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Thank You

This special thank you goes to all the people and organizations, who were a part of the Groton Area School District Veteran's Day celebration. A special thanks to Karen Wolter for the beautiful quilt. I will treasure it and use it to keep me warm. Also, thank you to Emma Kutter for the note with words I will cherish always.

Richard E. Helmer, World War II Veteran

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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The Big Send-Off

The Groton Area Volleyball Team had a wail of a send-off Wednesday morning, being escorted by the Groton Police Department and the Groton Fire Department. The bus stopped at the north end of Main Street where the players got off the bus to say their good byes to their parents. The parents then released balloons. (Photos lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



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Thirty-eighth Annual Volleyball Championships Set for November 21-23, 2019

The Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Barnett Arena in Rapid City is the site for the thirty-eighth annual state competition volleyball. Competition will begin on Thursday, November 21st, with opening ceremonies beginning at 1:00 p.m... There will be one session on Friday at 1:00 and Saturday's award session beginning at 9:00 am with the three championship matches to start at 4:00 p.m. Saturday evening.

This year the tournament will be combined with the "B", "A" and "AA" all competing at the same time.

Last year's champions were Class AA –Rapid City Stevens; Class A – Sioux Falls Christian; Class B – Warner. All three teams are back in the tournament this year.

The state meet will be a three session tournament with adult tickets at \$15.00 each and the student ticket at \$10.00 each session or a season ticket may be purchased for \$45 for adult and \$30 for students. More information about the competition can be found on the SDHSAA website: www.sdhsaa.com.

Groton Area will play McCook Central/Montrose at 5:30 p.m. Central Time.

McCook Central is 24-3 and is seeded third in the state tournament. Groton Area is 26-7 and is seeded sixth in the tournament. The main attackers for Groton Area are Nicole Marzahn, averaging 12 kills per match while Eliza Wanner averages 9 kills per match and Indigo Rogers averages six per match. The Fighting Cougars are led by Abigail Van Ruler, a senior at 6-2, averaging 11 kills per match, Jacy Pulse, a 5-7 senior, averaging nine kills per match and Aleah Ries, a 5-6 senior, averaging 7 kills per match.

Both teams average eight ace serves per match. Groton Area has four that are good blockers at the net - Nicole Marzahn, Madeline Flihs, Indigo Rogers and Stella Meier. Van Ruler averages nearly three blocks per match for McCook Central/Montrose.

The matches will be Livestreamed at <https://www.sdpb.org/hsactivities/sports/volleyball/>

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 10, Coyotes 9, Jackelopes 8, Shih Tzus 7, Chipmunks 7, Foxes 7

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 203, Brad Larson 201, Mike Siegler 188

Women's High Games: Darci Spanier 201, 199, Vicki Walter 189, Lori Wiley 179

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 548, Mike Siegler 527, Brad Larson 509

Women's High Series: Darci Spanier 519, Vicki Walter 514, Nicole Kassube 477

Groton Coffee Cup

Team Standings: Biker Chix 31, James Valley 25, Kens 17, Ten Pins 15

High Games: Nancy Radke 173, 162; Sam Bahr 166; Deb Fredrickson 160

High Series: Nancy Radke 494, Sam Bahr 470, Mary Jane Jark 411

Conde National League

Team Standings: Mets 30, Pirates 23½, Giants 21, Cubs 21, Braves 19½, Tigers 17

Men's High Games: Butch Farmen 205, 190, Russ Bethke 203, Larry Frohling 181, Lance Frohling 181.

Men's High Series: Butch Farmen 560, Russ Bethke 538, Larry Frohling 529.

Women's High Games: Mary Larson 201, Vickie Kramp 186, Michelle Johnson 169

Women's High Series: Mary Larson 447, Nancy Radke 446, Joyce Walter 443

East River Deer Hunters Should be Aware of Wet Conditions

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Department is reminding hunters heading out for the East River Deer season to be mindful of the wet conditions that exist across much of eastern South Dakota.

"There are a lot of muddy roads, pastures and fields across the state, but especially in eastern South Dakota," said GFP deputy secretary, Kevin Robling.

"Producers have had a tough year because of the extreme wet conditions, and we are reminding hunters to use good judgement when traveling on wet roads, trails, fields, and pastures. Tearing up land to get to your hunting spot can lead to loss of access for you or other hunters in the future," Robling said.

Robling asked hunters to tread lightly on public lands, too.

"When muddy conditions exist, access roads and trails to our game production areas and other public lands get damaged easily. Please be mindful of other hunters to ensure these designated trails remain open for future use."

GFP officials also shared a few more tips to ensure a successful hunting season:

- If you open a gate, close the gate behind you.
- Never park on the top of a hill or in front of a closed gate. Harvest is still in progress, and producers are moving large equipment.
- Pick up any trash you see, whether it is yours or not.
- Never leave carcasses next to roads and parking areas.
- When field dressing animals, gut piles should be disposed of away from highly visible areas.

For more information on hunting deer in South Dakota, visit: gfp.sd.gov.



Christmas at the Cathedral presents "Light of the World" December 19-22

The 23rd annual Christmas at the Cathedral, the nationally acclaimed Christmas concert, will be performed six times Thursday through Sunday, December 19-22, at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Sioux Falls. This year's all-new production, "Light of the World," features internationally acclaimed tenor, Scott Piper; Disney recording artist, Jackie Stressman; and actor, Joe Obermueller.

"It's a privilege each year to produce a different experience of the Christmas story in the beautiful, sacred Cathedral of St. Joseph," said Mark Conzemius, Producer and Director of Christmas at The Cathedral. "'Light of the World' was inspired by the writings of St. John, expressing God's immense love and the gift of hope that He has for each of us," added Conzemius.

St. John's first-hand perspective of the Messiah and our modern experience is reflected in the inspiring musical compositions and arrangements of Music Director and Conductor, Dan Goeller, who has three new pieces this production. The Christmas at the Cathedral Orchestra and 70-member Choir provide the foundational music elements for the production.

"Our world and each of us are in need of hope," said Conzemius. "Christmas at the Cathedral celebrates this hope. God's light came into the darkness of our world through the birth of the Christ child. God is light. And the darkness will not overcome it."

In addition to being a significant Christmas tradition, proceeds from Christmas at the Cathedral will support endowments for the ongoing care and maintenance of two "beacons of hope" in our community; the Bishop Dudley Hospitality House-providing emergency shelter for the most vulnerable in our midst; and the Cathedral of St. Joseph-one of the region's most significant civic and sacred landmarks. More information and tickets are available at all Sioux Falls Hy-vee Stores (starting Nov. 10), online at www.ccfesd.org or by calling 605.988.3765.

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Today



Decreasing
Clouds and
Blustery then
Sunny

High: 29 °F

Tonight



Clear

Low: 10 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 42 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 26 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 45 °F

Cold Today
...Warmer Weather for the Weekend

Today	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Gusty winds diminishing later this afternoon.	Breezy southerly winds		
Highs: 25-35 F	Highs: 35-45 F	Highs: 40-50 F	Highs: 45-55 F

National Weather Service - Aberdeen, SD
Created: 11/21/2019 5:10 AM

www.weather.gov/abr
US National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
@NWSAberdeen

Published on: 11/21/2019 at 12:11 AM

After a cold day today, the area will see a gradual warming trend through the weekend. Dry conditions are expected as well.

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Today in Weather History

November 21, 1985: Winds gusting to over 40 mph caused blizzard conditions over the western and central parts of South Dakota on the 21st and 22nd. In addition to the existing snow cover, 1-2 inches of new snow fell and when blown by the wind, reduced visibilities to zero at times. Many roads were drifted shut by the blowing and drifting snow in the western part of the state.

November 21, 2003: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches fell from the late afternoon to the late evening hours of the 21st and into the early morning hours on the 22nd. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches in Browns Valley, 2S Ashton, and Britton; 5 inches at Timber Lake, Blunt, 6 SE McIntosh, and Pollock; 6 inches at Clark, McLaughlin, 14 NNE Isabel, 17 WSW Fort Pierre and Miller; 7 inches at Castlewood, 1 W Highmore, and 4 NW Onida; and 8 inches north of Goodwin, at Ree Heights, at Eagle Butte, and near Troy. Thirteen inches of snow fell in Watertown.

1992: The November 21st – 23rd tornado outbreak was the 3rd largest outbreak in recorded history and one of the longest continuous outbreaks ever recorded. There was no break in tornado activity from 1:30 pm on the 21st when the tornadoes started in Texas until 7:30 am on the 23rd when the last tornadoes lifted in North Carolina. On this date, severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes within 70 minutes in the Houston metro area in Texas. At one time, there were three on the ground in Harris County. The strongest, an F4, tracked 20 miles through the eastern suburbs of Houston destroying 200 homes and damaging 1,000 more. In total, 23 tornadoes struck Mississippi and Alabama. An F4 tornado killed 12 people on a 128-mile track through 7 Mississippi counties. The deadliest tornado of 1992, an F4 tornado killed 12 people on a 128-mile path through 7 counties in Mississippi, one of the bodies was blown a quarter mile into a tree.

1798 - A four day storm was in progress in the northeastern U.S. The storm dropped a foot of snow on New York City and New Haven, and as much as three feet in Maine and New Hampshire. The snowstorm ushered in a long and severe winter, in some places the ground remained covered with snow until the following May. (David Ludlum)

1967 - Excessive rains in southern California caused the most severe flooding and the most damaging mud slides in 33 years. Downtown Los Angeles received eight inches of rain, and 14 inches fell in the mountains. (David Ludlum)

1985 - Hurricane Kate made landfall during the evening hours near Mexico Beach, FL. Wind gusts to 100 mph were reported at Cape San Blas FL. It was the latest known hurricane to hit the U.S. so far north. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Squalls in the Lower Great Lakes Region and the Upper Ohio Valley produced 14 inches of snow at Snowshoe WV, and nearly eight inches at Syracuse NY. Eleven cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 21 degrees at Pinson AL, 9 degrees at Syracuse NY, and 8 degrees at Binghamton NY. Gale force winds lash the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast, and the strong northwesterly winds produced wind chill readings as cold as 30 degrees below zero. Winds gusting to 60 mph at Trumansburg NY toppled a chimney onto a nearby truck. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - High winds accompanied rain and snow in the northeastern U.S. Caribou ME received eight inches of snow in six hours, and Fort Kent ME was blanketed with a total of fourteen inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The storm which produced thunderstorms and high winds in the northeastern U.S. the previous day, produced snow and high winds in New England, with blizzard conditions reported in Maine. Winds gusted to 55 mph at Boston MA, and reached 58 mph at Augusta ME, and hurricane force winds were reported off the coast of Maine. Snowfall totals ranged up to 18 inches at Vanceboro ME, with 17 inches at South Lincoln VT. There were thirty-five storm-related injuries in Maine. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 44 °F at 11:54 AM

Low Temp: 34 °F at 12:31 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 7:42 AM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 65° in 1960, 1917

Record Low: -18° in 1964

Average High: 36°F

Average Low: 16°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.53

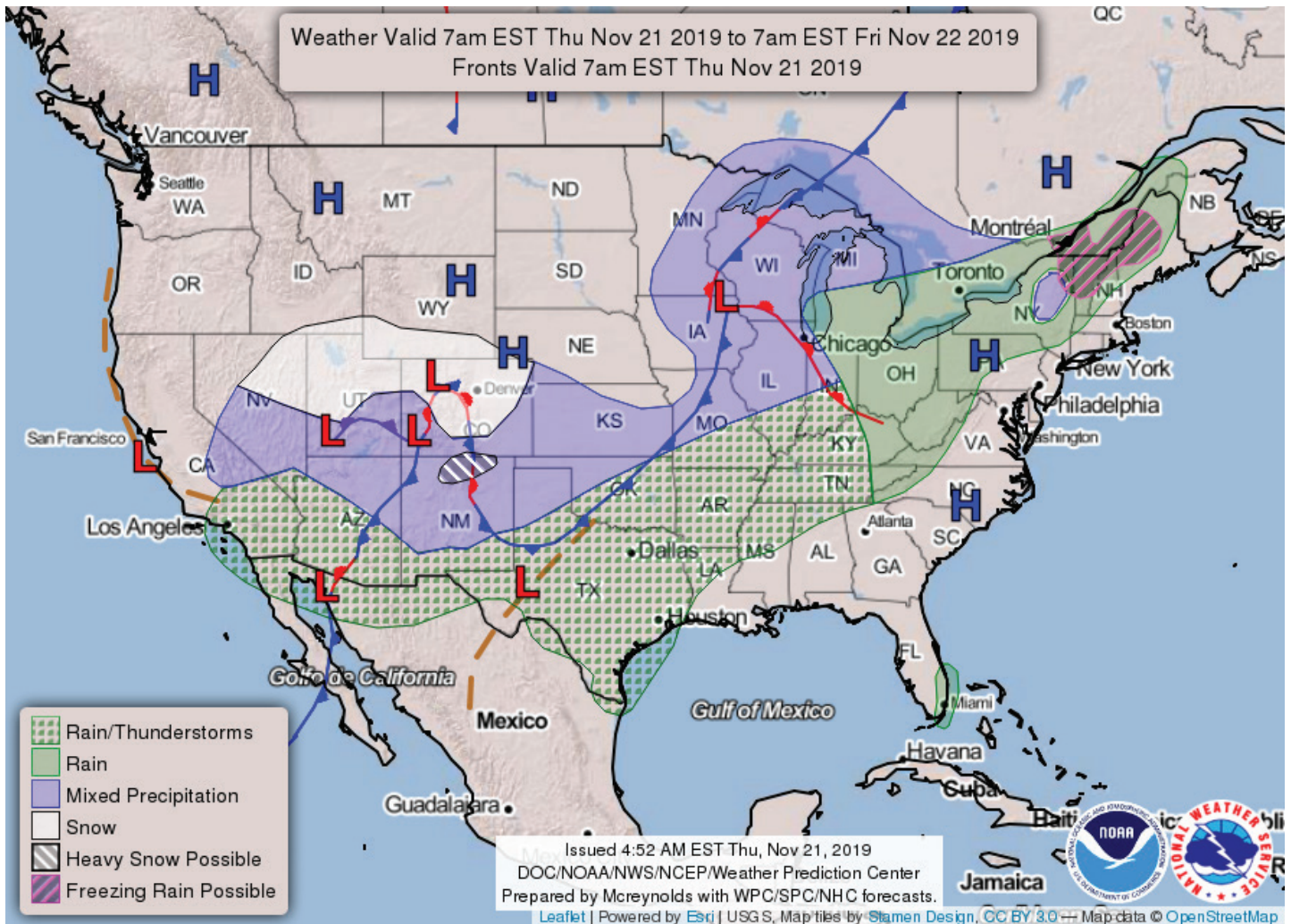
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.38

Average Precip to date: 21.00

Precip Year to Date: 26.95

Sunset Tonight: 4:58 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42 a.m.



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RIGHT IS RIGHT

The games were played, the gifts opened, the food was eaten. Turning to his uncle, Billy said, "Thank you for my birthday present."

"Oh, it was nothing," he said pleasantly.

"Mom and I agree with you," he replied, "but she said I should thank you anyway."

An attitude of gratitude is very important. A mind that is alert to and aware of the gifts and kind acts of others is an invaluable asset to anyone. And a heart that is quick to express a word of "thanks" for any expression of thoughtfulness is deeply appreciated by others. Everyone wants to know that they are appreciated for what they do for others!

Too often as we make our way through life we focus on our worries and woes rather than God's blessings that come to us through others. We seem to harbor problems and losses deep within us and tend to lose sight of God's gracious and generous gifts.

Although it is normal and natural to bring our needs and necessities to God, we must never lose sight of our obligation to express our gratitude to Him for everything that we have – big or little. If we truly love and worship Him, our lives will be one continuous celebration of thanksgiving. What can you thank Him for right now?

Prayer: Father, we ask that You will open our eyes to all of the gifts that You constantly lavish upon us. Make us aware of all that You constantly do for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12/2019 St. John's Lutheran Luncheon
- 09/20/2019 Presbyterian Luncheon
- 09/28/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 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)

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Lotto America

01-04-29-46-47, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(one, four, twenty-nine, forty-six, forty-seven; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$5.11 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$208 million

Powerball

07-15-39-40-57, Powerball: 12, Power Play: 2

(seven, fifteen, thirty-nine, forty, fifty-seven; Powerball: twelve; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$80 million

Affidavit: Woman was strapped into seat of submerged truck

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — An American Indian woman whose body was found in a submerged truck in a North Dakota lake was strapped into the passenger side with a seatbelt around her waist, according to court documents released Wednesday.

Olivia Lone Bear, 32, was reported missing to the Three Affiliated Tribes Police Department on Oct. 27, 2017. A sonar-equipped boat found the truck July 31, 2018, with Lone Bear's body inside. No obvious injuries were found on her body, and an autopsy failed to determine the cause of death.

Three search warrants were unsealed Wednesday after U.S. Attorney Drew Wrigley of North Dakota and other federal officials traveled to New Town to update Olivia Lone Bear's family members on the investigation into her death.

The FBI also announced a reward of up to \$10,000 for information on her disappearance.

In addition to revealing that Lone Bear was strapped in on the passenger side, one affidavit said a witness told investigators that one of the last text messages he received from her said she had been to a bonfire and was going "mudding" — a practice of off-road driving usually conducted near rivers or swamps. The next message from Lone Bear read "Good Bye!"

None of the people interviewed by investigators identified anyone who went to a bonfire or went "mudding" with Lone Bear, according to the affidavit.

Earlier this summer, family and tribal members complained about the lack of information in the case. Matt Lone Bear, her brother, told the Bismarck Tribune that the meeting was "very professional and sincere."

"Considering we went from not knowing anything to this, I think it's definitely a big step in the right direction," he said.

"Olivia's family and members of her community want to know what happened to her and so do we," Minneapolis FBI Special Agent in Charge Jill Sanborn said in a statement.

Native Americans and others have sought to draw attention to violence against Native American women, who have been victimized at high rates for decades. Congress is considering an act that calls for the Justice Department to review how law enforcement agencies respond to cases of missing and slain Native Americans.

Savanna's Act is named for 22-year-old Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, who went missing while pregnant in 2017. Her body was found in a North Dakota river.

Lawmakers say they'll try again on hemp in 2020

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Some South Dakota lawmakers said Wednesday that they're working on a bill for the 2020 legislative session that would pave the way for hemp to be grown in the state, putting them on a likely collision course with Gov. Kristi Noem.

Noem vetoed such legislation in March. Though the House successfully voted to override, lawmakers fell two votes short in the Senate. Both chambers are controlled by Republicans; Noem is also a Republican.

Rep. Oren Lesmeister, a Democrat from Parade, said he and a bipartisan group of lawmakers are working to craft a bill similar to the one vetoed. He said he's "very confident" it would draw enough support to override another veto.

Supporters, in the meantime, are working to educate their colleagues on hemp and its uses.

"They see the difference between industrial hemp and marijuana," Lesmeister said.

Sen. Rocky Blare, a Republican from Ideal who opposed the bill last year, said federal regulations for industrial hemp that the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced last month helped convince him of the crop's potential viability. But he said he'll wait to see the bill before committing.

"If it's good for farmers and good for South Dakota, then I'm absolutely for it," he added.

South Dakota, Mississippi and Idaho are the only states that don't allow hemp cultivation. Two Native American tribes in South Dakota have applied to the federal government for permits to grow industrial hemp.

Noem has argued that legalizing hemp is akin to legalizing marijuana because it is difficult for police officers to tell the difference. Hemp is allowed under federal law when it has less than 0.3% of THC, the component in marijuana that produces a high.

"Governor Noem continues to have conversations with legislators about industrial hemp and the impact legalization could have on public safety and law enforcement's ability to enforce drug laws," Noem's spokeswoman, Kristin Wileman, said Wednesday in a written statement.

Blare isn't persuaded by Noem's argument. Though he staunchly opposes legalizing marijuana, he said hemp is different. Blare said a bill would need to regulate testing and transporting hemp to get his support, as well as make sure that farmers are responsible to keep their hemp crops under the federal limit for THC.

Noem has also argued it would cost too much and strain law enforcement to test hemp for THC levels.

Nearly all the lawmakers agreed that if hemp crops were allowed in South Dakota, farmers would have to proceed with caution in an unpredictable new market.

Senate Majority Whip Josh Klumb said hemp won't be "a golden egg that saves everybody's farm." But the Mount Vernon Republican supports allowing it and thinks South Dakota farmers are missing out on opportunities the longer the state waits.

Hemp came up this week on a conference call hosted by U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, with a woman asking about hemp's potential in textiles. That prompted Rounds to post an old photo on Facebook of his father working in a hemp field in Beadle County — a photo he said convinced him of its potential.

Rounds said South Dakotans grew hemp during World War II to be used for ropes on Navy boats.

"I personally don't see a problem with at least trying it," the senator said.

In Minnesota, everyone's aboard the Gophers boat

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — At 73, Allan Vergin has been waiting a long time for his Golden Gophers to make it to a meaningful bowl game. When Minnesota beat Penn State earlier this month — giving the Gophers their first 9-0 record since 1904 — tears rolled down Vergin's face as he told a friend: "I'm smelling roses!"

While last week's tight loss to Iowa took a tiny bit of bloom off the team's Rose Bowl hopes, Vergin and the rest of a long-beleaguered fan base are enjoying a red-hot revival of their 11th-ranked Gophers under coach P.J. Fleck.

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"I think this coach has brought a group of guys together as a team that's stronger than I've ever seen," Vergin said, choking up again as he recounted the high of the Penn State win, which came at home. "These are a bunch of kids that love each other. And I think they love the coach and the coach loves them, and that makes it even more emotional."

Minnesota's stirring run has some wondering if the Gophers could be in the mix for the College Football Playoff, which ranks them at No. 10. The Gophers would need to win the rest of their games — including an expected Big Ten championship game against No. 2 Ohio State — to have any chance to make the CFP field of four. A trip to the Rose Bowl would be the next best thing.

Fans were euphoric after the Gophers beat Penn State 31-26 in Minnesota's first win over a top-five team in 20 years, rushing the field in a blissful sea of maroon. One fan took a rally towel to place at her father's gravesite after the win. Online traffic on a fan website doubled, online sales of Gophers merchandise picked up and fans started booking hotel rooms in Pasadena (just in case) and planning trips to the Big Ten title game in Indianapolis next month.

"Gopher fans have gone through the apathy phase before and right now it's a complete polar opposite," said Nadine Babu, co-owner of GopherHole.com, a website for fans. Despite Minnesota's 23-19 loss to Iowa, she said, Fleck has changed fans' mindset to believe in winning.

"People are just coming out of the woodwork and rowing the boat," Babu said.

The Gophers have a one-game lead over Wisconsin in the Big Ten West and control their own destiny, with games Saturday at Northwestern and Nov. 30 at home against the rival Badgers.

Many bowl projections put the Gophers in the Rose Bowl if they win the West, and plenty of fans are daring to dream of returning for the first time since 1962.

Denny Schulstad, a senior in high school at the time, didn't attend that one. He thought he would have another chance once he went to Minnesota. Instead, it's been more than 50 years of mediocrity, interspersed with the occasional trip to also-ran bowls. The 75-year-old Schulstad has been a super fan through it all (Goldy Gopher attended his 50th wedding anniversary this year, and he has a five-foot tall statue of the mascot in his yard). This year, he said, has been a marvelous ride.

"The stars have lined up just right," he said.

Aaron Richards, a 36-year-old fan who grew up watching the Gophers with his family, said this is the season he has waited for.

"For years, all I have wanted is for Minnesota to be relevant. I have wanted to go into a season assuming we would make a bowl — thinking we have a chance to pull off an upset and thinking there's no game on our schedule that is an automatic loss. It has been a long time since we have been able to say that," he said.

"This is a magical season," Richards added. "I hope that this is the new narrative."

Fleck is getting much of the credit.

Plucked from Western Michigan after four years capped by a 13-1 season in 2016, Fleck brought his "Row the Boat" mantra and rah-rah attitude to Minneapolis, where some fans rolled their eyes as he went 5-7 and 7-6 his first two seasons. An 8-0 start this year made critics harder to find, and Minnesota just a couple weeks ago gave him a seven-year, \$33.25 million extension.

Wendy Bauman, a senior, said the excitement on campus has been visible.

"It's cool to see how the culture has changed on campus to being a place that wasn't completely supportive of the football program to now, this year especially ... everyone is so pumped and excited to see what is going to happen with the rest of the season," Bauman said.

Fleck has been talking about creating "some type of dynasty ... some type of cultural sustainability," and there's some truth in that. This is, after all, a market where pigskin futility is a familiar rite of fall and winter. The NFL's Vikings, as anyone around here knows, have made it to four Super Bowls and won none.

Mark Rosen, a longtime TV sports anchor in the Twin Cities, noted the Penn State victory wasn't assured until the Gophers intercepted a pass in their end zone.

"Minnesota fans are going, 'Here's Charlie Brown and Lucy. Here we go again, she's going to pull the

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football away," he said. Like Fleck, he said the key now is delivering more seasons like this one. "The story hasn't been completed yet," he said.

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

Pickup rollover kills 2 teens, hurts another in South Dakota

KENNEBEC, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say two teenagers were killed and another seriously hurt when their pickup rolled in central South Dakota.

The state Department of Public Safety says the crash happened around 4:30 a.m. Tuesday north of Kennebec.

The pickup was northbound on South Dakota Highway 273 when it went off the road and rolled in the ditch.

All three teens were thrown from the vehicle. The 18-year-old man who was driving and a 17-year-old male passenger died at the scene. An 18-year-old man who also was a passenger was flown to a Sioux Falls hospital with serious injuries. He is expected to survive.

The three were the only ones in the pickup. Their names have not been released. The Highway Patrol is investigating.

Center told to stop cultural sage burning at Rapid City mall

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City mall has banned a Native American cultural practice following health complaints.

Rushmore Mall security recently gave the I Am Legacy youth outreach center a letter saying it could no longer burn sage because it was jeopardizing people's health.

The center's founder, Erik Bringswhite, calls the order "a bit hurtful" and says they didn't mean to harm anyone by burning about a nickel-sized amount of sage twice a day.

KOTA-TV reports the mall's general manager Sandy Brockhouse says the burning smell has sickened some people. Both parties verbally agreed to sage burning before the center moved in, but only when there is proper ventilation. And so far, that ventilation system has not been installed. Brockhouse says the center could burn it outside.

Information from: KOTA-TV, <http://www.kotatv.com>

Genworth Cost of Care Survey 2019: In-Home Care Costs Rising Sharply in South Dakota

RICHMOND, Va., Nov. 20, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- In-home care costs in South Dakota rose sharply year over year, making it one of the top five most expensive states in the nation for care at home – the place most people prefer to stay as they grow older¹.

In South Dakota, the cost of homemaker services, which includes assistance with "hands-off" tasks such as cooking, cleaning and running errands, increased 16.67 percent during the last 12 months to \$64,064 for 44 hours/week for 52 weeks. The cost of a home health aide, which includes "hands-on" personal assistance with activities such as bathing, dressing and eating, increased 12 percent, to \$64,064 for the same amount of time.

This year's Cost of Care Survey findings show that the national median annual cost of in-home care is rising sharply compared with the costs of assisted living and nursing home care, which are stabilizing. Nationally, the cost of homemaker services rose almost four times as fast as the annual median cost of a nursing home.

"Aging in place has always been a popular choice, but now the costs of that care are really starting to reflect the mismatch between the supply of care professionals and demand for their services as the

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population ages," said Gordon Saunders, Genworth Senior Brand Marketing Manager who manages the Cost of Care Survey. "The ever-increasing cost of long term care, even for care at home, makes it vitally important that individuals and families start planning for these costs well in advance of needing care."

Annual Median Cost of Long Term Care Support Services for South Dakota

	South Dakota	National			
Care Category	2019 Annual Cost	Change Since 20187	State Rank (High/Low)8	2019 Annual Cost	Change Since 20187
Homemaker Services	\$64,0643	16.67%	#4	\$51,4803	7.14%
Home Health Aide	\$64,0643	12.00%	#8	\$52,6243	4.55%
Adult Day Health Care	\$29,1204	57.75%	#5	\$19,5004	4.17%
Assisted Living Facilities2	\$42,0005	0.00%	#43	\$48,6125	1.28%
Nursing Home Semi-Private Room	\$82,1256	3.45%	#38	\$90,1556	0.96%
Nursing Home Private Room	\$86,3236	1.72%	#40	\$102,2006	1.82%

1AARP, 2018 Home and Community Preferences Survey: A National Survey of Adults Age 18-Plus, ©August 2018, <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/community/info-2018/2018-home-community-preference.html>

2-8Genworth Cost of Care Survey 2019, Conducted by CareScout®. Represents the Year over Year growth rate based on Genworth Cost of Care Surveys conducted from 2018 to 2019. The rate can be influenced by a number of factors such as random variation in samples, different sample sizes, and new surveyed providers.

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Why In-Home Care Costs Are Rising In-home care providers consulted by Genworth point to several factors⁹ that are driving up the cost of in-home care:

The shortage of skilled workers – not enough care professionals to meet the increasing demand for in-home care – compounded by a tight labor marketThe costs of complying with the new mandates in local, state and federal certifications and regulations, including revised minimum wage and overtime laws in some statesThe shift in post-acute Medicare reimbursement, which is spurring hospitals to discharge patients sooner and with greater care needs.Long Term Care Planning Tools Genworth offers its annual cost of Care Survey and award-winning interactive website to help individuals and their families educate themselves about the costs of care so that they can begin thinking about who will care for them if they should no longer be able to care for themselves and how they will pay for that care.

Genworth's Cost of Care Calculator allows online visitors to look up and compare the cost of care in locations all across the country and project those costs up to 50 years into the future. In addition to the calculator, Genworth's website contains long term care planning tools, practical information on topics such as understanding Medicare and Medicaid, conversation starters, impairment simulations, options for financing long term care and videos of real families sharing their long term care stories.

"In the absence of planning, long term care decisions are often driven by crises, such as when a parent is discharged from the hospital and can no longer manage on their own," said Saunders. "That's often when families realize they can't afford the care their loved one needs. We hope these resources will encourage families to start these conversations well before long term care is needed so that their loved ones can receive the best care and live life on their own terms as they grow older. The upcoming holidays are a great time to begin that conversation."

About Genworth's 2019 Cost of Care Survey Genworth's annual Cost of Care Survey, one of the most comprehensive studies of its kind, contacted 53,901 long term care providers nationwide to complete 15,178 surveys for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult day health facilities and in-home care providers. The survey includes 441 regions based on the Metropolitan Statistical Areas, defined by the Office of Management and Budget, and include approximately 85 percent of the U.S. population.

CareScout®, part of the Genworth Financial family of companies, has conducted the survey since 2004. Located in Waltham, Massachusetts, CareScout has specialized in helping families find long term care providers nationwide since 1997.

⁹ Online discussions with long term care providers across all care settings in key geographical locations, conducted for the 15th anniversary of Genworth's Cost of Care Survey by J&K Solutions, LLC, September 2018.

About Genworth Financial Genworth Financial, Inc.is a Fortune 500 insurance holding company committed to helping families achieve the dream of homeownership and address the financial challenges of aging through its leadership positions in mortgage insurance and long term care insurance. Headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, Genworth traces its roots back to 1871 and became a public company in 2004. For more information, visit genworth.com.

From time to time, Genworth releases important information via postings on its corporate website. Accordingly, investors and other interested parties are encouraged to enroll to receive automatic email alerts and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds regarding new postings. Enrollment information is found under the "Investors" section of genworth.com. From time to time, Genworth's publicly traded subsidiaries, Genworth MI Canada Inc. and Genworth Mortgage Insurance Australia Limited, separately release financial and other information about their operations. This information can be found at <http://genworth.ca> and <http://www.genworth.com.au>

Table Footnotes:

2 Referred to as Residential Care facilities in California 3 Based on 44 hours per week by 52 weeks 4 Based on 5 days per week by 52 weeks 5 Based on 12 months of care, private, one bedroom 6 Based on 365 days of care 7 Based on 2018 and 2019 Annual Percentage Change 8 Ranking based on the highest to lowest cost per state for each care category

View original content: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/genworth-cost-of-care-survey-2019-in-home-care-costs-rising-sharply-in-south-dakota-300961853.html>

SOURCE Genworth Financial, Inc.

FBI investigates reservation crash that killed 2

WANBLEE, S.D. (AP) — The FBI is investigating a fatal crash involving an Oglala Sioux tribal police officer on the reservation.

Oglala officials say the officer was responding to a 911 call about gunfire when he crashed into a van on Highway 44 near Wanblee Oct. 25, killing the driver and a passenger.

Officials have not named the officer or the victims. But, relatives say 7-year-old Emily Rain White and her aunt, 41-year-old Raquel Yankton-Reinhart, were killed. Three other passengers received injuries ranging from minor to severe.

FBI spokesman Kevin Smith tells the Rapid City Journal tribal police usually investigate crashes on the reservation. But since an officer was involved, the FBI is handling the case and will determine whether any crime was committed. The state Highway Patrol will investigate what caused it.

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

Key witnesses will cap intense week in impeachment inquiry

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House impeachment investigators will hear on Thursday from two key witnesses who grew alarmed by how President Donald Trump and others in his orbit were conducting foreign policy in Ukraine, capping an intense week in the historic inquiry.

David Holmes, a political counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, says he was having lunch with Ambassador Gordon Sondland this summer when he heard Trump on the phone asking the envoy about the investigations he wanted from the Ukraine president. The colorful exchange was like nothing he had ever seen, Holmes said in an earlier closed-door deposition.

Fiona Hill said her National Security Council boss, John Bolton, cut short a meeting with visiting Ukrainians at the White House when Sondland started asking them about "investigations."

The two witnesses set to appear Thursday are the last scheduled for public hearings in an inquiry that brought hours of testimony from a roster of current and former U.S. government officials defying Trump's orders not to appear.

The impeachment inquiry focuses on allegations that Trump sought investigations of former Vice President Joe Biden and his son — and the discredited idea that Ukraine rather than Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election — in return for the badly needed military aid and a White House visit the new Ukrainian president wanted to show his backing from the West.

Those testifying publicly this week previously appeared for private depositions, most having received subpoenas compelling their testimony.

Holmes has told investigators the call he overheard "was so remarkable that I remember it vividly."

He said he heard Trump ask, "So he's going to do the investigation?" According to Holmes, Sondland replied that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "will, quote, 'do anything you ask him to.'"

Hill said Bolton told her he didn't want to be involved in any "drug deal" Sondland and Trump's acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney were cooking up over the Ukrainian investigations Trump wanted.

Sondland, a wealthy hotelier and donor to Trump's inauguration, appeared before lawmakers Wednesday in a marathon session.

He declared that Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani explicitly sought a "quid pro quo" with Ukraine, leveraging an Oval Office visit for political investigations of Democrats. But he also came to believe the trade involved much more.

Sondland testified it was his understanding the president was holding up nearly \$400 million in military aid, which Ukraine badly needs with an aggressive Russia on its border, in exchange for the country's

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announcement of the investigations.

Sondland conceded that Trump never told him directly the security assistance was blocked for the probes, a gap in his account that Republicans and the White House seized on as evidence the president did nothing wrong. But the ambassador said his dealings with Giuliani, as well as administration officials, left him with the clear understanding of what was at stake.

"Was there a 'quid pro quo'?" Sondland testified in opening remarks. "With regard to the requested White House call and White House meeting, the answer is yes."

The rest, he said, was obvious: "Two plus two equals four."

Later Wednesday, another witness undercut a main Republican argument — that Ukraine didn't even realize the money was being held up. The Defense Department's Laura Cooper testified that Ukrainian officials started asking about it on July 25, which was the day of Trump's phone call with Zelenskyy, when he first asked for a "favor."

Sondland was the most highly anticipated witness in the House's impeachment inquiry into the 45th president of the United States.

In often-stunning testimony, he painted a picture of a Ukraine pressure campaign that was prompted by Trump himself, orchestrated by Giuliani and well-known to other senior officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Sondland said he raised his concerns about a quid pro quo for military aid with Vice President Mike Pence — a conversation Pence said he didn't recall.

However, Sondland said: "Everyone was in the loop. It was no secret."

The ambassador said he and Trump spoke directly about desired investigations, including a colorful cellphone call this summer overheard by others at a restaurant in Kyiv.

Trump himself insists daily that he did nothing wrong and the Democrats are just trying to drum him out of office.

As the hearing proceeded, he spoke to reporters outside the White House. Reading from notes written with a black marker, Trump quoted Sondland quoting Trump to say the president wanted nothing from the Ukrainians and did not seek a quid pro quo. He also distanced himself from his hand-picked ambassador, saying he didn't know him "very well."

Trump concluded, "It's all over" for the impeachment proceedings.

In Moscow on Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was pleased that the "political battles" in Washington had overtaken the Russia allegations, which are supported by the U.S. intelligence agencies.

"Thank God," Putin said, "no one is accusing us of interfering in the U.S. elections anymore. Now they're accusing Ukraine."

Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Laurie Kellman, Zeke Miller, Matthew Daly and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

Takeaways from the 5th Democratic 2020 presidential debate

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI** and **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats spent more time making the case for their ability to beat President Donald Trump than trying to defeat each other in their fifth debate.

Civil in tone, mostly cautious in approach, the forum on Wednesday did little to reorder the field and may have given encouragement to two new entrants into the race, Mike Bloomberg and Deval Patrick.

Key takeaways:

IMPEACHMENT CLOUD HOVERS

The impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump took up much of the oxygen early in the debate.

The questions about impeachment did little to create much separation in a field that universally condemns the Republican president.

The candidates tried mightily to pivot to their agenda. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren talked about how a major Trump donor became the ambassador at the heart of the Ukraine scandal and reiter-

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ated her vow to not award ambassadorships to donors. Former Vice President Joe Biden tried to tout the investigation as a measure of how much Trump fears his candidacy.

Impeachment is potentially perilous to the Democratic candidates for two reasons. A Senate trial may trap a good chunk of the field in Washington just as early states vote in February. It also highlights a challenge for Democrats since Trump entered the presidential race in 2015 — shifting the conversation from Trump's serial controversies to their own agenda.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders warned, "We cannot simply be consumed by Donald Trump, because if you are you're going to lose the election."

OBAMA COALITION

Perhaps more than in any debate so far, Democrats explicitly acknowledged the importance of black and other minority voters.

California Sen. Kamala Harris said repeatedly that Democrats must reassemble "the Obama coalition" to defeat Trump. Harris, one of three black candidates running for the nomination, highlighted black women especially, arguing that her experiences make her an ideal nominee.

Another black candidate, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, added: "I've had a lot of experience with black voters. ... I've been one since I was 18."

Neither Booker nor Harris, though, has been able to parlay life experiences into strong support in the primary, in no small part because of Biden's strong standing in the black community.

Biden's standing is also a barrier to other white candidates, including South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, who is surging in overwhelmingly white Iowa but struggling badly with black voters in Southern states like South Carolina that have proven critical to previous Democratic nominees.

Buttigieg acknowledged as much, saying he welcomes "the challenge of connecting with black voters in America who don't yet know me."

The exchanges show that candidates seemingly accept the proposition that the eventual nominee will have to put together a racially diverse coalition to win, and that those whose bases remain overwhelmingly white (or just too small altogether) aren't likely to be the nominee.

CLIMATE CRISIS GETS AIR

The climate crisis, which Democratic voters cite as a top concern, finally gained at least some attention.

There were flashes of the debate Wednesday night, as billionaire environmental activist Tom Steyer swiped at Biden by suggesting the former vice president wants an inadequate, piecemeal approach to the crisis. Biden hit right back, reminding Steyer that he sponsored climate legislation as a senator in the 1980s while Steyer built his fortune in part on investments in coal.

Buttigieg turned a question about the effects of Trump's policies on farmers into a call for the U.S. agriculture sector to become a key piece of an emissions-free economy.

But those details seem less important than the overall exchange — or lack thereof. Perhaps it's the complexities of the policies involved. Or perhaps it's just the politics. Whatever the case, the remaining field simply doesn't seem comfortable or willing to push climate policy to the forefront, and debate moderators don't either.

HEALTH CARE GROUNDHOG DAY

Before every debate, Democratic presidential campaigns aides lay out nuanced, focused arguments their candidates surely will make on the stage. And every debate seems to evolve quickly into an argument over health care.

So it was again. Within minutes of the start, Warren found herself on the defensive as she explained she still supports a single-payer government run insurance system — "Medicare for All" — despite her recent modified proposal to get there in phases. Not to be outdone, Sanders reminded people that he's the original Senate sponsor of the "Medicare for All" bill that animates progressives. "I wrote the damn

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bill," he quipped. Again.

Biden jumped in to remind his more liberal rivals that their ideas would not pass in Congress. The former vice president touted his commitment to adding a government insurance plan to existing Affordable Care Act exchanges that now sell private insurance policies.

The debate highlights a fundamental tension for candidates: Democratic voters identify health care as their top domestic policy concern, but they also tell pollsters their top political priority in the primary campaign is finding a nominee who can defeat Trump.

The top contenders did nothing to settle the argument Wednesday, instead offering evidence that the ideological tug-of-war will remain until someone wins enough delegates to claim the nomination.

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ...

The debate was so genial that some of the most memorable moments were the candidates' well-rehearsed jokes.

Asked what he'd say to Russian President Vladimir Putin if he's elected to the White House, technology entrepreneur Andrew Yang said his first words would be, "Sorry I beat your guy."

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar drew laughs for an often-repeated anecdote about how she set a record by raising \$17,000 from ex-boyfriends during her first campaign. She also pushed back at fears of a female candidacy by saying, "If you think a woman can't beat Donald Trump, Nancy Pelosi does it every day."

Booker, criticizing Biden for not agreeing to legalize marijuana, said, "I thought you might have been high when you said it."

And Harris may have issued the zinger of the night at the president when discussing his nuclear negotiations with North Korea: "Donald Trump got punked."

GABBARD AS GADFLY

Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard has carved out a distinctive role during the Democratic debates — reliable gadfly.

On Wednesday she kept sniping at her own party, standing by her comments last month that its last presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, is the "personification of the rot that has sickened the Democratic Party for so long."

Asked to elaborate, Gabbard said Democrats are "no longer the party that is of, by and for the people, it is a party that continues to be influenced by the foreign policy establishment in Washington, by the military-industrial complex."

Gabbard's fondness for slamming Democrats has led some in the party to fear she's laying the groundwork for a third-party run, something the congresswoman denies. Her criticism Wednesday drew a sharp riposte from Harris, who said Gabbard had been on Fox News "full-time" during President Barack Obama's administration and noting she met with Trump after the president's election.

Gabbard dismissively replied that Harris' response "only makes me guess that she as president will continue the status quo." She later tangled with Buttigieg, contending he had supported sending U.S. troops to Mexico, a charge that reduced him to disbelieving chuckles.

Gabbard made the stage due to the burst of attention she got after getting into her fight with Clinton. Wednesday's exchange showed how she can easily stay before the cameras while criticizing her own party.

The Trump campaign was quick to embrace the fight, tweeting out Gabbard's slamming of her party.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

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. KEY WITNESSES CAP INTENSE WEEK IN IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY

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David Holmes and Fiona Hill are expected to recount how they grew alarmed by how Trump and others in his orbit were conducting foreign policy in Ukraine.

2. ON UKRAINE'S BLEAK FRONT LINE, US AID SAVES LIVES AND MORALE

Troops fighting Kremlin-backed separatists say they were nervous that the U.S. was turning its back on them when the Trump administration held up \$400 million in military assistance.

3. WHAT DEMOCRATS SPARRED OVER

Ten presidential hopefuls in Atlanta debated the future of health care in America, racial inequality and their ability to build a winning coalition to take on Trump next year.

4. CATHOLIC CHURCH REFORMS COME UP SHORT

An AP investigation finds independent boards made up of lay people in each diocese undermined victims' claims of sexual abuse, avoid payouts and shield pedophile priests.

5. FEAR, TURMOIL IN LEBANON AS FINANCIAL CRISIS WORSENS

Banks are severely limiting withdrawals of hard currency, and Lebanese say they don't know how they'll pay everything from tuitions to insurance and loans all made in dollars.

6. 'UPROOT THIS EVIL'

Pope Francis calls for women and children to be protected from exploitation, abuse and enslavement as he continues his mission in Thailand.

7. HISTORIC DROUGHT DEVASTATES SOUTHERN AFRICA

More than 11 million people now face crisis levels of food insecurity, the U.N. says, and many farmers are struggling just to keep people and animals alive.

8. PRINCE ANDREW URGED TO COME FORWARD

Gloria Allred, a lawyer for the victims of sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, says the British royal should speak to U.S. investigators about what he knew of the convicted pedophile.

9. 'IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD'

In western Pennsylvania, where Fred Rogers' actual neighbors were, the ripples he left behind reveal a strong sense of faith in every sense of the word.

10. SPURS EXPERIENCE RARE LOSING STREAK

San Antonio, a five-time NBA champion, is on a 7-game losing streak — the team's longest since Gregg Popovich's first season as coach, more than 20 years ago.

AP: Catholic Church boards reviewing sex abuse fail victims

REESE DUNKLIN, MATT SEDENSKY and MITCH WEISS Associated Press

Facing thousands of cases of clergy sex abuse, U.S. Catholic leaders addressed their greatest crisis in the modern era with a promised reform: Mandatory review boards.

These independent panels with lay people in each diocese would review allegations fairly and kindly. And they would help bishops ensure that no abusive priests stayed in ministry.

But almost two decades later, an Associated Press investigation of review boards across the country shows they have broadly failed to uphold these commitments. Instead, review boards appointed by bishops and operating in secrecy have routinely undermined sex abuse claims from victims, shielded accused priests and helped the church avoid payouts.

The AP also found dozens of cases in which review boards rejected complaints from survivors, only to have them later validated by secular authorities. In a few instances, board members were themselves clergy accused of sexual misconduct. And many abuse survivors told the AP they faced hostility and humiliation from boards.

When a victim in Florida went before a board, a church defense attorney there grilled him about his abuse until he wept. When another man in Ohio braced to tell a panel of strangers how a priest had raped him, one of them, to his disbelief, was knitting a pink sweater. And when a terrified woman in Iowa told her story of abuse, one member was asleep; the board's finding against her was later thrown into doubt by a court ruling in her favor.

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The AP checked all the roughly 180 dioceses in the U.S. for information, reviewed thousands of pages of church and court records and interviewed more than 75 abuse survivors, board members and others to uncover a tainted process where the church hierarchy holds the reins of power at every stage.

Bishops have appointed church defense attorneys and top aides to boards. Bishops choose which cases go to the board, what evidence members see and what criteria is used to decide if an allegation is "substantiated" or "credible." And sometimes, the AP found, even where boards did find cases credible, bishops still sided with the priest and ignored the findings.

"It's a fraud. It's a sham. It's a cover-up," said David Lasher, 56, the owner of a furniture design company who told the review board in St. Petersburg, Florida, in April about his sexual abuse by a priest. "There's no one on the board that cares for the victim...it's all about protecting the church."

The board ruled against Lasher, and the diocese stopped paying for his counseling. AP does not typically name sex abuse victims, but Lasher and others opted to be identified.

Several bishops contacted by the AP, including St. Petersburg's Gregory Parkes, did not respond to requests for comment. Some referred the AP to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which also did not respond to interview requests. Others, such as Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, said that while improvements are possible, review boards are living up to the promises of the reforms mandated in 2002.

"They are critical to regaining the trust and confidence of our people, who rightly believe in increased lay involvement in such matters," said Lori, who served on the conference's sex abuse committee when the reforms were passed.

The Baltimore archdiocese names its board members, which, Lori said, "inspires confidence in the process," and it does not include high-level church officials. An annual report that the board produced this year at Lori's direction didn't say how members ruled, but noted that in 11 cases, one priest was removed and 10 others were already disciplined or deceased. The victims were offered counseling.

"Diocesan Review Boards have come a long way," added Lafayette, Indiana, Bishop Timothy Doherty, who has been serving as head of the conference's child protection committee. "Our level of professionalism is up tremendously."

However, at least a dozen reports by government investigators and outside consultants with access to church documents have questioned the independence of boards, their treatment of victims or their thoroughness. These include at least seven grand jury and state attorney general reports.

In Illinois, for example, where the attorney general's probe remains under way, investigators have turned up evidence that dioceses scoured victims' personal lives to discredit them. In Colorado, an investigator jointly appointed by the state and church said Denver's board showed too much bias in support of the archdiocese and little understanding of sexual assault and trauma. And in Pennsylvania, a 2016 grand jury investigating the Altoona-Johnstown diocese called the board's work a cover-up cloaked "in the guise of advocacy," with members focused on "fact-finding for litigation" in case the victim sued.

The review board was an attempt to convince the public "that the days of a mysterious bishop deciding how to handle a scandalous and heinous report of child molestation and sodomy were over," the jury wrote. "In reality," it added, a board is "only as real as any bishop may want it to be."

Even reports by the bishops' conference have dinged dioceses for ignoring boards — sometimes leaving them dormant for more than a year — and have repeatedly warned of "complacency." Review board members past and present told AP about dioceses gaming the process, from failing to keep them informed to using aides to steer deliberations.

"It's all internal. That's the problem," said the Rev. James Connell, who served nearly a decade on a review board in Milwaukee. "It's the church thinking the church is gonna fix the church. It's not that the review board didn't do what the review board was asked to do. It's that it's the whole wrong approach."

PICKING THE BOARDS

Clergy sex abuse has cost more than \$4 billion and implicated at least 5,100 priests by the church's own count since 2002, when the crisis erupted nationwide. Despite promises of accountability, the church

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has again been forced to reckon with abuse after a damning grand jury report last year on generations of assaults and cover-ups in Pennsylvania spurred investigations across the country.

The review board path is supposed to give victims the opportunity to get validation from the church, especially for cases old enough that statutes of limitations prevent them from being tried in court. While dioceses are expected to report possible crimes to authorities, review boards and their findings are entirely separate from secular law enforcement.

The secrecy that is a trademark of many boards starts with how bishops and their administrators select members — perhaps where they exert the most influence.

More than half of the dioceses in the country don't reveal the names of members of their review boards on their websites. A few published them instead in the Official Catholic Directory, a thick book of church listings retailing for nearly \$400. Some dioceses like St. Louis said they didn't identify members as a "professional courtesy," and others like Dallas said members could go public if they wanted.

"They know my deepest secret, and I can't even know what their names or titles are?" said Becky Ianni, who couldn't get details about board members in Arlington, Virginia. "When you don't know their names, it's like going into this darkness."

Ianni eventually was allowed to speak before a different board in Richmond, Virginia, where member identities were revealed. She called the ordeal in 2007 "pure hell," and said one member fell asleep and another flipped through a magazine.

The Richmond diocese said it was "saddened" to hear her story and that she was welcome to appear before the current board.

Even the official names of boards can mask what they do: the "Independent Fitness Review Board," the "Conduct Response Team" and the "Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Review Board" are a few.

When board members' identities do become known, there's often cause for concern.

In 2002, when mandatory boards were first announced at a bishops' meeting in Dallas, the proposal called for five or more people of "outstanding integrity and good judgment," most of them not employed by the diocese. But that policy was watered down due to Vatican-dictated rewrites that stated boards must be "confidential," they must have at least five members "in full communion with the church" and their duties "may" include advising bishops on abuse allegations.

Over the next year, outsiders foreshadowed problems. The head of a national lay advisory group that bishops created to monitor reforms, former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating, warned: "We will look rather unkindly at a lawyer for the diocese, a head of Catholic Charities, being on a board — someone who appears to be joined at the hip with the bishop."

Yet at least 40 bishops have put on boards high-ranking aides and attorneys who defended the church or its priests in sex-assault cases, based on AP's review of the roughly 80 dioceses that posted member names. That means the same person who reports to the bishop and possibly handles abuse cases for the church could be hearing victims' allegations, creating a potential conflict of interest. AP found the connections by viewing lawsuits, online biographies and news archives.

In the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, the seven-member panel includes two priests and two deacons. In Montana, a voting member handles most of the Helena diocese's legal affairs and guided it through a 2014 bankruptcy spurred by a crush of sex-abuse claims. In West Virginia, another diocesan attorney with voting power this year defended former Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Michael Bransfield against an employee's assault allegations.

AP even found three cases of clergy serving on boards who themselves faced allegations of sexual misconduct. Two had left the board by the time they were publicly accused. But one joined after a review board in the same diocese had dismissed a complaint against him as "not credible," and served until a lawsuit named him years later.

Some bishops and review board members disagree that having attorneys and aides involved is a conflict of interest.

In Louisville, Kentucky, where four out of nine board members were church officials or clergy, a consul-

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tant this year urged the archdiocese to cut down the number of church employee members to "emphasize the board's independence." But archbishop Joseph Kurtz said through a spokesperson that he didn't see a problem, especially since one clergy member who served recently was an advocate for victims, and another was himself a survivor. Nonetheless, he said he would follow the recommendation and replace one of two church officials.

John Laun, the review board chair in Louisville and a retired state court judge, said church officials don't direct the conversation, and noted that the consultant found the archdiocese hadn't withheld anything. He estimated the board handles four to five cases a year and deems most credible.

"We have always been independent," Laun said. "The lay members are all strong-willed people from the get-go."

That was not the experience of Matt Connolly, a survivor and a former member of the Covington, Kentucky, review board. Connolly said he saw a shift in the board's approach to cases once the diocese became the target of a class-action lawsuit. Its attorney began interjecting, cutting off discussions and cautioning members not to broach subjects the diocese feared could be raised in court.

Members were also discouraged from writing notes or leaving with documents. In many dioceses, AP found, members are required to sign non-disclosure agreements, and some policies don't allow them to take or keep detailed minutes of meetings.

"They've got people who are going to follow the line and keep it secret," Connolly said. "Everybody's a tool of the bishop."

Ultimately, for reasons Connolly does not know, he and all his colleagues were replaced in a single swoop around 2009.

The AP asked the Covington diocese for a response from Bishop Roger Foys. The diocese instead directed a reporter to Bill Burleigh, a former news executive who now chairs the review board. Covington is among the dioceses that did not post names of members, but Burleigh described them as "independent thinking," adding that characterizations of them as pawns of the hierarchy are "not the board I'm familiar with."

Burleigh defended Foys as a strong bishop. He added that some Catholic laypeople have tried to speak as frankly as possible to the church hierarchy, but recognize that final judgment is up to the bishops, "some of whom have acquitted themselves and some of whom have fallen short."

Some attorneys and aides on boards have votes, while others are consultants. But either way, their presence at meetings can make for a grueling experience for victims.

Lasher, the furniture design company owner, said the chairwoman of the St. Petersburg board interrupted him as he tried to recount how a priest had molested him as a teen in his own home, taken him to bath houses and forced oral sex.

"We already know it," he quoted her as saying.

Then the church's defense attorney started pelting questions: Did he remember the color of the bath houses' walls? Could he name anyone there?

Others joined in. It became so intense that Lasher cried.

"It was like a corporate meeting," he recalled, "and I'm the one being fired."

Near the end, according to Lasher and three others in the room, the church attorney told members there was no evidence the now-deceased priest had abused others, and a bishop's aide on the board called the cleric "beloved."

A month later, a letter from the attorney said the board thought his testimony was articulate and believable, but members "could not conclude anything to substantiate the allegation." The diocese left the priest off its list of "credibly" accused clergy.

"David goes in and bares his soul, thinking....Jesus is merciful, and Jesus wants the right thing for everyone," said legal advocate Peter Schweitzer, a former priest who works with dozens of survivors and was at the meeting. "And that doesn't happen."

The attorney for the St. Petersburg diocese, Joseph DiVito, said he couldn't discuss the specifics of Lasher's case, but that he wasn't mistreated by the board.

"My recollection is very different," DiVito said. "Look, the review board met at 6:30. They're all volun-

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teers. They hadn't been home to eat dinner. He probably saw some plates and food. But I assure you it wasn't a party."

DiVito said when the accused is dead, it's considered an unsubstantiated case because there's no way to determine what happened.

Some abuse survivors say clergy are not always an obstacle to justice on the review boards. Ann Phillips Browning filed a formal complaint in 2010 to the Kalamazoo, Michigan, diocese about her abuse as a teen decades ago by a visiting cleric from India. She said a local priest who was also a licensed counselor informed review board members about trauma, positively influenced the bishop and "made all the difference in the world."

"Without fail, everyone who asked a question was very, very kind, very trauma informed, very affirming," Browning said.

The diocese ultimately found her report credible, records show. The cleric was criminally charged months ago as part of a Michigan attorney general probe.

Dr. Jim Richter, a survivor of priest abuse, also praised the St. Paul-Minneapolis board he serves on. However, he said he has become convinced that some boards are full of "unqualified, well-meaning, but ultimately incompetent" members.

"It is absolutely possible that you could be walking into, at worst, a den of wolves," he said.

CONTROLLING THE PROCESS

Bishops and their aides decide whether to investigate a complaint at all based on a "semblance of truth" — a term that is interpreted differently by dioceses and allows room to drop cases, records show.

In Illinois, for example, preliminary findings from the attorney general's probe said the process used in the state's six dioceses ranges from too complex to too general, is "a mystery" to survivors and lets dioceses operate in a "non-transparent manner." Dead priests there commonly get a pass, even if their victims are still suffering, and cases against those accused by a single person aren't pursued aggressively despite "reason to believe that survivor."

In Missouri, the Kansas City-St. Joseph diocese didn't always tell the review board about complaints against priests or give members all the evidence, according to an outside report commissioned by the diocese in 2011. Such failures enabled one priest to stay on duty for several months after church workers found child pornography on his computer. In the end, he was caught again with more pornography and arrested, and Bishop Robert Finn was convicted of a misdemeanor charge of failing to report child abuse to secular authorities. Finn was sentenced to two years of probation.

In Philadelphia, then-chair Ana Maria Catanzaro said she was stunned when a 2011 grand jury named 37 accused priests who had remained in ministry and slammed her review board for disregarding "very convincing evidence," leading to decisions "devoid of common sense." Catanzaro said the archdiocese had sent the board allegations for only 10 priests, and did not share information such as priests' psychological evaluations. She left the board in 2012.

"Little did I know they were lying to my face," Catanzaro said of the church hierarchy. "They lied to me just like they lied to everyone else."

The archdiocese did not respond to requests for comment.

The evidence brought before the board is key to the outcome of a case, said Jennifer Haselberger, a canon lawyer and former top official for three dioceses in the Midwest. She raised concerns about whether officials at the St. Paul-Minneapolis archdiocese were telling the board everything they knew, enabling some troubled priests to stay in ministry.

She resigned in 2013 after her efforts went nowhere. An internal task force created months later by the archdiocese issued a report that backed many of her concerns, including that church officials had "sometimes failed to inform the clergy review board of allegations."

Boards remain at the mercy of the dioceses, Haselberger said — and "that's really the problem."

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How bishops exert their power over the board varies from diocese to diocese.

Some use professional investigators to look into cases, and have demanded survivors' counseling, school, bank and even gynecological records, along with information on how often they attended Mass. Some restrict questioning of victims by board members. At least one diocese — Springfield, Mass. — explicitly bars survivors involved in lawsuits from bringing their attorneys to board meetings.

Bishops may even decide whether victims appear before the board at all.

Riley Kinn was assured he'd have that opportunity after he brought his report of abuse by a priest at his high school to the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, in 2017. A contracting job in 2015 had taken him back to the rectory where it happened, triggering a panic attack. He suffered a recurring nightmare where the priest waited in a school hallway trying to pull him into an empty classroom.

The diocese sent a retired police detective to interview him, and the investigator took names of others who could back his account. Kinn reiterated that he wanted to speak to the board. But months later, he learned by letter that the board had found his allegations "unsubstantiated" - without hearing from him or any other possible victims he named.

"I was like, really? Unsubstantiated?" Kinn said. "I asked myself, 'What kind of investigation did they do?'"

The decision was especially perplexing because the same priest had already been found credibly accused in another case in 2003, and the diocese had paid a settlement. In a January meeting, Bishop Daniel Thomas said he "can't go into details," according to a recording Kinn secretly made and shared with AP.

"It's like they didn't care," said Kinn, who spiraled emotionally and two months later checked himself into a hospital with suicidal thoughts. "Now I'm even more traumatized."

The bishop declined to comment on the case. In a written statement, Toledo Diocese spokeswoman Kelly Donaghy said the review board, whose member names aren't posted, doesn't promise victims they can testify, but examines each case in turn.

When survivors of abuse do come before the board, they frequently emerge from the process scarred. Joseph Capozzi, who reported his abuse in 2005, was pressed by the board in Newark, N.J., on everything from the appearance of the pills he was drugged with to particulars about the pornography the priest showed him.

"The church needs to stay out of any of this," Capozzi said. "They have shown themselves, time and time again, to not be able to deal with the truth."

QUESTIONABLE OUTCOMES

The criteria board members use to substantiate an allegation are set by the bishops and vary: "believable and plausible," "more likely than not," or "strong suspicion." It's difficult to know how often boards decide for or against victims in general because of their secretiveness. The bishops' conference collects some national statistics about review boards that is self-reported by dioceses, but does not make the information public and declined to share the numbers with AP.

Illinois' attorney general, in a preliminary report last year, found three out of four allegations in the state either were not investigated or not substantiated by review boards. Outside investigators found this year that the Denver archdiocese similarly failed to investigate or substantiate dozens of reports.

Through interviews and documents, AP found dozens of other cases where review boards rejected cases later affirmed by courts and authorities.

In Pittsburgh, a priest who had remained active despite multiple allegations of sex assault was only removed from ministry when a 2018 grand jury identified him as an offender.

In Philadelphia, grand jurors in 2011 cited the case of a former altar boy who described his molestation with precision, backed by the testimony of others, and whose complaint echoed one brought a year earlier. The review board, unconvinced, rejected the case as "unsubstantiated." But the conclusion from jurors was simple: "Obvious credibility."

Less than a year after the review board ruling, the former altar boy killed himself. His mother said that

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in a lifetime scarred with pain, the ruling stood out for her son.

And in Iowa, Katie Bowman's case exemplifies how a secular review can draw a different conclusion from the same facts.

Bowman's parents welcomed into their religious home three priests who molested her, she said, starting when she was around 4.

The horror would drive her later to bite her tongue until she bled, and cut herself. The clues remain today, with her left arm pockmarked by cigarette burns, and the underside of her right wrist bearing the word "resilient" tattooed in black script. She has survived four suicide attempts, and not wanting to die is still a new feeling for her.

In 2011, the 54-year-old social worker reported the abuse to the church. An investigator for the Davenport diocese interviewed Bowman's therapists, and a friend vouched that she had revealed the abuse a decade before. She also signed more than a dozen releases allowing access to her pediatrician, school and employee records.

"I thought you were investigating the priest, not me," she remembered thinking.

In January 2012, Bowman and her husband went to diocesan headquarters to meet the review board, passing by a monument for sex-abuse victims.

Because Davenport was in bankruptcy proceedings, Bowman also had to meet with a court-appointed arbitrator, Richard Calkins. He has assessed claims from about a thousand victims nationwide and found a "preponderance of evidence" proved she was abused. He authorized the maximum payout under the bankruptcy settlement: \$83,114.53.

"When you do enough of these, you can almost sense when they're true," Calkins said in an interview.

Two months later, in Bowman's mailbox, was a letter from the Davenport review board chairwoman.

"There is no doubt in the minds of any of us on the review board that you suffered abuses," the letter said. "We are not saying that we don't believe you -- we do."

The board still ruled against her. It would take a judge to force the diocese to add Bowman's three abusers to its list of credibly accused clergy, as part of a bankruptcy process.

Board chairwoman Chris McCormick Pries stood behind the finding in an interview. She said Bowman was the lone accuser and when priests are deceased, as hers were, the diocese applies a higher standard of proof — "clear and convincing."

McCormick Pries, who has chaired the board nearly 15 years, said she's disgusted by the church's abuse problem, too. She said review boards are a positive step and, like other members, treats the work as "a sacred trust."

"Can anyone police themselves from the inside? I think the answer is yes," she said. "Who better to solve the problems of the church than those who love the church?"

Joey Piscitelli disagrees. The board in San Francisco deemed his abuse allegations not credible in 2004 without contacting him. After he questioned the outcome, he was told the investigation was reopened, but the same thing happened. A jury later awarded him \$600,000.

"They're playing judge, jury and God and who gives them that authority?" he asked. "You know who could play judge and jury? An actual court."

CHURCH VETO

Even when a review board affirms a victim's case, the bishop does not have to follow its ruling.

Erin Brady was raped by a priest when she was a third-grader, and won a \$2 million settlement from the archdiocese of Los Angeles. In 2009, after the priest transferred to Santa Rosa, California, Brady pushed for his removal there. The review board was impressed by her clarity and precision, one member recalled, and recommended the priest's ouster.

"She was eminently believable," psychologist Tony Madrid said. "She was telling the truth."

But Bishop Daniel Walsh did nothing. He retired in 2011, and a message left at the San Francisco church where he lives was not returned.

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Walsh's successor, Bishop Robert Vasa, said he found his review board "extremely responsive and attentive" and didn't know why his predecessor made the decision he did.

"It's a difficult decision-making process and fairness and equity have to be a part of it," he said.

Brady's abuser remained a priest in good standing until he retired two years later. It wasn't until January, five years after the priest died, that Santa Rosa published a list of "credibly" accused clergy with his name on it.

"I knew they wouldn't do anything," Brady said.

When a bishop accepts the board's recommendation, church law still allows a priest to pursue his case with the Vatican.

Browning, the woman who praised the Kalamazoo review board for finding in her favor in 2010, was later let down by the Vatican. In Rome, officials said the priest was in bad health and simply instructed him to say a prayer each Friday for victims, according to Browning.

"I don't want his prayers, thank you very much," Browning said. "I just wanted to puke."

Despite the Kalamazoo diocese's intervention with the Vatican on Browning's behalf, the priest has continued to preside at celebrations and make public appearances over the past eight years, as shown in online videos. The Vatican didn't do anything.

"I get the impression," Browning said, "it is not a priority."

Democrats spar at debate over health care, how to beat Trump

By **BILL BARROW, WILL WEISSERT and JILL COLVIN** Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Democratic presidential candidates clashed in a debate over the future of health care in America, racial inequality and their ability to build a winning coalition to take on President Donald Trump next year.

The Wednesday night faceoff came after hours of testimony in the impeachment inquiry of Trump and at a critical juncture in the Democratic race to run against him in 2020. With less than three months before the first voting contests, big questions hang over the front-runners, time is running out for lower tier candidates to make their move and new Democrats are launching improbable last-minute bids for the nomination.

But amid the turbulence, the White House hopefuls often found themselves fighting on well-trodden terrain, particularly over whether the party should embrace a sweeping "Medicare for All" program or make more modest changes to the current health care system.

Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the field's most progressive voices, staunchly defended Medicare for All, which would eliminate private insurance coverage in favor of a government-run system.

"The American people understand that the current health care system is not only cruel — it is dysfunctional," Sanders said.

Former Vice President Joe Biden countered that many people are happy with private insurance through their jobs, while Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, complained about other candidates seeking to take "the divisive step" of ordering people onto universal health care, "whether they like it or not."

Democrats successfully campaigned on health care last year, winning control of the House on a message that Republicans were slashing existing benefits. But moderates worry that Medicare for All is more complicated and may not pay the same political dividend. That's especially true after Democrats won elections earlier this month in Kentucky and Virginia without embracing the program.

"We must get our fired-up Democratic base with us," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. "But let's also get those independents and moderate Republicans who cannot stomach (Trump) anymore."

The fifth Democratic debate unfolded in Atlanta, a city that played a central role in the civil rights movement, and the party's diversity, including two African American candidates, was on display. But there was disagreement on how best to appeal to minority voters, who are vital to winning the Democratic nomination and will be crucial in the general election.

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Sens. Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey said the party has sometimes come up short in its outreach to black Americans.

"For too long, I think, candidates have taken for granted constituencies that have been a backbone of the Democratic Party," Harris said. "You show up in a black church and want to get the vote but just haven't been there before."

Booker declared, "Black voters are pissed off, and they're worried."

In the moderators' chairs were four women, including Rachel Maddow, MSNBC's liberal darling, and Ashley Parker, a White House reporter for The Washington Post. It was only the third time a primary debate has been hosted by an all-female panel.

Buttigieg — who was a natural target given his recent rise in the polls to join Biden, Warren and Sanders among the crowded field's front-runners — was asked early about how being mayor of a city of 100,000 residents qualified him for the White House.

"I know that from the perspective of Washington, what goes on in my city might look small," Buttigieg said. "But frankly, where we live, the infighting on Capitol Hill is what looks small."

Klobuchar argued that she has more experience enacting legislation and suggested that women in politics are held to a higher standard.

"Otherwise we could play a game called 'Name your favorite woman president,' which we can't do because it has all been men," she said.

Another memorable exchange occurred when Biden — who didn't face any real attacks from his rivals — was asked about curbing violence against women and responded awkwardly.

"We have to just change the culture," he said. "And keep punching at it. And punching at it. And punching at it."

Harris scrapped with another low polling candidate: Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who has criticized prominent Democrats, including 2016 nominee Hillary Clinton.

"I think that it's unfortunate that we have someone on the stage who is attempting to be the Democratic nominee for the president of the United States who during the Obama administration spent four years full time on Fox News criticizing President Obama," Harris said.

"I'm not going to put party interests first," Gabbard responded.

But the discussion kept finding its way back to Medicare for All, which has dominated the primary — especially for Warren. She released plans to raise \$20-plus trillion in new government revenue for universal health care. But she also said implementation of the program may take three years — drawing criticism both from moderates like Biden and Buttigieg, who think she's trying to distance herself from an unpopular idea, and Sanders supporters, who see the Massachusetts senator's commitment to Medicare for All wavering.

Sanders made a point of saying Wednesday that he'd send Medicare for All legislation to Congress during the first week of his administration.

Booker faced especially intense pressure Wednesday since he's yet to meet the Democratic National Committee's polling requirements for the December debate in California. He spent several minutes arguing with Warren about the need to more appropriately tax the wealthy, but also called for "building wealth" among people of color and other marginalized communities.

"We've got to start empowering people," Booker said.

Businessman Andrew Yang was asked what he would say to Russian President Vladimir Putin if he got the chance — and joked about that leader's cordial relationship with Trump.

"First of all, I'd say I'm sorry I beat your guy," Yang said with a grin, drawing howls of laughter from the audience.

Weissert and Colvin reported from Washington.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

'On whose authority?': What to watch in impeachment hearings

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They owned the White House's policy on Ukraine.

Or so they thought.

Gradually, administration officials on both sides of the Atlantic understood that President Donald Trump was using a back channel headed by Rudy Giuliani to push Ukraine for investigations of Democrats.

Former National Security Council adviser Fiona Hill says her team learned more by watching the Republican president's personal lawyer on television.

In Kyiv, U.S. diplomat David Holmes heard Trump's voice on a phone call asking about "investigations."

They're the eighth and ninth witnesses to testify publicly before the House impeachment hearings against the 45th president.

What to watch after Thursday's hearings open at 9 a.m. EST:

WHO IS FIONA HILL?

She wrote a book on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Hill was, until July, Trump's Russia analyst on the National Security Council. In her testimony before impeachment investigators last month, she delivered an impassioned warning that the United States' faltering resistance to conspiracy theories and corruption represents a self-inflicted crisis and renders the country vulnerable to its enemies.

Hill worked as an intelligence officer under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. In the Trump White House, she served directly under national security adviser John Bolton.

Look for whether she fills in blanks on Trump's moves regarding Ukraine. Republicans have complained that Hill is one of several witnesses with no firsthand knowledge of the president's actions, which Democrats say amount to impeachable bribery.

RUDY

Hill testified that "every single day it seemed that he was on television, you know, basically spouting off, you know, one thing after another."

The last thing she wanted to do, Hill said, is "to go home in the evening and try to look on the news to see what Giuliani was saying. And then I would have to go onto YouTube or whatever else I could find, you know, kind of replays of things because people were constantly saying to me: My God, have you seen what Giuliani is saying now?"

SHE WAS THERE

The British-born Hill was present at several key moments in the events at the center of the House's impeachment drive.

Most notably, she confronted EU Ambassador Gordon Sondland, who was known for telling others that he was "in charge of Ukraine" despite being the U.S. envoy in Brussels.

"And I asked, well, on whose authority?" Hill testified in her closed-door deposition. "And he said, the President."

Actually, Sondland said during his own testimony Wednesday, it wasn't Trump who gave him the assignment. Rather, Bolton and acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney signed off.

"So, by extension, yes, if the national security adviser and the chief of staff approve your remit, it really is coming from the president," Sondland said.

Look for Hill, who described Bolton as "furious" over Sondland's role, to respond.

NOT LITERALLY A 'DRUG DEAL'

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That July 10 confrontation with Sondland, Hill has testified, went like this:

A meeting at the White House with Ukrainian officials was cut short when Sondland said he had an agreement with acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney that Ukraine's president would get a meeting with Trump if Ukraine agreed to launch investigations.

According to Hill, Bolton "stiffened" and ended the meeting, later telling colleague Hill to report it to the National Security Council's lawyer.

"I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this," Hill said Bolton told her.

As Hill navigated Sondland's moves, she at one point referred to the shadow Ukraine policy as Trump's "Gordon problem," according to a colleague.

WHO IS HOLMES?

He is a political counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv who testified that he overheard Trump's call with Sondland in which the president asked about "the investigations."

Sondland confirmed the July 26 call with Trump. The cellphone call came a day after Trump pushed the Ukrainian president to investigate Democrats.

Holmes was dining with Sondland at a Kyiv restaurant when Sondland assured Trump that Ukraine would conduct the investigations he was seeking and would do anything he wanted. Sondland opened the call by telling Trump that his Ukrainian counterpart "loves your ass."

Look for whether Holmes adds to evidence that Trump was using a this-for-that technique to get what he wanted from Ukraine.

Follow Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

Hong Kong campus drama persists as city gears for elections

By EILEEN NG and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A small but determined group of protesters remained holed up Thursday inside a Hong Kong university campus as the city's largest pro-Beijing political party urged voters to "kick out the black force" in upcoming elections seen as a key gauge of public support for anti-government protests.

At least a few dozen protesters at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, that has been ringed by police for days, resisted pleas to surrender amid fears of being arrested. They are the holdouts from a much larger group that occupied the campus after battling police over the weekend. Some 1,000 protesters have either surrendered or been stopped while trying to flee.

The city's largest political party slammed the flareup in violence in the past week and urged some 4.1 million voters to use the ballot box this Sunday to reject the "black force" that had thrown the semi-autonomous Chinese territory into unprecedented turmoil since June.

"The black force say they want to fight for freedom but now people cannot even express their views freely. We have even been stripped of our right to go to school and work," said Starry Lee, who heads the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong.

The party is contesting 181 of the 452 district council seats, a low-level neighborhood election held every four years. For the first time, all the seats will be contested and a huge win by the pro-democracy bloc could bolster the legitimacy of the protest movement.

Protesters, who believe China is increasing control over the territory, are demanding fully democratic elections and an independent probe into alleged police brutality against demonstrators.

The government, which rejected the demands, has warned the polls could be delayed if violence persists and transport links are disrupted. Earlier Thursday, there were long lines and delays at some subway stations. Some stations remained shut and protesters tried to block train doors from closing but the disruption was relatively minor.

A Hong Kong restaurant owner was deported from Singapore for organizing an illegal gathering last

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month to discuss the protests, Singapore media reported. Alex Yeung, who founded the Wah Kee restaurant chain and is a staunch pro-Beijing supporter, will also be barred from entering Singapore without prior approval.

In a video posted on YouTube from Singapore's Changi Airport, Yeung said he has been warned to refrain from any criminal conduct. He didn't say where he was heading but urged Hong Kong residents to cast their vote on Sunday to "reject violence and support peace."

Lee said the party's candidates have faced threats and some have even been beaten up but they are ready for a "tough battle."

"We believe that if we are united and if everyone comes out to vote, Hong Kong can be restored and violence can be stopped," she said at a campaign event in a park downtown with dozens of the party's candidates.

Lee and some candidates kicked black footballs as a symbolic gesture to banish the black-clad protesters.

More than 5,000 have been arrested since the protests started in June over a now-abandoned extradition bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial. The protest has since swelled into an anti-China movement as many fear a loss of freedoms guaranteed to the former British colony when it returned to Chinese control in 1997.

A 12-year-old became the youngest protester to be convicted Thursday after pleading guilty to spraying graffiti outside a police station and subway exit last month, the South China Morning Post reported. A lawyer for the student reportedly said he was remorseful and acted on impulse. The court will sentence him on Dec. 19.

Pressure ratcheted up on Hong Kong as the U.S. Congress approved legislation late Wednesday to sanction officials who carry out human rights abuses and require an annual review of the favorable trade status that Washington grants Hong Kong. Another bill bans export of tear gas and other non-lethal tools to Hong Kong,

President Donald Trump is expected to sign the bills into law, which is sure to anger China and jeopardize trade talks between the two economic giants.

"If the U.S. continues to make the wrong moves, China will be taking strong countermeasures for sure," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. "No one should underestimate China's determination to safeguard the interests of national sovereign security and development, to implement the 'one country, two systems' policy and to safeguard Hong Kong's prosperity and stability."

Hong Kong's Financial Secretary Paul Chan said that the U.S. legislation was baseless and an unnecessary meddling into the city's affairs. He urged Washington to reconsider, warning it would also hurt the interest of more than 1,000 American businesses in Asia's top financial hub.

Pope in Thailand calls for action to protect women, children

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Pope Francis called Thursday for women and children to be protected from exploitation, abuse and enslavement as he began a busy two days of meetings in Thailand, where human trafficking and forced prostitution help fuel the sexual tourism industry.

Francis pleaded for action against one of the region's greatest scourges at the start of his weeklong visit to Asia.

He praised the Thai government's efforts to fight human trafficking in a speech delivered at Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's Government House offices. But he appealed for greater international commitment to protect women and children "who are violated and exposed to every form of exploitation, enslavement, violence and abuse."

He called for ways to "uproot this evil and to provide ways to restore their dignity."

"The future of our peoples is linked in large measure to the way we will ensure a dignified future to our children," he said.

The United Nations considers Thailand a key trafficking destination as well as a source of forced labor

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and sex slaves, who are trafficked at home or abroad. The U.N. drug and crime agency said in a report this summer that trafficking for sexual exploitation accounted for 79% of all trafficking cases in Thailand from 2014-2017. Of the 1,248 victims detected, 70% were underage girls, the report said, citing data from Thai authorities.

The U.N. says sex tourism is a factor in fueling the trafficking of more victims, who often are forced, coerced or deceived into sexual exploitation.

The U.S. State Department has faulted Thailand for failing to fully crack down on traffickers who induce young Thai girls into pornography, as well as the exploitation, including via debt bondage, of migrant workers in commercial fishing enterprises.

The Thai government has insisted it has made significant progress and has vowed continued cooperation with international bodies.

Prayuth didn't make any reference to the problem in his remarks to Francis, though he stressed that Thailand had made great strides in promoting human rights.

"We have sought to strengthen the family institution and ensure equal opportunities for all groups in society, especially women and children," he told Francis after a brief private meeting.

Francis has made the fight against human trafficking one of the cornerstones of his papacy, calling it a crime against humanity. Under his express wishes, the Vatican has hosted several conferences on eradicating trafficking, featuring women freed from forced prostitution. And during his papacy, an international network of religious sisters, Talitha Kum, has gained greater prominence following decades of quiet efforts to rescue women from traffickers.

In his comments made alongside Thai authorities, Francis thanked the country for its historical role welcoming migrants from across the region, who are drawn to Thailand for economic opportunities. But he said all countries must do more to resolve the conflicts that fuel the "tragic exodus" of forced migration.

While Thailand has a tradition of taking in migrant laborers and sheltering people fleeing from danger in neighboring countries, it also has a checkered history of deporting foreigners who are in the country illegally, even if they are recognized by the United Nations as refugees who are fleeing persecution. In addition, up until it signed an agreement with the U.N. refugee agency this year, Thailand held child asylum seekers in detention centers.

Francis had a busy schedule on his first full day of activities of his weeklong tour, which will also take him to Japan. Small crowds of Thais greeted him at each destination, including a few hundred who gathered under a scorching sun to wait for Francis at the St. Louis Hospital, a private nonprofit founded by then-Siam's Catholic archbishop in 1898.

Piyanut Phatpirom, a Thai Catholic, said Francis' visit would help strengthen her faith.

"I intend to follow the teachings that the pope has given, for example kindness, mercy, loving others, having kindness, helping those in need," she said.

Francis also met with Thailand's Supreme Patriarch of Buddhism at the Wat Rachabophit temple and dutifully followed the custom to remove his shoes before entering the jeweled, intimate room.

Amid the scent of fresh roses inside, Francis committed the Catholic Church to working more with Thailand's majority Buddhists to launch projects to care for the poor and the environment, "our much-abused common home."

There are fewer than 400,000 Catholics among Thailand's 65 million people, yet Francis said they nevertheless have enjoyed freedom in their religious practice. On that note, he gave the patriarch a copy of his much-vaunted human fraternity document calling for interfaith solidarity, which he penned this year with the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the seat of Sunni Muslim learning.

Francis's visit was the second time a pope has called on the spiritual leader of Thailand's Buddhists, after St. John Paul II in 1984. And Francis cited one of John Paul's documents in praising the influence of faith on Thai culture.

"The majority of Thais have drunk deeply from the sources of Buddhism, which have imbued their way of venerating life and their ancestors, and leading a sober lifestyle based on contemplation, detachment,

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hard work and discipline," he said, speaking with his second cousin by his side — an Argentine nun who has worked in Thailand since the 1960s and is serving as his interpreter for the trip.

Francis wraps up the day with a private audience with Thailand's recently crowned King Maha Vajiralongkorn, and a public Mass at Bangkok's National Stadium.

Friday's agenda is far more church-based, with meetings with local Thai clergy, Asian bishops and separately a meeting with leaders of different Christian denominations and other faiths.

AP video producer Emily Wang contributed.

On Ukraine's bleak front line, US aid saves lives and morale

By INNA VARENYTSIA Associated Press

AVDIIVKA, Ukraine (AP) — U.S.-made medical equipment, night-vision devices and countermortar radar make a difference for Ukrainian troops fighting Kremlin-backed separatists on the front line of the standoff between Russia and the West. Sometimes, it's the difference between life and death.

So when \$400 million in U.S. military aid to Kyiv was held up this year, Ukrainians got nervous.

Every little bit of assistance helps in the World War I-style trenches of Avdiivka, where conscripts and volunteer soldiers use shovels to shore up mud walls, chop wood for makeshift stoves, and cook their own food from local vegetables and canned supplies.

Rostyslav Pokotylo shows off the American flag inside the case for his night-vision gun scope, which he credits with saving his life in 2017.

"I ended up in a combat zone ... If not for this, who knows what would have happened," he says. "With its help, I could see the enemy. I saw the enemy first, and we opened fire."

As impeachment hearings play out in Washington, Ukrainian troops at the front described their hopes and fears to The Associated Press in the five-year conflict that has taken 13,000 lives and still simmers on, sporadic gunfire punctuating the autumn calm.

In the hearings, Democrats in Congress say U.S. President Donald Trump pressured his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to investigate former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, a Democratic rival, while withholding U.S. military aid to Kyiv. Trump says the aid was held up over corruption concerns.

The holdup in aid wasn't something palpable that immediately affected the Ukrainian troops in action; it had more of a psychological impact, raising fears here that the U.S. was turning its back on Ukraine. The aid was later released, but the scandal has effectively frozen U.S.-Ukrainian relations and thrown long-term U.S. backing into doubt.

"We need support, and without support of our allies we won't win this war," Pokotylo said.

Avdiivka feels a world away from Washington. A soldier works his trench with a pickax. Another hangs wet laundry in the damp chill. Another cleans his Kalashnikov rifle with a piece of old rag.

While the U.S. aid helped fill some of the gaps in Ukraine's military capability, with countermortar radars being one highly welcome addition, its army continues to rely on aging Soviet-era weapons and often lacks essential supplies.

On the other side of the front line, separatists work from a similar, Soviet-made arsenal.

After large-scale battles involving tanks and long-range artillery early in the conflict, fighting has devolved into an oddly primitive standoff, with both sides stuck in trenches and occasionally exchanging artillery salvos and gunfire. Ukraine used warplanes and helicopter gunships early on, but it grounded them after heavy losses from anti-aircraft fire.

Strategically located near the airport of regional capital Donetsk and home to Ukraine's main coke and chemical plant, Avdiivka was seized by separatists at the start of the 2014 uprising, then recaptured by Ukrainian forces a few months later.

Heavy fighting erupted again in 2017, and Avdiivka remains a key spot on the front. About 10 days ago, two Ukrainian soldiers were killed by light artillery fire as they unloaded firewood from their vehicle.

"Sometimes it's scary. Sometimes it's so dark that you can't see yourself, can't see your hand in front

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of you. You might get scared when you walk down the trenches at night. The trenches are long," said Kyrylo, a 21-year-old soldier who spoke on condition that his last name not be used for security reasons.

"My family is in danger. My loved ones," said Kyrylo, who's says he's fighting to protect his wife and 10-month-old daughter.

"I want all my comrades to survive," he said, his eyes welling up. "Many die."

National symbolism is ubiquitous around the trenches — a Ukrainian trident hanging on a wooden pillar, a Ukrainian flag spread on a table. The day-to-day rituals are tedious, and the ambiance is subdued but tense, as gunfire can erupt at any moment.

The war began in 2014, after Ukraine's former Moscow-friendly president was driven from office by massive protests on Kyiv's Maidan square. In retaliation and in fear of Western encroachment on what it sees as its geopolitical backyard, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and helped foment an insurgency in eastern Ukraine. Many in the separatist-held areas see Russia as their more natural trading partner and backer than the United States, while many elsewhere in Ukraine lean firmly toward the West.

The centerpiece of the lethal U.S. military aid provided by the Trump administration are Javelin anti-tank missiles. They're not being used in the field, soldiers say, but serve as a deterrent, a symbol of U.S. power and support — and a confidence-booster for Ukrainian troops.

Soldiers say U.S. helmets saved lives early in the war, and U.S. medical equipment is especially prized.

In Avdiivka, soldier Yevhen Hlushko carefully guards his U.S. first-aid kit, with its decompression needle and compact tourniquet.

"The quality of emergency medical treatment depends on what's in the first-aid kit," he said.

Shiny green U.S.-made tents serve as a triage point for a hospital in Chasiv Yar, farther north along the front, where radiologist Oleh Kyryiak X-rays a soldier's chest, and a colleague uses an American ultrasound machine to monitor a patient's heart.

"The American equipment is higher quality than ours. Of course, we'd like to have help (from the U.S.), friendly relations," Kyryiak said.

Ukrainians at the front have another worry: That the U.S. impeachment drama has weakened Zelenskiy so much that he'll cede too much to Russian President Vladimir Putin in peace talks in Paris next month.

"Our guys died in droves — what was that for?" asked Dmytro, a soldier whose hometown of Popasna was captured by separatists for several months in 2014. "For Ukraine, victory at the end of the war is if we get the territory back."

Associated Press writers Yuras Karmanau in Kyiv, Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

Southern Africa's deadly drought leaving millions hungry

By **MOGOMOTSI MAGOME** Associated Press

VOSBURG, South Africa (AP) — Residents call this drought-stricken community a "forgotten town."

The flat, dusty roads to Vosburg are surrounded by withered fields. The streams feeding the community of a few thousand people have gone dry. Signs warn drivers of wandering cattle and sheep but there are none in sight.

The months-long drought is affecting most of southern Africa. The United Nations estimates that more than 11 million people now face crisis levels of food insecurity in places like Zimbabwe and Mozambique, where two cyclones wiped out crops earlier this year.

Among the hardest hit areas is South Africa's Northern Cape province, where many farmers are struggling to keep their families and animals alive while revenue falls and debt piles up.

Commercial sheep farmer Louis van der Merwe, 64, broke down as he described losing more than 400 sheep and 450 springboks in the past two years because of the worst drought he has seen in 45 years of farming.

Some animals died of hunger. Others were sent prematurely to the slaughterhouse to reduce the num-

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ber to feed. With tears running down his face, Van der Merwe said he now relies on donations of animal feed so the rest can survive.

"If we didn't have hope, we would not be here anymore," he said. "We have to have hope and faith. There are a couple of times when we have felt it is not worth it."

Two of his fellow farmers have killed themselves due to the stress, Van der Merwe said.

Northern Cape province will need over \$28 million in drought relief over the next three months to assist 15,500 affected farms, according to farmers' organization Agri-SA.

So far, South Africa's government has pledged \$2 million.

The World Food Program says southern Africa has received normal rainfall in just one of the past five growing seasons, with small-scale farmers feeling it most.

Some like 55-year-old Gertruida Buffel, have resorted to sharing their own food with their animals.

For two weeks she had fed two tiny lambs a mixture of maize meal and water after their mother starved to death. When The Associated Press arrived at her home, she had just learned that one had died.

"It must have died because it has only been eating the maize meal mixture. It is not their natural diet," Buffel said.

Small children are hungry, too.

At Vosburg's only school, Delta Primary School, scores of children line up every morning for what becomes both breakfast and lunch: usually corn meal, vegetables and soup.

While the school food program began before the drought, teachers say it has become increasingly vital for the town's struggling families.

"It's very hard for the parents to actually feed their children at home," said one teacher, Xolile Ngxathu.

In the regional center of Kimberley a few hours' drive away, government officials spend their days trying to allocate money from the \$2 million provincial disaster relief fund. It is a daunting task as some farmers in far-flung areas cannot be reached easily.

Farmers Jan Louw, 65, and Martiens Tieties, 67, are among those relying on government-sponsored animal feed but are not expecting their next rations until January.

Until then, they rely on commercial farmers sharing feed to keep their few livestock alive.

The Rev. Jaco Heymans with the Dutch Reformed Church has been offering spiritual counselling to many farmers and farm workers in Vosburg.

"The drought is having devastating impact on the people emotionally and spiritually because financially, all is almost lost," Heymans said.

"Many people have already cancelled their insurance policies and their medical aid in order to just survive. Primary concern is to keep the animals alive, so everything that is spared goes into feeding sheep."

The drought is even blurring the divisions left by racially based planning under South Africa's harsh apartheid system that ended 25 years ago — with more affluent and mainly white residents living in developed areas and black and mixed-race residents in under-resourced townships.

Vosburg is no exception. With the stress of the drought, residents realize they need each other more than ever to survive. Large commercial farms are sharing animal feed with small-scale farmers. The church now counsels everyone from well-off farm owners to farm laborers who fear losing their jobs.

The end is not yet in sight. Christien Engelbrecht, a meteorologist at the South African Weather Service, said below normal rainfall is predicted for the country and the southern African region over the next three months.

"It is clear that southern African farmers, water managers and government entities need to prepare," Engelbrecht said.

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Fear, turmoil in Lebanon as its financial crisis worsens

By **BASSEM MROUE** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — On one of Beirut's main commercial streets, store owners are cutting salaries by half or considering shutting down. Shops advertise sales, but still can't draw in customers. The only place doing a thriving business: the store that sells safes, as Lebanese increasingly stash their cash at home.

It's a sign Lebanese fear their country's financial crisis, which has been worsening for months, could tip over into disaster.

Banks have clamped limits on withdrawals of U.S. dollars. The Central Bank's sources for dollars are waning. Politicians are paralyzed, struggling to form a new government in the face of tens of thousands of protesters in the streets for the past month in an unprecedented uprising demanding the entire leadership go.

"People are scared," said Khalil Chehab, owner of Shehab Security, a store selling safes on Beirut's Hamra Street. "Since the middle of last month, business rose about 30%." As he spoke to The Associated Press, three customers were in his shop. Clients of all economic levels have been coming, he said — and the shop has safes for any budget, with prices from \$35 to \$15,000.

A jewelry shop nearby has also seen a bump in business from people in need of cash coming in to sell their valuables, said its owner, who asked to be identified only by his first name, Nabil.

Businesses and households have been thrown into disarray. Residents say they don't know how they will come up with dollar payments needed to pay for tuition, health insurance and housing loans. Companies are struggling to transfer salaries to staff, others have cut salaries or are simply laying off employees.

Lebanon has one of the highest debt ratios in the world, at around \$86 billion or 150% of GDP. Much of the government's budget is sucked up by salaries in the sprawling public sector, while infrastructure has gone undeveloped for years. Struggling with the broken economy, the government began hiking taxes and taking other measures, prompting small protests early in the year.

But the protests exploded across the country on Oct. 17 in response to a new round of proposed taxes and evolved into a revolt against the country's entire political elite. Protesters blame the politicians for decades of systematic corruption and mismanagement that brought the country into its dire economic straits. The prime minister stepped down on Oct. 29, but political parties have been unable to agree on a government since.

One of Lebanon's biggest problems is that it has a dollarized economy. Since a crash in the Lebanese pound in the early 1990s, the currency has been pegged to the dollar. As a result, many things — from rents to cars to insurance premiums — are priced in dollars. Most Lebanese get their salaries in local currency, however.

Since 1997, the Central Bank has kept the pound stable at 1,507 to the dollar thanks to heavy borrowing at high interest rates. That encouraged the large diaspora of hundreds of thousands of Lebanese around the world to pump in hard currency, sending it to their families, buying property or depositing in local banks, keeping the local market liquid.

The economy boomed for three years starting in 2008, with annual growth of about 8%. Then came a series of blows. First, the war in neighboring Syria sent more than 1 million refugees to Lebanon since 2011, straining the country's capacities.

Then the flow of hard currency into the country dropped starting in 2016, in large because falling oil prices reduced remittances from Lebanese in Arab Gulf nations. Salameh, the central bank's chief, responded with a program of so-called "financial engineering," encouraging local banks to get dollars from their branches abroad by paying high interest rates.

According to government officials, economic growth in Lebanon next year will be zero. The World Bank said the economy will likely contract by 1% in 2020. The crunch in U.S. dollars has created a black market in currency for the first time in years, with the dollar reaching 1,900 pounds this week.

Multiple dangers stalk the economy now. The government is trying to avoid any sort of default or a rush

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on banks. Consumers fear a collapse in the currency will wreck the value of their savings.

Banks have been largely closed since the protests began. They opened for a week starting Nov. 1, but then bankers went on strike, complaining of insults and threats from clients upset about capital controls. The strike ended Tuesday and banks reopened, with a limit of \$1,000 a week on withdrawals from dollar accounts. Transfers abroad have been restricted except for emergency cases.

"The situation in the banks is totally unacceptable," said Hassan Abadeh, a merchant who imports mobile phone accessories, after he tried withdrawing as much as he wanted from his dollar account. "When I told them this is my money, they said 'We can't do anything.'"

On once busy Hamra Street, many stores go for an entire day without selling anything.

One shoe shop proclaiming discounts of up to 70% was empty of customers. One employee, Kamal Amhaz, said sales were a quarter of what they were months ago. He and his colleagues have received only half their salaries since October, he said.

"I have no other choice, because if I leave this place I won't be able to find a job," Amhaz said.

Abdul-Ghani Mouwaqit, 59, used to come with his wife everyday to work in their lingerie shop but now with nearly no sales he is seriously thinking of closing down the shop as it is hard for him to pay rent.

Antoine Farah, who heads the business section of Lebanon's Al-Joumhouria newspaper, said the banks have lent the private sector worth more than \$50 billion and the slowdown in that sector will gradually endanger repayment.

"The percentage of bad debt will begin to rise because the private sector is frozen," he said. "It will become a bigger problem if the private sector becomes unable to pay back its debt."

A big test will come on Nov. 28, when eurobonds worth \$1.5 billion mature, raising the question whether Lebanon, which has always paid its debt on schedule, will continue to do so or default for the first time.

"We are passing through a very critical time, and we might enter the period of default," Farah warned.

Fiona Hill, adviser with sharp eye for detail, is next up

By LYNN BERRY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They have heard the measured testimony of career diplomats and the mind-boggling account of a first-time ambassador who declared he was in charge of President Donald Trump's Ukraine policy. Now House impeachment investigators will hear from Fiona Hill, a no-nonsense former White House adviser who was alarmed by what she saw unfolding around her.

Hill, who speaks rapid-fire and in the distinctive accent of the coal country of northern England where she grew up, is expected to testify Thursday about what she witnessed inside the White House as two men — European Union Ambassador Gordon Sondland and Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani — carried out foreign policy for an unconventional president.

She is a distinguished Russia analyst who took a break from the think-tank world to serve as a national intelligence officer from early 2006 to late 2009. She took another leave from the Brookings Institution in early 2017 to join the National Security Council at the start of the Trump administration, a decision that raised eyebrows at the time.

Hill built her reputation on her insights into Russian President Vladimir Putin and clear-eyed view of the threats posed by Russia, yet went to work for a president who discounted Russian election interference and appeared to believe in Putin's good intentions.

In closed-door testimony last month, Hill testified that she spent an "inordinate amount of time" at the White House coordinating with Sondland, whose donation to Trump's inauguration preceded his appointment as ambassador to the EU. Sondland testified Wednesday that Trump and Giuliani sought a quid pro quo with Ukraine, and that he was under orders from the president to help make it happen.

Sondland said Trump wanted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to announce investigations of Democrats before he would agree to welcome him at the White House. As the push progressed, Trump also held up nearly \$400 million in military aid that Ukraine was counting on to fend off Russian aggression.

During her closed testimony, Hill warned of the risks posed by the shadow diplomacy being run by Gi-

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uliani and his associates, including two Soviet-born Florida businessmen who now face campaign finance charges. She said she told Sondland: "You're in over your head. I don't think you know who these people are."

She described Sondland as a counterintelligence risk because of his use of a personal cellphone, including in Ukraine, where the networks are easily hacked by Russia. Sondland confirmed Wednesday that he called Trump on his cellphone from a restaurant in Kyiv.

David Holmes, a U.S. diplomat in Kyiv who overheard that July 26 call, also is testifying Thursday as investigators wrap up two weeks of public hearings. Holmes heard Trump ask Sondland whether Zelenskiy was going to conduct the investigations he wanted and be told he would.

Unlike Sondland, who explained discrepancies in his testimony by saying he doesn't take notes, Hill is a meticulous note taker. She says it was a habit she learned from the first grade because her town was so poor that pupils didn't have textbooks.

Hill left the administration about a week before the July 25 call in which Trump asked Zelenskiy to investigate his Democratic rival Joe Biden, his son and a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 election. She learned the details only when the White House released a rough transcript in September and said she was shocked. "I sat in an awful lot of calls, and I have not seen anything like this," she said.

But the call did not come out of the blue. It was an outgrowth of a July 10 meeting of U.S. and Ukrainian officials at the White House that Hill witnessed and described to lawmakers in vivid detail.

Hill said Sondland "blurted out" that he and Trump's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, had worked out a deal for Ukraine's president to visit the White House in exchange for opening the investigations. Her boss, national security adviser John Bolton, "immediately stiffened" and ended the meeting.

When Sondland led the Ukrainians to a room downstairs in the White House to continue the discussions, Bolton sent Hill to "find out what they're talking about." As she walked in, Sondland was trying to set up the meeting between the two presidents and mentioned Giuliani. Hill cut him off.

She reported back to Bolton, who told her to tell an NSC lawyer what she had heard and to make clear that "I am not part of whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up on this."

Sondland on Wednesday pushed back on Hill's account. He said he doesn't remember the meeting being cut short and denied that by carrying out Trump's Ukraine policy he was engaging in "some kind of rogue diplomacy." He said Ukraine was part of his portfolio from the start, and said it's "simply false" to say he "muscled" his way in.

Hill made clear in her testimony that she was frustrated by Sondland, particularly over his casual use of cellphones. He not only used his to call Trump and foreign officials, he was giving out her number as well. Officials from Europe would appear at the gates of the White House and call her personal phone, which was kept in a lockbox. She would later find messages from irate officials who had been told by Sondland that they could meet with her.

She is sensitive to security risks. While writing a book on Putin published in 2013, she said her phone and Brookings' computer system were repeatedly hacked.

During her deposition, Hill's temper flared when asked about conspiracy theories, including those espoused by Trump and his allies, seeking to deny Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election. The reason she joined the Trump administration, she said, was because the U.S. is "in peril as a democracy" because of interference by Russians and others.

"And it doesn't mean that other people haven't also been trying to do things, but the Russians were who attacked us in 2016, and they're now writing the script for others to do the same," she said. "And if we don't get our act together, they will continue to make fools of us internationally."

From Lizzo to Lil Nas, new kids on the block rule Grammys

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Genre-mashing, bold and chart-topping new artists have caught the attention of the

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Recording Academy, as Lizzo, Billie Eilish and Lil Nas X lead in nominations at the 2020 Grammy Awards.

Lizzo is in first place, scoring eight bids Wednesday for her fun, positive rap-pop style that has made her not only the year's top new act, but arguably the year's most successful musician.

She and Eilish — who created her best-selling debut album with her brother Finneas at their home studio — each earned nominations in the top four categories: album, song and record of the year, along with best new artist. Lil Nas X, who burst onto music charts with the country-trap anthem "Old Town Road," earned nominations for album, record and song of the year.

Yola, the British country-soul singer who scored four nominations, said she feels honored to be nominated for best new artist alongside Lizzo, Lil Nas X and Eilish.

"You just couldn't ignore the contribution that Lizzo's brought, or Lil Nas, and the conversation he and I have been opening up about country music," said Yola. "And obviously Billie, she's killing it.

"I find it really hard to believe that I was awake — that it was a real thing. It's such a hard category to get into," she added.

Rounding out the nominees for best new artist are pop singer Maggie Rogers, Spanish artist Rosalía, New Orleans group Tank and the Bangas and Austin-based duo Black Pumas.

H.E.R., who scored five nominations at last year's Grammys, including a bid for best new artist, returns this year with five more nominations. She won two awards in the R&B categories earlier this year and said she's not sure what advice to offer the new acts who are dominating in Grammy nominations.

"I don't even know if I can give advice because everything felt so surreal to me. I was just thankful, and I know the nominations itself is just a stamp on all the hard work," she said. "It solidifies that, like, 'Wow, I really made it to even be named among these artists. It's just a good feeling.'"

Yola, who spoke from Germany where she was performing Wednesday, said she couldn't stop crying after getting the good news. Her other nominations include best American Roots performance and best American Roots song for "Faraway Look," as well as best Americana album for "Walk Through Fire," which was produced by Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys.

"I'm an album-maker more than a person that focuses on singles, so that's just really meaningful," she said.

Creating an album instead of focusing on singles is also important to H.E.R., who is returning to the 2020 Grammys with her second nomination for album of the year.

"I can't believe it honestly. It's a big category. It's like the biggest category," H.E.R. said in a phone interview from London. "It feels like the first time again."

She's got some stiff competition for the show's big award: Along with Lizzo's "Cuz I Love You," Eilish's "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" and Lil Nas X's "7," H.E.R.'s "I Used to Know Her" will compete with Vampire Weekend's "Father of the Bride," Ariana Grande's "Thank U, Next," Bon Iver's "I, I" and Lana Del Rey's "Norman (Expletive) Rockwell!"

The R&B singer-songwriter-guitarist is also up for record and song of the year with "Hard Place." In song of the year, women dominate with seven of the eight nominations, including Lady Gaga, Eilish, Taylor Swift, Lizzo, Lana Del Rey and Tanya Tucker.

"It's a beautiful thing," she said of the women taking over. "Absolutely."

H.E.R. said the key to her success has been staying true to herself and following whatever sound and style she wants to explore. Her goal, she said, is to be a genre-less artist.

"The fact of the matter is — I'm not just one thing. And I love all styles of music," she said. "I listen to Led Zeppelin and I listen to Jimi Hendrix. And I also listen to a lot of Drake, and I also listen to a lot of hip-hop from today. The range, as far as what I love, is so wide that it's only right for me to explore the things that I love."

The 62nd annual Grammy Awards will air live from the Staples Center in Los Angeles on January 26, 2020.

Impeachment hearings takeaways: 'Everyone was in the loop'

By ERIC TUCKER AND AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Gordon Sondland, President Donald Trump's ambassador to the European Union, bolstered Democrats' impeachment narrative Wednesday as he repeatedly talked of a "quid pro quo" involving Ukraine.

He said "everyone was in the loop" about President Donald Trump's push for Ukraine to announce investigations into a Ukraine gas company and the 2016 U.S. election.

Sondland was one of the most anticipated witnesses as Democrats are holding a rigorous week of hearings into whether Trump's dealings with Ukraine are grounds for impeachment.

Sondland told lawmakers that he worked with Rudy Giuliani on Ukraine at Trump's direction and that he eventually came to believe that military aid for the country was dependent on Ukraine launching the investigations.

Separately, in a second evening hearing, a Defense official provided new details about when Ukrainians learned that the aid was being held up — a key question in determining whether the aid and investigations were linked.

Takeaways from Day 4 of the impeachment inquiry before the House intelligence committee:

THIS FOR THAT

Sondland repeatedly referred to a quid pro quo — one thing in return for another — in describing the administration's dealings with Ukraine.

It was a remarkable spectacle: Trump's own ambassador using the exact term that the president himself has disavowed. Sondland is hardly a Never-Trumper: He donated \$1 million to Trump's inaugural committee before being named ambassador.

"I know that members of this committee have frequently framed these complicated issues in the form of a simple question: Was there a 'quid pro quo?' As I testified previously, with regard to the requested White House call and White House meeting, the answer is yes," Sondland said.

The quid pro quo in this case, he said, involved arranging a White House visit for Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in return for Zelenskyy's announcing investigations of Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company, and a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine had interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Biden's son Hunter was a Burisma board member.

That proposed arrangement was pushed by Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, who conveyed Trump's wishes to multiple administration officials. Sondland said he did not know until September that what was actually desired was an investigation into the Bidens.

A PRESUMPTION

Notably, though, Sondland says no one ever told him that hundreds of millions of dollars in security assistance to Ukraine was similarly contingent on satisfying Trump's request for investigations.

He said he simply presumed that was the case, based in part on the absence of any credible explanation for the withholding of the aid.

The White House took note of that testimony and turned it in the president's favor in a statement issued during Sondland's testimony.

"Sondland is basing his new testimony on presumptions he had made regarding President Trump's wishes," the statement said. Under questioning from the committee chairman, Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., "Sondland confirmed he presumed what the President wanted. Sondland said that he 'speculated' about and 'presumed' what the President wanted."

WHAT UKRAINE KNEW AND WHEN

The question of a possible connection between the aid and Trump's demand for investigations was central to the testimony of Defense Department official Laura Cooper during the evening session.

She told lawmakers that Ukrainian Embassy officials were asking about the military aid on July 25, earlier than previously known.

That could undercut a Republican argument that there couldn't have been a quid pro quo involving

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military aid because the Ukrainians didn't know that the aid was being held up

Cooper said she has seen emails provided by her staff since she was deposed last month that showed the embassy was asking questions. She said she has also recently been informed that a Ukrainian Embassy contact had asked a member of her staff that same day "what was going on" with the aid.

July 25 is when Trump's spoke on the phone with Zelenskiy and pushed for the Biden investigation. That call is at the heart of the impeachment probe.

Cooper told lawmakers she "cannot say for certain" that Ukraine knew the money was being withheld, but she said "it's the recollection of my staff that they likely knew."

'AT THE EXPRESS DIRECTION' OF TRUMP

Sondland says he was uncomfortable working with Giuliani, but he did so at the "express direction of the president of the United States."

"We did not want to work with Mr. Giuliani. Simply put, we played the hand we were dealt," Sondland said.

Democrats will certainly point to the diplomat's remarks to undercut any distance that Trump might try to put between him and demands that were placed on Zelenskiy.

Sondland said Giuliani emphasized to him in a subsequent conversation that Trump wanted a public statement from Zelenskiy committing Ukraine to look into corruption issues, including looking into potential interference in the 2016 election and Burisma.

"Mr. Giuliani's requests were a quid pro quo for arranging a White House visit for President Zelenskiy," Sondland said. "Mr. Giuliani was expressing the desires of the President of the United States, and we knew that these investigations were important to the President."

'EVERYONE WAS IN THE LOOP'

Sondland made clear that this was no rogue effort. He said he was open about Trump's demand that Ukraine commit to the investigations.

Sondland's account made clear his refusal to be a fall guy for the administration's dealings with Ukraine and underscored that officials across the government were aware of the unconventional dialogue.

He updated Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the White House's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, telling them that Ukraine's leader would conduct a "fully transparent investigation" and "turn over every stone."

Sondland further told Pompeo that he and another diplomat, Kurt Volker, had negotiated a statement that Zelenskiy could deliver that "will hopefully make the boss happy enough to authorize an invitation" to the White House.

"Everyone was in the loop. It was no secret," Sondland said.

Sondland mentioned Vice President Mike Pence as well, telling him he was concerned that aid to Ukraine had become tied to the investigations.

Marc Short, Pence's chief of staff, said that Pence never spoke with Sondland "about investigating the Bidens, Burisma, or the conditional release of financial aid to Ukraine based upon potential investigations."

In Brussels, Pompeo dismissed Sondland's testimony, but didn't comment on specifics.

THE IMPACT

Sondland's testimony almost certainly advanced the case for impeaching Trump. It moved the effort to get Ukraine to announce an investigation of the Bidens closer to the president.

The testimony also may help House Democrats build a separate impeachment charge against Trump for getting in the way of their investigation, said former independent counsel Kenneth Starr, whose investigation led to President Bill Clinton's impeachment 20 years ago.

"That just got drawn up today thanks to Ambassador Sondland," Starr said on Fox News. Sondland said that the administration refused to give him access to records that might have helped him prepare his testimony.

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In a normal criminal case, Trump's side would try to damage Sondland's credibility, exploit inconsistencies in his testimony and note that Sondland said the president never personally directed him to dangle a White House meeting in return for announcing the investigation. The effort could create a reasonable doubt that would prevent a jury from returning a conviction.

But impeachment takes place in a political arena, not a court of law. Impeachment scholars stress the standard of proof for impeachment is lower than it is in the courtroom. Though that would seem to work against Trump, the political nature of impeachment ultimately benefits him. Republicans have been united in defense of Trump and, even if he is impeached, it's difficult to see Republican-run Senate removing him from office.

TRUMP CLAIMS EXONERATION

Sondland directly tied Trump to the effort to push Ukraine to investigate the Bidens. But Trump is seizing upon a portion of that testimony to make his defense.

While Sondland was testifying, Trump briefly addressed reporters as he left the White House on his way to Texas. Trump normally speaks off-the-cuff, but on Wednesday he read from handwritten notes that appeared to be scrawled in the black Sharpie that the president favors.

Trump launched into a defense, selectively recounting Sondland's testimony that Trump told him there was no quid pro quo and that he wanted nothing from Ukraine.

"That means it's all over. This is the final word from the president of the United States. I want nothing," Trump said, before resorting to his usual description of someone from whom he wanted to distance himself. "I don't know him very well. I have not spoken to him much. This is not a man I know well. He seems like a nice guy though."

Trump also disputed what he said was Sondland's characterization that Trump was in a bad mood during their conversation.

"I'm always in a good mood. I don't know what that is."

CONFIRMING THE OVERHEARD CALL

Sondland confirmed a July 26 call with Trump that was revealed by another diplomat last week.

A U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, David Holmes, told impeachment investigators last week about the phone call between Trump and Sondland.

Holmes overheard the cellphone call, conducted a day after Trump pushed Zelenskyy to investigate Democrats, while Holmes was dining with Sondland at a Kiyv restaurant. Holmes said Sondland told Trump that Zelenskyy would conduct the investigations he was seeking and would do anything he wanted. He opened the call by telling Trump that Zelenskyy "loves your ass."

Sondland also said that he had "no reason to doubt that this conversation included the subject of investigations," but said the conversation didn't strike him as significant. For Democrats, though, it provides further direct evidence of Trump pressuring Ukraine to investigate the Bidens.

Sondland said the White House confirmed the call by sharing certain call dates with his attorneys.

Asked about the "loves your ass" comment, Sondland sheepishly acknowledged that he and Trump sometimes used colorful language during their conversations.

"That sounds like something I'd say," Sondland said. "That's how President Trump and I communicate, a lot of four-letter words. In this case, three-letter."

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire, Mark Sherman and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

SEALs face review following death of Islamic State militant

By JULIE WATSON and LOLITA BALDOR Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Navy officials on Wednesday notified a SEAL convicted of posing with a dead Islamic State militant and three of his superior officers during a 2017 deployment to Iraq that all four will face a review to determine if they should remain on the elite force.

Attorneys for Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher said the Navy is trying to remove his Trident pin, designating him as a SEAL, in retaliation for President Donald Trump's decision last week to restore his rank.

Gallagher was acquitted last summer of a murder charge in the stabbing death of the militant captive, but a military jury convicted him of posing with the corpse while in Iraq in 2017. He also was acquitted of attempted murder for allegedly shooting at civilians.

His lawyers said Wednesday they have filed a complaint with the inspector general's office accusing Rear Adm. Collin Green of insubordination for defying Trump's actions and asking for an investigation into the Navy's handling of Gallagher's case. Green is the Naval Special Warfare commander.

It was the latest twist in what has been a tumultuous case that has shaken the secretive SEAL community and revealed rifts within its ranks after SEALs testified against one of their own. The case was dogged from the start with the Navy's lead prosecutor being removed in the middle of the court-martial after it was discovered the prosecution was tracking the defense team's emails.

Trump restored Gallagher's rank on Friday after he was demoted from chief following his conviction. "What the bureaucracy is doing to him now is pure and simple retaliation," said Marc Mukasey, one of Gallagher's lawyers.

Two U.S. officials familiar with the case but not authorized to speak publicly disputed that and said discussions about convening a review board began shortly after Gallagher's conviction in July.

Eugene Fidell, who teaches military justice at Yale Law School, said he's not surprised the Navy would call for a review. "I think this would have happened anyway to a SEAL with a court-martial conviction," he said.

In a letter from Green, obtained by The Associated Press, Gallagher was notified that a peer-review board has been instructed to determine whether he should remain a SEAL.

The five-person board will convene Dec. 2 behind closed doors. It will include one SEAL officer and four senior enlisted SEALs, according to the two U.S. officials. Gallagher can appear once before the board on Dec. 4 but without his lawyers. He can dispute the evidence given to the board that will include his conviction and call witnesses. He also can appeal the final decision that will be made by the Naval Personnel Board, which will take into account Green's input and the board's recommendations.

Green also notified three SEAL officers who oversaw Gallagher during the deployment — Lt. Cmdr. Robert Breisch, Lt. Jacob Portier and Lt. Thomas MacNeil, according to the officials.

Removing their Trident pins means they will no longer be SEALs but could remain in the Navy, though Portier and Gallagher were already planning on leaving the service. Still it would be considered a mark on their career that they were cast out of the prestigious force.

The Navy has revoked 154 Trident pins since 2011.

The other three officers will go before three-person boards. Attorneys for Breisch and MacNeil could not be immediately reached for comment.

According to Portier's letter, his review board has been instructed to specifically look at Portier's 2017 deployment in Iraq and his actions through July 2019 to see if he "displayed a gross lack of professional or personal judgment, lack of moral or ethical behavior and/or conduct inconsistent with the SEAL ethos."

Portier was Gallagher's platoon commander and was charged with failing to report the alleged murder. He denied the charges and they were dropped after the jury acquitted Gallagher of murder.

His attorney, Jeremiah Sullivan said Trump recognizes "the honorable sacrifices that my client has made in his combat deployments," and that Green is challenging the "integrity of the president."

Naval Special Warfare spokeswoman, Capt. Tamara Lawrence, said in a statement that Green "remains focused on delivering a capable, ready, and lethal maritime special operations force in support of national

security objectives, which includes assessing the suitability of any member of his force via administrative processes.”

Baldor reported from Washington.

Blackouts hit Northern California again during fire danger

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Pacific Gas & Electric turned off electricity Wednesday for about 120,000 people in Northern California to prevent power lines from sparking wildfires during a new bout of windy, warm weather.

However, favorable weather allowed the nation’s largest utility to drastically reduce the number of customers it originally had planned to black out — about 375,000 — and even to begin restoring electricity in some areas.

Higher-than-expected humidity, cloud cover and even some rain showers in the Sierra Nevada helped reduce the risk, said Scott Strenfel, PG&E’s principal meteorologist.

“All of these factors kind of broke in all of our favor,” he said.

Virtually all those who lost power were expected to get it back Thursday once a weather all-clear is declared and ground crews and helicopters check power lines to make sure any damage is repaired, officials said.

Forecasts had called for it to be dry and windy Wednesday, with gusts up to 55 mph (89 kph), which could fling tree branches or other debris into lines and cause sparks that have the potential to set catastrophic fires, PG&E officials said. A virtually rainless fall has left brush bone dry.

The blackout is the latest in a series of massive outages by PG&E, including one last month that plunged nearly 2.5 million people into darkness and outraged officials and customers as overkill.

Officials accused the company of using the blackouts as a crutch after years of failing to update its infrastructure to withstand fire weather. PG&E equipment has caused some of California’s most destructive wildfires in recent years.

PG&E CEO Andy Vesey acknowledged the outages have been “terribly disruptive” and said the company is taking steps to avoid them in the future but that for now, “we won’t roll the dice on public safety.”

Meanwhile, California regulators are demanding answers from wireless, internet and landline providers whose equipment failed during the earlier outages, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without a way to get emergency alerts or make 911 calls.

About 3% of cell towers statewide failed at one point in late October, but the numbers were much higher in northern counties, such as Marin, which had 57% of its towers out, and Sonoma, with 27% out.

Some public safety workers had to drive for an hour to see if they needed to check in, said John Kennedy of the Rural County Representatives of California. Fire departments lost contact with fire trucks, and some had to rely on radios because download speeds were so slow or out of service, he said.

More than 450,000 people had communications cut off, the group said.

Exasperated members of the California Public Utilities Commission reminded representatives of Sprint, AT&T, Verizon and other companies that customers pay for reliable service.

“The customers need to know where there’s coverage and where there’s not, and the local responders need to know,” Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves said.

“Next fire season cannot, cannot look like this one,” commission President Marybel Batjer said.

Consumer advocates have urged the commission to establish backup power requirements and make the companies provide detailed information about outage locations.

State Sen. Steve Glazer and Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan proposed legislation Wednesday that would require cellphone companies to provide at least 72 hours of backup power at cell towers.

Verizon, T-Mobile and AT&T officials said they would disclose outage information immediately but didn’t commit to 72 hours of backup power.

They also criticized PG&E, saying the changing outage forecasts made it difficult to prepare. For example, AT&T deployed 60 generators to the San Francisco Bay Area only to learn that the suburbs were no longer affected, said Jeff Luong, an AT&T vice president.

"It's impossible to react to that type of situation," he said.

Lake County Supervisor Moke Simon said AT&T's network went down right away during an outage in late October, risking sewer and alarm systems. There was no backup, he said.

"That really put us in a dire-straits situation," he said.

Batjer told the companies she was surprised by their lack of preparation given California's long history of wildfires.

"It's sort of stunning that you go, 'Well, we just learned a lot in the last three weeks,'" she said.

The companies have told the state they communicated with authorities, but the outages were unprecedented. They said they're improving backup power but that those sources might not be possible in some places and generators aren't always safe.

Comcast said its network "fundamentally relies on commercial power to operate."

Associated Press writer Olga R. Rodriguez contributed to this story.

Trump directed Ukraine quid pro quo, key witness says

By **LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ERIC TUCKER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ambassador Gordon Sondland declared to impeachment investigators Wednesday that President Donald Trump and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani explicitly sought a "quid pro quo" with Ukraine, leveraging an Oval Office visit for political investigations of Democrats. But he also came to believe the trade involved much more.

Besides the U.S. offer of a coveted meeting at the White House, Sondland testified it was his understanding the president was holding up nearly \$400 million in military aid, which Ukraine badly needed with an aggressive Russia on its border, in exchange for the country's announcement of the investigations.

Sondland conceded that Trump never told him directly the security assistance was blocked for the probes, a gap in his account that Republicans and the White House seized on as evidence the president did nothing wrong. But the ambassador said his dealings with Giuliani, as well as administration officials, left him with the clear understanding of what was at stake.

"Was there a 'quid pro quo?'" Sondland asked. "With regard to the requested White House call and White House meeting, the answer is yes."

The rest, he said, was obvious: "Two plus two equals four."

Later Wednesday, another witness undercut a main Republican argument — that there could be no quid pro quo because Ukraine didn't realize the money was being held up. The Defense Department's Laura Cooper testified that Ukrainian officials started asking about it on July 25, which was the day of Trump's phone call with the country's new president when Trump first asked for "a favor."

Her staff received an email, Cooper said, from a Ukrainian Embassy contact asking "what was going on with Ukraine's security assistance." She said she could not say for sure that Ukraine was aware the aid was being withheld but "it's the recollection of my staff that they likely knew."

Sondland, the ambassador to the European Union and a major donor to Trump's inauguration, was the most highly anticipated witness in the House's impeachment inquiry into the 45th president of the United States.

In often stunning testimony, he painted a picture of a Ukraine pressure campaign that was prompted by Trump himself, orchestrated by Giuliani and well known to other senior officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Sondland said he raised his concerns about a quid pro quo for military aid with Vice President Mike Pence — a conversation a Pence adviser vigorously denied.

Pompeo also dismissed Sondland's account.

However, Sondland said, "Everyone was in the loop. It was no secret."

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The ambassador said that he and Trump spoke directly about desired investigations, including a colorful cellphone call this summer overheard by others at a restaurant in Kyiv.

Trump himself insists daily that he did nothing wrong and the Democrats are just trying to drum him out of office.

As the hearing proceeded, he spoke to reporters outside the White House. Reading from notes written with a black marker, Trump quoted Sondland quoting Trump to say the president wanted nothing from the Ukrainians and did not seek a quid pro quo.

"I want nothing, I want nothing," insisted the president, who often exhorts Americans to "read the transcript" of the July phone call in which he appealed to Ukraine's leader for "a favor" — the investigations.

He also distanced himself from his hand-picked ambassador, saying he didn't know him "very well." A month ago, he called Sondland "a really good man and a great American."

The impeachment inquiry focuses significantly on allegations that Trump sought investigations of former Vice President Joe Biden and his son -- and the discredited idea that Ukraine rather than Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election -- in return for the badly needed military aid for Ukraine and the White House visit.

In Moscow on Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was pleased that the "political battles" in Washington had overtaken the Russia allegations, which are supported by the U.S. intelligence agencies.

"Thank God," Putin said, "no one is accusing us of interfering in the U.S. elections anymore. Now they're accusing Ukraine."

Sondland said that conditions on any potential Ukraine meeting at the White House started as "generic" but more items were "added to the menu including -- Burisma and 2016 election meddling." Burisma is the Ukrainian gas company where Biden's son Hunter served on the board. And, he added, "the server," the hacked Democratic computer system.

During questioning in the daylong session, Sondland said he didn't know at the time that Burisma was linked to the Bidens but today knows "exactly what it means." He and other diplomats didn't want to work with Giuliani. But he and the others understood that Giuliani "was expressing the desires of the president of the United States, and we knew that these investigations were important to the president."

He also came to understand that the military aid hinged on the investigations, though Trump never told him so directly.

Sondland, a wealthy hotelier, has emerged as a central figure in an intense week in the probe that is featuring nine witnesses testifying over three days.

The envoy appeared prepared to fend off scrutiny over the way his testimony has shifted in closed-door settings, saying "my memory has not been perfect." He said the State Department left him without access to emails, call records and other documents he needed in the inquiry. Republicans called his account "the trifecta of unreliability."

Still, he did produce new emails and text messages to bolster his assertion that others in the administration were aware of the investigations he was pursuing for Trump from Ukraine.

Sondland insisted, twice, that he was "adamantly opposed to any suspension of aid" for Ukraine. "I followed the directions of the president."

The son of immigrants who he said escaped Europe during the Holocaust, Sondland described himself as a "lifelong Republican" who has worked with officials from both parties, including Biden.

Dubbed one of the "three amigos" pursuing Ukraine policy, Sondland disputed that they were running some sort of "rogue" operation outside official U.S. policy. He produced emails and texts showing he, former special envoy Kurt Volker and Energy Secretary Rick Perry kept Pompeo and others apprised of their activity. One message from Volker said, "Spoke w Rudy per guidance from S." He said, "S means the secretary of state."

Democratic Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff of California said, "The knowledge of this scheme was far and wide."

Schiff warned Pompeo and other administration officials who are refusing to turn over documents and testimony to the committee "they do so at their own peril." He said obstruction of Congress was included in articles of impeachment during Watergate.

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The top Republican on the committee, Devin Nunes of California, decried the inquiry and told the ambassador, "Mr. Sondland, you are here to be smeared."

Nunes renewed his demand to hear from the still-anonymous whistleblower whose complaint about Trump's July 25 phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy led the House to open the impeachment inquiry.

Sondland's hours of testimony didn't appear to sway Trump's GOP allies in the Senate, who would ultimately be jurors in an impeachment trial.

Mike Braun of Indiana said the president's actions "may not be appropriate, but this is the question: Does it rise to the level of impeachment? And it's a totally different issue and none of this has."

"I'm pretty certain that's what most of my cohorts in the Senate are thinking and I know that's what Hoosiers are thinking — and most of middle America."

Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Laurie Kellman, Zeke Miller, Matthew Daly and Andrew Taylor in Washington contributed to this report.

Suu Kyi to lead Myanmar team contesting genocide court case

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Myanmar said Wednesday its leader Aung San Suu Kyi will head the legal team contesting a genocide case filed against it in the International Court of Justice over the crackdown on Rohingya Muslims two years ago that set off their exodus to Bangladesh.

Myanmar's military has been accused of carrying out mass rapes, killings and arsons against Rohingya during a counterinsurgency campaign initiated in western Myanmar in August 2017 after rebel attacks. Myanmar's population is overwhelmingly Buddhist, and the country has long denied citizenship and other rights to the Rohingya.

Gambia filed the genocide case on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the court based in the Netherlands said Monday it would hold public hearings on Dec. 10-12.

When filing the case, Gambia's justice minister and attorney general, Abubacarr Marie Tambadou, told The Associated Press he wanted to "send a clear message to Myanmar and to the rest of the international community that the world must not stand by and do nothing in the face of terrible atrocities that are occurring around us. It is a shame for our generation that we do nothing while genocide is unfolding right before our own eyes."

The head of a U.N. fact-finding mission on Myanmar warned last month that "there is a serious risk of genocide recurring," and the mission also said in its final report in September that Myanmar should be held responsible in international legal forums for alleged genocide against the Rohingya.

Myanmar has strongly denied carrying out organized human rights abuses. Its announcement that Suu Kyi would head the legal team was posted on the Facebook page of the office of the state counsellor, a position Suu Kyi holds along with that of foreign minister. Myanmar's government releases much public information on Facebook.

The brief announcement Wednesday night on the effort "to defend Myanmar's national interest" did not specify that Gambia's application to the court involved genocide, but said it was "with regard to the displaced persons from the Rakhine state," the area from which the Rohingya fled.

It said Suu Kyi will lead the team of international lawyers in her capacity as foreign minister.

Akila Radhakrishnan, president of the New York-based Global Justice Center, said Suu Kyi and Myanmar's civilian government "failed to act against genocide in Rakhine State with any level of urgency and have taken no steps to hold the military to account."

"The international community should no longer have illusions where Suu Kyi and the civilian government stand and must act to support The Gambia and take other measures to hold Myanmar accountable," Radhakrishnan said in a statement.

Myanmar last week rejected the International Criminal Court's decision to allow prosecutors to open the investigation.

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Government spokesman Zaw Htay said Myanmar stood by its position that the court has no jurisdiction because Myanmar was not a party to the agreement establishing the court.

The court's stance is that it has jurisdiction because the case may involve forced deportations and because Bangladesh is a party to the court. The more than 700,000 Rohingya fleeing for their safety crossed Myanmar's border into Bangladesh and since then have lived in crowded refugee camps there with no hope of safely returning to their home villages.

The International Court of Justice settles disputes between nations, while the International Criminal Court seeks to convict individuals responsible for crimes. Member states of the United Nations are automatically parties to the court, though they must also consent to its jurisdiction. Both courts are based in The Hague.

Official: Ukraine asked about aid on day of Trump call

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a blow to GOP defenses of President Donald Trump, a Defense Department official said Wednesday the Ukrainian government asked "what was going on" with U.S. military aid as early as July 25 — the very day that Trump asked Ukraine's president to investigate Democrats.

Testifying in an evening hearing, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura Cooper told lawmakers her staff recently showed her emails that she had not yet seen when she testified behind closed doors last month in the impeachment probe looking into Trump's dealings with Ukraine.

Cooper said her staff received an email on July 25 from a Ukrainian embassy contact asking "what was going on with Ukraine's security assistance." She said she "cannot say for certain" that Ukraine was aware the aid was being withheld, but said "it's the recollection of my staff that they likely knew."

Republicans have argued there couldn't be a "quid pro quo" — investigations into Democrats for military aid — if Ukrainians weren't aware of a hold on the aid.

"Your testimony today destroys two of the pillars of the president's defense," said Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif. "The first pillar: No harm no foul. The Ukrainians didn't know that the hold was in place, so it didn't really hurt them. The second pillar: This president was a real champion of anti-corruption."

Trump's July 25 call with Ukrainian President Zelenskiy occurred in the morning in Washington. After Zelenskiy pressed for the military aid, Trump suggested Ukraine "look into" Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who was on the board of a huge Ukrainian natural gas company.

In addition to the email from the Ukrainian Embassy, Cooper testified that her staff also received two emails from the State Department that afternoon of July 25. One said "that the Ukrainian Embassy and House Foreign Affairs Committee are asking about security assistance." A second email said "the Hill knows about the (military aid) situation to an extent and so does the Ukrainian Embassy."

UAW president steps down as GM sues rival over union bribery

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — United Auto Workers President Gary Jones abruptly resigned Wednesday, capping a tumultuous day that saw union leaders move to oust him, and General Motors accusing rival Fiat Chrysler in a lawsuit of bribing union officials to get more favorable contract terms from the UAW.

Jones has notified the union that he would retire, his attorney, Bruce Maffeo of New York, said in an email.

The news of Jones' resignation came shortly after the UAW's International Executive Board filed paperwork to expel him and Regional Director Vance Pearson from the union over allegations raised by a federal investigation into union corruption that has resulted in multiple arrests starting in 2017. The move to oust the two leaders would have brought union trials for both.

Pearson is facing criminal charges while Jones has not been charged but federal agents raided his suburban Detroit home in August.

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In the email, Maffeo said Jones decided to step down before learning of the move to oust him.

Jones, who has been a UAW member for 44 years and started as a factory worker, stepped down to let the union focus on its core mission of improving the lives of members and their families, Maffeo said.

Pearson's status with the union was not clear late Wednesday. A message was left seeking comment from his attorney.

Jones' departure came just hours after General Motors filed a racketeering lawsuit against Fiat Chrysler, alleging that its crosstown rival got an unfair business advantage by bribing UAW officials.

The unprecedented lawsuit, filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Detroit, alleges that FCA was involved in racketeering by paying millions in bribes to get concessions and gain advantages in three labor agreements with the union.

The lawsuit alleges that Fiat Chrysler corrupted the bargaining process with the UAW in the 2009, 2011 and 2015 union contracts to gain advantages over General Motors.

"FCA was the clear sponsor of pervasive wrongdoing, paying millions of dollars in bribes to obtain concessions" from the union, GM General Counsel Craig Glidden said. "FCA's manipulation of the collective bargaining process resulted in unfair labor costs and operational advantages for it, causing harm to GM."

In a statement, Fiat Chrysler called the lawsuit "meritless" and said it would defend itself vigorously. It also accused GM of trying to disrupt its proposed merger with French automaker PSA Peugeot as well as ongoing contract talks with the UAW.

"We are astonished by this filing, both its content and its timing," Fiat Chrysler said. "We intend to vigorously defend against this meritless lawsuit and pursue all legal remedies in response to it."

In its complaint, GM accused Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne, who died last year, of authorizing bribes worth more than \$1.5 million to union officials in a scheme to impose unexpected labor costs on GM. The higher costs were designed to force GM to merge with FCA, which had rejected Marchionne's offer to combine the companies, the lawsuit said.

Erik Gordon, a University of Michigan business and law professor, said one company suing another over bribes to union officials is without precedent. While GM's allegations are believable given what federal prosecutors have already uncovered, it will have the burden of convincing a jury that the scheme actually happened, Gordon said.

In addition to Fiat Chrysler, GM's lawsuit names former FCA labor relations chief Alphons Iacobelli, and former FCA officials Jerome Durden and Michael Brown as defendants. All have pleaded guilty in the federal corruption probe, which has alleged that Fiat Chrysler bribed UAW officials to keep them "fat, dumb and happy."

Authorities have said that payments were made through a training center jointly run by the company and the UAW. Durden handled the training center's finances, and Brown helped run the center.

After leaving Fiat Chrysler, Iacobelli went to GM's labor relations department in 2016. He was suspended after his indictment and fired in December of 2017.

In a separate statement, the UAW said it had multiple safeguards in place to ensure the integrity of its contracts negotiated with Fiat Chrysler, including reviews by local and international union officials.

"We are confident that the terms of those contracts were not affected by Iacobelli's misconduct, nor that of any UAW officials involved in the misuse of joint program funds at FCA," the statement said.

The UAW says it's committed to make whatever changes are needed to make sure misconduct never happens again.

Glidden told reporters that in the three UAW contracts, FCA was able to reduce its labor costs because the union allowed it to hire more temporary and lower-paid workers than GM.

In 2007, the union agreed that new hires would be paid less than longtime workers, setting up a "second-tier" of employees who were paid less. FCA has more second-tier workers than either of its Detroit competitors.

The Center for Auto Research, an industry think tank, calculated earlier this year that Fiat Chrysler's total labor costs including wages and benefits were about \$55 per hour, giving it an \$8 per hour benefit over GM and a \$6 advantage over Ford.

Glidden said GM is not suing the UAW because it believes that responsibility rests with FCA, which was the "orchestrator" of the conspiracy.

He said GM is seeking substantial damages in the case, but he could not give a specific amount. The lawsuit says GM doesn't seek to reduce wages or benefits of any UAW workers.

Last week, a retired union vice president and former GM board member became the 13th person to be charged in the federal probe of the union and auto companies.

Joe Ashton is accused of receiving millions of dollars in kickbacks from a contractor who made watches for union members. The 58,000 watches, purchased through the GM-UAW joint training center, are still in storage five years later.

Last month, the union settled with GM after a 40-day strike, and Ford workers reached an agreement shortly after. Intense talks with Fiat Chrysler began Monday, with the possibility of another strike due in part to union members' distrust of UAW leadership.

Arizona border activist acquitted of harboring immigrants

By **ASTRID GALVAN Associated Press**

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — An activist was quickly acquitted Wednesday on charges he illegally harbored two Central American immigrants at a southern Arizona camp operated by a humanitarian group.

The verdict by a jury in U.S. District Court came after jurors deliberated for about two hours in what was the second trial for Scott Warren. A mistrial was declared last June after a jury deadlocked on harboring charges.

Warren was stoic after the verdict was read. "The government failed in its attempt to criminalize basic human kindness," Warren said outside of court.

The jury's quick decision came in contrast to Warren's last trial, when jurors deliberated for several days before calling it quits over a lack of consensus.

Greg Kuykendall, an attorney who defended Warren, said the new jury followed the law carefully.

"They parsed the evidence," he said. "They paid rapt attention while we were putting on our defense and while the prosecution was putting on its case, and they decided that humanitarian aid is not always a crime, the way the government wanted it to be."

Warren, 37, testified that neutrality guides his work near the border and denied he has ever helped migrants hide or instructed them how to avoid authorities.

Warren was arrested in January 2018 by U.S. agents who were staking out a humanitarian aid station in Arizona known as "The Barn," where two Central American men had been staying for several days.

Prosecutor Nathaniel Walters said the men didn't need medical attention and questioned the authenticity of Warren's claim that he was "orienting" them before they left the camp.

The camp is run by a group that tries to prevent immigrants from dying in the desert.

"What they needed was a place to hide, and that's what the defendant gave them, and that is an intent to violate the law," Walters said.

Warren, a member of the group No More Deaths, says the group's training and protocol prohibit advising migrants on how to elude authorities. He said his interest is in saving lives.

"We need to work within the spirit of humanitarian aid and within the confines of the law," Warren said.

Michael Bailey, the U.S. attorney for Arizona, said he was disappointed with the verdict, but promised to continue prosecuting people who harbor and smuggle immigrants and those who sneak across the border.

"We won't distinguish between whether somebody is trafficking or harboring for money, or whether they're doing it out of, you know, what I would say a misguided sense of social justice or belief in open borders or whatever," Bailey said.

Kuykendall said his client did what everyone should aspire to do. "He risked his freedom, he risked his livelihood and he risked his future, all in order to help strangers in distress," Kuykendall said.

Warren and his supporters say President Donald Trump's administration has increasingly scrutinized humanitarian groups that leave water in the desert and conduct search and rescue operations when they

are asked to help find a missing migrant.

The federal judge overseeing the trial barred Warren from mentioning the president.

The Border Patrol had been investigating The Barn for months, according to documents released after news outlets sued to obtain them.

The documents show that in April 2017, an anonymous Arizona resident told Border Patrol officials that he suspected members of the group were harboring immigrants in Ajo. About three months later, officials detained members of the group No More Deaths on suspicion of vandalizing a camera at Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, where they regularly left water jugs.

In November 2017, agents interviewed residents who said they had noticed more traffic and littering outside The Barn.

Agents eventually encountered a man who said he had traveled across the desert with two other men who were picked up by a van.

Suspecting they might be at the No More Deaths building, agents began watching it on Jan. 17, 2018, arresting Warren and the two migrants. The men were deported after providing video testimony.

Thousands of immigrants have died crossing the border since the mid-1990s, when increased enforcement pushed many to Arizona's scorching desert.

How Sondland's testimony stacks up to his past statements

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For an ambassador whose credibility had been called into question by fellow witnesses, Gordon Sondland didn't seem to make any major corrections to past statements in the House impeachment inquiry.

He did, however, reveal previously undisclosed conversations, offer additional details about his perception of the Trump administration's interactions with Ukraine, and name-drop some of the most senior advisers to President Donald Trump — including the vice president and a Cabinet secretary.

A look at how Sondland's public testimony Wednesday compares with previous statements he's made:

ON THE QUID PRO QUO

Sondland didn't exactly deny the existence of a quid pro quo when he testified to Congress behind closed doors Oct. 17, but the only time he used the Latin term in his opening statement was to quote Trump's response when he asked him what he wanted from Ukraine.

"The President responded, nothing. There is no quid pro. The President repeated, no quid pro," Sondland, Trump's ambassador to the European Union, said at the time. "No quid pro quo multiple times."

On Wednesday, Sondland went out of his way to use the term in his opening statement. He said he knew a White House visit for Ukraine's leader was contingent on the country announcing the investigations Trump wanted into Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden. He left no doubt that he viewed the proposed arrangement as meeting the definitions of a quid pro quo. He said he presumed, but was not told for certain, that the release of military aid for Ukraine later depended on the same conditions.

"Was there a quid pro quo? As I testified previously, with regard to the requested White House call and the White House meeting, the answer is yes," Sondland said Wednesday.

ON VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE

Sondland made zero reference to Pence in the opening statements he delivered last month.

When his name did come up, it was mostly in response to questioning, with no new significant information revealed.

On Wednesday, though, he described a significant encounter with Pence ahead of a meeting in Warsaw with Ukrainians last September. He said he told Pence he was concerned that the delay in military assistance to Ukraine was tied to the issue of investigations. He said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy raised the same concerns with Pence during the meetings, and said the vice president replied that he

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would talk to Trump.

Pence's chief of staff Marc Short said the exchange recounted by Sondland "never happened."

ON A PHONE CALL WITH TRUMP

The first time he testified, Sondland did not describe any phone conversation he may have had with Trump a day after Trump urged Zelenskiy to investigate Biden. Sondland's July 26 phone call with Trump was not publicly known until a few days ago, when a diplomat who overheard Sondland in a crowded Kyiv restaurant described the contents in vivid and evocative detail — including the fact that the president and the ambassador had discussed investigations.

On Wednesday, Sondland confirmed he did indeed speak to Trump that day and said there was no reason to doubt Holmes' recollection that he and Trump had discussed investigations. He said the White House confirmed the call took place by sharing certain call dates with his attorneys.

He insisted the call did not strike him as significant at the time he had it, perhaps explaining why he hadn't disclosed it during the closed-door appearance.

ON MICK MULVANEY

Sondland minimized his personal relationship with the White House acting chief of staff during his private deposition, and he did the same on Wednesday.

Mostly.

Sondland stressed last month that he had not discussed Ukraine with Mick Mulvaney, and had had minimal interactions with him. But he said Wednesday that Mulvaney was kept abreast of the president's desire for investigations and was among the officials aware that a White House visit depended on Ukraine announcing those probes.

To prove his point, Sondland brought emails to the hearing, including one to Mulvaney and other officials in which Sondland said Zelenskiy was prepared to reassure Trump that he would leave no stone unturned in the investigations.

ON SECRETARY OF STATE MIKE POMPEO

Sondland had stressed last month that his actions had the blessing of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and that Pompeo had supported his Ukraine strategy and told him to keep up the good work and to continue working on Ukraine.

He shed new light on their relationship Wednesday: Pompeo was among the recipients of the July email that went to Mulvaney and others.

He also recalled asking Pompeo directly if they should organize a "pull-aside" meeting in Warsaw between Trump and Zelenskiy, so Zelenskiy could give reassurances that he would move forward with issues of importance to Trump. Pompeo said yes.

He also described a separate email to Pompeo's aides in which he said he and another envoy, Kurt Volker, had negotiated a statement that was to be delivered by Zelenskiy.

"Again," Sondland said, "everyone was in the loop."

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Amid turmoil, Prince Andrew to step back from royal duties

By GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Following days of turmoil that have damaged the British royal family's reputation, Prince Andrew announced Wednesday that he will step back from public duties "for the foreseeable future" because of his association with a notorious American sex offender.

The second son of Queen Elizabeth II said in a statement that his ties to Jeffrey Epstein had become a "major disruption" to the royal family's charitable work. It was unclear whether the change was a tem-

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porary or permanent shift in his role.

Andrew said he had obtained the queen's permission to step away. He also said he was willing to help any law enforcement agency with an investigation.

The scandal has rocked the royal family, particularly since a television interview on Saturday failed to ease the many questions about Andrew's links to Epstein.

For a senior royal to step away from his duties is extremely unusual and reflects the degree to which charities and educational institutions had questioned their associations with him in recent days.

Andrew said his history with Epstein had disrupted his family's work and "the valuable work going on in the many organizations and charities that I am proud to support."

The prince said he regretted his ties to the billionaire investor, who took his own life in August while in jail on sex-trafficking charges. Andrew said he "deeply sympathizes" with Epstein's victims, many of whom were underage victims of trafficking.

In the interview, the prince seemed to show no remorse for his relationship with Epstein. Wednesday's statement made clear that Andrew and his advisers now understand how damaging the interview was.

Epstein's suicide "has left many unanswered questions, particularly for his victims, and I deeply sympathize with everyone who has been affected and wants some form of closure," Andrew said. "I can only hope that, in time, they will be able to rebuild their lives."

Like most senior members of the royal family, Andrew was a patron for charities and other civic endeavors, lending his name and the backing of the monarchy to the good works of all manner of institutions.

But after the interview, some charities and universities said they were reviewing their association with the prince. And major businesses, including Barclays and BT, distanced themselves from Andrew in charities they were involved with.

Andrew has faced questions over his links to Epstein for years, and he hoped the interview with the BBC's Emily Maitlis would ease the pressure.

The move backfired.

The interview centered on whether he had had sex with Virginia Giuffre, who says she was trafficked by Epstein. Though Andrew denied the claims, his answers drew scorn. Giuffre said she had sex with Andrew on three occasions, including twice when she was 17.

Critics said Andrew came across as insensitive and arrogant — particularly in an era in which social media has made even the rich and the powerful seem more accessible.

The prince defended his previous friendship with Epstein because of the contacts it provided when he was preparing for his role as Britain's special trade representative.

The announcement that he was leaving his public role, at least for a time, recalled memories of the historic decision by King Edward VIII to abdicate in 1936 so that he could marry Wallis Simpson, an American divorcee. The queen's father George VI succeeded Edward.

Historian Judith Rowbotham of the University of Plymouth said there were "plenty" of parallels between the king's abdication and Andrew's decision to halt his royal role.

She said she was not surprised by Andrew's announcement and that the crisis could have "escalated" if he had not stepped down.

"I think it will be a great sadness for the queen," she said of Elizabeth, the 93-year-old monarch.

The queen did not comment on her son's decision during an appearance Wednesday night. She has never spoken out on the matter.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's dubious claim about Sondland

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump sought to defend against accusations that he pushed Ukraine's president for a political "favor" by making a dubious claim that he had little involvement with the U.S. ambassador who testified in House impeachment hearings.

Trump distanced himself Wednesday from Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union who had direct conversations with the president and other top Trump advisers about U.S. policy

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toward Ukraine.

Some of the remarks on Day 4 of public hearings in the impeachment inquiry by the House intelligence committee and the White House response to it:

TRUMP: "I don't know him very well. I have not spoken to him much. This is not a man I know well. He seems like a nice guy, though. But I don't know him well." — remarks to reporters.

PAM BONDI, White House adviser: "The president doesn't know him very well." — remarks to reporters.

THE FACTS: That's not credible. Testimony by several officials revealed that Sondland was in frequent contact with Trump around the time Trump spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about doing a politically beneficial "favor." Tim Morrison, the National Security Council's former Russia and Europe director, told House investigators that Sondland and Trump had spoken approximately five times between July 15 and Sept. 11 — the weeks that \$391 million in U.S. assistance was withheld from Ukraine before it was released as Trump pressed for the favor. Morrison said the ambassador "related to me he was acting — he was discussing these matters with the President."

Sondland himself changed his testimony Wednesday to acknowledge more contacts with Trump than previously revealed.

In previous testimony, he failed to disclose calling Trump the day after the July 25 phone call in which Trump pressed Zelenskyy to investigate Democrats, along with Joe Biden and his son, as a "favor." In testimony Wednesday, Sondland did not challenge the account by David Holmes, an aide to top Ukrainian diplomat William Taylor, who told House investigators that he overheard Trump discuss "investigations" in Ukraine. Sondland on Wednesday acknowledged that he opened the July 26 conversation by telling Trump that the Zelenskyy "loves your ass."

As recently as Oct. 8, Trump had tweeted that Sondland was a "really good man and great American."

But later on Nov. 8, Trump said that he "hardly" knew Sondland. That came after the ambassador revised testimony to acknowledge he had told an aide to Ukraine's president in September that military aid would not likely occur until Ukraine made public announcements about corruption investigations.

Sondland donated \$1 million to Trump's inaugural committee before being named the U.S. ambassador to the European Union.

CALIFORNIA REP. DEVIN NUNES, the top Republican on the committee, announcing that he is requesting a subpoena for the whistleblower's closed-door testimony: "They've zeroed in on an anonymous whistleblower complaint that was cooked up in cooperation with Democrats on this very committee."

THE FACTS: He's exaggerating. Democrats also would have to agree to a subpoena before one is issued.

The whistleblower did speak to staffers on the Democratic-controlled House intelligence committee before filing the formal complaint that would trigger the impeachment inquiry. But he's taking a big leap in asserting that Democrats schemed with the whistleblower to cook up the complaint.

Patrick Boland, a spokesman for Democratic Chairman Adam Schiff, said committee staff advised the person to contact an inspector general and to seek counsel. The committee did not get an early look at the complaint.

The whistleblower's lawyer, Mark Zaid, said the person had never met or spoken with Schiff about the matter.

Nunes is pointing to partisan bias in asserting that the whistleblower complaint is false, but key details have been corroborated by people with firsthand knowledge of the events who have appeared on Capitol Hill.

The rough transcript of the July 25 phone call between Trump and Ukraine's leader also showed that the whistleblower had accurately summarized the conversation in the complaint sent to the acting director of national intelligence.

BONDI: "We're going to hear what Gordon Sondland has to say today. He was the ambassador to the Ukraine."

THE FACTS: Sondland is the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, not Ukraine. He testified Wednesday.

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day that he and other Trump advisers pressured Ukraine to investigate Democrats "because the president directed us to do so" and that it was a quid pro quo.

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Browns' Garrett awaits ruling after hearing for suspension

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Myles Garrett looked composed and casual, a stark contrast to the last time he was seen in public.

Stylishly dressed in a bright blue suit and black turtleneck, the Cleveland Browns' star defensive end met Wednesday with an appeals officer in New York in hopes of getting a reduction to an indefinite NFL suspension that has temporarily ended Garrett's season and tarnished his career.

Garrett was banned last week for the rest of the regular season and playoffs, if Cleveland makes them, for striking Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph with a helmet. Garrett appealed and his case was heard by league-appointed officer James Thrash, a former NFL player, who will either lessen the penalty or put a definitive number of games on it.

The former No. 1 overall draft pick spent roughly two hours in the league's Manhattan offices before leaving with his representatives. He did not speak to the media.

In the closing seconds of the Browns' 21-7 victory over the rival Steelers on Thursday night, Garrett wrestled Rudolph to the ground before they scuffled. Pittsburgh's QB unsuccessfully tried to rip off Garrett's helmet before the two got to their feet.

That's when Garrett yanked off Rudolph's helmet, swinging it and connecting with the top of the QB's head. Rudolph avoided injury and was not suspended despite his attempt to grab Garrett's helmet or charging at him.

On Wednesday, Rudolph, who likely will be fined for his involvement, said he doesn't begrudge Garrett.

"I have no ill will toward Myles Garrett, great respect for his ability as a player and I know if Myles could go back he would handle the situation differently," Rudolph told reporters in Pittsburgh after reading a prepared statement. "As for my involvement last week, there is no acceptable excuse. The bottom line is I should have done a better job keeping my composure in that situation.

"It falls short of what I believe it means to be a Pittsburgh Steeler and a member of the NFL."

It's unclear when Thrash will rule on Garrett's appeal. As part of his punishment, the league said Garrett is required to meet with Commissioner Roger Goodell's office before he can be reinstated.

While Garrett awaits a ruling on his case, Thrash upheld the one-game suspension for Browns defensive tackle Larry Ogunjobi, who was disciplined for shoving a helmet-less Rudolph to the ground during the melee.

Thrash did rescind a \$10,527 fine for Ogunjobi, who will have to sit out this week's game against the Miami Dolphins.

The Browns will be down at least two starters on their defensive line and could be missing three if Olivier Vernon doesn't return from a knee injury that has kept him out of the past two games.

Earlier this week, appeals officer Derrick Brooks, a Hall of Fame linebacker, heard Steelers center Maurkice Pouncey's appeal of a three-game suspension for punching and kicking Garrett as he lay on the ground.

The league said decisions on Garrett and Pouncey will come "later this week."

Browns coach Freddie Kitchens would not divulge who from the team accompanied Garrett to his hearing.

"Myles has great representation," Kitchens said. "More importantly, Myles will represent himself well. We're going to continue to support him and Larry and we will not waver with that support."

As Garrett pleaded his case, the Browns are trying to regroup amid the possibility they'll be without their best defensive player for a significant period. Cleveland is still in the playoff race hunt going into Sunday's game against Miami.

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On Tuesday, Steelers coach Mike Tomlin called the incident involving Garrett "ugly for the game of football" but said there was nothing teachable to come from it because "I don't know that we did anything to make it happen in the first place."

Kitchens hopes the experience will serve as a reminder for his team to stay collected.

"We talk all the time about being the smartest, toughest football team and sometimes one of those things don't happen and you decrease your chances of winning and you decrease your chances of being successful and we want to add both of those to the mix, not one without the other," he said. "So you have to be both. That's a continual conversation topic and will always be discussed."

AP Sports Writer Will Graves in Pittsburgh contributed to this report.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Phony 'fact check' account on Twitter raises new concerns

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The deception was easy to pull off and came with barely any consequences. Britain's Conservative Party changed the name of its press office's Twitter account to "factcheckUK" during a televised election debate between Prime Minister Boris Johnson and opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn this week.

The renaming made the account look like a neutral fact-checker, raising new concerns about all the creative ways groups and individuals can use social media to deceive voters.

The party hardly even got a slap on the wrist, as Twitter pledged to take "decisive corrective action" only if the Conservatives try to mislead people again.

The incident occurred after years of promises, new rules and millions of dollars spent by social media companies to prevent election interference following Russia's meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

It shows that whatever steps tech companies have taken, users will continue to look for ways to exploit loopholes, unevenly enforced or nonexistent policies and companies' fears of appearing partisan in their crackdowns.

"This is dirty tricks and should be dealt with mercilessly," said Michael Pachter, an analyst with Wedbush Securities who covers social media. "It shows how difficult it is for social media to police tricks like these."

In one tweet, the Conservative Party account posted a short video with the words "factcheckUK verdict," declaring Johnson the winner of the debate. The renamed account still carried the blue checkmark reserved for "verified" Twitter users.

It's not clear if large swaths of people were misled by the fake fact-checking account. Plenty of Twitter users called out the deception while it was happening.

The Conservative Party changed only the name that appeared at the top of the account, not the actual username that comes after the "at" symbol. Anyone who took a closer look could still see who the tweets were coming from.

Twitter declined to answer questions Wednesday on whether it is rethinking its policies to prevent similar incidents and why it didn't suspend the offending account.

Twitter users can easily change their account names. This is popular around Halloween, when people temporarily adopt spooky monikers. While impersonation is technically against Twitter's policies, the rules don't apply to parody accounts.

There is no specific rule on Twitter against calling yourself a fact-checker, even if you're peddling anything but facts.

As for Twitter's bigger rival Facebook, it is unclear if there's anything to stop a verified group from changing its name on the social network to something like TheTruthUK or FactCheckUSA.

While Facebook bars impersonating the official account of a brand or a public figure, its rules are silent on names that merely describe the account's intent.

Some journalists fear that sites that co-opt the phrase "fact check" to make political points could cause

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the term to lose its meaning.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab defended the party's actions, saying the Twitter account was clearly linked to the Conservatives and asserting that voters would not be perturbed by "the social media cut and thrust."

"We make no apology for having an instant rebuttal to all the nonsense and lies put out," Raab told the BBC.

Twitter, long known for its freewheeling and public nature, has said in the past that it cares "deeply" about misinformation and its "potentially harmful effect on the civic and political discourse that is core to our mission."

But it does not offer third-party fact checks like Facebook. Nor does it ban misinformation save for a few specific cases, such as instances in which people are being told the wrong time or place to vote.

Twitter cannot check every single tweet for accuracy. Instead, the company said in a 2017 blog post, its "open and real-time nature is a powerful antidote to the spreading of all types of false information."

Even so, the company recently banned all political ads, calling it an important step in reducing the flow of election-related misinformation. But the policy does not apply to the myriad other ways misinformation can be spread.

Tim Bjarin, president of consultancy Creative Strategies, said that while the misleading name change happened in Britain, both major parties in the U.S. will probably "go to school on how this works and how Twitter responds to this."

AP Technology Writer Mae Anderson contributed to this story from New York.

Police: Mother took daughter from care facility, killed her

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — An elderly woman who feared she was developing dementia removed her mentally disabled adult daughter from a care facility, then fatally stabbed her in a suburban St. Louis hotel before attempting to kill herself, police and relatives say.

Marjorie Theleman, 78, was charged Tuesday with first-degree murder and armed criminal action in the death of her 51-year-old daughter, Sharon Theleman, after police were summoned to a hotel in Fenton, Missouri, because the pair had not checked out.

Sharon Theleman was pronounced dead at the scene. Her mother, who attempted to suffocate herself with a plastic bag, remained hospitalized Wednesday, according to a police news release. She left a typed note explaining her actions and a handwritten note telling housekeeping to call police, a police detective wrote in the probable cause statement.

Police said she was expected to survive. But one of her two sons, Scott Theleman, who lives in the Dallas area, said he has been told his mother is in a coma and has a "50-50 chance of surviving." He said his mother lived in a retirement community and wanted to have his sister moved there from a group home because his sister's mobility was declining.

"She was concerned about Alzheimer's," he said of his mother. "Her mother had it. She had spent many years trying to avoid it but felt she was heading that way."

"From what I understand, the note I haven't seen said she was doing this as a favor to her sons, so we didn't have to carry the burden of a handicapped sister and declining mother" he said. "I don't approve of that at all but that's apparently what the note said."

Scott Theleman didn't say how he knew the contents of the note and police declined to comment.

Court records show that Marjorie Theleman was appointed in 1989 as a guardian for her then-21-year-old daughter, who was described as an "incapacitated person." A report filed in 2014 in the guardianship case described Sharon Theleman as mentally disabled and visually impaired. The report also said she needed a walker or wheelchair and "cannot take care of herself." Thomas Zotos, the attorney for Marjorie Theleman in the guardianship case, said he had no recent contact with the mother or daughter and

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couldn't comment. No attorney is listed for Marjorie Theleman in online court records in the criminal case. Her bond was set at \$250,000.

Sharon Theleman had been in the care of St. Louis Arc, a nonprofit that provides services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"We are heartbroken by the tragic loss of a long-time member of the St. Louis Arc family," the group's president and CEO, Mark Keeley, said in a written statement. "Sharon Theleman has been a valued part of the Arc community dating back to the early 1990s. The circumstances surrounding yesterday's incident involve a domestic situation concerning a mother who has guardianship of her daughter. As such, the St. Louis Arc can offer no insight or comment other than to convey our deepest sympathy to Sharon's family."

Hollingsworth reported from Kansas City, Missouri. Associated Press researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed to this report.

Steelers' Rudolph: 'No acceptable excuse' for role in brawl

By WILL GRAVES AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph wanted to get away from Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett.

The way Rudolph went about it — a process that contributed to a brawl that culminated with Rudolph getting smacked in the head with his own helmet and led to Garrett getting suspended by the NFL indefinitely — is one of the first-year starter's regrets.

Saying "there is no acceptable excuse," Rudolph said his behavior in the final moments of last Thursday's 21-7 loss to the Browns fell short of the standard set by the league and the Steelers.

"The bottom line is I should have done a better job keeping my composure in that situation," Rudolph said Wednesday while reading from a prepared statement before briefly taking questions from reporters.

Garrett and Rudolph became entangled on the next-to-last Steelers snap of Cleveland's lopsided 21-7 victory. Rudolph flipped a short pass to running back Jaylen Samuels just before getting hit by Garrett, who twisted Rudolph to the ground as play continued downfield.

Rudolph took exception to Garrett wrapping him up, calling it "late." Rudolph said he was trying to separate himself from Garrett — who was not flagged on the play — when he briefly grabbed the back of the 6-foot-4, 272-pound Garrett's helmet.

"It was the last play of the game and I was just trying to get him from off on top of me," Rudolph said.

Garrett responded by tugging at Rudolph's facemask, eventually ripping it off and holding it high while Steelers guard David DeCastro attempted to separate them. Rudolph scrambled to his feet and gave chase in an apparent attempt to retrieve his helmet. Garrett then swung the helmet at Rudolph, connecting on the right side of Rudolph's head. The chaos that followed included Steelers center Maurkice Pouncey punching and kicking Garrett and Rudolph getting knocked to the ground by a blind-side hit from Cleveland defensive tackle Larry Ogunjobi.

In addition to handing out a record suspension to Garrett, the NFL banned Pouncey for three games and ordered Ogunjobi to sit out on Sunday when the Browns host Miami. All three players are appealing. Rudolph said he has not been notified of any fine for his actions but will accept whatever punishment the league metes out.

"I have no ill will toward Myles Garrett, great respect for his ability as a player," Rudolph said. "And I know if Myles could go back he would handle the situation differently."

Rudolph said he "definitely didn't say anything" to escalate the situation with Garrett, calling the ordeal "an unfortunate situation for both teams involved." Rudolph lamented that his actions led directly to Pouncey's retaliation against Garrett that resulted in Pittsburgh (5-5) potentially losing the seven-time Pro Bowler during a critical stretch that will go a long way to determining whether they stay in the playoff picture.

"Probably one of the best teammates I've ever had," Rudolph said of Pouncey. "A guy that you want on your team. He has your back. He has everybody's back on this team. ... I put him in a bad spot and

we're looking to get him back as soon as possible whenever that is."

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Netanyahu challenger fails to form coalition

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Benjamin Netanyahu's chief rival announced Wednesday that he had failed to form a new government, dashing his hopes of toppling the long-time Israeli prime minister and pushing the country closer toward an unprecedented third election in less than a year.

The announcement by Benny Gantz, leader of the centrist Blue and White party, prolongs the political paralysis that has gripped the nation for the past year. It also provides a new lifeline for the embattled Netanyahu, who is desperate to remain in office as he prepares for an expected indictment on corruption charges, possibly as early as Thursday.

Gantz, a former military chief, was tapped to form a government last month after Netanyahu failed to cobble together a coalition in the wake of inconclusive September elections. But during four weeks of intense negotiations, Gantz was unable to muster the support of a required 61-member majority in the 120-seat parliament by Wednesday's midnight deadline.

Addressing reporters, Gantz accused Netanyahu of scuttling attempts to form a broad-based unity government between their parties.

"He should have come to terms with the fact that the outcome of the elections required him to negotiate directly, with no blocks or barriers," Gantz said angrily.

"Most of the people chose a liberal unity government headed by Blue and White," he added. "Most of the people voted to weaken the power of extremists, and most of the people voted to go on a different path from that of Netanyahu in recent years."

Under Israeli law, parliament now enters a 21-day period where any lawmaker can try to muster a 61-seat majority and become prime minister.

That means both Gantz and Netanyahu will continue their efforts to find coalition partners and to explore the possibility of a unity government. Dark-horse candidates may also emerge. If they fail, the country would be forced to hold another election in March.

"These are 21 fateful days in which Israeli democracy will be challenged by the most important test," Gantz said. He vowed to try to find a way to pull Israel "out of the total paralysis that was forced upon us."

Gantz's Blue and White is the largest party in parliament, with 34 seats, just ahead of Likud's 33, meaning the two men together could control a majority. But during weeks of talks, they could not agree on the terms of a power-sharing agreement, including who would first be prime minister and what would happen if Netanyahu is indicted.

Opinion polls have indicated a new election would deliver similar results to September's inconclusive vote, signaling additional months of horse-trading and uncertainty.

The race, however, could be shaken up by the expected indictment of Netanyahu in a series of corruption cases. Channel 13 TV reported that Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit has decided to file fraud and breach of trust charges and an announcement could come as soon as Thursday. There was no immediate confirmation from the Justice Ministry.

Netanyahu is desperate to remain in the prime minister's post, where he would be best positioned to fight the charges and seek immunity from prosecution from parliament. With the exception of prime minister, Israeli law requires public officials to resign if charged with a crime.

As Netanyahu's legal woes have mounted, his Likud party has remained firmly behind him. But that could change if there is a formal indictment, and he could begin to face calls to step aside. It also is unclear how voters beyond his political base would react to an indictment.

Gantz has ruled out a partnership with Netanyahu at a time when he is facing trial, but has said he has no objections to partnering with Likud if it is led by someone else.

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Wednesday's crisis was triggered by Avigdor Lieberman, leader of a small secular, ultranationalist party who has emerged as Israel's political power broker.

Neither Gantz nor Netanyahu was able to form a majority government without Lieberman's support. But on Wednesday, Lieberman said he would not endorse either candidate.

Lieberman, a former Netanyahu ally who hails from the former Soviet Union, has objected to the outsize influence of ultra-Orthodox religious parties and refused to join Netanyahu's coalition of religious and nationalist partners after April elections. That forced the second election in September.

Lieberman had urged Netanyahu and Gantz to form a broad, secular unity government as a way out of the stalemate.

Speaking to reporters, Lieberman blamed both men for the failure.

"I made every effort. I turned over every stone," he said. "There were no significant gaps, they were mainly personal gaps and after it all, at least for now, it seems we are heading for another election."

Lieberman said he objected to Netanyahu's alliance with "messianic" religious parties, while he also accused Gantz of reaching out to religious parties and not negotiating in good faith.

Lieberman also ruled out a "minority" government that would depend on outside support from Arab politicians. Lieberman has frequently been accused of racism for describing the country's Arab minority as a threat from within.

In recent weeks, Netanyahu had lambasted Gantz for dangling the prospect of a minority government with Arab partners. His comments drew accusations of racism and incitement and a stern lecture from President Reuven Rivlin, who berated Netanyahu's "ugly" words.

After Lieberman's announcement Wednesday, Netanyahu called upon Gantz to join him in forming a unity government. "I think we must not drag this country into another election," he said at a Likud faction meeting.

Yuval Shany, vice president of research at the Israel Democracy Institute, said there is little appetite for new elections, but the expected indictment would complicate unity talks.

"I think what we will see now is the continued negotiations over the formation of a grand coalition," he said.

Rising regional tensions could also force the sides into compromise.

Israel carried out a wide-scale offensive against Iranian targets in Syria early Wednesday in response to rocket attacks against it. At least 23 people were reported killed, including 15 non-Syrians who included at least some Iranians.

Israeli security officials fear Iran could respond, setting off further violence a week after heavy fighting between Israel and Iranian-backed militants in Gaza. Against such a backdrop, the prospect of another dreaded election would weigh heavily on an already weary public.

US schools try to diversify mainly white teaching ranks

By MICHAEL MELIA Associated Press

WATERBURY, Conn. (AP) — It wasn't until she became a high school senior that Kayla Ireland had another black person as a teacher in Waterbury, a former manufacturing hub where the students are mostly minorities and the educators are generally white.

The imbalance never troubled her much, except for some moments, like when a white teacher led a discussion of police brutality and racial profiling. But the absence of black teachers has been a frequent topic of discussion among Kayla's classmates at Wilby High School, which has struggled with high numbers of disciplinary issues, including a mass suspension over dress-code violations.

"Sometimes people go through bad days. But because you don't have that person that looks like you, a person that you can talk to that can relate to it, you don't really know how to explain it," said Kayla, 16. "So it feels good to have a teacher that you can go to, and you feel comfortable with, because you're not going to be deemed the girl in class who doesn't know anything."

More than half of the students in American public schools are minorities, but the teaching force is still

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80% white, according to statistics from the U.S. Education Department. As mounting research highlights the benefits minority teachers can bestow on students, the gap has received renewed attention, including from Democratic presidential candidates who have endorsed strategies to promote teacher diversity.

Sen. Kamala Harris, who spoke at a September debate about the importance of black teachers for black students, has proposed spending \$2.5 billion for teacher-preparation programs at historically black colleges and universities. Other leading Democrats have also called for investment in those schools, as well as mentorship programs, assistance for teacher aides and new requirements to promote transparency around teacher hiring.

The Waterbury school system has taken steps to close the racial gap following complaints from the NAACP. Its limited success so far highlights some of the challenges of addressing the problem, which some see as rooted in teacher training programs and barriers that date back to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that led to desegregation.

An agreement reached by a state human rights commission and Waterbury's mayor in 2017 committed the city to build a partnership with black colleges and universities for recruiting purposes, to train students interested in teaching beginning as early as middle school and to provide cultural competency training to current educators. The 2016 national teacher of the year, Waterbury's Jahana Hayes, was hired as the top recruiter before becoming the first black woman from Connecticut elected to Congress in 2018.

Known as the Brass City for its historical brass production, Waterbury has 19,000 students in its school district. The number of black and Hispanic educators has been rising, but the teaching force was still 86% white as of the last school year. Among new hires, the percentage of minority teachers jumped above 30% for two years before falling back to around 25% last year.

Despite the district's outreach efforts, teachers and administrators often pass up or leave jobs in Waterbury for nearby districts offering higher salaries.

"We're one of 169 towns in the state. And so there is stiff competition," said W. Lee Palmer, the district personnel director. "And that's one of the reasons that we have to be really aggressive about what we do."

Cicero Booker, a former NAACP Waterbury branch president, said the district is doing the necessary work and change will take time. He also raised questions about the city's financial commitment.

"What are we going to do to make it attractive for teachers from other communities? Are we going to help them with housing? Are we going to give them six months' living expenses?" he said.

Research has found that black students who have at least one black teacher are more likely to graduate from high school and that black teachers are likely to have higher expectations for black students. Exposure to teachers of the same race has also been linked to lower rates of suspension and expulsion for black students.

Kayla remembered the police brutality discussion as an example of when a white teacher struggled to connect with black students. During a sophomore-year English course, the teacher assigned the class to read "The Hate U Give," a young adult novel about a police shooting. As students talked about how they avoid going into stores with hoodies on, the teacher understood but could not relate, she said.

After the mass suspension of over 150 students for dress code violations at Wilby in the spring of 2017, the appointment of a black principal brought optimism that the climate would improve, Kayla said. With more minority educators, she said, there would be less antagonism.

"I just feel like if we had a more diverse staff that reflected the school population, people would feel a little more comfortable in school, a little more comfortable to open up," she said.

The low numbers of minority educators nationally results partly from disparities in teacher training programs, which have been shown to enroll disproportionately large numbers of white students. Researchers also have traced declines in the numbers of black teachers to the period of desegregation marked by school consolidations and a trend toward tighter accreditation requirements.

The issue has received attention from state leaders in Connecticut, which this year passed a law creating new flexibility in teacher certification requirements and providing mortgage assistance for teachers who graduated from colleges that traditionally serve minority students. But advocates say it will take change

at each individual district.

"If there is an opening in your building, unless you say I am intentionally going to fill that opening with a person of color, we will not change," said Subira Gordon, director of the ConnCAN education advocacy group.

Kayla's mother, LaToya Ireland, said she will never forget a black teacher she had in seventh grade.

"She took her time not just with me but with other students, and she really left a lasting impression on my life," she said. "I would like for my girls and other kids to see that."

Thunberg, Cameroon peace activist receive children's award

By **MIKE CORDER Associated Press**

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Greta Thunberg, a young activist who has gone from staging school strikes to scolding world leaders about their climate change inaction, was awarded the prestigious International Children's Peace Prize on Wednesday, along with Cameroon peace campaigner Divina Maloum.

Maloum campaigns for the rights and education of Cameroon children preyed upon by extremist groups, while Thunberg has made global headlines for her calls for action to tackle climate change.

Thunberg could not accept the award in person as she was sailing across the Atlantic Ocean toward an international climate conference in Madrid.

She texted a friend and fellow activist Luisa Neubauer who accepted the award on her behalf: "I am incredibly grateful and honored for this prize." Thunberg dedicated the prize to her Fridays For Future movement.

In a video introducing the winners, organizers said that Thunberg and Maloum show that "children are at the heart of the fight for a safe and sustainable future."

Maloum set up an organization called Children for Peace that tours schools, mosques and marketplaces in her native Cameroon speaking to children who could fall prey to extremist groups like Boko Haram. She draws pictures, including of a child refusing to wear a suicide bomb vest, as a way of cutting through linguistic barriers to bring across her message.

She said that she would use her half of the 100,000 euro (\$110,000) fund linked to the award to help fund her group's next project, a pan-African children's parliament.

She called it "a platform which is going to help children to be implicated in peace-building processes and to make their voice be heard around the world."

Speaking to The Associated Press ahead of the ceremony, Maloum said she was honored to be receiving the prize alongside Thunberg.

"She also is a bit like a model for me so I'm very, very happy," she said.

Previous winners of the annual prize include Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani schoolgirl who campaigned for girls' right to education even after surviving being shot by Taliban militants, and the students behind the March For Our Lives in the aftermath of last year's deadly mass shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida

Disney Plus blames past hacks for user accounts sold online

By **MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer**

Disney said Disney Plus account passwords being sold in underground hacking forums are coming from previous breaches at other companies, predating last week's launch of its streaming service.

The company reiterated Wednesday that it found no evidence of a security breach and that account problems are limited to "a very small percentage of users" of Disney Plus.

Disney and other traditional media companies are trying to capture the subscription revenue now going to Netflix and other streaming giants. Helped by promotions, including a free year for some Verizon customers, Disney Plus attracted 10 million subscribers on its first day.

The news site ZDNet found stolen account usernames and passwords selling for \$3 on underground

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hacking forums. Disney's streaming service costs \$7 a month or \$70 a year.

Despite warnings by security experts, users often reuse passwords at multiple services, meaning a breach at one opens the door for a hacker to gain access to the others.

Users can easily avoid this by using strong passwords that are unique for each service, said Troy Hunt, an Australian security researcher whose "Have I Been Pwned?" website alerts people when their identity information is stolen.

But Hunt said Disney should implement better security measures.

"The Disney situation appears to be yet another credential stuffing attack where hackers exploit a combination of customers reusing passwords and the service provider not providing sufficient defenses to stop it," Hunt said in an email.

Paul Rohmeyer, a professor at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, said he's surprised that streaming services haven't yet implemented better security such as multi-factor authentication.

With multi-factor authentication, users must enter a code sent as a text message or email when logging in from a new device. The code helps ensure that people using stolen passwords or guessing them can't use a service without also having access to the legitimate user's phone or email account.

Rohmeyer said services may be hesitant to implement tougher security because they don't want to be seen as more inconvenient than competitors.

Multi-factor authentication is an option for many non-streaming services, including Google, Facebook and Apple, but the extra security must be turned on. Disney Plus does require codes sent by email when changing account passwords, but it doesn't use them for logging in from new devices.

Multi-factor authentication is harder to implement for services that are shared in households, as multiple users would need access to the same phone or email account. While Disney Plus, Netflix and Hulu let family members create their own profiles, with separate watch lists and preferences, they all share the same username and password. Apple TV Plus gets around this by having each family member sign in with a separate Apple ID.

Last campus protesters hold out as Hong Kong schools reopen

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong schools reopened Wednesday after a six-day shutdown, but students and commuters faced transit disruptions as the last anti-government protesters remained holed up on a university campus, surrounded by police.

City officials tried to restore a sense of normalcy as primary and secondary classes resumed. Workers began cleaning up debris blocking a major road tunnel, but it was unclear when it would reopen. Officials warned protesters not to disrupt elections scheduled for the weekend.

A small group of protesters refused to leave Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the remnants of hundreds who took over the campus for several days. They won't leave because they would face arrest, and police have set up a cordon around the area to prevent anyone from escaping.

The occupation of Polytechnic capped more than a week of intense protests, the latest flareup in the often-violent unrest that has gripped the semi-autonomous Chinese city for more than five months.

Also Wednesday, a former British Consulate employee said he was detained in mainland China and tortured by secret police trying to extract information about activists involved in the movement — revelations sure to add to protesters' fears about Beijing's tightening grip.

Since a police siege of the campus began Sunday, police have arrested 700 people who left campus to surrender, while another 300 minors were allowed to go home but may still face prosecution, Chief Superintendent Ricky Ho told reporters.

Among those arrested were people involved in an apparent escape attempt through a sewer. Ho said officers saw four people remove a manhole cover and lower a rope into the drain to help two others climb out. Ho said all were arrested but did not give further details.

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It was unclear how many protesters remained on campus, but they appeared to number fewer than 100. About two dozen scrounged through supplies in the cafeteria looking for food in the morning. Trash littered public areas, and a stench permeated the campus.

One protester, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he fears arrest, remained adamant.

"I think if you go out and surrender, it just shows you agree with what the police and that government are doing or have given up the fight," he said.

There were scattered incidents of protesters stopping trains by opening emergency doors and blocking traffic, but on a much smaller scale than last week.

Television footage showed long lines at some stations because of train delays. A few stations remained shut by damage from earlier protests.

A group of protesters, joined by students in uniform, blocked traffic at one intersection. Others in the area argued with them, removing some of the metal barriers that protesters carried into the street.

Even as the latest violence wound down, a fundamental divide suggested the protests in the former British colony are far from over.

Office workers joined protesters at lunch time in the central business district to show support for the movement, as they have every day since last week. Police kept the crowds on the sidewalks, so they wouldn't block traffic.

Hong Kong's protests began in June over an extradition bill that would have allowed suspects to be sent to China to face trial. Opponents saw it as a threat to the "one country, two systems" framework that gives Hong Kong its relative autonomy.

The bill has been withdrawn, but protesters now demand fully democratic elections and an independent investigation into police actions in suppressing the protests. City leaders have rejected these demands and said violence must stop before meaningful dialogue can begin.

Protesters also have called on the government not to cancel Sunday's neighborhood council elections. Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung, Hong Kong's No. 2 official, said officials are "extremely keen" to hold the vote.

"But much depends on the cooperation of violent protesters. It takes two to tango," he said, adding that blocking roads and disrupting traffic will make it hard for people to vote and "then it will really ruin this election."

The city sent inspectors to examine the damage to the city's Cross-Harbour Tunnel, as workers used heavy equipment to remove the debris left on the approach road.

Protesters set fire to the toll booths during their occupation of Polytechnic University that overlooks the approach to the tunnel, one of three connecting Hong Kong Island with the rest of the city.

The Hong Kong government joined China in condemning passage of legislation by the U.S. Senate that mandates sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials who commit human rights abuses and requires an annual review of the favorable trade status that the U.S. grants Hong Kong.

"The passage of this bill is an important step in holding accountable those Chinese and Hong Kong government officials responsible for Hong Kong's eroding autonomy and human rights violations," said Sen. Marco Rubio.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in a statement that the aim of the bill was to "bolster anti-China, extremist and violent radicals who attempt to disrupt Hong Kong (and) damage Hong Kong's prosperity and stability" as part of a plot to contain China's development.

A Hong Kong government statement called the legislation "unnecessary and unwarranted" and said it would "harm the relations and common interests between Hong Kong and the U.S."

Organizers said they've postponed the Hong Kong Open golf tournament because of the unrest, the latest in a string of disrupted public events. But in a rare boost for the economy, Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba raised at least \$11 billion in the city's biggest share offering since 2010.

Associated Press journalist Alice Fung and Kelvin Chan in London contributed.

Drive behind occupation of Alcatraz lingers 50 years later

By FELICIA FONSECA and TERRY TANG Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — On a chilly November night 50 years ago, a 7-year-old Peter Bratt, his four siblings and their single mother left their San Francisco home for the pier. From there, they joined a group of indigenous activists on a small boat, bobbing in fog and rolling over what felt like tidal waves.

They eventually landed at their destination — Alcatraz Island. At first, all the young boy could see was a vast, “magical” playground. He and other children roamed the beaches, literally blazing their own trails. They explored buildings that once housed prisoners, including Native Americans incarcerated there nearly a century earlier.

Despite his age, Bratt quickly comprehended that the adventure was the start of a movement. The adults banded together to take back a body of land that they felt didn’t belong to the U.S. government to begin with.

“I remember seeing these young Indian people from all over the country shouting to the world, ‘Red Power! You’re on Indian land,’” said Bratt, 57, the older brother of actor Benjamin Bratt. “Whoa, that was a game changer. I felt like I was finally home.”

The 19-month occupation of Alcatraz, which started Nov. 20, 1969, is widely seen as a seminal event that reinvigorated tribes to organize in the face of a U.S. government steamrolling over their land, their rights and their identities. Many Native American activists today say they are still struggling to have their voices not only heard but respected. They point to recent examples like their ongoing fight against a proposed oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota that they argued would contaminate water. President Donald Trump’s administration approved a final permit for it early in his term.

Alcatraz was the beginning of something, according to Bratt. His mother, who is indigenous to Peru, was among those keeping the momentum going. Their San Francisco home became a haven for Native American activists who were fighting for issues including sovereignty and treaty recognition. It also provided heroes for younger Natives beyond figures in history books.

“I think movements and events like Alcatraz and the Wounded Knee standoff, I think they gave us new role models and new warriors to look up to,” said Bratt, who visited Alcatraz earlier this month.

The 21-acre (8-hectare) rock in the middle of San Francisco Bay was a military prison before it served as a maximum-security federal penitentiary. Some of its earlier prisoners included 19 Hopi men incarcerated in 1895 after resisting cultural assimilation, according to the National Park Service website.

Occupiers argued they had a right to Alcatraz under an 1868 treaty the U.S. government signed with the Sioux that said abandoned government land would be returned to indigenous people. After the federal prison there closed in 1963, it was declared surplus property, a necessary step in selling it or transferring ownership.

Donations came in from around the world, and the occupiers set up a clinic, a live broadcast and a school system for children on the island.

But the coalition of tribes knew it likely wouldn’t get what it wanted: the deed to Alcatraz, a museum, cultural center and university built there, sustained federal funding and a seat at the table in administering national parks.

Over time, the occupiers dwindled. Students returned to college. One of the main organizers, the late Richard Oakes, left after a few weeks when his daughter was killed in an accidental fall from a stairwell. Infighting among demonstrators created factions, and Alcatraz eventually became more of a place for transients looking for food and shelter. Armed federal officials removed the last of the occupiers in June 1971.

Still, the occupation marked a pivotal moment — the start of Indian activism during the civil rights movement, said John Echohawk, founder of the Native American Rights Fund.

“It really kind of showed what the focus of Native American people was and, basically, our rights as sovereign nations,” he said. “Treaty rights as opposed to civil rights, equal rights that the other minori-

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ties were pushing.”

It was to be a continuous push that exists today through protests and court battles centered on treaty rights. Under a list of things to do while on Alcatraz, the occupiers wrote: “Set stage for next action! (Win one battle first ... then move again!!)”

After the occupation, American Indian Movement members asserted treaty rights in the takeover of a U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs building in the nation’s capital, at the site of an 1890 massacre on a South Dakota reservation, and on the road as hundreds of tribes caravanned across the U.S. in what was called the “Trail of Broken Treaties.”

The Alcatraz occupation also helped spur a shift in federal policy toward self-determination, allowing tribes to take over federal programs on their land — and a shift away from policies that sought to rid them of their culture, language and traditions.

Although then-President Richard Nixon increased the budget for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, it’s underfunded today. The agency that oversees schools, police forces and road maintenance on reservations can’t meet the needs of the more than 2 million Native Americans across the country. Its funding also isn’t shielded during government shutdowns, and neither is the Indian Health Service, responsible for primary health care for Native Americans.

Those services are supposed to be guaranteed through various treaties, tribes say.

LaNada War Jack, a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, was in her 20s when she helped plan the Alcatraz takeover. She points to recent decisions by the federal government to relax environmental laws and policies that don’t fully allow Native Americans to oversee public safety on their reservations as signs these battles are ongoing, and much work remains to be done.

“We’re really digressing rapidly, and we need to speak up and say something again and try to get some unity and some support and wake up the people in America,” she said.

Robert Free also participated in the occupation, leading the raising of a teepee that became a demonstrators’ meeting spot. He revisited the island over Veterans Day weekend.

Just like 50 years ago, Peter Bratt helped Free put up a teepee with the help of several Native teens. It will remain there until early January. But Free wants it to be a permanent monument to the beacon it became for subsequent protests.

“The Alcatraz occupation drew people from across the country and inspired people across the north continent and south continent and central America,” said Free, now 70. “All these people came and gave us lost souls direction. We were rediscovering ourselves.”

Tang reported from Phoenix. Fonseca and Tang are members of The Associated Press’ race and ethnicity team. Follow them on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/FonsecaAP> and <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>.

Check out the AP’s complete coverage of the occupation of Alcatraz.

Iran blames deadly unrest on outsiders, including US

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — As a cold rain fell on a suburb of Iran’s capital on Wednesday, women swallowed by black chadors and men in green military-style jackets walked alongside the flag-draped coffin of a Revolutionary Guard member, one of over 100 people reported to be killed in protests across the country.

A low wail rose among the women as they passed the burned remains of buildings set ablaze in the chaos that began Friday. The mourners did not blame the Guard member’s death on Iran’s government, which increased gasoline prices amid widespread economic woes as Tehran’s nuclear deal with world powers collapses.

Instead, those at the funeral blamed the United States.

“America, shame on you for your conspiracies,” they cried. “The blood of our youth is dripping from

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your claws!"

From allegations of foreigners in demonstrations to claims of outside forces being involved, Iran's government has been blaming everyone else for the violence unleashed after it raised the minimum price for gasoline by 50%.

Those claims have been amplified by state-controlled TV and radio channels, the only broadcasters allowed, after interference on illegal but widely tolerated satellite dishes has grown worse and the internet has been blocked since Saturday.

Iran has yet to offer any definitive figures of those killed, injured or arrested in the unrest. Amnesty International on Tuesday said it believed at least 106 people had been killed, with the death toll possibly above 200. Iran's mission to the United Nations disputed the figure as "baseless allegations," although a U.N. office earlier said it feared the unrest may have killed "a significant number of people."

Iranian reports suggested the unrest led to nearly a half-billion dollars in damage and losses for the country.

The internet outage and communication disruption made it difficult for Iranians to speak to the outside world. The number of online videos of the unrest similarly have dried up, a result of the internet blockage.

"That the internet is still shut down only signals that despite the heavy use of violence, the security forces haven't been able to successfully squash the unrest," said Ali Fathollah-Nejad, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center.

In the hard-line Kayhan newspaper, editor-in-chief Hossein Shariatmadari alleged Wednesday that the U.S., Israel, France and Saudi Arabia all supported the demonstrations. The newspaper run by Shariatmadari, who was appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, described "retaliation" as a legitimate right for Iran.

"It is possible to bring them to their knees through imposing heavy financial and military damage," the newspaper wrote. "The enemies have lived in a glass house and their sensitive and strategic military and economy centers are easily accessible."

It did not offer any suggestion on how the retaliation could occur, although Iran enjoys the support of proxy forces across the wider Middle East and increasingly has confronted the U.S. this summer amid the collapse of the nuclear deal a year after U.S. President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the 2015 accord.

The protests come as demonstrations also are taking place in Iraq and Lebanon, two nations key to Iran's regional influence. In Syria, another country supported by Tehran, Israel said it struck dozens of Iranian targets near Damascus on Wednesday, attacks that a monitoring group said killed at least 23 people.

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday summoned the Swiss ambassador, America's representative in Tehran, to complain about what it described as U.S. intervention in the Islamic Republic's affairs.

The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, which had been in the Arabian Sea for months over those tensions, sailed through the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday, the U.S. Navy said.

In Tehran's suburbs, people described the assailants in the unrest as moving quickly, something mentioned by others. Gas stations and banks, both private and state-owned, were seriously damaged.

"Everything happened in seconds," homemaker Maliheh Qorani said in Tehran's western Tehransar neighborhood. "Dozens of young and organized men smashed the windows of the bank and threw (gasoline bombs) into the building."

A heavy police presence could be seen in neighborhoods most recently affected by protests. However, people appeared to be more comfortable with coming out on the street than they had been since the unrest began.

Iran's relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani, whose administration said it pushed for the gasoline price increase to pay for more aid to the poor, declared victory Wednesday in the unrest, blaming "the Zionists and Americans" for the violence.

"Our people have come out victorious in different incidents and in the face of enemies' plots," Rouhani said.

Blaming foreigners for domestic woes is a decades-old tradition in Iran, dating back even to the time

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of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In the months before his abdication and the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the shah and his government blamed Soviet-backed rebels for the unrest then. Others saw the hand of Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, Palestinian militants or Israel.

The same could be heard at the funeral for Morteza Ebrahimi, a young member of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Protesters shot and stabbed Ebrahimi in the unrest and he died in a car that had been commandeered to take him to the hospital, his friends told the hard-line news website Raja News.

A funeral procession passed through the streets of the Tehran suburb of Shahriar, his casket riding on the back of a truck. Posters of Ebrahimi, bearded and smiling, sat pinned against garlands of flowers.

A truck in front bore a banner with the faces of Khamenei and the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini reading: "Protecting Islamic and revolutionary values, as well as praising martyrs, is the highest work." White-turbaned Shiite clerics in robes followed the crowd as it passed a building that was nearly razed in the unrest.

"These people have gathered here to say with a loud voice to the world's arrogance and hypocrites and those who wish to deal a blow to our ruling system to understand that the blood of martyrs has been spilled for this country," said Mohammad Reza Rezaei, a man who accompanied the funeral procession. "One of those martyrs is Ebrahimi who stood up for this system until the last drop of his blood."

He added: "We are here to announce that we will resist also until the last drop of our blood and support the ruling system."

In rare move, N. Carolina county removes Confederate statue

PITTSBORO, N.C. (AP) — A North Carolina county removed a Confederate statue from a historic courthouse early Wednesday, joining the handful of places around the state where such monuments have come down in recent years despite a law protecting them.

Preparations began Tuesday night to carefully dismantle the statue of a soldier outside the historic Chatham County courthouse, where it had stood since 1907, and continued for hours overnight, said county spokeswoman Kara Lusk Dudley. By dawn, even the base was gone.

A subdued crowd of several dozen people watched the work unfold. Television news footage showed workers atop motorized lifts secure the statue, which was then hoisted away by a crane as a few people cheered.

The removal comes months after Winston-Salem officials removed a Confederate statue from land there that had passed into private hands. Protesters have also torn down two such monuments in recent years, including one at a historic Durham courthouse and another on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It has been rare for public officials to take down Confederate statues in North Carolina since the enactment of a 2015 state historic monuments law restricting the removal of public monuments.

But county officials argued in court that the monument was private property, owned by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and a judge hearing the group's challenge declined to block the removal.

Crews closed two highways that intersect at a traffic circle around the courthouse while they dismantled the statue, which stood about 27-feet (8-meters) high outside the courthouse's front doors.

A University of North Carolina catalog of monuments says the statue depicts an anonymous soldier holding a rifle with its butt resting on the ground. It was made of stamped copper, finished to resemble bronze, atop a pedestal of granite.

A county news release said the statue and pedestal were carefully dismantled and taken to a safe location until the United Daughters of the Confederacy comes up with a plan for what to do with them.

In past weeks, demonstrators for and against removal had gathered around the statue, leading to scuffles and some arrests.

"The last several months have been a painful time for Chatham County. We've experienced high emotions, division and even violence which have impacted residents, businesses and the overall feel of our community," Chatham County Board of Commissioners Chair Mike Dasher said in a statement. "What's

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clear now is that the overwhelming majority of our residents are eager to move forward.”

North Carolina has been at the center of the debate over what to do with Confederate monuments as one of three southern states with the most statues, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

More than 90 Confederate monuments stand in public places other than cemeteries around the state. A state tally shows Confederate monuments are located at contemporary or historic courthouses in about half of the state’s counties.

Onlookers to the Pittsboro removal Wednesday had mixed opinions.

“It’s heartbreaking,” Robert Butler, a supporter of the monument, told WRAL-TV. “A statue’s never hurt a soul, just like a grave memorial. Do they hurt anybody?”

But Sandra Day of Moncure, who is black, told The News & Observer that she supported its removal. She said she got out of bed and put on a heavy coat to come to Pittsboro to watch the statue come down.

“It’s an honor and a privilege to be standing here,” she said. “I wanted to see it for myself.”

Fake doctors, pilfered medical records drive Oxy China sales

By ERIKA KINETZ Associated Press

SHANGHAI (AP) — Thousands of lawsuits across the United States have accused a drug company owned by the billionaire Sackler family of using false claims to push highly addictive opioids on an unsuspecting nation, fueling the deadliest drug epidemic in U.S. history.

Yet, even as its U.S. drugmaker collapses under the charges, another company owned by the family has used the same tactics to peddle its signature painkiller, OxyContin, in China, according to interviews with current and former employees and documents obtained by the Associated Press.

The documents and interviews indicate that representatives from the Sacklers’ Chinese affiliate, Mundipharma, tell doctors that time-release painkillers like OxyContin are less addictive than other opioids—the same pitch that Purdue Pharma, the U.S. company owned by the family, admitted was false in court more than a decade ago.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The Associated Press, supported by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, is investigating the global spread of opioids and its consequences.

Mundipharma has pushed ever larger doses of the drug, even as it became clear that higher doses present higher risks, and represented the drug as safe for chronic pain, according the interviews and documents.

These tactics mirror those employed by Purdue Pharma in the U.S., where more than 400,000 people have died of opioid overdoses and millions more became addicted. An avalanche of litigation over the company’s marketing has driven Purdue Pharma into bankruptcy in the U.S.

In China, Mundipharma managers have required sales representatives to copy patients’ private medical records without consent, in apparent violation of Chinese law, current and former employees told AP. Former reps also said they sometimes disguised themselves as medical staff, putting on white doctor’s coats and lying about their identity to visit patients in the hospital. As in the U.S., marketing material in China made claims about OxyContin’s safety and effectiveness based on company-funded studies and outdated data that has been debunked.

The AP examined more than 3,300 pages of training and marketing materials used by Mundipharma staff, as well as internal company documents and videos. These files came from three independent sources and were verified by cross-checking. AP also spoke with one current and three former OxyContin sales representatives who worked at the company last year.

Mundipharma has promoted its blockbuster product, OxyContin, in questionable ways in other countries, including Italy and Australia. But the company has particularly high hopes for China — the world’s most populous nation and second largest economy— where it has said it wants sales to surpass those in the U.S. by 2025.

Though Mundipharma and Purdue are separate legal entities, both are owned by the Sackler family.

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Today, Mundipharma is a bargaining chip in negotiations to settle sweeping U.S. litigation. The Sackler family agreed to cede ownership of Purdue, but wants to keep Mundipharma for now to sell OxyContin abroad. They have discussed eventually selling Mundipharma to fund the family's contribution to a nationwide settlement in the U.S.

Mundipharma said it was taking immediate action to investigate the allegations uncovered by AP. In a statement, the company did not respond to specific allegations but said it has rigorous policies in place "to ensure that our medicines are marketed responsibly and in accordance with China's strict regulatory framework governing analgesics."

In response to detailed questions, Purdue said Mundipharma is an independent entity, operating in a different country, under different laws and regulations. Representatives of the Sackler family did not respond to detailed requests for comment.

In the United States, Purdue stopped promoting OxyContin to doctors in 2018 and got rid of its entire opioid sales staff.

Meanwhile, Mundipharma is hiring in China.

A CELESTIAL CHALLENGE

Mundipharma China was born in 1993 in a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square. Just as in the U.S., the Sackler family's business interests in China coincided with their philanthropy.

The month after Mundipharma's creation, the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archeology opened its doors at Peking University in Beijing. Outside the museum is a statue dedicated to Arthur Sackler and his wife by the China Medical Tribune, a journal he helped found that now claims a readership of more than a million Chinese doctors.

These seeds of philanthropy and political alliances would bear fruit for the Sacklers just as opioid prescriptions began to fall in the U.S.

China was a tantalizing market for the Sacklers. The country's per capita consumption of opioids was low and it had millions of new cancer cases every year.

But if convincing U.S. doctors in America that opioids are safe was a hard sell, in China, it would be even more difficult.

China fought two wars in the 19th century to beat back British ships dumping opium that fueled widespread addiction. Today, the cultural aversion to taking drugs — in Chinese, literally "sucking poison" — is so strong addicts can be forced into police-run treatment centers. The country does not appear to have an opioid crisis anything like in the U.S.

Two decades ago, as stories of OxyContin abuse began to circulate in the United States, foreign pharmaceutical companies helped spread a new gospel of pain treatment across China, recasting pain as the fifth vital sign—alongside blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and temperature—and pain treatment as a human right.

Dr. Yu Buwei, director of anesthesiology at Shanghai's prestigious Ruijin Hospital, was skeptical. Philosophical and soft-spoken, Yu was deeply grounded in traditional Chinese medicine. During China's Cultural Revolution he used acupuncture as anesthesia on patients undergoing major surgery.

"It is necessary to treat pain," Yu said. "We agree with this. But raising it to a human right and the fifth vital sign, we think is controversial."

Many of his younger colleagues, however, appeared in thrall of these foreign ideas. They believed the best medical practices came from the United States. Few understood how deeply the Western consensus about pain had been shaped by the financial self-interest of pharmaceutical companies.

"In China, doctor's groups, especially the young doctors, show their respect to American doctors or the European doctors," Yu said. "What they say, that's truth. What you say, that's interfering."

DESPERATELY SEEKING SALES

In 2007, Purdue and three executives pleaded guilty in U.S. court to misrepresenting OxyContin as less addictive than other opioid painkillers, and paid \$635 million in penalties, one of the largest settlements in pharmaceutical company history.

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Sackler family members began to worry about a "dangerous concentration of risk" in their U.S. business, and trained their sights on the global market. Not long after, Mundipharma helped launch a campaign to improve cancer pain care in China called Good Pain Management, or GPM, according to interviews and company documents.

Today, the program is portrayed as a government public health initiative. But Zhang Li, director of internal medicine at Sun Yat-sen University Cancer Center in Guangzhou, said GPM "got the energetic support of Mundipharma during the launch process."

According to Zhang, the GPM campaign was started in 2009 under his leadership, by a group within the Guangdong Provincial Anti-Cancer Association, a non-profit that accepts corporate funding. Pharmaceutical companies helped by covering the cost of training and educational materials, he said.

Two years later, the Chinese government launched the campaign nationwide. On February 22, 2011, Mundipharma won a contract to implement the program with an initial target of establishing model GPM wards in 150 key hospitals within three years.

It was a watershed moment for the company.

Mundipharma was responsible for helping train doctors and educate patients, as well as distributing pamphlets and placards to raise awareness about pain. "Mundipharma will eventually become your best supporter and partner in creating a demonstration ward," proclaimed a PowerPoint assembled in 2009.

The program was a three-way alliance among the then-Ministry of Health, the Chinese Society of Clinical Oncology and Mundipharma, according to Zhang and presentations used by Mundipharma sales staff.

Mundipharma's initial contract with the oncology society gave it a seat on the GPM leadership team and barred the company from using the program to market its products, according to sections of the contract obtained by AP. In internal company documents, however, Mundipharma treated the program as part of its marketing strategy and used it to tout the superiority of its own products.

"We were definitely talking about OxyContin ninety percent of the time," said a former sales rep who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

The oncology society declined to answer questions. China's Ministry of Health, which was reorganized as the National Health Commission, said it hadn't designated a company to provide assistance for the program.

One GPM presentation that Mundipharma employees said was still being used last year suggested OxyContin is the preferred option for cancer pain treatment under World Health Organization and other guidelines, before detailing why competing painkillers such as acetaminophen, fentanyl patches and immediate release morphine aren't recommended.

The WHO does not recommend OxyContin as superior to other drugs for cancer pain care.

In a statement to AP, the company said its role in GPM is only to assist with implementation. "The Program is independently initiated and managed with the goal of improving the medical community's understanding of cancer pain management treatments," the company said.

Mundipharma told AP that all marketing materials undergo multi-level approval. But current and former employees acknowledged that they sometimes altered the officially-vetted presentations. The messages contained in all three sets of documents were consistent and contained information that Purdue Pharma has used in the United States.

In the years after GPM rolled out, from 2012 through 2018, sales of Mundipharma's oxycodone, the active ingredient in OxyContin, at nearly 700 of China's major hospitals rose five-fold, according to previously unreported data from the government-linked China National Pharmaceutical Industry Information Center.

During that same period, sales of morphine, widely considered an affordable "gold standard" for pain treatment, remained flat at those same hospitals. By early 2017, OxyContin had captured roughly 60 percent of the cancer pain market in China, up from just over 40 percent in 2014, company documents show.

Tony Chen, a former OxyContin sales rep who spoke on condition that he be identified by his English name, for fear of retribution, said he loved GPM because the government backing got him high-level access at hospitals and helped drive sales.

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"We didn't need to bribe," he said. "That's why I liked it."

The pressure to perform was intense. Chen and other reps said quarterly sales targets rose by as much as 30 percent. If he surpassed them, he could more than double his take home pay. If he didn't, he could lose his job.

He said he was prepared to "get fired up" about driving growth. He wasn't prepared to break the law.

One current and three former sales reps who worked in different parts of China told the AP that managers required them to upload patients' medical records, obtained without consent, to a company chat group each day.

AP was shown snapshots of prescription records staff said were sent to managers. Handwritten on pink slips of paper, they included the patient's full name, age, phone number, ID number, diagnosis and prescription.

The more precise the information, the better Mundipharma could plan sales targets, as well as guide doctors to increase dosages and switch to OxyContin from rival drugs, former sales reps explained.

Chen knew he had no legal right to copy personal information, and at first scribbled over patients' names before uploading the documents. He and his colleagues said they used to discreetly snap photos of patient records during the night shift, or during lunch breaks.

Ultimately, Chen said, he decided his effort to protect privacy was a waste of time because other people in his group were uploading full patient records. He told himself it was OK because the information wouldn't circulate outside Mundipharma.

When it was time for hospital rounds, Chen sometimes slipped on a white doctor's coat and mingled with medical staff. If anyone asked who he was, he lied and told them he was a doctor or an intern. He said he sometimes asked patients directly if they felt sore, swollen or numb and how they were sleeping.

Two other former OxyContin sales reps said they also disguised themselves in doctor's coats and sat in on patient meetings.

The key to this access was good relationships with doctors. Just as Purdue was accused of doing in the U.S., Mundipharma cultivated doctors with paid speaking gigs, dinners, event sponsorships and expense-paid trips to meetings, sometimes routing payments through third parties, sales reps said. Speakers, who sometimes delivered presentations created by or with Mundipharma sales staff, could earn 500 yuan (\$70) to several thousand yuan per speech, current and former employees said.

Two of Chen's former colleagues said they also used gift cards to encourage doctors to prescribe more. It was easy to fake receipts for company expense reports and get cash to fund under-the-table payments, they claimed.

Mundipharma told AP it promotes ethical behavior and compliance with Chinese law through internal monitoring as well as external audits. "We have detailed policies covering interactions with healthcare professionals, grants and donations, and sponsorships and incentives," the company said, adding that a compliance team monitors expense claims and meetings.

China has some of the strictest regulation in the world on the use of opioids. Opioid painkillers like OxyContin are not available at pharmacies. They are stored under double-lock at hospitals and governed by so-called "red prescriptions," which only specially certified doctors can write.

But as pain treatment expanded in China, with the establishment of pain clinics beginning in 2007 and the rollout of GPM, more doctors became certified to prescribe opioids. Pain management ceased to be the purview of anesthesiologists like Ruijin Hospital's Dr. Yu. It became a matter for surgeons, pain clinicians and cancer doctors.

"Patients, or drug abusers, can get these kinds of drugs much more easily compared with 10 years ago," Yu said. "That's a problem."

Yu read about what was happening in the U.S. and worried for China. "There is already a quite enormous group of drug users in this society," he said.

Yu resisted the notion that opioid painkillers weren't addictive and could be safely used, at any dose, for all kinds of pain. He checked the scientific references on clinical presentations and often found them

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unconvincing. He barred sales reps from his department.

Yu said he tried to persuade colleagues that some of the new notions about pain were silly, even risky. "I remember I argued with them, muscle pain or joint pain is not a good indication for opioid drugs," he said. "But they said, it's a human right. You have to relieve the pain."

A FAMILIAR PLAYBOOK

When Chen started work at Mundipharma, he was taught that OxyContin was a good drug, and widely used in America.

The company gave him hundreds of pages of documents to study. Chen read that the risk of getting addicted to opioid painkillers was virtually non-existent and that OxyContin's slow-release formulation made it even safer. He didn't bother to check the references Mundipharma cited as proof. Neither did most doctors at China's notoriously overburdened hospitals. And the legal sanctions Purdue faced in the U.S. didn't apply in China, where some people had never heard of the company or its troubles.

"I considered this a problem in terms of humanistic care for patients," Chen said. "This is a really good product."

In the 2007 lawsuit filed by U.S. prosecutors, Purdue conceded that some of its employees had falsely claimed that long-acting opioids are less addictive because they have fewer "peak and trough" effects and cause less euphoria. Purdue entered into a legally binding agreement with the U.S. government to ensure that their staff never made such claims again.

"Purdue accepted responsibility for the misconduct in 2007 and has since then strived never to repeat it," the company said again in a legal filing in September.

Yet, three current and former employees of Purdue's international affiliate in China made the same claim to AP that OxyContin reduces the risk of addiction because it is released slowly into the bloodstream, causing fewer "peaks and troughs" than immediate-release drugs. This argument has no scientific basis, according to a 2016 U.S. Centers for Disease Control report.

Sustained-release technology "further reduces the incidence of addiction," reads a Mundipharma PowerPoint slide staff said was still in use last year. It referenced a study in the scientific journal *Cancer* from 1989 funded by Purdue and co-authored by a Purdue employee, and a brief 2004 Chinese study.

Neither paper actually examined addiction risk.

Some influential doctors in China also continue to make Mundipharma's argument.

"The prolonged release formulation doesn't easily give rise to drug dependence," Dr. Fan Bifa, the director of the pain clinic at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing, told the AP in May.

Dr. Fan has spoken at Mundipharma-funded conferences and appeared in a pain awareness video alongside Mundipharma China's general manager, other prominent doctors and celebrities. The China-Japan Friendship Hospital was among the first to obtain certification under the Good Pain Management program in Beijing.

Fan told AP he has never taken money directly from Mundipharma.

When AP told Fan about Purdue's 2007 guilty plea, he seemed shocked. He said he had never looked for scientific evidence to prove that sustained release opioids are less likely to cause addiction.

Other Mundipharma materials echoed a brief 1980 letter in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that has been repeatedly and incorrectly cited to suggest that opioids aren't as addictive as everyone had long thought. Even after the journal "for reasons of public health" took the unusual step of publishing a cautionary editor's note above the letter, it continued to be used in China.

"In the last 40 years, clinical studies at home and abroad have shown that the danger of opioid dependence occurring is less than 3/10,000," proclaimed a Sept. 2017 press release for a Mundipharma-backed cancer pain awareness campaign.

Three current and former OxyContin sales reps repeated similar statistics to AP.

In a statement to AP, Mundipharma said that it "mandates warnings of addiction risk" in material used by sales representatives, but did not provide further detail. The package insert for OxyContin in China warns that it has the potential for abuse but also says "concerns about abuse, addiction, and diversion should not prevent proper use for pain treatment."

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control says that as many as 1 in 4 people prescribed opioids for long-term use struggle with addiction.

The Mundipharma sales reps told AP they had a pitch for doctors worried about addiction: If used properly, the risks of addiction to opioid painkillers are virtually non-existent. Patients who seem addicted may just need more drugs to control pain, staff PowerPoints explained.

"Based on my experience, that's like a joke," Dr. Yu said.

He said patients could slip into addiction within a few days. "They came to you and started talking repeatedly about pain and asked you to prescribe medicine," Yu said. "We call this drug-seeking behavior." Mundipharma called it "pseudoaddiction."

It is a notion first popularized by Dr. J. David Haddox, who coined the term "pseudoaddiction" in a 1989 paper. Haddox went on to spend nearly two decades as an executive at Purdue Pharma.

OxyContin's FDA-approved label warns that even if taken as prescribed, OxyContin carries potentially lethal risks of addiction and abuse. Purdue now faces multiple U.S. lawsuits for spreading ideas about pseudoaddiction, as well as claiming the risk of opioid addiction is low and that doses can be increased without risk.

The idea that patients can safely take as much OxyContin as they want was great for Chen's bottom line. Mundipharma sometimes offered special bonuses for selling 40 mg OxyContin, the largest, most expensive dose sold in China, internal documents and interviews show.

But Chen said cramming people full of pills "would lay heavy on my conscience."

Chen flipped through a PowerPoint presentation on high-dose opioids he said he got from his boss at Mundipharma and pointed to an example of a patient taking 1500 mg twice a day.

"It's terrifying," he said.

A year after the CDC said that taking more than 33mg of OxyContin a day at least doubles the risk of overdose, Mundipharma came out with a marketing plan pushing its 40mg pill.

Mundipharma said its training covers "appropriate dosage levels for cancer patients" and provides information "in accordance with current best practice."

As Chen looked back over his training documents, he found presentations touting opioid painkillers as a safe and effective treatment for chronic pain, citing outdated studies with authors linked to Mundipharma and other companies.

The co-author on a 2006 study of visceral pain went on to serve as a paid consultant for Mundipharma. One of the authors on another study, from 2003, cited as evidence that OxyContin is "ideal" for neuropathic pain, was a Mundipharma Canada employee. Mundipharma sourced OxyContin's effectiveness for osteoarthritis pain to the American Academy of Pain Medicine, a professional society that attorneys general allege, in multiple lawsuits, is a paid front group for corporate interests.

In the U.S., Purdue also set out to change the culture of pain by first focusing on cancer. But from the beginning, Purdue was after the far larger non-cancer pain market, according to budget documents released by the Florida Attorney General's office and published by Kaiser Health News.

The CDC says there are risks of "serious harms" from taking opioids long-term for chronic pain, but evidence for the potential benefits is lacking.

In a statement to AP, Mundipharma said that OxyContin "is used in practice only for the treatment of cancer pain in China."

But under Chinese regulations, OxyContin can be used to treat moderate to severe pain, whether it's caused by cancer or not. Government guidelines published in 2002 specify that strong opioids like OxyContin can be used after other methods have failed for non-cancer patients who are over 40 years of age and suffer from a handful of painful conditions.

But the guidelines are not rigorously followed. AP spoke with three doctors who said they prescribed OxyContin for a range of chronic pain conditions, though all said the numbers of non-cancer pain patients on OxyContin in China are small.

China's National Health Commission, the National Medical Products Administration, the State Administration for Market Regulation and the National Development and Reform Commission all declined to comment

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on detailed questions from the AP.

AN UNCERTAIN LEGACY

If the U.S. has entered an endgame in its battle with prescription painkillers, China is somewhere near the beginning. While some people believe China's painful history with opium and strict regulations will protect it against a U.S.-style outbreak, others fear for the future.

"Why am I afraid of a drug epidemic?" Dr. Yu said. "If our doctors can't stand temptation and want to make tens or hundreds of thousands of yuan a month, it is easy to be manipulated by other people."

Sitting in a large, Spartan office at Ruijin's campus in suburban Shanghai, Yu had an air of resignation. His beliefs about how to shepherd people through suffering had fallen out of fashion in China. But Yu seemed at peace with his lost prestige.

In the end, he said, "it relies on the doctor's conscience."

Associated Press researcher Chen Si in Shanghai contributed to this report.

Follow Kinetz on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/ekinetz>

Online: A selection of Mundipharma China documents, U.S. court filings and regulatory guidelines
<https://www.documentcloud.org/search/projectid:46816-munipharma-china-documents>

Asian shares skid on renewed US-China trade worries

By **ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Shares skidded Thursday in Asia after moderate declines on Wall Street as anxious investors mounted over the possibility the U.S. and China may not reach a trade deal before next year.

Hong Kong led the region with its benchmark Hang Seng index falling 1.5% to 26,461.41. The Shanghai Composite index lost 0.3% to 2,902.20, while Japan's Nikkei 225 gave up 1.2% to 22,872.03.

A published report suggested a preliminary "Phase 1" trade pact that President Donald Trump had said he hoped to sign this month may not be completed this year as negotiators continue to wrestle over differences. The report by Reuters cited an unnamed Trump administration official as saying it was possible a deal might not be reached, but more likely that it would.

The comments spooked investors already twitchy over the possible blow to the talks from U.S. Congressional resolutions expressing support for human rights in Hong Kong, where political protests have dragged on for months.

China condemned moves by U.S. lawmakers to throw their support behind the protesters in Hong Kong, threatening "strong countermeasures."

"Asia has been nervous about the state of trade play all week with equities ex-China underperforming. The early price action this morning suggests that the cautious walk to the exit may be turning into an unruly every man for himself," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a commentary.

Investors have been hoping the world's two biggest economies can make a deal before new and more damaging tariffs take effect Dec. 15 on about \$160 billion in Chinese imports. Those duties would cover smartphones, laptops and other consumer goods.

Beijing wants Washington to first agree to broader tariff rollbacks on Chinese goods.

"If a deal is not going to get done before the end of the year, then all of a sudden this uncertainty comes back in around what's going to happen around December 15," said Scott Ladner, chief investment officer at Horizon Investments. "Are the tariffs back on the table again? The market has certainly come to expect that those are not going to happen."

In other Asian trading, South Korea's Kospi dropped 1.2% to 2,098.95 and the S&P ASX 200 lost 0.7% to 6,672.40. Shares fell across the region, but rose in India, where the Sensex gained 0.2% to 40,737.31.

On Wall Street overnight, technology stocks took the heaviest losses, along with communication services and industrial stocks. Energy stocks notched big gains as crude oil prices rebounded.

The selling nudged the major U.S. stock indexes off their recent all-time highs.

The S&P 500 index dropped 0.4% to 3,108.46. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.4% to 27,821.09,

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while the Nasdaq slid 0.5% to 8,526.73. The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks gave up 0.4% to 1,591.61.

Growing optimism among investors that the U.S. and China were making progress toward a limited trade deal helped pave the way for gains in the market in recent weeks, including a string of all-time highs for the major stock indexes.

That optimism dimmed Wednesday as investors weighed the implications of more tariffs kicking in next month.

The two countries have raised tariffs on billions of dollars of each other's goods in the fight over China's trade surplus and technology ambitions. That weighs on trade worldwide and threatens to depress corporate earnings and global economic growth, which has already showed signs of slowing.

Benchmark crude oil shed 11 cents to \$56.90 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose \$1.66 on Wednesday to settle at \$57.01 a barrel. Brent crude oil, the international standard, gave up 15 cents to \$62.25.

The dollar slipped to 108.52 Japanese yen from 108.59 yen on Wednesday. The euro rose to \$1.1077 from \$1.1075.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Nov. 21, the 325th day of 2019. There are 40 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 21, 1985, U.S. Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Jay Pollard was arrested accused of spying for Israel. (Pollard later pleaded guilty to espionage and was sentenced to life in prison; he was released on parole on Nov. 20, 2015.)

On this date:

In 1789, North Carolina became the 12th state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1920, the Irish Republican Army killed 12 British intelligence officers and two auxiliary policemen in the Dublin area; British forces responded by raiding a soccer match, killing 14 civilians.

In 1927, picketing strikers at the Columbine Mine in northern Colorado were fired on by state police; six miners were killed.

In 1934, the Cole Porter musical "Anything Goes," starring Ethel Merman as Reno Sweeney, opened on Broadway.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Air Quality Act.

In 1969, the Senate voted down the Supreme Court nomination of Clement F. Haynsworth, 55-45, the first such rejection since 1930.

In 1979, a mob attacked the U-S Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing two Americans.

In 1980, 87 people died in a fire at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

In 1990, junk-bond financier Michael R. Milken, who had pleaded guilty to six felony counts, was sentenced by a federal judge in New York to ten years in prison. (Milken served two.)

In 1992, a three-day tornado outbreak that struck 13 states began in the Houston area before spreading to the Midwest and eastern U.S.; 26 people were killed. Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., issued an apology but refused to discuss allegations that he'd made unwelcome sexual advances toward ten women over the years. (Faced with a threat of expulsion, Packwood ended up resigning from the Senate in 1995.)

In 1995, Balkan leaders meeting in Dayton, Ohio, initialed a peace plan to end three and a-half years of ethnic fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BAHZ'-nee-ah HEHR'-tsuh-goh-vee-nah).

In 2001, Ottilie (AH'-tih-lee) Lundgren, a 94-year-old resident of Oxford, Conn., died of inhalation anthrax; she was the apparent last victim of a series of anthrax attacks carried out through the mail system.

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Ten years ago: The Senate voted 60-39 to open debate on health care legislation. An explosion at the Xinxing coal mine near Hegang city in China killed 108 miners. The University of East Anglia, in eastern England, reported that hackers had broken into a server at its Climatic Research Unit. (The hackers posted hundreds of private e-mails and documents online, stoking debate on whether some scientists had overstated the case for man-made climate change.) The shimmering, white glove Michael Jackson wore when he premiered his trademark moonwalk dance was auctioned off for \$350,000 (plus \$70,000 in taxes and fees) at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York's Times Square.

Five years ago: After a three-day onslaught that dumped a historic 7 feet of snow on the Buffalo, New York, area and killed at least 12 people, the sun came out, but so did predictions of flooding caused by rain, temperatures up to 60 degrees and blocked catch basins.

One year ago: President Donald Trump and Chief Justice John Roberts publicly clashed over the independence of America's judiciary, with Roberts rebuking the president for denouncing a judge hearing a migrant asylum challenge as an "Obama judge." Some of Trump's Republican allies in Congress joined in criticizing him for refusing to impose harsher penalties on Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over the death and dismemberment of a U.S.-based columnist, Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee), inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Laurence Luckinbill is 85. Actress Marlo Thomas is 82. Actor Rick Lenz is 80. Actress Juliet Mills is 78. Basketball Hall of Famer Earl Monroe is 75. Television producer Marcy Carsey is 75. Actress Goldie Hawn is 74. Movie director Andrew Davis is 73. Rock musician Lonnie Jordan (War) is 71. Singer Livingston Taylor is 69. Actress-singer Lorna Luft is 67. Actress Cherry Jones is 63. Rock musician Brian Ritchie (The Violent Femmes) is 59. Gospel singer Steven Curtis Chapman is 57. Actress Nicollette Sheridan is 56. Singer-actress Bjork (byork) is 54. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Troy Aikman is 53. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chauncey Hannibal (BLACKstreet) is 51. Rock musician Alex James (Blur) is 51. Baseball Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. is 50. TV personality Rib Hillis is 49. Rapper Pretty Lou (Lost Boyz) is 48. Football player-turned-TV personality Michael Strahan (STRAY'-han) is 48. Actress Rain Phoenix is 47. Actress Marina de Tavira is 46. Country singer Kelsi Osborn (SHeDAISY) is 45. Actor Jimmi Simpson is 44. Singer-actress Lindsey Haun is 35. Actress Jena Malone is 35. Pop singer Carly Rae Jepsen is 34. Actor-singer Sam Palladio is 32.

Thought for Today: "Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment." — Robert Benchley, American humorist (born 1889, died on this date in 1945).

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