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CLOSED: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

Swimming Pool Hours

Open Swim Daily: 1 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.

Fun Night is every Friday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.

Adult Water Aerobics: Monday through Thursday: 8 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 pm

Adult Lap Swim: Monday through Friday: 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.; Monday through Thursday: 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.; Friday-Sunday: 4:50 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Swimming Lessons: First Session: June 17-27

Thursday, June 20

6:00 p.m.: Legion hosts Northville, (DH)

6:00 p.m.: U8 Pee Wees vs. Jacobson at Manor Park, (DH) (R)

Softball hosts Mellette (U8 at 5 p.m. (1 game), U10 at 6 p.m. (2 games), U14 at 6 p.m. (2 games))

Friday, June 21

6:00 p.m.: U12 Midgets at Britton, (DH)

6:00 p.m.: U10 Pee Wees at Britton, (DH) (R,W)

6:00 p.m.: T-Ball Scrimmage, Nelson Field (both)

Olive Grove Golf Course: Groton Area Businesses Tournament (former Chamber), 18 holes, Noon Shotgun Start.

FOR RENT

2 bedroom apt, \$750/month plus utilities, attached garage, major appliances furnished, 480-980-8513 or 605-397-7118

GFP SEEKING COMMENTS ON REVISED CWD MANAGEMENT PLAN

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Department is seeking public comments on the revised draft of their Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management plan.

The objective of the "South Dakota Chronic Wasting Disease Action Plan" is to provide guidance and transparency regarding the management of CWD to wildlife managers and the public.

The plan can be found at: gfp.sd.gov/chronic-wasting-disease/, and then clicking on the "2nd CWD Plan" link.

"The public involvement process in developing this plan included a diverse stakeholder group, several open houses, and discussions with numerous organizations and members of the public," said GFP wildlife program administrator, Chad Switzer. "The involvement of those interested in CWD and the long-term outlook for our future deer and elk populations was appreciated in the development of this plan."

Submit comments via email to CWDActionPlan@state.sd.us or mail them to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, S.D. 57501. Comments must include full name and city of residence. To request a printed copy of the draft plan, call 605.773.3387.

Comments will be taken through June 28th.

The GFP Commission will be considering formal adoption of this plan at their July meeting in Pierre.

CUSTER STATE PARK'S FRENCH CREEK HORSE CAMP CLOSED

CUSTER STATE PARK – Custer State Park's French Creek Horse Camp will be closed until Friday, June 28 after park staff discovered horses in the camp tested positive for Equine Influenza A.

Last Friday, June 14, staff was notified of coughing horses that were located in the campground. Custer State Park then called Fall River Veterinarian Clinic, who performed tests on three different horses. Though the horses did not show typical signs of the virus, all three horses tested positive for Influenza A.

After taking direction from State Veterinarian, Dr. Dustin Oedekoven, park staff will disinfect the entire area, including all horse stables and leave them empty for eight days. In addition, all horse manure will be removed from the camp.

According to the Animal Industry Board, the equine virus is commonly spread by airborne transmission. Infected horses release infective droplets into the air by coughing or snorting which are then inhaled by horses in close proximity. Horses can also be exposed to the virus by coming into contact with contaminated surfaces such as stalls, wash racks, stocks, water sources, feed, tack, grooming equipment such as wipe rags, and transport vehicles. Humans can spread the virus from horse to horse by contaminated hands and clothing.

To stay at Horse Camp, Custer State Park does require all out of state horses to provide a health certificate within the last 30 days and a negative Coggins or ELISA EIA test within the last 12 months. In-state horses are not required to provide documentation.

Day riding in the park is still open for visitors, but riders will need to refrain from riding out of Horse Camp. For questions or more information, please call the Custer State Park Administrative Office at 605-255-4515.

Changes to the Open Meetings Laws

Changes made by the Legislature to the open meetings laws that take effect on July 1. Specifically, changes made in Senate Bill 91. Here are a few things to know:

“Public Notice of a Quorum”

A key change involves a clarification about when a quorum of a public body is invited to an event or meeting where the public body does not control the agenda and where public policy may be discussed. An example may be a chamber of commerce event where the city council has been invited to attend and the chamber event may or may not include discussion about city-related issues. In the past, there has been confusion as to whether or not the city council should post an official meeting agenda in this instance if the council knows that a majority of its members will be in attendance. The new law now says that in these instances, the public body may post a “public notice of a quorum, in lieu of an agenda.” The notice of quorum shall meet the same posting requirements of a meeting agenda and the notice of quorum shall include at a minimum, the date, time and location of the event.

This is a significant addition to the open meetings law will cause some confusion starting out. However, it is a good addition to the law to deal with those instances where a public board (or the public) is uncertain about when a meeting notification/agenda posting is required. A “public notice of a quorum” will be new and it will take some time for everyone to incorporate.

Public Comment

The new law clarifies when and how public comment is permitted at meetings of public bodies. In short, public bodies are required to include a time for public comment at regular meetings of the body, but is not required to include it at special or emergency meetings or at meetings solely for the purpose of swearing in newly elected officials. The public body has discretion regarding the time limit and scope of public comments at regular meetings.

Agenda Posting for State Boards and Commissions

The new law still requires that state boards and commissions must post their meeting agendas at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. However, the new law strikes the old requirement that the day the agenda is posted does not count toward the 72-hour notice. In other words, the old law said the notice must be posted at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting, plus the day the agenda was posted. The new law says the day of the posting can count toward the 72-hour requirement. For local public bodies such as cities, schools and counties, the law is unchanged and still requires the agenda to be posted at least 24 hours in advance of regular meetings.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 91 also included several other changes that cleaned up and reorganized the various open meetings laws statutes but did not change the substance or intent of the laws. The housecleaning changes will help simplify the statutes and make them easier for the public to understand.

2019 Growing Season Challenges Addressed by SDSU Extension Staff During Faulkton & Aberdeen Open-Houses

BROOKINGS, S.D. – SDSU Extension is hosting open house meetings in Faulkton and Aberdeen June 21, 2019 to address the current state of farming.

These meetings will be come-and-go style with no formal presentations.

Growers are encouraged to bring their questions and concerns regarding forages, cover crop mixtures, herbicides, insurance, delayed planting and more. SDSU Extension staff will be on hand to answer questions and help connect agriculture producers to more resources.

SDSU ice cream will be served and no registration is necessary.

The Faulkton open house will be held at the Faulkton City Hall Meeting Room (105 8th Ave. N). It will begin at 10 a.m. and run until Noon.

The Aberdeen open house will be held at the Aberdeen Public Library Meeting Room (215 Southeast 4th Avenue) from 2-4 p.m.

SDWF Annual National Guard Helicopter Training

Rapid City, S.D. - The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's Wildland Fire Division will be conducting their annual wildland fire training with the South Dakota National Guard Aviation Unit.

Flight operations training will take place Thursday, June 20 with a helibase located at the Hot Springs airport. Aerial water delivery practice will take place on the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks' land on the east end of Sheps Canyon with helicopters dipping buckets in the Angostura Reservoir.

These cooperative exercises provide great training for pilots before they participate in an active fire. It is important, for the overall safety and security of the state and its residents, that aerial resources are able to safely integrate between state and federal partners.

The public is requested to stay clear of the dip sites while these activities take place. Unmanned Aerial System (drone) operators are requested to refrain from flying in the area during this exercise. Flight operations will be shut down if there are any drones flying in the area.

Follow South Dakota Wildland Fire on Twitter @SDWildlandFire and on Facebook by searching SD Wildland Fire.

2019 State Football Schedule

Following significant exploration and discussion, the SDHSAA Board of Directors has approved playing the 2019 SDHSAA Football Championships at Dana J. Dykhouse Stadium on the campus of South Dakota State University in Brookings. Due to a Saturday home game for SDSU, all of the Championship contests will be played over two days instead of the customary three.

The schedule for those two days of finals will be as follows:

Thursday, November 14th

9A- 11:00 AM

9AA- 1:45 PM

9B- 4:30 PM

11A- 7:15 PM

Friday, November 15th

11AA- 12:00 PM

11B- 3:30 PM

11AAA- 7:00 PM

You will notice that the 11AA and 11AAA contests are both being held on the same day. In general, these are our highest attended contests and as such, are usually held as the sole or final contest on separate dates. Due to a scheduling conflict with the AA SoDak 16 Volleyball dates on November 14th, the SDHSAA has made the decision to not separate the 11AA and 11AAA contests by date, and will instead separate them with the 11B contest. We have added extra time in-between the 11AA and 11B contests to help avoid congestion and to help with traffic flow, parking and access. We assure you that the SDHSAA will work with everyone involved to ensure that the transition between all of the contests will be done as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

We look forward to a great event! The students involved will be a part of the first ever SDHSAA Football Championships held outdoors. We thank both the University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University for their patience and help over the past six months. Both organizations have been and continue to be excellent partners with the SDHSAA, to the benefit of all member schools and students.

Respectfully,

Dr. Daniel Swartos, SDHSAA Executive Director

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Today in Weather History

June 20, 1957: An F2 tornado moved ENE from near Rockham to near Athol and Ashton. One person was killed as a mobile home was destroyed near the start of the path. Four barns were destroyed, and one house was unroofed.

Also on this day, an F5 tornado cut a swath through Fargo, North Dakota killing 10 and injuring at least 103 people. This tornado was the northernmost confirmed F5 tornado until the Elie, Manitoba tornado on June 22, 2007.

June 20, 1989: A meteorological "hot flash" hit Pierre. Descending air from collapsing thunderstorms caused the temperature in Pierre to warm from 86 degrees at midnight to 96 at one a.m. and to 104 at 2 a.m. Pierre's record high for the date of 105 degrees in 1974.

1970: Nesbyen, Norway reached 96 degrees on this day, becoming the warmest temperature recorded in Norway.

2001: Large hail driven by strong thunderstorm winds raked Denver International and front-range airports. Wind gusting to 54 mph along with hail as large as 2 inches in diameter punched at least 14 thousand holes and cracks in the flat roofs of several buildings at Denver International Airport. Also, 93 planes and hundreds of cars were damaged. About 100 flights had to be canceled stranding 1500 travelers. The Airport was completely shut down for about 20 minutes. The storm also damaged ground avoidance radar used to track planes on the ground to prevent collisions. Damage was estimated at 10 million dollars not counting the cost to the 93 airliners. The storm moved south and struck Watkins Colorado with hail as large as 2 1/2 inches in diameter and winds gusting to 60 mph.

1682 - A major tornado ripped through southwestern Connecticut, passing through Stratford, Milford, and New Haven, and then into Long Island Sound. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1921 - Circle, MT, received 11.5 inches of rain in 24 hours, a record for the state. The town of Circle received a total of 16.79 inches of rain that month to establish a rainfall record for any town in Montana for any month of the year. (The Weather Channel)

1928 - A farmer near Greensburg, KS, looked up into the heart of a tornado. He described its walls as rotating clouds lit with constant flashes of lightning and a strong gassy odor with a screaming, hissing sound. (The Weather Channel)

1964 - A squall line producing large hail swept through central Illinois. A second squall line moved through during the early morning hours of the 21st, and a third one moved through shortly after dawn. The series of hailstorms caused nine million dollars damage. Hailstones as large as grapefruit caused heavy damage to trees, utility lines, crops and buildings. The thunderstorms also produced as much as five inches of rain in an eight hour period. (David Ludlum)


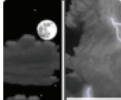



1987 - Thunderstorms prevailed east of the Rockies, producing severe weather in the Central High Plains Region. Thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes in Colorado, and produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Goodland, KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)













1988 - Thirty-eight cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Flint, MI, and 104 degrees at Chicago, IL, equalled records for the month of June. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced baseball size hail near Kief, and wind gusts to 100 mph near McGregor. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)













1989 - An early morning thunderstorm produced wind gusts to 61 mph at Pierre, SD, and the hot thunderstorm winds raised the temperature from 86 degrees at midnight to 96 degrees by 1 AM, and 104 degrees by 2 AM. Butte, MT, and Yellowstone Park, WY, reported snow that afternoon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
90% → 30%	30%	60%	70%	30%
T-storms then Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	T-storms Likely	T-storms Likely	Chance T-storms
High: 74 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 77 °F

Time	8AM	9AM	10AM	11AM	12PM	1PM	2PM	3PM	4PM	5PM	6PM	7PM
Day	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu
Temperature (F)	59° 	58° 	59° 	62° 	65° 	68° 	69° 	70° 	71° 	72° 	73° 	72° 
Feels Like	59°	58°	59°	62°	65°	68°	69°	70°	71°	72°	73°	72°
Chance Precip	70%	70%	60%	60%	40%	40%	40%	40%	20%	20%	10%	10%
Dew Point	57°	58°	58°	58°	58°	58°	58°	58°	58°	57°	57°	56°
Humidity	93%	94%	96%	87%	78%	70%	68%	66%	64%	59%	58%	57%
Wind Dir	SE	SE	SE	ESE	ENE	NNE	NNE	N	NNW	N	N	NNE
Wind Speed (mph)	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	10 MPH	9 MPH	8 MPH
Barometer (in.)	29.62	29.62	29.62	29.62	29.62	29.65	29.65	29.65	29.65	29.68	29.68	29.68

Time	8PM	9PM	10PM	11PM	12AM	1AM	2AM	3AM	4AM	5AM	6AM	7AM
Day	Thu	Thu	Thu	Thu	Fri	Fri	Fri	Fri	Fri	Fri	Fri	Fri
Temperature (F)	69° 	65° 	61° 	58° 	57° 	56° 	56° 	57° 	57° 	58° 	58° 	59° 
Feels Like	69°	65°	61°	58°	57°	56°	56°	57°	57°	58°	58°	59°
Chance Precip	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	50%
Dew Point	56°	57°	57°	57°	56°	56°	56°	57°	57°	57°	58°	58°
Humidity	63%	75%	87%	96%	97%	98%	99%	100%	98%	97%	100%	97%
Wind Dir	NE	E	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	ESE	ESE	ESE	E	E
Wind Speed (mph)	7 MPH	5 MPH	3 MPH	3 MPH	3 MPH	3 MPH	5 MPH	6 MPH	7 MPH	7 MPH	7 MPH	7 MPH
Barometer (in.)	29.71	29.71	29.71	29.74	29.74	29.77	29.74	29.74	29.74	29.74	29.71	29.71

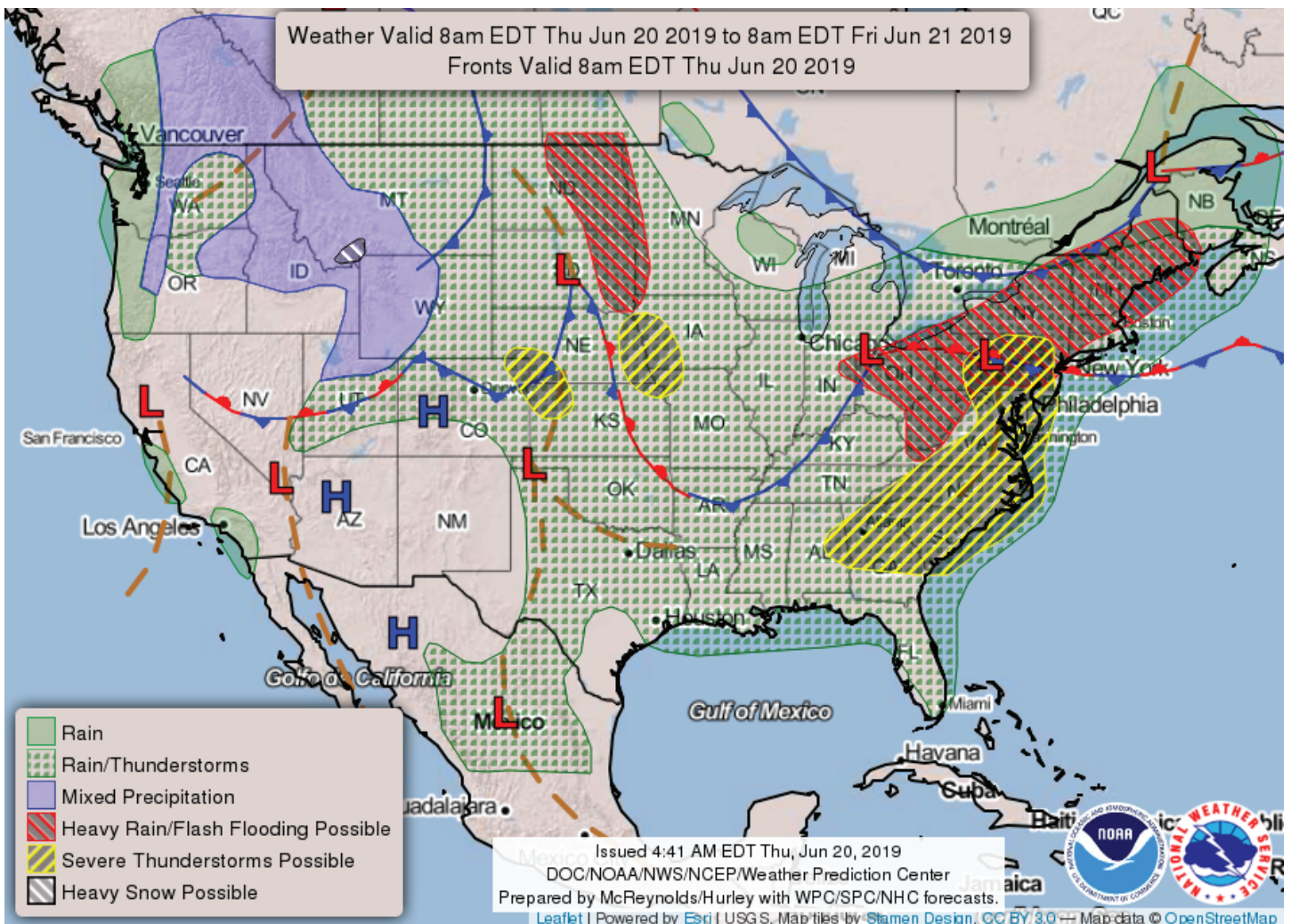
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 69 °F at 1:41 PM
Low Temp: 59 °F at 2:58 AM
Wind: 12 mph at 3:51 PM
Day Rain: 0.19

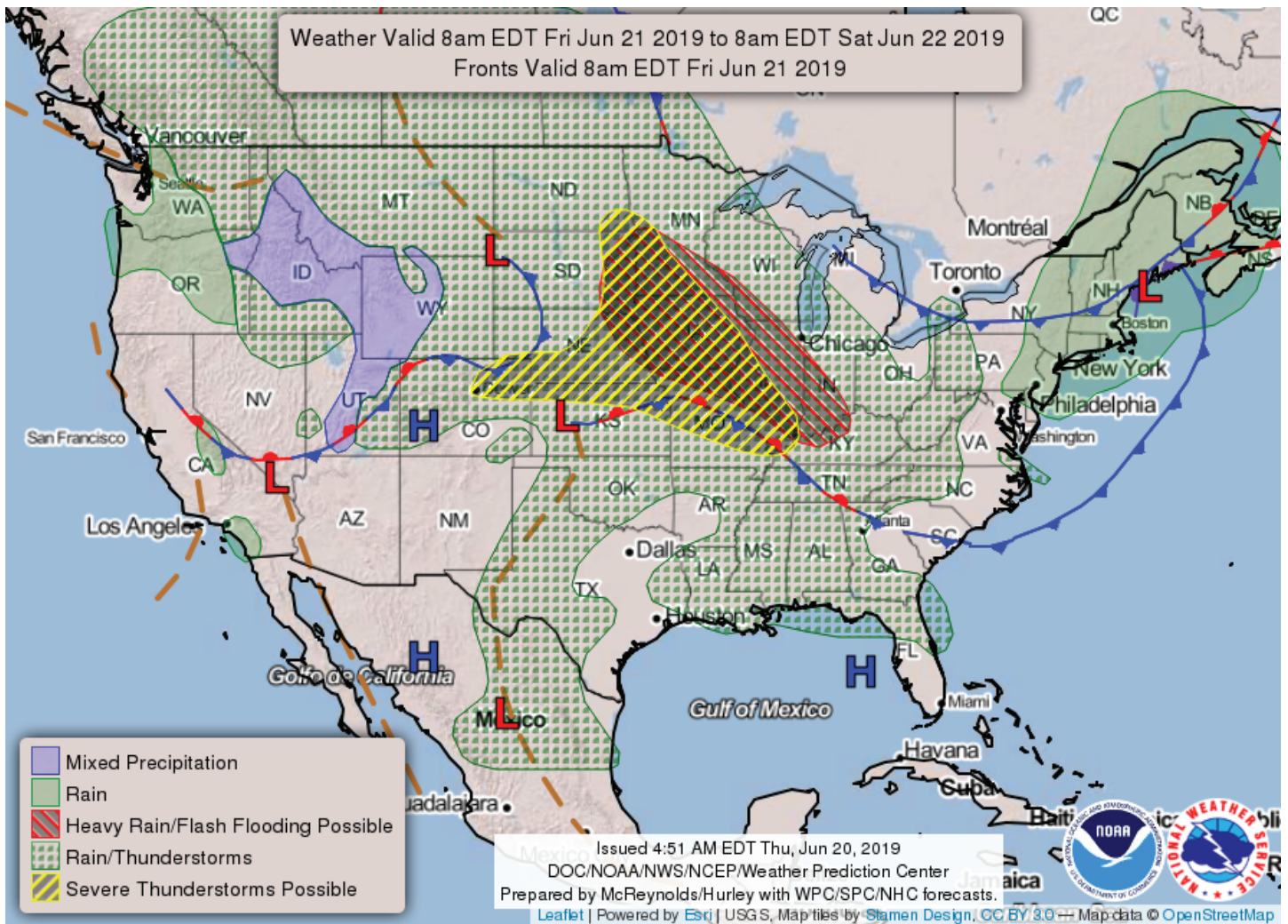
Record High: 101° in 1988
Record Low: 34° in 1969
Average High: 79°F
Average Low: 55°F
Average Precip in June.: 2.33
Precip to date in June.: 1.07
Average Precip to date: 9.47
Precip Year to Date: 8.85
Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45 a.m.



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Tomorrow's Weather Map



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HEART MEDICINE

One of my dear physician-friends wrote a book entitled *The Body Reveals*. He began his medical career as a general surgeon then studied to become a cardiovascular surgeon. One day while we were talking, he said, Larry, the most disturbing part of my practice is that I cannot get people to look at their lives - what they are doing to themselves. People think they can do anything they want and then go to a physician for a prescription or some surgery and all of their problems will be corrected. That's not the way we work. There's a connection between our bodies and our minds, and we are very complex beings, because of the way God made us.

There's an intimate and complex connection between our heads, hearts, and bodies. God, our Creator, reminds us in His Word that our hearts contain emotions, values, goals, desires the sum total of who we are. And, Solomon said it so well: A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Incidentally, this is the only time the word medicine is used in the Old Testament. So, we must listen to God's voice!

Our peace of mind directly affects our ability to maintain a life of wellness. Conversely, a troubled mind makes it difficult, if not impossible, to be healthy. A troubled mind makes it difficult to regain our health once we lose it. Jesus said, My peace I leave with you!

The most important lesson for us to learn from this verse is that God is in control. Whatever is, is a gift from Him to us, and He is somewhere in that gift. He is at work in our lives shaping us into His image. We must always remember that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Prayer: Lord, life is difficult. Sickness comes, doubts arise, and suffering hurts. Grant us strength, peace and hope. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/27/2019 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 03/17/2019 Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
- 04/13/2019 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/27/2019 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/04/2019 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/27/2019 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Program (Memorial Day)
- 06/13/2019 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-June)
- 06/14/2019 SDSU Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 06/15/2019 Triathlon (Saturday before Father's Day)
- 06/21/2019 Best Ball Golf Tourney
- 06/22-23/2019 Groton Junior Legion Tournament
- 06/29/2019 Groton U10/U12 Round Robin Tournament
- 07/04/2019 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
- 07/14/2019 Summer Fest/Car Show (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/18/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Tournament
- 07/21/2019 Granary Ice Cream Social & Family Music Fest
- 08/02/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Wine on Nine
- 08/09-11/2019 State Junior Legion Tournament in Groton
- 08/22/2019 First Day of School
- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/08/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat/Halloween on Main (Halloween)
- 11/09/2019 Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Bingo: every Wednesday at the Legion Post #39

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 4/4/2020 Easter Egg Hunt (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 4/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 5/2/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday in May)

News from the Associated Press

1 in 6 ER visits or hospital stays triggers 'surprise' bill

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Roughly one in every six times someone is taken to an emergency room or checks in to the hospital, the treatment is followed by a “surprise” medical bill, according to a study released Thursday. And depending on where you live, the odds can be much higher.

The report from the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation finds that millions of people with what’s considered solid coverage from large employers are nonetheless exposed to “out-of-network” charges that can amount to thousands of dollars. It comes as congressional lawmakers of both parties and the Trump administration move to close the loophole, with a Senate panel scheduled to vote on legislation next week.

A patient’s odds of getting a surprise bill vary greatly depending on the state he or she lives in. Texas seems like a bit of a gamble, with 27% of emergency room visits and 38% of in-network hospital stays triggering at least one such bill. Minnesota looks safer, with odds of 2% and 3%, respectively.

Researcher Karen Pollitz of the Kaiser Foundation said the reasons for such wide differences are not entirely clear, but seem to be related to the breadth of hospital and doctor networks in each state, and the ways those networks are designed.

Patients in New York, Florida, New Jersey and Kansas were also more likely to get surprise bills. Other states where it was less likely included South Dakota, Nebraska, Maine and Mississippi.

Averaging the results nationwide, 18 percent of emergency room visits and 16 percent of stays at an in-network hospital triggered a surprise bill for patients with health insurance through a large employer, the study estimated.

That illustrates the need for Congress to get involved, said Pollitz, since large-employer plans are regulated by federal law and surprise billing protections already enacted by states like New York do not apply to them. “This is a prominent problem affecting patients, and it is beyond the reach of state laws to fix, and it is by definition beyond the ability of patients to fix on their own,” she said.

Next Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee plans to vote on bipartisan legislation that would limit what patients can be charged to their in-network deductibles and copays. The bill from Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and Patty Murray, D-Wash., would require insurers to pay out-of-network doctors and hospitals the median — or midpoint — rate paid to in-network providers. The House Energy and Commerce committee is working on similar legislation. President Donald Trump has said he wants to sign a bill.

Major industry lobbies are going to battle over the issue. Insurers and employers generally favor the approach the Alexander-Murray bill takes on how to pay out-of-network providers, using an in-network rate as the reference point. But hospitals and doctors instead want disputed bills to go to arbitration. New York has an arbitration system and a recent study found it has worked well. However, some lawmakers are concerned that on a national scale it may lead to a costly new bureaucracy.

Surprise bills can come about in different ways. In an emergency, a patient can wind up at a hospital that’s not in their insurer’s network. Even at an in-network hospital, emergency physicians or anesthesiologists may not have a contract with the patient’s insurer. For a scheduled surgery at an in-network hospital, not all the doctors may be in the patients’ plan.

Bills can amount to tens of thousands of dollars and hit patients and their families when they are most vulnerable. Often patients are able to negotiate lower charges by working with their insurers and the medical provider. But the process usually takes months, adding stress and anxiety. When it doesn’t work out bills can get sent to collection agencies.

The Kaiser estimates are based on insurance claims from 2017 for nearly 19 million people, or more than 1 in 5 of those covered by large employers. The claims details came from an IBM Health Analytics database that contains information provided by large-employer plans. Researchers excluded patients 65

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or older, most of whom are covered by Medicare.

The Alexander-Murray legislation also includes other ideas aimed at lowering medical costs by promoting competition to brand-name drugs, blocking health industry contracting practices can bid up prices, and requiring greater disclosure of information. A public health section of the bill would authorize a national campaign to increase awareness of the role vaccines play in preventing disease.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

02-04-07-12-21

(two, four, seven, twelve, twenty-one)

Estimated jackpot: \$552,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$55 million

Powerball

04-18-21-26-38, Powerball: 1, Power Play: 3

(four, eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-six, thirty-eight; Powerball: one; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$92 million

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, June 18

Help arrives in wake of flooding

It wouldn't really be accurate to say that the cavalry has arrived in the Yankton area — and in many other counties across South Dakota — but the fact that officials from agencies such as FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) have set up offices in Yankton to cope with the recent fallout from the spring storms can be seen as an encouraging sign.

That sign is a simple one: Officials are on the ground now and ready to offer some direction to those who have been impacted.

The officials are here because the Trump administration approved South Dakota's disaster declaration request about 10 days ago. That opened the door to a lot of options for relief and recovery. In the days since, the Press & Dakotan has received a steady flow of press releases from various agencies trying to get the word out that those agencies are ready to help in whatever way possible.

For instance, FEMA has set up shop at the Yankton County Emergency Management office at 807 Capital Street and is there to "provide in-person support to individuals and businesses that were impacted by local flooding this spring," according to one of those aforementioned press releases.

FEMA is really the starting point for any federal aid needed to help deal with recovery. According to Brian Hvinden, an external affairs specialist for FEMA, the local recovery center will include representatives from several state agencies who can help people with their questions and concerns.

"We want people to avail themselves of the opportunity to meet with folks if they've already registered or if they want to meet with folks to make that initial registration," Hvinden told the Press & Dakotan.

Meanwhile, the SBA has set up a center at RTEC on W. 21st St. to help business owners who may have been either directly or indirectly impacted by the flooding.

"The center will provide a one-stop location for businesses to access a variety of specialized help. SBA customer service representatives will be available to meet individually with each business owner," Tanya N. Garfield of the SBA's Disaster Field Operations Center-West said in a press release.

It really isn't the metaphorical cavalry that will put life back the way it was, but these agencies can serve

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as helping hands to start you on your way toward where you want to be.

They can offer you consulting and provide direction. They can help you dot the i's and cross the t's, so to speak, as you wade into the long process of recovery.

They can give you options and help you take the best steps forward.

It's important to keep these agencies in mind. They are here to help. They are here for you.

Yankton's FEMA Disaster Recovery Center and SBA Business Recovery Center both offer business hours of 9 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays. The deadline for registering with FEMA is Aug. 6.

Madison Daily Leader, June 17

Invite kids to follow Apollo 11 anniversary

This summer is the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission in which astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon.

For those who remember, the mission captivated Americans and many others around the world. Few events have created such unique, positive focus worldwide.

An estimated 1 million people watched the launch in person in Florida, and it was televised live in 33 countries, with an estimated 25 million viewers in the U.S. alone. The pages of The Madison Daily Leader filled in many details not seen on television.

The whole mission was a bold fulfillment of a challenge by President John F. Kennedy during a speech at Baylor University in 1962. He said the United States should put a man on the moon within a decade.

It was just the catalyst the scientific community needed, although some Americans questioned the \$24 billion price tag. Most were simply astounded that it was possible.

Fifty years later, perhaps we aren't as amazed by science as we were then. We've seen so many scientific accomplishments in many fields, and electronic technology has dramatically altered life for many.

Even so, landing a man on the moon still seems astounding -- which causes us to think we should encourage young people to read and watch the anniversary specials this year.

One special that might appeal to the smartphone generation is an app that helps users relive the Apollo 11 mission. It will use videos, images and audio recordings from the mission to take users on an augmented reality journey from the Earth to the moon with real-time tracking simulation.

We think the 50th anniversary is a new, great opportunity to inspire young people in science, and we hope they seize the chance.

Black Hills Pioneer, June 15

A joint effort is needed to fix roads

Northern Hills counties need all the help they can get to improve roads and bridges damaged by snow, rain, and flooding this spring.

We know from living here that precipitation can be feast or famine. This year our cup runneth over.

The Sturgis/Fort Meade reporting station of the National Weather Service showed 8.63 inches of precipitation in May alone for a total of 12 inches for the year. Just down the road in Piedmont, the National Weather Service reports 10.41 inches of precipitation for a total of 16.19 inches for the year to date.

Belle Fourche received 5.58 inches of rain in May and sits at a total of 9.93 inches for the year. Lead had 7.29 inches of rain in May and Spearfish 7.43. Both locations have recorded more than 14 inches of precipitation for the year.

Meade County Commissioners passed a resolution declaring a state of emergency.

In May, Gov. Kristi Noem requested a Presidential Disaster Declaration saying an "historic severe winter storm of rare intensity" hit in South Dakota on March 13, followed by rapid snowmelt and flooding.

She sought FEMA assistance to help with repairs for damage done to both public property as well as to individual homes and businesses. A preliminary damage assessment indicated about \$43 million in damage to public infrastructure.

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President Donald Trump approved the disaster declaration. Another declaration is anticipated to include damage sustained since that initial event.

The saturated ground tests even the best roads, and those roads that were already seeing wear and tear now face amplified degradation.

It's nearly impossible for the county to maintain the roads it has, let alone find the means to fix roads that have been damaged by an over-abundance of moisture.

Resources and manpower in the counties are stretched to their limit. And not all roads will see adequate maintenance.

As residents of the areas affected, we must do our part. When "road closed" signs are posted please heed the warning. Don't drive around the barrier. The sign is there for a reason.

Be patient. Butte County encompasses an area of 2,266 square miles with 800 miles of road. Meade County covers 3,483 square miles with about 1,000 miles of road. Lawrence County is 800 square miles with 408 miles of roads.

Our local counties and the state must do their part also by enforcing load limits on our roads. We pay the property taxes to build and maintain these roads. Law enforcement needs to step up and on occasion bring out the portable scales to catch culprits who further degrade our roads.

In true West River South Dakota fashion, we must all pull together to solve this problem and bring our roads back into drivable condition.

Fan nabs home run ball with 1 hand, saves beer in other hand

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former athlete at Dakota Wesleyan University watching the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska became an internet star by making a stretching one-handed catch of a home run ball — all while keeping a plastic cup filled with beer from tipping over.

For good measure, 23-year-old Austin Buysse of Minneota, Minnesota, immediately guzzled the beer and spiked the cup like a football, much to the delight of fans sitting in left field for the Texas Tech-Arkansas game.

ESPN posted the feat on Twitter and called it "The catch and the chug." The tweet received 90,000 likes.

Buysse told the Sioux Falls Argus Leader that he couldn't say which he considered more impressive, making the left-handed stab on the ball or saving the beer. He said he felt no pain from the bare-handed catch.

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

2 National Guard soldiers, semi driver injured in collision

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say two Illinois National Guard soldiers in a cargo truck and a man driving a semitrailer were injured when the two vehicles collided on a South Dakota highway.

South Dakota Department of Public Safety spokesman Tony Mangan says the crash happened Wednesday morning in Mitchell. Investigators say the cargo vehicle crossed into the path of the semi, which had the right of way.

Mangan says the National Guard members and semi driver were taken to a hospital with serious non-life-threatening injuries.

The soldiers from the 1244th Transportation Company based in North Riverside, Illinois, had been training in the Black Hills. The semi driver was hauling liquid carbon dioxide from the Poet Research Center in Scotland, South Dakota. No liquid was spilled.

The driver of the military vehicle is facing charges.

AT&T Invests More Than \$60 Million Over 3-Year Period to Boost Local Networks in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D., June 19, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- At AT&T 1, we've invested more than \$60 million in our

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South Dakota wireless and wired networks during 2016-2018. These investments boost reliability, coverage, speed and overall performance for residents and businesses. We've also improved critical services that support Public Safety and first responders using the FirstNet communications platform.

AT&T's wireless network covers more than 99% of all Americans and has become the fastest wireless network in the nation, according to the first quarter 2019 results from tests taken with Speedtest® and analyzed by Ookla®.²

In 2018, AT&T made 569 wireless network upgrades in South Dakota. We added new cell sites, additional network capacity and enhanced back haul. By building out our 4G LTE network, we're boosting network speeds and capacity, as we continue to expand the availability of our network and upgrade our technology.

"For South Dakota to continue to thrive and attract new jobs and innovation, sustained investment by the private sector is crucial," said Steve Westra, Commissioner of the South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development. "We commend AT&T for continuing to build state-of-the-art infrastructure in our state that makes business growth possible and assures our residents have the tools to stay connected and entertained."

"AT&T is proud to boost our investment in our wireless network and upgrades across South Dakota," said Cheryl Riley, president, AT&T Northern Plains. "Our goal is to continue to expand not only our geographic reach but our depth of service, and provide our customers and businesses with the reliable, high-speed coverage that they've come to trust and rely on."

Additionally, for the 5th consecutive year we've landed on Fortune magazine's list of the "World's Most Admired" companies. It's also the 6th year in a row we've appeared on the Global Top 50 list – no other telecom company made the Top 50.

Transforming Public Safety Communications

FirstNet is Public Safety's dedicated, nationwide communications platform. It is for all first responders – career and volunteer, urban, rural or tribal. It's bringing public safety communications into the 21st century with new, innovative capabilities, helping first responders connect to the critical information they need – every day and in every emergency.

Building upon our current and planned investments in South Dakota, we continue to extend the reach and increase the capacity of the FirstNet communications platform:

Deployed Band 14 spectrum in more than 600 markets nationwide, including Sioux Falls. Band 14 is high-quality spectrum provided by the First Responder Network Authority. Its signal covers larger geographic areas with less infrastructure to better support rural communities, and it can better reach in-building in more urban areas as compared to higher-MHz spectrum. South Dakota first responders enjoy the fastest overall experience on FirstNet, compared to any commercial network in the nation, thanks to the specialized capabilities enabled by the physically separate and dedicated FirstNet network core, like always-on priority and preemption. ³Public safety agencies subscribed to FirstNet have 24/7 access to a nationwide fleet of 75 deployable network assets. These assets can either be deployed for planned events or called upon in emergencies to help first responders stay connected and operate faster, safer and more effectively when lives are on the line. FirstNet is built with AT&T in a public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority – an independent agency within the federal government. This helps ensure that the FirstNet communications platform and service offerings meet the short- and long-term needs of the public safety community.

To learn more about our wireless coverage in South Dakota, or anywhere in the U.S., visit the AT&T Coverage Viewer. For updates on the AT&T wireless network, please visit the AT&T network news page.

¹ AT&T products and services are provided or offered by subsidiaries and affiliates of AT&T Inc. under the AT&T brand and not by AT&T Inc.

² Based on analysis by Ookla® of Speedtest Intelligence® data average download speeds for Q1 2019. Ookla trademarks used under license and reprinted with permission.

³ Based on AT&T analysis of Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® nationwide data average download speeds for Q1 2019. Ookla trademarks used under license and reprinted with permission.

Rapid City man dies in house fire

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Pennington County sheriff's officials say one person has died in a house fire in Rapid City.

The victim is identified as 41-year-old Sean Rensch. Preliminary autopsy results show Rensch died of smoke inhalation at his house Tuesday. Authorities are looking for a cause of the fire, but also say nothing appears to be suspicious.

Former prison associate warden suing corrections officials

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — The former associate warden at the South Dakota prison in Yankton is suing corrections officials claiming she was forced from her job after complaining about a hostile work environment.

Jennifer Stanwick-Klimek was placed on indefinite administrative leave in March of 2018 shortly after she was interviewed by human resources officials investigating her harassment and retaliation claim at the Mike Durfee State Prison.

The Argus Leader reports Stanwick-Klimek says in her complaint that she was reluctant to make a report because previous complaints about harassment had gone unheeded. Stanwick-Klimek was hired at the prison in 2003. Her lawsuit says she was promoted and earned praise in her annual performance evaluations. Defendants named include corrections Secretary Mike Leidholt and the former warden, Robert Dooley.

Corrections officials declined to comment on the lawsuit.

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

The Latest: US military denounces Iran's 'unprovoked attack'

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The Latest on developments in the Persian Gulf region amid rising tensions between Iran and the U.S. (all times local):

3:35 p.m.

The U.S. military's Central Command has confirmed that Iranian forces shot down a U.S. drone, an RQ-4 Global Hawk, saying the downing took place in international airspace and describing it as an "unprovoked attack."

A statement from CENTCOM says the unmanned aircraft — an RQ-4A Global Hawk maritime surveillance drone — was "shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile system while operating in international airspace over the Strait of Hormuz" early on Thursday.

The statement further said that "Iranian reports that the aircraft was over Iran are false" and that "this was an unprovoked attack on a U.S. surveillance asset in international airspace."

2:20 p.m.

Iran's foreign ministry has warned the United States over violating Iranian airspace after the Revolutionary Guard shot down a U.S. drone earlier in the day.

A ministry spokesman, Abbas Mousavi, is quoted by the semi-official Tasnim news agency as saying that Iran cannot condone the "illegal trespassing and invading of the country's skies by any kind of foreign flying object."

Iran's Revolutionary Guard says it shot down the American drone over Iranian airspace, while U.S. officials say it happened over international airspace in the Strait of Hormuz.

Mousavi expressed Iran's "strong objection" and added that the "invaders will bear full responsibility."

12:45 p.m.

Saudi Arabia says Yemen's Houthi rebels have fired a rocket into the kingdom targeting a desalination plant, but that no one was wounded and the rocket caused no damage.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency on Thursday reported the attack, quoting military spokesman Col.

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Turki al-Maliki. The attack took place late Wednesday night.

The Iranian-backed Houthis through their Al-Masirah satellite channel claimed that they targeted a power plant in Jizan in Saudi Arabia.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders earlier said President Donald Trump had been "briefed on the reports of a missile strike in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

It wasn't immediately clear why the U.S. would brief Trump over the incident if it caused no damage.

The attack comes amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. over Tehran's collapsing nuclear deal with world powers.

10:40 a.m.

The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard says the shooting down of a U.S. drone has sent "a clear message" to America.

Gen. Hossein Salami said also says that Iran does "not have any intention for war with any country, but we are ready for war."

His speech was carried live on Iranian state television on Thursday, shortly after U.S. and Iranian officials acknowledged the shooting down of the drone.

The Guard says it shot down the American drone over Iranian airspace, while U.S. officials told The Associated Press the downing happened over international airspace in the Strait of Hormuz.

The different accounts could not be immediately reconciled.

10:25 a.m.

A U.S. official says that an Iranian surface-to-air missile shot down a U.S. drone flying in international airspace over the Strait of Hormuz.

The official spoke to The Associated Press on Thursday on condition of anonymity as the information had yet to be cleared for release to the public.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said Thursday it shot down a U.S. drone amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington over its collapsing nuclear deal.

It said the U.S. drone was flying in Iranian airspace, contradicting the U.S. official.

The reported downing of the RQ-4 Global Hawk comes after the U.S. military previously alleged Iran fired a missile at another drone last week that responded to the attack on two oil tankers near the Gulf of Oman. The U.S. blames Iran for the attack on the ships, something Tehran denies.

—Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates;

7 a.m.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency says the country's Revolutionary Guard has shot down a U.S. drone. The U.S. military declined to immediately comment.

IRNA said Thursday the drone was hit when it entered Iranian airspace near the Kouhmobarak district in southern Iran's Hormozgan province.

IRNA, citing the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, identified the drone as an RQ-4 Global Hawk.

Capt. Bill Urban, a U.S. Central Command spokesman, declined to comment when asked if an American drone was shot down.

However, he told The Associated Press: "There was no drone over Iranian territory."

The reported shootdown comes amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. It takes root in President Donald Trump's decision a year ago to withdraw America from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

The Latest: China leader urges restart of US-N. Korea talks

BEIJING (AP) — The Latest on Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to North Korea (all times local):
7 p.m.

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Chinese state media say Chinese President Xi Jinping told North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that the international community expects the U.S. and North Korea to restart a productive dialogue.

State broadcaster CCTV quoted Xi as making the comments during a meeting Thursday, the first day of his first visit to North Korea since taking office in 2013.

It quoted Xi as saying the situation on the Korean Peninsula "concerns the peace and stability of the region."

"In the past year, the peninsular issue has seen bright prospects for resolution through dialogue and won the recognition and expectation of the international community," Xi said, apparently referring to meetings between Kim and President Donald Trump in Singapore and Vietnam that failed to produce solid results. Those talks are now stalled.

3:30 p.m.

The leaders of China and North Korea are holding talks in the North Korean capital.

China's official Xinhua News Agency said President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sat down for talks Thursday in Pyongyang. It provided no further details.

Xi arrived earlier Thursday for a two-day state visit. He and Kim are expected to discuss the stalled U.S.-North Korean talks on the latter's nuclear weapons program.

Xi is the first Chinese leader to visit North Korea in 14 years.

3 p.m.

Chinese state media says President Xi Jinping was greeted with a huge arrival ceremony at the start of a two-day state visit to North Korea.

The official Xinhua News Agency says about 10,000 people stood in formation and waved flowers at the airport in Pyongyang on Thursday.

Xi and his wife were met by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his wife.

A banner read: "Long Live with Unbreakable Friendship and Unity Formed by Blood".

The two communist nations fought together against the United States, South Korea and their allies in the 1950-53 Korean War. They have had close, though sometimes strained, ties since the war.

1:15 p.m.

A former North Korean diplomat who defected to South Korea says he thinks the North's leader wants China to mediate between Pyongyang and Washington and relay his new proposal to President Donald Trump for a possible third summit.

Thae Yong Ho defected to South Korea while serving in Britain in 2016. He says Kim would want Chinese President Xi Jinping to deliver his message to Trump when they meet at next week's Group of 20 summit in Japan.

Xi is making a two-day state visit to North Korea on Thursday and Friday.

Thae says Kim may propose some compromise on his nuclear facilities to achieve a third summit but such a move would be only to buy time and not to denuclearize.

11 a.m.

Chinese state media say President Xi Jinping has arrived in North Korea for first visit since taking office in 2013.

The Xinhua News Agency says Xi arrived shortly before 11 a.m. Thursday. During the two-day state visit, he's expected to talk with leader Kim Jong Un about reviving talks with Washington over North Korea's nuclear weapons.

China's official Xinhua news agency reported that Xi was accompanied by his wife, Peng Liyuan, and several Communist Party officials. He would be the first Chinese president to visit North Korea in 14 years.

The summit comes as both Xi and Kim are locked in separate disputes with the United States — Xi over trade and Kim over his nuclear weapons.

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9:30 a.m.

Chinese state media say President Xi Jinping has departed for his state visit to North Korea, which he has said will strengthen the countries' strategic ties.

Xinhua news agency said Xi left Thursday morning and was accompanied by his wife, Peng Liyuan, and several Communist Party officials. He's expected to have talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, including about his nuclear program as talks have stalled with the U.S.

Experts say Xi will likely endorse North Korea's calls for an incremental disarmament process in which every action Pyongyang takes it met with U.S. concessions on sanctions and security issues.

Poll: Tracking asteroids a favored focus for space program

By MARCIA DUNN and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Americans prefer a space program that focuses on potential asteroid impacts, scientific research and using robots to explore the cosmos over sending humans back to the moon or on to Mars, a poll shows.

The poll by The Associated Press and the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, released Thursday, one month before the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, lists asteroid and comet monitoring as the No. 1 desired objective for the U.S. space program. About two-thirds of Americans call that very or extremely important, and about a combined 9 in 10 say it's at least moderately important.

The poll comes as the White House pushes to get astronauts back on the moon, but only about a quarter of Americans said moon or Mars exploration by astronauts should be among the space program's highest priorities. About another third called each of those moderately important.

Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on July 20, 1969, became the first humans to walk on another celestial body. In all, 12 NASA astronauts stepped on the moon.

Jan Dizard, 78, a retired environmental studies professor living in Chico, California, acknowledges there's more to learn on the moon and it would be "miraculous" to send astronauts to Mars. But now's not the time, he stressed.

"There are all kinds of other things, not the least of which is climate change, that deserve our attention," Dizard told the AP. "This other stuff can wait."

After asteroid and comet monitoring, scientific research to expand knowledge of Earth and the rest of the solar system and universe came next on the list of Americans' space priorities — about 6 in 10 said that was very or extremely important. Close to half said the same about sending robotic probes, rather than astronauts, to explore space, and about 4 in 10 said the same about continued funding of the International Space Station.

Searching for life on other planets came in fifth with 34% rating it at least very important, followed by 27% for human Mars expeditions and 23% for crewed moonshots.

In a dead heat for last place among the nine listed goals: setting up permanent human residences on other planets, with 21% ranking it as a very high priority, and establishing a U.S. military presence in space with 19%. While other goals were considered at least moderately important by majorities of Americans, about half called a military presence and space colonies unimportant.

Toni Dewey, 71, a retired clerical worker in Wilmington, North Carolina, said space exploration should benefit life on Earth and the explorers should be machines versus humans.

"It would cost a lot of money to send somebody to Mars," she said, "and we have roads and bridges that need repaired here."

As for the moon, Dewey noted, "We've been there."

But Alan Curtis, 47, of Pocatello, Idaho, considers moon and Mars trips a top priority, especially if the U.S. is to remain a world leader in space. Compared with its feats of the 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. space program is now a second thought, he said.

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"It's pretty bad that we have to rent a spot on a Russian spacecraft to get to the space station," said Curtis, a store cashier who says he's an occasional bounty hunter. He pointed to the first-ever landing by a spacecraft on the far side of the moon, by China in January.

Abdul Lotiff, 28, a retail security company manager in Mason City, Iowa, also favors a return to the moon. He sees economic benefits there, with the resulting new tech spilling into areas outside the space business. In addition, he said, if and when Earth becomes overpopulated, the moon could serve as a springboard for humanity's expansion into space.

The survey asked Americans to directly choose between the moon and Mars for exploration by U.S. astronaut. The red planet was the winner by about double: 37% compared with 18%. However, 43% said neither destination was a priority.

For Americans under 45 — born after NASA's Apollo moonshots — Mars came out on top by an even larger margin: 50% prefer a Mars trip, versus 17% for the moon. A third said neither should be a priority.

For those 45 and older, 52% said neither Mars nor the moon should be a priority as a human destination. Of that age bracket, 26% preferred sending astronauts to Mars and 19% to the moon.

As for the White House's deadline of returning astronauts to the moon within five years — NASA is aiming for the water ice-rich lunar south pole by 2024 — about 4 in 10 Americans favored the plan, versus 2 in 10 against. The remainder had no strong opinion either way.

The good news, at least for NASA and its contractors, is that 60% of Americans believe the benefits of the space program have justified the cost.

In 1979 — on the 10th anniversary of the first manned moon landing — 41% of Americans said the benefits were worth the cost, according to an AP-NBC News poll.

If given an opportunity to experience space travel themselves, about half of Americans said they would orbit the Earth, while about 4 in 10 would fly to the moon and about 3 in 10 would go to Mars. Among those willing to travel to the red planet, about half — or 15% of all Americans — said they would move to a Mars colony, even if it meant never returning to Earth.

Men were more likely than women to want to travel to any space destination: Earth orbit, moon and Mars.

Curtis contends the U.S. might have a colony on the moon by now "if we had put our money in the right places."

"We haven't been there in so long," he said. "Is the flag even still there?"

U.S. flags were planted on the moon during each of the Apollo landings through 1972. The first was knocked over by engine exhaust when Apollo 11's Armstrong and Aldrin blasted off the moon.

Swanson reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Jeremy Rehm in New York contributed to this report.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,137 adults was conducted May 17-20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org>

APNewsBreak: Texas says Rapid DNA supplier jeopardizes cases

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — With a name that sounds like futuristic fiction, Rapid DNA machines roughly the size of an office printer have helped solve rape cases in Kentucky, identified California wildfire victims and verified family connections of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Now a state board in Texas has asked a growing government provider of the DNA equipment used in those high-profile projects to halt work amid concerns of potentially jeopardized criminal cases, according

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to a letter obtained by The Associated Press.

Texas is not the only place where the company, Longmont, Colorado-based ANDE, has come under scrutiny. Utah officials say they will likely no longer use Rapid DNA machines for sexual assault investigations, citing a higher degree of technical analysis required, but one case raised concerns about swabs taken from a victim. And when the Arizona Legislature this year considered creating a new statewide DNA database, ANDE helped draft the bill that included language excluding its only U.S. competitor, giving some lawmakers discomfort.

"Prosecutors are saying, 'You're screwing up our cases,'" said Lynn Garcia, general counsel of the Texas Forensic Science Commission.

On Monday, the governor-appointed board sent a letter asking ANDE to "cease any project in Texas involving the use of its Rapid DNA technology" unless it goes through an accredited lab familiar with handling criminal evidence.

The commission says ANDE embarked on projects with police and a hospital in Houston without input from prosecutors, leaving them in the dark about evidence they're required to disclose to criminal suspects. That sent prosecutors scrambling to comply with a 2013 Texas law named after a man who wrongfully spent 25 years in prison after significant evidence in his case was withheld.

ANDE spokeswoman Annette Mattern disputed the accusations, saying law enforcement agencies bear the responsibility for evidence handling. She said no issues have been raised regarding ANDE's equipment.

Started in 2004, ANDE is becoming synonymous with Rapid DNA thanks to a run of high-profile projects, including a pilot program on the border with the U.S. government that ended in May. Voluntary cheek swabs were taken from some migrant adults and children to confirm family connections, amid worries by the Trump administration that some migrants were fraudulently posing as parents.

Mattern said the company's technology is "challenging norms" and suggested that some might be struggling to adjust.

"If there are procedural issues within the agencies, I'm not surprised because this is new," she said. "If there is confusion because one group says it has a protocol and another says, 'Well, it should be different,' those are good conversations to have. Make it better."

It has left ANDE facing criticism as the company — one of just two manufacturers of Rapid DNA machines in the U.S. — makes an aggressive push into police stations and labs nationwide. Officials in Texas say they fear the company's actions are setting back a promising technology that has gotten a boost under President Donald Trump, who in 2017 signed the Rapid DNA Act that allows police stations to link machines to the nation's DNA database.

The technology is gaining traction. Although Rapid DNA results aren't used for courtroom evidence, investigators are embracing a tool that can give them results in a couple hours rather than waiting days or weeks, allowing them to zero in on suspects and solve cases faster.

In Texas, the commission said the company's arrival in Houston has jeopardized the integrity of ongoing criminal cases, although the board did not cite any that had been derailed because of ANDE.

Peter Stout, chief executive of the Houston Forensic Science Center, said at least one swab taken from a sexual assault victim was lost in the mail. Mattern said she had no information about a lost sample, but the commission noted other concerns related to the integrity of samples "sent out of state."

Stout rejected ANDE's assertion that it had no responsibility in how evidence was handled.

"It's a little disingenuous on ANDE's part because they are so aggressive in marketing this to the officers that this is an investigative tool. And they certainly don't take the opportunity to explain and point out that you guys need to make sure you're giving everybody the information," Stout said.

Utah Republican Attorney General Sean Reyes, who purchased two ANDE machines, raves about the technology on his website in a video that includes about 90 seconds of ANDE promotional footage.

The machines were purchased for low-priority property and gun crimes but in one case ran evidence from a sexual assault investigation, said Nate Mutter, the office's assistant chief of investigations. He said technical assistance was needed from ANDE to help analyze the sample.

Mutter said it was "very possible" that the Utah law enforcement agency that obtained the swab, which he would not disclose, did not get consent from the victim for a rapid DNA analysis. He acknowledged concerns were raised, but said his office's reluctance to use the machine again in sexual assault cases is because the analysis requires more technical proficiency.

"I would just find it hard to believe that they wouldn't consent to extra swabs if that meant their case got adjudicated faster, and their rape suspect got held accountable faster," Mutter said.

In Arizona, Mattern defended the company asking for "performance parameters" in the proposed DNA database bill that excluded the company's chief rival, Thermo Fischer Scientific, saying it wouldn't have prevented competitors from ultimately meeting the same requirements. Mattern said ANDE later asked to kill the legislation.

During a February hearing, Mattern was other ANDE representatives testified in support of the proposal. Some senators questioned whether there were other advocates besides the company.

"Limiting that to just one company, or two companies, that can make a lot of money on this makes me uncomfortable," Arizona Democratic Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai said at the hearing.

Follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pauljweber

Iran Revolutionary Guard shoots down US drone amid tensions

By **NASSER KARIMI** and **JON GAMBRELL** Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's Revolutionary Guard shot down a U.S. drone on Thursday amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington over its collapsing nuclear deal with world powers, American and Iranian officials said, though they disputed the circumstances of the incident.

The Guard said it shot down the drone over Iranian airspace, while two U.S. officials told The Associated Press that the downing happened over international airspace in the Strait of Hormuz. The different accounts could not be immediately reconciled.

Previously, the U.S. military alleged that Iran had fired a missile at another drone last week that was responding to the attack on two oil tankers near the Gulf of Oman. The U.S. blames Iran for the attack on the ships; Tehran denies it was involved.

The attacks come against the backdrop of heightened tensions between the U.S. and Iran following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from Tehran's nuclear deal a year ago.

Separately, Saudi Arabia said on Thursday that Yemen's Iranian-allied Houthi rebels launched a rocket targeting a desalination plant in the kingdom the previous night. The White House said Trump was briefed about that attack.

Iran has quadrupled its production of low-enriched uranium and threatened to boost its enrichment closer to weapons-grade levels, trying to pressure Europe for new terms to the 2015 nuclear deal.

In recent weeks, the U.S. has sped an aircraft carrier to the Mideast and deployed additional troops alongside the tens of thousands already in the region. From Yemen, the Houthis have launched bomb-laden drones into neighboring Saudi Arabia.

All this has raised fears that a miscalculation or further rise in tensions could push the U.S. and Iran into an open conflict, some 40 years after Tehran's Islamic Revolution. Thursday's drone incident marks the first direct Iranian-claimed attack on the U.S. amid the crisis.

"We do not have any intention for war with any country, but we are fully ready for war," Revolutionary Guard commander Gen. Hossein Salami said in a televised address.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said it shot down the drone on Thursday morning when it entered Iranian airspace near the Kouhmobarak district in southern Iran's Hormozgan province. Kouhmobarak is some 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) southeast of Tehran and close to the Strait of Hormuz.

The Guard said it shot down the drone at 4:05 a.m. after it collected data from Iranian territory, including the southern port of Chahbahar near Iran's border with Pakistan. Iran used its air defense system known

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as Third of Khordad to shoot down the drone — a truck-based missile system that can fire up to 18 miles (30 kilometers) into the sky, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency, citing the Guard, identified the drone as an RQ-4 Global Hawk. However, the U.S. Navy also flies a variant that looks similar, called the MQ-4C Triton.

The drones cost over \$100 million apiece and can fly higher than 10 miles in altitude and stay in the air for over 24 hours at a time. They have a distinguishable hump-shaped front and an engine atop. Their wingspan is bigger than a Boeing 737 passenger jet.

The Guard described the drone as being launched from the southern Persian Gulf but did not elaborate. American RQ-4 Global Hawks are stationed at the Al-Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, near the capital, Abu Dhabi. AP journalists saw the drones on the base's tarmac during a March 2016 visit by then-Vice President Joe Biden.

The U.S. officials told the AP the Iranians fired a surface-to-air missile striking the American drone over the Strait of Hormuz, in international airspace. The strait is the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all global oil moves.

The officials spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity as the information had yet to be cleared for release to the public. They did not elaborate on the type of drone shot down, nor the mission it was conducting. However, the U.S. has been worried about international shipping through the Strait of Hormuz since the limpet mine attacks in May and June.

Salami, speaking to a crowd in the western city of Sanandaj, described the American drone as "violating our national security border."

"Borders are our red line," Salami said. "Any enemy that violates the borders will be annihilated."

Iran's Foreign Ministry separately protested the drone, saying it entered Iranian territory.

Iran has claimed to have shot down American drones in the past. In the most-famous incident, in December 2011, Iran seized an RQ-170 Sentinel flown by the CIA to monitor Iranian nuclear sites after it entered Iranian airspace from neighboring Afghanistan. The Iranians later reverse-engineered the drone to create their own variants.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said Yemen's Houthi rebels fired a rocket at a desalination plant in al-Shuqaiq, a city in the kingdom's Jizan province. The state-run Saudi Press Agency quoted military spokesman Col. Turki al-Maliki as saying the attack caused no damage and wounded no one. The Yemeni rebel Al-Masirah satellite news channel earlier said the Houthis targeted a power plant in Jizan, near the kingdom's border with Yemen, with a cruise missile.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said Trump had been "briefed on the reports of a missile strike in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

"We are closely monitoring the situation and continuing to consult with our partners and allies," Sanders said. It wasn't immediately clear why Trump would be briefed about an attack that caused no damage or casualties.

A Saudi-led coalition has been battling the Houthis since March 2015 in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest nation now pushed to the brink of famine by the conflict. In recent weeks, the Houthis have launched a new campaign sending missiles and bomb-laden drones into Saudi Arabia.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Oil shippers boost security after attacks on tankers in Gulf

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A series of attacks on oil tankers near the Persian Gulf has ratcheted up tensions between the U.S. and Iran — and raised fears over the safety of one of Asia's most vital energy trade routes, where about a fifth of the world's oil passes through its narrowest at the Strait of Hormuz.

The attacks have jolted the shipping industry, with some of the 2,000 companies operating ships in the region on high alert and ordering their vessels to transit the Strait of Hormuz only during the daylight

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hours and at high speed.

Washington's accusation that Iran is behind the attacks targeting oil tankers comes as tensions flare between the two countries. The U.S. has deployed an airstrike carrier and bombers to the region, and announced this week it will send 1,000 more troops. European powers are facing a deadline from Tehran to ease the effects of punishing U.S. sanctions — described by its leaders as “economic warfare” — or Iran will break out of the limits set on its uranium enrichment by the landmark 2015 nuclear deal.

The apparent targeting of tankers is alarming to ship owners operating in the Persian Gulf, said chief shipping analyst at BIMCO, Peter Sand. The company dubs itself the world's largest shipping association.

But it's more or less business as usual for shippers, he said, despite the need for added precautions.

“They are all of course increasingly worried, but many of them are going with business as they would have done without the attacks, but of course with an extra layer of safety and security measures on top of that,” Sand said.

That means going at high speed through the Strait of Hormuz, which at its narrowest point is about 3 kilometers (2 miles) wide. Normally, vessels carrying cargo would slow down to save on fuel costs.

It also means avoiding the strait at night to keep better watch on security around the vessel.

Washington alleges Iranian forces surreptitiously planted limpet mines on two vessels in the Gulf of Oman last week. The attack forced the evacuation of all 44 crewmembers onboard and left one of the ships ablaze at sea.

Washington also blamed Iran for similar attacks on May 12 that targeted four oil tankers anchored off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. Iran denies being involved.

The attacks last week targeted the Norwegian-owned MT Front Altair, which had a cargo of highly flammable naphtha loaded from the UAE, and the Kokuka Courageous, a Japanese tanker carrying Saudi methanol. Both had been traveling through the Gulf of Oman, having passed the Strait of Hormuz.

Of the roughly 2,000 companies that operate ships in the Persian Gulf, only two companies have halted bookings outright. Otherwise, “business has continued more or less undisrupted,” Sand said.

In fact, higher risks could boost the bottom line for some oil shippers, after a lackluster period for the industry. A risk analysis by shipping services company Braemar ACM said owners can ask for higher premiums now. The firm said the Gulf region was declared as a “Listed Area”, meaning it faces enhanced risk, after the May 12 incidents targeting tankers off the UAE coast.

Immediately after last week's attacks, freight rates for operators in the Gulf rose 10-20%.

With increased risks, however, come higher insurance premiums, which are expected to rise 10-15%.

It's typically the buyers and charterers who bear the brunt of the overall higher costs, another reason why security of the Strait of Hormuz is paramount for oil-importers around the world. An estimated 18-20 million barrels of oil — much of it crude — pass through the strait every day. BIMCO says anywhere between 10-40 vessels carrying just crude oil move through daily.

During the so-called Tanker War of the 1980s, when Iran and Iraq targeted vessels carrying one another's exports, the U.S. Navy escorted oil tankers through the Persian Gulf to ensure American energy supplies. But the U.S. is no longer as reliant on Arabian producers.

Today, any conflict that threatens tankers would badly disrupt crude supplies for energy-hungry East Asia. Higher prices could hit hardest China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Indonesia — among the five biggest buyers of Arabian oil.

Indeed, the MT Front Altair was headed to Japan; the Kokuka Courgaeous reportedly to Singapore.

The Washington Post quoted this week Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as saying that because most of the oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz is headed to Asian markets, it would be ill-advised for the U.S. military to take the same role it did in the 1980s. He said there were plans to reach out to the big Asian oil-importers about a possible international effort to safeguard tanker traffic.

Robert Macleod, CEO of Frontline Management, whose vessel Front Altair was targeted last week, said the general area of the Strait of Hormuz “represents a real and very serious risk to shipping.”

In a statement, he said crews must be on high alert while traversing through the passage. The company,

however, said it had re-commenced trading in the region after briefly halting it following the attack. He said the company also tightened security measures, but did not elaborate.

One extraordinary measure ship owners might consider, if the situation deteriorates further, is having armed guards onboard. This is already the case for many vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden, where piracy is a major concern.

"From a shipping industry perspective, we are certainly not in favor of bringing more armed guards onboard international commercial ships because they are not warships," said Sand. "They should not be carrying arms. They should be able to transit without being interrupted."

Biden's words on segregationist senators draw rivals' fire

By BILL BARROW and ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is dismissing calls to apologize for saying that the Senate "got things done" with "civility" even when the body included segregationists with whom he disagreed.

His rivals for the 2020 nomination, including the two major black candidates in the race, roundly criticized Biden's comments. But Biden didn't back down Wednesday and was particularly defiant in the face of criticism from New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, who said the former vice president should apologize.

Biden said Booker should apologize because the senator "should know better" than to question Biden's commitment to civil rights.

"There's not a racist bone in my body," Biden said. "I've been involved in civil rights my whole career."

Booker's response: "I was raised to speak truth to power and that I shall never apologize for doing that. And Vice President Biden shouldn't need this lesson," he told CNN.

It's becoming one of the most intense disputes of the primary, showing the hazards for Biden as he tries to turn his decades of Washington experience into an advantage. Instead, he's infuriating Democrats who say he's out of step with the diverse party of the 21st century and potentially undermining his argument that he's the most electable candidate to take on President Donald Trump.

At a New York fundraiser Tuesday, Biden pointed to two long-dead segregationist senators, Democrats James Eastland of Mississippi and Herman Talmadge of Georgia, to argue that Washington functioned more smoothly a generation ago than under today's "broken" hyperpartisanship.

"We didn't agree on much of anything," Biden said of the two men, who were prominent lawmakers when Biden was elected in 1972. Biden described Talmadge as "one of the meanest guys I ever knew" and said Eastland called him "son," though not "boy," a reference to the racist way many whites addressed black men at the time.

Yet even in that Senate, Biden said, "At least there was some civility. We got things done."

Biden's rivals quickly pounced.

"I have to tell Vice President Biden, as someone I respect, that he is wrong for using his relationships with Eastland and Talmadge as examples of how to bring our country together," said Booker, who is African American.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, a white man who is married to a black woman, tweeted: "It's 2019 & @JoeBiden is longing for the good old days of 'civility' typified by James Eastland. Eastland thought my multiracial family should be illegal."

California Sen. Kamala Harris, who is black, said Biden was "coddling" segregationists in a way that "suggests to me that he doesn't understand ... the dark history of our country" — a characterization Biden's campaign rejects.

Former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke said that for Biden "to somehow say that what we're seeing in this country today is a function of partisanship or a lack of bipartisanship completely ignores the legacy of slavery and the active suppression of African Americans and communities of color right now."

The tumult comes at a crucial point in the campaign. Biden is still recovering from controversy earlier this month when he angered many Democrats by saying he didn't support federal taxpayer money supporting abortion. He later reversed his position.

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He's among the more than 20 candidates who will be in South Carolina this weekend to make their case to black voters at a series of events.

Meanwhile, most of the candidates will gather in Miami next week for the first presidential debate of the primary season. Biden will almost certainly face criticism for the comments.

He tried to defuse the tension by saying he was trying to argue that leaders sometimes have to work with people they disagree with to achieve goals, such as renewing the Voting Rights Act.

"The point I'm making is you don't have to agree. You don't have to like the people in terms of their views," he said. "But you just simply make the case and you beat them without changing the system."

He has received support from some black leaders. Louisiana Rep. Cedric Richmond, Biden's campaign co-chairman and a former Congressional Black Caucus chairman, said Biden's opponents deliberately ignored the full context of his argument for a more functional government.

"Maybe there's a better way to say it, but we have to work with people, and that's a fact," Richmond said, noting he dealt recently with President Donald Trump to pass a long-sought criminal justice overhaul. "I question (Trump's) racial sensitivity, a whole bunch of things about his character ... but we worked together."

Likewise, Richmond said, Biden mentioned Jim Crow-era senators to emphasize the depths of disagreements elected officials sometimes navigate. "If he gets elected president, we don't have 60 votes in the Senate" to overcome filibusters, Richmond noted. "He could be less genuine and say, 'We're just going to do all these things.' But we already have a president like that. (Biden) knows we have to build consensus."

Biden also drew a qualified defense from Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, the only black senator from his party.

Scott said that Biden "should have used a different group of senators" to make his point but that his remarks "have nothing to do with his position on race" issues. Scott said the reaction reflects an intense environment for Democrats in which the desire to defeat Trump means "anything the front-runner says that is off by a little bit" will be magnified.

Associated Press writer Brian Slodysko in Chevy Chase, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Follow Bill Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP> and Elana Schor at <https://twitter.com/eschor>

AP Interview: Border official says aid needed to save lives

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When 16-year-old Carlos Hernandez Vasquez fell ill in a holding facility at the U.S.-Mexico border, he was diagnosed with the flu and given medication, then sent back to a cell to recuperate on a concrete bench.

But Carlos didn't get better. The Guatemalan migrant died May 20 from flu complications — a glaring sign that Border Patrol stations aren't set up to manage thousands of children.

If they must, they need better medical care and a place for sick kids to convalesce, acting Customs and Border Protection Commissioner John Sanders told The Associated Press. That's why Congress must pass the \$4.6 billion in emergency funding, he said shortly before the request took a step forward in the Senate Wednesday.

And if not, Sanders said, more kids may die.

"What occurred, that was something that impacted me profoundly," Sanders told the AP.

U.S. Border Patrol stations are no place for children. They are bare-bones holding facilities meant for swift processing. But because the entire system is overwhelmed, Border Patrol is routinely holding children for about five days or longer — well beyond the 72-hour mandated window — because the government agency that takes care of minors who cross the border is also overwhelmed. And children must be deemed "fit to travel" before they are transferred.

When Carlos got sick, Border Patrol had about 2,500 kids in its custody, Sanders said. Overall, Border

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Patrol is holding about 15,000 people. Officials consider 4,000 to be at capacity.

"The death of a child is always a terrible thing, but here is a situation where, because there is not enough funding ... they can't move the people out of our custody," Sanders said.

The Trump administration is struggling to manage a growing number of children and families crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. More than 100,000 people are crossing per month. Immigration facilities are overwhelmed, as are the nonprofits that often take in migrants after they are released from government custody. The numbers have risen dramatically during President Donald Trump's time in office despite his hard-line immigration policies and border tough-talk.

In addition to Carlos, four other children have died since late last year after being detained by the Border Patrol. Just last week, a 17-year-old girl who had an emergency cesarean section in Mexico was discovered at a border facility in Texas with her premature baby.

Congress is nowhere near agreement on any major immigration law changes. As a stopgap, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Wednesday approved a modified version of the emergency funding request by a 30-1 vote. It's on its way to a floor vote next week.

The bipartisan vote likely means that the Senate will take the lead in writing the legislation, which needs to pass into law before the House and Senate leave for vacation next week. A spokesman for the House Appropriations Committee chairwoman, Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., said the panel has drafted its version of the measure and expects a bipartisan vote early next week.

The legislation contains \$2.9 billion to care for unaccompanied migrant children — more than 50,000 have been referred to government care since October — and \$1.3 billion to care for adults. There's also money to hire new judges to decide asylum claims.

To win Democratic support, the panel's chairman, Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., agreed to drop Trump's request for Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention beds, where adults and a small number of families are held, and agreed to a Democratic provision to block any of the money in the legislation from being diverted to building a border wall.

In the meantime, to help manage the crush, Customs and Border Protection opened a second air-conditioned tent to hold up to 500 people in Donna, Texas, after the first facility of 500 near the Donna-Rio Bravo International Bridge quickly filled up. There is a large tent in El Paso. And construction is underway for a similar facility in Yuma, Arizona.

The spaces offer bathrooms, recreation areas and sleeping quarters that are divided by gender and by families and children traveling alone. Detainees will sleep on mats.

Across the border, Department of Homeland Security volunteers heat up meals for migrants. Government agencies are spending considerably more on perishables, travel and medical checks. A flu epidemic at the facility where Carlos died prompted a temporary shutdown while it was sanitized and cleaned. The supplemental funding will in part pay for those efforts, Sanders said.

Sanders also envisions small infirmaries with beds where people can recuperate if they're sick, and mobile medical units that can get care faster to rural areas.

Getting the emergency funding isn't a permanent fix, but it's a necessary start, he said.

"We need to be thinking not only about the care for the people in our custody," Sanders said. "I have a 60,000-person workforce that is strained, are getting sick. The people of CBP need assistance for them."

Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

China's Xi Jinping holds talks with Kim Jong Un in N. Korea

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The leaders of China and North Korea met in the North's capital on Thursday, their fifth meeting in 15 months, with stalled nuclear negotiations with Washington expected to be on the agenda.

China's official Xinhua news agency reported that the talks in Pyongyang between Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had begun, but provided no details.

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The summit comes as both Xi and Kim are locked in separate disputes with the United States — Xi over trade and Kim over his nuclear weapons.

With Xi due to meet President Donald Trump next week in Japan, analysts say Kim may ask the Chinese leader to pass on a message in hopes of reviving talks with the U.S. on North Korea's nuclear program.

Xi's two-day state visit to North Korea is the first by a Chinese president in 14 years.

He, his wife Peng Liyuan and senior Chinese officials were greeted with a 21-gun salute at a huge arrival ceremony at Pyongyang's airport, where they were met by Kim and his wife, Ri Sol Ju.

About 10,000 people stood in tight formation, waving flowers and chanting slogans to welcome Xi, according to Xinhua. People also lined the roads as Xi's motorcade traveled to central Pyongyang, where he joined Kim in an open-top vehicle, it said.

They waved to crowds as they rode to the square where the embalmed bodies of Kim's grandfather and father, the first two leaders of North Korea, lie in state.

As of late Thursday afternoon, North Korean media had yet to report on Xi's arrival.

Nuclear talks between the U.S. and North Korea broke down after a summit between Kim and Trump in February in Hanoi, Vietnam, ended in failure.

The U.S. is demanding that North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons development before international sanctions are lifted. North Korea is seeking a step-by-step approach in which moves toward its denuclearization are matched by concessions from the U.S., notably a relaxation of economic sanctions.

Experts say Xi will likely endorse North Korea's calls for an incremental disarmament process.

A Xinhua commentary said China could play a unique and constructive role in breaking the cycle of mistrust between North Korea and the U.S. It said both sides "need to have reasonable expectations and refrain from imposing unilateral and unrealistic demands."

A former North Korean diplomat who defected in 2016 said he thinks Kim wants to give Xi a message to deliver to Trump when the two meet at the upcoming G-20 summit in Japan.

Thae Yong Ho said Kim may offer to abandon some of his nuclear facilities in a bid to set up a third summit with the U.S. president. But he cautioned that such a move would be only to buy time and not to denuclearize fully, as the U.S. is demanding.

"The main purpose for the Kim Jong Un regime in negotiating is to keep North Korea as a new nuclear state in this region, there is no doubt about that," he said at a news conference in Tokyo, where he is promoting the Japanese translation of his book, "Password From the Third Floor," an inside look at North Korean diplomacy and the Kim regime.

Kim has met Xi four times in China as talks with both the U.S. and South Korea got underway starting last year.

China is North Korea's most important foreign partner, though their relations grew somewhat rocky as Kim's efforts to build his country's nuclear weapons capabilities threatened regional stability.

A banner at the airport welcome ceremony read, "Long Live with Unbreakable Friendship and Unity Formed by Blood," Xinhua said.

The nations fought together in the 1950-53 Korean War against the United States, South Korea and their allies. China welcomed Kim's announcement last year that he was shifting the country's focus from nuclear weapons to economic development.

Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea, and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this story.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. IRAN SHOTS DOWN US DRONE AMID SPIRALING TENSIONS

The Revolutionary Guard says it took down the drone over Iranian airspace, while U.S. officials tell the

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AP that the downing happened over international airspace in the Strait of Hormuz.

2. WHAT MAY BE ON XI'S AGENDA IN NORTH KOREA

In a rare visit to his reclusive neighbor, China's president and Kim Jong Un are expected to discuss stalled nuclear negotiations with Washington.

3. HOW AMERICANS VIEW SPACE PROGRAM

A new AP-NORC poll shows people prefer a focus on potential asteroid impacts, scientific research into the cosmos and robots over humans for future exploration.

4. DNA EQUIPMENT COMES UNDER SCRUTINY

Texas officials are raising concerns over Rapid DNA analysis that has been used to identify wildfire victims, solve rape cases and verify migrant family connections.

5. INTERPOL EX-PRESIDENT CONFESSES TO BRIBE TAKING

Meng Hongwei admits to accepting more than \$2 million in bribes and expresses regret for his crime at a hearing, a Chinese court says.

6. SOME TRAVELERS THINKING GREEN

A small but growing movement in Europe and North America is shunning air travel because it produces high levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

7. WHICH REFUGEES ARE BEING PREVENTED FROM PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Syrians in Lebanon are facing a new aggressive campaign as politicians crack down on unpermitted work and construction.

8. MISTAKEN IDENTITY IN DAVID ORTIZ CASE

The former Red Sox slugger was shot in the back by a gunman who mistook him for the real target at the same table at an outdoor cafe, Dominican officials say.

9. WAYMO TEAMS UP WITH RENAULT, NISSAN

The self-driving car pioneer partners with the automakers for a ride-hailing service that will dispatch a fleet of robotaxis in France and Japan.

10. WHO WON BIG AT NHL AWARDS

Tampa Bay Lightning star winger Nikita Kucherov took home three big prizes, including the Hart Trophy awarded to the league MVP.

Hicks rebuffs questions on Trump White House in interview

By **MARY CLARE JALONICK** and **LAURIE KELLMAN** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former top White House adviser Hope Hicks refused to answer questions related to her time in the White House in a daylong interview with the House Judiciary Committee, dimming Democrats' chances of obtaining new or substantive information about President Donald Trump in their first interview with a person linked to his inner circle.

Frustrated Democrats leaving the meeting Wednesday said Hicks and her lawyer rigidly followed White House orders to stay quiet about her time there and said they would be forced to go to court to obtain answers.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said Hicks' lawyers asserted the White House's principle that as one of Trump's close advisers she is "absolutely immune" from talking about her time there because of separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. Nadler said that principle is "ridiculous" and Democrats intend to "destroy" it in court.

Nadler said the committee plans to take the administration to court on the immunity issue, and Hicks' interview would be part of that litigation.

In a letter Tuesday to Nadler, White House counsel Pat Cipollone wrote that Trump had directed Hicks not to answer questions "relating to the time of her service as a senior adviser to the president." The White House has similarly cited broad executive privilege with respect to many of the Democrats' other investigative demands, using the president's power to withhold information to protect the confidentiality of the Oval Office decision-making process.

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Hicks did answer some questions about her time on Trump's campaign, the lawmakers said, but they said they learned little that was new.

"She's objecting to stuff that's already in the public record," California Rep. Karen Bass said on a break from the interview. Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., called her answers "a farce."

California Rep. Ted Lieu tweeted about the meeting while it was ongoing, writing that Hicks refused to answer even innocuous questions such as whether she had previously testified before Congress and where her office was located in the White House.

In all, she was behind closed doors for eight hours, with an hourlong break for lunch.

Democrats pressed Hicks on episodes she might have witnessed as one of Trump's closest advisers. During questioning about the campaign, Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-Pa., said she asked Hicks if she had been aware of any outreach from the Russians. After Hicks responded no, Dean named apparent contacts, such as emails, some of which are mentioned in special counsel Robert Mueller's report. Hicks said she hadn't thought those contacts were "relevant," according to Dean.

Republicans had a different perspective, saying she was cooperative and the interview was a waste of time, especially in light of Mueller's two-year investigation. The top Republican on the panel, Georgia Rep. Doug Collins, said after the interview that the committee "took eight hours to find out what really most of us knew at the beginning."

Hicks was a key witness for Mueller, delivering important information to the special counsel's office about multiple episodes involving the president. Mueller wrote in his report released in April that there was not enough evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russia, but said he could not exonerate Trump on obstruction of justice. The report examined several situations in which Trump attempted to influence or curtail Mueller's investigation.

Democrats has planned to ask Hicks about several of those episodes, including efforts to remove Mueller from the investigation, pressure on former Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the firing of FBI Director James Comey. They also planned to ask about Hicks' knowledge of hush-money payments orchestrated by former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen to two women who claimed to have had affairs with Trump — the porn actress Stormy Daniels and model Karen McDougal. Trump has denied the allegations. Cohen is now serving three years in prison partly for campaign violations related to the payments.

One lawmaker who was in the room said Hicks would not answer many of those questions. The person requested anonymity to discuss the closed-door interview.

As Hicks spoke to the committee, Trump tweeted throughout the day. He said the interview was "extreme Presidential Harassment," and wrote that Democrats "are very unhappy with the Mueller Report, so after almost 3 years, they want a Redo, or Do Over."

He also tweeted that it was "so sad that the Democrats are putting wonderful Hope Hicks through hell."

Trump has broadly stonewalled House Democrats' investigations and said he will fight "all of the subpoenas."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is taking a methodical approach to investigating Trump. More than 60 lawmakers in her caucus — including around a dozen on the Judiciary Committee — have called for opening an impeachment inquiry, but she has said she wants committees to investigate first and come to a decision on impeachment later.

While Trump has continued to block their requests, Democrats have recently made some minor gains, such as the Justice Department's agreement to make some underlying evidence from Mueller's report available to committee members.

The Judiciary panel wanted a higher-profile interview with Hicks, subpoenaing her for public testimony. But they agreed to the private interview after negotiations. A transcript of the session will be released in the coming days.

The committee has also subpoenaed Hicks for documents, but she has only partially complied. She agreed to provide some information from her work on Trump's campaign, but none from her time at the White House because of the administration's objections.

Also Wednesday, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said Russia-born business executive Felix Sater will talk to House intelligence committee staff behind closed doors as part of its investigation into Russian election interference.

Schiff wouldn't give a date for the interview, but another person familiar with the meeting said it will happen Friday. The person requested anonymity to discuss the private interview.

Sater worked with Cohen on a Trump Tower deal in Moscow before the 2016 election. The project was later abandoned.

Schiff said the committee will also talk to "other witnesses related to Moscow Trump Tower" in future interviews.

Associated Press writers Padmananda Rama and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Man says fire Phoenix officers who aimed guns at his family

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The young black man shown in a videotaped encounter that showed Phoenix police pointing guns and yelling obscenities at him and his pregnant fiancée told the City Council on Wednesday that he wants the officers fired.

Dravon Ames, 22, told councilmembers that he and his family "could have lost their lives over something senseless ... over a 4-year-old taking a doll."

He said it is "sad" the officers are still employed.

Ames added, "I guess our lives are worth less than a 99-cent doll."

The video, which was taken by a bystander, shows police responding to a shoplifting report confront Ames and his pregnant fiancée, Iesha Harper, who was holding their 1-year-old daughter. The couple say their 4-year-old daughter took a doll from a store without their knowledge.

Scores of other protesters angered by the video crowded City Council chambers Wednesday to demand police reforms and for the officers involved to be fired.

"You cannot pass the budget until you fire the cops," resident Jennifer Hernandez told the council, which was scheduled to discuss the city's annual spending plan. "It is our lives on the line."

The protesters shouted down City Councilman Sal DiCiccio, calling him a racist when he defended the police officers.

"You are anarchists and you are out to destroy the city," DiCiccio told the demonstrators in the audience.

The Wednesday protest followed a Tuesday night meeting at a downtown church that drew hundreds of people.

"Real change starts with the community," Police Chief Jeri Williams said Tuesday night to a sometimes-hostile crowd comprised mainly of black and Hispanic residents.

Williams, who is black, said the meeting would not be the last, adding: "We are here to listen. We are here to make change."

The race of the officers has not been made public.

Phoenix police released surveillance video Tuesday aimed at backing up their assertion that the adults and not just a child were shoplifting before the incident.

The heavily edited store video showed a man taking something from a display rack and examining it, but it's unclear what happened to the package when he walked off camera.

Another snippet of video showed a little girl with a doll in a box walking out of the store accompanied by adults.

A police statement last week about the incident in late May stated that Ames told police he threw a pair of stolen underwear out of his car. Police also say a woman traveling in a different vehicle was arrested separately for stealing aluminum foil.

The store decided not to prosecute, and no charges have been filed.

The couple filed a \$10 million claim against the city alleging civil rights violations.

Ames has a pending case on charges of aggravated assault of a police officer in an unrelated incident that followed a traffic accident last year in suburban Tempe. Court documents say Ames unsuccessfully tried to kick officers several times when they arrested him on suspicion of driving under the influence of marijuana.

Phoenix police have not responded to repeated questions about whether the officers on the video were aware of, or influenced by, Ames' earlier case. Civil liberties attorney Sandra Slaton has called the prior case irrelevant.

The police chief has said an investigation into the officers' actions is underway.

Police shooting poses Buttigieg's biggest 2020 challenge yet

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — Mayor Pete Buttigieg stood before newly sworn police officers to welcome them to the city's ranks, just as he has more than a dozen times since taking office. But this time he was a Democratic candidate for president, speaking just days after a white officer fatally shot a black man the officer said was armed with a knife.

The timing made for a more sober, less congratulatory occasion, Buttigieg acknowledged Wednesday. Then he delivered a speech intended for an audience far beyond South Bend, touching on a long history of racial injustice, "justified anger" among residents and "a seemingly constant series of stories and videos from around the country showing abuses that tarnish the badge."

"You may think to yourself — how is this my fault? How is this my responsibility?" Buttigieg asked the six officers who sat looking up at him from the front row. "It may not seem fair as you prepare for your first day on the job, but you are burdened with this. We all are."

Sunday's shooting of 54-year-old Eric Logan has posed perhaps Buttigieg's biggest challenge of the presidential election cycle so far, forcing him to navigate the dual roles of mayor and candidate at a critical time for both his campaign and the city of roughly 100,000 people. It also highlights Buttigieg's struggle to appeal to black voters and threatens to undo some of the progress he has made with the minority community in his hometown.

The 37-year-old, who rose quickly to the top tier of the Democratic field since joining the race in January, had to cancel several fundraisers just as candidates are scrambling to raise as much money as possible before the June 30 quarterly fundraising deadline. He's also investing significant, unanticipated time in his day job just as he's set to appear in next week's debate against several better-known top candidates — including former Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Since leaving the campaign trail on Sunday, Buttigieg, who is white, said he's met with Logan's family as well as leaders of the black community, clergy and police officials. He's also been consulting with experts on community policing, race relations and civil rights, as well as former mayors with experience with similar cases, his office said.

Buttigieg, as one of the few Democratic presidential candidates with executive experience, suggested Wednesday that it has made him a better candidate and a better leader and will allow him to speak during the campaign about issues he's dealt with firsthand. That may be particularly true as he stands on the debate stage next week alongside Biden, who has defended his support for a 1994 crime bill many say led to mass incarceration of blacks and other minorities.

"What I will say is that when the topic of criminal justice comes up, this is obviously something that is not theoretical, for any of us, but certainly for anyone who's responsible for guiding a city," Buttigieg told reporters after his speech. "And its importance is only heightened, having navigated something like this."

But the shooting also has renewed the focus on one of Buttigieg's biggest vulnerabilities. He has struggled to attract early support from black voters, who are key to winning as a Democrat, and has drawn attention to problems of race within South Bend and under his leadership. The two-term mayor was highly criticized for firing the city's first black police chief early in his career, and while he has implemented several programs to try to improve relations between police and the black community, he admitted this week that

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any gains they've made are now in jeopardy.

The Rev. Wendy Fultz, who is black, described the relationship between police and the black community as "broken, very broken." The 69-year-old has lived in South Bend her entire life and said, "It's gotten to the point that we are hopeless."

"We talk. We try to organize. We do a plan, we have a strategy," she said. "And yet we feel like in this community, every time a black man calls the police you may as well call the morgue."

As for the mayor, she said: "I think he's removed. Everybody in this situation - even the mayor - is removed. They don't understand."

Prosecutors say the officer who killed Logan, Sgt. Ryan O'Neill, was responding to a report of a person breaking into cars when he encountered Logan in an apartment building parking lot. O'Neill told authorities that Logan had a knife, and when he refused the officer's orders to drop it, O'Neill opened fire, shooting Logan in the stomach. Another officer took Logan in a squad car to the hospital, where he later died.

While South Bend officers are equipped with body cameras and dashboard cameras, the shooting was not captured on video. Mike Grzegorek, commander of the county prosecutor's Metro Homicide Unit, said O'Neill told investigators he spotted Logan leaning inside a car and didn't press a button to turn on his body camera as he approached to ask if he was a resident of the apartment building. Both the dash and body cameras would have been automatically activated if his squad car's emergency lights were turned on or if O'Neill had been driving fast, but he was driving slowly without lights because he was looking for a suspect, Grzegorek said.

Buttigieg said Wednesday that he was "extremely frustrated" that O'Neill's body camera wasn't turned on. On Tuesday, he asked his police chief to issue an executive order reminding officers of a department policy that says cameras must be on during any interaction with civilians.

"The justified anger over why our system of body-worn cameras did not lead to a clear picture of Sunday's events is just one reminder of how much work is yet to be done," Buttigieg told police recruits and their families gathered for Wednesday's swearing-in. "How much it will take to reinforce trust. How far we will have to go before the day when no community member or officer would hesitate to trust one another's word_and, ultimately, how far we have to go before we live in a society where none of the circumstances leading to Sunday morning's death could have happened in the first place."

Buttigieg is scheduled to campaign Friday in Miami and this weekend in South Carolina, though so far only his appearance in South Carolina has been confirmed. He said he has not yet decided when he will start campaigning again, adding that he's "working to make sure that balance is appropriate."

"Mayors, like presidents, have to do many things at once," he said.

Associated Press writer Tom Davies in Indianapolis contributed to this report.

UN health agency to remove controversial opioid guidelines

By **CLAIRE GALOFARO** Associated Press

The World Health Organization notified U.S. lawmakers Wednesday that it will discontinue two publications on prescribing opioid painkillers in response to allegations that the pharmaceutical industry influenced the reports.

The pledge to remove the guidelines comes a month after U.S. Reps. Katherine Clark and Hal Rogers accused the WHO of being influenced by Purdue Pharma, the American manufacturer of the potent painkiller OxyContin. The lawmakers' report claimed the guidelines, crafted in part by organizations with financial ties to the company, downplay the risk of opioids despite the American epidemic that has killed more than 390,000 since 1999.

WHO's reports are viewed around the world as best practices in public health policy, and the opioid prescribing documents have been in circulation for years.

"That is a very dangerous situation," Clark said. "We do not want to see the opioid crisis in this country exported around the globe."

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The WHO, the health arm of the United Nations, could not be reached for comment Wednesday evening. Purdue has denied the allegations, and said it transparently discloses its relationships with doctors and organizations and markets its drugs only as they have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The company is facing some 2,000 lawsuits in the United States alleging the company's aggressive marketing helped spark the addiction crisis by minimizing the risk of addiction and pushing the drugs on patients with chronic pain. Such drugs have historically been used to treat patients with acute and cancer pain.

The lawmakers initially contacted the WHO in 2017, after reports that Purdue's international arm, called Mundipharma, was expanding overseas using some of the same controversial tactics. Mundipharma was eventually caught up in a corruption probe in Italy, where police allege company executives paid a prominent pain doctor to help push more opioids.

Clark said all they heard back was that their letter had been received, which caused them to decide to dig deeper into the WHO's stance on opioids.

The congressional report released last month tracked how doctors and organizations tied to Purdue, including many of the leading figures who worked to expand opioid prescribing in the United States in the 1990s, influenced the WHO document.

The 2011 guidance called "Ensuring balance in national policies on controlled substances" includes a claim that Clark says is reminiscent of Purdue's marketing of OxyContin in the 1990s, in defiance of known science about the addictiveness of opioids. It states: "Opioid analgesics, if prescribed in accordance with established dosage regimens, are known to be safe and there is no need to fear accidental death or dependence." The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that up to 29 percent of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain eventually misuse them.

Clark described it as a "playbook" that the pharmaceutical industry is taking abroad, and that the WHO was "lending the opioid industry its voice and credibility."

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, wrote to Clark and Rogers that the guidelines from 2011 and 2012 would be removed in "light of new scientific evidence that has emerged" and that the removal of the reports should address the allegations of conflicts of interest. Since the reports were first published, he wrote, the agency has strengthened its ethics policies.

The organization will also publish a statement saying that it takes the concerns the lawmakers raised seriously and is updating its guidelines for pain management. The statement says that in many poor nations, access to opioids is extremely limited, even for those in agony. It is committed to addressing that issue while balancing the risk of addiction and death.

Clark wrote in a statement that the agency acknowledged "the danger posed" by its publications and called it a victory that they will be removed from circulation. But she called on the agency to thoroughly investigate how the reports were published and how it will prevent corporate influence in the future, as pharmaceutical companies continue selling opioids around the world.

Dominican AG: Ortiz shooting result of mistaken identity

By DANICA COTO Associated Press

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — Former Red Sox slugger David Ortiz was shot in the back by a gunman who mistook him for the real target, another man who was seated at the same table at an outdoor cafe, Dominican officials said Wednesday.

The Dominican Republic's attorney general and national police director told reporters that the attempted murder was ordered from the United States by Victor Hugo Gomez, an associate of Mexico's Gulf Cartel. They said Gomez had hired a gang of killers to eliminate his cousin, whom Gomez suspected of turning him in to Dominican drug investigators in 2011.

The cousin, Sixto David Fernández, was seated with the former baseball star on the night of June 9, when a gunman approached and fired a single shot at Ortiz, the officials said. Fernández owned an auto-repair shop and was friends with Ortiz, according to Attorney General Jean Alain Rodríguez and Maj. Gen. Ney

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Aldrin Bautista Almonte, director of the Dominican Republic's national police.

Ortiz remains hospitalized in Boston, where doctors have upgraded his condition from guarded to good.

At least 11 people have been arrested in the case so far, ranging from the alleged gunman to a series of drivers and relatively minor accomplices. Rodríguez and Bautista said the case of mistaken identity began when one of the accomplices shot a blurry photo of Fernández seated at the Dial Bar and Lounge in an upscale section of Santo Domingo. In the photo, a white freezer obscures Fernández's lower body, making it look like he was wearing white pants when, in fact, he was wearing black pants, officials said.

"It was a badly lit photo taken minutes before the attack," the chief prosecutor said.

Ortiz was wearing white pants on the night of the shooting and law-enforcement officials said that the gunman, Rolfy Ferreyra, mistook him for the target and fired.

Nonetheless, many Dominicans were skeptical that their country's most famous person, a 6-foot-3-inch (2 meters) man weighing around 250 pounds (113 kilograms), could be mistaken for Fernández, who appeared to be far smaller with a lighter complexion in a photo provided by authorities.

"He is big. He likes to attract attention," said Daniel Pou, an independent consultant on public security. "He wears a lot of jewelry. He's flashy all around."

The alleged shooter is a skinny, tattooed 25-year-old whom U.S. prosecutors said is wanted on armed robbery and gun charges in New Jersey. His driver was captured immediately after the shooting when he fell off the motorcycle he was trying to use to escape.

Ferreyra and the other suspects were captured over the next few days. Ferreyra told reporters from the window of a jail cell this week that he did not mean to shoot Ortiz, but fired at him in confusion over his clothing.

Gomez, the alleged mastermind, is believed to be in the United States and is being sought by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Bautista said, pointing to a news report in which federal authorities identified Gómez as one of several suspects in a March 2019 drug trafficking sting in Houston, Texas.

The weapon used in the shooting, a Browning Hi Power semiautomatic pistol, was buried in the garden of one of the suspect's home and was later turned over to police by his mother, according to court documents obtained by The Associated Press.

Also accused is Gabriel Alexander Pérez Vizcaíno, aka Bone, whom they say was hired by someone who is in prison on unrelated charges to be the liaison between the hit men and the person who paid them. Authorities say Pérez shared the picture of the target as he met the other suspects at a nearby gas station just minutes before the shooting.

They said Pérez then sold the cellphone used to plan the attack and to distribute a picture of the target to a woman for \$180 so he could get rid of the evidence a day after the shooting.

Police are still looking for at least three other suspects: a woman known as The Venezuelan or Red; Luis Alfredo Rivas Clase, aka The Surgeon, who is wanted for a 2018 shooting in Reading, Pennsylvania, and was believed to be driving a car used to stalk Fernández; and Alberto Miguel Rodríguez Mota, whom authorities believe paid the hit men. Authorities have said coordinator of attack was offered 400,000 Dominican pesos, or about \$7,800.

A video from the scene of the shooting shows everyone fleeing or crouching except for Rodríguez, who stands calmly amid the chaos.

"He grabbed his beer to make sure it was safe," Bautista said.

Authorities also are investigating Fernández, the supposed target, Bautista added.

Ortiz is recovering at Massachusetts General Hospital. Doctors in the Dominican Republic removed his gallbladder and part of his intestine before he was wheeled into an air ambulance sent by the Red Sox and flown to Boston.

He led the Red Sox to three World Series championships, was a 10-time All Star and hit 541 home runs. The Red Sox retired his number, 34, in 2017, and he has a bridge and a stretch of road outside Fenway Park named after him. He has a home in Weston, on the outskirts of Boston, that he shared with his wife and three children before putting it up for sale.

Although he lives in Boston, the 43-year-old Ortiz visits the Dominican Republic several times a year. His

father and sister live in Santo Domingo.

Associated Press writer Michael Weissenstein in Havana contributed to this report.

This story has been amended to correct that one of the suspects was believed to be driving the car used to stalk the target.

'Joints will be separated': Jamal Khashoggi's murder, retold

By JAMEY KEATEN and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The gathering on the second floor of the Saudi consulate featured an unlikely collection: a forensic doctor, intelligence and security officers, agents of the crown prince's office. As they waited for their target to arrive, one asked how they would carry out the body.

Not to worry, the doctor said: "Joints will be separated. It is not a problem," he assured. "If we take plastic bags and cut it into pieces, it will be finished. We will wrap each of them."

Their prey, Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, would not leave the consulate in Istanbul alive. And on Wednesday, more than eight months after his death, a U.N. special rapporteur revealed new details of the slaying — part of a report that insisted there was "credible evidence" to warrant further investigation and financial sanctions against Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The report brought the grisly case back into the spotlight just as the prince and his country appeared to be emerging from the stain of the scandal. But it contained no smoking gun likely to cause President Donald Trump to abandon one of his closest allies — and none likely to send the crown prince before a tribunal.

And yet the details of the Oct. 2 killing were so chilling, and now so public, that it's hard to fathom that there won't be repercussions.

On the recording, apparently picked up by Turkish listening devices, intelligence officer Maher Mutreb is heard asking whether "the sacrificial animal" had entered the consulate, and a voice responds: "He has arrived." (Khashoggi is never mentioned by name in the audio.)

Two minutes later, Khashoggi enters the consulate, hoping to collect a Saudi document that would let him wed his Turkish fiancée. He is led into the consul general's office and told he has to return to Saudi Arabia.

Khashoggi protests: "I notified some people outside. They are waiting for me. A driver is waiting for me."

"Let's make it short," the official tells him, adding: "Send a message to your son."

"Which son? What should I say to my son?" Khashoggi asks.

"You will type a message. Let's rehearse; show us," the official says, prodding: "Type it, Mr. Jamal. Hurry up."

Within minutes, the official loses patience and, the rapporteur said, apparently pulls out a syringe.

"Are you going to give me drugs?" Khashoggi asks.

"We will anesthetize you," he is told.

Then came the sounds of struggle, "movement and heavy panting," and finally — according to Turkish intelligence relayed in the report — the sounds of a saw.

He is believed to have been dismembered inside the consulate. His remains have never been found.

The nearly minute-by-minute narrative is part of a 101-page report from the U.N. special rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions. Agnes Callamard, who is not a United Nations staffer, launched her inquiry in January under her mandate from the U.N.-backed Human Rights Council.

Her report is to be presented at a council session that opens Monday. The 47-nation Geneva body has already supported more scrutiny of a Saudi-led military campaign in neighboring Yemen that has been blamed for the deaths of thousands of civilians.

The Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs, Adel al-Jubeir, dismissed the report in a tweet, saying that it contained "nothing new" and was riddled with "clear contradictions and baseless allegations which challenge its credibility."

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"The Saudi judiciary is the sole party qualified to deal with the Khashoggi case and works with full independence," he added.

The report comes as damage to the crown prince's reputation had begun to fade, with countries and companies resuming business with the uber-wealthy kingdom. In recent weeks, the Trump administration has tried to ram through a sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia over objections in Congress. A British petrochemicals company laid out a \$2 billion investment to build three plants in the kingdom.

Callamard said responsibility for Khashoggi's killing falls on Saudi Arabia, even if she can't attribute guilt. But the focus has lingered over the man who is next in line to become its king. There is, she said, "sufficient credible evidence regarding the responsibility of the Crown Prince demanding further investigation."

She said people directly implicated in the murder reported to him. And she flagged Saudi Arabia's track record with human rights violations in the past, saying "there was no way the leaders of that state including the crown prince were not aware of those violations."

Callamard listed dozens of recommendations, and urged U.N. bodies or Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to demand a follow-up criminal investigation. She insisted that the U.N. chief should be able to establish one "without any trigger by a state." But U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Guterres could only do so with a mandate from "a competent intergovernmental body."

Callamard called for sanctions specifically against the crown prince, even before his guilt or innocence is determined.

An investigation should look into how much the crown prince knew, whether he had a direct or indirect role, and whether he could have stopped the killing, she said.

The 33-year-old prince, who continues to have the support of his father, King Salman, denies any involvement. Trump has defended U.S.-Saudi ties in the face of international outcry over the slaying. Many U.S. lawmakers have criticized Trump for not condemning Saudi Arabia over the journalist's killing.

In an interview with the Arabic newspaper Asharq al-Awsat published Sunday, the prince was quoted as saying Khashoggi's murder is a "very painful crime" and that the state "will seek to achieve full justice" against the perpetrators.

The report includes the names of 11 men on trial in Saudi Arabia for the killing; authorities there have never named them. It confirms that Saud al-Qahtani, a former top adviser to the crown prince who has been sanctioned by the U.S. in connection with Khashoggi's killing, has not been charged.

Callamard said Saudi Arabia should call off the trial and let the international community investigate, arguing that the case can hardly be considered a domestic issue now.

Saudi Arabia initially offered multiple shifting accounts about Khashoggi's disappearance. As international pressure mounted, the kingdom eventually settled on the explanation that he was killed by rogue officials in a brawl inside their consulate.

But the U.N. probe said it is hard to accept the theory that the leader of the 15-man Saudi team sent to the consulate at the time of Khashoggi's visit had planned the murder without any authorization from superiors in the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia has blamed the operation on Saudi agents who exceeded their authority. Saudi Arabia's own investigation said the agents were only given orders by two senior officials to forcibly bring Khashoggi back to Saudi Arabia, but not to kill him.

Before his death, Khashoggi wrote columns in The Washington Post criticizing the crown prince's crackdown on freedom of thought and expression, though he also commended the prince's social reforms. He wrote his columns after leaving Saudi Arabia to avoid being swept up in the crackdown.

In a statement, the U.S. State Department said it supported Callamard's "global mission to investigate extra-judicial, summary, or arbitrary executions. State Department officials met with her, at her request, to discuss several matters, including Jamal Khashoggi's killing. We are determined to press for accountability for every person who was responsible."

In Istanbul, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the report had determined Saudi Arabia's responsibility over the killing, adding that the kingdom would have to account for the killing.

"They have declared that the Saudis are guilty and had knowledge," Erdogan said. "They will account for this, they will pay a price."

Callamard, an academic and rights advocate, said she never received a response from the Saudis on her request to travel to the kingdom, and said she only had access to a total of 45 minutes of tapes recorded within the consulate around the time of the killing. Turkish intelligence had referenced some seven hours of recordings.

Callamard was not allowed by Turkish authorities to take notes while listening to portions of the tapes. Her account was based on her memory of the Arabic audio.

— Batrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

Amid urgent climate warnings, EPA gives coal a reprieve

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid scientists' increasingly urgent warnings, the Trump administration ordered a sweeping about-face Wednesday on Obama-era efforts to fight climate change, easing restrictions on coal-fired power plants in a move it predicted would revitalize America's sagging coal industry.

As miners in hard hats and coal-country lawmakers applauded, Environmental Protection Agency chief Andrew Wheeler signed a measure that scraps one of President Barack Obama's key initiatives to rein in fossil fuel emissions. The replacement rule gives states more leeway in deciding whether to require plants to make limited efficiency upgrades.

Wheeler said he expects more coal plants to open as a result. But one state, New York, immediately said it would go to court to challenge the action, and more lawsuits are likely.

The EPA move follows pledges by candidate and then President Donald Trump to rescue the U.S. coal industry, which saw near-record numbers of plant closings last year in the face of competition from cheaper natural gas and renewables. It's the latest and one of the biggest of dozens of environmental regulatory rollbacks by his administration.

It came despite scientists' cautions that the world must cut fossil fuel emissions to stave off the worst of global warming and the EPA's own analysis that the new rule would result in the deaths of an extra 300 to 1,500 people each year by 2030 compared to the never fully enacted Clean Power Plan, owing to additional air pollution from the power grid.

"Americans want reliable energy that they can afford," Wheeler declared at the signing ceremony, with White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney alongside to underscore Trump's approval.

There's no denying "fossil fuels will continue to be an important part of the mix," Wheeler said.

Lawmakers and industry representatives from coal states blamed federal regulation, not the market, for the decadeslong trend of declining U.S. coal use and said Wednesday's act would stave off more coal plant closings.

"We're not ready for renewable energy ... so we need coal," declared Rep. David McKinley, a West Virginia Republican.

But rather than a sensible economic move, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi described the change as a "dirty power scam" and "a stunning giveaway to big polluters." She called climate change "the existential threat of our time" and said the administration was ignoring scientific studies and yielding to special interests.

Obama's 2015 Clean Power Plan is currently stayed by the Supreme Court while challenges play out from more than two dozen states that contend it exceeded authority under the federal Clean Air Act.

Environmental advocates and Obama-era EPA officials involved in drafting the now-repealed plan said Trump's replacement rule will do little to cut climate-damaging emissions from coal-fired power plants, at a time when polls show Americans are increasingly paying attention to global warming.

"I can't think of a single rule that would do more to set back the effort to do what we need to do to address the critical threat of climate change," said Joe Goffman, who helped draft the repealed Clean

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Power Plan.

The Obama plan aimed at encouraging what already had been market-driven changes in the nation's electrical grid, pushing coal-fired power plants out and prodding utilities to rely more on natural gas, solar, wind and other lower- or no-carbon fuels.

Obama EPA head Gina McCarthy said Trump officials had "made painfully clear that they are incapable of rising to the challenge and tackling this crisis. They have shown a callous disregard for EPA's mission, a pattern of climate science denial and an inexcusable indifference to the consequences of climate change."

Burning of fossil fuels for electricity, transportation and heat is the main human source of heat-trapping carbon emissions.

Trump has rejected scientific warnings on climate change, including a dire report this year from scientists at more than a dozen federal agencies noting that global warming from fossil fuels "presents growing challenges to human health and quality of life." Administration officials argue climate science is imperfect, and that it's not clear climate change would have as great an impact as forecast.

Democrats pledge to make combatting climate change a major issue in the presidential race. They condemned Wednesday's act.

Presidential contender Elizabeth Warren called for broad action to reduce emissions, saying "the climate crisis is endangering our country, our health, our economy and our national security."

New York Attorney General Letitia James quickly tweeted a pledge that her state would sue, an early signal of what environmental groups said would be more court challenges.

Wheeler told reporters after the signing that he expected new coal plants to open as a result.

"We're leveling the playing field" in terms of regulations on various energy sources "to allow that investment to occur," he said. "We are trying to address climate change, but we're doing it with the authorities we have."

The Trump administration also is proposing to roll back an Obama-era mileage rule requiring tougher mileage standards for cars and light trucks. Environmental groups promise court challenges there, too.

An Associated Press analysis Tuesday of federal air data showed U.S. progress on cleaning the air may be stagnating after decades of improvement. Despite Trump's repeated false claims that America's air is the cleanest it's ever been, there were 15% more days with unhealthy air both last year and the year before than on average from 2013 through 2016, the four years when America had its fewest number of those days since at least 1980.

Facebook's currency Libra faces financial, privacy pushback

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Facebook is getting a taste of the regulatory pushback it will face as it creates a new digital currency with corporate partners.

Just hours after the social media giant unveiled early plans for the Libra cryptocurrency, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire insisted that only governments can issue sovereign currencies. He said Facebook must ensure that Libra won't hurt consumers or be used for illegal activities.

"We will demand guarantees that such transactions cannot be diverted, for example for financing terrorism," he said on Europe-1 radio.

Facebook unveiled its much-rumored currency Tuesday and said it will launch publicly early next year with such partners as Uber, Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.

Libra could open online purchasing to millions of people who do not have access to bank accounts and could reduce the cost of sending money across borders. It's easy to see how attractive an alternative like Libra could be to people in countries beset with hyperinflation such as Venezuela.

But Facebook already faces scrutiny over its poor record on privacy and its dominance in social media, messaging and related businesses.

Libra poses new questions for the social network: Given that cryptocurrency is lightly regulated now, if at all, how will financial regulators oversee Facebook's plan? And just how much more personal data will this give the social media giant, anyway?

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A 'RUDE AWAKENING' OVER REGULATION?

The financial industry is more heavily regulated than internet companies — especially in the U.S., where tech companies have often been given free rein.

Companies creating Libra are in for a "rude awakening" if they expect the same model of light regulation, said Karen Shaw Petrou, managing partner of Federal Financial Analytics in Washington.

She expects Libra will fall under U.S. regulations adopted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Which agency will oversee the venture will depend on what the currency system does, she said.

France's Le Maire said he asked central bank chiefs from the G-7 countries to produce a report by mid-July laying out "guarantees that we must set ... to assure us that there are no risks of illicit financing or for the consumer."

In the U.S., the head of the House Financial Services Committee wants Facebook to suspend plans for a new currency until Congress and regulators are able to study it more closely.

In asking Facebook to put the Libra currency plans on hold, Rep. Maxine Waters, a California Democrat, said Facebook "is continuing its unchecked expansion and extending its reach into the lives of its users."

The senior Democrat on the Senate Banking Committee said Facebook's new digital currency will give the tech giant unfair competitive advantages in collecting data on financial transactions as well as control over fees.

"Facebook is already too big and too powerful," said Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio.

Brown and Waters both called on financial regulators to examine the new currency project closely.

In a statement, Facebook said, "We look forward to responding to lawmakers' questions as this process moves forward."

One hurdle Facebook and its partners will face is the potential for criminals to use it for money laundering and fraud, given the pseudo-anonymous nature of Libra and other digital currencies.

Facebook said it will comply with all existing financial regulations, though it has not offered many details. The company said its wallet app for using Libra will walk people through a verification process to ensure they are who they say they are.

Still, Facebook is sure to face an onslaught of liability concerns when it comes to anti-money laundering and identity verification, said Nicholas Weaver, a senior researcher at the International Computer Science Institute.

"I am shocked they have decided to go ahead," he said.

PRIVACY PUSHBACK?

Facebook has been dogged with questions about users' personal data, especially since the Cambridge Analytica scandal hit last year.

That appears to be part of the reason Facebook created a nonprofit oversight association to govern Libra. It also created a subsidiary, Calibra, to work on the technology, separately from its main social media business.

"We've heard loud and clear that you don't want social and financial data commingled," Calibra head David Marcus wrote on Twitter, addressing Facebook users. "We understand we will have to earn your trust."

In some ways, privacy is the enemy in the battle against money laundering and other crimes, Weaver said. You want to know who is making transactions to keep them secure and legal, he said.

Facebook is "going to get access to a lot of financial data," Forrester analyst Aurelie L'Hostis said. "What are they going to do with that information and what are they going to put in place to safeguard that information?"

Cryptocurrencies such as Libra store all transactions on a widely distributed, encrypted ledger known as the blockchain. Libra is designed so transaction amounts are visible, but transaction participants can be anonymous — at least until they move money into real-world accounts.

Facebook said people can keep their individual transactions from appearing on the blockchain by using

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Calibra's wallet app, though in that case, Calibra itself would have people's data.

Calibra said it won't use financial data to target ads on Facebook. It also said it won't share financial data with Facebook, though there are exceptions that haven't been fully spelled out, including situations where data sharing would "keep people safe."

ANTITRUST RED FLAGS?

Congress has launched an inquiry into whether Big Tech giants such as Facebook and Google have gotten too big. Regulatory bodies including the Federal Trade Commission and Justice Department are said to be considering investigations.

Adding another major business will make Facebook bigger — if Libra takes off as intended — but it may not raise major antitrust red flags, said New York University law professor Eleanor Fox.

"It is a grass-roots entry into a new field and can actually reflect an increase in innovation," she said.

Still, she said, people could be alarmed because of Facebook's use of data in the past. And Justice Department officials have hinted they may take a broader view of harm to competition to go well beyond whether a company's dominance leads to higher prices.

Sarah Miller, deputy director of Open Markets Institute, which advocates against monopolies, said it was "insanity" to trust Facebook to launch a global cryptocurrency when it is already facing regulatory scrutiny around the world over data privacy.

"The FTC needs to rein in Facebook before the corporation puts our financial information and currency systems at risk, too," she said.

Associated Press writers Mae Anderson in New York, Frank Bajak in Boston, Marcy Gordon in Washington D.C. and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

Self-help guru convicted in lurid sex-trafficking case

By TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The guru of a cult-like self-improvement group that attracted heiresses and Hollywood actresses was convicted Wednesday of turning his female devotees into his sex slaves through such means as shame, punishment and nude blackmail photos.

A jury in federal court in Brooklyn took less than five hours to find 58-year-old Keith Raniere guilty on all counts of sex-trafficking and coercing women into sex.

"Raniere was truly a modern-day Svengali," Brooklyn U.S. Attorney Richard Donoghue said outside court, calling him a lying manipulator who "ruined marriages, careers, fortunes and lives."

Raniere, a short, bespectacled figure who wore pullover sweaters in court, listened attentively but showed no reaction as he learned the verdict. His lawyer, Marc Agnifilo, said Raniere plans to appeal. He could get 15 years to life in prison at sentencing Sept. 25.

"It's a very sad day for him," Agnifilo said. "I think he's not surprised, but he maintains that he didn't mean to do anything wrong."

Raniere once had an international following with a foothold in Hollywood with his Albany-area group, NXIVM, pronounced NEHK-see-uhm. His adherents included actress Allison Mack of TV's "Smallville"; an heiress to the Seagram's liquor fortune, Clare Bronfman; and a daughter of TV star Catherine Oxenberg of "Dynasty" fame.

"This was a very frightening group," Oxenberg said after the verdict. Her daughter India left NXIVM after her mother spoke out against it.

"I had to save a child who was caught in the grips of this cult, so I wasn't going to stop until I succeeded," Oxenberg said.

Prosecutors told jurors that Raniere — known to his followers as "Vanguard" and revered as "the smartest man in the world" — was actually a creepy con man who barely got passing grades in college.

A sorority made up of some NXIVM members, sometimes called "The Vow," was created to satisfy his

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“desire for sex, power and control,” prosecutor Moira Penza said in closing arguments .

According to testimony, Ranieri’s “slaves” were forced to give up “collateral” — nude photos and other material — to keep them in line.

Among the more damning allegations against Ranieri were that he had some women branded with his initials and that he started having sex with a follower when she was 15. Prosecutors said he took nude photos of the teen that were shown, one by one, to the eight women and four men on the jury.

Ranieri kept the photos stashed in his private study as “a trophy” of “his sexual conquest,” Penza said.

The defense argued that Ranieri was a genuine believer in unconventional means for self-improvement and that all his sexual encounters with female followers were consensual. His behavior could be seen as “repulsive and offensive, but we don’t convict people in this country for being repulsive or offensive,” Agnifilo told the jury.

Ranieri was arrested at a Mexican hideout in 2018 following an investigation into his group. Mack and Bronfman were indicted with him but pleaded guilty . Mack admitted helping Ranieri assemble his harem and collect “collateral”; Bronfman confessed to committing financial crimes for him.

They didn’t testify, leaving a cooperating member of his inner circle and three victims from the secret sorority as the key witnesses.

One victim described being confined to a bedroom for more than 700 days on orders from Ranieri as punishment for showing interest in another man. Another said she was blindfolded and bound to a table so that another woman could perform a sex act on her.

Seattle campaign finance program gives voters \$100 to donate

By TOM JAMES The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — On a muggy spring morning, Seattle City Council candidate Pat Murakami weaves through front yards and porches, knocking on doors in a gritty but gentrifying neighborhood.

It’s a tradition for political hopefuls. And for Murakami, a two-time council contender, it’s her main fundraising strategy, thanks to a first-of-its-kind program allowing Seattle voters to give candidates taxpayer money to fuel their campaigns.

“I would have been a complete non-contender without the program,” she said of her first race in 2017, when she beat six other primary candidates before losing the general election.

Now entering its second election, Seattle’s voter voucher-based campaign financing program is drawing national attention with support from Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a Democrat from New York and presidential contender who proposes duplicating it at the federal level. It’s one of at least eight public campaign finance programs enacted by city and county governments across the U.S. since 2015.

Seattle officials mail each voter four \$25 “Democracy Vouchers” that they can give to City Council or city attorney candidates, split among different candidates, or choose not to donate. Voucher money not used by voters remains in city coffers.

Candidates took in \$1.1 million during the program’s first round in the 2017 cycle.

Supporters say the program draws in candidates who otherwise would not consider running and forces politicians to pay attention to smaller donors. The city’s 2017 City Council race featured 15 primary candidates, with three-quarters applying for the vouchers and nearly half saying they would not have run without them, according to a report commissioned by the city.

This year, 72 candidates registered to compete for seven seats, making the race by several measures the most competitive in more than 15 years.

“It gives candidates the chance to say, ‘I’m going to raise my money by speaking to my constituents,’ rather than dialing for dollars to big out of state donors,” said Ian Vandewalker, a campaign finance expert with the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.

Gillibrand has said a federal campaign financing system modeled on the Seattle program could distribute \$200 per voter in what she called “Democracy Dollars” so voters could individually finance presidential and congressional races.

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Statistics show that the popularity of the program is on the rise, with Seattle candidates receiving about 61,000 vouchers worth \$1.5 million through May, ahead of the November general election. That's up from 13,841 vouchers totaling \$346,000 over the same period in 2017.

Voter engagement also appears to have increased because of the program. Seattle residents who voted in less than half of the city's elections before 2017 were found to be four times more likely to vote that year if they used their vouchers, according to a University of Washington study.

The program has seen some speedbumps. Its first year didn't yield a dramatic increase in donor diversity, with participation highest among older voters and in majority-white neighborhoods.

The program also stumbled in accessibility. Roughly half the candidates who said they wanted to use the vouchers didn't make it through the qualification process, and others ran into delays getting the money in time to compete.

The city said it has since taken steps to address diversity and accessibility.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Legal Foundation, a libertarian-leaning group, has sued to halt the program on behalf of two Seattle residents. The program is funded by a special property tax, and the lawsuit says it's a violation of taxpayers' rights to use the money to fund candidates they may not support.

And even advocates who back campaign finance reform more broadly say translating the Seattle program to the national stage raises unanswered questions.

Scaling a municipal voter campaign finance system to the federal level would be a challenge, Vandewalker said, and a voucher program would likely require more administrative work and be generally more complicated than other more popular public finance models, like funds-matching programs.

In Seattle, the 2017 program cost about \$1 million in administrative costs alone, before a single voucher was even turned in.

But it makes all the difference between running and not running for candidates like Murakami, who during her unsuccessful 2017 campaign collected almost 90% of her \$172,000 in funding from the vouchers and without it said she "never would have attempted to run."

Shaun Scott, 34, who's running for City Council, said in an interview the program gives him room to talk about policies that might be unpopular with wealthy political donors, like costly environmental reforms known as a "Green New Deal," partially funded by a tax on high earners. He's collected more than \$50,000 through the voucher program so far.

"I'm a Black working-class Millennial candidate with a net worth of approximately \$10,000," Scott wrote separately on Twitter. "If it weren't for the democracy voucher program, running for office would be a pipe dream."

Fed leaves its key rate unchanged but hints of future cuts

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged Wednesday but signaled that it's prepared to start cutting rates if needed to protect the U.S. economy from trade conflicts and other threats.

The Fed kept its benchmark rate — which influences many consumer and business loans — in a range of 2.25% to 2.5%, where it's been since December.

It issued a statement saying that because "uncertainties" have increased, it would "act as appropriate to sustain the expansion." That language echoed a remark Chairman Jerome Powell made two weeks ago that analysts interpreted as a signal that rate cuts were on the way.

The uncertainties the Fed referred to clearly include President Donald Trump's trade conflicts, especially with China. The effects of tariffs and counter-tariffs between the United States and China have become perhaps the leading threat to the U.S. economic expansion, which next month will become the longest on record.

In its statement, the Fed removed a reference to being "patient" about adjusting rates. That suggested that it's now inclined to begin cutting rates for the first time in more than a decade. It remains unclear,

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though, when that might happen.

The Fed's decision was approved on a 9-1 vote, with James Bullard, president of the Fed's St. Louis regional bank, dissenting because he thought the central bank should begin cutting rates now. It marked the first dissent from a Fed decision since Powell became chairman in February last year.

On Wall Street, stocks rose and bond yields dipped, reflecting investor expectations of lower rates ahead. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added a modest 38 points. But investors snapped up bonds and sent their yields tumbling. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note sank to 2.03 percent, its lowest point since Trump's election in November 2016.

A survey of the 17 Fed officials showed that nearly half now expect at least one rate cut this year, with seven projecting two cuts. When they previously issued forecasts in March, none had predicted a rate cut in 2019.

Many Fed watchers have said they think the policymakers want to first see whether a meeting that Trump and President Xi Jinping are to hold late next week at a Group of 20 nations summit in Japan produces any breakthrough in the U.S.-China trade war.

That meeting carries opportunity as well as risks, said Jay Bryson, global economist at Wells Fargo.

It's possible the meeting could lead to the removal of tariffs that would help growth and nullify the need for rate cuts. But it's also possible that the leaders of the world's two largest economies could deepen their feud and that new import taxes could be launched.

"The clearest and present danger is the G-20 meeting next week," Bryson said. "It could go either way."

Many analysts think the central bank will wait until September at the earliest to announce its first drop in its benchmark short-term rate since 2008 and might not cut again in 2019. A few Fed watchers foresee no rate cut at all this year, especially if the United States and China reach some tentative resolution to the trade war.

Complicating the timing of possible rate cuts is an escalation of attacks on the Fed by Trump as he gears up for his 2020 re-election campaign. Trump's public criticism, a highly unusual action for a president, has raised concern that he is undermining the Fed's independence as a central bank. The president has asserted that under Powell's leadership, the Fed hurt the economy by tightening credit too much last year and by failing to lower rates since then.

This week, Trump was asked about a news report that the White House in February had explored whether the president had the authority to demote Powell as chairman while leaving him on the Fed's board.

"Let's see what he does," Trump said of Powell. "They're going to be making an announcement very soon. So we'll see what happens."

The president has previously explored firing Powell. But under the law, a Fed board member, like Powell, can be fired only for cause.

At his news conference, Powell was asked what he would do if Trump said he intended to demote him.

"I think the law is clear that I have a four-year term, and I fully intend" to fulfill it," the chairman said, reiterating what he has said previously.

The Fed is meeting at a time when the U.S.-China trade war has magnified concern and uncertainty for businesses and investors about whether and how much the economy will suffer. The U.S. manufacturing sector, in particular, is weakening. This week, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York reported that an index it compiles of manufacturing in New York state plunged this month into negative territory — to its lowest point since 2016. The index reflects manufacturing conditions in the state.

In some encouraging news, Trump tweeted Tuesday that he had spoken by phone with Xi and that the two leaders plan "an extended meeting" at a Group of 20 nations summit in Japan late next week. Trump also said that before his meeting with Xi, negotiators for the two sides will resume talks.

Also Tuesday, Mario Draghi, head of the European Central Bank, said the ECB was ready to provide further stimulus, including rate cuts, if the eurozone economy doesn't strengthen soon.

Draghi's comments sent the value of the euro tumbling against the dollar, prompting an angry tweet from Trump accusing the ECB leader of acting to weaken the euro to gain a competitive trade advantage against the United States.

AP Economics Writer Josh Boak contributed to this report.

'Toy Story' lives on, but should it have?

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Like "Casablanca," "Toy Story 3" concluded with the beginning of a beautiful friendship. It's an ending that has very possibly produced an ocean's worth of tears, not to mention countless awkward moments for children mildly embarrassed by their parents suddenly turning into waterfalls. "Um, dad, it's a movie about a toy cowboy."

But the sentimental crescendo of the "Toy Story" trilogy was real. The films' young boy, the one whose name was emblazoned on the bottom of Woody's foot, had grown up. Andy was going to college. The fate most feared by the toys — boxed up in the attic — was miraculously avoided when Andy gifted his beloved playthings to a young girl named Bonnie.

As he drove off, after one last imaginative romp in the yard, Woody watched Andy go like a wistful father. After three brilliant and heartfelt parenting parables that ruminated on aging, loss and impermanence alongside the pitfalls of arcade claw machines and toddler daycare centers, this was the final goodbye. Goodbye to Andy, yes, but goodbye to childhood. "So long, partner," said Woody.

Big gulp.

The finale was immediately received as a classic Hollywood ending. "The chances of topping this one are infinitesimal," New York magazine wrote at the time. "Toy Story 3" won the Oscar for best animated film. Everyone, including the film's makers and cast, believed they had neatly, perfectly wrapped up their trilogy.

"From the inside, 'Toy Story 3' was definitely the end of it," said Tim Allen, the voice of Buzz Lightyear. "That one scene was it."

But, of course, that wasn't it. "Toy Story" has returned, nine years later, with "Toy Story 4." In today's movie business, nothing is safe from ongoing sequelizing, not even a story about the very necessity of letting go and making peace with the passage of time.

That movie franchises have been extended well beyond their natural cycle is nothing new. But "Toy Story 4" may mark when Hollywood officially gave up saying goodbye.

It's probably a fool's errand to wish for prudence from a corporate-made, multi-billion dollar property that was, from the outset, designed to sell as many toys as it jerked tears. "Toy Story 4," which opens in theaters Friday, is widely expected to make around \$150 million over the weekend and gross close to \$1 billion over its worldwide run, just like "Toy Story 3" did.

And, for some, Woody is again coming to rescue. The Walt Disney Co. release will break a spell of underperforming sequels. The box office has recently slumped about 7% below last year, partly due to a string of disappointing returns for badly reviewed (or just plain bad) sequels: "Dark Phoenix," "The Secret Life of Pets 2," "Men in Black: International."

As Jeff Bock, senior box office analyst for Exhibitor Relations notes, it's difficult for any studio, even Disney, to leave \$1 billion on the table.

"Audiences might not actually need 'Toy Story 4' but theaters desperately need it," said Bock. "It's very reflective of where we are today with sequels and continuing sagas. We're at a point where three is no longer the magic number. It's beyond that."

It would be an unfair Buzz kill to call "Toy Story 4" simply a blatant cash grab. Quality control is too high at Pixar to give us a "Toy Story" sequel on par with, say, "Jaws: The Revenge," or something that we collectively pretend never existed, like "Godfather 3." "Toy Story 4" is quite good, critics say. Though many reviewers have questioned its necessity, the film rates 99% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes.

Directed by veteran Pixar animator and first-time feature filmmaker Josh Cooley, "Toy Story 4" finds Woody and the gang now settled in with Bonnie. But Woody slips into another existential crisis of self-worth when Bonnie favors other toys, especially one she quickly crafted herself out of a spork and some kindergarten trash. She names him Forky, a neurotic character voiced by Tony Hale. When Forky goes

missing on a family road trip, the resulting adventure forces Woody to confront the possibility of not only post-Andy life, but post-kid life.

It's become standard business for franchises to slowly abandon the numbers that might too bluntly remind fans of their lengthy runs. The "Fast and the Furious" series understandably chose to title its upcoming installment "Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbes and Shaw" over its almost shocking actual numerical value: "Fast & Furious 9." Pixar, at least, hasn't shied away from where this "Toy Story" fits in, even if its lead actor would have gone a different direction.

"It really should be called "Toy Story: Forky," said Tom Hanks. "Because it's all about the Forky."

Sequels have always been a somewhat touchy subject for Pixar. Since its groundbreaking first feature, 1995's "Toy Story" (the first full-length computer generated animated movie), Pixar has, for much of its existence, eschewed repetition for originality. In his 2014 book "Creativity, Inc.," Pixar co-founder Ed Catmull called quality "the best business plan" and suggested sequels can lead to "creative bankruptcy."

Lately, things have been changing at Pixar, and not just because of a recent preponderance of sequels including "Finding Dory," "Cars 3" and "Incredibles 2." Former Pixar chief John Lasseter, who directed the first two "Toy Story" films, exited the company last year after acknowledging "missteps" in his behavior with female staff members. In 2017, Rashida Jones departed "Toy Story 4," which she was helping to write, and said then that the company had "a culture where women and people of color do not have an equal creative voice."

"Inside Out" and "Up" director Pete Docter, who has a story credit and is an executive producer on "Toy Story 4," last year took over as Pixar's chief creative officer. The studio's next two releases will be originals: "Onward" next March and Docter's own "Soul," in June 2020.

And given Pixar's unique stature as one of Hollywood's few remaining factories of fresh storytelling capable of reaching mass audiences (its last original, "Coco," grossed more than \$800 million), some are rooting for "Toy Story 4" to — really this time — be Woody's last go-around. Not because they won't watch another one, but because they will. In a movie world of endless "Star Wars" episodes and even actors who can be digitally resurrected, closure — the kind preached in "Toy Story 3" — is increasingly a hard-to-come-by commodity. Not everything is meant to keep going for infinity and beyond.

The Associated Press' Gary Hamilton contributed to this report.

Pilots criticize Boeing for mistakes on its grounded jet

By DAVID KOENIG and TOM KRISHER AP Business Writers

Airline union leaders and a famed former pilot said Wednesday that Boeing made mistakes while developing the 737 Max, and the biggest was not telling anybody about new flight-control software so pilots could train for it.

Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, who landed a crippled airliner safely on the Hudson River in 2009, said he doubted that any U.S. pilots practiced handling a specific malfunction until it happened on two Max jets that crashed, killing 346 people. Max pilots should train for such emergencies in simulators — not just on computers, as Boeing proposes, he said.

"We should all want pilots to experience these challenging situations for the first time in a simulator, not in flight, with passengers and crew on board," Sullenberger said, adding that "reading about it on an iPad is not even close to sufficient."

Sullenberger's comments to the House aviation subcommittee came during the third congressional hearing on Boeing's troubled plane, which has been grounded for three months.

Daniel Carey, the president of the pilots' union at American Airlines, said Boeing's zeal to minimize pilot-training costs for airlines buying the 737 Max jet contributed to design errors and inadequate training. That has left a "crisis of trust" around aviation safety, he said.

Former Federal Aviation Administration chief Randy Babbitt said his old agency too readily accepted Boeing's design changes on the Max, and pilots should have been better trained. Sara Nelson, president of

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the largest flight attendants' union, joined in hammering Boeing and the FAA, although she acknowledged she has recently noticed "a chastened tone" from the company.

As the hearing unfolded in Washington, the head of the pilots' union at Southwest Airlines in Dallas said his group will seek compensation from Boeing for lost flying assignments and the costs of complying with a Justice Department subpoena for its records, which are part of the government's criminal investigation into Boeing.

All of the comments underscore the challenges Boeing faces convincing pilots they can be confident the Max can be made safe. Those pilots, in turn, are key to convincing reluctant passengers to fly on the plane.

"That bond between the passenger and the pilot is one that is critical," Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg said during an investor presentation in April.

Pilots complain that Boeing did not tell them about flight software called MCAS until after the October crash of a Lion Air jet in Indonesia. That same software, which could misfire on the failure of a single sensor, was implicated in a second crash five months later of an Ethiopian Airlines jet.

The MCAS software was designed to make the Max feel like previous 737 models to pilots despite engines that were larger and placed more forward on the wings and changed the plane's aerodynamics.

"This was a fatal design flaw built into the aircraft at the factory," Carey said in an interview before the hearing.

After the Lion Air crash, Boeing sent pilots and airlines a checklist of steps to take if MCAS malfunctioned, including disabling the software and hand-cranking a wheel to manually rotate part of the plane's tail and point the nose up. The Ethiopian Airlines pilots tried that, but they couldn't physically move the tail part because the jet was flying too fast.

"We not only have to devise checklists, we have to make sure those checklists are able to be performed by a flight crew," Carey told the lawmakers.

Carey said video training for pilots on the MCAS updates would be enough to get the planes back into the air, but he advocated simulator training during each pilot's training updates.

Boeing engineers have finished making fixes to the software and expect to soon demonstrate their work to government safety officials on test flights in hopes that the FAA will certify the plane as safe.

The changes will be accompanied by additional pilot training. FAA technical experts endorsed Boeing's conclusion that simulator time is not immediately needed for pilots who know how to fly older 737 models. Acting FAA Administrator Daniel Elwell said recently the agency has not made a final decision.

Carey and Sullenberger also questioned the FAA's independence from Boeing and other companies it regulates. Sullenberger criticized an FAA program that relies on industry employees to perform some safety tests and inspections, and he urged lawmakers to give FAA more money so it can do the work itself.

No one from Boeing Co. testified at Wednesday's hearing. Rep. Peter DeFazio, an Oregon Democrat and chairman of the full House Transportation Committee, said his panel has received "a substantial number" of the documents it has requested from Boeing and the FAA about development and approval of the Max, and he will summon the company to a future hearing.

In a statement, Boeing spokesman Peter Pedraza said Boeing was providing information to regulators, airlines and pilots "to re-earn their trust and know we must be more transparent going forward."

Boeing's path to regaining trust still looks bumpy. Jon Weeks, president of the pilots' union at Southwest — which owns 34 Max jets, more than any other carrier, and is the world's biggest 737 operator — faulted Boeing for many missteps during the crisis.

"Boeing seems to receive more bad news with every passing week and still needs to learn how to rebuild trust as well as the airplane," Weeks wrote in a memo to his pilots on Wednesday.

David Koenig can be reached at <http://twitter.com/airlinewriter>

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Asian shares gain, Shanghai up 2.6%, on Fed rate cut talk

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Asian shares were higher on Thursday, with the Shanghai benchmark up 2.6%, after the Federal Reserve reaffirmed that it's prepared to cut interest rates if needed to shield the U.S. economy from trade conflicts or other threats.

The Thursday tracked modest gains on Wall Street. The 10-year Treasury note slid to 1.98%, its lowest level since November 2016, as investors bet on at least one interest rate cut this year, possibly as early as July.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index added 0.7% to 21,478.93 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong surged 1% to 28,486.39. Shanghai was up 2.6% to 2,992.29 while Australia's S&P ASX 200 picked up 0.3% to 6,664.70. India's Sensex edged 0.1% higher to 39,139.47. Shares were flat in Taiwan and Jakarta and higher elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Confirmation that Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping will meet at the Group of 20 summit in Osaka next week has raised hopes for a political compromise on their tariffs war.

U.S. Trade Representative told a congressional hearing that he plans to speak with China's top trade envoy, Vice Premier Liu He, soon and also to meet with him in Osaka.

Prospects for a breakthrough in stalled negotiations remain uncertain, given the acrimony in recent weeks over who is to blame over the impasse.

The widely expected decision by the U.S. central bank's policymakers to leave the Fed's benchmark interest rate unchanged in a range of 2.25%-2.5% and the signal of openness to lower rates later reassured investors who have been worried the trade war between Washington and Beijing could weigh on global economic growth, and by extension, corporate profits.

The reaction to the Fed's midafternoon statement was more pronounced in the bond market, where the yield on the 10-year Treasury note slid to 2.03%, its lowest level since November 2016. The move signals that bond traders see an increased likelihood that the Fed will lower rates. Investors are betting on at least one interest rate cut this year, possibly as early as July.

The S&P 500 rose 0.3% to 2,926.46, within striking range of its all-time high, set on April 30. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.1% to 26,504. The Nasdaq composite added 0.4% to 7,987.32, and the Russell 2000 index of smaller companies picked up 0.3% to 1,555.58.

Major stock indexes in Europe finished mixed.

U.S. stock indexes spent much of the day wavering between small gains and losses as investors waited for the Fed to deliver its update on interest rates following a two-day meeting of policymakers.

The 10-year Treasury yield has been declining steadily since hitting a high of 3.23% last November. It fell to 1.98% Thursday, down from 2.06% late Tuesday.

Benchmark crude oil added 75 cents to \$54.73 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 14 cents to \$53.97 a barrel. Brent crude oil, the international standard, picked up 83 cents to \$62.65 a barrel.

The dollar fell to 107.65 Japanese yen from 108.10 yen on Wednesday. The euro rose to \$1.1267 from \$1.1226.

Today in History

Today is Thursday, June 20, the 171st day of 2019. There are 194 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 20, 1921, U.S. Rep. Alice Mary Robertson, R-Okla., became the first woman to preside over a session of the House of Representatives.

On this date:

In 1782, Congress approved the Great Seal of the United States, featuring the emblem of the bald eagle.

In 1837, Queen Victoria acceded to the British throne following the death of her uncle, King William IV.

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In 1863, West Virginia became the 35th state.

In 1893, a jury in New Bedford, Massachusetts, found Lizzie Borden not guilty of the ax murders of her father and stepmother.

In 1943, race-related rioting erupted in Detroit; federal troops were sent in two days later to quell the violence that resulted in more than 30 deaths.

In 1967, boxer Muhammad Ali was convicted in Houston of violating Selective Service laws by refusing to be drafted and was sentenced to five years in prison. (Ali's conviction was ultimately overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court).

In 1975, Steven Spielberg's shark thriller "Jaws," starring Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw and Richard Dreyfuss (not to mention a mechanical shark nicknamed "Bruce") was released by Universal Pictures.

In 1977, the first oil began flowing through the recently completed Trans-Alaska Pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez.

In 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld a New York City law making it illegal for private clubs with more than 400 members to exclude women and minorities.

In 1990, South African black nationalist Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie, arrived in New York City for a ticker-tape parade in their honor as they began an eight-city U.S. tour.

In 1994, O.J. Simpson pleaded not guilty in Los Angeles to the killings of his ex-wife, Nicole, and her friend, Ronald Goldman. Former airman Dean Allen Mellberg went on a shooting rampage at Fairchild Air Force Base near Spokane, Washington, killing four people and wounding 22 others before being killed by a military police sharpshooter.

In 2001, Houston resident Andrea Yates drowned her five children in the family bathtub, then called police. (Yates was later convicted of murder, but had her conviction overturned; she was acquitted by reason of insanity in a retrial.)

Ten years ago: Iranian music student Neda Agha Soltan, 27, was gunned down during election protests in Tehran; her dying moments were caught on video and circulated widely on the Internet, making her name a rallying cry for the opposition and sparking international outrage.

Five years ago: The Obama administration granted an array of new benefits to same-sex couples, including those living in states where gay marriage was against the law; the new measures ranged from Social Security and veterans benefits to work leave for caring for sick spouses. Defiant before skeptical Republicans, IRS Commissioner John Koskinen refused to apologize during a hearing for lost emails that might have shed light on the tax agency's targeting of tea party and other groups before the 2010 and 2012 elections.

One year ago: President Donald Trump abruptly reversed himself and signed an executive order halting his administration's policy of separating children from their parents when they are detained illegally crossing the border; Trump had been insisting wrongly that there was no alternative to the policy because of federal law and a court decision. The Vatican announced that Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired Roman Catholic archbishop of Washington, D.C., had been removed from public ministry and would face further punishment over "credible" allegations that he sexually abused a teenager more than 40 years earlier. (Pope Francis accepted McCarrick's resignation as a cardinal on July 28th.) A suspect was arrested and charged with murder in the killing of rising Florida rap star XXXTentacion

Today's Birthdays: Actress Bonnie Bartlett is 90. Actress Olympia Dukakis is 88. Actor James Tolkan is 88. Actor Danny Aiello is 86. Movie director Stephen Frears is 78. Singer-songwriter Brian Wilson is 77. Actor John McCook is 75. Singer Anne Murray is 74. TV personality Bob Vila is 73. Musician Andre Watts is 73. Actress Candy Clark is 72. Producer Tina Sinatra is 71. Rhythm and blues singer Lionel Richie is 70. Actor John Goodman is 67. Rock musician Michael Anthony is 65. Pop musician John Taylor is 59. Rock musician Mark degli Antoni is 57. Christian rock musician Jerome Fontamillas (Switchfoot) is 52. Rock musician Murphy Karges (Sugar Ray) is 52. Actress Nicole Kidman is 52. Country/bluegrass singer-musician Dan Tyminski is 52. Movie director Robert Rodriguez is 51. Actor Peter Paige is 50. Actor Josh Lucas is 48. Rock musician Jeordie White (AKA Twiggy Ramirez) is 48. Rock singer Chino Moreno (Deftones) is 46. Country-folk

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singer-songwriter Amos Lee is 42. Country singer Chuck Wicks is 40. Actress Tika Sumpter is 39. Country musician Chris Thompson (The Eli Young Band) is 39. Actress-singer Alisan Porter is 38. Christian rock musician Chris Dudley (Underoath) is 36. Rock singer Grace Potter (Grace Potter & the Nocturnals) is 36. Actor Mark Saul is 34. Actress Dreama Walker is 33. Actor Chris Mintz-Plasse is 30. Actress Maria Lark is 22.

Thought for Today: "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order." — Alfred North Whitehead, English philosopher and mathematician (1861-1947).