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Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

Friday and Saturday, Nov. 1 and 2
All State Chorus and Orchestra in Sioux Falls

Saturday, Nov. 2
Oral Interp Pumpkinstakes at Watertown

Sunday, Nov. 3
Turn clocks back one hour to return to Standard Time

Groton Prairie Mixed
Team Standings: Shih Tzus 3, Cheetahs 3, Coyotes 3, Chipmunks 1, Jackelopes 1, Foxes 1
Men's High Games: Ron Belden 192, Brad Larson 188, Tony Madsen 186
Women's High Games: Vicki Walter 166, Darci Spanier 161, Nicole Kassube 160
Men's High Series: Brad Larson 502, Roger Colestock 491, Ron Belden 482
Women's High Series: Darci Spanier 465, Vicki Walter 461, Nicole Kassube 442

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

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October Students of the Month

In back, left to right, are Jacob Lewandowski, freshman; Carly Gilbert, sixth grade; Gretchen Dinger, seventh grade; and Lydia Meier, eighth grade; in front, left to right, are Allyssa Locke, sophomore; Samantha Pappas, junior; and Nicole Marzahn, senior. (Courtesy photo)

Groton Area MS/HS School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.

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Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



Annual



Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 9, 2019

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

**DOOR
PRIZE!**

Lunch served
by Auxiliary



The Life of G. Edward Karel



G. Edward Karel, 83, of Walhalla, ND passed away Saturday, October 26, 2019 at the Pembina County Memorial Hospital, Cavalier, ND. Mass of Christian Burial will be held Thursday, October 31, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. at the St. Boniface Catholic Church, Walhalla, ND. Burial will be held in the St. Boniface Catholic Cemetery.

George Edward Karel was born November 6, 1935 at Grafton, ND to John J. and Mary (O'Toole) Karel. He grew up in Walhalla and graduated from Walhalla High School. Edward then attended St. Thomas Academy and the University of North Dakota. After serving in the U.S. Marine Corp, he returned to U.N. D. where he received his Master Degree. Ed then returned to Walhalla where he worked in the family business. He owned and operated Karel's Sales and Service.

Edward's military background promoted him to lead, serving as an Alderman and Mayor of Walhalla. He served on the board of directors for the Pembilier Nursing Center. Ed also served on numerous telephone boards at both regional and national levels. Many knew Edward for his passion of collecting guns and interest in hunting.

On August 4, 1958, he married Rose Neldon at Groton, SD. He is survived by his wife, Rose; children: Stacie (Jim) Metelmann, Walhalla, ND, Terrie (Daniel) Johnson, Cooperstown, ND, Michael (Susan) Karel, Walhalla, ND; grandchildren: Ashley Crosby and Brittaney Metelmann; Shannon (Andy) Tvrdik and Darren Johnson; Reed, Rhett, and Dane Karel; great-grandson, Asher Crosby; and brother, Jack (Connie) Karel.

Preceding him in death were his parents; infant daughter, Stephanie; twin granddaughters, Heidi and Holli Johnson; and sister-in-law, Lou Ann Karel.

Online guestbook at www.askewfuneralhome.com



Pictured are Joni Groeblichhof, Tara Fjelstad, Vicci Stange, Carol Smith

(Courtesy Photo)

PAC MS/HS Teacher of the Week parking spot

by Kiersten Sombke

MS/HS Groton Area PAC is so proud to announce that the MS/HS Teacher of the Week will now also receive the use of a Personalized Parking Spot! Each week a different MS/HS Groton Area Teacher is honored by receiving the "Teacher of the Week" black executive chair embroidered with "GT Teacher of the Week". PAC is so excited to now be able to honor the "Teacher of the Week" both inside the school, and outside the school!

Plans are also underway to add some painted upgrades to the parking spot itself, so be sure to stop in sometime to get a peek at the completed "MS/HS Teacher of the Week" parking spot.

MS/HS PAC works hard to support our teachers, staff, students, and the families of our community in so many ways, including: providing school supplies to students and teachers, providing meals to teachers during parent/teacher conferences, providing donations many times throughout the year to families, groups, or individuals in need, annual donation to the junior class to cover prom expenses, organizing and funding the Post Prom event each year, and giving of their individual time and talents throughout the year to serve the Groton Area Community.

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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 42 °F

Tonight



Snow Likely

Low: 28 °F

Friday



Snow Likely
then Chance
Rain/Snow

High: 40 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 25 °F


Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 43 °F

Halloween Thursday:



Light winds 10-15 mph

Highs 39-45



Tonight

Lows in the upper 20s



Up to an inch of snow possible

 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD   Updated: 10/31/2019 5:02AM Central

Published on: 10/31/2019 at 1:05AM

High pressure will keep the area mostly dry today. A front will move through tonight bringing light snow through Friday morning.

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Today in Weather History

October 31, 1979: A narrow band of heavy wet snow developed around midnight from Winner to Leola and produced from three to six inches of snow before ending in the afternoon of 31st. The wet snow stuck to power poles and combined with 30 to 50 mph winds broke up to 600 poles. Estimated damage was around \$400,000 dollars. The counties affected were Tripp, Lyman, Buffalo, Hyde, Hand, Faulk, and Edmunds Counties.

October 31, 1991: A blizzard swept through southeastern South Dakota, dropping over 16 inches of snow in places. The snow combined with winds gusting to 60 mph at times, thus producing blizzard conditions. Interstates 29 and 90, as well as most other roads east and south of Sioux Falls were closed due to blowing and drifting snow. There were hundreds of traffic accidents in the Sioux Falls area alone. The hospital emergency rooms were swamped with victims of automobile accidents and injuries sustained while shoveling heavy snow. Two men died from heart problems while shoveling the snow.

1846 - Eighty-seven pioneers were trapped by early snows in the Sierra Nevada Mountains that piled five feet deep, with 30 to 40 foot drifts. Just 47 persons survived the "Donner Pass Tragedy". (The Weather Channel)

1876: The Great Backerganj, also known as the Bengal cyclone of 1876 struck Bangladesh, then part of the province of Bengal in British India on this day. A maximum wind speed of 137 mph along with a storm surge of 10 to 45 feet inundated the coastal region. This storm likely caused 200,000 casualties along with displacing thousands of other individuals.

1950 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the central U.S. for Halloween. The temperature soared to 83 degrees at Minneapolis MN, their warmest reading of record for so late in the season. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - Fort Lauderdale, FL, was deluged with 13.81 inches of rain, which brought their rainfall total for the month of October to an all-time record of 42.43 inches. (30th-31st) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Halloween was a wet one in the southwestern U.S. Heavy rain in southern California resulted in numerous mudslides. Weather-related auto accidents resulted in three deaths and twenty-five injuries. Mount Wilson CA received 3.14 inches of rain in 24 hours. Yakima WA reported measurable rainfall for the first time since the 18th of July. The 103 day long dry spell was their longest of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty-two cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 19 degrees at Cleveland OH was a record for October, and morning lows of 21 degrees at Allentown PA and Bridgeport CT tied October records. Nine cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Phoenix AZ with a reading of 96 degrees. Showers made Halloween a soggy one in the southeastern U.S. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Halloween night was a soggy one in New England. Showers in the northeastern U.S. produced more than an inch and a half of rain in six hours at some locations. An invasion of cold arctic air brought an abrupt end to a week of "Indian Summer" type weather in the Great Lakes Region, and brought snow and subzero wind chill readings to the Northern Plains. In Colorado, Alamosa was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of two degrees above zero, and a Halloween night storm brought 3 to 6 inches of snow to the Front Range, and 5 to 10 inches to the nearby foothills. Icy streets around Denver the next morning made for a rather spooky commute. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: A severe winter storm, dubbed the Great Halloween Mega Storm, struck the upper Midwest. Minnesota bore the brunt of this storm. Blizzard conditions occurred with winds gusting frequently to 40 and 50 mph. By the time it was all over on November 2nd, Duluth recorded 37 inches, Minneapolis 28 inches, International Falls 18 inches and 11.2 inches in 24-hours at Sioux Falls, SD, their earliest heavy snowfall of 6 inches or more and snowiest October on record. For Duluth and Minneapolis, the snow amounts set new all-time records for the greatest amount of snow in a single storm. The storm gave these two cities nearly half of their average seasonal snowfall.

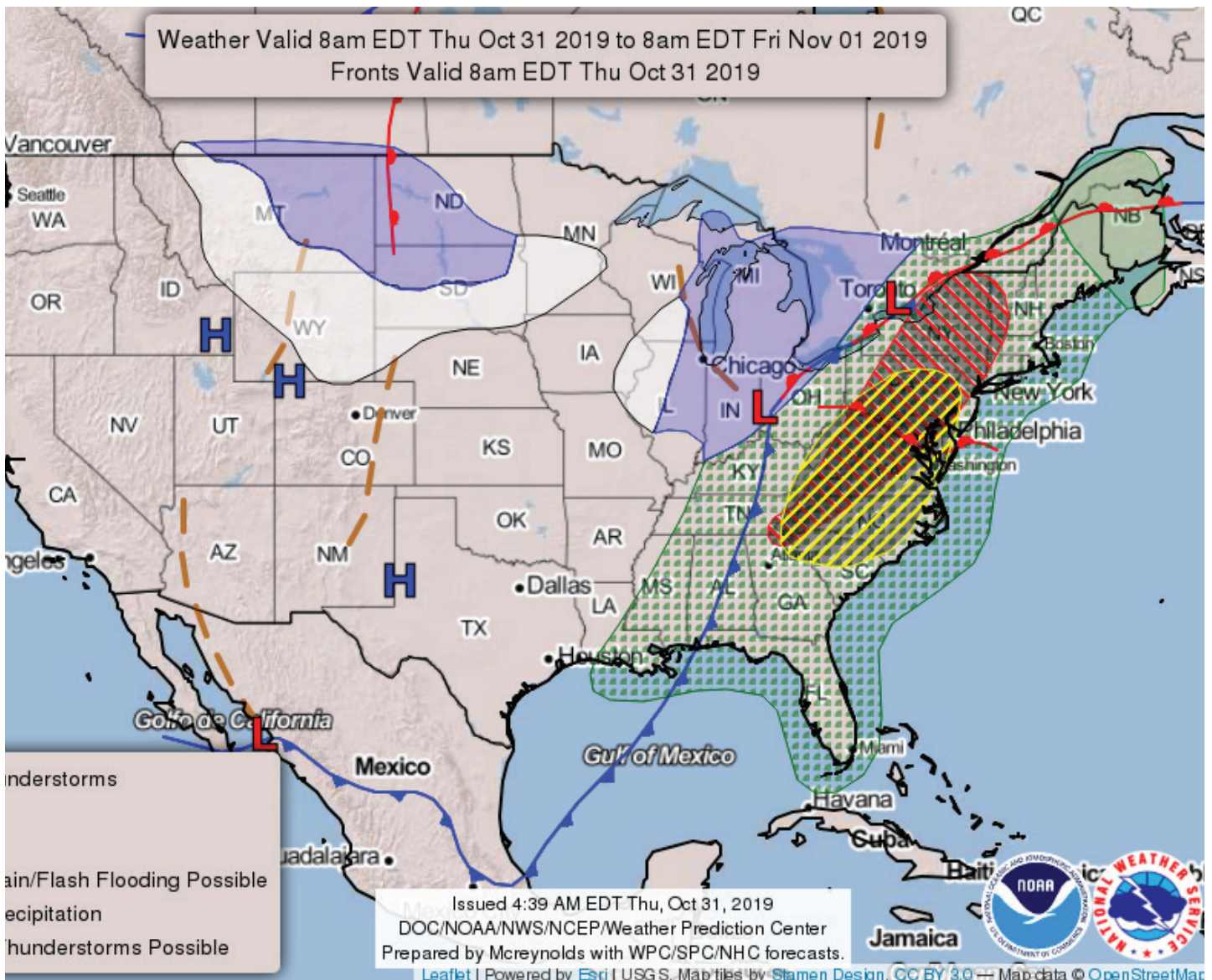
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 35 °F at 3:46 PM
Low Temp: 20 °F at 8:22 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 3:22 AM
Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 78° in 1933
Record Low: 8° in 2006
Average High: 49°F
Average Low: 27°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.95
Precip to date in Oct.: 1.55
Average Precip to date: 20.43
Precip Year to Date: 26.57
Sunset Tonight: 6:23 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.





WHOSE PICTURE IS THAT?

An art teacher asked her students to draw a picture of someone famous. Looking over the shoulder of one of her students, she asked, "And whose picture are you drawing?"

"God's," he answered confidently.

"God's?" asked the teacher. "No one knows what He looks like."

"They will when I get through!" he said.

Who was right: the teacher or the student?

Paul said that "Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God." The word Paul chose for the word "image" was a word his readers knew meant "a description of a person." In other words, what we see in the life of Jesus is a portrait, or a description, of Who God is and what He would look like. So, if we want to know Who God is and what He would look like, it is possible to see, know and understand God through His Son.

In Jesus, we see a Man filled with unending love that included the least, the last, the loneliest, and the lost. We see in Him One who healed, helped, and hurried to reach and redeem the unreached and unredeemed. This He did every day. Can we do less?

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the picture we have of You in Your Son, our Lord, and Savior. Convict us to live as He lived and serve as He served. In His Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Colossians 1:15 - Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 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

- 01/26/2020 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m. Sharp (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
Groton Hosting State B American Legion Baseball Tournament
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/14/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

News from the Associated Press

House explodes near Wagner, injuries unknown

WAGNER, S.D. (AP) — Police in southeastern South Dakota suspect a propane leak caused a house to explode.

But authorities haven't said whether anyone was injured in Wednesday's explosion near Wagner. It happened at Wagner North Housing on the Yankton Sioux Reservation.

Lindsay Lasley lives near the house that exploded. Lasley tells KSFY she was at a gas station, heard the explosion and rushed home to find debris, smoke and first responders at the neighboring property. She says it was a scary scene and was shaken up.

Information from: KSFY-TV, <http://www.ksfy.com>

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

10-14-22-26-27

(ten, fourteen, twenty-two, twenty-six, twenty-seven)

Estimated jackpot: \$241,000

Lotto America

03-06-28-32-44, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 4

(three, six, twenty-eight, thirty-two, forty-four; Star Ball: two; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$4.29 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$118 million

Powerball

19-22-52-56-67, Powerball: 21, Power Play: 2

(nineteen, twenty-two, fifty-two, fifty-six, sixty-seven; Powerball: twenty-one; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$140 million

South Dakota man gets probation in wildlife trafficking case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man will serve two years on probation for guiding illegal hunting trips on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

A federal judge sentenced Everett Thomas MacKaben Jr. of Whitewood on Monday.

The judge ordered MacKaben's hunting privileges revoked during his probation. MacKaben also was ordered to pay nearly \$27,000 in restitution to the Oglala Sioux Tribe Parks and Recreation Authority and a \$10,000 fine.

A federal grand jury indicted MacKaben last year for violating the Lacey Act. He pleaded guilty in July.

Prosecutors say MacKaben acted as a commercial guide for out-of-state deer hunters. MacKaben regularly guided the non-resident hunters on hunts on land within Oglala Lakota County. After deer were illegally taken in violation of tribal and state law, MacKaben also would arrange to ship the deer to the hunters' home states.

This story corrects style on MacKaben.

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Truck driver dies in semi fire in Lemmon grocery store lot

LEMMON, S.D. (AP) — Authorities in Lemmon have recovered the body of a truck driver after his semi caught fire in the parking lot of a grocery store.

Firefighters were called to a vehicle fire in the parking lot of the Lemmon IGA around 5:30 a.m. Wednesday. Crews found the semi engulfed in flames.

A man was found dead in the truck. He was the only occupant. His name has not been confirmed and won't be released until family members are notified.

The South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office is among agencies investigating the fire.

Universities say they're complying with campus speech law

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota university leaders told state lawmakers on Wednesday that they're working to implement a law aimed at ensuring free speech and intellectual diversity, after one legislator accused them of "slow walking" the reforms to avoid fostering conservative thought on campus.

The legislature passed the bill last spring after controversy over a "Hawaiian Day" party theme at the University of South Dakota revived conservative lawmakers' complaints about political correctness on campus. The Board of Regents opposed the bill as unnecessary, citing unfunded testing and reporting mandates.

At a meeting with a legislative committee Wednesday, the university presidents said they have been training students and faculty on protecting speech and working with groups such as the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a group that promotes free speech on campuses. The presidents said they're also working to gauge students' experiences on campus.

Several presidents said they have not found any instances of students feeling that freedom of speech was hampered.

"Our problem is not that we have people shouting speakers down," said Barry Dunn, the president of South Dakota State University. "Our problem is that we are not educating enough people post-secondary."

Speaker Steve Haugaard, a Sioux Falls Republican, said the law is needed to counter what he considers an "increasing amount of socialism" on campuses nationwide.

Democratic state Sen. Susan Wismer scoffed at Haugaard's fears.

"Every single lever of state government is controlled by conservatives and yet they are portraying conservative thought as a victim," Wismer, of Britton, said. "Maybe that's what sells these days."

In a letter to the regents, Republican State Rep. Sue Peterson of Sioux Falls said she had heard from constituents and students that universities were not implementing the law.

She asked the regents why they were not promoting speakers and courses with conservative ideas. She suggested the regents were "instructing campuses to ignore the requirements of HB1087 and/or to 'slow walk' any reforms. From recent media reports this seems to be accurate," Peterson wrote.

After the meeting, Peterson provided a brief statement saying she was looking forward to the Board of Regents' written report on its implementation of the law, which is due Dec. 1.

The National Association of Scholars and other groups have lauded the South Dakota law as the first of its kind.

Wismer said such groups are using the state as a "guinea pig" to promote similar laws elsewhere.

South Dakota rallies round Britton-Hecla QB with head injury

By **ERIN BALLARD** Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — On Oct. 20, the Britton-Hecla football team gathered at head coach Pat Renner's house for a big meal and an even bigger matter.

Together, they talked and they cried, and Renner gave them the chance to sit out their upcoming game against Ipswich/Edmunds Central. Nobody would have blamed the young athletes for having too much on their minds to play football.

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But their decision was unanimous and firm. The Braves would be brave for their quarterback. "Everybody on the team stepped up like I've never seen before," Renner said. "They had a different look in their eyes."

The result was a resounding 74-20 victory Thursday night.

That was without star junior Trevor Zuehlke, who suffered a serious head injury during an Oct. 18 game at Warner.

His injury was the reason for the gathering at Renner's. And the Aberdeen American News reports it has grabbed the attention of students, coaches, school administrators, fans and many others well beyond northeast South Dakota.

After a CT scan at an Aberdeen hospital, it was determined that there was bleeding in Zuehlke's brain and he was flown to Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, according to a page set up for him on CaringBridge. That's an online social network that allows family members and loved ones to provide updates on medical conditions and others to send messages of support or make donations.

Nearly two weeks later, Zuehlke remains in a medical coma to keep swelling down and to allow time for his brain to heal.

The waiting is difficult, but necessary.

While Zuehlke was sedated, he has been responsive to touch and was able to breathe on his own with minimal assistance, according to a Monday CaringBridge update. An update Tuesday said he had been weaned off sedation.

Those close to Zuehlke know his determined attitude will serve him well as he tries to fight through the injuries.

Zuehlke is one of a kind, according to Renner. He's the kind of player who doesn't have to be told what to do, who takes initiative before being asked, who goes above and beyond for those around him.

"He's a leader, helper, big brother, friend," Renner said. "They don't come around like that all that often. Not real often."

Fundraisers at sporting events all over the state are being organized to benefit Zuehlke and his family.

Last week, donation buckets passed around during a Lennox vs. Vermillion football game brought in \$1,380. Fans of Warner and Mobridge/Pollock teams raised nearly \$3,500 at volleyball and football games. A drive during school hours in Webster drummed up more than \$1,000 in just one day.

Campaigns are also planned in Burke and Rosholt, while "Trevor Strong" T-shirts can be ordered in Britton at H.H. Design and Clear Lake at Ultimate Ink. All of the profits will be donated to the family.

Many of the people helping have likely never met the Zuehlkes. But in South Dakota, the sense of community extends far beyond next-door neighbors.

Take the Lemmon-McIntosh football field, for example, some 250 miles from Britton. The 50-yard line now reads "#ForTrev" in large, blue letters underneath an image of the school's cowboy mascot. Even people outside of the Midwest have felt called to lend their thoughts and prayers.

"I've gotten texts and phone calls from coaches in other states," Renner said. "It never ends, the amount of support and people reaching out offering to help."

On Tuesday at 10 a.m. — because Zuehlke's football jersey number was 10 — people paused to take time to pray for healing. The event was spread on Facebook and elsewhere.

The dramatic outpouring of support has humbled the Zuehlkes, who are by their son's side as he takes baby steps toward recovery.

"We keep seeing the amazing support of other schools and communities across the whole region and we are so thankful for you all to take the time and the effort to show your love," a CaringBridge post from Kurt Zuehlke read. He's Trevor's father. "It is really humbling to see people from other places come together for Trevor's cause."

Zuehlke would have been proud of his teammates' effort in the opening round of the Class 9A playoffs.

"I know the first thing Trevor is going to say when he wakes up is, 'Did we win?'" Renner said. "That's just the kind of kid he is."

The top-seeded Braves face Burke in a quarterfinal matchup Thursday in Britton. Kickoff is set for 6 p.m.

Find Trevor Zuehlke's CaringBridge page online at bit.ly/32BIHud

Information from: Aberdeen American News, <http://www.aberdeennews.com>

Charges filed in September death near Lennox

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Lincoln County man is facing murder and manslaughter charges in the September death of a woman.

Fifty-nine-year-old Dean Torrence is being held in the Minnehaha County Jail on \$250,000 bond. Authorities say he's responsible for the death of 47-year-old Sherry Willey. The cause of her death has not been released. She was found unresponsive south of Lennox on Sept. 19.

The Argus Leader reports a Lincoln County grand jury reviewed investigative findings in the case this week. Torrence was then charged with second-degree murder domestic, first-degree manslaughter domestic, aggravated assault domestic and several other charges.

It's not immediately clear if Torrence has an attorney.

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

AP-NORC poll: Halloween plans, from candy to costumed pets

By DON BABWIN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The good news for kids this Halloween: They'll likely come home with a bigger pile of candy than of healthy snacks while out trick-or-treating.

Americans have a wide variety of plans to celebrate the spooky holiday this year, from carving pumpkins to watching scary movies. Some even plan to make their dogs and cats suffer the fate of being forced into goblin or Spiderman outfits.

Those are just some of the findings of a poll conducted ahead of Halloween by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

A majority of Americans think it's unsafe for kids to trick-or-treat alone, including about a third who say it's very unsafe. Perhaps not surprisingly, city residents and people with younger children at home are especially likely to say it's very unsafe.

"There's all these kidnappings and stuff going on," said Lamar Walker, of Huntsville, Alabama, in explaining why this year he is taking his sons, 12 and 6, to a party at a church.

Such worries help explain why an army of children descend on one street on Chicago's North Side every Halloween, not leaving until each house is some 2,000 pieces of candy lighter. Part of the attraction may be the elaborate displays, including zombies programmed to shake fences and push baby carriages down the street and skeletons digging graves. But homeowners know that parents, some of whom drive from across the city, are after something else: safety.

"It's all contained and safe, and kids don't have to go into apartment buildings where it gets creepy, (and) they don't have to go down main streets," said Nelson Gonzalez, an electric engineer who is responsible for a lot of the electronics that make the displays shake, roll, scream and smoke.

While pretty much every house on Bernard Street is good for a treat, the poll shows what every kid knows: not everyone gives out candy. In all, about 4 in 10 say they plan to do so.

Many Americans, including most people with kids under 13 at home, say they do plan to dress their kids up and take them out trick-or-treating. About a quarter of adults, and a third of those with younger children, will get into costume themselves.

But the poll also indicates that by 60 years old, fewer want to spend the evening dressed like Dracula, or to spend Nov. 1 yanking out the tombstones planted in their lawns.

"I've always thought that was kind of foolish," said 76-year-old Earl Thompson, a retired northern Illinois

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truck driver who counts himself among the vast majority of Americans age 60 and over who have no plans to don a costume.

By comparison, close to half of adults under age 30 do plan to dress up. Younger Americans are also far more likely than older ones to have plans to decorate for the holiday, 46% to 28%.

But as long as his wife has her way, Thompson can't join the ranks of those who have stopped putting up decorations.

"She decorates every year and as soon as Halloween is done, the Thanksgiving stuff goes up," he said.

Thompson is equally adamant that he won't be among the 7% who hand out healthy snacks instead of candy this year.

"We are a good house because we pass out the bad stuff," he said.

Peyton Helmer also is a firm "no" when it comes to the question of healthy snacks.

"This is the one day a year for candy," said Helmer, a farmer in St. Landry, Louisiana. "We are not going to give out healthy snacks."

Pets weren't asked about their feelings about Halloween, but 11% of Americans do say they plan to dress up their cat or dog.

For those facing the choice of whether to dress their critters up, a common refrain is that the decision belongs to the pets themselves.

Thompson joked his dogs would try to bite him if he ever came at them with a costume. But it's a split decision at Lamar Walker's house. "Cucumber likes it," he said of the dog's bat outfit. But, the other one, China? "She don't like it (and) she'll just sit in one spot and pee on the floor."

In Spearfish, South Dakota, Cheryl Anagnapoulos would be happy to let her Miniature Pinscher, Oliver, decide, as soon as he starts paying rent.

"He fights pretty hard," she said of when it comes time to put on his sweater with the skeleton face on it. "But we feed and house him so this is the least he can do."

The AP-NORC poll of 1,075 adults was conducted Oct. 24-28 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. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later were interviewed online or by phone.

Online:

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

Health care or Brexit? UK parties pick their election issues

By **DANICA KIRKA** and **JILL LAWLESS** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's upcoming election is all about economic and social issues and is a once-in-a-generation chance to transform the country, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said Thursday as he kicked off his party's six-week election campaign.

Corbyn outlined the left-of-center party's plan to take on the "vested interests" that he said are hurting ordinary people, as he attempted to move the election battle away from the political turmoil swirling around Britain's departure from the European Union.

Returning to his party's core issues, Corbyn named prominent business leaders including media mogul Rupert Murdoch and industries that pollute as he made his first stump speech for the Dec. 12 general election.

"We're going after the tax dodgers. We're going after the dodgy landlords. We're going after the bad bosses. We're going after the big polluters. Because we know whose side we're on," Corbyn told supporters at a rally in London. "Whose side are you on?"

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, head of the Conservative Party, sought the Dec. 12 election to break the parliamentary deadlock over Brexit. He plans to campaign as a Brexit champion and blame Corbyn for

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Johnson's failure to meet his "do or die" promise to leave the EU by the long-scheduled departure date of Thursday.

After Johnson failed to get British lawmakers to pass his Brexit divorce deal with the bloc, the EU granted Britain a three-month delay, setting a Jan. 31 departure date.

"Today should have been the day that Brexit was delivered and we finally left the EU," Johnson planned to say Thursday, according to his office. "But despite the great new deal I agreed with the EU, Jeremy Corbyn refused to allow that to happen — insisting upon more dither, more delay and more uncertainty for families and business."

Labour is calculating that voters want to talk about issues such as health care, the environment and social welfare — all of which saw years of funding cuts by Conservative governments — instead of more Brexit debates.

The party is divided between those such as Corbyn, who are determined to go through with Brexit, and others who want to remain in the EU. After much internal wrangling, Labour now says if it wins the election, it will negotiate a better withdrawal agreement with the EU, then call a referendum where voters will be able to choose between that deal and remaining in the bloc. It has not said which side it would support.

"The prime minister wants you to believe that we're having this election because Brexit is being blocked by an establishment elite," Corbyn said. "People aren't fooled so easily. They know the Conservatives are the establishment elite."

EU leaders, meanwhile, have said that they are not in favor of any more Brexit delays and urged British politicians to use the next three months wisely.

While Johnson's Conservative Party has a wide lead in most opinion polls, analysts say the election is unpredictable because Brexit cuts across traditional party loyalties. For many voters, their identities as "leavers" or "remainers" are more important than party affiliation.

All seats in the 650-seat House of Commons will be up for grabs, chosen by Britain's 46 million eligible voters.

Britain's toxic political atmosphere is also prompting some long-time lawmakers to drop out of the race altogether. Culture Secretary Nicky Morgan of the Conservative Party is among those opting out, citing the abuse she had received over Brexit.

All parties worry that they could be hurt by voters' Brexit fatigue.

Britons are facing the third major electoral event in as many years, after the country's 2016 EU membership referendum and a 2017 election called by Johnson's predecessor Theresa May to try to boost the Conservatives' majority and strengthen her hand in negotiations with the EU.

May's move was a spectacular miscalculation that cost the Conservative Party its majority in Parliament. It left her unable to get her Brexit divorce plan passed by Parliament, leading to her resignation and the rise of a new prime minister, Johnson, who took power in July.

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Final 'Or-derrrs': UK Commons speaker John Bercow bows out

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — It's last or-derrrs for John Bercow.

The speaker of Britain's House of Commons, who has become a global celebrity and online meme-magnet for his loud ties, even louder voice and star turn at the center of Britain's Brexit drama, is stepping down on Thursday after 10 years in the job.

Some lawmakers are sad to see him go, but others are delighted. With his innovative interpretation of the role, Bercow has become a hero to opponents of leaving the European Union, a villain to Brexit advocates and a thorn in the side of Britain's Conservative government.

"He has as many detractors as he has people who worship the floor that he walks on," said Sebastian Whale, author of a "Call to Order," a forthcoming biography of Bercow. "And that's the nature of the man. He is the speaker for the times. He's divisive, abrasive and controversial."

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Prime Minister Boris Johnson paid Bercow a respectful but barbed tribute in the House of Commons on Wednesday. He said the tennis-loving Bercow wasn't just "a commentator offering your own opinions on the rallies you are watching, sometimes acerbic and sometimes kindly, but above all as a player in your own right."

"Although we may disagree about some of the legislative innovations you have favored, there is no doubt in my mind that you have been a great servant of this Parliament and this House of Commons," Johnson said.

Bercow, the 157th House of Commons speaker, transformed the centuries-old role, whose powers include running Commons business, calling on lawmakers to speak —or making them shut up — overseeing votes and ruling on questions of parliamentary procedure.

Elected to the post on June 22, 2009, as the reputation of British politics was tarnished by an expenses-fiddling scandal, Bercow took a more activist role than many of his predecessors. Seeing himself as the champion of Parliament against the executive, he took every opportunity to let lawmakers hold the government to account.

Urgent questions to ministers and emergency debates on big issues, once, rare, became commonplace. At crucial moments in the Brexit process, Bercow allowed lawmakers to seize control of Parliament's agenda. One such intervention led to the law that forced Johnson to ask for a three-month delay to Brexit, postponing Britain's departure until Jan. 31.

"John Bercow said from the beginning, 'I want to be the champion of the backbenchers. I want to give backbenchers and Parliament a voice,'" said Bronwen Maddox, director of independent think-tank the Institute for Government.

"It was when he began running across conventions — changing conventions in ways that shape the Brexit process — that it all got very, very controversial."

A London cab driver's son who began his career in the 1980s as a right-wing acolyte of Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Bercow became a modernizing speaker and sought to rein in the rowdy, booze culture of Parliament.

During his tenure, late-night hours were scaled back and a nursery was set up for the children of lawmakers and staff. He appointed the first black woman to the post of chaplain of the House of Commons, and he clamped down on some of lawmakers' noisier heckling.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said Bercow transformed Parliament "from being a gentleman's club that happens to be in a royal palace to a genuinely democratic institution."

But he was also accused by some who had worked with him of bullying — allegations he denies.

Whale said Bercow, now 56, is a complex character "from a very right wing, staunch Thatcherite to a center, even center-left, soft Tory."

He angered some on the political right by saying in 2017 that President Donald Trump shouldn't be allowed to address Parliament, an honor given to some of his predecessors.

"He was bullied at school, and I think when you understand that, you can start to really understand the man," Whale said. "I think he has an antipathy towards the powerful using their majority for means that he thinks aren't correct or right. You can see that with how he stands up to government.

"I think also, coming from a relatively working-class background — his dad was a taxi driver — you can see how he's always wanted to be part of the establishment as yet had problems with it."

Britain's decision in 2016 to leave the European Union made Bercow a star — and a figure of controversy. The speaker is supposed to be impartial, but Bercow revealed in 2017 that he had voted to remain in the EU. That helped fuel claims by Brexit-backing politicians that he favored pro-EU lawmakers in his decisions. He pointed out that he had often championed the rights of the Brexiteers when they were in the minority.

"Throughout my time as speaker I have sought to increase the relative authority of this legislature, for which I will make absolutely no apology to anyone, anywhere, at any time," Bercow said when he announced his resignation in September.

Brexit gave Bercow a platform, but his personal style made him a star. As the twisting political drama

unfolded, millions around the world became familiar with Bercow's bellowing cries of "Or-derrr!" and "The ayes have it!" and his rhetorical flourishes. One of his favorites is to tell off heckling lawmakers for "chuntering from a sedentary position."

Whale said Bercow modeled some of his verbal flourishes on characters in the Austen novels that he loves. "But that's just who he is, he's a kind of eccentric character," Whale said. "And as I understand it, he's like that in private as he is in public. He doesn't necessarily change because the camera's on him. He just is that kind of slightly bewildering character from a different age."

Bercow's replacement will be elected by lawmakers on Monday from among the 650 members of Parliament. There are nine candidates, including Bercow's three deputy speakers.

Maddox said "the Commons may well go for a safe pair of hands after this and someone less controversial." "But the questions are still there," she said. "What exactly is the speaker's discretion to decide when backbenchers can bring an amendment to a government motion and not? And exactly what powers does Parliament have compared to the government?"

Associated Press writers Dorothee Thiesing and Jo Kearney contributed to this report.

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Fiat Chrysler, Peugeot to create fourth-biggest carmaker

By COLLEEN BARRY, TOM KRISHER and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Fiat Chrysler and France's PSA Peugeot said Thursday they have agreed to merge to create the world's fourth-largest automaker with enough scale to confront big shifts in the industry, including a race to develop electric cars and driverless technologies.

Italian-American Fiat Chrysler brings with it a strong footprint in North America, where it makes at least two-thirds of its profits, while Peugeot is the No. 2 automaker in Europe.

Both lag in China, however, despite the participation of Peugeot's Chinese shareholder, Dongfeng, and are playing catching up in developing electric vehicles.

Fiat Chrysler shares were trading up 9% at 14 euros in Milan, while PSA Peugeot shares were down 3.2% to 22.84 euros.

The 50-50 merger is expected to offer savings of 3.7 billion euros (\$4 billion), which the automakers expect to achieve without any factory closures — a concern of unions in both France and Italy where the carmakers have more overlap.

Fiat Chrysler's strongest brands are Jeep SUVs and Ram trucks and it is focusing on relaunching its premium and luxury brands, Alfa Romeo and Maserati, with a focus on hybrid engines. It still makes smaller cars under the Fiat marquee, mostly for the European and Latin American markets.

PSA Peugeot makes mostly small, city-friendly cars, family sedans and SUVs under the nameplates of Peugeot, Citroen and Germany-based Opel, which it bought in 2017. That is where the companies can expect to have the most overlap.

The new company would be worth \$50 billion, with revenue of 170 billion euros (\$189 billion). It would produce 8.7 million cars a year — still behind Toyota, Volkswagen and the Renault-Nissan alliance, which make over 10 million each.

Once a merger is finalized, PSA Peugeot CEO Carlos Tavares will be chief executive of the new company, with Fiat Chrysler Chairman John Elkann becoming chairman. Fiat Chrysler CEO Mike Manley will have a senior executive role.

"This convergence brings significant value to all the stakeholders and opens a bright future for the combined entity," Tavares said in a statement.

Manley called it "an industry-changing combination," and noted the long history of cooperation with Peugeot in industrial vehicles in Europe.

The 11-member board will be made up of five members from each company plus Tavares, who is locked

in as CEO for five years.

The combined company would be able to share in the cost of developing electric cars and autonomous driving, among other things, as well as to save on investments in vehicle platforms.

European automakers have been looking to mergers and alliances for years to share R&D costs and tackle the issue of overproduction on the continent.

"We have to face the challenges of electric cars and autonomous cars. To face this you need to have champions at the world level," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told a news conference.

The French government has a stake in Peugeot through its investment bank and just five months scuttled a similar deal between Fiat Chrysler and French automaker Renault. There were no signs of resistance to this deal, beyond concerns for jobs.

Le Maire also wants the new group to create a European electric battery industry, something the French government has pushed for to ensure that European carmakers can reduce their dependence on U.S. and Asian battery technology.

The French state investment bank currently has a seat on the PSA board; Le Maire declined to answer at a press conference whether it would be retained.

There was no immediate comment from Italian officials.

Because of the overlap in European operations and product, there is concern among unions about job cuts, though the companies have promised to not close any plants.

The new company would continue to have offices in France, Italy and the United States, and shares would be traded in all three countries. The parent company would be based in the Netherlands, as is currently the case with Fiat Chrysler.

Both companies have strong shareholder participation by the founding families — the Peugeots in France and the heirs to the Agnelli family in Italy, represented by Elkann.

As part of the agreement, the main shareholders — the Peugeots, the Agnelli family investment arm Exor, as well as the Chinese investor Dongfeng and the French state investment bank — agree to maintain their stakes for seven years. The only exception is that the Peugeots could increase their stake by up to 2.5% during the first three years by buying shares from Dongfeng and the French investment bank.

The next step in the deal is expected to be a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, which could come before the end of the year.

Tom Krisher reported from Detroit, and Angela Charlton from Paris. Claire Parker in Paris contributed to this report.

Report says CIA-trained Afghan forces behind war atrocities

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Heavily armed men burst into the home in the middle of night, hustling four brothers into separate rooms, their hands bound. Afghan special forces then shot them in the head and heart. The operation, the CIA-trained Afghan unit said, targeted Islamic State militants in a remote region of eastern Nangarhar Province.

In reality, the raid took place in the province's capital of Jalalabad, within earshot of Justice Ministry offices. In an interview with The Associated Press, the family said the dead brothers included a school teacher and an assistant to a member of Afghanistan's parliament. The truth of their deaths was eventually revealed by local and international media and the country's intelligence chief, Masoom Stanikzai, was forced to resign.

But that's not enough, says Human Rights Watch in a new report released Thursday documenting what it says are mounting atrocities by U.S.-backed Afghan special forces and rising civilian deaths by both American and Afghan forces. It calls for an investigation into whether the U.S. has committed war crimes in Afghanistan.

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The report says U.S.-led peace talks to end the 18-year-old war have omitted addressing the fate of the Afghan special forces that work "as part of the covert operations of the Central Intelligence Agency." The report suggests either disbanding them or bringing them under the control of the Defense Ministry.

"These troops include Afghan strike forces who have been responsible for extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, indiscriminate airstrikes, attacks on medical facilities, and other violations of international humanitarian law, or the laws of war," it says.

Speaking with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, several Afghan, Taliban and U.S. officials, including some who are involved in trying to resuscitate peace talks, said the Taliban won't agree to reduce attacks without a reduction in violence from the U.S. and Afghan side.

President Donald Trump ended negotiations with the Taliban over what he said was the insurgents' unacceptable level of violence.

According to HRW and several U.N. reports, Afghan special operations units are now partly responsible for rising civilian deaths and rights abuses. They operate with seeming impunity under Afghanistan's intelligence agency, the National Security Directorate, and hold nondescript names like Unit 01 or Khost Protection Forces.

HRW's report, the culmination of a nearly two-year investigation, documented instances of families terrorized by night raids, summary executions and disappearances of people, some of whom are never heard from again. In preparing the report, researchers interviewed 39 Afghans directly impacted by offenses and several witnesses in nine different provinces.

The report tells of raids in Zurmat in eastern Paktia Province. Witnesses said Afghan and U.S. strike forces blew open the door of one home and shot dead four men as the family watched. In a second house, three shopkeepers and a guest, all home for a holiday, were shot and killed, said a witness. In a third incident in Zurmat, a religious teacher and two construction workers were killed.

Quoting the Afghanistan Analysts Network, an independent research organization, the report said the three brothers operated a shop in the center of the city of Ghazni.

In southern Kandahar province in March, an Afghan strike force arrived in Panjwai in the night and took away two men. One has not been heard from since. A few weeks later in a nearby village, witnesses said a 60-year-old school principal was shot and killed by the strike force after separating him from the women in his household. The body was left in the courtyard.

The incidents prompted demonstrations by local residents who complained to researchers: "Why are we always being killed by them? What's our mistake?"

Human Rights Watch shared its findings with both the U.S. and Afghan authorities.

Kaber Aqmal, spokesman for the National Security adviser, refused to respond to the report directly but said "the Afghan government is doing its best to safeguard lives of the Afghan civilians, we are looking for all those possible ways to avoid civilian casualties." He blamed the casualties on Taliban insurgents.

The U.S. military, without addressing specific cases, blamed the suffering of civilians on Taliban, Islamic State and al-Qaida fighters and called the Taliban violence "pointless." The U.S. says it holds itself to a higher standard of accountability than IS or the Taliban.

"The battlefield is complex_the fighting is in crowded cities and in populated villages," the U.S. military said in a response included in HRW's report. "Our challenges are immense because we face enemies who do not wear uniforms, who hide among women and children, and who use lies about the death of civilians to try and check our effectiveness."

HRW Associate Asia Director Patricia Gossman, the report's author, said the U.S. has failed to investigate the "raid incidents" by Afghan forces and its probes into civilian airstrike deaths have been "shockingly deficient."

The U.S. has taken a more aggressive approach to the conflict since 2017, according to the report. It quotes Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who said the CIA "must be aggressive, vicious, unforgiving, relentless."

The Human Rights Watch report also called for an investigation into allegations that U.S. military personnel were with Afghan forces when possible war crimes were committed.

Previously, the U.S. has flatly denied any accusation of war crimes. It rebuked the International Criminal

Court for even suggesting an investigation and denied one of its prosecutor's a U.S. visa. The ICC later stated it would not investigate war crimes allegations in Afghanistan by any party to the conflict, including America.

HRW is seeking an investigation, though it did not specify what organization should carry out the probe.

Associated Press writer Rahim Faiez in Kabul contributed to this report.

Frozen in time, US Embassy a monument to Iran hostage crisis

By MEHDI FATTAHI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The U.S. Embassy in Tehran remains frozen in 1979 as the 40th anniversary of the Iran hostage crisis approaches, a time capsule of revolutionary graffiti, Underwood typewriters and rotary telephones.

The diplomatic compound was overrun by students angered when Washington allowed ousted Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi into the U.S. for medical treatment. What initially began as a sit-in devolved into 444 days of captivity for 52 Americans seized in the embassy.

Today, the embassy remains held by the Basij, a volunteer wing of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, partly as a museum and a space for student groups. Likewise, the Iranian Embassy in Washington remains empty since then-President Jimmy Carter expelled all of Iran's diplomats during the crisis, although it is closed to the public and maintained by the U.S. State Department.

The 27-acre U.S. compound sits on the corner of Taleghani Street and Mofatteh Avenue, a busy thoroughfare through downtown Tehran.

Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Taleghani Street was known as Takhteh-Jamshid Street, the Farsi term for Persepolis, the ancient Persian religious capital. Mofatteh Avenue had been named after U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose distant cousin Kermit Roosevelt, a CIA operative, played a role in the 1953 coup that toppled Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and cemented the shah's power.

The brick gate around the compound has become famous for its anti-American murals. On the day of the takeover, Nov. 4, 1979, Islamic students scaled its fence the same way their Marxist rivals had done earlier that year on Feb. 14.

The earlier incident was broken up by security forces, and an uneasy calm had returned to the embassy, although officials cut its staff to about 70 people.

The Great Seal of the United States on the outside wall has been defaced, although another one still is undamaged in white above the entryway of the compound's chancery. The two-story office block resembles a U.S. high school, something the diplomatic staff joked about by calling it "Henderson High," after former U.S. Ambassador Loy Henderson.

Entering the chancery is like stepping back in time. Rooms on the ground floors were shut and locked when Associated Press journalists visited on a recent night. The rooms are used by student groups and others.

Up a staircase, a guide led the AP journalists through the heavy safe door that guarded the embassy's secure vault room. This area has become part of the Basij museum.

Inside the vault sits the embassy's communications gear. Those Americans who hid in the room during the takeover rendered the equipment inoperable, removing and destroying individual components of the telexes — teletype machines that could transmit messages over phone lines to the rest of the world.

By destroying only the components, the staff could easily put the machines back into use had Iranian security forces rescued the employees, as they had in the Feb. 14 incident.

"The list was prioritized, so that the last items to go were the secure teletypes that kept them connected to Washington," journalist Mark Bowden wrote in his 2006 book, "Guests of the Ayatollah," recounting the crisis. "When it was decided to begin destroying them, selected parts were culled from the various bits and either smashed with a hammer or cut in half with a saw."

But saving the bulk of the machines instead only made them curiosity pieces in the Basij museum. A small

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placard on part of the equipment simply identifies it as a "coding and electronic communication center." Against a wall near a window air conditioner sits a blue-gray metal contraption that looks like a small wood chipper. A hose runs from it to a vacuum-cleaner-like device sitting over a large barrel.

This was the embassy's disintegrator, an industrial-style device designed to first shred documents and materials, then burn them to ash inside the barrel.

"It was slow to work and temperamental in nature, subject to jamming at the least provocation," recounted William J. Daugherty, a CIA officer who was among the hostages. "Within a few minutes, the device went 'ka-chonk' and shut down. Using a small commercial paper shredder, we continued to destroy what we could."

But they left behind a huge pile of shredded strips that the students later would spend weeks piecing together like a vast jigsaw puzzle of memos and reports. Other papers didn't get shredded. On one table sits a CIA report on Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, then the ruler of the Mideast island nation of Bahrain. Empty safes stand open, with one bearing signs of being pried apart.

Other rooms contain black-and-white photos of the embassy takeover. A large painting of one of the images shows U.S. Marine Sgt. Ladell Maples of Earle, Arkansas, and Cpl. Steve Kirtley of Little Rock, Arkansas, with their hands above their heads at the time of the takeover.

Images like those of surrendering American troops carry a strong resonance for hard-liners in Iran. Hanging on another wall is an artist's rendering of Iran's 2016 capture of 10 U.S. sailors in the Persian Gulf before their release a day later.

Some of the walls in the chancery bore fresh paint, although others still show some of the students' graffiti.

"The den of espionage must be shut down," it reads in Farsi, while another line honors Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who became supreme leader of Iran after returning from exile in France earlier in 1979.

In English, it reads: "There is no time for intervention in Iran anymore."

One wall features a poster in Farsi reading, "Death to America," although it offers an alternative English translation of "Down with America."

Another reads: "Death to the USA," with the letter "U" bearing the profile of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo; the "S" the pompadour of President Donald Trump; and the "A" the moustache of former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton, a longtime hawk on Iran.

"Death to America means 'Death to Trump, John Bolton and Pompeo,'" the sign's caption reads, quoting a February speech by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the current supreme leader, published by his website.

"Death to these individuals means death to American leaders. We have nothing to do with the American people," it says

In the same speech, Khamenei added: "As long as the U.S. government and regime continues the same malevolence, interference, evil and malice in its actions, this 'Death to America' will continue to be heard from the people of Iran."

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Mayors for Pete: Buttigieg hunts for support in city halls

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — As Pete Buttigieg works to prove the leader of a city of roughly 100,000 people is ready to assume the American presidency, he's relying on help from politicians who would know best: his fellow mayors.

The South Bend, Indiana, mayor has amassed a network of roughly 60 "Mayors for Pete," a collection of local leaders pushing for his underdog bid. The group includes mayors from former industrial cities, thriving metros and tiny towns of just a few thousand people. It includes the mayor of Dayton, Ohio, a Rust Belt city like the one Buttigieg leads, and the mayor of West Sacramento, California, a rising progressive leader. About a third are from swing states Democrats need to win to take the White House. But just

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three are from the early voting states Buttigieg needs to win to become Democrats' presidential nominee.

The campaign believes the mayors bring credibility to the 37-year-old Buttigieg's chief pitch — a promise to usher in the next generation of Democratic politics and a more pragmatic, no-excuses style of governing.

"He's a mayor, which means that unlike a lot of people who are running for that office, he's in a place where he actually has to get things done," said Steve Adler, the mayor of Austin, Texas, who endorsed Buttigieg in April, passing over Beto O'Rourke, a home state candidate.

But Buttigieg's list also highlights one of his chief weaknesses in the Democratic primary. Adler aside, the group is short on mayors who represent America's largest cities, and on city leaders who aren't white. It's an omission that reflects Buttigieg's trouble winning over black voters, a critical group of the Democratic primary electorate, amid criticism of his handling of the fatal shooting of a black man by a white police officer in South Bend.

Meanwhile, some of his competitors have picked up big names: Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan are backing Joe Biden. Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney just endorsed Elizabeth Warren.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, who flirted with a presidential run himself, has not yet offered an endorsement, nor has Lori Lightfoot, Chicago's first black and LGBT mayor and a rising Democratic star. Many mayors of majority black cities in the South still haven't endorsed anyone.

Senior Buttigieg campaign adviser Jess O'Connell said that winning support from mayors is just a piece of the campaign's overall strategy for capturing the nomination and that she hopes the list of mayors will grow as the Democratic field winnows to fewer candidates.

"For now, what we most want are people that know Mayor Pete and understand his style," she said. "But we know we have more to do to earn everybody's endorsement."

Adrian Perkins of Shreveport, Louisiana, is one of the mayors who hasn't yet committed. Perkins went to Harvard Law School and served in the military like Buttigieg; the two connected through a friend when Perkins, 33, was still in school and Buttigieg took time to offer him advice.

But Perkins said his endorsement must be the best choice for his city, a majority black community experiencing major floods that he attributes to climate change. Perkins, who is black, acknowledged that Buttigieg has a perception problem with some black voters, but he said that could change if people get to know him.

"It would go a long way for Pete ... on coming here and me putting him in front of some of the African Americans in my community, so they can see who I see in him," he said.

Buttigieg has already won over Sly James, the former mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, and former head of the African American Mayors Association, and Michelle De La Isla, the first Latina mayor of Topeka, Kansas. Christopher Cabaldon, of West Sacramento, is Filipino, part of the West's growing Asian-Pacific Islander community.

While smaller-city mayors may not seem like coveted presidential endorsements, they are more closely connected to voters than most politicians and are responsible for functions of government that often have a more direct impact on voters' lives.

"I think that right now you see a complete breakdown of state and federal politics, and the only place you see governing happening and stuff getting done is at the local level," said Nan Whaley, the mayor of Dayton, Ohio.

Whaley, Adler and Cabaldon met Buttigieg through the U.S Conference of Mayors and developed friendships. Cabaldon, who came out as gay in 2006 while serving as mayor, sought Buttigieg out at the conference in 2015, after Buttigieg came out, to offer support. Three years later, he was a guest at Buttigieg's wedding to husband Chasten.

All three spoke at Buttigieg's campaign launch in April, where the effort to win support from other mayors began.

As impeachment battles consume Washington, Cabaldon said, Buttigieg can provide an alternative focused on actual governance, not partisan bickering.

"We don't fight to the death in local government," he said.

The mayors have a call every other week with a campaign staffer dedicated to working with mayors, where they toss around policy ideas, discuss Buttigieg's upcoming schedule and connect the campaign with interested people, Whaley said.

O'Connell, the senior campaign adviser, said the campaign has drawn from various cities to build out its policy proposals.

Whaley said she's helped at least three Ohio mayors who aren't backing Buttigieg connect local donors or activists with the campaign. Adler has set up fundraisers and facilitated community meetings, including with Austin's black and Hispanic communities.

"Mayors know the leadership of every one of their communities," Whaley said.

Buttigieg won the endorsement of Victory Fund, a group that helps LGBT candidates raise money that is headed by Annise Parker, the former Houston mayor who is backing his bid. Buttigieg didn't automatically win the group's endorsement, instead having to prove he was competitive first, Parker said.

With so many other current and former mayors running for president — Cory Booker (Newark), Julián Castro (San Antonio) and, previously, Bill de Blasio (New York) — Parker said Buttigieg's ability to win over his colleagues stands out.

"One telling indicator is that mayors across the country stood up and said, "We like this one,"" Parker said.

Pentagon releases new details on al-Baghdadi raid

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and ROBERT BURNS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The general who oversaw the U.S. raid on Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi provided the most detailed account yet of the operation and said the U.S. is on alert for possible "retribution attacks" by extremists.

Gen. Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, said al-Baghdadi's remains were buried at sea within 24 hours of his death inside an underground tunnel where he fled as special operations soldiers closed in on him.

The Pentagon on Wednesday released the first government photos and video clips of the nighttime operation, including one showing Delta Force commandos approaching the walls of the compound in which al-Baghdadi and others were found.

Another video showed American airstrikes on other militants who fired at helicopters carrying soldiers to the compound. The U.S. also bombed the compound after the soldiers completed the mission so that it would not stand as a shrine to al-Baghdadi.

"It looks pretty much like a parking lot with large potholes right now," McKenzie said.

The attacking American force launched from an undisclosed location inside Syria for the one-hour helicopter ride to the compound, McKenzie said.

Two children died with al-Baghdadi when he detonated a bomb vest, McKenzie said, adding that this was one fewer than originally reported. He said the children appeared to be under the age of 12. Eleven other children were escorted from the site unharmed. Four women and two men who were wearing suicide vests and refused to surrender inside the compound were killed, McKenzie said.

The general said the military dog that was injured during the raid is a four-year veteran with U.S. Special Operations Command and had been on approximately 50 combat missions.

The dog was injured when it came in contact with exposed live electrical cables in the tunnel after al-Baghdadi detonated his vest, but it has returned to duty, McKenzie said. The dog, named Conan, will leave the Middle East and visit the White House next week, President Donald Trump tweeted.

Al-Baghdadi was identified by comparing his DNA to a sample collected in 2004 by U.S. forces in Iraq, where he had been detained.

The U.S. managed to collect "substantial" amounts of documentation and electronics during the raid, McKenzie said, but he would not elaborate. Such efforts are a standard feature of raids against high-level extremist targets and can be useful in learning more about the group's plans.

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Although the raid was successful, McKenzie said it would be a mistake to conclude that the Islamic State has been defeated.

"It will take them some time to re-establish someone to lead the organization, and during that period of time their actions may be a little bit disjointed," the general said. "They will be dangerous. We suspect they will try some form of retribution attack, and we are postured and prepared for that."

In outlining the operation, McKenzie said al-Baghdadi had been at the compound in Syria's northwest Idlib province for "a considerable period," but he was not specific.

He said the raid was briefed to Trump on Friday, and McKenzie made the decision to go ahead on Saturday morning.

McKenzie offered no new details about al-Baghdadi's final moments.

"He crawled into a hole with two small children and blew himself up while his people stayed on the grounds," he said when asked by a reporter about al-Baghdadi's last moments and Trump's description of the Islamic State leader as "whimpering and crying and screaming all the way" to his death.

Other senior Pentagon officials, including Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have said they could not confirm Trump's description.

Several times this month, Trump has said he is withdrawing from Syria and that the troops are "coming home." But, in fact, the U.S. military remains in the country, shifting positions and gearing up to execute Trump's order to secure Syria's oil fields — not for the Syrian government but for the Kurds. Trump also has said he wants to "keep" the oil, although it's unclear what he means.

Earlier Wednesday, the acting homeland security secretary, Kevin McAleenan, told a congressional hearing that U.S. security agencies have been reminded of the potential for al-Baghdadi's death to inspire his followers to launch an attack "in the immediate aftermath."

Russell Travers, the acting director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told the same hearing that he does not believe al-Baghdadi's death will have "much impact" on the organization.

"If there were significant attacks that were in the planning, that planning will continue. It won't have that much effect," Travers said.

Within Syria and Iraq, he added, IS has at least 14,000 fighters.

"That's an important number," he said. "Because five, six years ago, when ISIS was at its low point, they were down under a thousand. To us, this tells us the insurgency has a lot of options."

FBI Director Chris Wray said the biggest concern in the United States was the "virtual caliphate" that inspires Americans to pledge allegiance to IS and commit acts of violence in the group's name even without traveling to Syria.

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, a Mississippi Democrat and chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said he worries that despite al-Baghdadi's death, the conditions in Syria "are ripe for ISIS to reconstitute."

Associated Press Writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Nationals top Astros in Game 7 to win 1st World Series title

By BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Stephen Strasburg paraded the MVP trophy for delirious fans packed behind the dugout. Max Scherzer tearfully hugged his teammates. Gerardo Parra did the Baby Shark chop, Sean Doolittle flapped snow angels next to the mound.

Almost out of contention in May, champs in October.

Howie Kendrick, Anthony Rendon and the Washington Nationals completed their amazing comeback journey — fittingly with one last late rally on the road.

In Game 7 of the World Series, no less.

Kendrick and Rendon homered in the seventh inning as the Nationals overcame a two-run deficit, rocking the Houston Astros 6-2 Wednesday night to win the first title in franchise history.

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With all eyes on Scherzer and his remarkable recovery after a painkilling injection, these Nationals truly embraced their shot in the only Series when the road team won every game.

Even more against the odds: Juan Soto and Washington came from behind to win five elimination games this postseason, an unprecedented feat.

"What a story," said Ryan Zimmerman, the only player who's been a part of every Nationals team.

"The way this game went is the way our whole season went."

Strasburg, new lefty Patrick Corbin and the Nats brought the first World Series championship to the nation's capital since ol' Walter Johnson delivered the crown for the Senators in 1924.

This franchise started out as the Montreal Expos in 1969 when the major leagues expanded beyond the border, putting a team with tricolor caps at jaunty Jarry Park. They moved to D.C. in 2005, ending Washington's three-decade-plus wait for big league baseball after the Senators skipped town to become the Texas Rangers.

But the incredible path these wild-card Nationals with the curly W logo took, well, no one could have imagined.

Because in one topsy-turvy week, they put aside the pain of past playoff failures and upended heavily favored Houston. Quite an ending to a season that began back in February with the Nationals and Astros working out side-by-side at the spring training complex they share in Florida.

"Resilient, relentless bunch of guys," manager Dave Martinez said. "They fought all year long."

Having lost star slugger Bryce Harper in free agency and beset by bullpen woes, Washington plummeted to 19-31 in late May. It got so bad there was talk the Nationals might fire Martinez and trade away Scherzer. Instead, they stuck with the mantra that sprung up on T-shirts — Stay In The Fight.

"That was our motto," Scherzer said.

And months later they finished it, indeed.

Shut out on one hit by Zack Greinke going into the seventh, they still found a way to win.

"Guess what? We stayed in the fight. We won the fight!" Martinez shouted during the trophy celebration on the field.

"We were down and out. We were 19-31. We didn't quit then, we weren't going to quit now," he said.

Strasburg earned the World Series MVP award with a pair of wins, including Game 6.

"It's almost like we've done it so many times that we have to get punched in the face to kind of wake up," he said.

As pitcher Aníbal Sánchez told Scherzer while hugging him in the middle of the diamond: "We won one. We finally won one."

For the 43,326 revved-up fans at Minute Maid Park, it was a combination of shock and disappointment. So close to seeing José Altuve, Alex Bregman, George Springer and their Astros add to the title they won in Game 7 at Dodger Stadium two years ago, they watched this chance suddenly vanish.

"I've got a group of heartbroken men in there that did everything they could to try to bring a World Series championship to this city. And we fell one win shy," Astros manager AJ Hinch said.

"Let's be honest, there's 28 other teams that would love to have our misery today," he said. "And I just told our team, it's hard to put into words and remember all the good that happened because right now we feel as bad as you can possibly feel," he added.

President Donald Trump, greeted with chants of "Lock him up!" when he attended Game 5 in Washington, tweeted his congratulations to the Nationals from the White House.

"Game 7 was amazing!" Trump tweeted.

Washington kept pulling away after taking the lead, with the sensational Soto hitting an RBI single in the eighth and Adam Eaton adding a two-run single in the ninth off rookie José Urquidy.

Acquired from Arizona at the July trade deadline, Greinke was in complete control until Rendon — a Houston prep and college star — hit a solo homer with one out in the seventh that trimmed it to 2-1.

"Just gave us a little bit of hope," Nationals leadoff man Trea Turner said.

When Soto followed with a one-out walk, Hinch decided to make a move. He'd had ace starter Gerrit

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Cole warming up earlier, but left him in the bullpen.

"I wasn't going to pitch him unless we were going to win the World Series and have a lead," Hinch said. "He was going to close the game in the ninth."

Instead, Hinch signaled for reliable reliever Will Harris.

Kendrick connected on the second pitch, slicing a drive that hit the screen attached to the right field foul pole for a 3-2 lead. Just like that, everything had changed for the team in orange that led the majors with 107 regular-season wins, and the ballpark fell silent.

For Kendrick, another timely blow. At 36, playing on the oldest team in the majors, he was the NL Championship Series MVP against St. Louis after hitting the winning grand slam in the 10th inning of the deciding Game 5 in the Division Series at Dodger Stadium.

Then again, this was nothing new for the Nationals.

Washington rallied in the eighth to beat Milwaukee in the wild-card game and took the last two to beat Los Angeles in the NLDS, setting up a sweep of the Cardinals in the NLCS.

"This is now the most 2019 Nats thing to ever happen," Doolittle said. "Another elimination game, another come-from-behind win."

Far away, a sizable crowd poured into Nationals Park for a watch party. That was the stadium where Houston hammered the Nats for three games last weekend in taking a 3-2 edge, but their luck changed in Texas.

They won the last two against a team that posted the best home record in the majors (60-21) over the last two decades. Houston earned home-field advantage throughout the postseason, but it didn't help in the end as the Astros went a stunning 0-4 in their own ballpark during the Series.

Martinez said Soto, who turned 21 last week, celebrated with his first beer. Meanwhile, the skipper, who had a heart procedure six weeks ago and can't resume his six-cups-a-day coffee habit, headed back to the clubhouse for a special treat.

"I am," he said, "going to smoke a cigar."

With Greinke and Scherzer grunting on every pitch, Game 7 started as a classic duel.

Yuli Gurriel put the Astros ahead with a home run in the second and Carlos Correa added an RBI single off Scherzer that made it 2-0 in the fifth.

Scherzer was done after the fifth. Only a few days earlier, the three-time Cy Young Award winner had been unable to lift his right arm due to nerve irritation near his neck.

Corbin, the \$140 million starter, threw three scoreless innings in relief.

Daniel Hudson, released by the Angels in March, closed for the Nationals, who made Houston pay for stranding so many runners all game. Hudson struck out Michael Brantley for the last out, then threw his glove to start the celebration.

The Astros breezed to the AL West title, edged Tampa Bay in a five-game ALDS and topped the Yankees in the ALCS. They had a front-office fiasco in October, which led to the firing of an executive for a boorish rant at female reporters during a clubhouse celebration.

"Yeah, the ultimate goal is to win the World Series, and we fell short to a great team. You can't hang your head low about that," Springer said. "You move on and start getting ready for spring training."

GOING WILD

The Nationals became the first wild-card team to win the Series since Madison Bumgarner and the Giants in 2014. The last six champs have clinched on the road.

UP NEXT

The Astros and Nationals open exhibition play with a World Series rematch on Feb. 22 at Ballpark of the Palm Beaches. They met in their Grapefruit League opener this year and Scherzer gave up a home run to the first batter of the game.

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

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. FORMER TRUMP ADVISER TO FACE HOUSE IMPEACHMENT INVESTIGATORS

President Donald Trump's top adviser for Russian and European affairs is leaving his job at the White House - he's scheduled to testify before the House impeachment investigators today.

2. VOTE EXPECTED ON IMPEACHMENT GROUND RULES

Democrats set the stage for certain House approval along party lines of the ground rules lawmakers will use when they consider impeaching Trump.

3. FIRE ON TRAIN KILLS DOZENS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistani officials say a massive fire that erupted on a train, caused by a cooking gas stove, killed at least 71 passengers in eastern Punjab province.

4. CALIFORNIA NOT OUT OF FIRE DANGER FROM LINGERING WINDS

Santa Ana winds are expected to linger for a final day after driving more than a dozen wildfires through California.

5. U.S. EMBASSY IS A MONUMENT TO IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS

The U.S. Embassy in Tehran remains frozen in 1979 as the 40th anniversary of the Iran hostage crisis approaches.

6. WHO'S BEHIND WAR ATROCITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

A new report by Human Rights Watch documents what it says are mounting atrocities by CIA-trained Afghan forces and increasing civilian casualties at the hands of both U.S. and Afghan forces.

7. NATIONALS WIN FIRST WORLD SERIES TITLE

Howie Kendrick and Anthony Rendon homered in the seventh inning as the Washington Nationals overcame a two-run deficit, rocking the Houston Astros 6-2 in Game 7 of the World Series.

8. BUTTIGIEG HUNTS FOR SUPPORT IN CITY HALLS

Pete Buttigieg is turning to his fellow mayors as he works to prove the mayor of a city of roughly 100,000 people is ready to assume the American presidency.

9. SOCIAL MEDIA SITE TO BAN ALL POLITICAL ADS STARTING IN NOVEMBER

Twitter announces an end to political campaign and issue ads on its service, calling it an important step in reducing the flow of election-related misinformation.

10. FAKE CHIMNEYS FOR BIRDS THAT NEED VERTICAL HOLLOW TO REST

People from New England to Texas are building fake chimneys as nesting spots and migration motels for chimney swifts, little birds that are dwindling in number as the nation's architectural landscape changes.

German farmers take Merkel govt to court on climate targets

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Three German farming families are taking Chancellor Angela Merkel to court, arguing that her government isn't doing enough to tackle climate change.

The lawsuit that will be heard Thursday is the first attempt in Germany to hold authorities legally accountable for pledges they have made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Similar cases elsewhere have met with mixed success.

The families, who are backed by environmental group Greenpeace, argue that their farms are already suffering from the effects of man-made global warming and Germany, one of the world's biggest historical emitters of greenhouse gases, is partly responsible.

Their lawyer, Rhoda Verheyen, said her clients want judges to decide whether the government's self-set emissions reduction targets for 2020 constitute a binding pledge.

"The German government set itself a target in 2007, and even before, to lower Germany's emissions by 40% compared with 1990," Verheyen told The Associated Press.

"First this was a political promise, which then became a plan," she said, noting that it was repeatedly

cited in Cabinet decisions. "Ultimately they are suing to have a promise that we see as binding fulfilled."

Germany's environment ministry has acknowledged that it will miss its 2020 goal but that it's now concentrating on a more ambitious target of cutting emissions by 55% by 2030.

"We are united by the same goal," the ministry said in a statement.

Anike Peters, a climate expert with Greenpeace, said the new target means the original 2020 goal will be delayed by five years, causing considerable harm to people in Germany and elsewhere in the world.

"Simply by failing to act on climate change, the German government is breaching fundamental rights of people in Germany," she said. "We won't accept that."

Speaking ahead of the hearing at Berlin's administrative court, plaintiff Silke Backsen said recent hot summers and stronger storm seasons are putting a strain on the family's organic cattle farm on the North Sea island of Pellworm. Rising sea levels could make the low-lying island uninhabitable unless global warming is slowed significantly.

"We are in a crisis. It's simply a disaster," she said.

Backsen said she's hopeful the court will confirm the emissions targets.

"I believe that together we can turn the ship around, so that our children have a future, including in the area where we live," she said.

Follow AP's full coverage of climate change issues at <https://www.apnews.com/Climate>

Fire on moving train kills 71 passengers in central Pakistan

By ASIM TANVEER Associated Press

MULTAN, Pakistan (AP) — A massive fire caused by a cooking gas stove erupted Thursday on a train traveling in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, killing at least 71 passengers, officials said.

Flames roared through the train cars as the train approached the town of Liaquatpur in Punjab, they said, the latest tragedy to hit Pakistan's dilapidated, poorly maintained and mismanaged rail system.

Survivors recounted horrific scenes of fellow passengers screaming as they jumped through the windows and off the train, flames billowing from the carriages.

"We could hear people crying and screaming for help," said Chaudhry Shujaat who had boarded the train just a few hours earlier with his wife and two children. "I thought we would die. The next car was on fire. We felt so helpless."

Deputy Commissioner Jamil Ahmed said the fire broke out when a gas stove exploded as breakfast was being prepared on board. He added that the death toll had risen steadily since the early morning.

Kaleem Ullah, an official with the district emergency services, says of the 43 people injured, 11 were still in critical condition.

Several of the injured had jumped off the train — many to their deaths — after the fire broke out and before it eventually screeched to a halt, said Ahmed.

Survivors said it took the train nearly 20 minutes to come to a halt after the fire broke out and passengers began screaming for help. Some pulled at emergency cords that weave through the train to notify the conductor.

Ghulam Abbas, a passenger who had gotten on the train in the town of Nawabshah in neighboring Sindh province with his wife and two children, recounted watching panicked passengers jumping off.

"We learned afterward that most of them had died," he said.

His wife, Sulai Khan Bibi, said she was horrified what would happen to their two small children. "We were so close to death, but Allah saved us," she said, clutching the children.

In Pakistan, poor passengers often bring their own small gas stoves on the trains to cook their meals, despite rules to the contrary, according to Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. Safety regulations are often ignored in the overcrowded trains.

Ahmed said in Thursday's tragedy, it was cooking oil carried on the train by a group of Islamic missionaries known as Tableeqi-e-Jamaat that had caught fire after the initial cooking stove exploded, contributing

to the extent of the blaze and its speedy progress.

Railway official Shabir Ahmed said bodies of passengers were scattered over a 2 kilometer (mile) -wide area around the site.

People from nearby villages rushed to the train, carrying buckets of water and shovels to help douse the flames. "But it was impossible," said Ahmed.

Through the morning hours, rescue workers and inspectors sifted through the charred wreckage, looking for survivors and aiding the injured. Local Pakistani TV footage from the scene showed a huge blaze raging as firefighters struggled to get it under control.

Officials said they were still trying to identify the victims and that the lists of fatalities and those injured were not ready yet. Another train was dispatched to bring the survivors to the city of Rawalpindi, they said.

Yasmin Rashid, a provincial minister in the Punjab, told reporters that the medical staff were providing the best possible treatment for the injured at a hospital in Liaquatpur. Those critically injured were taken by ambulances to the city of Multan, the largest city nearest to the site of the accident.

The train was on its way from the southern port city of Karachi, the capital of southern Sindh province, to the garrison city of Rawalpindi when the blaze erupted, said Ahmed, the deputy commissioner.

Pakistan's military said troops were also participating in the rescue operation. President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan issued statements expressing their sorrow over the tragedy.

Khan took to Twitter to offer his condolences to the families of those killed and say he was praying for the speedy recovery of the injured. He also ordered an urgent investigation into the incident.

Train accidents in Pakistan are often the result of poor railway infrastructure and official negligence. Media reports on Thursday suggest that railways officials did not notice when passengers boarded the train, carrying individual gas stoves.

In July, a passenger train rammed into a paged freight train at the Walhar Railway Station in the district of Rahim Yar Khan, killing at least 20 people and injuring 74.

A month earlier, a passenger train traveling to the eastern city of Lahore from the port city of Karachi collided with a freight train in the southern city of Hyderabad, killing three people.

Associated Press writers Munir Ahmed and Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed to this report.

Former Trump adviser next in line to be asked about Ukraine

By DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's top adviser for Russian and European affairs is leaving his job at the White House just as he's scheduled to testify before the House impeachment investigators, a senior administration official said.

Tim Morrison owes his job at the National Security Council to Trump, but his testimony Thursday in the House impeachment inquiry might be central to a push to remove the president from office.

A senior administration official said Wednesday that Morrison "has decided to pursue other opportunities." The official, who was not authorized to discuss Morrison's job and spoke only on the condition of anonymity, said Morrison has been considering leaving the administration for "some time."

Morrison has been in the spotlight since August when a government whistleblower said multiple U.S. officials had said Trump was "using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election."

Now it's his turn in the impeachment probe's hot seat.

Morrison, tall and lean with an authoritative voice, will be asked to explain that "sinking feeling" he got when Trump demanded that Ukraine's president investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and meddling in the 2016 election.

Morrison, who is in his 40s, is a political appointee in the Trump White House, brought on board by former national security adviser John Bolton to address arms control matters and later shifted into his

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current role as a top Russia and Europe adviser. It was there that he stepped into the thick of an in-house squabble about the activities of Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani, who had been conversing with Ukrainian leaders outside of traditional U.S. diplomatic circles.

Known as a "hawk" in national security circles, Morrison is set to be the first political appointee from the White House to testify before impeachment investigators. The probe has been denounced by the Republican president, who has directed his staff not to testify.

Regardless of what he says, GOP lawmakers will be hard-pressed to dismiss Morrison, formerly a long-time Republican staffer at the House Armed Services Committee. He's been bouncing around Washington in Republican positions for two decades, having worked for Rep. Mark Kennedy, R-Minn., Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and as a GOP senior staffer on the House Armed Services Committee, including nearly four years when it was chaired by Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas.

Morrison's name appeared more than a dozen times in earlier testimony by William Taylor, the acting U.S. ambassador in Ukraine, who told impeachment investigators that Trump was withholding military aid unless the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, went public with a promise to investigate Trump's political rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter. Taylor's testimony contradicts Trump's repeated denials that there was any quid pro quo.

Taylor said Morrison recounted a conversation that Gordon Sondland, America's ambassador to the European Union, had with a top aide to Zelenskiy named Andriy Yermak. Taylor said Morrison told him security assistance would not materialize until Zelenskiy committed to investigate Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company that once employed Biden's son. A White House meeting for Zelenskiy also was in play.

"I was alarmed by what Mr. Morrison told me about the Sondland-Yermak conversation," Taylor testified. "This was the first time I had heard that the security assistance — not just the White House meeting — was conditioned on the investigations."

Taylor testified that Morrison told him he had a "sinking feeling" after learning about a Sept. 7 conversation Sondland had with Trump.

"According to Mr. Morrison, President Trump told Ambassador Sondland that he was not asking for a quid pro quo," Taylor testified. "But President Trump did insist that President Zelenskiy go to a microphone and say he is opening investigations of Biden and 2016 election interference, and that President Zelenskiy should want to do this himself. Mr. Morrison said that he told Ambassador Bolton and the NSC lawyers of this phone call between President Trump and Ambassador Sondland."

Morrison told people after Bolton was forced out of his job that the national security adviser had tried to stop Giuliani's diplomatic dealings with Ukraine and that Morrison agreed, according to a U.S. official, who was not authorized to discuss Morrison's role in the impeachment inquiry and spoke only on condition of anonymity. The official said Morrison told people that with the appointment of Robert O'Brien as Bolton's successor, his own future work at the NSC was in a "holding pattern."

Bolton had brought Morrison into the NSC in July 2018 as senior director for weapons of mass destruction and biodefence. He's known as an arms control expert or an arms treaty saboteur, depending on who you ask.

Morrison, who earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and a law degree from George Washington University, keeps nuclear strategist Herman Kahn's seminal volume on thermonuclear warfare on a table in his office.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said Bolton and Morrison are likeminded. Kimball said both have been known for calling up GOP congressional offices warning them against saying anything about arms control that didn't align with their views.

"Just as John Bolton reportedly did, I would be shocked if Morrison did not regard Giuliani's activities as being out of bounds," said Kimball, who has been on opposite sides of arms control debates with Morrison for more than a decade.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

Fire nearly destroys historic Japanese castle

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A fire broke out early Thursday and spread quickly through historic Shuri Castle on Japan's southern island of Okinawa, nearly destroying the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Firefighters battled the blaze for about 12 hours before bringing it under control in the afternoon.

The fire in Naha, the prefectural capital of Okinawa, started from the castle's main structure and quickly jumped to other buildings. Three large halls and four other structures burned down, a fire official said.

No one was injured. The cause was not immediately known.

An annual weeklong castle festival that began Sunday was to run for a week but the remaining events were canceled.

Video on NHK public television showed parts of the castle engulfed in orange flames, then turning into a charred skeleton and collapsing to the ground. Many residents watched from a hillside road and quietly took photos to capture what was left of the castle before it was largely lost. Some people were crying.

"I feel as if we have lost our symbol," said Naha Mayor Mikiko Shiroma, who led an emergency response team. "I'm shocked."

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki cut short a trip to South Korea to return to Naha. "My heart is broken," he said. "But I also feel strongly that we must reconstruct Shuri Castle, a symbol of the Ryukyu Kingdom filled with our history and culture."

The castle is a symbol of Okinawa's cultural heritage from the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom that spanned about 450 years from 1429 until 1879, when the island was annexed by Japan.

It is also a symbol of Okinawa's struggle and efforts to recover from World War II. The castle burned down in 1945 during the Battle of Okinawa near the war's end, in which about 200,000 lives were lost on the island, many of them civilians.

The castle was largely restored in 1992 as a national park and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000 as part of a group of ancient ruins, castles and sacred sites that "provide mute testimony to the rare survival of an ancient form of religion into the modern age."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters that the central government will do its utmost to reconstruct the castle.

The government dispatched officials from the Agency for Cultural Affairs and other government organizations to join efforts to investigate the cause of the fire and study ways to protect other historical sites from disasters, Suga said.

Kurayoshi Takara, a historian at the University of the Ryukyus who helped reconstruct Shuri Castle, said he was speechless when he saw the fire. He told NHK that the castle reconstruction was a symbolic event for Okinawans to restore their history and Ryukyu heritage lost during the war.

"I still can't accept this as a reality," Takara said. "It has taken more than 30 years and it was a monument to the wisdom and efforts of many people. Shuri Castle is not just about the buildings, but it reconstructed all the details, even including equipment inside."

UNESCO Director General Audrey Azouley expressed her sympathy. "Deep emotion and sincere solidarity with the Japanese people as we see the tragic fire at the beautiful #shuricastle," she wrote on her Twitter account. "This is a loss for all humanity."

Okinawa was under U.S. occupation until 1972, two decades after the rest of Japan regained full independence.

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

Near party-line vote expected on impeachment ground rules

By ALAN FRAM and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats have set the stage for certain House approval of the ground rules lawmakers will use when they consider impeaching President Donald Trump as the chamber braced for

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its first showdown over the inquiry.

There was no doubt that the Democratic-controlled body would approve the eight pages of procedures on Thursday, with each side likely to lose a handful of defectors, if any.

"As much as this president flaunts the Constitution, we are going to protect it," House Rules Committee Chairman James McGovern, D-Mass., said on Wednesday as his panel debated the procedures.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy told The Associated Press that the package creates "much more of a politically closed system than an open system."

That echoed Republican complaints that the Democratic-run process has been secretive and tilted against them. Democrats say their plan follows how impeachment efforts against Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton were run.

The investigation is focused on Trump's efforts to push Ukraine to investigate his Democratic political opponents by withholding military aid and an Oval Office meeting craved by the country's new president.

It is likely to take weeks or more before the House votes on whether to actually impeach Trump. If the House impeaches Trump, the Senate would hold a trial to decide whether to remove him from office.

Both parties' leaders were rounding up votes as Thursday's roll call approached, with each side eager to come as close to unanimity as possible.

Republicans said a solid GOP "no" vote would signal to the Senate that the Democratic push is a partisan crusade against a president they have never liked. McCarthy, R-Calif., said he's unaware of any Republican even "leaning toward voting for it."

Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., a moderate who some thought might be open to backing the Democratic rules, said he would oppose them. He complained about the secrecy that Democrats have used and said he had not been pressured by GOP leaders or Trump, with whom he had a drink at a Republican fundraiser Tuesday night.

"You really can't roll back the clock" from the time the investigation began last month, Upton said.

Democrats were also hoping to demonstrate solidarity from their most liberal elements to their most moderate members. They argued that GOP cohesion against the measure would show that Republicans are blindly defending Trump, whatever facts emerge.

"It will show the other party has become the party of Trump. It's really not the Republican Party any longer," said Rep. Dan Kildee, D-Mich.

Democrats' chief vote counter, Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina, said he believed "less than half a dozen" from his party would oppose the package. One Democrat whose vote was unclear, New York freshman Rep. Anthony Brindisi, said he'd not been pressured by party leaders to back the measure and said, "This is a decision I have to make."

Republicans said they'd use the vote to target freshman Democrats and those from districts Trump carried in 2016. They said they would contrast their support for the rules with campaign promises to focus on issues voters want to address, not on impeaching Trump.

The House GOP's campaign arm sent emails to reporters all but taunting some of those Democrats including freshman Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H. "Pappas wants to be a one-termer," one said.

GOP leaders called the rules "Speaker Pelosi's sham process designed to discredit the Democratic process" in their daily impeachment email to lawmakers.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., decided to have the vote following weeks of GOP claims that the inquiry was invalid because the chamber had not voted to formally commence the work.

The rules lay out how the House Intelligence Committee — now leading the investigation by deposing diplomats and other officials behind closed doors — would transition to public hearings.

That panel would issue a report and release transcripts of the closed-door interviews it has been conducting with diplomats and other officials with connections to Trump's interactions with Ukraine.

The Judiciary Committee would then decide whether to recommend that the House impeach Trump — a finding that he should be removed from office.

Republicans could only issue subpoenas for witnesses to appear if the entire panel approved them — in

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effect giving Democrats veto power over such requests by the GOP.

Attorneys for Trump could participate in the Judiciary Committee proceedings. But in a bid for leverage, panel Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., would be allowed to deny "specific requests" by Trump representatives if the White House continues refusing to provide documents or witnesses sought by Democratic investigators.

The rules also direct House committees "to continue their ongoing investigations" of Trump.

Top Democrats think that language will shield their members from weeks of Republican complaints that the inquiry has been invalid because the House had not formally voted to begin that work.

Democrats have said there is no constitutional provision or House rule requiring such a vote.

Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

Berlin Wall's fall stokes memories of lost hopes in Russia

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — When the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union stepped back, letting East Germany's communist government collapse and then quickly accepting German unification. Russian President Vladimir Putin now blames the Soviet leadership for naivety that paved the way for NATO's expansion eastward.

Many in Russia share that view, seeing the collapse of the Berlin Wall and reunification of Germany as a moment when Moscow reached out to the West hoping to forge a new era of partnership but was cheated by Western powers.

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev encouraged the Communist leaders in Central and Eastern Europe to follow his lead in launching liberal reforms and took no action to shore up their regimes when they started to crumble under the pressure of pro-democracy forces. During 1989, reformers took power across Soviet bloc countries, ending more than four decades of Communist rule.

The swiftness of the change took Gorbachev himself by surprise.

The ex-Soviet leader said in a recent interview, ahead of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, that he welcomed democratic changes in East Germany and other Soviet bloc countries but didn't foresee the Berlin Wall to come down that quickly.

"Not only us, but our Western partners didn't expect that the pace of history would be so fast," Gorbachev told newspaper Izvestia.

The morning after the Berlin Wall's collapse, Gorbachev called a session of the Communist Party's ruling Politburo to discuss a Soviet response.

"The Politburo unanimously decided that the use of force must be absolutely ruled out. Some were certainly eager to 'restore order' with tanks, but they kept mum then," he said in the interview.

Pavel Palazhchenko, who worked as Gorbachev's interpreter at the time, said that "any other decision could have had extremely serious, grave consequences, could have been the beginning of a disaster."

The Soviet Union had more than 300,000 troops and more than 12,000 tanks and other armored vehicles in East Germany.

"Practically they could have closed the entire border with their tanks, but they stayed in their barracks," said Vladislav Zubok, an expert on Soviet history with the London School of Economics. "It was clear to the Soviet leadership that it was impossible to put the paste back into the tube. A new era started."

Nikolai Andreyev, who was a Soviet army colonel in East Germany, said he was relieved to see that the Soviet leadership didn't try to reclaim control by forceful means.

"I was happy that it all happened peacefully, without a military conflict, without any shooting and bloodshed," he said.

The Soviet Union itself was going through a tumultuous period of change. Liberal reformers in the newly elected Soviet parliament pushed for ending the Communist Party's monopoly on power and pro-independence movements quickly gained leverage in Soviet republics. The Soviet media, transformed by Gorbachev's policy of openness, freely reported on the Berlin Wall's collapse.

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"I was sure that our military units wouldn't take any radical action. Gorbachev's policy warranted that," said Vyacheslav Mostovoi, who covered the wall's fall for Soviet state television.

Following the wall's collapse, Gorbachev agreed to fast-track the talks on the unification of Germany and, to much Western surprise, easily accepted its membership in NATO. He told Izvestia that it "removed a source of tension in the center of Europe" and helped radically improve relations with Germany.

But many in Russia continue to hold Gorbachev responsible for betraying Soviet ally East Germany and foregoing Moscow's vital interests in talks with Western powers.

They include Putin, who charged that the Soviet leader naively trusted Western promises that NATO wouldn't seek to incorporate Soviet bloc countries instead of getting a written pledge.

"Gorbachev made a mistake," Putin said. "It's necessary to document things in politics. And he just talked about it and thought that it was done."

Gorbachev countered that it would have been absurd to ask the West for written guarantees that the Warsaw Pact members wouldn't join NATO because it would have amounted to declaring the Soviet-led military alliance dead even before it formally ceased to exist in July 1991.

For Putin, however, Gorbachev's German policy was a show of unforgivable weakness that left a deep personal mark. A month after the wall's collapse, Putin, a KGB lieutenant colonel posted to Dresden, East Germany, was left to face demonstrators who tried to break into the KGB's headquarters there after the Soviet military ignored his desperate plea to protect the building. He eventually managed to turn the crowd back without violence.

As the Kremlin was negotiating German reunification, the Soviet Union began to unravel amid a massive economic crisis and political turmoil. The country's hard currency reserves depleted and the Kremlin was struggling to pay its bills, leaving Gorbachev and his government in a weak negotiating position.

"The Soviet Union was in crisis and couldn't negotiate from the position of equality with the West," Zubok said.

The country's economic woes continued after the 1991 Soviet breakup, leaving Russia heavily dependent on Western financial aid throughout the 1990s. Some of the elite Soviet troops hastily pulled back from Germany often were lacking basic infrastructure and had to stay in tents. Germany helped finance the pullout, but many in Russia saw the aid as insufficient.

In the years that followed, the Kremlin could do little to oppose the enlargement of NATO that embraced Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1999 and incorporated other former Soviet bloc nations and the three ex-Soviet republics in the Baltics in the following years.

NATO's expansion eastward was widely seen in Russia as a proof of its hostile intentions, helping foment anti-Western sentiments.

"The mistrust toward the West, toward the potential partners on the other side, is still there," said Konstantin Kosachev, the Kremlin-connected head of the foreign affairs committee in the Russian parliament's upper house. He argued that the West, eager to claim victory in the Cold War, squandered a chance to build a safer world.

"In a certain sense, this damage is somehow irreversible," Kosachev said. "The Soviet Union and then Russia did make its own choice to stop confrontation with the West and start cooperation. It could have been a win-win situation, but for that the Western countries should have been much wiser, much more generous."

Harriet Morris, Francesca Ebel, Konstantin Manenkov and Tanya Titova contributed to this report.

Follow AP's full coverage of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall at <https://www.apnews.com/FalloftheBerlinWall>

Apple TV Plus joins streaming wars with Oprah but no library

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As the streaming wars near a fever pitch and viewers are targeted from every vantage point — Disney Plus has the Marvel and Star Wars brands! HBO Max counters with “Game of Thrones” and DC superheroes! — Apple TV Plus could be cast as the highly pedigreed and improbable underdog.

While the venture counts Oprah Winfrey and Steven Spielberg among its first wave of talent, Apple TV Plus launches Friday with just a handful of original programs. It also lacks a warehouse of old shows and franchise films that can reliably draw nostalgic viewers and produce spinoffs, such as “The Mandalorian” for Disney Plus and HBO Max’s newly announced “Game of Thrones” prequel, “House of the Dragon.”

Zack Van Amburg and Jamie Erlicht, the former Sony Pictures Television presidents who are heads of worldwide video for Apple, say they are undaunted by the comparisons and optimistic about the streamer’s future.

“We are working with some of the most tremendously talented people we’ve ever met working in entertainment today,” Van Amburg said, and he sees them rising to the challenge of building an enterprise in general and for tech giant Apple in particular. “There’s an expression that we use here across the board at Apple: ‘Come to Apple and do the best work of your life.’ That’s actually what we ask of everyone who comes here.”

There’s both opportunity and anxiety in being part of such a launch, said Kerry Ehrin, showrunner for the Jennifer Aniston-Reese Witherspoon drama “The Morning Show.”

“It’s a huge amount of pressure, but you can’t really live in that space,” Ehrin said. “You drive yourself crazy ... because you start creating for, ‘Oh, is this right, or is that gonna work?’ instead of just creating what you find compelling and entertaining.”

Aniston, who’s also a producer for the series, calls it “refreshing and exciting to be a part of something that’s just beginning. ... We’re building it all together.”

Besides “The Morning Show,” the service’s starting lineup includes Jason Momoa and Alfre Woodard in the futuristic drama “See,” Hailee Steinfeld in “Dickinson,” a revisionist take on poet Emily Dickinson, and the wildlife documentary “The Elephant Queen.” Upcoming fare includes Spielberg’s revival of “Amazing Stories”; a book-focused series and other projects from Winfrey; the psychological thriller “Servant” from M. Night Shyamalan and “The Banker” drama series starring Anthony Mackie and Joe Morris.

A subscription costs \$4.99 a month, with usage allowed for up to six family members. Buyers of new Apple devices such as the iPhone and iPad get the streamer free for a year. Among the competition, Disney Plus (launching Nov. 12) is \$6.99 monthly, HBO Max (May 2020) is \$14.99 and, among the existing services, it’s as low as \$5.99 a month for Hulu and \$8.99 each for Netflix and Amazon Prime Video (which is included with a \$119 annual Amazon Prime membership).

There are deals to be had. Buyers of new Apple devices get a free year of Apple TV Plus and a seven-day trial is available without charge to all, enticements that mirror those of its competitors. For the new services, free promotions are key to building a subscriber base, while retaining them will be another challenge .

To break out from the pack, streamers are touting their wares with carnival barker-like gusto. In a presentation Tuesday for HBO Max, part of AT&T-owned WarnerMedia, executives emphasized the hits it will draw from the WarnerMedia library, including the full 10-season run of “Friends” (which it’s retrieving from Netflix), and newly purchased series including “South Park.”

Van Amburg and Erlicht , who in their long tenure at Sony were involved with some of the shows their competitors stream, including Netflix’s Emmy-winning “The Crown,” brush away concerns about being library-less. Instead, the executives stress a bonus they’re offering consumers in this dauntingly prolific television age. The Apple TV app, which houses Apple TV Plus and is available on iPhones, iPads and other iOS devices, also functions as a sort of Grand Central Terminal to efficiently access everything streaming, including from competitors (to be paid for accordingly).

“We want to make it easy for the user to find all the things that they watch,” Erlicht said.

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Viewers, especially cord-cutters seeking to escape hefty cable and satellite TV bills, likely will be choosy. A new study found that 70% of the 4,816 respondents believe there will be too many streaming services and even more, 80%, worry the streaming habit will become too expensive to maintain, according to the findings from TV Time, a movie and TV tracking platform, and United Talent Agency's data and analytics group, which joined in the study.

According to the research firm Magid, consumers are willing to subscribe to an average of four streaming services and pay an average of \$42 a month for them.

The budget for the streamers themselves? Based on reports, Apple Plus TV is spending \$1 billion for its first year of programming, with Disney Plus at slightly under that and HBO Max budgeted for about \$2 billion. By comparison, Netflix, with its deep bench of movies and buzzy original series including "Stranger Things," shelled out a hefty \$15 billion this year.

If Apple is serious about the service it will have to open its wallet wider, said analyst Daniel Ives of Wedbush Securities. The lack of a library is another significant drawback, one that could force Apple into the acquisition of a major studio and its creative assets as early as in 2020, said Ives. He offered a bullish prediction for Apple TV Plus of possibly 100 million customers within three to four years, given its loyalists and the 1.4 billion Apple devices worldwide.

Streaming leader Netflix has about 160 million subscribers worldwide.

Apple, however, has long struggled to crack the TV market, said Pivotal Research Group analyst Jeffrey Wlodarczak. While it has plenty of capital to throw at Apple TV Plus and a built-in consumer base, he said, it remains to be seen if its new service ultimately is among the survivors of streaming's fierce contest. Major companies can't always break into another sector, he said, citing Google's attempt to compete against Facebook with Google Plus.

"Just because you have a lot of money doesn't mean you're necessarily going to be successful," Wlodarczak said.

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Disabled seniors in Ca. complex left behind during outage

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

NOVATO, Calif. (AP) — One woman in her 80s tripped over another resident who had fallen on the landing in a steep stairwell. Others got turned around, even in their own apartments, and cried out for help.

At least 20 seniors with wheelchairs and walkers were essentially trapped, in the dark, in a low-income apartment complex in Northern California during a two-day power shut-off aimed at warding off wildfires.

Residents of the Villas at Hamilton in Novato, north of San Francisco, say they were without guidance from their property management company or the utility behind the blackout as they faced pitch-black stairwells and hallways and elevators that shut down.

"We were surprised by how dark it was," said Pamela Zuzak, 70, who uses a walker to get around. "There was nothing, nothing lit. It was like going into a darkroom closet, pitch black, you couldn't see in front of you."

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. shut off power to more than 2 million people over the weekend to prevent its equipment from sparking fires amid hot, dry gusts. It was just one of four preemptive rounds of shut-offs initiated by the utility this month.

By PG&E's estimate, more than 900,000 people were without power Wednesday, some of them since Saturday, while crews battled fires in Northern and Southern California.

The outages turned urban highways dark and blackened shopping malls once glittering with light. People stocked up on batteries, water and gas and lamented the spoiled food in refrigerators.

But the backouts are more challenging for older and disabled residents who lack the transportation and money to rush out for ice and groceries, said John Geoghegan, head of the Hamilton Tenant Association.

He said about a third of the Villas' 140 residents are too old, sick or cognitively impaired to care for

themselves during an extended outage. He alleges the property management company VPM “abandoned” its tenants.

Geoghegan came home Saturday night to find residents milling in the parking lots, some near panic. “Some expected they would be communicated with, but they weren’t hearing from anybody,” he said.

VPM Management of Irvine, landlord Affordable Housing Access of Newport Beach, and the on-site manager did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

Elected officials and PG&E customers have complained bitterly over the utility’s lack of communication and inability to provide real-time estimates of when power would be back on.

Marie Hoch, president of the Hamilton Field of Marin Owners Association, which does not include the Villas, got a call Monday. She visited the three buildings that make up the complex and found apartments without heat and electric stoves that did not work.

“I thought it was particularly upsetting that they knew the power outage was coming,” she said of management.

Zuzak didn’t leave her floor until after Monday night, when power was restored. She spent the two days ping-ponging from one end to the other, checking on neighbors.

Her friend Patti Zahnow, 77, who also uses a walker, says she was too frightened to leave her apartment.

“It was really dark. They put a flood light up that wasn’t working,” she said. “They should have a flood light that works.”

Residents said emergency lighting came on in the windowless hallways but lasted for about 12 hours, not nearly long enough for an extended outage. Battery-operated front doors to the buildings that are usually locked became unlocked during the outage.

“It’s pretty disconcerting for the seniors who were fairly unprepared or have difficulty orienting at night-time,” said Maureen Wagner, 64, who serves as a caregiver for her sister, who lives at the Villas.

Resident Helen Wagar, who is in her 80s, was returning to her third-floor apartment from walking her dog, Pixie. She was climbing the stairs, in the dark, when she tripped over another woman who had fallen on a landing.

Wagar’s knee is swollen. She never found out the identity of the woman.

“It was black as pitch in that stairwell,” she said. “I never did see the girl at all.”

Asian markets follow Wall Street higher after Fed rate cut

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Most Asian stock markets followed Wall Street higher on Thursday after the Federal Reserve cut a key interest rate.

Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul advanced. Shanghai retreated 0.1% after Chinese factory activity weakened more than expected in October.

Investors welcomed the Fed’s third rate cut this year to shore up economic growth amid a bruising U.S.-China trade war. The Fed indicated it won’t cut rates again unless the outlook worsens.

The Fed has “ample time to add a few more gallons of high octane to the tank and boost a sputtering U.S. economic engine,” said Stephen Innes of Oanda in a report.

Tokyo’s Nikkei 225 rose 0.2% to 22,887.06 and Hong Kong’s Hang Seng gained 1.2% to 26,995.65. South Korea’s Kospi added 1.1% to 2,102.38.

Australia’s S&P-ASX 200 lost 0.5% to 6,653.10. Benchmarks in Singapore and Taiwan advanced while New Zealand retreated.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 rose 0.3% to 3,046.77, hitting a record for the second time this week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.4% to 27,186.69. The Nasdaq composite added 0.3% to 8,303.98.

With its latest rate cut, the Fed has nearly reversed four rate hikes made in 2018.

The central bank’s latest move reduces the short-term rate it controls — which influences many consumer and business loan rates — to a range between 1.5% and 1.75%.

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During a news conference, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell signaled the central bank will likely forgo additional cuts while economic growth and inflation matches the Fed's outlook.

On Wednesday, the Commerce Department said the U.S. economy slowed to a modest growth rate of 1.9% in the July-September quarter. That surpassed economists' forecasts for even weaker growth, however.

Meanwhile, a monthly gauge of Chinese factory activity declined more than expected for October amid weak consumer demand and a tariff war with Washington.

The purchasing managers' index of the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing, an official trade group, declined to 49.3 from September's 49.8 on a 100-point scale on which numbers below 50 show activity contracting.

New export orders and other indicators declined.

Chinese economic growth has hurt by weakening consumer demand as shoppers, jittery over the trade war and possible job losses, put off purchases of cars and other big-ticket goods.

Exporters have been hurt by President Donald Trump's tariff hikes on Chinese imports in a fight over Beijing's technology ambitions and trade surplus but the impact on the overall economy has been limited.

The latest data suggest an improvement at the end of the previous quarter "didn't mark the start of a sustained recovery," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report.

Japan's industry ministry reported industrial output rose 1.4% in September over the previous month, but forecasters said activity for the rest of the year is likely to be weak.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose 14 cents to \$55.20 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York mercantile Exchange. The contract lost 48 cents on Wednesday to close at \$55.06. Brent crude, used to price international oils, gained 23 cents to \$60.47 per barrel in London. It lost 99 cents the previous session to \$60.24.

CURRENCY: The dollar declined to 108.62 yen from Wednesday's 108.64 yen. The euro advanced to \$1.1168 from \$1.1151.

California not out of fire danger from lingering winds

By **BRIAN MELLEY** and **MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ** Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — Santa Ana winds were expected to linger for a final day Thursday after driving more than a dozen wildfires through California, sending thousands fleeing and burning nearly up to the walls of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Firefighters managed to tamp down or at least partially corral fires that for the past few days surged through tinder-dry brush in both the north and south, destroying dozens of homes.

But much of Los Angeles and Ventura counties remained under a National Weather Service red flag warning of extreme fire danger through Thursday evening because of bone-dry humidity and the chance of winds gusting to 70 mph (112 kph) in the mountains.

A brushfire that broke out before dawn Wednesday between the cities of Simi Valley and Moorpark north of Los Angeles quickly exploded in size and prompted officials to order about 30,000 people to evacuate, although some were being allowed back home Wednesday night as fire crews began to get a handle on the blaze.

Crews remained through the night to make sure embers weren't blown back into flame.

Throughout the day, an army of firefighters helped protect the hilltop Reagan museum, and helicopters hit the flames, which came within about 30 yards (27 meters) of the property and left the library sitting like an island in a soot-black sea. A team of goats is brought in annually to chew away vegetation and create a firebreak around the museum.

There was no damage, library spokeswoman Melissa Giller said.

Nearby residents had little time to heed evacuation orders as the flames approached.

Elena Mishkanian was able to gather only some basics. Her son, Troy, 13, netted six pet fish from a tank and put them in pots.

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"Fish have feelings!" he said when his sister Megan teased him about it.

Frightened horses screamed in a nearby barn as Beth Rivera used a garden hose to water down the edges of her home to keep embers from igniting dry grass and trees. Friends helped evacuate 11 horses.

The cause was not yet determined, but Southern California Edison filed a report with state regulators to say it began near its power lines. Electrical equipment has sparked some of California's worst wildfires in recent years and prompted utilities to resort to precautionary power outages. SoCal Edison had not cut power in the area at the time this fire started.

Another wildfire Wednesday forced the evacuation of two mobile home parks and a psychiatric nursing care facility in Jurupa Valley, 45 miles (72 kilometers) east of Los Angeles, where elderly people wearing face masks and wrapped in blankets were taken out in wheelchairs and gurneys as smoke swirled overhead. The blaze grew to 200 acres in size before its forward spread was stopped.

"There was one moment when I could see nothing but dark smoke and I was like, 'We're going to die,'" said Qiana McCracken, assistant director of nursing for the Riverside Heights Healthcare Center.

As winds buffeted the state this week, utilities deliberately cut power to more than a million people to prevent high winds from damaging power lines and sparking wildfires.

Pacific Gas & Electric, which has staged three sweeping blackouts this week, restored power to hundreds of thousands of people Wednesday and expected to have it back for the others sometime Thursday.

The waves of days-long outages have been angrily condemned by state officials and consumers.

PG&E Corp. CEO Bill Johnson acknowledged hardships but said outages will be necessary in the future as seasonal fire threats increase.

"As long as they remain the best tool that we have to keep people safe, and our communities safe, they're the tool we will use," he said.

PG&E equipment that wasn't de-energized may have ignited a massive blaze in Sonoma County wine country that has destroyed 133 homes.

Firefighters reported making significant progress as high winds in the area eased Wednesday and the fire was 45 percent contained.

Southern California Edison said its safety power cuts still affected about 215,000 people by late Wednesday night and warned that outages were under consideration for about 800,000 people.

Yet fire crews managed to make good progress against most blazes. A fire that erupted Monday in the wealthy Brentwood area of Los Angeles, burning a dozen homes, was reduced to hot spots and evacuation orders were lifted for most of the thousands who had been told to flee.

The days of windstorms are not unusual for the fall season, which has seen vicious gusts propel a series of deadly and destructive California wildfires in recent years.

But at least in the short term, there was good news from forecasters.

"This is the last event in our near future. We are not expecting any Santa Anas next week," weather service meteorologist Kristen Stewart said.

But she noted the forecast only extends out seven days.

"Once we get past that, all bets are off," she said.

Trump to welcome military working dog Conan to White House

WASHINGTON (AP) — Every dog has his day, just not at the White House.

President Donald Trump tweets that the military working dog injured in the raid last weekend that killed the Islamic State leader will leave the Middle East for the White House sometime next week.

And the president appears to have declassified the dog's name: Conan. That had remained a military secret because of the classified nature of the mission in which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi died.

In announcing the impending visit, Trump again posted an altered image of him presenting a medal to the dog. The Daily Wire had created the image by taking an Associated Press photo of an actual medal presentation by Trump and replacing the human recipient with the canine hero.

"Thank you Daily Wire," Trump tweeted after midnight Wednesday. "Very cute recreation, but the 'live'

version of Conan will be leaving the Middle East for the White House sometime next week!"

Conan was hurt after being exposed to live electrical cables but has returned to active duty, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, who leads U.S. Central Command, told reporters the dog was injured when it came in contact with the cables as it pursued al-Baghdadi in a tunnel underneath a compound in northwestern Syria.

McKenzie said the dog has worked with special operations forces for four years and taken part in about 50 missions. He said such working dogs are "critical members of our forces."

When Trump first posted the altered image on Twitter of him presenting a medal to the dog, it came with an all-caps tweet of "AMERICAN HERO."

The image was derived from a photo taken at a 2017 East Room ceremony to present retired Army medic James McCloughan with the Medal of Honor for saving the lives of 10 men during the Vietnam War. The Medal of Honor is the most prestigious military decoration awarded to U.S. service members.

Rocket attack kills Iraqi soldier, adding to growing unrest

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ALI ABDUL-HASSAN Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Two rockets were fired into Baghdad's fortified Green Zone on Wednesday, killing one Iraqi soldier and adding to the violence gripping the country amid unprecedented anti-government protests and a violent security crackdown.

Security officials said one of the Katyusha rockets landed about 100 meters (110 yards) away from the perimeter of the U.S. Embassy, triggering alert sirens. A soldier manning a checkpoint near a restaurant was killed, they added, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The Green Zone is home to several Western embassies and government offices. An eyewitness near the embassy said he heard two explosions. It was not immediately clear where the other landed. Earlier this week, three rockets struck a large military base north of Baghdad that houses U.S. and Iraqi forces. No casualties were reported from that attack.

Iraq has been engulfed by deadly anti-government protests that have picked up momentum in recent days. Iraq's semi-official human rights commission said 100 people have been killed and over 5,000 injured since Friday, when protests resumed after a three-week hiatus.

The deaths bring to nearly 250 the overall number of people killed this month as security forces crack-down on the growing protest movement.

Tens of thousands of people gathered in a central square in Baghdad and across much of the country's Shiite-majority central and southern province Wednesday.

The sound of tear gas explosions echoed throughout the day as security forces battled young men trying to advance toward the Green Zone through Jomhuriya Bridge.

Later on Wednesday, hundreds of people headed to the Al-Sanak Bridge that runs parallel to the Jomhuriya Bridge, opening a new front in their attempts to cross the Tigris River to the Green Zone. Security forces fired volleys of tear gas that billowed smoke and covered the night sky.

Security and hospital officials said two protesters were killed in the vicinity of Tahrir Square, which has emerged as the epicenter of the protests.

Earlier in the day, the mood was festive in the square, despite the nearby tear gas. Barbers give free haircuts to protesters. Young men grill carp fish for a national dish called masgouf and distribute to the crowds. Others play dominoes, oblivious to the chaos all around.

"We are now in Tahrir Square, which is called nowadays 'the holy land,' supporting our sons, brothers and friends who are here (protesting), to show a civilized image of the protest to the whole world," said Jenan Kareem, a middle-aged Iraqi woman who joined the protests.

The protests are over deteriorating living conditions, unemployment and corruption. Protesters have been joined by supporters of an influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who has called on the government to resign, and have snowballed into the biggest security challenge Iraq has faced since the Islamic

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State group was defeated two years ago.

The protests are unprecedented in their scope and the fact that they are mostly grassroots, leaderless and spontaneous. In recent days, university and school students have also joined the protesters. Civil society groups have formed, including young people who clean the streets of litter left behind by the protesters.

Dozens of Tuk Tuks — or motorized rickshaws — crowd the streets around the square, ferrying protesters back and forth from homes, and the injured to ambulances and hospitals.

But that hasn't deterred the protesters from pouring into the streets. Tahrir Square, in particular, has become a beehive for activists including some who have erected tents and are staying there.

"We are staying here (in the demonstration area) just like the protesting youth, offering services. We are a group of barbers offering free haircuts to protesters," said Najam Ashour, a barber.

The Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis Plasschaert, visited Tahrir on Wednesday and was met by an angry group of protesters. Security officials escorted her along the square and shielded her from the demonstrators.

Protesters in Baghdad on Tuesday could be seen carrying the coffin of a fellow protester who was killed in Tahrir square during the ongoing demonstrations. The coffin was wrapped in Iraq's black, red and white flag with the words God is Great written in green in the middle.

Authorities have announced a curfew from midnight to 6 a.m. in the capital, but it was not being enforced.

On Tuesday, masked gunmen opened fire at Iraqi protesters in the Shiite holy city of Karbala, killing 18 people and wounding hundreds in one of the deadliest single attacks since anti-government demonstrations erupted earlier this month.

Despite its vast oil wealth, Iraq suffers from high unemployment and crumbling infrastructure, with frequent power outages that force many to rely on private generators.

The demonstrations have occurred in Shiite-majority areas and have been directed at the Shiite-dominated government and Shiite political parties and militias, many of which are supported by neighboring Iran.

The protests have grown and demonstrators are now calling for sweeping changes, not just the government's resignation. Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi has promised a government reshuffle and reforms, which the demonstrators have already rejected.

Chile cancels climate, trade summits amid protest chaos

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Chilean President Sebastián Piñera canceled two major international summits and said he would focus on restoring security and moving ahead in the coming days with an attempt to satisfy popular demands for better social services and a lower cost of living.

Thirteen days into a wave of protests that has left more than a dozen people dead, hundreds injured and businesses and infrastructure damaged, the streets of Santiago were mostly calm on Wednesday night after Piñera's announcement. A few thousand people protested outside the presidential palace.

It was unclear if the relative tranquility would continue Thursday, the first day in a long holiday weekend in Chile.

The decision to call off the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and U.N. global climate gatherings, planned for November and December, respectively, dealt a major blow to Chile's image as a regional oasis of stability and economic development.

But leaders across Chile's political spectrum, and protesters on the streets Wednesday, mostly said they accepted Piñera's decision, although many lamented cancelling the climate summit. Chile has moved faster than many South American countries to reduce carbon emissions, and activists and politicians alike had high hopes for the summit.

"This has been a very difficult decision that causes us great pain," Piñera said in a televised address. "A president always has to put the needs of his countrymen first."

Piñera said he was forced to cancel both events due to the chaos unleashed by 12 days of protests. Demonstrators are demanding greater economic equality and better public services in a country long

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seen as an economic success story. Shops have been vandalized and buildings set on fire, shutting down numerous subway stations.

Heraldo Muñoz, president of Chile's opposition Party for Democracy, said he thought it was unfortunate the climate summit was canceled.

"On the other hand, the desire to hold the meeting wasn't realistic," he said. "We have to focus on domestic affairs."

Some demonstrators said they agreed with Piñera's decision.

"The political situation right now in Chile isn't right for talking productively about climate change," said Micha Vergara, a 20-year-old art student.

Trade and climate negotiators scrambled to find new locations for their summits, aimed at resolving tariff-related conflicts between China and the U.S. and finalizing countries' climate rules in advance of a bigger summit next year during which governments will be asked to commit to new emissions limits.

President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping had hoped to sign a modest trade agreement at the APEC summit, formerly scheduled to take place in Santiago on Nov. 16-17. Under the tentative deal, the U.S. had agreed to suspend plans to raise tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese imports, and Beijing had agreed to step up purchases of U.S. farm products.

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said U.S. officials were "awaiting potential information regarding another location," but it was unclear if any had been proposed. Gidley added that Trump wanted to sign the deal with China "within the same time frame," hinting that a separate event could occur outside a summit.

The so-called Phase One trade agreement did little to address the underlying U.S. grievances against China, including its alleged practice of forcing foreign firms to hand over trade secrets, stealing technology, and unfairly subsidizing Chinese firms. China's leaders have been reluctant to make the kind of policy reforms that would satisfy Washington, worrying such concessions would mean scaling back their aspirations to become a world leader in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and driverless cars.

Still, the apparent cancellation of the summit "removes a hard deadline for action toward a comprehensive agreement in the trade war," said Jeff Moon, a former U.S. diplomat and trade official specializing in China who is now president of the China Moon Strategies consultancy. "That hard deadline and the relatively short period of time available allowed Trump and Xi to give themselves permission to do only easy things and delay indefinitely resolving tough issues."

Now, Moon said, "there is no excuse for not pressing forward with the full U.S. agenda of concerns."

Climate advocates said they were disappointed but expected to relocate their talks.

"I've been making my way through the North American continent towards Santiago, but as #COP25 will be moved I will now wait until I have more information," tweeted teen climate activist Greta Thunberg.

The Santiago climate conference was meant to work out some of the remaining unresolved rules for countries on climate efforts, smoothing the way for the bigger effort in the 2020 summit: encouraging countries to up their commitments to cutting climate-changing emissions.

"The absence of rules does not stop countries from acting either alone or together" to cut emissions, said Nigel Purvis, a climate and environment negotiator in the administrations of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. "It really shouldn't slow down climate action."

But other climate experts said it was important to get those rules worked out in advance.

"To load everything into one conference — I think they'll work pretty hard not to do that," said Henry Jacoby, a climate expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Rachel Cleetus, policy director at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said she believed there would be "every effort made that some type of ... meeting does happen."

U.N. Climate Change Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa issued a statement saying "alternative hosting options" were being explored. And a U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity for lack of authorization to comment publicly, said that all U.N. venues are being considered as options. Those would include cities such as New York, Geneva, Bonn, Vienna and Nairobi.

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Associated Press reporters Ellen Knickmeyer and Paul Wiseman in Washington; Frank Jordans in Berlin; and Luis Andres Henao in Buenos Aires contributed to this report.

Stable costs but more uninsured as 'Obamacare' sign-ups open

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans are going without health insurance, and stable premiums plus greater choice next year under the Obama health law aren't likely to reverse that.

As sign-up season starts on Friday, the Affordable Care Act has shown remarkable resiliency, but it has also fallen short of expectations. Even many Democrats want to move on.

President Donald Trump doesn't conceal his disdain for "Obamacare" and keeps trying to dismantle the program.

During President Barack Obama's tenure, open enrollment involved a national campaign to get people signed up. The program's complexity was always a problem, and many lower-income people didn't understand they could get financial help with premiums.

For example, the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation has estimated that some 4 million uninsured people may be eligible for coverage at no monthly cost to them, after taking subsidies into account. Zero-premium plans are skimpy, but experts say it beats going uninsured.

But the Trump administration says it's not specifically advertising that. Early on, it slashed the Obamacare ad budget. Officials say they're focused on providing a quality sign-up experience and keeping the HealthCare.gov website running smoothly.

Democrats who once touted the health overhaul as a generational achievement now see it as a stepping stone, not the final word.

Presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren would bring the 20 million people covered under the law into a new government-run system for all Americans. "It's time for the next step," says Warren.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, who asserts "Obamacare is working," is proposing a major expansion of current ACA subsidies and a whole new "public option" insurance program.

For John Gold, a self-employed graphic designer from Maine, health care that's stable, affordable and comprehensive still feels more like a goal than a reality. He's been covered by the ACA since 2014.

"It's a great start, but it's not the be-all and end-all of health care," he said.

Health care "takes up too much of my budget, and it doesn't need to," explained Gold, who lives near Portland. "There are appointments my doctor suggests, that I turn down because it's going to cost me \$300."

Gold's income fluctuates, and when he makes too much to qualify for subsidized premiums, he must pay full freight. He's in his 50s, so his monthly cost is higher, about \$700. On top of that, the plan comes with a \$4,000 deductible and an \$8,000 out-of-pocket limit, potentially leaving him on the hook for a lot more.

Nonetheless, Gold said he hasn't looked at the cheaper alternative the Trump administration is touting, though it can cost up to 60% less. One reason is "short-term plans" don't have to cover pre-existing medical conditions.

With the economy strong, it's unusual for progress to falter on America's uninsured rate. Yet the Census Bureau reported that 27.5 million people were uninsured in 2018, an increase of nearly 1.9 million from 2017, and the first time the rate went up in a decade.

Caroline Pearson, a health insurance expert with the nonpartisan NORC research institution at the University of Chicago, said she doesn't expect to see ACA coverage gains in 2020.

"Premiums are still expensive for people who have other costs," said Pearson. "It's a challenging proposition unless you are getting a big subsidy or really need insurance."

Enrollment has been slowly eroding since Trump took office, from 12.2 million in 2017 to 11.4 million this year. The drop has come mainly in HealthCare.gov states, where the federal government runs sign-up season. State-run insurance markets have held their own.

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But Trump administration officials say they're doing just fine managing Obamacare. They recently announced that premiums for a hypothetical 27-year-old choosing a standard plan will decline 4% on average in 2020 in HealthCare.gov states.

Despite relatively good news on premiums, Trump's actions still cast a shadow over the ACA's future. His administration is asking a federal appeals court in New Orleans to strike down the entire law as unconstitutional. The White House has released no plans to replace it.

Seema Verma, the top administration official overseeing the health law, sounded confident in a recent appearance before a House committee.

"The president has made clear that we will have a plan of action to make sure Americans will have access to health care," Verma, head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said when asked about the court case. But she added, "I'm not going to get into any specifics."

A decision in the court case could come any day. Whatever they decide, it's likely to go to the Supreme Court.

Gold, the graphic designer from Maine, is worried. "I do not trust them to replace it with something better," he said.

Sign-up season ends Dec. 15 in most states. Coverage starts Jan. 1.

Border wall, impeachment battle imperil budget progress

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bitter fight over funding for border fencing is imperiling Capitol Hill efforts to forge progress on more than \$1.4 trillion worth of overdue spending bills, one of the few areas in which divided government in Washington has been able to deliver results in the Trump era.

Poisonous political fallout from the ongoing impeachment battle isn't helping matters. While it appears likely that lawmakers will prevent a government shutdown next month with a government-wide stopgap spending bill, there has been little progress, if any, on the tricky trade-offs needed to balance Democratic demands for social programs with President Donald Trump's ballooning border wall demands.

Even an expected Senate vote on Thursday to pass a \$209 billion bundle of four bipartisan spending bills isn't regarded as much progress, especially since it will be followed by a Democratic filibuster of a massive Pentagon spending bill.

At issue are the agency appropriations bills that Congress passes each year to keep the government running. A hard-won budget and debt deal this summer produced a top-line framework for the 12 yearly spending bills, but filling in the details is proving difficult.

Democrats say White House demands for \$5 billion for Trump's long-sought U.S.-Mexico border wall have led the GOP-controlled Senate to shortchange Democratic domestic priorities.

They say negotiations can't begin in earnest until spending hikes permitted under the July budget deal are allocated among the 12 appropriations subcommittees more to their liking. Trump is demanding a huge border funding increase that comes mostly at the expense of a major health and education spending bill.

"I am not optimistic," said House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y. "I don't see the Senate taking action that would enable us to have an active negotiation with them. They haven't set the groundwork. And until they figure out the (subcommittee allocations) — although we are having very nice conversations — I don't see progress."

Current stopgap spending authority expires Nov. 21 and another measure will be needed to prevent a shutdown reprising last year's 35-day partial shuttering of the government. All sides want to avert a repeat shutdown, but it can't be entirely ruled out because of the dysfunction and bitterness engulfing Washington these days.

Staff discussions on a new stopgap continuing resolution, or CR in Capitol Hill shorthand, haven't yielded agreement yet. Democrats, including Lowey, have floated the idea of a stopgap CR into February, which would likely punt the budget battle past any Senate impeachment trial.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is pressing for a CR of shorter duration in hopes of wrap-

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ping up the unfinished budget work by Christmas. McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., spoke by telephone on Monday, congressional aides said, in hopes of breaking the logjam.

"I think that McConnell clearly wants to get this done before the end of the year, which is good news," said No. 2 House Democrat Steny Hoyer of Maryland, who also spoke with McConnell. "He doesn't want it to go into next year, nor do I."

But no progress was made at a follow-up staff session on Tuesday that included White House representatives. The White House is playing a strong hand on the border wall since it has begun employing its transfer authorities to shift billions of dollars of Pentagon funding toward wall construction — far more than it has obtained through the regular funding process.

The White House is demanding \$5 billion in appropriations for the wall this budget year — up from \$1.4 billion — and it is also demanding to keep its powers to transfer Pentagon dollars as well — and to get Congress to refill Pentagon military base construction projects tapped last month to pay for up to \$3.6 billion worth of border fencing.

"Completely unproductive," reported a senior Democratic aide who requested anonymity to describe the closed-door session.

For their part, Senate Democrats are refusing to allow the \$700 billion Pentagon bill to advance, protesting the controversial wall funding gimmicks — and holding it back as leverage to counter White House power moves. They filibustered the measure last month and McConnell is forcing a re-vote as soon as Thursday.

"There is such animosity and bitterness and confrontation, it's going to be really difficult to get agreement on anything," said former Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers, R-Ky. "So I worry about whether or not we can even pass a CR."

Fires spare Reagan library but menace homes near Los Angeles

By BRIAN MELLEY and MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — A wind-whipped outbreak of wildfires outside Los Angeles on Wednesday threatened thousands of homes and horse ranches, forced the smoky evacuation of elderly patients in wheelchairs and narrowly bypassed the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, protected in part by a buffer zone chewed by goats.

With California tinder dry and fires burning in both the north and south, the state was at the mercy of strong winds, on high alert for any new flames that could run wild, and weary from intentional blackouts aimed at preventing power lines from sparking more destruction.

The blaze near the Reagan library in Simi Valley was driven by strong Santa Ana winds that are the bane of Southern California in the fall and have historically fanned the most destructive fires in the region.

The cause was not yet determined, but Southern California Edison filed a report with state regulators to say it began near its power lines. Electrical equipment has sparked some of California's worst wildfires in recent years and prompted utilities to resort to precautionary power outages. SoCal Edison had not cut power in the area at the time this fire started.

The library, which holds the presidential archives and includes grounds with the graves of Reagan and his wife, Nancy, was well-equipped when flames surrounded it. It relies on a combination of high-tech defenses such as fireproof doors, sprinklers and an underground vault, as well as a decidedly no-tech measure — hundreds of goats brought in every year to graze on brush and create a firebreak.

An army of firefighters helped protect the hilltop museum, and helicopters hit the flames, leaving some neighbors resentful as they frantically hosed down fires in the surrounding subdivisions and open ranchland.

Armed with just a garden hose and wearing a mask, Beth Rivera watered down the perimeter of her large home to prevent embers from igniting dry grass and trees. Friends helped evacuate 11 horses from the property. Soaring flames were only 30 yards (27 meters) away and blowing toward her house, with no firetrucks in sight.

Animals could be heard shrieking in a barn burning next door on Tierra Rejada Road, where large ranches with riding stables and horse rings line the road. Two horses bolted into the street from the flaming barn,

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trailing a cloud of smoke.

"Oh gosh, this isn't fun," Rivera said. "There isn't a fire unit (here) at the moment because they're busy working on the fire close to the library. This is why I'm very worried. Because I can't ... save my home."

Within minutes, a fire crew arrived to help Rivera and her boyfriend protect their home.

The brush fire broke out before dawn between the cities of Simi Valley and Moorpark north of Los Angeles and grew to 2.5 square miles (6.4 square kilometers), Ventura County officials said. About 7,000 homes, or around 30,000 people, were ordered evacuated, authorities said.

Wind gusts of up to 68 mph (109 kph) were reported, forecasters said. Other spots in Southern California were buffeted by even stronger winds. The gusts knocked over a truck on a freeway.

Another wildfire forced the evacuation of two mobile home parks and a health care facility in Jurupa Valley, 45 miles (72 kilometers) east of Los Angeles, where elderly people were taken out in wheelchairs and gurneys as smoke swirled overhead. The blaze was at least 200 acres in size.

Meanwhile, about 750,000 people statewide remained without power amid efforts to prevent more wildfires.

In wine country north of San Francisco, fire officials reported progress in their battle against a 120-square-mile (310-square-kilometer) blaze in Sonoma County, saying it was 30% contained.

The fire destroyed at least 266 structures, including 133 homes, and threatened 90,000 more, most of them homes, authorities said. Fewer than 6,000 people were still out of their homes after authorities lifted most of the evacuation orders.

Winds topped out at 70 mph (112 kph) north of San Francisco Bay and began to ease early Wednesday, but forecasters said the fire danger would remain high because of continuing breezes and dry air.

In Southern California, fire crews continued making progress in trying to snuff out a wildfire in the celebrity-studded hills of Los Angeles that destroyed a dozen homes on Monday. About 9,000 people, including Arnold Schwarzenegger and LeBron James, were ordered to evacuate and most of those orders were lifted Wednesday.

No deaths have been reported from the recent fires, but toppled trees claimed three lives.

In the battle taking place in the dry hills around Simi Valley, 800 firefighters worked on the ground as helicopters precisely dropped water on the leading edge of the flames and a jet streamed red fire retardant to slow the fire's growth.

Firefighters successfully protected the library, leaving it looking like an island in a soot-black sea. Flames came within about 30 yards (27 meters) of the property, but there was no damage, library spokeswoman Melissa Giller said.

Residents were warned of evacuations when their cellphones blared with emergency messages and police officers went door to door.

"Everything started rolling so fast," said Elena Mishkanian, describing the time from the text to when she heard sirens.

Her family was able to gather only some basics. Her daughter, Megan, 17, took some photos and mementos of trips she had taken. Her son, Troy, 13, netted six pet fish from a tank and put them in pots.

"Fish have feelings!" he said when Megan teased him about it. "Even if they don't make it, at least I know I tried."

As they left the house, police tied yellow caution tape around their front door to show they had left.

Melley reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers John Antczak and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles, and Stefanie Dazio in Thousand Oaks contributed.

California nursing home patients had minutes to flee fire

By AMY TAXIN Associated Press

JURUPA VALLEY, Calif. (AP) — A wildfire pushed by gale-force winds moved with terrifying speed toward a psychiatric nursing care facility Wednesday, leaving caregivers just 15 minutes to evacuate more than

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five dozen residents, many of them elderly and confined to wheelchairs and beds.

They copied residents' paperwork, gathered medications and got everyone into a common room while dialing 911 to ask for a bus and ambulances. Workers then put face masks on the residents and wrapped them in blankets before moving them outside to wait for help.

The smoke was so thick they could hardly see, and the flames that started in hills above the Riverside Heights Healthcare Center drew closer.

"There was one moment when I could see nothing but dark smoke and I was like, 'We're going to die,'" said Qiana McCracken, assistant director of nursing for the facility.

Bone-dry Southern California was buffeted by Santa Ana winds and fires broke out across the region. The one that threatened the nursing care facility started around 10 a.m. in Jurupa Valley, about 45 miles (72 kilometers) east of Los Angeles.

It temporarily shut down a freeway and forced the evacuation of two mobile home parks and an elementary school, as well as the nursing facility.

McCracken said she first learned of the fire from the relative of one of the residents who called to check in. She said she could see smoke on the hillside, but initially didn't think much of it until a sheriff's official came to the door and warned they might need to evacuate.

Fifteen minutes later, the authorities said it was time to go.

McCracken and manager Philip Weinberger said everyone leaped into action. The patients were taken outside and gathered in a wide dirt area across the road. Workers and sheriff's deputies started loading residents into their own cars to take them to an evacuation center, and ambulances and a bus arrived a short time later to get the rest.

"There's nobody who once said, 'It's not my job,'" Weinberger said. "You couldn't see, you couldn't breathe. It was bad for a while."

McCracken said the staff managed to keep calm, and so did residents, through the ordeal. Once all the residents were out of harm's way, she got in her own car and broke into tears before heading out.

Authorities opened a shelter at a local high school where residents from the facility and people from the mobile home parks gathered. Some patients rested on cots in the school gym while nursing facility workers reviewed boxes of paperwork and packages of medication.

No one was injured during the evacuation and the nursing facility was saved by the small army of firefighters who flooded the area to fight the blaze. Only one mobile home was damaged.

Nursing care residents were transferred along with staff to temporary facilities.

"It was a crazy day, but the residents are safe," McCracken said. "And we're safe."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Oct. 31, the 304th day of 2019. There are 61 days left in the year. This is Halloween.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 31, 1941, the Navy destroyer USS Reuben James was torpedoed by a German U-boat off Iceland with the loss of some 100 lives, even though the United States had not yet entered World War II.

On this date:

In 1517, Martin Luther sent his 95 Theses denouncing what he saw as the abuses of the Catholic Church, especially the sale of indulgences, to the Archbishop of Mainz, Germany (by some accounts, Luther also posted the Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg), marking the start of the Protestant Reformation.

In 1926, magician Harry Houdini died in Detroit of peritonitis resulting from a ruptured appendix.

In 1941, work was completed on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, begun in 1927.

In 1959, a U.S. Marine reservist showed up at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to declare he was renouncing his American citizenship so he could live in the Soviet Union. His name: Lee Harvey Oswald.

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In 1964, Theodore C. Freeman, 34, became the first member of NASA's astronaut corps to die when his T-38 jet crashed while approaching Ellington Air Force Base in Houston.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered a halt to all U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, saying he hoped for fruitful peace negotiations.

In 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh (seek) security guards.

In 1994, a Chicago-bound American Eagle ATR-72 crashed in northern Indiana, killing all 68 people aboard.

In 1998, a genetic study was released suggesting President Thomas Jefferson did in fact father at least one child by his slave Sally Hemings.

In 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990, bound from New York to Cairo, crashed off the Massachusetts coast, killing all 217 people aboard.

In 2001, New York hospital worker Kathy T. Nguyen (nwen) died of inhalation anthrax, the fourth person to perish in a spreading wave of bioterrorism.

In 2005, President George W. Bush nominated Judge Samuel Alito (ahl-EE'-toh) to the Supreme Court. Civil rights icon Rosa Parks was honored during a memorial service in Washington, D.C.

Ten years ago: A registered sex offender was arrested in Cleveland after police found six decomposing bodies at his home. (Authorities turned up the bodies of 11 women at the home of Anthony Sowell, who was convicted and sentenced to death in 2011.) The New York Yankees won Game 3 of the World Series, defeating the Philadelphia Phillies 8-5 to give New York a 2-1 Series lead.

Five years ago: Commercial space tourism suffered a huge setback when a prototype passenger rocket, Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo, exploded during a test flight, scattering debris over the Mojave Desert and killing one pilot while seriously injuring the other.

One year ago: President Donald Trump said the number of military troops being deployed to the U.S.-Mexican border could reach 15,000. Huge crowds of fans cheered as the Red Sox rumbled through downtown Boston aboard duck boats to mark the team's fourth World Series championship in the past 15 years. Baseball Hall of Famer Willie McCovey, a star first baseman and outfielder who played for the San Francisco Giants for 19 of his 22 major league seasons, died at the age of 80.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Lee Grant is 94. Former astronaut Michael Collins is 89. Former CBS anchorman Dan Rather is 88. Folk singer Tom Paxton is 82. Actor Ron Rifkin is 81. Actress Sally Kirkland is 78. Actor Brian Doyle-Murray is 74. Actor Stephen Rea is 73. Olympic gold medal long-distance runner Frank Shorter is 72. Actress Deidre Hall is 72. TV show host Jane Pauley is 69. Actor Brian Stokes Mitchell is 62. Movie director Peter Jackson is 58. Rock musician Larry Mullen is 58. Actor Dermot Mulroney is 56. Rock musician Mikkey Dee is 56. Rock singer-musician Johnny Marr is 56. Actor Rob Schneider is 55. Country singer Darryl Worley is 55. Actor-comedian Mike O'Malley is 54. Rap musician Adrock is 53. Songwriter Adam Schlesinger (SHLES'-in-ger) is 52. Rap performer Vanilla Ice (aka Rob Van Winkle) is 52. Rock musician Rogers Stevens (Blind Melon) is 50. Rock singer Linn Berggren (Ace of Base) is 49. Reality TV host Troy Hartman is 48. Gospel singer Smokie Norful is 46. Actress Piper Perabo (PEER'-uh-boh) is 43. Actor Brian Hallisay is 41. Actress Samaira (SAH'-mee-rah) Armstrong is 39. Folk-rock musician Tay Strathairn (Dawes) is 39. Actor Eddie Kaye Thomas is 39. Rock musician Frank Iero (My Chemical Romance) is 38. Actor Justin Chatwin is 37. Actor Scott Clifton is 35. Actress Vanessa Marano is 27. Actress Holly Taylor is 22. Actress Danielle Rose Russell is 20. Actress-singer Willow Smith is 19.

Thought for Today: "Success is a public affair. Failure is a private funeral." — Rosalind Russell, American actress (1911-1976).

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