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"WHEN YOU'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO CONFORM TO THE NORM, YOU LOSE YOUR UNIQUENESS, WHICH CAN BE THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR GREATNESS."

-DALE ARCHER

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

Milbank Student Congress

Thursday, December 12, 2019

5:00pm: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Game at Tiospa Zina High School
Both 7th and 8th grade games will be played at 5 PM

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Closing for Inventory

We will be closing at Noon
on Wednesday, Dec. 18th
for Inventory

We will be reopening for normal hours on
Thursday, Dec. 19th

Thank you for your patronage!

S & S Lumber

HARDWARE HANK

201 East Hwy 12 • 605/397-2361

Governor's no increase in education does not affect Groton Area

The funding for education on state level does not impact the Groton Area School District, according to Superintendent Joe Schwan. "All of our funding comes from local sources. We get no state aid," he said.

The biggest issue for the district is the possible change in valuation of the property.

The Groton Area School District gets 80 percent of its tax revenue from ag property and 20 percent from home occupied/commercial property. Schwan said if there was a change in ag valuation, it would have an impact on the Groton district as there is not enough home occupied/commercial property to make up the difference. "It would be problematic for our district," Schwan said.

He mentioned that Tea Area is only 26 square miles. "They can't generate enough property taxes to do anything so they get a lot of state aide."

One thing the state will suffer from is a loss of \$20 million a year in taxes. The taxes you see on your internet bill will go away shortly thanks to a federal law.

The Capital Outlay fund was discussed. Districts can get a maximum of \$2,800 per student and will increase by rate of inflation. Schwan said that building expenses increase at a faster rate than the inflation rate and that down the road, it will become an issue.

The life insurance policy that the faculty gets, which is paid for by the school, will have a new company in 2020. In 2018, the \$10,000 accident life insurance was 65 cents per month per staff member. This year, it increased to \$1.92. A proposed increase to \$2.50 for 2020 has caused the ASBSD to switch to a different company for 2020. Some will see decreases and others will see slight increases for next year. Business Manager Mike Weber said the "fun" part will be getting everyone to enroll with the different company by the first of the year.

In other action:

Approved resignation of Jaccob Sargent, custodian, effective December 6, 2019.

Approved hiring Jasmine Schinkel, special education paraprofessional, at \$11.40 an hour effective January 6, 2020.

Approved a request from Emmanuel Lutheran and United Methodist to use two school buses on December 11, 2019. They will be using the buses for Christmas Caroling.

Approved Wyatt Locke as a volunteer assistant wrestling coach for the 2019-20 school year.

Steve Smith was appointed to be a member of the ASBSD Legislative Action Network for the 2020 legislative session.



The Groton Robotics Club put on a demonstration at the start of the school board meeting Monday evening. Jim Lane is their leader and he thanked the board for the use of a room and for the support of the program. (Photo by Paul

Kosel)

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Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

December 9, 2019

School Crisis Response Team Training. We are half way through this training which began today and will conclude tomorrow (rescheduled from December 2-3 due to weather). There were approximately 35 education professionals from as far away as Platte-Geddes here participating in the training. So far the training has included a lot of very good information and considerations for us to discuss locally and potentially write into our comprehensive emergency plan.

Needs Assessment Progress. The classroom and student observations are scheduled for December 13, December 18, and January 9. Our next regional training event which will include working with collected data is scheduled for January 15 and 16 in Watertown.

Pre-Student Teacher Presentation. On Tuesday, November 26, I lectured in Dr. Schwan's class to a room full of pre-student teachers on the importance of knowing and following the SD Teacher Code of Ethics, protecting the confidentiality of students and colleagues, and on the issue of First Amendment rights to free speech and professional decorum in the use of personal social media pages.

Statewide Superintendent Meeting. As you might imagine, the discussion at the annual statewide Superintendent Association meeting on Wednesday, December 4 was spent primarily discussing the news of the governor's budget proposal which included a 0% increase to the funding formula for K-12 education. She proposed additional money to fund the re-base for state aid to special education and additional money for the general fund to account for the estimated enrollment growth of 1,000 students.

While these issues are important as they relate to the general welfare of our statewide educational system, none of this will have a direct fiscal impact on our district. We receive \$0 in state aid to general education. We receive \$0 in state special education aid. Of importance to us, however, are the impending levy limitations in capital outlay and any potential modification to the property valuation system in place.

Clean Diesel Grant Application. I have begun to work on the application process for this grant program. If awarded, it appears that this grant could fund the reimbursement of 25% of the cost of a bus meeting EPA emission standards (estimated reimbursement at approximately \$20,000). We are most likely going to propose the removal of bus #16 (a 1996 GMS bus) from the fleet. We would purchase an activity bus similar to our most recent purchase nearly four years ago and put bus #04 (2004 International activity bus) on a route in place of bus #99 (1999 International route bus) which would become a spare. Reimbursement would occur after the delivery of the new bus and disposal of the retiring bus (FY2021). *New: We are going to submit an additional application that would replace bus #99 to increase our chances of being awarded funding.*

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Board Report

Elementary Principal

12/9/19

Enrollment:

- JK: 13
- KG: 48
- 1st: 42 (+1, -1)
- 2nd: 45
- 3rd: 39
- 4th: 48
- 5th: 43
- Total: 278
- PS: 8
- EC: 1

South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment: All surveys have been completed. Teacher and student observations will be done next week. Ms. Seeklander will also be responsible for principal interviews.

Teacher Observations: All of my formal observations for the 1st semester have been completed as planned. I still have to do 2 informals and 1 formal for our non-continuing contract teachers and 1 formal and 1 informal for our continuing contract teachers.

5th Grade Robotics: Becca Tullar from the the SDSU Extension 4-H office is here this week working with students and teaching them about robotics during their science classes.

Elementary Christmas Concert: Students will be performing on Friday, December 20th at 1:00 in the high school gym. Students will dismiss after the completion of the concert. Most students will be going home with their parents. Students riding the bus will be taken to the busses at the high school.

OST: OST will be closed Friday, May 20th in the afternoon.

Senior Mentors: Senior from Mr. Scott Thorsons government class have asked to come to the elementary school to work with our students. *"They are doing this as part of their community service projects as a unit of study for government. They all wanted to do something with the younger kids in our district. We are looking to do this on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 16th and 17th from 10:30 -1:30. They hope to assist the teachers in any way possible. Some of their ideas are: helping read, do homework, eat lunch and play games at recess. Some of the also would like to do some bike maintenance instruction."*

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Principals Report

MS/HS Building

Mrs. Sombke

December 9, 2019

- 1) Pre-ACT Testing Completed
 - 55 Students participated
 - 3 groups tested; 2 groups on December 4th and 1 group on December 5th
 - Mrs. Schwan was able to provide results and guidance to students in order to help them prepare for the official ACT test in April
 - Additional information on upcoming ACT online practice test can be found by going to ACT.org or by seeing Mrs. Schwan for assistance and schedule of testing dates and sites
- 2) 2nd Nine Weeks/End of 1st Semester
 - December 20th will mark the end of the 2nd nine weeks and the end of the 1st semester
- 3) Class Changes/Schedule Changes for Spring Semester
 - December 18-19
 - Students may see Mrs. Schwan to review options for meeting graduation requirements through available courses
 - Dual Credit Students will also need to register individually with Mrs. Madsen and may need to complete an Accuplacer before registration is final for any Spring Courses
 - Students and Parents may also access the Curriculum Guide-Book on the Groton Area Website so that you may review individual course descriptions
- 4) FCCLA Gingerbread house Competition
 - December 19th at Boys Basketball Game
 - Please see Mrs. Tietz for information
- 5) Crisis Management Training
 - Groton Area Hosting and attending December 9-10
 - Great resource and combination of education, networking, planning and preparedness so that we may be even better prepared to support our students, staff, and families in the event of a crisis
- 6) Early Release on December 20th
 - School will dismiss at 2:00pm on December 20th for Christmas Vacation
 - School will resume on January 6th for the start of the 3rd nine weeks and 2nd semester

Mike Schmidt Named Head Coach of Northern State Football

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University Director of Athletics Josh Moon announced Mike Schmidt as the next head coach for Northern State football this afternoon. Schmidt is the 30th head coach in program history and only the seventh coach since 1980.

"I am excited and honored to be the next head football coach at Northern State University. I can't wait to lead NSU Football as we take the next step in pursuit of greatness. Our family is thrilled to join the Aberdeen community," said Schmidt. "This is a great opportunity. I am thankful to work with Dr. Downs and Josh Moon as we build a premier NSIC program."



Schmidt joins the Wolves after spending the last four seasons as head coach at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL), where he posted a 27-13 record overall. Schmidt's .675 winning percentage ranks third in school history. UWL won 15 league games over the past three seasons, matching the most league victories in a three-year span since 2004-06.

"Mike is an excellent coach, his records show that, but he's also shown an excellent track record of developing student athletes," said Moon. "We're excited to welcome him to Wolves Nation!"

A total of 47 All-WIAC selections were earned in Schmidt's four seasons at UWL, including nine first team honors. Thirteen players were named to the 2019 All-WIAC Team, including four first team selections.

"Coach Schmidt knows what it takes to win. He also understands the importance of academics for our student athletes," said Dr. Tim Downs, Northern State President. "These are exciting times for Northern and Mike sees the momentum. He understands the important role athletics plays in the entire student experience. I cannot wait to see him lead the team into Dacotah Bank Stadium in two years."

The Eagles placed third in the conference standings in 2019, including a 31-3 victory over eventual co-champion UW-Oshkosh. UWL was ranked 25th in the final regular-season D3football.com Top-25 Poll while receiving votes in the final American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) Top-25 Poll.

"I believe Northern football is ready to take that next step," noted Schmidt. "From Dacotah Bank Stadium to the recently opened Athletic and Recreation Fields (football practice field), not to mention the overwhelming support of scholarships, we have what it takes to succeed at a high level."

A native of Menomonie, Wisconsin, Schmidt served as defensive coordinator and linebackers coach at UW-Platteville in 2015. Prior to arriving at UW-Platteville, Schmidt was the defensive coordinator and coached the linebackers and defensive backs at the University of Dubuque (Iowa) from 2011-14. He also served as the recruiting coordinator from 2009-14. Named the 2013 AFCA Division III Assistant Coach of the Year, Schmidt coached running backs (2009-10), defensive backs (2009) and offensive line (2010) at Dubuque (Iowa). He served as a graduate assistant coach at Minnesota State University Mankato in 2008, coaching the defensive line.

Schmidt and his wife, Morgan, have three children. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Missional Christianity degree at Dubuque (Iowa) Theological Seminary.

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Mike Schmidt Year-by-Year at UW-La Crosse

Year	Overall Record	WIAC Record/Finish
2016	5-5	2-5/6th
2017	8-2	5-2/3rd
2018	7-3	5-2/2nd
2019	7-3	5-2/3rd
Totals	27-13	17-11

The Schmidt File

- Career Record: 27-13 (.675)
- Coaching Stops: UW-La Crosse, UW-Platteville, University of Dubuque, Minnesota State University Mankato
- Four .500-plus seasons at La Crosse
- 47 All-Conference Players (UWL)
- 2 Conference Players of the Year (UWL / UWP)
- 1 All-American student-athlete (UWL)
- 2013 AFCA NCAA Division III Assistant Coach of the Year

What others are saying

"Mike is a passionate and hardworking professional who I respect! He will be an asset to the athletic department and represent the football program with class." – Todd Hoffner, Head Football Coach, Minnesota State

"Mike was my first hire when I got to the University of Dubuque in 2009. Mike is an outstanding Football Coach; his enthusiasm and knowledge is contagious. He also has a great family, which will be a great addition to the NSU family. But the most important thing I feel about Coach Schmidt, is he is a better person than he is a coach. I have coached for 45 years and he remains one of my favorite coaches of all time!" – Stan Zweifel, Head Football Coach at the University of Dubuque

"Mike is one of the rising stars in the coaching profession. He possesses a great football mind, and approaches everything with a contagious energy level. He is one of those coaches that players love to play for because of his positive approach, and unmatched energy level. He is a great recruiter and I have no doubt he will have an instant impact at Northern State." – Joe La Buda, Menomonie High School Head Football Coach, Five-time Wisconsin High School State Champion

"Coach Mike Schmidt is an excellent young coach who not only understands but appreciates the awesome responsibility that comes with being a leader of a program. Schmidt creates an environment for players that will be transformative rather than transactional. It's not the 'what' but rather the 'why' with Mike. The Wolves will not only be better players, and better students; but also better men on and off the field and throughout life. I'm thrilled for Josh Moon, the Athletics department, the Northern State campus and the entire Aberdeen community!" – Mick Miyamoto, Interim Director of Recreational Sports, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Today

Tonight

Wednesday

Wednesday
Night

Thursday



Cold



Partly Cloudy



Cold



Chance Snow



Mostly Cloudy

High: -4 °F

Low: -15 °F

High: 8 °F

Low: 1 °F

High: 17 °F

COLD TODAY! Dec 10th, 2019

At *BEST*, temps will hover near zero and wind chills 10 to 20 below for some

Air temperatures at 2pm Tuesday

Wind chills at 2pm Tuesday

Light snow possible Tuesday evening across portions of Central SD

Coldest air Tuesday night into Wednesday morning

10 to 30 degree below zero or colder wind chills means frostbite could develop in ~30 minutes

NWS Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 12/10/2019 5:03 AM Central

Winter is here and in full force, as arctic air remains entrenched across the region. Dangerously cold wind chills this morning will improve only modestly this afternoon, before plunging once again tonight into Wednesday morning. Limit time outdoors, wear layers, and stay warm/safe!

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Today in Weather History

December 10, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches fell across parts of Lyman and Jones Counties on the 10th and 11th. Some amounts included 6 inches at Kennebec and Okaton and 8 inches at Murdo.

December 10, 1699: A severe ice storm hit Boston, Massachusetts causing much damage to orchards.

December 10, 2002: A shower of tiny fish rained down on Korona, a village in the mountains of northern Greece. A Greek television reported a waterspout caused the incident on Lake Doirani.

1699 - A severe ice storm hit Boston, MA, causing much damage to orchards. (The Weather Channel)

1946 - The temperature at New York City soared to 70 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1949 - The barometric pressure at Las Vegas, NV, reached a record low reading of 29.17 inches (987.8 millibars). (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought high winds to the eastern slopes of the Northern and Central Rockies. Winds gusted to 97 mph at Mines Peak CO. In Wyoming, up to a foot of snow blanketed the Teton Village Ski Resort, northwest of Jackson. Strong chinook winds in the Central High Plains Region, gusting to 61 mph at Scottsbluff NE, warmed temperatures to near 70 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls produced heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Totals in northeastern Ohio ranged up to 14 inches at Harpersfield, and totals in western New York State ranged up to 14 inches at Sodus. In the snowbelt of Upper Michigan, the Ontonogon area reported two feet of snow in two days. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Heavy snow fell across the northern and central mountains of Colorado, with 24 inches reported at Steamboat Springs. Six to twelve inches of snow fell in the Denver and Boulder area delaying plane flights and snarling traffic. Heavy snow also spread across the Central Plains into the Mississippi Valley. Winner SD received 11 inches of snow, and more than ten inches of snow was reported north of Sioux City IA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992 - A slow-moving Nor'easter storm batters the northeast U.S. coast killing 19 people.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 10 °F at 10:24 PM

Low Temp: 0 °F at 8:36 AM

Wind: 26 mph at 12:35 AM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 58° in 1979

Record Low: -29° in 1972

Average High: 27°F

Average Low: 7°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.16

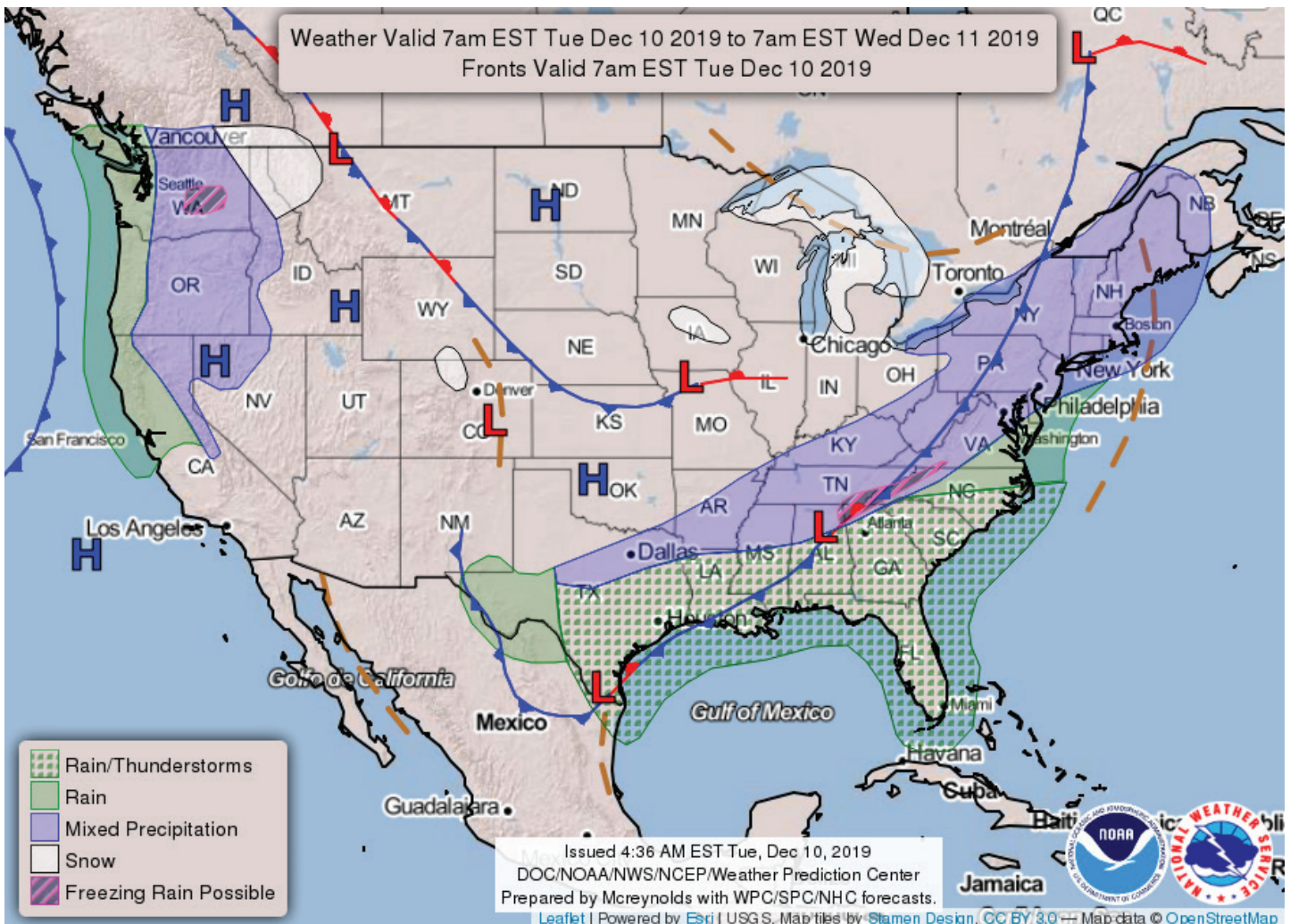
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.11

Average Precip to date: 21.36

Precip Year to Date: 28.06

Sunset Tonight: 4:50 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:03 a.m.



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WHOSE PARTY?

Competent! Outstanding! Careful! Friendly! Supportive! Bright! Cheerful! Caring! Gracious! And the list of words to describe Beth, the secretary to the president of the company, could go on and on. She was loved by everyone who knew her.

When it came time for her birthday one year, her co-workers decided to honor her with a lavish party. They rented a beautiful ballroom, hired the best caterer, designed a special cake, had special napkins with her name printed on them, and collected money to buy a gift.

All went well. The tables were beautifully set, the caterer was on time, the guests arrived, and there was excitement in the room. Everyone kept looking at the entrance awaiting the arrival of Beth. After waiting for fifteen minutes, the co-worker who organized the event said to Beth's best friend, "Where is she?"

"I'm not sure," she replied. "I'll phone her."

She did – and discovered that she was at her favorite sandwich shop enjoying her lunch - alone. No one thought to invite Beth to her own celebration!

There will be many parties this Christmas. And as usual, the Guest, Whose birthday we celebrate, will not be invited. Tables will be set, lights will blink, guests will arrive, laughter will ring out, gifts will be exchanged, everyone will have fun – but Jesus will not be present. No one will think to invite Him – the One who should be the main attraction.

Prayer: Lord of the season, may we place Your Son, our Savior, at the center of everything we do this Christmas. May we never forget, "It's all about Him." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 2:11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 12/03/2019 – Christmas Open House 10am-4pm, James Valley Telecommunications
- 12/07/2019 – Santa Day 9am-12pm, Professional Management Services
- 12/07/2019 – Tour of Homes 4pm-7pm, Olive Grove Golf Course (Tickets available at Lori's Pharmacy, Groton Ford, Hair & Co (Aberdeen) and Vicki Walter (605) 380-0480)
- 12/19/2019 – Christmas Open House 10am-4pm, Wells Fargo Bank
- 12/20/2019 – Holiday Bake Sale & Open House 9am-4pm, Groton Community Transit
 - Bingo: every Wednesday at the Legion Post #39

2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

Umude leads S. Dakota past Alabama St. 73-59

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Stanley Umude scored 21 points on 9-of-13 shooting and South Dakota beat Alabama State 73-59 on Monday night.

Leon Daniels' 3-pointer with 7:33 before halftime made it 20-19 in favor of Alabama state (1-7). Hunter Goodrick followed with a jump shot a minute-and-a-half later and the Coyotes (8-3) never trailed again. South Dakota went to halftime up 27-23 and extended the margin to 35-25 on a pair of Kruz Perrott-Hunt foul shots with 17:47 remaining.

Tyler Hagedorn scored 18 points for South Dakota and Tyler Peterson scored 12. The Coyotes were 26-of-52 shooting against 21 of 61 (35.6%) for the Hornets. South Dakota has won all four its games at home this season.

Tobi Ewuosho led Alabama State with 11 points. The Hornets had 10 players enter the scoring column.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and <http://twitter.com/AP-Top25>

South Dakota puts \$730,000 towards drug programs in schools

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota is allocating \$730,000 to provide evidence-based meth prevention programming in nearly 40 middle schools across the state, a state agency said.

The South Dakota Department of Social Services announced last week that nine prevention providers would receive the funding to support the schools.

"Our youth are at risk, and we need to protect them," Social Services Secretary Laurie Gill said in a news release. "That starts with education and awareness, and we are pleased to be commit these dollars toward prevention programming."

But some said that awareness and prevention is not enough, the Argus Leader reported. Rep. Kevin Jensen, vice chair of the state's "Fighting Methamphetamine Addiction" committee, argued that the state needs to make sure the difference between prevention and awareness is clear.

"Prevention is not a one-time shot, it needs to be continued and reinforced at all ages, especially in high school where the challenges of peer pressure are much higher," Jensen said last month.

The effort is part of the state's 2020 budget to spend \$1 million for meth treatment. It will run alongside the department's \$450,000 anti-meth campaign, "Meth. We're On It," which drew widespread ridicule when it launched in November.

The programming will focus on reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors such as environment characteristics that can support healthy development, the release states.

Each program is expected to draw attention to distinct issues and outcomes. It will also emphasize skill learning such as recognizing and challenging common misconceptions about substance use, practicing resistance skills, and learning personal self-management and social skills, according to the release.

"Our kids are our future, and it's crucial we teach them the dangers of substance abuse," Gov. Kristi Noem stated in the release. "These programs are aggressively combating South Dakota's meth epidemic and teaching our kids how to avoid harmful and addictive substances. Programs like these can have a tremendous impact on our students and our hometowns. It's time meth is eradicated from our communities."

3 arrested after gunshots fired at Sioux Falls hotel

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Three people have been arrested after one of them fired a gun at a Sioux Falls hotel, according to police.

Officers were called to the RedRock Inn Sunday about 9:30 p.m. where investigators determined a man

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had fired a gun at another person and his dog and then ran into one of the hotel rooms.

Rooms were evacuated as officers tried to get the man to surrender. A man and woman who came out of the room were arrested. The gunman initially refused to come out and the SWAT team was summoned. The man later surrendered.

There are no reports of injuries.

Pine Ridge fire victims identified as father, adult son

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — The two people found dead in a fire at their home near Pine Ridge have been identified by relatives as a father and his adult son.

Jackie Mousseaux says her 29-year-old brother, Jason Mousseaux, and her 64-year-old father, Ronald Mousseaux Jr., died when fire swept their trailer home a week ago.

"Jason and my dad were always together" and they almost made it out of the trailer before they died together on the back porch, Jackie Mousseaux said.

Simone Janis, Jackie and Jason's mother, said she began to worry when the two wouldn't pick up their phones.

Janis said her son had complained about the fuse box in his bedroom sparking, even after having an electrician come to fix it. She believes the fire began in his room and Ronald tried to rescue him, according to the Rapid City Journal.

Oglala Sioux Police Chief Robert Ecoffey says the trailer was totally engulfed by the time first responders arrived.

The cause of the fire is being investigated by tribal police, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Ecoffey said.

Deep freeze headed for Minnesota, Wisconsin, Dakotas

DULUTH, Minn. (AP) — A wintry storm system is expected to generate 10 inches (254 millimeters) of snow or more near Lake Superior before a deep freeze settles into the region.

The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning for northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin Monday.

The port cities of Duluth and Superior, Wisconsin are still digging out from more than 20 inches (508 millimeters) of snow last weekend.

Near record cold temperatures are expected to descend on the region after the snow moves out. Forecasters expected the high temperature to stay below zero in Fargo, North Dakota Tuesday and Wednesday.

Blowing and drifting snow was making travel difficult in South Dakota where some schools have delayed the start of classes Monday.

Federal challenge on petition circulators law being heard

ABERDEEN, S. D. (AP) — A federal trial challenging a state law that will require petition circulators to register is getting underway in Aberdeen.

The lawsuit, filed by the grassroots organization SD Voice, seeks an injunction to stop the law from taking effect next July. It requires petition circulators to apply with the secretary of state for an identification number and be included in a directory.

SD Voice says the law is unconstitutional. The plaintiffs say the law places additional restrictions on ballot measures, but makes no changes to the process related to candidates, candidate committees, political action committees or political parties, according Aberdeen American News.

Judge Charles B. Kornmann will rule after hearing the evidence. Kornman could make his decision Monday or issue a written ruling later.

Peace laureate watches UN court hear Rohingya genocide case

By ALEKS FURTULA and LORNE COOK Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The justice minister of Gambia appealed to the U.N.'s top court Tuesday to recognize that genocide against Myanmar's Rohingya minority took place and to ensure it does not continue, while Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi prepared to defend the actions of her country's military.

Former pro-democracy icon Suu Kyi watched from the front row as lawyers gave the International Criminal Court detailed accounts of Rohingya men, women and children killed and the destruction of tens of thousands of Muslim minority homes in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state.

"It is indeed sad for our generation that 75 years after humankind committed itself to the words 'never again,' another genocide is unfolding right before our eyes," Gambian Justice Minister Aboubacarr Tambadou told the court in The Hague. "Yet we do nothing to stop it."

"This is a stain on our collective conscience, and it will be irresponsible for any of us to simply look the other way and pretend that it is not our business," he said.

Gambia, a nation in West Africa, filed the case in the world court on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Myanmar's military began a harsh counterinsurgency campaign against the Rohingya in August 2017 in response to an insurgent attack. More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh to escape what has been called an ethnic cleansing campaign involving mass rapes, killings and the torching of homes.

The head of a U.N. fact-finding mission on Myanmar warned in October that "there is a serious risk of genocide recurring." The mission also found that Myanmar should be held responsible in international legal forums for alleged genocide against the Rohingya.

Myanmar has strongly denied the charges but says it stands ready to take action against wrongdoers if there is sufficient evidence.

A recent statement on the website of the nation's Ministry of the Interior said the renewed international pressure was due to a lack of understanding of "the complexities of the issue and the narratives of the people of Myanmar."

Beyond detailing graphic accounts of rape, mutilation and the killing of children by soldiers, Gambia's legal team underscored what it alleged was Myanmar's "ongoing genocidal intent" and the government's continued incitement of racial hatred.

Gambia asked for provisional measures to prevent "extrajudicial killings or physical abuse; rape or other forms of sexual violence; burning of homes or villages; destruction of lands and livestock, deprivation of food" and other actions "calculated to bring about the physical destruction of the Rohingya group in whole or in part."

Suu Kyi, who was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for championing democracy and rights under Myanmar's then-ruling junta, sat attentively in the front row as Gambia's representatives made their case. She is leading the Myanmar delegation to The Hague in her capacity as foreign minister.

Scores of Rohingya supporters gathered outside the court behind a banner reading "Stop Genocide." Some carried photos of Suu Kyi with "Shame" and "agent of the military" written under them.

The International Criminal Court hearing is set for an extraordinary scene on Wednesday, when Suu Kyi - once a global beacon of hope for human rights — is expected to defend the actions of an army that held her under house arrest for years.

A group of seven fellow Nobel Peace Prize winners has called on Suu Kyi "to publicly acknowledge the crimes, including genocide, committed against the Rohingya. We are deeply concerned that instead of condemning these crimes, Aung San Suu Kyi is actively denying that these atrocities even occurred."

They wrote in a signed statement ahead of the court hearing, which runs until Thursday, that "Aung San Suu Kyi must be held criminally accountable, along with her army commanders, for crimes committed."

In Myanmar, hundreds of people have rallied to show their support for her in recent days.

At one rally, around 700 people, including many members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, gathered outside the colonial-era City Hall in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city.

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As the crowd waved national flags and listened to music and poetry, a popular local singer told them "Mother Suu is the bravest human being in the world — her weapon is love."

Cook reported from Brussels.

Suspect shoots 6 dead in Czech hospital, then kills self

By KAREL JANICEK Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — A man with an illegal gun shot six people dead and wounded three more in a hospital in the eastern Czech Republic Tuesday, the prime minister and officials said. The apparent suspect later shot himself dead as police approached his car.

Prime Minister Andrej Babis told Czech public television the shooting took place around 7 a.m. in a waiting room. The attacker opened fire at people's heads from close range, Babis said.

The prime minister canceled an official visit to Estonia and was heading for the site, at the University hospital in the eastern city of Ostrava, 350 kilometers (220 miles) east of Prague.

"It's a huge tragedy," Babis later said. "It's an unfortunate, individual act."

He said the suspect had been treated in the hospital, but didn't offer details.

Interior Minister Jan Hamacek said police found the suspect's car and he shot himself in the head as they approached and died from his injuries about half an hour later. Hamacek said police will be investigating his motive.

"I'd like to assure the public that there's no danger anymore," Hamacek said.

Police identified the suspect as a 42-year-old man. Several hundred police officers had launched an extensive manhunt, using two helicopters, for the suspect and his silver-gray Renault Laguna car.

Regional police chief officer Tomas Kuzel said the suspect used an illegally held Czech-made 9 mm gun. He said police believe the suspect who had a criminal record acted alone.

Police published a photo of the suspect, having withdrawn an earlier photo of a different man. They said that man was now considered to be a witness.

Clinic director Jiri Havrlant told media the dead were four men and two women. Another man and a woman had to be operated on, while one person was more lightly wounded.

All the victims were adult patients waiting for treatment.

The heart of Pensacola: City has strong ties with naval base

By BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — There's a message board in Gary Yetter's brewery, located near Naval Air Station Pensacola. The idea is, a customer buys a beer for a friend who isn't there, puts their name on it and when the friend comes in, they have a free beer waiting for them.

Right now, there are several free beers waiting for unnamed NAS Pensacola flight school students, first responders and U.S. Marines. But it's not just a reaction to the Royal Saudi Air Force officer who fatally shot three sailors and wounded eight others on Friday. Yetter says people have always shown their appreciation for the sailors and Marines on the base.

"Someone will come in and say 'I want to buy a beer for a flight school student,'" Yetter said.

It's an example of the mutual love between the city and those on the base. While a lot of military bases provide an economic engine for the communities that host them, the Navy has a special relationship with Pensacola that is built on centuries of history.

A large number of the city's 52,000 residents, including Yetter, are people who first came to Pensacola because of the naval base.

Yetter, 63, spent 21 years in the Navy and used to call Washington state his home. The Navy brought him to Pensacola twice, and after retiring he made it his home for good. He worked part-time at the base as a civilian, and eventually opened the brewery. He says 75% of his customers are active military, retired

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military or civilian employees from the base.

"It's funny about Pensacola. Everybody says, 'Are you from Pensacola?' and most people say, 'No, I'm from somewhere else.' But we all move here eventually," said Yetter.

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan first came to Pensacola as a member of the Air Force, and returned to the city when he retired.

He noted during a press briefing on the shooting that the community is particularly hurt because it opens its heart and homes to foreign nationals who train at the base.

"We opened our country to the allied officers, we opened our hearts. Many of the folks that surround our military base ... do sponsorships, where they sponsor officers into their homes to do a cultural exchange," Morgan said. "You should have walked the crime scene with us, and you'd understand the anger in this community right now."

The military history of the area dates back to 1698, when Spain built a fort on the same site where NAS Pensacola is now — though not as sprawling as the nearly 6,000-acre base. French forces destroyed the Spanish fort in 1719. The Spanish later built Fort San Carlos de Barrancas in 1797 and some of the structure is still on the current base. President John Quincy Adams ordered the construction of a Navy yard on the site and construction began in 1826. The decision was made to conduct aviation training at the base in the years before the U.S. entered World War I.

The base employs more than 16,000 military personnel and 7,400 civilians and trains about 60,000 members of the military each year. It's also home to the National Naval Aviation Museum, which King Juan Carlos of Spain and his wife Sofia visited in 2009 during a trip to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Spain settling the area.

The city takes tremendous pride in NAS Pensacola, so much so that it named an elementary school after the Blue Angels precision flying team based there. A Blue Angels jet is mounted by a visitor welcome center on I-10, positioned to look like it's soaring sideways above the center.

"It's an economic engine, but it goes far beyond that. So many of us are retired military that chose to retire here because there's a sense of family, there's a sense of belonging," said Morgan, who is originally from Missouri and lived around the country as a military brat.

Killed in the shooting were Joshua Kaleb Watson, a 23-year-old graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy; Airman Mohammed Sameh Haitham, 19, of St. Petersburg, Florida, who joined the Navy after graduating from high school last year; and Airman Apprentice Cameron Scott Walters, 21, of Richmond Hill, Georgia.

After the attack, the community responded. The day of the shooting, a line at a local blood donor center went out the front door into the parking lot. The next day people continued to come in to donate blood as their way to try to help.

"It's about the least I can do. There's not really much else I can do in my position except give blood and try to provide comfort," said Navy Ensign Kyle Hering, 25, who has been stationed at the base for about a year. "Pensacola is really welcoming to all the Navy folks, and it's really hard when we have our brothers and sisters get shot and killed. It really hurts us. It stings. We're just trying to do what we can to stick together as a family and take care of each other."

AP Interview: Taiwan may help if Hong Kong violence expands

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan's top diplomat said Tuesday that his government stands with Hong Kong citizens pushing for "freedom and democracy," and would help those displaced from the semi-autonomous Chinese city if Beijing intervenes with greater force to quell the protests.

Speaking to The Associated Press in the capital, Taipei, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu was careful to say his government has no desire to intervene in Hong Kong's internal affairs, and that existing legislation is sufficient to deal with a relatively small number of Hong Kong students or others who seek to reside in Taiwan.

But he added that Hong Kong police have already responded with "disproportionate force" to the protests.

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He said that any intervention by mainland Chinese forces would be “a new level of violence” that would prompt Taiwan to take a different stance toward helping those seeking to leave Hong Kong.

“When that happens, Taiwan is going to work with the international community to provide necessary assistance to those who are displaced by the violence there,” he said.

“The people here understand that how the Chinese government treats Hong Kong is going to be the future way of them treating Taiwan. And what turned out in Hong Kong is not very appealing to the Taiwanese people,” he added.

China’s Communist Party insists that Taiwan is part of China and must be reunited with it, even if by force. Modern Taiwan was founded when Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists, who once ruled on the mainland, were forced to retreat to the island in 1949 after Mao Zedong’s Communists took power in the Chinese Civil War.

Beijing has suggested that Taiwan could be reunited under the “one country, two systems” model that applied to Hong Kong after the former British colony was returned to China in 1997. That agreement allowed Hong Kong to keep its civil liberties, independent courts and capitalist system, though many in Hong Kong accuse Beijing of undermining those freedoms under President Xi Jinping.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen has said that the “one country, two systems” model has failed in Hong Kong and brought the city to “the brink of disorder.”

Government surveys earlier this year showed that about 80% of Taiwanese citizens oppose reunification with China.

Wu’s comments come a month before Taiwanese voters go to the polls for presidential and parliamentary elections on Jan. 11. Opinion surveys suggest that Tsai, a U.S. and British-educated law scholar who rejects Beijing’s claims to Taiwan, is on track to secure a second term over her more China-friendly rival, Han Kuo-yu of the Nationalist Party.

China severed ties with Tsai’s government after she took office in 2016 because of her refusal to accept Beijing’s claims on the island.

China has been increasing diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan since she took office. That includes sending aircraft carriers through the Taiwan Strait — the most recent transit was last month — and peeling away Taiwan’s few remaining diplomatic allies. Two more, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, switched their diplomatic recognition to Beijing in September.

A second term for Tsai would see a continuation of Taiwan’s tough stance against its much larger neighbor.

“If President Tsai is reelected, we’ll continue to ... maintain the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. We’ll continue to send out goodwill gestures to China,” Wu said. “We want to make sure that the Chinese have no excuse in launching a war against Taiwan.”

Democrats poised to unveil 2 impeachment articles vs. Trump

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats are poised to unveil two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump — abuse of power and obstruction of Congress — with an announcement expected early Tuesday.

Democratic leaders say Trump put U.S. elections and national security at risk when he asked Ukraine to investigate his rivals, including Joe Biden.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi declined during an event Monday evening to discuss the articles or the coming announcement. Details were shared by multiple people familiar with the discussions but unauthorized to discuss them and granted anonymity.

When asked if she has enough votes to impeach the Republican president, the Democratic leader said she would let House lawmakers vote their conscience.

“On an issue like this, we don’t count the votes. People will just make their voices known on it,” Pelosi said at The Wall Street Journal CEO Council. “I haven’t counted votes, nor will I.”

The outcome, though, appears increasingly set as the House prepares to vote, as it has only three times in history against a U.S. president.

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Trump spent part of the day tweeting against the impeachment proceedings but did not immediately respond late Monday. The president and his allies have railed against the "absurd" proceedings.

Pelosi convened a meeting of the impeachment committee chairmen at her office in the Capitol late Monday following an acrimonious, nearly 10-hour hearing at the Judiciary Committee, which could vote as soon as this week.

"I think there's a lot of agreement," Rep. Eliot Engel of New York, the Democratic chairman of the Foreign Affairs committee, told reporters as he exited Pelosi's office. "A lot of us believe that what happened with Ukraine especially is not something we can just close our eyes to."

At the Judiciary hearing, Democrats said Trump's push to have Ukraine investigate rival Joe Biden while withholding U.S. military aid ran counter to U.S. policy and benefited Russia as well as himself.

"President Trump's persistent and continuing effort to coerce a foreign country to help him cheat to win an election is a clear and present danger to our free and fair elections and to our national security," said Dan Goldman, the director of investigations at the House Intelligence Committee, presenting the finding of the panel's 300-page report of the inquiry.

Republicans rejected not just Goldman's conclusion of the Ukraine matter; they also questioned his very appearance before the Judiciary panel. In a series of heated exchanges, they said Rep. Adam Schiff, the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, should appear rather than sending his lawyer.

From the White House, Trump tweeted repeatedly, assailing the "Witch Hunt!" and "Do Nothing Democrats."

In drafting the articles of impeachment, Pelosi is facing a legal and political challenge of balancing the views of her majority while hitting the Constitution's bar of "treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

Some liberal lawmakers wanted more expansive charges encompassing the findings from former special counsel Robert Mueller's probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election. Centrist Democrats preferred to keep the impeachment articles more focused on Trump's actions toward Ukraine.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., was blunt as he opened Monday's hearing, saying, "President Trump put himself before country."

Trump's conduct, Nadler said at the end of the daylong hearing, "is clearly impeachable."

Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia, the top Republican on the committee, said Democrats are racing to jam impeachment through on a "clock and a calendar" ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

"They can't get over the fact that Donald Trump is the president of the United States, and they don't have a candidate that can beat him," Collins said.

In one testy exchange, Republican attorney Stephen Castor dismissed the transcript of Trump's crucial call with Ukraine as "eight ambiguous lines" that did not amount to the president seeking a personal political favor.

Democrats argued vigorously that Trump's meaning could not have been clearer in seeking political dirt on Biden, his possible opponent in the 2020 election.

The Republicans tried numerous times to halt or slow the proceedings, and the hearing was briefly interrupted early on by a protester shouting, "We voted for Donald Trump!" The protester was escorted from the House hearing room by Capitol Police.

The White House is refusing to participate in the impeachment process. Trump and his allies acknowledge he likely will be impeached in the Democratic-controlled House, but they also expect acquittal next year in the Senate, where Republicans have the majority.

The president was focused instead on Monday's long-awaited release of the Justice Department report into the 2016 Russia investigation. The inspector general found that the FBI was justified in opening its investigation into ties between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia and that the FBI did not act with political bias, despite "serious performance failures" up the bureau's chain of command.

Democrats say Trump abused his power in a July 25 phone call when he asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for a favor in investigating Democrats. That was bribery, they say, since Trump was

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withholding nearly \$400 million in military aid that Ukraine depended on to counter Russian aggression. Pelosi and Democrats point to what they call a pattern of misconduct by Trump in seeking foreign interference in elections from Mueller's inquiry of the Russia probe to Ukraine.

In his report, Mueller said he could not determine that Trump's campaign conspired or coordinated with Russia in the 2016 election. But Mueller said he could not exonerate Trump of obstructing justice in the probe and left it for Congress to determine.

Associated Press writers Julie Pace, Laurie Kellman, Matthew Daly and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

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. WHAT HOUSE DEMOCRATS ARE POISED TO DO Unveil two articles of impeachment against President Trump — for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

2. IG REPORT ON RUSSIA PROBE MIXED The Justice Department's internal watchdog rules out political bias in the decision to investigate Trump's presidential campaign but does identify "serious performance failures" up the FBI's chain of command.

3. HARROWING MOMENTS AFTER NEW ZEALAND VOLCANO Survivors of a powerful eruption run into the sea to escape the scalding steam and ash and emerge covered in burns as the death toll rises to at least six.

4. INDIA'S CRACKDOWN HITS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN DISPUTED KASHMIR While some of the conditions have since been eased, some mosques and Muslim shrines in the region either remain shuttered, deepening anti-India sentiment.

5. 'WE OPENED OUR HEARTS' The deaths of three Navy sailors shot by a Royal Saudi Air Force officer stuns Pensacola, the Florida city that has forged a close personal relationship with the naval air station.

6. SWING STATES ALREADY COMING INTO FOCUS Trump and his Republican Party are showering top general election swing states with time and resources, while Democrats are devoting most of their energy to their marathon primary fight.

7. CHILE MILITARY PLANE MISSING ON WAY TO ANTARCTICA A search and rescue operation is underway after the air force loses radio contact with a transport plane carrying 38 people, and authorities are not optimistic about the aircraft's fate.

8. WHERE GLOBAL WARMING IS THREATENING REINDEER HERDS In Sweden's arctic region as unusual weather patterns jeopardize the migrating animals' grazing grounds.

9. YOUR 2019 WORD OF THE YEAR "They," a common but increasingly mighty and very busy little word, has an accolade all its own, language mavens at Merriam-Webster declare.

10. EAGLES BOLSTER PLAYOFF HOPES Carson Wentz and Zach Ertz rally Philadelphia past the New York Giants 23-17 in overtime, spoiling Eli Manning's return under center.

In Sweden's Arctic, ice atop snow leaves reindeer starving

By DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

KIRUNA, Sweden (AP) — Thick reindeer fur boots and a fur hat covering most of his face shielded Niila Inga from freezing winds as he raced his snowmobile up to a mountain top overlooking his reindeer in the Swedish arctic.

His community herds about 8,000 reindeer year-round, moving them between traditional grazing grounds in the high mountains bordering Norway in the summer and the forests farther east in the winter, just as his forebears in the Sami indigenous community have for generations.

But Inga is troubled: His reindeer are hungry, and he can do little about it. Climate change is altering weather patterns here and affecting the herd's food supply.

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"If we don't find better areas for them where they can graze and find food, then the reindeers will starve to death," he said.

Already pressured by the mining and forestry industry, and other development that encroach on grazing land, Sami herding communities fear climate change could mean the end of their traditional lifestyle.

Slipping his hand from a massive reindeer skin mitten, Inga illustrated the problem, plunging his hand into the crusted snow and pulling out a hard piece of ice close to the soil.

Unusually early snowfall in autumn was followed by rain that froze, trapping food under a thick layer of ice. Unable to eat, the hungry animals have scattered from their traditional migration routes in search of new grazing grounds.

Half the herd carried on east as planned, while the rest retreated to the mountains where predators abound, and the risk of avalanches is great.

Elder Sami herders recall that they once had bad winters every decade or so, but Inga said that "extreme and strange weather are getting more and more normal, it happens several times a year."

The arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the globe. Measurements by the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute show the country has warmed 1.64 degrees Celsius (2.95-degree Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial times. In Sweden's alpine region, this increase is even greater, with average winter temperatures between 1991 and 2017 up more than 3 degrees Celsius (5.4-degree Fahrenheit) compared with the 1961-1990 average.

Snowfall is common in these areas, but as temperatures increase, occasional rainfall occurs — and 'rain-on-snow' events are having devastating effects. The food is still there, but the reindeer can't reach it. The animals grow weaker and females sometimes abort their calves while the survivors struggle to make it through the winter.

"We have winter here for eight months a year and when it starts in October with bad grazing conditions it won't get any better," Inga said.

That is devastating to Sami herders, a once-nomadic people scattered across a region that spans the far north of Sweden, Norway, Finland and the northwestern corner of Russia. Until the 1960s, this indigenous minority were discouraged from reindeer herding and their language and culture were suppressed. Today, of the 70,000 Sami, only about 10% herd reindeer, making a limited income from meat, hides and antlers crafted into knife handles.

"Everyone wants to take the reindeers' area where they find food. But with climate change, we need more flexibility to move around," said Sanna Vannar, a young herder from a community living in the mountains surrounding Jokkmokk, an important Sami town just north of the Arctic Circle. "Here you can't find food, but maybe you can find food there, but there they want to clear-cut the forest and that's the problem."

The 24-year-old is the president of the Swedish Sami Youth organization and, together with eight other families elsewhere in the world, they launched a legal action in 2018 to force the European Union to set more ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Earlier this year, the European General Court rejected their case on procedural grounds, but the plaintiffs have appealed.

"We've said we don't want money because we can't buy better weather with money," Vannar said. "We've said we need that the EU take action and they need to do it now."

The EU's new executive Commission is expected to present a 'European Green Deal' on Wednesday, to coincide with a U.N. climate conference in Madrid.

Herders have also started working with Stockholm University, hoping to advance research that will broaden understanding about changing weather patterns.

As part of this rare collaboration between Sami and science, weather stations deep in the forests of the Laevas community are recording air and ground temperature, rainfall, wind speed and snowfall density. Sami ancestral knowledge of the land and the climate complements analysis of data gathered, offering a more detailed understanding of weather events.

"With this data we can connect my traditional knowledge and I see what the effects of it are," says Inga who has been working on the project since 2013 and has co-authored published scientific papers with

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Ninis Rosqvist, a professor of Natural Geography at Stockholm University.

Rosqvist directs a field station operating since the 1940s in the Swedish alpine region measuring glaciers and changes in snow and ice. But through the collaboration with Inga, she realized that less “exciting” areas in the forests may be most crucial to understanding the impacts of changing climate.

“As a scientist I can measure that something is happening, but I don’t know the impact of it on, in this case, the whole ecosystem. And that’s why you need their knowledge,” she said.

Rosqvist hopes this research can help Sami communities argue their case with decision-makers legislating land use rights.

Back in the forest, Inga is releasing onto the winter pastures a group of reindeer that had been separated from the herd when the animals scattered earlier in autumn.

Several other herders have spent more than a week high in the mountains searching for the other half of the herd and trying to bring the animals down, to no avail.

“As long as they are forced to stay there, they’ll get into worse and worse condition,” he warned.

Follow David Keyton on Twitter and Instagram: @DavidKeyton

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The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute’s Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Federal watchdog: FBI was justified in probing Trump-Russia

By ERIC TUCKER and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI was justified in opening its investigation into ties between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia and did not act with political bias, the Justice Department’s internal watchdog declared, undercutting President Donald Trump’s repeated claims that he has been the target of a “witch hunt.”

The long-awaited report, issued Monday, rejected theories and criticism spread by Trump and his supporters, though it also found “serious performance failures” up the bureau’s chain of command that Republicans are citing as evidence that Trump was targeted by an unfair investigation.

The affirmation of the investigation’s legitimacy, balanced by criticism of the way it was conducted, ensured that partisan battles would persist over one of the most politically sensitive investigations in FBI history. Another review of the origins of the probe continues, and the prosecutor picked by Attorney General William Barr to lead that effort hinted Monday he’ll take a harder view of the FBI’s actions.

Monday’s review by Inspector General Michael Horowitz knocked down multiple lines of attack against the Russia investigation, finding that it was properly opened and that law enforcement leaders were not motivated by political bias. Contrary to the claims of Trump and other critics, it said that opposition research compiled by an ex-British spy named Christopher Steele had no bearing on the decision to open the investigation known as Crossfire Hurricane. And it rejected allegations that a former Trump campaign aide at the center of the probe was set up by the FBI.

It found that the FBI had an “authorized purpose” when it opened its investigation in July 2016 into whether the Trump campaign was coordinating with Russia to tip the election in his favor. The report said the FBI had cause to investigate a potential national security threat.

FBI Director Chris Wray, in an interview with The Associated Press, noted that the report did not find political bias but did find problems that are “unacceptable and unrepresentative of who we are as an institution.”

The FBI is implementing more than 40 actions aimed at fixing some of the bureau’s most fundamental operations, such as applying for surveillance warrants and interacting with confidential sources.

Those changes are in response to some of the report’s criticisms. They largely centered on how agents

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and prosecutors set about eavesdropping on a former Trump campaign aide who they said they feared was being targeted for Russian government recruitment.

The inspector general identified 17 "significant inaccuracies or omissions" in applications for a warrant and later renewals from the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to monitor the communications of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

The report also details that the FBI used an informant to set up and record a September 2016 meeting with a high-level Trump campaign official. The official wasn't identified by name, but was not a subject of the Russia investigation, the report said. While the information collected wasn't used during the Russia probe, it does lend support to the assertions by Trump and Barr that the Trump campaign was spied upon.

The report said the errors resulted in "applications that made it appear that the information supporting probable cause was stronger than was actually the case." The watchdog found that the FBI had overstated the significance of Steele's past work as an informant and omitted information about one of his sources who he said "may engage in some embellishment."

Republicans have long criticized the process since the FBI relied in part on opposition research from Steele, whose work was financed by Democrats and Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and that fact was not disclosed to the judges who approved the warrant.

Though the surveillance has been central to Republican objections about the investigation, the eavesdropping was not necessarily central to the probe itself — which had been underway for months before the warrant was sought.

The report's release, coming as a House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearing centers on the president's interactions with Ukraine, brought fresh attention to the legal and political investigations that have entangled the White House from the moment Trump took office.

Political divisions were evident in responses to the report.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said it makes clear that the basis for the FBI's investigation was "valid and without political bias." Trump, in remarks at the White House, claimed it showed "an attempted overthrow and a lot of people were in on it."

The president has repeatedly said he is more eager for the report of John Durham, the prosecutor Barr selected to investigate how intelligence was gathered. Both Barr and Durham issued statements rejecting the inspector general's conclusion that there was sufficient evidence to open the FBI investigation. The attorney general's reaction was especially unusual in that the head of the Justice Department typically would not take issue with an internal investigation that clears a department agency of serious misconduct.

"The Inspector General's report now makes clear that the FBI launched an intrusive investigation of a U.S. presidential campaign on the thinnest of suspicions that, in my view, were insufficient to justify the steps taken," Barr said in a statement.

Durham, in a brief statement, said he had informed the inspector general that he also didn't agree with the conclusion that the inquiry was properly opened, and suggested his own investigation would back up his disagreement.

The FBI's Russia investigation, which was ultimately taken over by special counsel Robert Mueller, began in July 2016 after the FBI learned that a former Trump campaign aide, George Papadopoulos, had been saying before it was publicly known that Russia had dirt on Democratic opponent Clinton in the form of stolen emails. Those emails, which were hacked from Democratic email accounts by Russian intelligence, were released by WikiLeaks before the election in what U.S. officials have said was an effort to harm Clinton's campaign and help Trump.

The report concluded that that revelation was a sufficient basis for opening the investigation and it knocked down claims by Papadopoulos that he had been set up by the FBI or that the professor who told him about the hacked emails was an FBI informant.

Months later, the FBI sought and received the Page warrant. Officials were concerned that Page was being targeted for recruitment by the Russian government, though he has denied wrongdoing and has never been charged with a crime.

The inspector general also found that an FBI lawyer is suspected of altering an email to make it appear that an official at another government agency had said Page was not a source for that agency, even though he was.

Agents were concerned that if Page had worked as a source for another government agency, the FBI would have needed to tell the surveillance court about that, the report said, and contacted the other agency to obtain additional information. But the FBI lawyer "did not accurately convey, and in fact altered, the information he received from the other agency.

The lawyer is not identified by name in the report, but people familiar with the situation have said he is Kevin Clinesmith. The inspector general's report said officials notified the attorney general and FBI director and provided them with information about the altered email.

The inspector general conducted more than 170 interviews involving more than 100 witnesses.

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

6 dead from New Zealand volcano as helpers describe horror

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WHAKATANE, New Zealand (AP) — Survivors of a powerful volcanic eruption in New Zealand ran into the sea to escape the scalding steam and ash and emerged covered in burns, say those who first helped them.

The accounts Tuesday came as some relatives were forced to continue waiting for news of their loved ones, with authorities deciding it remained too dangerous for crews to land on the island and remove bodies.

Six deaths were confirmed after Monday's eruption of the White Island volcano. Five people died at the time of the blast or soon after, while a sixth person died Tuesday night at an Auckland hospital.

Another eight people are believed to have died, with their bodies remaining on the ash-covered island for now.

Experts said there was a 50 percent chance of another small eruption within a day and rescue teams didn't want to take any chances. Police said they planned to send up drones to measure whether gas levels were safe.

The tragedy will have an ongoing effect on the town of Whakatane, which road signs tout as the gateway to White Island. As well as being an important tourist draw for the 20,000 people who live here, the volcano has an almost mystical significance, its regular puffing a feature of the landscape.

Whether the island will ever host tourists again remains uncertain after the horrific tragedy that unfolded when the volcano exploded a little after 2 p.m. Monday.

Geoff Hopkins was in a boat offshore after visiting the island with his daughter, the tour a 50th birthday present for him. He told the New Zealand Herald the eruption at first looked beautiful but quickly turned menacing.

As injured people were transported onto their boat screaming in pain, Hopkins and his daughter Lillani poured fresh water onto them, cut them out of their clothes and tried to keep them calm.

He told the Herald they were "horrifically" burned on their exposed skin and faces, even under their clothes.

In all, police believe there were 47 visitors on the island at the time. They say 24 were Australian, nine were American and five were New Zealanders. Others were from Germany, Britain, China and Malaysia. Many were passengers aboard the Royal Caribbean cruise ship Ovation of the Seas.

About 30 of the survivors remained hospitalized on Tuesday, many flown to burn units around the country. The first confirmed death was of a local man, Hayden Marshall-Inman, a guide who had shown tourists around the island.

Former Whakatane Mayor Tony Bonne said Marshall-Inman was a keen fisherman and well-liked. He was so kind, Bonne said, that he would often leave extra money at the grocery store for those he knew were struggling to pay.

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Many people were left questioning why tourists were still allowed to visit the island after seismic monitoring experts raised the volcano's alert level last month.

"These questions must be asked and they must be answered," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in Parliament.

New Zealand's Deputy Police Commissioner John Tims said Tuesday that police were opening a criminal investigation into the deaths that would accompany an investigation by health and safety regulators.

But hours later, police put out a statement saying that while they were investigating the deaths on behalf of the coroner, "To correct an earlier statement, it is too early to confirm whether there will also be a criminal investigation."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said 11 Australians are unaccounted for and 13 were hospitalized. Three Australians were suspected to be among the initial five confirmed dead, he told reporters in Sydney. "I fear there is worse news to come," Morrison said.

Relatives of a newlywed American couple say the husband and wife were severely burned. Barbara Barham told The Washington Post that her daughter Lauren Urey, 32, and son-in-law Matthew Urey, 36, from Richmond, Virginia, were on a honeymoon trip.

A few locals laid flowers Tuesday at a fence on the waterfront near where the rescue boats had returned with the injured.

White Island, also known by the indigenous Maori name Whakaari, is the tip of an undersea volcano about 50 kilometers (30 kilometers) off New Zealand's main North Island.

New Zealand's GeoNet seismic monitoring agency had raised the volcano's alert level on Nov. 18 from 1 to 2 on a scale where 5 represents a major eruption, noting an increase in sulfur dioxide gas, which originates from magma. It also said volcanic tremors had increased from weak to moderate strength. It raised the alert level to 4 for a time after Monday's eruption but lowered it to 3 as the activity subsided.

Richard Arculus, an Australian National University volcanologist who has made numerous visits to White Island, said the eruption likely sent a ground-hugging lateral blast from the crater to the jetty, as well as blasting rock and ash vertically skyward.

"In that crater, it would have been a terrible place to be," Arculus said. "There would have been nowhere safe for you to be hiding, thinking that, 'Oh well, if it explodes, it just goes straight up in the air.'"

At least 10 people were killed on the island in 1914 when it was being mined for sulfur. Part of a crater wall collapsed and a landslide destroyed the miners' village and the mine itself.

The island became a private scenic reserve in 1953, and daily tours allow more than 10,000 people to visit every year.

"Tourism has been a growing market, and White Island has been an anchor for that," Bonne said. "It's something unique that pulls people from all around the world."

He said it was sad to think that might all now come to a stop.

Associated Press writer Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, contributed to this report.

Sydney choked by hazardous haze from Australia bush fires

SYDNEY (AP) — Wildfires engulfed the Australian city of Sydney on Tuesday in haze so thick in some places it was 11 times worse than the level considered "hazardous," and was apt to trigger fire alarms.

The city canceled ferries and some offices in the downtown area were evacuated.

Local health officials advised people to stay indoors as much as possible and those with heart and lung problems were told to avoid all outdoor activity.

"The smoke here in Sydney is extremely bad today, it is some of the worst air quality we've seen," Richard Broome of New South Wales Health told reporters.

"We are just urging people once again to take these (conditions) seriously," Broome said.

Ambulances have been answering dozens of respiratory-related calls a day, said the head of NSW Ambulance, Brent Armitage.

Sydney Trains warned that fire alarms at train stations might be set off by the thick smoke drifting into the city from fires ringing Sydney.

The regional environmental department said the air quality index, or AQI, in some parts of the city was more than 11 times the 200 reading considered hazardous.

Given the dire air quality, workers should not be forced to toil on outdoor job sites while the haze persists, said Unions NSW's assistant secretary, Thomas Costa.

"Toxicity is very, very high," Costa said.

Winds from the north were pushing the smoke into the city, overpowering coastal breezes. Forecasts showed the wind would likely clear the air somewhat but also will fan the brush fires.

Australia's fire season normally peaks during the summer in the Southern Hemisphere. It started early this year after an unusually dry and warm winter. Last month, authorities reported more than 50 wildfires burning mainly in northern New South Wales.

India's crackdown hits religious freedom in disputed Kashmir

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — For years Romi Jan's mornings would begin with the plaintive call to prayer that rang out from the central mosque in disputed Kashmir's largest city. The voice soothed her soul and made her feel closer to God.

Not anymore. For nearly four months now, the voice that would call out five times a day from the minarets of the Jamia Masjid and echo across Srinagar has been silent, a result of India's ongoing security operations in this Muslim-majority region.

"The mosque closure is a relentless agony for me and my family," Jan said. "I can't tolerate it, but I am helpless."

Already one of the most militarized places in the world, last summer India began pouring more troops into its side of Kashmir, which is divided between India and Pakistan and claimed by both in its entirety. It implemented a security lockdown in which it pressed harsh curbs on civil rights, arrested thousands of people, blocked internet and phone service, and shuttered important mosques.

All of this was laying the groundwork for the Hindu nationalist-led government's Aug. 5 decision to strip Kashmir of its semiautonomous status and remove its statehood, moves it knew would be met with fury by Kashmiri Muslims, most of whom want independence or unification with Pakistan. The government said the restrictions were needed to head off anti-India protests and violence.

While some of the conditions have since been eased, some mosques and Muslim shrines in the region either remain shuttered or have had their access limited. Muslims say this is undermining their constitutional right to religious freedom and only deepening anti-India sentiment.

The centuries-old Jamia Masjid, made of brick and wood, is one of the oldest in this city of 1.2 million, where 96% of people are Muslim. When it's open, thousands of people congregate there for prayers.

Romi would take her two children there every day and sit inside the compound while they would play.

"I would forget all my miseries there," she said.

Now, when her kids ask why they can't go to the mosque, she draws a blank face.

"I open my window of the house which faces the mosque and show my kids the soldiers that are stationed outside it," Romi said.

That it's a target for authorities is neither surprising nor new. Friday sermons at the mosque mainly revolve around the Kashmir conflict, and its surrounding neighborhoods are often where stone-throwing protesters clash with government forces as part of an ongoing anti-India rebellion.

Authorities have banned prayers at the mosque for extended periods during unrest in 2008, 2010 and 2016. Official data show the mosque was closed at least 250 days in those three years combined.

Mohammed Yasin Bangi, the 70-year-old whose voice has called out the prayers at the mosque for the last 55 years, said the current restrictions are the worst he has seen.

"During earlier restrictions, we would be sometimes allowed to offer evening prayers. But not even once

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during this time around," he said. "The closure of the mosque has robbed me of my peace. I've been subjected to spiritual torture."

A top police officer in the city, speaking on condition of anonymity in keeping with department policy, said authorities decided the mosque could reopen last month for Friday prayers but mosque officials refused.

A mosque official speaking on condition of anonymity because he feared reprisals said they refused because authorities sought assurances that there would be no protests or speeches against Indian rule.

Rohit Kansal, Kashmir's chief government spokesman, declined to comment. Officials from the Home Ministry in New Delhi, which oversees internal security in the country, did not respond to requests for comment.

Freedom of religion is enshrined in India's constitution, allowing citizens to follow and freely practice religion. The constitution also says the state will not "discriminate, patronize or meddle in the profession of any religion."

But even before the current security operation in Kashmir, experts say conditions for India's Muslims have been growing worse under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, which came to power in 2014 and won a landslide re-election in May.

In June, the U.S. State Department said in a report that religious freedom in India continued a downward trend in the year 2018. India's foreign ministry rejected the report.

In August, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation raised concerns about India's lockdown in Kashmir and called for authorities to ensure that Kashmiri Muslims could exercise their religious rights.

The ongoing restrictions in Kashmir have also included gatherings at Muslim shrines and religious festivals.

In August, worshippers were told to host the prayers for the festival of Eid-al-Adha inside small neighborhood mosques rather than in the large outdoor gatherings that are normal. In September, authorities banned the annual Muharram processions that mark the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson.

Last month, during the yearly celebration of the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad, authorities blocked all roads leading to Dargah Hazratbal, the region's most revered Muslim shrine. Only a few hundred devotees were allowed to pray there — far fewer than the tens of thousands the event has been known to draw.

Authorities on Monday allowed thousands of people to gather at a Sufi shrine in downtown Srinagar for an annual celebration.

Restrictions on such gatherings are particularly galling to Kashmiri Muslims because they have long complained that the government curbs their religious freedom on the pretext of law and order while promoting and patronizing an annual Hindu pilgrimage to the Amarnath Shrine in Kashmir that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Sheikh Showkat, a professor of international law and human rights at the Central University of Kashmir, warned that such a duality in policy sent a clear message that the government no longer remains impartial toward different religions and further alienates the people of Kashmir.

"It no way augers well for any peace," he said. "Whether it triggers further radicalization or not, it definitely infuriates people about the safety and security of their faith. It can also snowball into a mass mobilization against the state."

Syed Mohammed Tayib Kamili has been leading annual prayers at Kashmir's Khanqah Naqashband shrine since 1976. Indian authorities stopped last month's gathering from taking place.

The decision, which was met with anti-India protests, was the first time the prayers had not been held in the shrine's 399-year history, Kamili said.

"They have not only violated constitution," he said, "but also invited wrath of the divine power."

Associated Press writer Sheikh Saaliq contributed to this report.

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Follow Aijaz Hussain on Twitter at twitter.com/hussain_aijaz

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Chile military plane missing with 38 on way to Antarctica

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Chile's air force lost radio contact with a transport plane carrying 38 people on a flight Monday evening to the country's base in Antarctica, and authorities indicated several hours later that they were not optimistic about the aircraft's fate.

The military said earlier that it had declared an alert and activated search and rescue teams.

The C-130 Hercules carried 17 crew members and 21 passengers, including three civilians. The personnel were to check on a floating fuel supply line and other equipment at the Chilean base.

President Sebastián Piñera said via Twitter that he was with his defense and interior ministers at the air force headquarters monitoring developments.

In a statement early Tuesday, the air force said the plane had not been heard from in more than seven hours and likely would have run out of fuel around 12:40 a.m.

The air force "continues the search in the sector where communication with the aircraft was lost, in order to rescue potential survivors," the statement said.

The plane took off at 4:53 p.m. from the southern city of Punta Arenas, which is more than 3,000 kilometers (1,860 miles) from the capital of Santiago. Contact was lost at 6:13 p.m., the initial announcement said.

Drake's Passage, where the plane was missing, is infamous for severe weather conditions, including freezing temperatures and ferocious storms. But the air force said late Monday that the weather was good when the plane began its flight, or the mission would not have been carried out.

Gen. Eduardo Mosqueira of the Fourth Air Brigade told local media that a search was underway and a ship was in the general area where the plane should have been when contact was lost.

Mosqueira said the aircraft would have been about halfway to the Antarctic base when it lost contact. No emergency signals had been activated, he said.

He said the plane, whose pilot had extensive experience, had been scheduled to return Monday night.

Spy Harder: Patriots caught videotaping in Spygate sequel

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — The New England Patriots acknowledged on Monday night that a video crew working for the team filmed the Cincinnati Bengals sideline during Sunday's game, a violation of league rules that echoed the team's 2007 Spygate scandal.

In a statement posted on Twitter and the team website, the Patriots said that a three-person crew for a web series titled "Do Your Job" "inappropriately filmed the field from the press box" as part of a feature on the scouting department. The filming took place "without specific knowledge of league rules," the statement said.

The team also said that while it was granted credentials for the crew from the Browns, the home team, "our failure to inform the Bengals and the League was an unintended oversight." When confronted, the team said the crew "immediately turned over all footage to the league and cooperated fully."

"The sole purpose of the filming was to provide an illustration of an advance scout at work on the road. There was no intention of using the footage for any other purpose," the statement said. "We accept full responsibility for the actions of our production crew at the Browns-Bengals game."

The Patriots were fined \$250,000 and docked a first-round draft pick in 2007 for violating NFL rules against using video to steal signals. Coach Bill Belichick was fined \$500,000.

The scandal, dubbed Spygate, helped fuel a widespread distrust of the team that reverberated a decade later when the team was accused of illegally deflating the footballs used in the 2015 AFC championship game. Quarterback Tom Brady was suspended four games, and the team was fined \$1 million and docked another first-round draft pick.

The latest allegations came to light when Bengals coach Zac Taylor, whose team plays New England on Sunday, confirmed that the league was investigating the crew's activities. An NFL spokesman did not immediately respond to a request from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Asked about the reports during his radio show on Monday, Belichick told WEEI radio that the video crew

was completely separate from the football staff.

"We have absolutely nothing to do with anything that they produce or direct or shoot," said Belichick, who did appear on camera in an earlier episode of the series, on the equipment manager. "I have never seen any of their tapes or anything else. This is something that we 100 percent have zero involvement with."

Consulting firm allows Buttigieg to release names of clients

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

The McKinsey & Co. consulting firm said Monday that it will allow Pete Buttigieg to identify the clients he served more than a decade ago while the Democratic presidential contender also pledged to open his fundraising events to the news media and provide the names of key fundraising organizers.

The moves reflect the growing pressure Buttigieg is under as his campaign gains traction in early voting states, particularly Iowa, less than two months before the Democratic contest begins. He's working to avoid losing his momentum as rivals, especially Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, step up their criticism of him for not being forthright about how he raises money and the type of corporate work he undertook more than a decade ago.

The 37-year-old mayor of South Bend, Indiana, is one of the party's most successful fundraisers this year — collecting more than \$50 million so far in 2019 — in part by tapping the resources of big donors. That's set him apart from Warren and Sen. Bernie Sanders, who have pleased the party's progressive base by rejecting traditional fundraising techniques and instead relying largely on small dollar donations.

Buttigieg has resisted opening his fundraisers, but that position became untenable as his campaign moved into the top tier. On Monday, Buttigieg campaign manager Mike Schmuhl said, "From the start, Pete has said it is important for every candidate to be open and honest, and his actions have reflected that commitment."

Former Vice President Joe Biden is the only other current Democrat candidate who regularly opens his fundraisers to a pool of reporters. Warren only does fundraisers for the Democratic Party and says she'll only do those if they are open to the media. Sanders holds what his campaign calls "grassroots" fundraisers that are meant to prioritize even small donors and have generally been open to the press or livestreamed.

Buttigieg's decision to open the fundraiser is the latest round in an escalating battle between him and Warren. He has portrayed her as someone who might be too extreme to win against President Donald Trump next year. He's also called on her to release additional years of tax returns to shed light on corporate clients she represented.

Warren, in turn, hit Buttigieg's fundraising practices and called on him to release a full client list from McKinsey. She also released new data late Sunday that said she was paid nearly \$2 million for legal work stretching back three decades.

Warren said Monday night: "I'm glad to see the mayor take these steps. I believe that in 2020, the Democrat who can have the best chance to beat Donald Trump is one who makes the case for rooting out corruption."

Buttigieg has yet to name specific companies he worked for during his tenure at the consulting firm. But he released a summary on Friday of the work he did at McKinsey that amounted to the most detailed look at his work to date.

McKinsey's statement on Monday said Buttigieg "may disclose the identity of the clients he served while at McKinsey from 2007 to 2010," with the proviso he not "disclose confidential, proprietary or classified information obtained during the course of that work, or violate any security clearance."

Buttigieg traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan for McKinsey so security issues could limit what he can reveal about that work. He has said his work for the firm largely involved working in small groups on monthslong assignments and completing studies for clients.

"The bulk of my work on these teams consisted of doing mathematical analysis, conducting research, and preparing presentations," Buttigieg wrote. "I never worked on a project inconsistent with my values, and if asked to do so, I would have left the firm rather than participate."

Associated Press writer Hunter Woodall in Manchester, N.H., contributed to this report.

AP Exclusive: Troops that defied Maduro have fled Venezuela

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press Writer

MIAMI (AP) — For seven nerve-wracking months, they slept through the day in cramped quarters on cold floors, while spending their nights in prayer, keeping fit with dumbbells made from water jugs and peering through the diplomatic compound's curtains for fear of surveillance.

But on Monday, 16 national guardsmen who shocked Venezuela and the world alike by revolting on April 30 against President Nicolás Maduro were safely out of the country, having successfully fled the Panamanian embassy in Caracas that had been their makeshift home.

The Associated Press spoke exclusively to the group's leaders, who provided the first detailed account of what led them to plot with Maduro's opponents in an uprising that laid bare fraying support for the socialist leader within the armed forces.

Due to security concerns, lieutenant colonels Illich Sánchez and Rafael Soto wouldn't reveal their location, or say exactly when or how they left Venezuela. They only said they journeyed in small groups as part of a clandestine "military operation" that counted with the support of dozens of low-ranking troops and their commanders.

"We want to clarify to all of the Venezuelan people that the decision taken April 30 was in fulfillment of the constitution, the republic's laws and our democratic institutions," Sánchez said in a handwritten missive sent to the AP confirming that he and the other 16 troops had all safely left the country.

The previously untold story of how Sánchez and Soto managed to dupe their superiors and plot a revolt against Maduro underscores how discontent — and fear — has been running high inside Venezuela's barracks even as the embattled leader clings to power amid punishing U.S. sanctions imposed after a presidential election last year many say was fraudulent.

In their telling, the two longtime friends grew disillusioned watching the devastating collapse of Venezuela's economy and started secretly plotting to remove Maduro. Eventually they teamed up with Maduro's opponents led by National Assembly President Juan Guaidó, who is recognized as Venezuela's rightful leader by the U.S. and some 60 countries.

On April 30, they stunned Venezuelans by appearing before dawn with tanks and heavily armed troops on a bridge in eastern Caracas alongside Guaidó and activist Leopoldo López, who they helped spring from what they considered an illegal house arrest.

"When I gathered my troops at 2 a.m. and told them we were going to liberate Venezuela they broke down in tears," said Sánchez, who in a photo taken on Monday was still wearing the same Under Armour hoodie he used to sneak into the Panamanian embassy. "Nobody saw it coming, but they were all immediately committed."

Adds Soto: "Everything was perfectly lined up for a peaceful transition."

In hindsight the two standout officers seemed fated for the high-risk mission, having both risen through the ranks to a trusted position with direct control of troops and regular contact with Maduro's top aides and Cabinet members.

Sánchez, 41, commanded a garrison of some 500 guardsmen responsible for protecting downtown government buildings including the presidential palace, supreme court and — most importantly — the opposition-controlled congress.

That unique position gave him cover to win the trust of opposition lawmakers, even if on tumultuous days he had to do things such as forcibly remove activists who chained themselves to the legislature.

"The only military officer authorized in Venezuela to talk to the opposition was me," said Sánchez. "But in a polarized country, where things are either black or white, I couldn't risk taking a political position openly."

Soto, 43, for a time was assigned to the feared SEBIN intelligence police, leading a team of some 150 agents charged with spying on government opponents. That training gave him the assurances he needed

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to know how to safely communicate with fellow plotters.

In what he considers an "act of destiny," he met López in 2018 when he was sent to his home — where the opposition leader had been transferred to finish a 14-year sentence for inciting violence — to look for a cellphone with an American chip that he had been using to communicate clandestinely.

But instead of conducting a sweep, he spent an hour talking to Venezuela's top political prisoner, exchanging views about the country's situation and even snapping a photo of the two together for his wife, an admirer.

"That's where I planted a seed," said Soto. "I managed to convince him that not all of the military was with the revolution."

Echoing claims by the Trump administration, the two men said they were defrauded by Maduro aides, including Supreme Court President Maikel Moreno and Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino, who they say ditched at the last minute a promise made to the opposition to abandon their support for Maduro. Both Moreno and Padrino have repeatedly asserted their loyalty to Maduro.

In the confusing aftermath of the failed rebellion, they scurried for protection on the back of motorcycles, stripping off their olive green fatigues and knocking, unsuccessfully at first, on several embassy doors.

Amid the chaos, López phoned then Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela, who immediately embraced their cause and worked through the night personally guaranteeing their safe arrival to the embassy.

Varela in an interview recalled how two months before the U.S. invasion of Panama, in 1989, then-dictator Gen. Manuel Noriega crushed a similar revolt and then ordered the execution of more than 10 ringleaders.

"We couldn't leave them alone," Varela, who left office in July, told the AP. "The Sebin was 10 feet from the door. They were going to kill them all."

Venezuela's government has yet to comment but shortly after the failed putsch Maduro accused the men of belonging to a small pocket of "traitors" who had been hoodwinked by "far right coup mongers" backed by the U.S. Several other alleged conspirators were jailed, all were expelled and one naval captain accused of seeking to assassinate Maduro died in state custody with what his lawyer said were signs of torture.

Underscoring the risks associated with guardsmen's flight, regional military commanders in recent days were instructed to be on high alert for the men, who they identified by photos and ID.

"Remember, they are armed and are looking to sow chaos," reads the message, a copy of which was provided by Sánchez.

The embassy, in an upscale high-rise, would become their spartan, heavily surveilled home for the next seven months. Both men said the "humanitarian support" provided by the embassy's staff and the Panamanian people ensured their safety.

While confined, the 16 guardsmen worked hard to maintain military discipline.

To keep out of their host's way, they adopted an inverted sleep schedule, dozing during the day on thin mattresses strewn across the floor of a small room. Then at night, after the diplomats went home, they'd stumble out of bed to cook together on a small stove top, keep fit with dumbbells improvised from 20-liter water bottles and read religious texts in a prayer circle. Sanchez compared it Anne Frank's cloistered hideaway from the Nazis in a secret attic.

Guido celebrated the safe departure from the embassy of the "Venezuelan military patriots."

"We will always protect those who stand up for the constitution," he said on Twitter,

Soto and Sánchez cemented their friendship as young cadets, before Hugo Chávez had come to power and upended Venezuela's armed forces, purging anyone suspected of disloyalty. They said their loyalty was always to the institution they served, not Chavez's revolution, and managed to win the trust of top officials by demonstrating a high level of professionalism.

They secretly turned against Chavez's revolution in 2007, after the leftist firebrand tried to change Venezuela's constitution to abolish presidential term limits. But at the time they lacked the ability to push for change.

"I didn't want to stake a radical position and become another martyr," said Sánchez. "I had to wait for my moment."

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The brutal 2018 killing of renegade police officer Oscar Pérez in a military raid on his hideout magnified the dangers they faced but also stiffened their resolve. When Guaidó declared himself interim president with the backing of the U.S. in January, the two entered headlong into a compartmentalized conspiracy with members of the opposition.

Around the same time, Soto was arrested as part of a roundup of suspected plotters inside the national guard. But after a harrowing week in the dungeons of military counterintelligence, in which he said his head was covered and he was under a constant threat of torture, his one-time boss, SEBIN director Gen. Gustavo Gonzalez López, personally came to pull him out of jail.

"He only half believed in my innocence," said Soto. "But it wasn't convenient for him that someone who he completely trusted was there, because he could've been singled out next."

The two men's admiration for López runs deep despite misgivings within the opposition itself about the wisdom and planning that went into the surprise uprising, much of it unknown to all but a small circle. In the run-up to the uprising, the two even managed to get past the security detail stationed outside López's home and discuss plans face-to-face.

"We spoke easily because I knew exactly what the government was monitoring, and what we could and couldn't say," said Soto about the tense, adrenaline-filled two weeks prior to the uprising.

After the uprising, López — from the Spanish ambassador's residence, where he took refuge — took care of their everyday needs to make sure morale stayed high during the long ordeal. Every Saturday they cooked hamburgers donated by opposition well-wishers.

Now, in exile, their plans are uncertain but finally they will be reunited with their families, who were granted asylum in Panama after fleeing themselves when the uprising failed.

"We left Venezuela," said Sánchez from an undisclosed location, "but our fight to restore Venezuela's democracy will continue."

Joshua Goodman on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/apjoshgoodman>

Strasburg, Nationals reach record \$245M, 7-year deal

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Stephen Strasburg returned to the Washington Nationals with a record contract on the first day of the winter meetings, a deal that puts fellow free agent pitcher Gerrit Cole in position for an even larger payday.

Washington and the World Series MVP agreed to a \$245 million, seven-year contact, a deal of surprising size and length for a 31-year-old right-hander with an injury filled resume.

Strasburg received the highest deal for a pitcher in both total dollars and average annual value at \$35 million. The largest contract for a pitcher had been David Price's \$217 million, seven-year deal with Boston that began in 2016. The highest average value had been Zack Greinke's \$34.4 million as part of a \$206.5 million, six-year agreement with Arizona prior to the 2016 season.

"For me, it was an early Christmas present," Washington manager Dave Martinez said. "Just watching his whole career, to think that he's going to end it here with the team he started with is awesome for him and his family."

Strasburg gets \$35 million annually, with \$80 million deferred — an even \$11,428,571 a year — at 1% interest. The deferred money is payable from 2028-30, with an interest payment of about \$4 million due on Dec. 31, 2029.

Cole, like Strasburg represented by agent Scott Boras, is expected to shatter Strasburg's salary standards sometime soon. Cole is two years younger, and while he made five trips to the disabled list from 2014-16, he has not been sidelined since.

Other big names could be in play this week as teams talk trades and agents pitch free agents. But recent meetings have been more talk than action.

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"Right now it seems like the dominoes are falling more quickly than they have in the past," said new Los Angeles Angels manager Joe Maddon, whose team is thought to be competing with the New York Yankees for Cole. "We somehow have to grab some of these dominoes right now and figure it out."

In the other big contract announced Monday, Philadelphia finalized a \$118 million, five-year agreement with Zack Wheeler that was reached last week subject to a successful physical.

Strasburg was drafted first overall by Washington in 2009 and has spent his entire career with the Nationals. He'll stay in a rotation that also features All-Stars Max Scherzer and Patrick Corbin.

"He's a wonderful person, a wonderful player and a true champion," Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo said at a news conference. "We know this person, we know his character, we know his work ethic."

After helping win the first World Series title in the 51-season history of the Montreal/Washington franchise, Strasburg gave up \$100 million he had been guaranteed from 2020-23 as part of a \$175 million, seven-year contract he agreed to in May 2016 and became a free agent.

He was 18-6 with a 3.32 ERA this season, topping 30 starts for the second time in his career and leading the NL with 209 innings. He went 5-0 with a 1.98 ERA in five postseason starts and one relief appearance, including wins in Games 2 and 6 of the World Series against Houston.

In a career interrupted by Tommy John surgery shortly after his spectacular major league debut in 2010, Strasburg is 112-58 with a 3.17 ERA and 1,695 strikeouts in parts of 10 seasons. He's made 10 trips to the disabled list over seven of those years.

Strasburg's average annual value is second among all players behind outfielder Mike Trout's \$35.5 million in a \$426.5 million, 12-year contract with the Los Angeles Angels that started last season.

Washington has invested heavily in starting pitching. Scherzer, also a Boras client, agreed to a \$210 million, seven-year contract before the 2015 season. Corbin reached a \$140 million, six-year deal last offseason.

Rizzo confirmed a pending \$6.25 million, one-year deal to keep second baseman Howie Kendrick, one of Washington's postseason stars. All-Star third baseman Anthony Rendon, another key component of the Nationals' title, also is a free agent represented by Boras.

"Ownership has always given us the resources to field a great team," Rizzo said. "I don't expect that to change."

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

Russia, Ukraine to revive peace process amid little progress

By **VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, SYLVIE CORBET and YURAS KARMANAU** Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The presidents of Ukraine and Russia agreed Monday to revive the peace process on the bloody separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine and exchange all their prisoners, but they failed to resolve crucial issues such as a timeline on local elections and control of the borders in the rebel-held region.

At the first meeting between new Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Russian President Vladimir Putin, the two leaders failed to find a compromise to bring an end to the 5-year-old war that has killed 14,000 people, emboldened the Kremlin and reshaped European geopolitics.

But they did agree to try again in four months to find new solutions, said French President Emmanuel Macron, who mediated the talks along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and called them "fruitful" in that it brought all four leaders together.

"There are disagreements, especially on timeline and next steps. We had a very long discussion on this," Macron said at a news conference after the talks in the Elysee palace.

The talks focused on reviving a largely stalled 2015 peace agreement intended to end fighting between Ukrainian troops and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Putin said they agreed that there was no alternative to the 2015 accord reached in the Belarusian capital of Minsk. He emphasized that Ukraine should quickly extend a law giving wide autonomy to the rebel-held regions in line with the deal and also approve a legislation granting amnesty to the rebels.

He added that in addition to the prisoner swap, agreement was reached to continue pulling back troops

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in other areas in the east, clear mines there and remove fortifications.

Zelenskiy acknowledged many previous cease-fire deals didn't hold but he added that "this time we agreed to treat it seriously."

"I'm convinced that if all parties want it strongly, we will be able to implement it," he said.

Ukraine and Russia conducted several rounds of prisoner exchange, most recently in September. Monday's deal goes further, envisaging a blanket "all for all" exchange of all known prisoners held by Ukraine and the rebels.

Zelenskiy made a particular emphasis on that.

"I would very much like our people to come home in time to spend the New Year holidays with their families," Zelenskiy said after the talks.

But there was little clarity on the key contentious issues — autonomy for the east and control of the border.

Russia wanted the summit to increase pressure on Zelenskiy to fulfill the 2015 Minsk peace accord, which promises wide autonomy to Ukraine's rebel-held regions.

The Minsk deal puts forth that Ukraine can regain control over the border with Russia in the separatist-held regions only after they are granted a broad self-rule and hold local elections.

In particular, it stipulates that the Ukrainian law should allow municipal authorities in the east to appoint judges and prosecutors in the region and form local police. It notes that the law should also provide for an amnesty for those who took part in the fighting. Those provisions were anathema to many in Ukraine.

The 2015 deal was a diplomatic coup for Russia, ensuring that the rebel regions get a broad authority and resources to survive on their own without cross-border support.

Zelenskiy wants to tweak the timeline laid out in the accord, which calls for Ukraine to be able to regain control of its border with Russia only after local elections are held in the separatist regions and the regions receive autonomous status. He says Ukraine must get control of its border first before local elections are held, but the Kremlin insists that's not an option.

The summit was the biggest test yet for Zelenskiy, a comic actor and political novice who won the presidency this year in a landslide — partly on promises to end the war.

Macron praised Zelenskiy's courage and determination, adding that he made "gestures" that allowed peace talks to be relaunched.

"Today an important step was made. That's the first time in three years such a summit is being held," Macron said. "That's the first time President Zelenskiy and President Putin are meeting... and we have tangible results."

A major breakthrough at the Paris talks had been seen as unlikely, and Ukrainian protesters in Kyiv had put pressure on their new leader not to surrender too much to Putin, who has been in office nearly 20 years.

But the fact that Putin and Zelenskiy met at all was a significant step after years of war. Putin and Zelenskiy faced each other across the table, flanked by Macron and Merkel. Putin and Zelenskiy also held a separate one-on-one meeting.

While opinion surveys have shown an overwhelming support for Zelenskiy's peace efforts, a minority opposing them is highly-mobilized and energetic. Thousands rallied on Kyiv's main square Sunday to warn him against making any concessions, and some set up a tent camp around his headquarters. Cries of "shame!" and whistles of derision greeted announcements from the leaders' news conference in Paris.

"We didn't see any real steps — Putin did not promise control of the border or the withdrawal of his troops," 38-year-old demonstrator Nina Onufrik said.

Despite the 2015 peace agreement, Ukrainian soldiers and Russia-backed separatists have continued to exchange fire.

Germany and France helped to broker the Minsk accord, in hopes of ending a conflict on Europe's eastern edge that has complicated relations with Russia, a powerful trading partner and diplomatic player.

But with progress stalled, the leaders haven't met since 2016. Ukraine and Russia struck a prisoner exchange deal in September and agreed on a troop and heavy weapons pullback from two locations in eastern Ukraine. Russia has also released three Ukrainian navy ships that were seized a year ago.

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While Zelenskiy still enjoys broad public support, he has been embarrassed by the scandal around his discussions with U.S. President Donald Trump that have unleashed an impeachment inquiry in Washington. The U.S. is an important military backer for Ukraine, which is hugely out-gunned by Russia.

While the U.S. was never part of this peace process, U.S. backing has strengthened Ukraine's overall negotiating position with Russia in the past. Now that support is increasingly in doubt, after the Trump administration froze military aid earlier this year and is increasingly focused on Trump's re-election bid. With U.S. influence waning around the world, many in Kyiv see one clear winner: Russia.

Russia denies providing troops and weapons to help the separatists but has maintained political support and sent aid. It argues that people in eastern Ukraine feel stronger cultural and linguistic ties with Russia than with Western-leaning Kyiv.

The Kremlin hopes that an end to the conflict could also lead to the eventual lifting of EU sanctions against Russia linked to the fighting, which European businesses have pushed for. The EU and U.S. imposed separate sanctions on Russia over its annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

The EU is expected to extend sanctions this week by another six months. Arriving for meetings in Brussels on Monday, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said: "At the moment I see no grounds to change anything in the European Union's sanctions policy toward Russia in this matter. It would be good if we could get there at some point."

Macron and Merkel said they agreed to intensify the monitoring by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is now only active for 12 hours a day and conduct it 24 hours a day.

Karmanau reported from Kyiv. Sylvie Corbet and Angela Charlton in Paris, Inna Varenysia in eastern Ukraine, Daria Litvinova in Moscow and Geir Moulson in Berlin contributed.

George Laurer, inventor of ubiquitous UPC, dies at 94

WENDELL, N.C. (AP) — George J. Laurer, whose invention of the Universal Product Code at IBM transformed retail and other industries around the world, has died. He was 94.

A funeral was held on Monday for Laurer, who died Thursday at his home in Wendell, North Carolina, a suburb of Raleigh. Sean Bannon with Strickland Funeral Home in Wendell said he had no information on Laurer's cause of death.

Laurer was an electrical engineer with IBM in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park in the early 1970s when he spearheaded the development of the UPC, or bar code.

The now-ubiquitous marking, composed of unique black bars and a 12-digit number, allowed retailers to identify products and their prices as they are scanned, usually at checkout.

Laurer said in a 2010 interview that grocery stores in the 1970s were dealing with soaring costs and the labor-intensive requirements of putting price tags on all of their products. The bar code led to fewer pricing errors and allowed retailers to keep better account of their inventory.

Today, such UPCs are on all kinds of products, services and other items for identification.

"To me, it's just absolutely amazing, because when we were doing this ... I never expected it to be anything like this," Laurer told WRAL-TV in 2010. He later produced a patent for one of the first hand-held scanners for reading bar codes, according to an obituary provided by the funeral home.

A New York native, Laurer served in the Army during World War II and graduated from the University of Maryland in 1951, after which he worked for IBM for over three decades. IBM identified him during the company's 2011 centennial celebration as a contributor to one of the company's 100 iconic moments.

Laurer told WRAL he was still in awe of the invention, which was celebrated on its 25th anniversary at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

"When I watch these clerks zipping the stuff across the scanners and I keep thinking to myself ... 'It can't work that well,'" he said.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Marilyn Slocum Laurer. Survivors include four children, as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Report: US misled public on progress in Afghanistan war

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government across three White House administrations misled the public about failures in the Afghanistan war, often suggesting success where it didn't exist, according to thousands of pages of documents obtained by The Washington Post.

The documents reveal deep frustrations about America's conduct of the Afghanistan war, including the ever-changing U.S. strategy, the struggles to develop an effective Afghan fighting force and persistent failures to defeat the Taliban and combat corruption throughout the government.

"We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan — we didn't know what we were doing," Douglas Lute, a three-star Army general who served as the White House's Afghan war czar during the Bush and Obama administrations, told government interviewers in 2015.

The interviews were conducted as part of a "Lessons Learned" project by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction over the past several years. SIGAR has produced seven reports so far from the more than 400 interviews, and several more are in the works. The Post sought and received raw interview data through the Freedom of Information Act and lawsuits.

The documents quote officials close to the 18-year war effort describing a campaign by the U.S. government to distort the grim reality of the war.

"Every data point was altered to present the best picture possible," Bob Crowley, an Army colonel who served as a counterinsurgency adviser to U.S. military commanders in 2013 and 2014, told government interviewers, according to the Post. "Surveys, for instance, were totally unreliable but reinforced that everything we were doing was right and we became a self-licking ice cream cone."

The Pentagon released a statement Monday saying there has been "no intent" by the department to mislead Congress or the public.

Defense Department officials "have consistently briefed the progress and challenges associated with our efforts in Afghanistan, and DoD provides regular reports to Congress that highlight these challenges," said Lt. Col. Thomas Campbell, a department spokesman. "Most of the individuals interviewed spoke with the benefit of hindsight. Hindsight has also enabled the department to evaluate previous approaches and revise our strategy, as we did in 2017 with the launch of the president's South Asia strategy."

SIGAR has frequently been vocal about the war's failures in reports going back more than a decade, including extensive questions about vast waste in the nearly \$1 trillion spent on the conflict.

The Post said that John Sopko, the head of SIGAR, acknowledged that the documents show "the American people have constantly been lied to." SIGAR was created by Congress in 2008 to conduct audits and investigations into waste of government spending on the war in Afghanistan.

Democrats on Capitol Hill were quick to endorse the story's findings.

Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., tweeted: "The war in Afghanistan is an epic bipartisan failure. I have long called for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from that quagmire. Now it appears U.S. officials misled the American public about the war. It is time to leave Afghanistan. Now."

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., said in a tweet: "775,000 of our troops deployed. 2,400 American lives lost. Over 20,000 Americans wounded. 38,000 civilians killed. Trillions spent. Rumsfeld in 2003: 'I have no visibility into who the bad guys are.'"

Sarah Kreps, professor of government and international relations at Cornell University said the interviews reveal the enormous disconnect between what civilian and military leaders knew about the war and what the public knew, particularly about its costs.

The Post said that while the interviews contain few revelations about military operations in the war, they include a lot of criticism that refutes the narrative that officials often touted about progress being made.

James Dobbins, a former senior U.S. diplomat who served as a special envoy to Afghanistan under Bush and Obama was blunt in his assessment of the war in his interview.

"We don't invade poor countries to make them rich," The Post quoted Dobbins as saying in one of the interviews. "We don't invade authoritarian countries to make them democratic. We invade violent countries to make them peaceful and we clearly failed in Afghanistan."

2020 newcomer Bloomberg stepping onto international stage

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — New York billionaire Michael Bloomberg launched his campaign less than three weeks ago, but he is already making his first foreign trip as a presidential candidate.

The Democrat will appear Tuesday at a United Nations global climate conference in Madrid, where he'll share the results of his private push to organize thousands of U.S. cities and businesses to abide by the terms of a global climate treaty that the Trump administration is working to abandon. The appearance comes as Bloomberg, a former Republican whose dedication to the environment earned him the designation of special UN envoy for climate action, tries to find his footing in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary election.

It's rare for a presidential candidate to step onto the international stage before securing the nomination, and virtually unheard of for a candidate to do so in the first month of his or her candidacy.

Earlier this year, Bernie Sanders appeared in Canada to highlight his fight to lower prescription drug costs, while former candidate Beto O'Rourke met with asylum seekers in Mexico. Both men represented states that bordered those countries, however, and there were no formal talks with foreign leaders involved.

Bloomberg shared his plan to appear at the global climate conference on social media on Monday.

"I'm going to the climate summit in Madrid because President Trump won't," he said, adding that he plans to "meet with environmental leaders from around the world about next steps on tackling the climate crisis."

Bloomberg also vowed in a statement to rejoin the Paris climate agreement in his first official act as president.

Campaign aide Brynne Craig said climate would be "a central issue" for Bloomberg this week and throughout his presidential run.

She said the issue "is near and dear to his heart" and "a front-of-mind issue for Democratic voters."

The 77-year-old billionaire has used his wealth to make an impact in the global fight against climate change and in his 2020 presidential campaign. He is largest donor in the history of the Sierra Club, and he has spent more than \$60 million in the first two weeks of his campaign on television ads now running in all 50 states.

Many progressives remain resistant to his candidacy.

"How many self-declared climate champion billionaires does the race need? The answer is none," said Mitch Jones, climate and energy program director for the group Food & Water Watch, which has been critical of Bloomberg's pragmatic approach to fighting climate change. "This is just Bloomberg trying to insert himself into international climate negotiations to bolster his campaign."

Bloomberg's presidential campaign released a new online video ad contrasting his message on climate change with that of Trump, who served formal notice last month that the U.S. intends to become the first country to withdraw from the Paris accord.

"It's getting hotter. But while fire and smoke choke our air, Donald Trump is making it worse," Bloomberg's new ad says, describing Trump as a "climate change denier" and Bloomberg as a "climate change champion."

AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of the American electorate, found that 92% of people who voted for Democrats in the 2018 midterms said they were at least somewhat concerned about climate change. Seventy percent said they were very concerned.

This story has been corrected to show that the organization mentioned in the second paragraph is the United Nations, not the United National.

Up to 13 feared dead in volcanic eruption off New Zealand

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

TAURANGA, New Zealand (AP) — A volcano off the New Zealand coast erupted Monday with a towering blast of ash and scalding steam as dozens of tourists were exploring its moon-like surface, killing five people and leaving eight others missing and feared dead, authorities said.

Helicopter crews landed on White Island despite the danger and helped evacuate the dozens of survivors, some of them critically injured.

Hours after the disaster, authorities said the site was still too dangerous for rescuers to search for the missing. But aircraft flew over the island repeatedly, and “no signs of life have been seen at any point,” Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said.

The missing and injured included New Zealanders and tourists from Australia, the U.S., China, Britain and Malaysia, the prime minister said. Some of those who were exploring White Island volcano were passengers from the Royal Caribbean cruise ship *Ovation of the Seas*, docked on neighboring North Island.

“My god,” Michael Schade tweeted as he posted video of the eruption. “My family and I had gotten off it 20 minutes before, were waiting at our boat about to leave when we saw it. Boat ride home tending to people our boat rescued was indescribable.”

His video showed a wall of ash and steam around White Island and a helicopter heavily damaged and covered in ash. He said one woman was badly injured but seemed “strong” by the end.

The terrifying disaster immediately raised questions of why people were allowed to visit the island some 30 miles (50 kilometers) off mainland New Zealand after scientists had noted an uptick in volcanic activity in recent weeks. White Island is the tip of an undersea volcano.

Authorities said 47 people were on the island at the time. Some were walking along the rim of the crater just before the eruption. In addition to the dead and missing, 31 survivors were hospitalized and three others were released, officials said. Some of the victims were reported severely burned.

The eruption took place about 2 p.m. and consisted of two explosions in quick succession, the prime minister said. It sent a plume of steam and ash an estimated 12,000 feet (3,660 meters) into the air. One of the boats that returned from the island was covered with ash half a meter (yard) thick, Ardern said.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said 13 Australians were hospitalized and 11 others were believed to be among the missing or dead.

“I fear there is worse news to come over the course of perhaps today or over the next few days,” he said. “This is a terrible tragedy, a time of great innocence and joy interrupted by the horror of that eruption.”

The GeoNet agency, which monitors volcanoes and earthquakes in New Zealand, had raised the alert level on White Island on Nov. 18 from 1 to 2 on a scale where 5 represents a major eruption, noting an increase in sulfur dioxide gas, which originates from magma deep in the volcano. It also said that volcanic tremors had increased from weak to moderate strength.

Ardern said White Island is a “very unpredictable volcano,” and questions about whether tourists should be visiting will have to be addressed, “but for now, we’re focused on those who are caught up in this horrific event.”

Brad Scott, a volcanologist with research group GNS Science, said the alert level on White Island is often raised and then dropped without any eruption. He said there hadn’t been any major problems with tourists visiting the island in the past, though there had been some close calls.

He would not venture an opinion on whether it was safe enough for tourists immediately before Monday’s eruption.

After the disaster, GeoNet raised its alert level to 4, later dropping it to 3.

“In the scheme of things, for volcanic eruptions, it is not large,” said Ken Gledhill from GeoNet. “But if you were close to that, it is not good.”

White Island is New Zealand’s most active cone volcano. About 70% of the volcano lies under the sea.

Twelve people were killed on the island in 1914 when it was being mined for sulfur. Part of a crater wall collapsed and a landslide destroyed the miners’ village and the mine itself.

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The remains of buildings from another mining enterprise in the 1920s are now a tourist attraction. The island became a private scenic reserve in 1953, and daily tours allow more than 10,000 people to visit every year.

The island is also known by the indigenous Maori name Whakaari.

Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand.

AP Exclusive: Accidental shootings show police training gaps

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — When an Iowa mother tried to take her child from her husband during an argument on a snowy sidewalk in 2015, an officer stepped in to stop the scuffle, but he accidentally fired his weapon as a dog approached. The bullet went through the woman's arm and into her chest, killing her as her family watched in horror.

When a Minnesota sergeant stopped a motorcyclist after a 2015 high-speed chase, he stepped out of his patrol car with his firearm drawn, flush with adrenaline, and accidentally shot the man in the arm.

And an Arkansas police officer fatally shot a suspect in 2012 as she tried to get him into handcuffs.

Accidental shootings by law enforcement have happened in recent years at agencies small and large and at all levels — city, county, state and federal — across the U.S., an Associated Press investigation found. They've caused hundreds of injuries to officers, suspects and bystanders, and sometimes they've caused deaths.

Experts say it's because officers don't get the training they need to handle their guns proficiently, especially in life-and-death situations.

The methods used to train officers with their firearms "create the illusion of learning" but are inadequate for the demands of today's policing, said Bill Lewinski, executive director of the Illinois-based Force Science Institute, which provides research and training to law enforcement agencies.

"The training has to match the shooting challenges on the street," he said. "We don't do enough street training connected to actual skill and decision-making that's required of officers in this type of encounter. Some officers only handle their guns once a year."

Officers are most proficient with their guns immediately after graduating from a police academy, experts say.

After that, most are tested only once or twice a year in "qualifications" that measure a minimum level of firearms proficiency. There are no federal guidelines for these tests so there are thousands of different standards across the country.

No one tracks these shootings nationwide, so the AP collected media reports and surveyed agencies across the country through public records requests. The review was not comprehensive, due to the sheer number of U.S. law enforcement agencies and a lack of reporting requirements for such shootings. But it provides a snapshot of the problem, documenting 1,422 unintentional discharges since 2012 at 258 agencies, and uncovering detailed reports on 426.

The tally includes any incident in which a gun went off and the officer did not intend it to, whether they were cleaning or unloading a weapon or surging with adrenaline while responding to a call. Some shootings occurred because of involuntary muscle reflexes, experts said, or because the officer simply tripped.

While countless law enforcement officers safely perform their duties every day, some experts say even a small number of accidental shootings is unacceptable because they are preventable.

"Ninety-nine out of 100 times, there is not something wrong with the gun," said Paul Markel, a former police officer and firearms instructor in Mississippi. "It's the person holding it."

TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES

Gabe Steele describes Jan. 6, 2015, as the worst day of his life.

He and his wife, Autumn, had been having marital problems, issues he partly blames on his PTSD from

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two tours in Iraq. When she showed up at their Burlington, Iowa, home that morning, he called 911, fearing another fight.

Autumn Steele was trying to wrest their 3-year-old son from Gabe's arms on the sidewalk when Officer Jesse Hill approached.

Just then, their dog darted toward Hill, barking loudly, and the officer lost his footing, firing two shots as he fell backward into the snow. One bullet hit the dog, the other hit 34-year-old Autumn Steele, killing her.

Hill became frantic.

"I pulled my gun and shot it, and I hit her," he told Officer Tim Merryman, according to Hill's body camera video. "Oh, my God, no!"

Gabe Steele knew instantly his wife was in trouble. She "actually sat down, looked me in the eye" before she died, he recalled, choking up, in a recent exclusive interview. "That was tough."

The AP found 21 cases where people died in accidental shootings by police. It identified another 134 where the officer injured himself, and 45 where an accidental discharge injured another officer. An officer accidentally shot bystanders in 34 instances and suspects in 19.

Unintentional shootings usually lead to two investigations: one by an outside agency to determine whether charges should be filed, and an internal review to see if any policies were violated and punishment, such as suspension, is appropriate.

In Autumn Steele's case, state investigators reviewed the shooting and sent the matter to then-Des Moines County Attorney Amy Beavers to determine if Hill should be charged.

Beavers compared the evidence against Iowa's homicide statutes: First- and second-degree murder and voluntary manslaughter didn't fit the scene, she said; involuntary manslaughter would apply only if the death occurred while the officer committed a crime; and Iowa has no negligent homicide law. She decided Hill could not be charged.

"(It) appeared to me that Officer Hill was trying to protect himself from the dog and an assault," Beavers said in a recent interview, adding that the decision still weighs on her. "It was a tragic accident."

Hill also kept his job, including working as a school security officer. His lawyer did not respond to a request for comment, and Burlington Police Chief Dennis Kramer declined AP interviews with himself and Hill.

Gabe Steele, 40, thinks Hill should have been held accountable.

"He just got to go on vacation and get paid for it, for taking my son's mother away," Steele said. "No one has ever apologized to me and my son. That hurts."

Steele's family filed a wrongful death suit against the city and Hill, and reached a \$2 million settlement in 2018, according to their lawyer.

The AP's investigation found 17 cases in which the officer was charged and 28 that ended in lawsuits. Settlements varied from \$200,000 to several million.

PERVASIVE PROBLEM

Law enforcement agencies have different terms for these shootings, including "accidental," "negligent," or "unintentional" discharges.

But Doug Tangen, firearms program manager at Washington state's law enforcement training center, argues they are all caused by a degree of negligence because at some point the officer violated one or more of the four universal firearms safety rules: Assume all guns are loaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction, keep your finger off the trigger, and be sure of your target and what is beyond it.

"Guns don't go off by themselves," Tangen said.

In addition to a lack of standards for police shooting qualifications, there are no federal regulations mandating the amount of firearms training officers must receive at the police academy or once they graduate, Tangen said.

The U.S. Justice Department has issued consent decrees mandating certain types of training following use-of-force complaints, but those orders focused mostly on de-escalation training, not firearms, he said.

Accidental shootings happen at agencies of all sizes. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, for

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example, reported 140 between 2012 and 2018. New York City police had 100 during that time, while the smaller Jackson, Mississippi, police department had 93, the AP found.

They also continue to occur at federal agencies, more than a decade after the Justice Department's inspector general documented high rates.

The watchdog office studied shootings by four federal agencies from 2000 to 2003. It found that of 267 shootings reported, 38 percent were unintentional.

According to the AP's review of records obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests, the FBI has had at least 48 accidental shootings in the past five years. U.S. Customs and Border Protection has had at least 122 since 2012, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives 27.

SURVIVAL STRESS

When SWAT officers searched the Las Vegas hotel room used by Stephen Paddock to massacre people attending the 91 Harvest Festival in 2017, they used an explosive device to breach a door to an adjoining room, and three loud blasts erupted.

Officers in the hallway flooded into the room, asking: "Where did those shots come from? Was that us?" One of the officers called out that he accidentally fired his assault rifle, hitting a chair, cabinet and wall. No one was hurt.

The AP identified six cases where police accidentally fired their weapons while responding to reports of active shooters, including at schools. In all, 200 accidental shootings happened while officers were on duty or were responding to crimes.

In some cases, they were hyped up due to adrenaline, which can impair officers' hearing and vision and even skew their perception of time.

"When officers suffer survival stress, real survival stress, all of their senses start to degrade," said Sean Hendrickson, an instructor at the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, which trains all police and sheriff's deputies in the state.

An Eden Prairie, Minnesota, police sergeant cited this phenomenon after he accidentally shot a motorcyclist in 2015.

Sgt. Lonnie Soppeland stopped the biker after a middle-of-the-night, high-speed chase along county roads, according to police and court records.

Soppeland drew his firearm as he stepped out of his patrol car, and a round went off, hitting the motorcyclist in the arm.

"You actually shot me!" a distressed and bleeding Matthew Hovland-Knase is heard telling the sergeant in his dashcam video. Soppeland starts swearing and rushes to his aid.

"It was not intentional, I can tell you that," he responds.

Soppeland later explained to Hennepin County sheriff's investigators that as he chased the motorcycle, he watched it nearly crash head-on into a tow truck.

"This added stress and adrenaline to my body," he told them. "It was not my conscious choice to discharge my firearm."

Soppeland was assigned to administrative work during the investigation and later returned to regular duties with no further disciplinary action.

MUSCLE CONTRACTIONS

Other accidental shootings by police have been attributed to muscle reflexes — one hand or arm jerks or contracts, causing the other hand or arm to jerk or contract — including the 2012 killing of a suspect in Alexander, Arkansas.

Officer Nancy Cummings says she stopped to check on Carleton Wallace, who was walking down the middle of the street, and he pulled a gun on her. She told him to drop it, and he threw it in the bushes.

Cummings then attempted to handcuff Wallace, but he yanked away, causing her to fall. As she tried to hold onto him, the gun fired, the court record said.

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Wallace was shot in the back.

Cummings later said she didn't mean for the gun to go off and remembers looking at her hand and not knowing what happened, according to her statement in response to a federal wrongful death lawsuit.

She was charged with manslaughter. An agent who wrote the arrest affidavit said the way Cummings effected the arrest "with her gun in her hand with the finger on the trigger well was reckless," court records said.

Thomas Martin, an officer and firearms expert, testified at a trial in the lawsuit that the gun's firing was the result of a "natural reflex."

"If Ms. Cummings' finger were situated outside the trigger guard and Mr. Wallace's actions caused her to reflexively squeeze her right hand, it is possible that Cummings' finger inadvertently and unintentionally slipped into the trigger guard and in one fluid motion, disengaged the safety lever and pulled the trigger," he wrote in an affidavit.

Cummings was acquitted, and a jury ruled in her favor in the lawsuit.

A recent study by the Force Science Institute, the research and consulting group, cited involuntary muscle contractions as one of the potential main factors in accidental shootings by police.

The study categorized behaviors based on unintentional discharges outlined in 171 reports from four law enforcement agencies. Other shootings occurred when officers lost their balance or experienced a "startle response."

In most cases, their finger was on the trigger when it shouldn't have been, the study found.

Injuries happened in 20% of the 171 reports — three-quarters of them to the officer, and the rest to fellow officers and suspects. Deaths occurred in 8%, with 85% being suspects and 15% fellow officers.

"These findings suggest that injuries and deaths may be more prevalent than previously reported," the study said.

TRAINING SHORTFALLS

Experts agree the way to reduce these shootings is to rethink firearms training, starting with the amount required.

While all academies require cadets to undergo a certain number of hours of firearms instruction, the AP found how many varies widely.

Georgia, Illinois and Indiana, for example, call for 40 hours of specific firearms training, while Florida requires 80, Utah 52 and Missouri 66 hours.

Cadets at Washington's academy must have 90 hours of firearms training. But once they go to work for a department, the amount of additional training they receive is uncertain, said Hendrickson, the instructor.

"Those skills that they receive here at the academy, firearms skills, degrade pretty rapidly after they leave the academy if they're not practicing or getting more training," he said.

Another issue is the type of training used. Most academies use "block and silo" methods, which bombard officers with information and don't present it in a coordinated manner, so they don't retain it, experts say.

What's lacking are standards for regular, ongoing training — including scenario-based exercises that mirror high-stress situations — at the academy and over the course of an officer's career.

Spending money up front on training reduces the possibility of having to spend it later — on lawsuits, said Jason Wuestenberg, executive director of the National Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors Association.

"Usually when something bad happens, it's due to a lack of training or leadership," he said.

More on AP's findings: <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6570974/Accidental-shootings-by-police.pdf>

Follow Martha Bellisle at <https://twitter.com/marthabellisle>

Pensacola gunman got around a ban on foreigners buying guns

By LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

Generally, foreigners are not allowed to buy guns in the United States. But there are exceptions written into federal law, which may explain how the Saudi flight student who shot three servicemen to death at the Pensacola naval base was able to purchase a weapon.

For example, a foreigner who manages to obtain a state hunting license and can show proof of residency in that state can legally buy a gun.

"It seems every day we find a new loophole," said Adam Winkler, a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law and an expert on gun laws and politics.

Authorities have not disclosed precisely how 21-year-old Mohammed Alshamrani, a Royal Saudi Air Force officer undergoing months of flight training at the Florida military base, obtained the Glock 9 mm handgun he used in the attack Friday that ended with him being killed. But the FBI said it was purchased legally in Florida.

In the aftermath of the rampage, which the FBI is treating as a terrorist attack, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis questioned whether foreigners should be allowed to buy guns. The Republican governor said he supports the Second Amendment but it "does not apply to Saudi Arabians."

Law enforcement officials from nations friendly to the United States who are here on official business as well as foreigners who have entered the U.S. through the visa waiver program are among those exempted from the laws against foreigners buying weapons.

In Florida, like many other states, foreigners and non-residents can buy a hunting license. Getting one requires no background check, and it can be done online. With that license in hand, a foreigner can then purchase a firearm, provided the would-be buyer can show the dealer proof that he or she is living in the state.

It is at that point that the person would have to undergo a background check.

There have been instances of foreigners seeking to exploit American gun laws.

In one case in 2017, more than half a dozen Chinese students at the University of Arizona obtained hunting licenses and then purchased firearms. In that particular case, it did not appear to be for nefarious purposes but out of a desire to do something not allowed in their home country: possess a gun.

That same year, a Canadian man intent on carrying out an attack at the Flint, Michigan, airport twice tried to buy a weapon at a gun show, expecting it wouldn't require a background check. When that failed, he bought a knife and used it in an attack at the airport that injured two people.

The attacker, who was born in Tunisia and traveled to the U.S. with his Canadian passport, was sentenced to life in prison. At his sentencing, he told the judge: "Do I regret what I did? Never. I regret I didn't get that machine gun. I regret I didn't kill that cop."

UCLA's Winkler said these cases, underscored by the Pensacola attack, expose failings in American gun laws.

"Terrorists see our lax gun laws as an opening for terrorist attacks, that they don't need to use bombs, they don't need to commit suicide and blow themselves up. All they need to do is come to America and have easy access to guns," he said.

Gun-rights supporters said there are valid reasons for allowing foreigners to obtain guns for hunting. Just as Americans travel overseas to hunt big game, foreigners are keen to travel to the U.S. to bag animals that don't exist in their home countries.

"There is a vibrant hunting industry that happens here in the United States," said Mark Oliva, spokesman for the National Shooting Sports Foundation. "There are species that are iconic to North America."

That said, NSSF, which represents the gun industry, is also trying to find out more about how Alshamrani got his weapon and whether any laws were broken when he obtained it.

Obtaining the hunting license wouldn't guarantee a foreigner a gun; buying one would still require demonstrating valid residency and passing a background check.

Still, gun-control advocates suggest there are limits to what a background check might flag when look-

ing into the past of a foreigner. In the U.S., people prohibited from purchasing a firearm include convicted felons, domestic abusers, substance abusers and those involuntarily committed to a mental institution.

"Obviously our background check system is largely not going to pick up criminal histories from abroad," said David Chipman, a retired agent with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive who is now a senior policy adviser with Giffords, the gun-control group.

"There are obviously loopholes in our gun laws," he said. "We live in a country where the priority is easy access to the sale of guns because of a powerful lobby that has set it up that way because they want to profit from it."

Amazon says Trump's 'improper pressure' doomed Pentagon bid

By MATT O'BRIEN and JOSEPH PISANI undefined

Amazon says President Donald Trump's "improper pressure" and behind-the-scenes attacks harmed its chances of winning a \$10 billion Pentagon contract.

The Pentagon awarded the cloud computing contract to Microsoft in October.

Amazon argues in a lawsuit unsealed Monday in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims that the decision should be revisited because of "substantial and pervasive errors" and Trump's interference.

Amazon and its founder Jeff Bezos are a frequent target of Trump. Bezos personally owns The Washington Post, which Trump has referred to as "fake news" whenever unfavorable stories are published about him.

Amazon said it lost the deal due to Trump's "personal vendetta against Mr. Bezos, Amazon, and the Washington Post."

Pentagon spokeswoman Elissa Smith said in a statement Monday the decision to select Microsoft "was made by an expert team of career public servants and military officers" and without external influence.

Formally called the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure plan, or JEDI, the military's computing project would store and process vast amounts of classified data. The Defense Department has said it will help speed up its war planning and fighting capabilities and enable the military to advance its use of artificial intelligence.

Amazon and Microsoft became the finalists after Oracle and IBM were eliminated in an earlier round of the contract competition. Oracle had also sued, arguing the bidding was rigged in Amazon's favor. Trump publicly waded into the bidding process over the summer, saying he heard complaints and wanted the Pentagon to take a closer look.

"The department is confident in the JEDI award and remains focused on getting this critical capability into the hands of our warfighters as quickly and efficiently as possible," Smith said.

The White House didn't return an emailed request for comment Monday.

Microsoft said in a statement it has "confidence in the qualified staff at the Department of Defense, and we believe the facts will show they ran a detailed, thorough and fair process."

Charles Tiefer, a government contracting law professor at the University of Baltimore, said it would be "an uphill battle" for Amazon to win the lawsuit.

The company must prove real influence by the president beyond his tweets and campaign speeches. Emails and other documents would have to prove that Trump's views toward Amazon were on the mind of officials in charge of awarding the contract.

"That's hard to show," Tiefer said. "But it's not impossible."

Amazon makes the case in the lawsuit that its cloud services were a better fit for the project because of its speed, efficiency and experience securely handling classified government data. It says the Defense Department made errors in the procurement process that make little sense without taking into account Trump's antipathy toward Amazon. Some of the lawsuit's details are redacted for proprietary or security reasons.

"Basic justice requires reevaluation of proposals and a new award decision," the lawsuit says. "The stakes are high. The question is whether the President of the United States should be allowed to use the budget of DoD to pursue his own personal and political ends."

Amazon Web Services has been the industry leader in moving businesses and other institutions onto its cloud — a term used to describe banks of servers in remote data centers that can be accessed from almost anywhere. But Microsoft's Azure cloud platform has been steadily catching up, as have other providers such as Google, in both corporate and government settings.

Mike Hettinger, a tech industry lobbyist focused on federal contracting, said a strong case could have been made for either Amazon or Microsoft winning the contract but it is hard for an outside observer to know what went into the government's technical evaluations and whether Trump's comments or actions influenced the outcome. Amazon is likely to use the case to seek more internal documents from the government.

"I don't think anybody knows what happened behind the scenes," Hettinger said. "I think that's what this lawsuit is intended to find out."

Too much of a Greta thing? Activist urges focus on others

FRANK JORDANS and ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — With dozens of cameras pointing at her across a room full of reporters, celebrity teen environmentalist Greta Thunberg had an unexpected message: Look the other way.

"Our stories have been told over and over again," the 16-year-old Swede said, explaining why she and prominent German activist Luisa Neubauer would be handing over the stage at the U.N. climate meeting in Madrid to other young activists.

"It's really about them," Thunberg added of the young activists from developing countries already facing the effects of climate change, including violent storms, droughts and rising sea levels. "We talk about our future, they talk about their present."

Thunberg has become the face of the youth climate movement, drawing large crowds with her appearances at protests and conferences over the past year and a half.

Veteran campaigners and scientists have welcomed her activism, including her combative speeches challenging world leaders to do more to stop global warming. But some say that it's time to put the spotlight on other young activists who also have a strong story to tell about climate change.

"Greta and other youth leaders have been an incredible inspiration and catalyzed a whole group of young people," said Jennifer Morgan, the executive director of Greenpeace International. "And I think that the media needs to do a better job at covering that."

Thunberg and those close to her appeared to agree.

Neubauer, a 23-year-old who has become the face of the Fridays for Future student movement in Germany, said the focus on her and Thunberg was "incredibly disproportionate."

Thunberg was met by a crowd of cameras as she arrived in Portugal last week, having sailed back to Europe to avoid air travel for environmental reasons. On Friday, she left a protest march through the Spanish capital early after being mobbed by crowds of protesters and reporters.

"We want to break this up," Neubauer told The Associated Press.

Thunberg said she felt a "moral duty" to use the media's attention to promote others who have struggled to get the limelight.

"It is people especially from the global south, especially from indigenous communities, who need to tell their stories," she said before handing the microphone to young environmentalists from around the globe.

Among them was Kisha Erah Muaña, a 23-year-old activist from the Philippines, who called on global leaders to take "robust and lasting action" against climate change.

"We are talking about lives and survival here," she said.

Some stressed the risks they are exposing themselves to for speaking out on climate change.

"I am from Russia, where everyone can be arrested for anything," said Arshak Makichyan, a 25-year-old violinist from Moscow. "But I am not afraid to be arrested. I'm afraid not to do enough."

Thunberg's angry accusations that world leaders are failing the younger generation have made headlines, including her shouts of "How dare you?" at the U.N. General Assembly earlier this year. However, politi-

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cians have, by and large, praised Thunberg and her movement as an important voice of her generation.

"We have all of the youth around the world that are marching and calling to our conscience. And they have moral authority," said former Vice President Al Gore, calling Thunberg "an absolutely fantastic leader."

Other young activists now being propelled to the fore may find more push-back for their views.

Rose Whipple, 18, a community organizer from Minnesota who has taken part in the Standing Rock protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline, linked the issue of climate change to broader political concerns, including racism and long-standing grievances among indigenous groups.

"We deserve to be listened to and we also deserve to have our lands back," said Whipple, wearing a sweatshirt with the words "Destroy white supremacy."

Morgan, of Greenpeace, said she hoped attention would shift "to others who are living on the front line of climate impacts, who are trying to mobilize and push their governments as well."

"And I hope that can be the beginning of showing the world the very, very diverse set of young people who are desperate for leadership coming from their governments," she said.

___ Follow AP's climate coverage at <https://www.apnews.com/Climate> ___ The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Broadcast TV shut out of Globe nods, Netflix edges HBO

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Golden Globe TV nominations were most striking not for what they included, but what they didn't: The traditional broadcast networks were completely shut out in all 55 nominations.

It was a crowning moment for Netflix, and not just for the jeweled one on Queen Elizabeth's head. The streaming service, which dominated the Globe nominations overall, edged out HBO to win the most TV nods on Monday.

Netflix got 17 TV nods, to go with its 17 on the movie side. HBO was a close successor at 15. Two Netflix shows got four nods: "The Crown," in its new Olivia Colman incarnation, in the drama category, and "Unbelievable" in the limited series category, tying with HBO's "Chernobyl."

The shutout, believed to be for the first time, of the broadcast networks — ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, The CW and PBS — made for a seemingly awkward situation for NBC, which will host the awards ceremony Jan. 5 and covered the nominations live on "Today."

"It's shocking and weird that NBC will still telecast the Globes even though voters decided that the network's programs aren't worthy to compete," said TV analyst Tom O'Neil of goldderby.com, adding that a similar scenario has gradually been playing out at the Emmys.

Perhaps the biggest snub went to the HBO behemoth "Game of Thrones," this year's big Emmy winner, which in its final season was nearly shut out, save a leading actor nomination for Kit Harington. Overlooked was Peter Dinklage, an Emmy winner, in the supporting actor category. Also left out: FX's "Pose," though star Billy Porter was nominated.

Another key snub was a rare bit of bad news for Netflix: Its acclaimed "When They See Us," about the exonerated Central Park Five, was shut out, despite taking two Emmys, including for actor Jharrel Jerome. Its much-admired director, Ava DuVernay, was left off the list, adding to a bad day for female directors — and for diversity in general — across the board.

And comedy titan Julia-Louis Dreyfus was bypassed for the last season of HBO's acclaimed "Veep," as was Sandra Oh in "Killing Eve," who not only won the Globe last year, but co-hosted the awards show. Her co-star Jodie Comer, who took the Emmy in September, was nominated for her role as a multilingual, chillingly off-kilter assassin in the BBC America drama.

The Globes again showed an abiding affection for movie stars who dabble in TV. Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon were nominated for the Apple TV Plus drama "The Morning Show," not a critical favorite despite its starry cast. The nominations handed Apple its first Globe nominations barely a month after the streaming service launched.

Other nominees in the best drama actress category included Oscar winners Colman ("The Crown") and Nicole Kidman ("Big Little Lies"). All-time Oscar champ Meryl Streep was nominated in the supporting actress category for "Big Little Lies," as was Helena Bonham Carter ("The Crown"), Patricia Arquette ("The Act"), Toni Colette ("Unbelievable") and Emily Watson ("Chernobyl").

Then again, Oscar winners Mahershala Ali ("True Detective") and Regina King ("Watchmen") were overlooked for TV nods, as was movie veteran Laura Dern ("Big Little Lies").

Among the network series snubbed were NBC's popular "This Is Us," as it was last year, and its star Sterling K. Brown, who won the 2018 Globe and the 2017 Emmy. NBC's "The Good Place" and "Will & Grace" and ABC's "black-ish" were other network nominees from recent years that didn't make the cut.

It wasn't just network shows that fell out of favor: Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale," a previous best drama series winner, was overlooked as it was last year.

Ricky Gervais will host the 77th Golden Globes ceremony.

Associated Press media writer David Bauder contributed to this report.

Online: <https://www.goldenglobes.com/>

Messi's hometown offers emotional trip to his childhood

By DEBORA REY Associated Press

ROSARIO, Argentina (AP) — Soccer wasn't always Lionel Messi's favorite activity.

When he was a child in the modest neighborhood of La Bajada in his Argentine hometown of Rosario, he spent his time bicycling with friends, building forts out of branches and stones, playing hide and seek — and occasionally stealing lemons from a neighbor to make juice.

Those stories and others are the focus of a new tour being offered by Rosario to celebrate their 32-year-old hometown hero, an international sports superstar who just won an unprecedented sixth Golden Ball as world soccer's player of the year.

The tour put together by Rosario's city hall is free of charge and available in an app translated into several languages, guiding fans through 10 stops.

Few houses are higher than two stories in La Bajada, a middle-class neighborhood in the city that is 186 miles (300 kilometers) northwest of Buenos Aires.

Halfway down Israel street stands a gray house, closed off by shut curtains and protected by railings. There is no sign outside indicating it was Messi's home, and no one lives there now, though it still belongs to his family.

The neighbors aren't so shy about the Messi connection, however. Colorful paintings dedicated to the soccer star stand in front of houses and there are sidewalks colored in the blue and white of Argentina's national team with Messi's jersey number, 10, painted in black.

Messi's neighbors and friends are often willing to share stories with visitors.

"Leo was normal and ordinary like other people here," Diego Vallejos, one of Messi's childhood friends, told The Associated Press on a sandy soccer field of the El Campito club as three youngsters played soccer.

"We fell, we scratched ourselves riding bikes. We went to the street with water bombs and threw them at buses," said Vallejos, who is one year older than Messi.

Also on the tour are the school Messi attended and the Abanderado Grandoli club, where he learned his first soccer moves.

The city long had a somewhat distant relationship with Messi, and officials say the tour seeks to change that. Rosario's city hall said Messi's family did not take part in the creation of the tour.

"What we want to emphasize is that Leo is a product of his city, and that there is a life and many stories behind the superstar," said Santiago Valenti with Rosario's tourism agency.

Messi was born June 24, 1987, in the Hospital Italiano Garibaldi in Rosario. He lived in the city until 2000, when he moved to Barcelona.

A recently opened sports museum, a few blocks from Messi's old house, offers an interactive tour of

the lives of local stars in racing, boxing, basketball and soccer.

Messi's section of the museum is introduced by a painting that mixes monuments from Rosario and Barcelona, and the sentence: "All that I did, I did for soccer." Two giant screens display goals and testimonials from his teammates.

"The idea is not to pay a tribute to his sporting success," said museum coordinator Juan Echeverría. "It is to value the path he walked, everything that an athlete has to go through to get to the tip of the iceberg that we see when he is on the podium."

The museum has contacted Messi's family and the player's father said he would donate more memorabilia. One of items on display is a small red shirt with a white collar. Below it is Messi's official register as a Newell's Old Boys academy player and a picture of him smiling.

Downtown is the Malvinas compound where Newell's has its soccer academy. It was there the young Messi was filmed out-dribbling much bigger opponents.

"This is where it all started," said Lisandro Conte, an employee at the academy.

Messi did not play for Newell's. "At that time there were players who looked more promising, and the bet was placed on them," Conte said.

Still, Messi has said he wants to finish his career at Newell's, playing for his hometown club in his own country after a professional career in Barcelona's storied Spanish league team.

Fans visiting Rosario might even be able to catch a match between teams like the recent clash between Newell's and arch-rival Rosario Central. Among the 14 youngsters chasing the ball might be Rosario's next star.

Online: Rosario's Messi tour: https://rosario.tur.ar/web/circuitos_ptc_int.php?id=70

US Catholic priests describe turmoil amid sex abuse crisis

DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

CHICOPEE, Mass. (AP) — More than a century ago, waves of Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Poland and Quebec settled in Chicopee and other western Massachusetts mill towns, helping build churches, rectories and schools to accommodate their faith. Today the priests leading those churches are under siege due to stresses, challenges and sex abuse scandals complicating their lives and those of their fellow priests across the United States.

The Rev. Mark Stelzer is among those trying to persevere. He's a professor at a Roman Catholic college in Chicopee, and its chaplain. He travels frequently to out-of-state events organized by a Catholic addiction-treatment provider, recounting his own recovery from alcoholism.

Last year, his busy schedule got busier. Amid a worsening shortage of priests, the Diocese of Springfield named him administrator of a parish in Holyoke, Chicopee's northern neighbor, where he lives alone in a mansion-sized rectory while serving as spiritual leader to the 500 families of St. Jerome's Church.

"I'm at an age where I thought I'd be doing less rather than doing more," said Stelzer, 62.

Stelzer loves being a priest, yet he's frank about the ever-evolving stresses of his vocation that leave him nostalgic for the priesthood he entered in 1983.

"It was a lot simpler then," he said. "There's a real longing, a mourning for the church that was — when there was a greater fraternity among priests, and the church was not facing these scandals that are now emerging every day."

Stelzer's concerns echoed those of other priests, and some of their psychological caregivers, who were interviewed by The Associated Press.

Weighing on the entire Catholic clergy in the U.S. is the ripple effect of their church's long-running crisis arising from sex abuse committed by priests. It's caused many honorable priests to sense an erosion of public support and to question the leadership of some of their bishops. That dismay is often compounded by increased workloads due to the priest shortage, and increased isolation as multi-priest parishes grow scarce. They see trauma firsthand. Some priests minister in parishes wracked by gun violence; others

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preside frequently over funerals of drug-overdose victims.

One such victim was a 31-year-old woman whose family was among Stelzer's closest friends. "This is one of the few times I actually felt my voice quivering," he said of the funeral service he led last year.

Burnout has been a perennial problem for clergy of many faiths. But Thomas Plante, a psychology professor at California's Santa Clara University who has screened or treated hundreds of Catholic clerics, sees new forms of it as the sex abuse crisis persists and many parishioners lose trust in Catholic leadership.

"You're just trying to be a good priest and now everyone thinks you're a sex offender," he said. "If you walk in a park with your collar on, people think you're on the lookout for children. ... Some have been spat upon."

The Springfield diocese, like many across the U.S., has a long history of sex-abuse scandals. In the early 1990s, priest Richard Lavigne was defrocked and several of his victims received cash settlements. In 2004, a grand jury indicted Thomas Dupre on two counts of child molestation soon after he resigned following a 13-year stint as Springfield's bishop.

Stelzer had hoped the abuse crisis was abating but it resurfaced dramatically over the past two years. Abuse allegations led to former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's ouster from the priesthood and a Pennsylvania grand jury report asserted that about 300 priests had abused at least 1,000 children in the state over seven decades.

"It opened up an old wound, and now we're back to ground zero," Stelzer said in an interview at the College of Our Lady of the Elms.

The wound is self-inflicted, said Rev. Philip Schmitter, 74, who has served for 50 years in Flint, Michigan. His stance endears him to an African American community where he lived in public housing for three decades to maintain close ties.

"This cover up, this 'Let's protect the institution' was just a heinous, utterly unchristian kind of behavior," he said.

Two miles north of Stelzer's campus, on a recent Sunday, the Rev. William Tourigny was getting ready for the 4 p.m. Mass — his fourth and last of the day — at Ste. Rose de Lima Church.

When Tourigny, now 66, was ordained in 1980, the Springfield diocese had more than 300 priests serving 136 parishes. Since then, the ranks of priests have shrunk by more than half and nearly 60 of the parishes have closed. For Tourigny, it's meant many more funerals to handle, including dozens related to drug overdoses and heavy drinking.

Even his own family has been scarred: Tourigny says the 27-year-old daughter of his first cousin was killed in circumstances he describes as fueled by her drug habit.

"But for her addiction, she was a wonderful mother," Tourigny said.

Tourigny says he's worked nearly 40 years without a real vacation. For years, he's had therapy sessions, which he describes as "crucially important," and he strives to minister compassionately without being engulfed in the emotions of those he consoles.

"I can share their pain but I can't enter into it," he said. "I'd be overwhelmed by grief."

With 2,500 families, many of Polish and French Canadian descent, Tourigny's parish has fared better with membership and finances than several nearby parishes. Yet Tourigny says many Catholics now mistrust the church hierarchy because of the flawed response to the abuse scandals.

"I was ordained at a time when the church was so alive — there was so much optimism," he said. "Then things began to change quickly. It has changed the way people look at us. The church has lost credibility and it's hard to get credibility back again."

Plante, the California psychologist, says even priests deeply devoted to their work are upset.

"A lot are angry at bishops and the institutional church for screwing up — a lot of them feel they've been thrown under the bus," he said. "They're also concerned that one of these days someone will accuse them of misbehavior, even if they've done nothing wrong. They're asking, 'Did I do something 30 years ago that could be misconstrued, that will come back and haunt me?'"

The Rev. Stephen Fichter, pastor of St. Elizabeth Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey, said he has counseled

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people who've been abused by Catholic clergy and understands the "pain and horror" they experienced. Yet he voiced concerns on behalf of priests with unblemished careers who feel vulnerable to unwarranted suspicions.

"Sometimes a priest is confronted by an anonymous accusation from 30 or 40 years ago, and doesn't have a chance to defend himself," Fichter said. "It used to be innocent until proven guilty. Now a lot of priests feel it's been turned upside down."

Mark Stelzer proudly identifies himself as an alumnus of Guest House, a residential facility in Michigan that has specialized in addiction treatment for Catholic clergy since 1956. He travels frequently to make presentations on behalf of Guest House, and teaches a course at his Chicopee college titled "Addiction and Recovery."

By the time he was ordained, Stelzer says, he was consuming alcohol daily. Only after five more years of steady drinking did acquaintances suggest he had a problem, leading to his stay at Guest House.

Guest House's president, Jeff Henrich, is an experienced drug and alcohol counselor. He says substance abuse among priests is a longstanding problem but has been aggravated by recent developments — including the "residual shame" arising from the sex-abuse scandals and increased isolation as more priests now manage parishes on their own.

Since 1985, according to researchers at Georgetown University, the Catholic population in the U.S. has risen by nearly 20%, but the number of priests has plunged from more than 57,000 to under 37,000.

"There's fewer of them and more work to do," Henrich said. "That means you're far more likely to live alone than ever before — and very few of us were meant to live alone."

In response, treatment experts urge priests in recovery to find companionship in a support group and to form friendships outside their ministry.

Stelzer agrees that isolation raises the risks of substance abuse.

"We're lone rangers," he said. "Substance abuse might go undetected for longer when you're living alone. A lot of those in treatment now say it was because of isolation, working harder and longer, and not feeling support from leadership."

The harmful consequences of the priest shortage have come to the attention of the Vatican's ambassador to the U.S., Archbishop Christophe Pierre. Addressing U.S. bishops in November, he urged them to be attentive to their priests' health, spiritual well-being and sense of priestly fraternity.

"Many priests are saying they no longer know one another," Pierre said. "Others, due to the priest shortage, are forced to live in isolation, managing multiple parishes."

Stress, burnout, depression and addictions are among the conditions treated at St. Luke Institute, a residential treatment center for Catholic clergy and lay leaders, in Silver Spring, Maryland.

St. Luke's president, the Rev. David Songy, is a psychologist who has worked extensively with troubled priests. One growing problem, he says, is that new priests are now often assigned their own parish within three years, instead of 10 or more in the past, and may be ill-prepared to oversee finances and personnel as well as pastoral duties.

"Some of the younger people that come to us — they've been overwhelmed and weren't sure how to deal with things," Songy said.

Other stressful changes relate to ideological differences. Tourigny considers himself a progressive and has welcomed lesbian couples into Ste. Rita. He says many young priests now emerging from seminary are less tolerant of LGBTQ congregants and eager to revive the tradition of celebrating Mass in Latin.

Another change noted by several priests: Some parishioners, rather than showing deference to their pastors, openly challenge them.

"In the past they might have disagreed, but they'd be courteous. Now it's different," said Fichter. "They think you are not Republican enough or Democratic enough depending on which end of the political spectrum they occupy. ... They want you to preach what they want to hear, and they will confront you."

At St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, New York — just north of New York City — there's increased em-

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phasis on screening applicants for their ability to handle stress and avoid the burnout that's now affecting some priests even early in their ministry.

"There's no doubt these men coming forward are facing what will be a very stressful life," said the Rev. Thomas Berg, the seminary's vice rector. "We must be sure they have the skill set or will be able to develop it."

"On top of that, in some places, you don't have a sense that their bishop supports them," added Berg. "In plenty of dioceses, priests are essentially treated as outside contractors — there's a lack of a genuinely caring relationship."

Police officers, firefighters and paramedics are collectively labeled first responders. Henrich, the Guest House president, says priests also merit that label.

"They see trauma and loss on a very regular basis," he said. "They get called out to hospitals, deal with grieving families, with lost and dead children."

Gun violence is the plague besetting the Rev. Mike Pflieger's parish in an African American area of Chicago.

"It's a war zone," says Pflieger, an outspoken pastor at Saint Sabina Church since 1981. "Doing funerals of children is the hardest for me."

The violence has ripple effects: He says parents of slain young people go through divorce, mental breakdowns, addiction.

"It becomes overwhelming when it's day in and day out, and you don't have the resources to meet the needs," he said.

Now 70, Pflieger says his health is good, and his work rewarding. Yet he says he and his colleagues risk being overwhelmed by the crises facing their neighborhood of Auburn Gresham.

"I was seeing myself becoming depressed, after several violent deaths in a short span," he said. "I needed to make sure I talked to somebody."

"Last year I didn't take any days off — I realized that was a big mistake," he added. "It's important to have people around you to say, 'Are you OK?'"

In Brunswick, Ohio, a town of 34,000 people 20 miles (30 kilometers) southeast of Cleveland, the Rev. Robert Stec's priorities have been transformed, due to the scourge of opioids, since he became pastor of St. Ambrose Church in 2005.

In 2016, Brunswick's Medina County reported 20 opioid-related deaths. Stec presided over six funerals of those victims in a short span. While sharing parishioners' grief, Stec resolved to combat the opioid epidemic and founded a multifaith coalition of northeast Ohio religious leaders.

Stec is grateful that Brunswick has better-than-average mental health services. But he and his fellow priests in drug-ravaged towns still employ a triage policy, seeking help for the most dire cases, because they can't provide comprehensive support to every affected parishioner.

"We weren't trained for this in the seminary," he said.

Still the priests treasure their jobs despite the challenges. Mark Stelzer holds onto his role as a comforter. "For a lot of people, I'm the last person they saw while they were still alive," he said. "There's an energy and grace in those moments."

Associated Press writer Martha Irvine contributed from Flint, Michigan.

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Anti-doping agency imposes 4-year ban on Russia

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Russia was slapped Monday with a four-year ban from international sports events, including next summer's Tokyo Olympics, over a longstanding doping scandal, although its athletes will still be able to compete if they can show they are clean competitors.

The ruling by the World Anti-Doping Agency's executive committee means that Russia's flag, name and anthem will not appear at the Tokyo Games, and the country also could be stripped of hosting world championships in Olympic sports.

The sanctions are the harshest punishment yet for Russian state authorities who were accused of tampering with a Moscow laboratory database. Russia's anti-doping agency can appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport within 21 days — an action it has signaled it would take.

"Russia was afforded every opportunity to get its house in order ... but it chose instead to continue in its stance of deception and denial," WADA president Craig Reedie said.

Russian athletes can compete in major events only if they are not implicated in positive doping tests or if their data was not manipulated, according to the WADA ruling.

For soccer's 2022 World Cup, WADA said the Russian team will play under its name in the qualifying program in Europe. If it qualifies to play in Qatar, the team name must be changed to something neutral that likely would not include the word "Russia."

At the past two track and field world championships, Russians competed as "Authorized Neutral Athlete." A softer line was taken ahead of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games, when the International Olympic Committee suspended the Russian Olympic body yet allowed athletes and teams to compete as "Olympic Athlete from Russia."

Going forward, "they cannot use the name of the country in the name of the team," WADA president-elect Witold Bańka told The Associated Press.

Legal fallout from the WADA ruling at CAS seems sure to dominate preparations for the Tokyo Olympics, which open July 24.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev urged sports organizations to appeal and said WADA's ruling was "a continuation of this anti-Russian hysteria which has already become chronic."

The latest round of sanctions were imposed because tampering with the Moscow data was a new violation of anti-doping rules committed as recently as January.

Handing over a clean database to WADA was a key requirement given to Russia 15 months ago to help bring closure to a scandal that has tainted the Olympics over the last decade.

WADA investigators and the IOC agreed that evidence showed Russian authorities corrupted data from the Moscow lab that was long sealed by security forces. Hundreds of potential doping cases were deleted and evidence falsely planted to shift the blame onto whistleblowers.

"Flagrant manipulation" of the data was "an insult to the sporting movement worldwide," the IOC said last month.

Athletes whose data was manipulated in the 2012-15 testing period now face disciplinary cases by their sport's governing body.

"Yes, we do know who those athletes are. They will be kept out of the (Tokyo) Games," said British lawyer Jonathan Taylor, chairman of the WADA panel whose proposed sanctions were unanimously approved Monday.

However, the doping watchdog's outgoing vice president was left frustrated by an unwillingness to fully expel Russia from the Tokyo Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Games.

"I'm not happy with the decision we made today. But this is as far as we could go," said Linda Helleland, a Norwegian lawmaker who has long pushed for a tougher line against Russia. "This is the biggest sports scandal the world has ever seen. I would expect now a full admission from the Russians and for them to apologize on all the pain all the athletes and sports fans have experienced."

Although the IOC has called for the strongest possible sanctions, it wants those sanctions directed at

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Russian state authorities rather than athletes or Olympic officials.

That position was opposed by most of WADA's athlete commission. It wanted the kind of blanket ban Russia avoided for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics and the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games when a state-run doping program was exposed by media and WADA investigations after Russia hosted the 2014 Olympics in Sochi.

The decision to appeal has been stripped from RUSADA chief executive Yuri Ganus, an independent figure criticizing Russian authorities' conduct on the doping data issue. Authority was passed to the agency's supervisory board after an intervention led by the Russian Olympic Committee.

The ROC on Saturday labeled the expected sanctions as "illogical and inappropriate."

Russia has stuck to its claim that deceptive edits in the data were in fact made by WADA's star witness, Grigory Rodchenkov. The former Moscow lab director's flight into the witness protection program in the United States was the subject of an Oscar-winning documentary.

"As usual, Russia has disregarded all of its promises and obligations to clean sport," Rodchenkov said Monday in a statement from his lawyers.

Sports fans worldwide will still be watching top-tier events from Russia in the next four years despite the hosting ban.

In soccer, St. Petersburg will still host four games at the 2020 European Championship and the 2021 Champions League final, because European soccer body UEFA is not bound by the ruling. Nor is the Formula 1 racing series, which goes to Sochi's Olympic Park for a race each year.

"The contract is valid through 2025," Russian Grand Prix spokeswoman Tatyana Rivnaya told the AP in a telephone interview.

World championships in lower-profile Olympic sports — including luge in two months and wrestling in 2022 — could stay in Russia due to legal difficulties moving them.

"There will be practical issues," Taylor acknowledged, "and we can't ignore those."

However, Taylor said a block on Russia bidding for or being awarded sports events in the next four years would have a longer effect beyond the ban.

AP Sports Writer James Ellingworth in Duesseldorf, Germany, contributed.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Golden snubs and surprises, including little 'Cats' love

By **MARK KENNEDY** AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Some Golden Globe nominations seemed like locks: Joaquin Phoenix, Tom Hanks, Adam Driver and Eddie Murphy. But others were shocks, like Lupita Nyong'o not getting a nomination for "Us." Other notable snubs and surprises:

MEN ONLY

Only men made the best director category: Bong Joon Ho for "Parasite," Sam Mendes with "1917," Todd Phillips for "Joker," Martin Scorsese with "The Irishman" and Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood." Notable female directors snubbed this year include Greta Gerwig of "Little Women," Marielle Heller, who directed "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," Lulu Wang of "The Farewell" and Lorene Scafaria of "Hustlers."

AVA GETS NO LOVE

"When They See Us," the searing TV series on the plight of the Central Park Five got no nods despite critical acclaim. The four-part Netflix series explores the true story of five black and Latino teenagers from Harlem who were coerced into confessing to a rape they didn't commit in 1989. Show creator Ava DuVernay was also snubbed at the Emmys in the directing and writing categories, although Jharrel Jerome won for best lead actor in a limited series.

NO PURRING

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Although the Hollywood Foreign Press Association was shown an unfinished cut of Tom Hooper's film "Cats," the group chose not to give it any acting, directing or technical nominations. The film adaptation of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical stars Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Idris Elba, Jennifer Hudson and Taylor Swift. It's in theaters Dec. 20. The film did earn Taylor Swift and Lloyd Webber nods for writing the song "Beautiful Ghosts."

GOLDEN SON

Globe voters waded into the thorny family drama "Succession" and gave nominations to the show and to Brian Cox, who plays the powerful patriarch. It also gave a nomination to one of the three actors hoping to succeed Cox's Logan Roy. Was it the ice queen played by Sarah Snook? The unpredictable, snarky son played by Kieran Culkin? The striving but bumbling son played by Jeremy Strong? In the end, Culkin got the nod for the second successive year.

ANYONE WATCHING?

HBO's "Watchmen," an adaptation of one of the most acclaimed graphic novels of all time, was ignored by the Globe voters. The dark superhero tale, which follows a group of masked vigilantes, stars Regina King, Jeremy Irons, Louis Gossett Jr., Jean Smart, Tim Blake Nelson and Don Johnson. Critics seemed to like it more than "The Morning Show," which earned three nominations.

YOU TALKIN' ABOUT ME?

Al Pacino got one. Joe Pesci got one. And director Martin Scorsese got one, of course. But Robert De Niro didn't get an acting nomination for his work on "The Irishman." De Niro plays Frank Sheehan, the teamster and mafia figure who claimed right before his death that he was the one who killed Jimmy Hoffa. But don't worry about De Niro. He already has a Globe for "Raging Bull."

A SMALLER THRONE

The Golden Globes have been a safe place for HBO's "Game of Thrones." That ended this year. The show only picked up one nomination, for actor Kit Harington. Previously, "Game of Thrones" earned nods for best drama in 2012 and every year from 2015-2018. Fans have had mixed love for the final season and some have even asked HBO to remake it.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 10, the 344th day of 2019. There are 21 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 10, 1994, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize, pledging to pursue their mission of healing the anguished Middle East.

On this date:

In 1817, Mississippi was admitted as the 20th state of the Union.

In 1861, the Confederacy admitted Kentucky as it recognized a pro-Southern shadow state government that was acting without the authority of the pro-Union government in Frankfort.

In 1869, women were granted the right to vote in the Wyoming Territory.

In 1905, the O. Henry short story "The Gift of the Magi" was published in the New York Sunday World Magazine under the title "Gifts of the Magi."

In 1948, the U.N. General Assembly adopted its Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, saying he accepted it "with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind."

In 1967, singer Otis Redding, 26, and six others were killed when their plane crashed into Wisconsin's Lake Monona; trumpeter Ben Cauley, a member of the group the Bar-Kays, was the only survivor.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev concluded three days of sum-

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mit talks in Washington. Violinist Jascha Heifetz died in Los Angeles at age 86.

In 1995, the first group of U-S Marines arrived in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo to join NATO soldiers sent to enforce peace in former Yugoslavia.

In 1996, South African President Nelson Mandela signed the country's new constitution into law during a ceremony in Sharpeville.

In 2007, suspended NFL star Michael Vick was sentenced by a federal judge in Richmond, Virginia, to 23 months in prison for bankrolling a dogfighting operation and killing dogs that underperformed (Vick served 19 months at Leavenworth). Former Vice President Al Gore accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with a call for humanity to rise up against a looming climate crisis and stop waging war on the environment.

In 2013, South Africa held a memorial service for Nelson Mandela, during which U.S. President Barack Obama energized tens of thousands of spectators and nearly 100 visiting heads of state with a plea for the world to emulate "the last great liberator of the 20th century." (The ceremony was marred by the presence of a sign-language interpreter who deaf advocates said was an impostor waving his arms around meaninglessly.) General Motors named product chief Mary Barra its new CEO, making her the first woman to run a U.S. car company.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with a humble acknowledgment of his scant accomplishments and a robust defense of the U.S. at war. James Cameron's 3-D film epic "Avatar" had its world premiere in London.

Five years ago: Current and former CIA officials pushed back against the Senate Intelligence Committee's report released the day before which concluded that the United States had brutalized scores of terror suspects during interrogations, calling the report a political stunt by Senate Democrats which tarnished a program that saved American lives. NFL owners moved quickly and unanimously to change the league's personal conduct policy, announcing it would hire a special counsel to oversee initial discipline.

One year ago: Facing almost certain defeat, British Prime Minister Theresa May postponed a vote in Parliament on her Brexit deal, saying she would go back to EU leaders to seek changes to the divorce agreement. In a televised address, French President Emmanuel Macron broke his silence on the increasingly violent protests in Paris and elsewhere, pleading for a return to calm and offering tax relief for struggling workers and pensioners.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Tommy Kirk is 78. Actress Fionnula Flanagan is 78. Pop singer Chad Stuart (Chad and Jeremy) is 78. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ralph Tavares is 78. Actress-singer Gloria Loring is 73. Pop-funk musician Walter "Clyde" Orange (The Commodores) is 73. Country singer Johnny Rodriguez is 68. Actress Susan Dey is 67. Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich is 63. Jazz musician Paul Hardcastle is 62. Actor John York (TV: "General Hospital") is 61. Actor-director Kenneth Branagh (BRAH'-nah) is 59. Actress Nia Peeples is 58. TV chef Bobby Flay is 55. Rock singer-musician J Mascis is 54. Rock musician Scot (cq) Alexander (Dishwalla) is 48. Actress-comedian Arden Myrin is 46. Rock musician Meg White (The White Stripes) is 45. Actress Emmanuelle Chriqui is 44. Rapper Kuniva (D12) is 44. Actor Gavin Houston is 42. Actor Alano Miller is 40. Violinist Sarah Chang is 39. Rock musician Noah Harmon (Airborne Toxic Event) is 38. Actor Patrick John Flueger is 36. Country singer Meghan Linsey is 34. Actress Raven-Symone is 34. Actress/singer Teyana Taylor is 29. Actress Kiki Layne is 28.

Thought for Today: "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." — Amy Carmichael, American missionary (1867-1951).

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