated against because I supported him."

The 2018 election was good to Democrats, but Florida disappointed them. They couldn't convince enough of the state's often right-leaning Cuban-American voters to support Sen. Bill Nelson, who was ousted by the GOP's Spanish-speaking Gov. Rick Scott, or rally behind Democrats' gubernatorial candidate, Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum, who lost to Republican Rep. Ron DeSantis.

Still, in the rest of the country, there were signs that pleased Democrats. Latinos voted at high rates in an election that saw record-setting turnout among all demographic groups. Latinos normally have among the worst midterm turnout rates, and while official data won't be available for months, a number of formerly-Republican congressional districts in California and New Mexico flipped Democratic.

That's why Republicans shouldn't take solace from being able to consistently win about one-third of Latinos, said Madrid. They're still losing two-thirds of an electorate that's being goaded into the voting booth by Trump.

"That is contributing to the death spiral of the Republican Party — even if it holds at 30 percent," Madrid said. "That's a route to death, it's just a slower one."

Gonzalez, the pastor, sees the trend in Colorado. He distributed literature across Spanish-speaking congregations supporting Republican gubernatorial candidate Walker Stapleton, who was crushed by Democratic Rep. Jared Polis as the GOP lost every race for statewide office.

Gonzalez understands the anger among some Latinos at the GOP and Trump for what he says is a false impression of a solely hardline immigration stance. "In the community that is not informed, that is following the rhetoric of the media, there's a view that Donald Trump is a bad guy," Gonzalez said. Evangelicals "understand that he's there to defend values."

Gonzalez's church is Iglesia Embajada del Reino, or Church of the Kingdom's Embassy. On a recent Saturday night, an eight-piece band played Spanish-language Christian rock before Gonzalez walked to the podium. Wearing a blue corduroy blazer, blue shirt and grey slacks, Gonzalez, a onetime member of a Marxist group in Colombia, told his congregants that they were ambassadors of a higher power — the kingdom of God.

"It's important that your political opinions, your social opinions," not enter into it, Gonzalez said. "We need to represent the position of 'The Kingdom.'"

Gonzalez did not mention Trump in his sermon, though he spoke about the Bible as a book of governance.

Afterward the congregation gathered for bowls of posole, a traditional Mexican soup. When politics came up, church-goers struggled to balance their enthusiasm for some of Trump's judicial appointments with their distaste at his rhetoric and actions.

"I think the president has good, Christian principles," said Jose Larios, a parks worker. "But we feel as Latinos that he doesn't embrace our community, and our community is good and hard-working."

Oscar Murillo, a 37-year-old horse trainer, is not a fan of Trump's. But he tries to stay open-minded about Republicans. He voted for the GOP candidate for state attorney general, who visited the congregation before the election. "He's in the same party as Trump, but he seems different," Murillo said.

Hannah Fingerhut in Washington, DC contributed to this report.

No solution to shutdown in sight before Dems take House

By JULIET LINDERMAN and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's looking increasingly like the partial government shutdown will be handed off to a divided government to solve in the new year — the first big confrontation between President Donald Trump and Democrats — as agreement eludes Washington in the waning days of the Republican monopoly on power.

Now nearly a week old, the impasse is idling hundreds of thousands of federal workers and beginning to pinch citizens who count on varied public services. Gates are closed at some national parks, the government won't issue new federal flood insurance policies and in New York, the chief judge of Manhattan federal courts suspended work on civil cases involving U.S. government lawyers, including several civil lawsuits in which Trump himself is a defendant.

Congress is closing out the week without a resolution in sight over the issue holding up an agreement — Trump's demand for money to build a border wall with Mexico and Democrats' refusal to give him what he wants.

That sets up a struggle upfront when Democrats take control of the House on Jan. 3. Trump has signaled he welcomes the fight as he heads toward his own bid for re-election in 2020.

"This isn't about the Wall," Trump tweeted Thursday. "This is only about the Dems not letting Donald Trump & the Republicans have a win." He added Democrats may be able to block him now, "but we have the issue, Border Security. 2020!"

With another long holiday weekend coming, just days before House Republicans relinquish control, there is little expectation of a quick fix. Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi has vowed to pass legislation as soon as she takes the gavel, which is expected when the new Congress convenes, to reopen the 15 shuttered departments and dozens of agencies now hit by the partial shutdown.

"If they can't do it before January 3, then we will do it," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., incoming chairman of the Rules Committee. "We're going to do the responsible thing. We're going to behave like adults and do our job."

But even that may be difficult without a compromise because the Senate will remain in Republican hands and Trump's signature will be needed to turn any bill into law. Negotiations continue between Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill, but there's only so much Congress can do without the president.

Trump is not budging, having panned Democratic offers to keep money at current levels — \$1.3 billion for border fencing, but not the wall. Senate Republicans approved that compromise in an earlier bill with Democrats but now say they won't be voting on any more unless something is agreed to by all sides, including Trump.

"I think it's obvious that until the president decides he can sign something — or something is presented to him — that we are where we are," said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., who opened the Senate on Thursday for a session that only lasted minutes.

"Call it anything," he added, "barrier, fence, I won't say the 'w' word."

Trump long promised that Mexico would pay for the wall, but Mexico refuses to do so.

Federal workers and contractors forced to stay home or work without pay are experiencing mounting stress from the impasse.

As the partial shutdown stretched toward a second week, Ethan James, 21, a minimum-wage contractor sidelined from his job as an office worker at the Interior Department, wondered if he'd be able to make his rent. Contractors, unlike most federal employees, may never get back pay for being idled. "I'm getting nervous," he said. "I live check to check right now."

For those without a financial cushion, even a few days of lost wages during the shutdown could have dire consequences.

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Roughly federal 420,000 workers were deemed essential and are working unpaid, unable to take any sick days or vacation. An additional 380,000 are staying home without pay.

Like James, Mary Morrow, a components engineer on contract for NASA, is in a predicament. In addition to caring for a family largely on her own, she's got a mortgage.

"I have three teenage boys, it's near Christmas time and we just spent money, there are credit card bills and normal bills and it's really nerve-wracking," she said. "It's scary."

Steve Reaves, president of Federal Emergency Management Agency union, said the shutdown could have consequences that stretch beyond a temporary suspension of salary. Many federal government jobs require a security clearance, he said, and missed mortgage payments or deepening debt could hurt their clearance.

David Dollard, a Federal Bureau of Prisons employee and chief steward for the American Federation of Government Employees Local 709 union in Colorado, said at least two agency employees lost their homes after the 2013 shutdown suspended their salaries. Bureau of Prisons employees are considered essential, and must work without pay. The agency is already understaffed, Dollard said. Shutdown conditions make everything worse.

"You start out at \$44,000 a year, there's not much room for anything else as far saving money for the next government shutdown, so it puts staff in a very hard situation," he said. "We've got single fathers who have child support, alimony. It's very hard to figure out what you're going to do."

Candice Nesbitt, 51, has worked for 1½ years for the U.S. Coast Guard, the only branch of the military affected by the shutdown. About 44,000 Coast Guard employees are working this week without pay; 6,000, including Nesbitt, have been furloughed.

Nesbitt worked for a contractor but took a pay cut in exchange for the stability of a government job. She has a mortgage, is the guardian of her special needs, 5-year-old grandson, and makes about \$45,000 a year, she said. Any lapse in payment could plunge her into debt. "It shakes me to the core," she said.

In Iowa, Democrats see 2020 as head vs. heart moment

By THOMAS BEAUMONT, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The romance of Barack Obama's surprise victory in Iowa hangs like a championship banner in the minds of Democrats in the state more than a decade after they set him on the road to being the nation's first African-American president.

But as they begin to think about Iowa's 2020 presidential caucuses — in which as many as two dozen Democratic candidates may seek their support — the wistfulness is fading fast. The same early Obama supporters who admit to being swept off their feet by the then-Illinois senator are now looking steely-eyed for someone who can simply seize the presidency from Donald Trump.

"We've got to go for the greater good of winning this election, no matter what," said Nancy Bobo, an early Iowa Obama backer who attended a 10-year commemoration of the 2008 campaign at a Des Moines bar this year. "We need to learn to compromise in a way that moves us ahead, and not keep looking back."

More than a year away, the 2020 caucuses are already shaping up for many of Obama's earliest supporters to be more about their heads than their hearts.

"The innocence in us wants to fall in love," said Niki Neems, an Iowa City Democratic activist who pledged herself to Obama before he even announced his candidacy. "But whoever we all think stands the best chance, then let's get out there and start door-knocking. So, for me, it's OK to just fall in like."

The shift among Obama's devout supporters reflects the baggage many of them are carrying into the next caucus campaign. For one, Iowa Democrats uniformly criticize Trump as uniquely harmful to U.S. institutions and the nation's international standing. But there's also a sense that Hillary Clinton's doomed bid for the presidency began in Iowa, where Democrats didn't warm to her in the same way they did to Obama.

Neems and others said that lack of an emotional connection contributed to Clinton only narrowly beating Bernie Sanders in Iowa in 2016, foreshadowing the trouble she'd face in taking on Trump.

Now, some Democrats say they want to pay less attention to their feelings and focus more on a candi-

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date with a serious plan to reverse Trump's actions.

"People can connect with someone as long as they have a vision, have big ideas, and can express them," said Tricia Zebrowski, a retired University of Iowa professor who was among the first to pledge her support for Obama. "That's the kind of person who can wrest the presidency from Trump."

In fact, she speaks highly of Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, hardly a dynamic speaker on par with Obama. But Zebrowski said Klobuchar has impressed her as embodying common sense and projecting little of the ego that Trump exudes.

More than a dozen Democrats weighing 2020 presidential campaigns have already begun testing their ability to connect with Iowans. Notably, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker paced the stage at an Iowa Democratic Party fall banquet, repeatedly quoting Martin Luther King in a sermon-like speech to 1,200 of the state's most influential party activists, officials and donors in October.

There's a recognition among many of Obama's early supporters that his rise in Iowa was a unique moment in American politics, attributable in part to his own personal strengths at retail politics, his soaring oratory and his familiarity with street-level political organizing, which is key to delivering support for the caucuses.

The combination elevated the African American in the vastly white state over not just the establishment favorite, Clinton, but also former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, who had spent nearly six years building goodwill, especially among rural Iowa Democrats.

Obama seemed right for the times, offering hope first during the divisive Iraq war and then a devastating financial collapse. In 2020, Democrats will look to someone matched specifically to contrast with Trump, said Dale Todd, one of Obama's earliest activists in the Cedar Rapids area.

"If you try to replicate it, it ends up being false," said Todd, who also attended the commemoration this year. "The intangible was Obama."

And while they are older and wiser, some of Obama's first devotees say change, as it was in 2008, will again be the winning message.

"We'd be kidding ourselves if we kept looking for Obama in every single presidential hopeful," said Deidre DeJear, Iowa Democrats' 2018 candidate for Iowa secretary of state who worked on Obama's 2008 campaign as a college student. "But people are ready for change. They don't know what change looks like. But when it shows up, they know what it feels like."

Global stocks gain after Wall Street rally, Japan falls

By **JOE McDONALD, AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Most global stock markets advanced Friday while Japan edged down following Wall Street's rally after a turbulent week.

KEEPING SCORE: In early trading, Germany's DAX rose 0.7 percent to 10,454.51 points and France's CAC 40 advanced 0.7 percent to 4,627.44. London's FTSE 100 added 0.1 percent to 6,655.09. On Thursday, the DAX slid 2.4 percent, the FTSE 100 gave up 1.5 percent and France's CAC 40 gave up 0.6 percent. On Wall Street, the future for the Standard & Poor's 500 index declined 0.1 percent and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.3 percent.

ASIA'S DAY: The Shanghai Composite Index advanced 0.4 percent to 2,493.90 while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 shed 0.3 percent to 20,014.77. Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended up 0.1 percent at 25,504.20 and Seoul's Kospi added 0.6 percent to 2,041.04. India's Sensex gained 1 percent to 36,163.22 and benchmarks in Taiwan, New Zealand and Singapore also rose.

WALL STREET: U.S. stocks staged a last-minute turnaround that put the market on track to end the volatile week with a gain. That followed its best day in 10 years. Health care and technology companies, banks and industrial stocks accounted for much of the gains. The S&P 500 rose 0.9 percent, the Dow gained 1.1 percent and the Nasdaq composite added 0.4 percent. The downturn that began in October has intensified this month, erasing the market's 2018 gains and nudging the S&P 500 closer to its worst year since 2008. Stocks are on track for their worst December since 1931.

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ANALYST'S QUOTE: The upturn might be due less to revived sentiment than to traders covering short positions at year's end in thin trading, said Vishnu Varathan of Mizuho Bank in a report. This "looks suspiciously like a dead cat bounce," said Varathan. "Rather than prematurely rejoicing over a dead bear (and return to a bull market), it may be far more sensible to worry about a dead cat (bounce) that could quickly fizzle and revert to a more prolonged price correction."

JAPANESE FACTORIES: Japan's index of industrial production fell 1.1 percent in November compared with the previous month. Shipments declined 1.4 percent. Growth is below industry expectations, reflecting "weak external demand," said Harumi Taguchi of IHS Markit in a report.

CHINA PROFITS: Profits at major Chinese industrial companies fell in November for the first time in three years amid an economic slowdown and trade tension with Washington. Profit for producers in steel, construction materials, oil, chemicals and equipment manufacturing declined 1.8 percent from a year earlier, a reverse from October's 3.6 percent gain.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude jumped \$1.34 to \$45.96 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract plunged \$1.59 on Thursday to close at \$44.61. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained \$1.35 to \$54.08 per barrel in London. It fell \$1.97 the previous session to \$52.73.

CURRENCY: The dollar declined to 110.47 yen from Thursday's 111.01 yen. The euro advanced to \$1.1458 from \$1.1430.

Hui poet fears for his people as China 'Sinicizes' religion

By SAM MCNEIL, Associated Press

JINAN, China (AP) — Cui Haoxin is too young to remember the days of his people's oppression under Mao Zedong.

The 39-year-old poet was born after the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, when the Hui — China's second-largest Muslim ethnic group — were among the masses tormented by the Red Guard.

In the years since, the Hui (pronounced HWAY) generally have been supportive of the government and mostly spared the kind of persecution endured by China's largest Muslim group, the Uighur.

There are signs, though, that that is changing. Cui fears both that history may be repeating itself and for his own safety as he tries to hold the ruling Communist Party accountable.

In August, town officials in the Hui region of Ningxia issued a demolition order for the landmark Grand Mosque in Weizhou, though they later backed off in the face of protests.

More recently, authorities in nearby Gansu province ordered closed a school that taught Arabic, the language of the Quran and other Islamic religious texts. The school had employed and served mainly Hui since 1984. And a Communist Party official from Ningxia visited Xinjiang, center of Uighur oppression, to "study and investigate how Xinjiang fights terrorism and legally manages religious affairs."

China under President Xi Jinping is clamping down on minorities, tightening control over a wide spectrum of religious and political activity. In some places, a campaign to "Sinicize" religion has prompted authorities to seize Bibles, remove the "halal" designation from food products, demolish churches and strip mosques of loudspeakers and Islamic crescents and domes.

Cui has spoken out against government intrusions. He is working on a novel with a nightmarish plot: believers are brutalized by demons in a Cultural Revolution in Hell. "The Muslims resisted and tried to protect the mosque," he said, describing the work. "They failed."

He worries that violence lies ahead.

"One has dignity. For a person, it is his or her bottom-line," he said. "If the persecution is too unbearable, if something happens, as I said, there could be a disaster."

Cui speaks eloquently about his people, who claim descent from Persian and Arab traders who came to China 1,300 years ago.

The 10 million Hui living across China generally speak Mandarin - Cui is a former teacher of the standard Chinese dialect - and follow many Chinese cultural practices. They enjoy relative freedom of worship

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compared to the Uighurs, some of whom call the Hui "tawuz," which means watermelon in the Uighur's Turkic language.

"Green or Islamic on the outside, and red or Communist on the inside," writes University of Toronto professor Isabelle Cote in a study on Uighur attacks on Hui in Xinjiang from 2009 to 2013. Farther back, Hui served Chinese emperors as shock troops repressing Uighur rebellions.

In Beijing, Arabic signs mark Hui bakeries, teahouses, halal restaurants and a thousand-year old mosque bustling with activity in the historically Islamic neighborhood of Niujie.

Ma Changli, who has run a butcher shop in the enclave for the past five years, said police help provide security for Friday prayers at the mosque.

"Our country has always been pretty supportive to our worship," the 39-year-old butcher said, standing in front of an Islamic inscription and hanging lamb and beef racks.

While the Hui face prejudice from the Han Chinese majority, they are proud to be Chinese and have a "positive outlook for the future," said David Stroup, a University of Oklahoma professor who met Hui across China in 2016.

Many saw an opportunity in China's Belt and Road Initiative, a \$1 trillion trade and infrastructure initiative that runs across several Muslim-majority nations in central Asia and Africa, he said. They aspired to become middlemen on a revived Silk Road linking China with Islamic nations.

"It was going to be an opportunity for the Hui to play an important role as ambassadors to the Islamic world," Stroup said.

It came as a shock, he said, when new regulations targeted the practices of Hui alongside those of other religious groups earlier this year. Stroup said the shift has dampened optimism in a community that saw language and religion as links to trading partners in the Muslim world.

Tension bubbled up in August in Weizhou, a dusty Muslim-majority town in China's northwestern "Quran Belt."

The town's pride and joy is a gleaming white mosque with four minarets and nine domes tipped with crescent moons that dwarfs a surrounding warren of brick and concrete homes.

Officials issued a demolition order for the Grand Mosque, alleging it had been "illegally expanded" and adding that 1.07 million yuan (\$154,765) from foreign sources had been received by four local mosques - financing that would be illegal under Chinese law.

Hundreds of Hui flocked to the mosque's courtyard for a rarity in China: a political protest. City authorities detained Associated Press journalists and prevented them from conducting interviews at the mosque.

The protesters' success was even rarer. The mosque remained unscathed, if draped in a banner reading in Chinese: "Stick to directives of Sinicized religion."

Weeks later, a top Communist propaganda official in Ningxia blamed the incident on "an oversimplified administrative decision" by local authorities.

"It originally should not have happened," Bai Shangcheng, director-general of the regional Communist Party department that oversees religious groups, said at a news conference in Beijing.

Dissent simmered quietly in the Hui community after the mosque incident, according to Cui, who circumvented China's internet censorship to tweet about the protest and feed video to a Turkish television station.

In late November, the Communist Party-run Global Times reported that Ningxia had signed an anti-terrorism cooperation agreement with Xinjiang during a visit by Ningxia Communist Party head Zhang Yunsheng.

China has set up a vast security apparatus in Xinjiang with pervasive police checkpoints and surveillance cameras. By some estimates, more than 1 million Uighurs and Kazakhs have been detained in internment camps in a crackdown on extremism. Two former camp detainees have told the AP that some Hui have been swept up in the clampdown too.

The order to close the Arabic language school came early this month, the Global Times reported. An unnamed expert in Beijing told the newspaper that teaching Arabic sometimes arouses public concern if

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it crosses over into preaching religious content.

The article quoted China's education law: "The State separates education from religion."

Cui is one of the few Chinese citizens disturbed enough — and brave enough — to criticize the Communist Party openly. For that, he has experienced censorship, detention, and "home visits" by police.

He spoke to the AP at his home in Jinan, a city in eastern China where his family traces its roots back five centuries. Skyscrapers dwarf old mosques and boisterous halal restaurants with gold domes, Arabic script and crescents.

He doesn't drink alcohol or eat pork, but neither does he pray five times a day. His bedside table is stacked with poetry and novels, not religious books. Hanging in the living room is a framed red embroidery by his mother of the Islamic profession of faith in yellow Arabic stitching.

It was underneath this tapestry that police entered his home earlier this year to demand he stop criticizing the government online. Cui posts attacks on Beijing's policies related to Muslims in China and abroad, such as the government's support of Myanmar despite widespread criticism of its treatment of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority.

A few months later, on Nov. 27, police brought him to the local Public Security Bureau for a few hours of questioning. A recent Human Rights Watch report said that China started in November "targeting Twitter users in China as part of a nationwide crackdown on social media." Cui refused to stop or delete his tweets.

Sixty years ago, Communist Party cadres descended on the historically Hui city of Linxia to excise "superstitions" in the city in a "struggle against the privileges of feudalism and religion," according to a 2016 book by Matthew Erie, an Oxford University professor of modern China studies.

Red Guards lit bonfires with wood from demolished mosques and tombs, Erie writes in "China and Islam: The Prophet, the Party, and Law." They forced Muslims to wear signs reading "enemies of the state."

Cui fears the current crackdown on religion will return China to those days of blood.

At a teahouse in Jinan, as steam from his jasmine tea mixes with the scent from a tray of sweets, he recites from his poem "Letter from Prison:"

"It seems like I can see the bulldozer running wild in the Thousand and One Nights.

The angel upon my shoulder urges me: 'Tell the truth under the grey sky.'"

Associated Press researcher Fu Ting contributed to this report.

North Korea 'Singapore shops' reveal familiar sanction gaps

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — Despite the unwanted publicity of a criminal trial for one of their main suppliers, business is booming at Pyongyang's 'Singapore shops,' which sell everything from Ukrainian vodka to brand-name knock-offs from China. The stores stock many of the very things United Nations' sanctions banning trade in luxury goods are intended to block and provide a nagging reminder that not all potential trade partners are lining up behind the U.N.'s pronouncements or the Trump administration's policy of maximum pressure on the North.

Especially when there's a buck — or a few million bucks — to be made.

The stores are anything but secret.

They are well marked, open to walk-ins and distribute their own membership cards to reward regular customers. Until recently, the name of their Singaporean partner, the OCN Group, was printed on the Bugsae shop's plastic shopping bags. And while being the focus of the court case that could land OCN's former director in prison for a very long time, they continue to unabashedly specialize in imported products — perfumes, fine jewelry, wines, clothing and cosmetics — that would appear to blatantly violate U.N. restrictions.

Formally known as the Potonggang Ryugyong Shop and the Bugsae Shop, the stores are a fixture of the upscale shopping scene in Pyongyang, catering to the capital's elites, Chinese businessmen and members

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of the diplomatic corps. Purchases can be made in dollars, euros and Chinese yuan. The price in each is displayed digitally on the cash register.

Both stores have been substantially renovated since last summer.

The Ryugyong store now has a coffee shop behind the imported shoe section on its second floor. The Bugsae shop has installed dark wood paneling and glass casing for its wines and spirits corner, which was recently dominated by vodkas from the Ukraine. It has separate display areas for snacks and soft drinks from Japan, Malaysia and China, a row dedicated to fancy shampoos, and a section in the rear for imported electronic appliances and household goods.

The well-stocked shelves belie the hit supplies must have taken with the arrest of their former Singaporean trading partner.

Ng Kheng Wah, 56, faces 80 charges of violating United Nations sanctions for allegedly supplying \$6 million worth of luxury goods to the Bugsae Shop from 2010 to 2017. This includes watches "clad with a precious metal," jewelry, musical instruments and wine. While OCN is not mentioned, the charges accuse Ng of trying to defraud banks through another of his companies, T Specialist International.

Ng, who stepped down as an OCN director in March, also faces 81 charges for working with a partner identified as Wang Zhi Guo to deceive DBS, the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp. Ltd and Malayan Banking Berhad to carry out his deals, issuing false invoices for the sale of Watari Instant Noodles to T Specialist, most amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Ng was charged on July 18 and granted bail of 500,000 Singapore dollars (\$364,645). A pretrial conference is scheduled for Jan. 17. For each offense under the U.N. sanctions act, Ng faces a maximum sentence of five years in jail and a 100,000 Singapore dollars (\$72,929) fine. Each cheating charge comes with an additional maximum jail term of 10 years and an unspecified fine.

Singapore authorities have accused another Singaporean and a North Korean man of helping to supply luxury goods to Pyongyang. They are also investigating a Singaporean businessman who is facing criminal charges in the United States for allegedly violating sanctions against North Korea.

Ng denied any wrongdoing in an interview with the Singaporean newspaper The Straits Times shortly after reports of possible violations became public. He said OCN was the sole distributor of the popular Japanese Pokka brand canned drinks in North Korea from 2000 and 2012, but claimed OCN dropped that when Japan imposed sanctions banning such exports. Documents presented in court show that in early 2014 his other business, T Specialist International, presented a bogus invoice to a bank from which it was seeking a loan, claiming it had received \$522,410 for Pokka sales.

The case hints at an uncomfortable truth that has long hamstrung efforts to make sanctions enforcement really bite: engaging the North is not as uniformly taboo with potential trading partners as Washington might like.

China has long been Pyongyang's biggest pipeline. With Ng on trial, it's almost certainly where most of the Singapore shops' goodies come from, even if they originate elsewhere. The two countries have a long border, a rail connection, and almost-daily flights between their capitals that allow for the transport of a significant amount of goods. Russia is another important trader. So have been interests in countries like Egypt, which helped fund and set up the North's mobile phone system, and HB Oil of Mongolia, which was involved in a 2013 deal to build gas stations in Pyongyang.

Singapore, which in June hosted the summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, has relatively close ties with the North. North Korea runs an embassy in Singapore, though Singapore does not have an embassy in Pyongyang.

The two also have a long history of doing business.

While rumors swirled about how the Trump summit might lead to the North getting its first McDonalds, a trio of Singaporean businessmen had already gotten the jump on the Pyongyang burger market, in 2009. Burgers hot off the grill of the chain of fast food restaurants started by Patrick Soh, Quek Cher Lan and Timothy Tan called "Samtaesong," or Three Big Stars, are almost required eating at an amusement park next to Kim Il Sung Stadium.

The menu at another somewhat fancier Samtaesong outlet has a wide selection of coffee, smoothies, fried chicken and even "Sausage, Egg and Cheese McGriddles" on its menu.

Soh, also speaking to The Straits Times, claims to currently receive no income from the restaurants and says he has cut back his travel to Pyongyang.

Associated Press writer Annabelle Liang in Singapore contributed to this report. Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram: @EricTalmadge

Despite #MeToo, rape cases still confound police

By JIM MUSTIAN and MICHAEL R. SISAK, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The #MeToo movement is empowering victims of sexual assault to speak up like never before, but what should be a watershed moment for holding assailants accountable has coincided with a troubling trend: Police departments in the U.S. are becoming less and less likely to successfully close rape investigations.

The so-called "clearance rate" for rape cases fell last year to its lowest point since at least the 1960s, according to FBI data provided to The Associated Press. That nadir may be driven, at least in part, by a greater willingness by police to correctly classify rape cases and leave them open even when there is little hope of solving them.

But experts say it also reflects the fact that not enough resources are being devoted to investigating sexual assault at a time when more victims are entrusting police with their harrowing experiences.

"This is the second-most serious crime in the FBI's crime index," said Carol Tracy, executive director of the Women's Law Project in Philadelphia, "and it simply doesn't get the necessary resources from police."

Police successfully closed just 32 percent of rape investigations nationwide in 2017, according to the data, ranking it second only to robbery as the least-solved violent crime. That statistic is down from about 62 percent in 1964, despite advances such as DNA testing.

The FBI provided The AP with a dataset of rape statistics dating back to the early 1960s — a table that includes more complete data than the snapshot the bureau releases each fall.

The grim report card has prompted debate among criminal justice experts, with some attributing the falling clearance rate to an antiquated approach to investigations.

"You'd figure with all the new technology — and the fact that the overwhelming majority of victims of sexual assault know their attacker — the clearance rates would be a lot higher," said Joseph Giacalone, a former New York City police sergeant who teaches at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

"It's almost as if forensics and DNA has let us down," he said.

Experts agree that sexual assault is one of the most confounding crimes police confront. Many investigations lack corroborating witnesses and physical evidence. A significant chunk of complaints are reported months or years after the fact. Researchers believe only a third of rapes are reported at all.

Historically, some detectives also discouraged women from pursuing tough-to-prove charges against boyfriends, husbands or close acquaintances. The declining clearance rate could mean that investigators in some places are finally classifying rape investigations properly, said Kim Lonsway, research director at End Violence Against Women International.

Rather than hastily "clearing" certain tough-to-solve cases, she said, some police departments have begun "suspending" them, meaning they remain open indefinitely. That leaves open the possibility there could someday be an arrest.

"This may be an indicator of some positive things," Lonsway said.

The FBI's clearance numbers provide an incomplete picture of how often rapists are brought to justice. That's because they also include "exceptional clearances," where police close an investigation without charging anyone, for reasons beyond the department's control. That could be because a victim stopped cooperating or the suspect died or is incarcerated in another state, among other reasons.

The figures do not specify the percentage of rape cases that are exceptionally cleared compared with

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those resulting in arrests, but state data can fill out the picture in some places.

In Detroit, for instance, police investigated 664 reported rapes last year but made just 44 arrests, according to Michigan data. Another 15 cases were closed for other reasons. That would give Detroit a clearance rate of 8.9 percent, even though only 6.6 percent of reported rapes resulted in an arrest.

Sam Gaspardo said that when she reported in 2011 that she had been sexually assaulted, police in Woodbury, Minnesota, lacked a sense of urgency.

Investigators in the St. Paul suburb expressed frustration that she delayed reporting the attack for more than a year and couldn't recall the precise date. One time, when she phoned to follow up her case, she was put on hold indefinitely.

"To me, it felt like it was invalidated," Gaspardo said. "I was just completely dismissed."

Woodbury Police Cmdr. Steve Wills acknowledged Gaspardo's complaint fell through the cracks and was not investigated for years, something he called "a system failure."

"Obviously, we own that," Wills said.

Wills said authorities have "no reason not to believe" Gaspardo but decided a few weeks ago they could not prove her alleged attacker had forced her into intercourse.

He acknowledged police would have been in a far better position to investigate the case had they begun looking into the matter immediately.

"It can make a person so angry," Gaspardo said. "Are women supposed to start wearing body cameras when they're alone in a room with somebody?"

Many police sex assault units have heavy workloads and insufficient staffing, said Kevin Strom, the director of RTI International's Center for Policing Research & Investigative Science, a research center based in North Carolina.

"I think that has a major impact in terms of influencing the ability of law enforcement to successfully clear these cases," Strom said.

The clearance rate in rape cases dropped steadily in the 1960s, plateaued at nearly 50 percent through most of the 70s, 80s and 90s, then began a steady yearly decline that persisted through last year, according to the statistics collected by the FBI.

In 2013, the FBI significantly broadened the definition of rape in its Uniform Crime Reporting system to include oral penetration and attacks on men. After the revision, the number of rapes counted in the system soared from an average of around 84,500 per year between 1995 and 2012, to nearly 126,400 in 2016. The clearance rate after the adjustment continued to tick down, falling from 38 percent to 32 percent.

The number leapt again to 166,000 in 2017, a year when sexual assault got unprecedented national attention in the wake of allegations made against President Donald Trump and Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. Both men deny assaulting anyone.

Rape complaints in New York City, for instance, surged 24.5 percent as the #MeToo movement took off, according to city crime statistics.

"I think that has a major impact in terms of influencing the ability of law enforcement to successfully clear these cases," he said.

The NYPD, the nation's biggest municipal police force, transferred three dozen investigators to the special victims division in April, trimming a detective's average caseload from 77 to 64. The department also started an advertising campaign encouraging sexual assault victims to come forward.

"We believe that the stigma has been removed to a degree," said Lori Pollock, the department's chief of crime control strategies, "so people are much more comfortable — especially in domestic situations — to come forward and report rapes that are happening now and rapes that have happened in the past."

Father of dead Guatemalan boy heard rumors they could cross

By SONIA PEREZ D., Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — The father of an 8-year-old Guatemalan boy who died in U.S. custody took his son to the border after hearing rumors that parents and their children would be allowed to migrate to the

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United States and escape the poverty in their homeland, the boy's stepsister told The Associated Press. Felipe Gomez Alonzo died Monday at a New Mexico hospital after suffering coughing, vomiting and fever, authorities said. It was the second such death this month. Another Guatemalan child, 7-year-old Jakelin Caal, died in U.S. custody on Dec. 8. Both deaths are under investigation.

"We heard rumors that they could pass (into the United States). They said they could pass with the children," said Catarina Gomez Lucas, the boy's 21-year-old stepsister, explaining why Felipe and his father, Agustin Gomez, made the dangerous journey.

Gomez Lucas would not say who spread the rumors or who transported the father and son to the border from Yalambojoch in Huehuetenango province, a poor community of returnees from Mexico who had fled Guatemala in the bloodiest years of that country's 1960-1996 civil war. The stepsister spoke to the AP on Wednesday by telephone from Yalambojoch.

The boy's death came during an ongoing dispute over border security and with the U.S. government partially shut down over President Donald Trump's insistence on funding for a longer border wall.

The Trump administration has long argued smugglers capitalize on vulnerable parents because of "loop-holes" in American law, such as anti-trafficking legislation passed in 2008 that effectively prevents the immediate deportations of Central American children.

After hearing the rumors, Agustin Gomez thought he should take advantage of "the opportunity" to fulfill his son's dreams. He grabbed a few changes of clothing, bought the boy new shoes and left with what money he had, Gomez Lucas said.

Felipe "always wanted a bicycle," and in the U.S. he wouldn't have to endure the poverty and lack of opportunity in Guatemala, she said.

The boy's mother, 31-year-old Catarina Alonzo Perez, said she spoke with her son the day before they arrived at the U.S. border.

"He wasn't sick on the way; he wasn't sick here," she said through her stepdaughter in the Mayan language known as Chuj.

Both Felipe and Jakelin came from rural communities with extreme poverty. Both were taken to the border by their parents and detained by the U.S. Border Patrol before they fell ill.

It appears Felipe got sick after authorities moved him from El Paso, Texas, to Alamogordo, New Mexico, because of overcrowding.

"He was very happy to leave" on the voyage, Gomez Lucas said, so the family does not understand what happened.

She said the family stopped hearing from Felipe's father on Dec. 18, when he and the boy were detained. On Dec. 25, he called to say the boy had died in a hospital.

"He told us that (Felipe) was fine all day, that he was playing with other children. But then he said he felt bad and his stomach ached," the stepsister said.

Felipe told his father he did not know what was wrong with him and that it felt like something was stuck in his throat, Gomez Lucas said.

The father said Felipe asked him not to cry because he "was not going to get better," according to the boy's stepsister.

Felipe was taken to a hospital, and the father said he gave the boy to doctors, who soon informed him his son had died.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said the boy displayed signs of illness Monday and was taken with his father to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with a cold and a fever and prescribed amoxicillin and ibuprofen. He was released that afternoon but returned in the evening with nausea and vomiting and died there just after midnight, CBP said.

An autopsy performed on 8-year-old Felipe shows he had the flu, the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator said in a statement late Thursday, adding that more tests need to be done before a cause of death can be determined.

After the two deaths, the government announced that it would conduct additional medical screening for children and consider other changes.

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Agustin Gomez was drowning in debt, Gomez Lucas said. He sold a piece of land to survive, but the money was not enough, so he decided to take out a loan and travel to the United States.

Felipe is survived by five siblings, two from his father's first marriage and three from his stepmother and father.

The boy lived with his father's family in a small wooden house with earthen floors. It lacked basic services. Gomez Lucas said Felipe's father earned about \$6 a day through temporary farm jobs or harvesting coffee, which was not enough to support the family.

As with Jakelin's family, Felipe's relatives now must deal with the death of a child, a debt and their continued worry about the fate of Agustin Gomez.

Oscar Padilla, the Guatemalan consul in Phoenix, confirmed that the father is still detained by the Border Patrol.

"My father is suffering because of the boy. We do not know what will happen. We have nothing to live with. We do not have money," Gomez Lucas said.

Furious Iraqi lawmakers demand US troop withdrawal

By PHILIP ISSA, Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — President Donald Trump's surprise trip to Iraq may have quieted criticism at home that he had yet to visit troops in a combat zone, but it has infuriated Iraqi politicians who on Thursday demanded the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

"Arrogant" and "a violation of national sovereignty" were but a few examples of the disapproval emanating from Baghdad following Trump's meeting Wednesday with U.S. servicemen and women at the al-Asad Airbase.

Trips by U.S. presidents to conflict zones are typically shrouded in secrecy and subject to strict security measures, and Trump's was no exception. Few in Iraq or elsewhere knew the U.S. president was in the country until minutes before he left.

But this trip came as curbing foreign influence in Iraqi affairs has become a hot-button political issue in Baghdad, and Trump's perceived presidential faux-pas was failing to meet with the prime minister in a break with diplomatic custom for any visiting head of state.

On the ground for only about three hours, the American president told the men and women with the U.S. military that Islamic State forces have been vanquished, and he defended his decision against all advice to withdraw U.S. troops from neighboring Syria. He said the U.S. was once again respected as a nation, and declared: "We're no longer the suckers, folks."

The abruptness of his visit left lawmakers in Baghdad smarting and drawing unfavorable comparisons to the occupation of Iraq after the 2003 invasion.

"Trump needs to know his limits. The American occupation of Iraq is over," said Sabah al-Saidi, the head of one of two main blocs in Iraq's parliament.

Trump, he said, had slipped into Iraq, "as though Iraq is a state of the United States."

While Trump didn't meet with any officials, he spoke with Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi by phone. A planned meeting between the two leaders was canceled over a "difference in points of view" over arrangements, according to the prime minister's office.

The visit could have unintended consequences for American policy, with officials from both sides of Iraq's political divide calling for a vote in Parliament to expel U.S. forces from the country.

The president, who kept to the U.S. air base approximately 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Baghdad, said he had no plans to withdraw the 5,200 troops in the country. He said Ain al-Asad could be used for U.S. air strikes inside Syria.

The suggestion ran counter to the current sentiment of Iraqi politics, which favors claiming sovereignty over foreign and domestic policy and staying above the fray in regional conflicts.

"Iraq should not be a platform for the Americans to settle their accounts with either the Russians or the Iranians in the region," said Hakim al-Zamili, a senior lawmaker in al-Saidi's Islah bloc in Parliament.

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U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq as part of the coalition against the Islamic State group. American forces withdrew in 2011 after invading in 2003 but returned in 2014 at the invitation of the Iraqi government to help fight the jihadist group. Trump's visit was the first by a U.S. president since Barack Obama met with then-Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki at a U.S. base outside Baghdad in 2009.

After defeating IS militants in their last urban bastions last year, Iraqi politicians and militia leaders are speaking out against the continued presence of U.S. forces on Iraqi soil.

Supporters of the populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr won big in national elections in May, campaigning on a platform to curb U.S. and rival Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs. Al-Sadr's lawmakers now form the core of the Islah bloc, which is headed by al-Saidi in Parliament.

The rival Binaa bloc, commanded by politicians and militia leaders close to Iran, also does not favor the U.S.

Qais Khazali, the head of the Iran-backed Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia that fought key battles against IS in northern Iraq, promised on Twitter that Parliament would vote to expel U.S. forces from Iraq, or the militias would force them out by "other means."

Khazali was jailed by British and U.S. forces from 2007 to 2010 for managing sections of the Shia insurgency against the occupation during those years.

Trump's visit would be a "great moral boost to the political parties, armed factions, and others who oppose the American presence in Iraq," Iraqi political analyst Ziad al-Arar said.

Still, the U.S. and Iraq developed considerable military and intelligence ties in the war against IS, and they continue to pay off in operations against militants gone into hiding.

Earlier in the month, Iraqi forces called in an airstrike by U.S.-coalition forces to destroy a tunnel used by IS militants in the Atshanah mountains in north Iraq. Four militants were killed, according to the coalition.

A hasty departure of U.S. forces would jeopardize such arrangements, said Iraqi analyst Hamza Mustafa.

Relations between the U.S. and Iraq also extend beyond military ties. U.S. companies have considerable interests in Iraq's petrochemical industry, and American diplomats are often brokers between Iraq's fractious political elite.

Iraq's Sunni politicians have been largely quiet about the presidential visit, reflecting the ties they have cultivated with the U.S. to counterbalance the might of the country's Iran-backed and predominantly-Shiite militias.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Abdul-Mahdi accepted Trump's invitation to the White House during their call, though the prime minister's office has so far refused to confirm that.

Associated Press writers Ahmed Sami and Ali Jabar contributed to this report.

Federal workers face grim prospect of lengthy shutdown

By JULIET LINDERMAN and LISA MASCARO, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three days, maybe four. That's how long Ethan James, 21, says he can realistically miss work before he's struggling.

So as the partial government shutdown stretched into its sixth day with no end in sight, James, a minimum-wage contractor sidelined from his job as an office worker at the Interior Department, was worried. "I live check to check right now," he said, and risks missing his rent or phone payment. Contractors, unlike most federal employees, may never get back pay for being idled. "I'm getting nervous," he said.

Federal workers and contractors forced to stay home or work without pay are experiencing mounting stress from the impasse affecting hundreds of thousands of them. For those without a financial cushion, even a few days of lost wages during the shutdown over President Donald Trump's border wall could have dire consequences.

As well, the disruption is starting to pinch citizens who count on a variety of public services, beyond those who've been finding gates closed at national parks. For example, the government won't issue new federal flood insurance policies or renew expiring ones.

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Trump and congressional leaders appear no closer to a resolution over his demand for \$5 billion for the border wall that could now push the shutdown into the new year. The House and Senate gavelled in for a perfunctory session Thursday, but quickly adjourned without action. No votes are expected until next week, and even that's not guaranteed. Lawmakers are mostly away for the holidays and will be given 24-hour notice to return, with Republican senators saying they won't vote until all parties, including Trump, agree to a deal.

The president spent part of the day tweeting about the shutdown, insisting "this isn't about the Wall," but about Democrats denying him "a win."

"Do the Dems realize that most of the people not getting paid are Democrats?" he asked in one tweet, citing no evidence for that claim. That earned him a reprimand from Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, who tweeted: "Federal employees don't go to work wearing red or blue jerseys. They're public servants."

Roughly federal 420,000 workers were deemed essential and are working unpaid, unable to take any sick days or vacation. An additional 380,000 are staying home without pay. While furloughed federal workers have been given back pay in previous shutdowns, it's not guaranteed. The Senate passed a bill last week to make sure workers will be paid. The House will probably follow suit.

The longer the shutdown lasts, the more government activities will grind to a halt. It's already caused a lapse in money for nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice.

Many national parks have closed while some have limited facilities. The National Flood Insurance Program announced it will no longer renew or issue policies during the shutdown.

"I think it's obvious that until the president decides he can sign something — or something is presented to him — that we are where we are," said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., who opened the Senate for the minutes-long session. "We just have to get through this."

House Democrats tried Thursday to offer a measure to re-open government, but they were blocked from action by Republicans, who still have majority control of the chamber until Democrats take over Jan. 3.

"Unfortunately, 800,000 federal workers are in a panic because they don't know whether they'll get paid," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., who tried to offer the bill. "That may make the president feel good but the rest of us should be terribly bothered by that, and should work on overtime to end the shutdown now."

Government contractors like James, placed indefinitely on unpaid leave, don't get compensated for lost hours.

James said the contracting company he works for gave its employees a choice: take unpaid leave or dip into paid time-off entitlements. But James doesn't have any paid time off because he started the job just four months ago. His only option is forgoing a paycheck.

"This is my full-time job, this is what I was putting my time into until I can save up to take a few classes," said James, who plans to study education and become a teacher. "I'm going to have to look for something else to sustain me."

Mary Morrow, a components engineer on contract for NASA, is in the same predicament. In addition to caring for a family largely on her own, she's got a mortgage.

"I have three teenage boys, it's near Christmas time and we just spent money, there are credit card bills and normal bills and it's really nerve-wracking," she said. "It's scary."

As federal employees tell their stories on Twitter under the hashtag #Shutdownstories, Trump has claimed that federal workers are behind him, saying many have told him "stay out until you get the funding for the wall." He didn't say whom he had heard from, and he did not explain the incongruity of also believing that most are Democrats.

Steve Reaves, president of Federal Emergency Management Agency union, said he hasn't heard from any employees who say they support the shutdown.

"They're all by far worried about their mortgages," Reaves said.

Reaves said the shutdown could have consequences that stretch beyond a temporary suspension of salary. Many federal government jobs require a security clearance, he said, and missed mortgage payments

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or deepening debt could hurt their clearance.

David Dollard, a Federal Bureau of Prisons employee and chief steward for the American Federation of Government Employees Local 709 union in Colorado, said at least two agency employees lost their homes after the 2013 shutdown suspended their salaries. Bureau of Prisons employees are considered essential, and must work without pay. The agency is already understaffed, Dollard said. Shutdown conditions make everything worse.

"You start out at \$44,000 a year, there's not much room for anything else as far saving money for the next government shutdown, so it puts staff in a very hard situation," he said. "We've got single fathers who have child support, alimony. It's very hard to figure out what you're going to do."

Candice Nesbitt, 51, has worked for 1 ½ years for the U.S. Coast Guard, the only branch of the military affected by the shutdown. About 44,000 Coast Guard employees are working this week without pay; 6,000, including Nesbitt, have been furloughed.

Nesbitt worked for a contractor but took a pay cut in exchange for the stability of a government job. She has a mortgage, is the guardian of her special needs, 5-year-old grandson, and makes about \$45,000 a year, she said. Any lapse in payment could plunge her into debt. "It shakes me to the core," she said.

Legal marijuana industry toasts banner year

By GILLIAN FLACCUS, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The last year was a 12-month champagne toast for the legal marijuana industry as the global market exploded and cannabis pushed its way further into the financial and cultural mainstream.

Liberal California became the largest legal U.S. marketplace, conservative Utah and Oklahoma embraced medical marijuana, and the U.S. East Coast got its first commercial pot shops. Canada ushered in broad legalization, and Mexico's Supreme Court set the stage for that country to follow.

U.S. drug regulators approved the first marijuana-based pharmaceutical to treat kids with a form of epilepsy, and billions of investment dollars poured into cannabis companies. Even main street brands like Coca-Cola said they are considering joining the party.

"I have been working on this for decades, and this was the year that the movement crested," said U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, an Oregon Democrat working to overturn the federal ban on pot. "It's clear that this is all coming to a head."

With buzz building across the globe, the momentum will continue into 2019.

Luxembourg is poised to become the first European country to legalize recreational marijuana, and South Africa is moving in that direction. Israel's Parliament approved a law allowing exports of medical marijuana. Thailand legalized medicinal use of marijuana, and other Southeastern Asian countries may follow South Korea's lead in legalizing cannabidiol, or CBD. It's a non-psychoactive compound found in marijuana and hemp plants and used for treatment of certain medical problems.

"It's not just the U.S. now. It's spreading," said Ben Curren, CEO of Green Bits, a San Jose, California, company that develops software for marijuana retailers and businesses.

Curren's firm is one of many that blossomed as the industry grew. He started the company in 2014 with two friends. Now, he has 85 employees, and the company's software processes \$2.5 billion in sales transactions a year for more than 1,000 U.S. retail stores and dispensaries.

Green Bits raised \$17 million in April, pulling in money from investment firms including Snoop Dogg's Casa Verde Capital. Curren hopes to expand internationally by 2020.

"A lot of the problem is keeping up with growth," he said.

Legal marijuana was a \$10.4 billion industry in the U.S. in 2018 with a quarter-million jobs devoted just to the handling of marijuana plants, said Beau Whitney, vice president and senior economist at New Frontier Data, a leading cannabis market research and data analysis firm. There are many other jobs that don't involve direct work with the plants, but they are harder to quantify, Whitney said.

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Investors poured \$10 billion into cannabis in North America in 2018, twice what was invested in the last three years combined, he said, and the combined North American market is expected to reach more than \$16 billion in 2019.

"Investors are getting much savvier when it comes to this space because even just a couple of years ago, you'd throw money at it and hope that something would stick," he said. "But now investors are much more discerning."

Increasingly, U.S. lawmakers see that success and want it for their states.

Nearly two-thirds of U.S. states now have legalized some form of medical marijuana.

Voters in November made Michigan the 10th state — and first in the Midwest — to legalize recreational marijuana. Governors in New York and New Jersey are pushing for a similar law in their states next year, and momentum for broad legalization is building in Pennsylvania and Illinois.

"Let's legalize the adult use of recreational marijuana once and for all," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said last week.

The East Coast's first recreational pot shops opened in November in Massachusetts.

State lawmakers in Nebraska just formed a campaign committee to put a medical cannabis initiative to voters in 2020. Nebraska shares a border with Colorado, one of the first two states to legalize recreational marijuana, and Iowa, which recently started a limited medical marijuana program.

"Attitudes have been rapidly evolving and changing. I know that my attitude toward it has also changed," said Nebraska state Sen. Adam Morfeld, a Democrat. "Seeing the medical benefits and seeing other states implement it ... has convinced me that it's not the dangerous drug it's made out to be."

With all its success, the U.S. marijuana industry continues to be undercut by a robust black market and federal law that treats marijuana as a controlled substance like heroin. Financial institutions are skittish about cannabis businesses, even in U.S. states where they are legal, and investors until recently have been reluctant to put their money behind pot.

Marijuana businesses can't deduct their business expenses on their federal taxes and face huge challenges getting insurance and finding real estate for their brick-and-mortar operations.

"Until you have complete federal legalization, you're going to be living with that structure," said Marc Press, a New Jersey attorney who advises cannabis businesses.

At the start of the year, the industry was chilled when then-U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions rescinded a policy shielding state-licensed medical marijuana operators from federal drug prosecutions. Ultimately the move had minimal impact because federal prosecutors showed little interest in going after legal operators.

Sessions, a staunch marijuana opponent, later lost his job while President Donald Trump said he was inclined to support an effort by U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner, a Colorado Republican, to relax the federal prohibition.

In November, Democrats won control of the U.S. House and want to use it next year to pass legislation that eases federal restrictions on the legal marijuana industry without removing it from the controlled substances list.

Gardner and Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Warren have proposed legislation allowing state-approved commercial cannabis activity under federal law. The bill also would let states and Indian tribes determine how best to regulate marijuana commerce within their boundaries without fear of federal intervention.

If those provisions become law, they could open up banking for the marijuana industry nationwide and make it easier for cannabis companies to secure capital.

Blumenauer's "blueprint" to legalize marijuana also calls for the federal government to provide medical marijuana for veterans, more equitable taxation for marijuana businesses and rolling back federal prohibitions on marijuana research, among other things.

"We have elected the most pro-cannabis Congress in history and more important, some of the people who were roadblocks to our work ... are gone," Blumenauer said. "If we're able to jump-start it in the House, I think there will be support in the Senate, particularly if we deal with things that are important, like veterans' access and banking."

Gillian Flaccus is a member of AP's marijuana beat team. Follow her on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>. Find complete AP marijuana coverage here: <https://apnews.com/LegalMarijuana>.

Saudi king orders Cabinet shakeup after Khashoggi's killing

By AYA BATRAWY, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia's King Salman issued a wide-ranging overhaul of top government posts on Thursday, including naming a new foreign minister, following international fallout from the killing of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi nearly three months ago.

He also ordered a shakeup of the kingdom's supreme council that oversees matters related to security. The council is headed by the king's son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose powers including roles as deputy prime minister and defense minister, were untouched in the overhaul.

The changes appear to further consolidate the crown prince's grip on power by appointing to key posts advisers and members of the royal family seen as close to him.

It may also signal further efforts to show that changes are being made after the U.S. Senate passed a resolution saying it believes the crown prince is to blame for Khashoggi's grisly murder inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

As the crown prince struggles to convince many in Washington and other Western capitals that he had nothing to do with Khashoggi's killing, the soft-spoken Adel al-Jubeir was replaced as foreign minister by Ibrahim al-Assaf, a longtime former finance minister. Al-Jubeir was appointed to minister of state for foreign affairs at the Foreign Ministry.

Al-Assaf is well known to international investors, having led several Saudi delegations to the World Economic Forum in Davos. He served as finance minister under King Fahd and King Abdullah.

Al-Assaf sits on the boards of oil-giant Saudi Aramco and the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund. The crown prince oversees both entities. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Colorado State University and a master's degree from the University of Denver, according to his biography on Aramco's website.

Al-Assaf had been serving as a minister of state last year when he was reportedly detained at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Riyadh along with dozens of high-ranking officials and princes in an anti-corruption sweep led by the crown prince. Shortly after, al-Assaf appeared back at a Cabinet meeting to the surprise of many.

The government did not name those detained nor disclose what crimes they were suspected of committing. The Associated Press could not independently confirm reports of al-Assaf's arrest. The opaque anti-corruption sweep helped Prince Mohammed consolidate power and net the government more than \$13 billion in settlements.

The changes announced Thursday include aides to the crown prince, including Musaed al-Aiban as national security adviser — in addition to other positions he holds — and former media minister Awwad al-Awwad as adviser to the royal court. Khalid al-Harbi was named as head of general security.

Turki al-Sheikh, a confidant of the crown prince, was removed as head of the Sports Authority and replaced by Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Faisal. This means al-Sheikh no longer oversees a cybersecurity and programming body that was led by Saud al-Qahtani, a close aide to the crown prince who was fired from his post and sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for helping to mastermind the plot that led to Khashoggi's killing.

Khashoggi wrote critically of the crown prince in columns for The Washington Post before he was killed. After denying any knowledge of Khashoggi's death for weeks, Saudi authorities eventually settled on the explanation that he was killed in an operation masterminded by former advisers to Prince Mohammed. The kingdom denies the crown prince had any involvement.

Al-Sheikh will now lead the General Entertainment Authority, a body created in recent years to help organize and promote concerts and other events that had long been banned in the conservative country.

Turki Shabbaneh, who has held positions in privately owned Saudi TV channels, was named minister of media. Hamad al-Sheikh, a royal court adviser and former college dean who studied in the U.S., was

appointed minister of education.

The king's eldest son, Prince Sultan bin Salman, was removed as head of the tourism authority. He will lead a new national space agency. In 1985, he became the first Arab and Muslim astronaut to fly in space.

Prince Abdullah bin Bandar was named head of the National Guard. The force is tasked primarily with the protection of the Al Saud ruling family. Prince Abdullah had been deputy governor of Mecca.

He promised: LeBron James is the AP's male athlete of 2018

By TIM REYNOLDS, AP Basketball Writer

LeBron James went to the NBA Finals for the eighth consecutive year. He changed addresses again, leaving his Cleveland home for the second time to join the Los Angeles Lakers in the biggest move of free agency over the summer. He remained arguably the dominant player in the basketball, adding even more glitz on a legacy that reached epic status long ago.

It was, by any measure, a fantastic year for James.

And even without a title, it may have been his most significant year.

For the third time, James has been selected as The Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year — after 2018 saw him continue to excel on the court, open the "I Promise" school for at-risk children in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, and further use his voice as an activist who bristled at being told to "shut up and dribble."

"I would describe it as a success because I was able to inspire so many people throughout the year," James said. "I got to go back to China, to Paris, to Berlin, I opened up a school. And all these kids I was able to see, all over the world and in my hometown, I was able to inspire, to make them think they can be so much more than what they think they're capable of being. That was my outlook for 2018."

James received 78 points in balloting by U.S. editors and news directors announced Thursday, while Boston Red Sox star Mookie Betts was second with 46. Alex Ovechkin of the Washington Capitals was third, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes was fourth and Triple Crown winner Justify was fifth.

On the court, James remained dominant. He averaged 28.7 points, 8.8 rebounds and 8.4 assists in 2018 between his time with the Cavaliers and Lakers, playing in 102 games through Thursday.

"In addition to being on everyone's short list as one of the league's all-time greatest players, LeBron is among the hardest working players and is a thoughtful and impactful leader," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "He serves on the executive committee of the Players Association even as he builds an impressive media company of his own. And what's most inspiring, and no surprise given his talent and focus, is how he's done all of this while embracing his unique opportunity to positively impact communities in need."

James becomes the third man to win the award at least three times, joining Lance Armstrong (a four-time winner from 2002 through 2005), Tiger Woods (1997, 1999, 2000 and 2006) and Michael Jordan (1991, 1992 and 1993).

Armstrong won the Tour de France in each of his years as the AP recipient, — though he was later stripped of the titles in a doping scandal. Woods won at least one major and was the PGA's Player of the Year in all four of his AP-winning years. Jordan's three awards coincided with his first three NBA championships in Chicago. And James' first two times getting the award were in 2013 and 2016, years where his fingerprints mused up the Larry O'Brien Trophy in a title celebration.

And James' closest rivals in the AP balloting this year — Betts and Ovechkin — also won titles in 2018.

James' year included no championship, no scoring title, no MVP award. But some of the people closest to James still considered 2018 to be his finest year yet.

"I like to talk about generations," said Miami guard Dwyane Wade, one of James' best friends. "There will never be another Michael Jordan because he was the first to be a global superstar, the first to take the NBA to another level. There will never be another LeBron James, and a lot of it is from what he's done away from the game. Him understanding his voice has been so refreshing and so important to the culture and his friends."

The "I Promise" school is perhaps James' most prized accomplishment yet. It opened in July for 240 third- and fourth-graders, a public school in Akron that is perhaps like none other. Families — not just the

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kids — get support there, whether it's by helping put food on the table or providing adult education or even legal assistance.

And this is just the start. James and his LeBron James Family Foundation have enormous plans for the school in the years ahead.

"It is already such a success," James said. "And it's something that I never thought was possible until we made it happen. So yes, it's been a pretty good year."

A busy year, too.

He had a documentary series called "Shut Up and Dribble," which discusses the role athletes have in the current political and cultural climate. His show "The Shop," featuring James and friends talking about life in the backdrop of a barbershop, has been enormously popular. James has faced criticism in recent days for posting rap lyrics that included the phrase "Jewish money," for which he apologized, and even rival coaches have spoken out about how he's used his fame for good.

"To this day, he hasn't missed a step," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said earlier this year. "He hasn't fallen off the ledge and he's been a brilliant example for millions of kids, especially kids with lesser opportunity and haven't had the same advantages as others."

On the court, he was already an icon.

Off the court, he's looking to be one as well in the years ahead.

"The next star is out there," James said. "And I'm not just talking sports. Doctor, nurse, pilots, they're out there. The one thing they need is knowing that people care about them and care about their lives. I believe it's part of my job, and I take it very seriously, to try to tap into that."

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US fossil fuel exports spur growth, climate worries

By **MICHAEL BIESECKER** and **KIM TONG-HYUNG**, Associated Press

GEOJEDO, South Korea (AP) — In South Korea's largest shipyard, thousands of workers in yellow hard hats move ceaselessly between towering cranes lifting hulks of steel. They look like a hive of bees scurrying over a massive circuit board as they weld together the latest additions to the rapidly growing fleet of tankers carrying super-chilled liquefied natural gas across the world's oceans.

The boom in fossil-fuel production in the United States has been matched by a rush on the other side of the Pacific to build the infrastructure needed to respond to the seemingly unquenchable thirst for energy among Asia's top economies. When Congress lifted restrictions on shipping crude oil overseas in 2015, soon after the Obama administration opened the doors for international sales of natural gas, even the most boosterish of Texas oil men wouldn't have predicted the U.S. could become one of the world's biggest fossil-fuel exporters so quickly.

Climate experts say there is little doubt increased American production and exports are contributing to the recent rise in planet-warming carbon emissions by helping keep crude prices low, increasing consumption in developing economies.

Backers of U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, argue that the boom will produce environmental benefits because it will help China and other industrial nations wean themselves from coal and other dirtier fossil fuels.

Environmentalists counter that the massive new supplies unleashed by American advances in extracting natural gas from shale doesn't just make coal-fired power plants less competitive. LNG also competes with such zero-carbon sources of electricity as nuclear, solar and wind — potentially delaying the full adoption of greener sources. That's time climate scientists and researchers say the world doesn't have if humans hope to mitigate the worst-case consequences of our carbon emissions, including catastrophic sea-level rise, stronger storms and more wildfires.

"Typically, infrastructure has multi-decadal lifespans," said Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist and director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech University. "So, if we build a natural-gas plant today,

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that will impact carbon emissions over decades to come. So those are the critical and crucial decisions that are being made today. Do we increase access to and use of fossil fuels, or do we make decisions that limit and eventually reduce access to fossil fuels?"

This story is part of a collaboration between The Associated Press and the Center for Public Integrity, The Texas Tribune and Newsy.

While it is difficult to estimate how much America's rise as major exporter of fossil fuels is contributing to a hotter climate, some of the economic benefits are plain to see in South Korea's shipyards.

At the sprawling Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering facility on the island of Geoje, more than half of the 35 vessels scheduled for delivery in 2018 were LNG carriers. A similar number of vessels are lined up for completion next year.

It's the same story at the two other major Korean yards. The construction of the big gas tankers has been credited with lifting the nation's shipbuilding sector out of the doldrums from a decade ago, when the Great Recession caused a downturn in transoceanic trade.

South Korea's big three shipbuilders — Daewoo, Hyundai Heavy Industries and Samsung Heavy Industries — won orders for 53 new LNG carriers in 2018 at about \$200 million each, soaking up the lion's share of the 62 vessels ordered globally, according to numbers compiled by the London-based shipping group Clarkson Research. South Korea is expected to finish 2018 at the top spot in overall orders for new commercial ships, surpassing China for the first time in seven years.

"We are getting out of a long tunnel," Song Ha-dong, a senior Daewoo executive, said as he surveyed the company's 1,200-acre yard from above the British Contributor, a gargantuan LNG carrier with a freshly painted deck covered in a maze of pipes. "The U.S.-led shale gas boom is getting fully under way and China, Japan and South Korea are increasing their consumption of natural gas."

During a recent visit by The Associated Press, three of the LNG carriers were being assembled inside a massive dry dock. Another 13, including the British Contributor, had been floated out to nearby berths where workers were putting on finishing touches.

The Korean shipyards have developed a niche in building ships with the complex systems needed to transport natural gas. The gas is compressed and liquefied for storage by keeping it really cold, about -260 Fahrenheit. In this liquid state, natural gas is about 600 times smaller than at room temperature.

The British Contributor is as long as three football fields and can carry enough liquefied gas to fill about 70 Olympic-sized swimming pools — nearly two days' national supply for South Korea. The country used about 1.9 trillion cubic feet of LNG in 2017, finishing third behind China and Japan as the world's biggest importers, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

With no domestic oil and gas resources and an unfriendly neighbor blocking overland shipments from the north, South Korea relies exclusively on oceangoing tankers. Nearly half of South Korea's gas imports come from Qatar and Australia, but the share shipped from the U.S. is growing fast as additional export terminals along the Gulf coast are coming online to handle the glut of gas unleashed by hydraulic fracturing in the Permian Basin of West Texas and southeastern New Mexico.

U.S. LNG exports quadrupled in 2017, with this year on track to see similarly exponential growth. Nearly a fifth of all that gas goes to South Korea.

The British Contributor is the third of six LNG carriers being built by Daewoo for British energy giant BP, which will mainly use them to transport U.S. gas to Asia under a 20-year contract with the Freeport LNG facility south of Houston. Daewoo delivered four similar ships this year to the government-owned Korea Gas Corporation, which has a 20-year deal to buy gas exported from Cheniere Energy's Sabine Pass LNG terminal in Louisiana.

South Korea has been vying with Mexico for the title of the largest importer of U.S. LNG, and its reliance on gas could further increase under the government of President Moon Jae-in, who has pledged to transition his country away from nuclear power following the Fukushima meltdown in Japan.

Park Moo-hyun, a senior analyst at Hana Financial Investment, predicts shipping companies will need to

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place orders for around 480 new LNG carriers over the next decade to match the U.S.-driven increase in global LNG trade — roughly doubling the current worldwide fleet.

“The impact brought by the emergence of shale is not just about an increase in U.S. energy exports — there has been tremendous growth in the production of energy sources that hadn’t been used much, such as LNG,” Park said. “Once the groundwork is established for the stable use of these new energy sources, industries are pushed to adapt.”

Natural gas has the added appeal of producing about half the carbon dioxide when it’s burned than coal. Its increased adoption for generating electricity has been pitched by the U.S. and others as a way for nations to make progress toward meeting their emissions reductions goals under the 2015 Paris climate accord. Burning gas also creates less particulate pollution.

In China, the Communist government has declared a “Blue Sky Defense War” to reduce the choking smog in Beijing and two dozen surrounding cities with a program to convert hundreds of thousands of homes and industrial facilities from burning coal to gas. In February, Texas-based Cheniere signed a 25-year deal with the state-controlled China National Petroleum Corporation to export LNG from its export terminal in Corpus Christi.

But the increased gas exports from the U.S. and other sources hasn’t really put much of a dent in Chinese coal consumption, which has remained largely flat in 2018. Overall carbon emissions for China, the globe’s biggest emitter, saw a nearly five percent increase in 2018.

Daniel Raimi, a researcher at the Washington-based think tank Resources for the Future, said determining whether U.S. gas exports are a net good or bad for the climate is difficult. When considering China, researchers can’t just look at whether coal use or carbon emissions are falling. They must also try to calculate how much more coal would have been burned had ample supplies of gas not been available.

Another challenge is that the primary component of natural gas is methane, a potent greenhouse gas that traps far more heat in the atmosphere than a comparable amount of carbon dioxide. Studies have shown that a significant amount of natural gas leaks into the air at almost every stage of its production and transport — from wells to pipelines, processing facilities to ships. Raimi said the impact of all that leaking methane on the climate is roughly 84 times more powerful than the same amount of carbon dioxide over a 20-year time frame.

As part of its broad rollback of environmental rules, the Trump administration moved in September to weaken Obama-era regulations designed to prevent methane from escaping into the atmosphere during oil and gas operations. The regulatory rollbacks are part of President Donald Trump’s pro-industry “Energy Dominance” strategy to ramp up U.S. fossil-fuel production without concern for the corresponding increase in greenhouse-gas emissions. Trump has falsely claimed climate change is a “hoax,” and moved in 2017 to pull the United States out of the 2015 Paris accord.

“With or without increased U.S. oil and gas exports, ambitious policy measures are the essential ingredient to achieving long-term climate goals such as those laid out in the 2015 Paris agreement,” Raimi said. “For U.S. LNG exports to reduce global emissions, they must primarily displace coal, and methane emissions must be limited both domestically and abroad.”

Associated Press investigative reporter Michael Biesecker reported from Washington. Center for Public Integrity reporter Jamie Smith Hopkins contributed.

Follow Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck> and Seoul-based AP reporter Tong-hyung Kim <http://twitter.com/KimTongHyung>

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 28, the 362nd day of 2018. There are three days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 28, 1981, Elizabeth Jordan Carr, the first American "test-tube" baby, was born in Norfolk, Virginia.

On this date:

In 1612, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei observed the planet Neptune, but mistook it for a star. (Neptune wasn't officially discovered until 1846 by Johann Gottfried Galle.)

In 1694, Queen Mary II of England died after more than five years of joint rule with her husband, King William III.

In 1832, John C. Calhoun became the first vice president of the United States to resign, stepping down because of differences with President Andrew Jackson.

In 1846, Iowa became the 29th state to be admitted to the Union.

In 1895, the Lumiere brothers, Auguste and Louis, held the first public showing of their movies in Paris.

In 1908, a major earthquake followed by a tsunami devastated the Italian city of Messina, killing at least 70,000 people.

In 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 1961, the Tennessee Williams play "Night of the Iguana" opened on Broadway. Former first lady Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, the second wife of President Woodrow Wilson, died in Washington at age 89.

In 1972, Kim Il Sung, the premier of North Korea, was named the country's president under a new constitution.

In 1973, the book "Gulag Archipelago," Alexander Solzhenitsyn's expose (eks-poh-SAY') of the Soviet prison system, was first published in Paris.

In 1987, the bodies of 14 relatives of Ronald Gene Simmons were found at his home near Dover, Arkansas, after Simmons shot and killed two other people in Russellville. (Simmons, who never explained his motives, was executed in 1990.)

In 1999, Clayton Moore, television's "Lone Ranger, died in West Hills, California, at age 85.

Ten years ago: A bomb-loaded SUV exploded at a military checkpoint in Afghanistan, claiming the lives of 14 school children in a heartbreaking flash captured by a U.S. security camera. The Detroit Lions completed an awful 0-16 season — the NFL's worst ever — with a 31-21 loss to the Green Bay Packers.

Five years ago: Iraqi troops detained a Sunni lawmaker, Ahmed al-Alwani, a prominent organizer of Sunni protests in Anbar, on terrorism charges for inciting violence against Shiites. Film, television and stage actor Joseph Ruskin, 89, died in Los Angeles.

One year ago: Twelve people died in a Bronx apartment building fire, the deadliest residential fire to hit New York City in at least a quarter century; officials said it was caused by a 3-year-old boy playing with stove burners. (A 13th victim died of his injuries days later.) Officials in Alabama certified Democrat Doug Jones as the winner of a special U.S. Senate election over Republican Roy Moore, who charged that the election was "fraudulent." Rose Marie, who began her career in show business as a child in the 1920s and co-starred on "The Dick Van Dyke Show" in the 1960s, died at her Los Angeles-area home at the age of 94. Apple apologized for secretly slowing down older iPhones, a move it said was necessary to avoid unexpected shutdowns due to battery fatigue.

Today's Birthdays: Former United Auto Workers union president Owen Bieber is 89. Actress Nichelle Nichols is 86. Actress Dame Maggie Smith is 84. Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., is 74. Former Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., is 72. Rock singer-musician Edgar Winter is 72. Funk musician Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste (The Meters) is 70. Actor Denzel Washington is 64. TV personality Gayle King is 64. Country singer Joe Diffie is 60. Country musician Mike McGuire (Shenandoah) is 60. Actor Chad McQueen is 58. Country singer-musician Marty Roe (Diamond Rio) is 58. Actor Malcolm Gets is 55. Actor Mauricio Mendoza is 49. Actress Elaine Hendrix is 48. Talk show host Seth Meyers is 45. Actor Brendan Hines is 42. Actor Joe Manganiello is

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42. Actress Vanessa Ferlito is 41. Rhythm-and-blues singer John Legend is 40. Rapper-musician-producer Terrace Martin is 40. Actor Andre Holland is 39. Actress Sienna Miller is 37. Actress Beau Garrett (TV: "The Good Doctor") is 36. Pop singer Kasey Sheridan (Dream) is 32. Actor Thomas Dekker is 31. Actress Mackenzie Rosman is 29. Pop singer David Archuleta is 28. Actress Mary-Charles Jones (TV: "Kevin Can Wait") is 17. Actor Miles Brown is 14.

Thought for Today: "Let no one underestimate the need of pity. We live in a stony universe whose hard, brilliant forces rage fiercely." — Theodore Dreiser, American author (born 1871, died this date in 1945).