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VETERAN REBELS

Fighters struggle to find allegiances in the battle for Syria's freedom as many players wage war in the volatile region. **FEATURES, PAGE 6**



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Trump pulls out of climate pact

JULIE PACE
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris climate accord sends an unmistakable message to the world: America First can mean America Alone.

Trump's move, announced in the White House Rose Garden on Thursday, immediately leaves the United States isolated on a paramount global concern. It's a bitter blow to stalwart European partners who launched an aggressive campaign to convince Trump that American leadership is central to combatting climate change. Even a direct appeal from the Vatican wasn't enough to persuade the president.

For anxious allies, Trump's rejection of the Paris pact is particularly jarring in the wake of his first international trip last

Analysis: 'America-First' rejection of Paris Climate Accord leaves US isolated

week. Standing in the heart of Europe, Trump publicly lectured NATO partners about their military commitments and offered no explicit endorsement for the collective defense agreement at the core of trans-Atlantic security for decades. His posture left the impression that for the new American president, the nation's long-standing obligations to allies are neither unshakable nor unbreakable.

Trump's supporters cheered the decision, which marked the fulfillment both of his campaign promise to scrap the climate accord and his broader pledge to put American interests above all else.

Trump's record of keeping

those promises is mixed: He moved swiftly to withdraw from the sweeping Pacific Rim trade pact the Obama administration negotiated, but has signaled to other nations that he plans to stay in the nuclear deal so long as Iran lives up to its obligations.

Trump is hardly the first American president to turn his back on a predecessor's international agreement. President George W. Bush provoked similar anger from European allies when he decided not to implement the 1997 Kyoto climate change treaty. Bush made a similar argument to Trump's, saying it put the U.S. at a disadvantage compared with major polluters like China and India.

Still, Bush made the broad and public case for U.S. leadership in international cooperation, even as his policies in Iraq and Afghanistan frayed some American alliances.

Trump's "America First" mantra has signaled a new strain of isolationism. On Thursday he declared its rejection to be "a reassertion of America's sovereignty."

Trump left open the prospect that he'll ultimately take a similar approach to the Paris pact, announcing Thursday that while the U.S. will immediately stop complying with the standards, his administration will begin negotiations to seek a better deal. It's unclear why the U.S. would need to start such negotiations given that the climate agreement gave each country the ability to set its own targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Nooses: an unwelcome display

Black history museum target of hate-crime

JESSE J. HOLLAND
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nooses have appeared recently around the nation's capital — including the Smithsonian's new African-American history museum — in a rash of incidents that experts say shows the growing use of hate symbols in the U.S. to try to intimidate minorities.

"We've seen a spike in the use of symbols of hate lately, and the noose is one more example," said Denison University professor Jack Shuler, who has studied lynching and noose imagery in the U.S.

Two nooses were found at Smithsonian museums in the past week, one outside the Hirshhorn Museum last Friday and one inside the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture on Wednesday.

Bananas tied to nooses were discovered at American University in Washington last month, while a noose was found at the University of Maryland and a suburban middle school in Crofton, Maryland.

Two 19-year-old white men were arrested and charged with hate crimes for allegedly hanging the noose at the Crofton school. No arrests have been made in the other cases.

The Southern Poverty Law Center said it has seen an increase in hate incidents in the U.S. since the election of President Donald Trump. Between Election Day and Feb. 1 it collected information on about 1,800 hate-related episodes from almost every state. "In the past, it would be a couple hundred at most, and that would be high," said Heidi Beirich, director of the Intelligence Project at the SPLC.

Loops of rope have long been used to intimidate African-Americans because they evoke images of lynchings. The non-profit Equal Justice Initiative said there were 4,075 lynchings of blacks in the South to spread racial terror between 1877 and 1950.

For blacks, the noose is "comparable in the emotions that it evokes to that of the swastika for Jews," the Anti-Defamation League said.

"I think we're in a situation right now where people who express hateful opinions are being allowed to speak freely and it's become OK again," said Shuler, author of "The Thirteenth Turn: A History of the Noose."

The noose didn't stop some visitors to the black history museum. Stephen Middleton, who brought his family to the museum Thursday said, "We're not going to be wavered and not going to be intimidated."

Spellers buzz to final round



JACQUELYN MARTIN / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sohum Sukhatankar, 11, of Allen, right, takes a moment during a break in competition at the 90th Scripps National Spelling Bee in Oxon Hill, Maryland, Thursday. At left is Rohan Sachdev, 14, from Cary, North Carolina.

2 mature contestants stand out from crowd

BEN NUCKOLS
Associated Press

OXON HILL, Maryland — As the Scripps National Spelling Bee inched its way through the four grueling rounds that would determine the primetime finalists, two spellers seemed like young men among boys and girls.

Sitting on opposite sides of the stage, veteran spellers Tejas Muthusamy and Shourav Dasari, both 14, handled their time at the microphone with ease and flair. Both came into the bee with high

expectations and were among the 15 spellers competing Thursday night for a trophy and more than \$40,000 in cash and prizes.

Shourav, of Spring, Texas, the tallest speller on stage at 5 foot 11, kept his hands inside the pocket of his black Nike hoodie and went through the motions of asking a few questions — definition, language of origin — about words he clearly knew. In the spelling bee equivalent of a bat flip in baseball, he turned away and began walking toward his seat before he even

heard the words "you're correct" from a judge.

"I just knew that I got it right," Shourav said in his slight Texas drawl. "No need to stand around."

Shourav was highly touted ahead of last year's bee, having swept the two minor-league bees — the North South Foundation and the South Asian Spelling Bee — that serve as a proving ground for future champions. But he was eliminated just short of the primetime finals, continuing what some spellers refer to as the "Dasari family curse." His older sister, Shobha, competed in the bees three times and also suffered some tough eliminations.

No matter how he fares Thursday, the curse is over, he said.

"We've always gone out in the round before the night finals,"

Shourav said. "That's not an issue now."

Shourav has grown 4 inches in the past year. Tejas, too, has matured from a round-faced, slightly chubby kid into a lanky and elegant teenager with wispy facial hair.

Tejas, from Glen Allen, Virginia, finished in the top 10 in 2014 and 2015. But last year, he was eliminated before the finals. He started studying again the day he got home, aiming to be more confident on stage this year. So far, so good.

His goal has been to win, but he's come to a Zen-like understanding of what he called the "vicissitudes" of spelling bees. It hasn't come easily.

■ SCRIPPS, Page 2

Kids gain mobility with toy cars

VALERIE WIGGLESWORTH
The Dallas Morning News

FRISCO — Twelve students with severe disabilities took a test drive in shiny new "cars" complete with personal pit crews.

The young drivers came for the fun, but their parents and teachers know these motorized ride-on toy vehicles serve a more practical purpose. They give students the mobility to explore the world around them at the touch of a button.

The toy cars also spark greater cognitive gains and can help students qualify for a motorized wheelchair at an earlier age.

"Pure joy," Meggan Jackson said of her daughter's freedom to mo-

tor across the room in her mini Volkswagen bus.

Jackson's daughter was among the students at the Early Childhood School chosen for this unique effort in the Frisco Independent School District.

It was inspired by the University of Delaware's GoBabyGo program. The research lab developed the basics for modifying ride-on cars, then shared its manual online. Frisco ISD's test run last year with one vehicle and one student was a success.

"We just knew we had to make this bigger," said Lindsay Brittain, a teacher with the active learning class preschool program for children with disabilities.

She and physical therapist Jen-

nifer Cox received a \$1,300 grant through the Frisco Education Foundation to buy three vehicles. Further efforts raised another \$5,000 through the Frisco Sunrise Rotary Club to purchase eight more vehicles.

Increasing mobility is key for these students, Brittain said. "We know that when they play a part in that mobility that they then have that desire to move," she said.

The vehicles also boost social interactions.

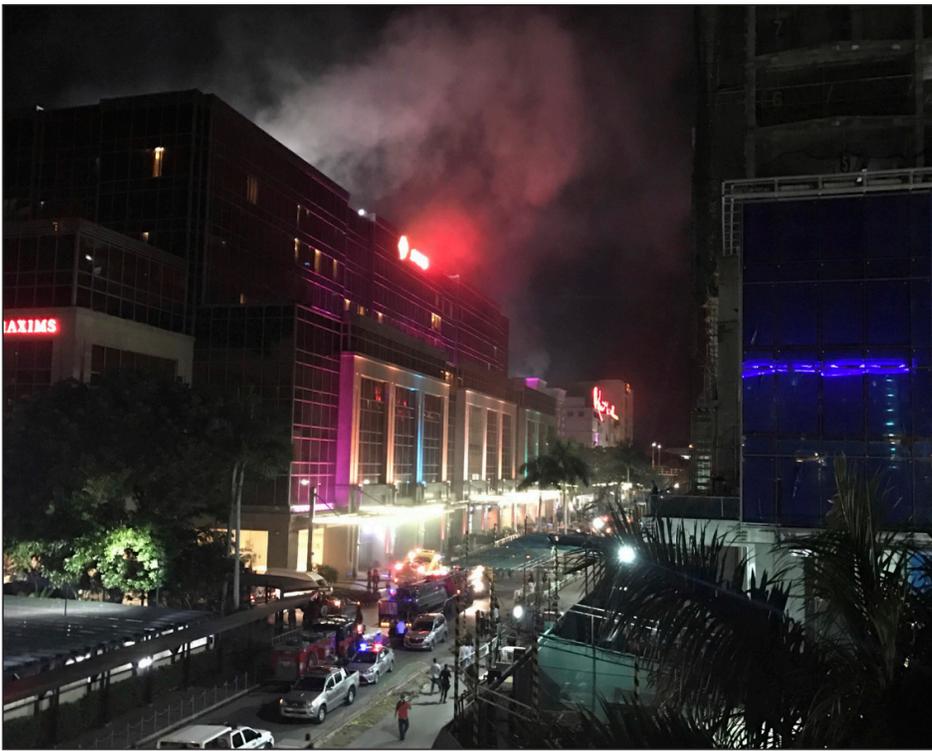
"Our kids are a little bit hard to play with," Brittain said, noting many of the children are non-

■ CARS, Page 2



LOUIS DELUCA / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Morgan Craig, 5, is all smiles as he takes his car for a spin.



BULLIT MARQUEZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Smoke rises from the Resorts World Manila complex early today in Manila, Philippines. Gunshots and explosions rang out early Friday at the mall amid an ongoing Muslim militant siege in the country's south.

Shots fired in robbery attempt at Filipino casino

BY JIM GOMEZ
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A gunman stormed a mall-casino complex in the Philippines, torched gambling tables and stuffed a backpack with casino chips before fleeing but was found dead of an apparent suicide in an adjacent hotel early Friday, authorities said.

The attack sent hundreds of people fleeing outside the Resorts World Manila complex and produced a claim of terrorism that police stressed had no evidence to support it. The violence unfolded as government forces were engaged in a second week of fighting against Muslim militants aligned with the Islamic State group in the southern city of Marawi.

"He would have shot all the people gambling there" if it had been terrorism, national police chief Ronald dela Rosa said. "But he did not hurt anyone."

Authorities suspect the motive was robbery. "It's either he lost in the casino and wanted to recoup his losses or he went totally nuts," Metropolitan Manila police chief Oscar Albayalde said. He said he saw no connection to the fighting in Marawi.

The gunman stole gambling chips, shot TV screens and set gambling tables ablaze by pouring gasoline on them, dela Rosa

said. It was not clear how the gunman smuggled gasoline and an assault rifle into the crowded casino, but the assailant did not fire at people he encountered.

More than 70 people suffered minor injuries in a stampede to escape.

Ronald Romualdo, a maintenance worker at Resorts World, said he and his colleagues heard gunshots and saw people smashing the windows on the second and third floor to escape.

"We took out a ladder to save them. We were able to save many of them," he said. "But one woman I was trying to save fell from the second floor. ... I could not carry her." He said the woman was not moving afterward, but he didn't know what happened to her.

About 90 minutes after the attack began, Resorts World Manila said on its Facebook page that it was on lockdown following reports of gunfire and was working to ensure the safety of guests and workers.

The national police chief said the gunman apparently barged into a room at the 5th floor of the Maxims hotel connected to the mall and casino, laid on the bed,

blanketed himself, doused himself with gasoline then set himself on fire. The bag of gambling chips worth 113 million pesos (\$226,000) was found in a toilet.

The suspect was English-speaking but had no identification cards. Dela Rosa described him as "white, with a mustache" and about 6 feet tall.

The SITE Intelligence Group, a U.S. terrorism monitor, said an Islamic State-linked Filipino operative who provides daily updates on the ongoing clashes in Marawi claimed "lone wolf soldiers" of the Islamic State group were responsible for the attack.

An English message by the operative was distributed across several pro-IS Telegram chat groups, SITE said. According to SITE, he wrote: "The lone wolf soldiers of Khilafah attack the heart of Kufar the city of Manila in Resort World." However police see no connection between the casino attack and Marawi.

Dela Rosa said the alert police response to the casino attack was not a cause for alarm. "We are just alert. ... We cannot attribute this to terrorism without concrete evidence."

"He would have shot all the people gambling there' if it had been terrorism."

RONALD DELA ROSA

The Finals

For full coverage of Game 1 of the NBA Finals, visit swjournalist.com



SCRIPPS

Continued from Page 1

"I'm a natural pessimist. Slowly I've understood that even champions who spell every word correctly don't know every word in the bee," Tejas said. "I've kind of accepted that."

Tejas said he knew every word he'd been given before he stepped up to the microphone and was given "bucattini," a pasta in the form of long, thin tubes. After making sure he got all the information about the word from pronouncer Jacques Bailly, he spelled it correctly and tipped his head back in relief.

While Shourav and Tejas survived, three previous top-10 finishers were eliminated: Siyona Mishra, Rutvik Gandharsi and Jashun Paluru. Siyona, the reigning South Asian Spelling Bee champion, went out on "corriedale," a large, hornless sheep from New Zealand.

"She got a really hard word," said Sylvie Lamontagne, who finished fourth last year and is now coaching younger spellers. "It always happens to someone."

The remaining spellers also

include Naysa Modi, already making her third appearance in the bee at age 11, and Rohan Sachdev, for whom spelling is a distraction from his first love, tennis. He's the top-ranked player in his age group in his home state of North Carolina.

Rounding out top 15: Shruthika Padhy, Ananya Vinay, Alex Iyer, Rohan Rajeev, Raksheet Kota, Alice Liu, Saketh Sundar, Sreeniketh Vogoti, Shrinidhi Gopal, Mira Dedhia, and Erin Howard.

No matter what happens later Thursday at a convention center outside Washington, it's all but certain that either Shourav or Tejas will leave disappointed. The bee has ended in a tie for three years running, but this year it added a written tiebreaker test in an attempt to identify a single champion.

As much as they might not admit it after thousands of hours of practice, luck remains a factor. "The dictionary is so vast," Tejas said. "A lot of spellers talk about conquering the dictionary. I don't think that's possible."

CARS

Continued from Page 1

verbal. "This way kids can come and actually interact with them because they have a really cool medium to play through."

Teachers Travis Volk and Ken Strong enlisted their second-year engineering students at Frisco ISD's Career and Technical Education Center to retrofit the cars.

The students removed the foot pedal and reconfigured the wiring to replace it with a power button. Most buttons are on the steering wheel. A few are strategically placed elsewhere — off to one side, behind the head — to play to a child's strength.

Engineering students also added a kill switch for parents, harnesses, seat belts, safety rails and other features, depending on each student's needs. They used 3D printers to create the parts they needed.

The reward came on a recent Wednesday night. Engineering students met with families of the youngsters at the CTE Center to explain each vehicle's features. The kids then got to test-drive them before taking the toy vehicles home. Once their child out-



LOUIS DELUCA / ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this May 24 photo, Advait Mudi-gonda, 5, shares a tender moment with Frisco student Caitlin Colston, who helped retrofit the toy vehicle to meet Advait's specific needs.

grows the car, families will return it to the district so it can be given to another child.

Fellow 10th-grader Colin Burden remembers the thrill he had years ago when he got his own ride-on toy Jeep. He volunteered to do the wiring for several of the modified toy cars.

"I knew this was going to make some kid happy," he said.

Did it ever.

DJ News Fund interns have promising futures

Eleven college students and recent college graduates are headed to copy editing internships after completing 10 days of intensive preparation at The University of Texas at Austin.

The interns are among a group of undergraduate and graduate students placed in internships in copy editing, sports copy editing, business reporting and digital journalism.

The highly competitive national program is operated by the Dow Jones News Fund. The more than 750 applicants had to take a test and complete an extensive application before being considered.

Newspaper professionals, visiting faculty and UT journalism faculty moderated the sessions in this 20th residency program at UT-Austin.

In the latter half of the pre-internship training, participants produced three issues of a model newspaper, the Southwest Journalist, as well as a companion online product, swjournalist.com.

The UT-News Fund interns serve internships of 10 to 12 weeks.

Grants from the News Fund and contributions from participating news organizations cover the participants' training, including housing, meals, transportation and instruction.

Participating newspapers also pay interns a weekly wage for their internship work. Students returning to their universities after the internships are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship provided by the News Fund.

Beth Butler and Bradley Wilson served as co-directors of the workshop with assistance from Lourdes Jones, senior administrative associate of the UT School of Journalism.

Faculty included George Sylvie, associate professor at UT-Austin; Mark Grabowski, associate professor at Adelphi University; and Linda Shockley, managing director of the News Fund in Princeton, New Jersey.

Students also had the opportunity to visit with Dan Cunningham, senior editor of the Houston Chronicle; and Will Weisert, administrative correspondent at the Austin Bureau of the Associated Press.



PHOTO BY BRADLEY WILSON

Dow Jones News Fund students and faculty. (Standing) Linda Shockley, Dow Jones News Fund; Payton Potter, Louisiana Tech University, Beaumont Enterprise; Faith Miller, Arizona State University, Los Angeles Times; Corey Keenan, East Carolina University, The Denver Post; Orlaith McCaffrey, Binghamton University, Omaha World-Herald; Mariah Schaefer, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Houston Chronicle; Jon Allsop, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, BuzzFeed; Lily Stephens, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Bay Area News Group; Beth Butler, Dow Jones News Fund; Bradley Wilson, Dow Jones News Fund; (Sitting) Lourdes Jones, University of Texas; Emma Freer, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, GateHouse Media; Charlotte Carroll, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, The Denver Post; Matthew Clough, University of Kansas, Kansas City Star; Kyle Brown, University of Missouri-Columbia, Kansas City Star.

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INTERNATIONAL

Philippine airstrike kills 11 soldiers in besieged city

MARAWI, Philippines — A Philippine bomber plane accidentally killed 11 soldiers and injured seven others, security officials said Thursday, as troops struggled to end a bloody siege by 500 Islamic State group-aligned extremists in a southern city.

The plane was making a bombing run over militant positions in Marawi on Wednesday when one bomb accidentally hit army troops locked in close battle with extremists who had taken cover in buildings and houses, military spokesman Brig. Gen. Resituto Padilla said. The plane had made three successful bombing runs before making the error, he said.

The military ran out of precision-guided bombs from earlier airstrikes and used conventional ones in Wednesday's bombing run, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in a news conference in Manila.

44 migrants die of thirst in Niger while crossing desert

NIAMEY, Niger — At least 44 migrants, including babies, have died of thirst after their vehicle broke down in the Sahara Desert as they were making their way to Libya, an official in Niger said Thursday.

Most of the dead migrants were from Ghana, said the prefect of Dirkou locality, Bachir Manzo. They included three babies, two children and 17 women. The official said six people survived, and are being cared for in the Dirkou migrant center.

West African migrants making their way toward Europe often pass through Niger, and some 300,000 migrants passed through the vast West African nation in 2016 alone, according to the International Organization for Migration.

The bodies were discovered just days after President Mahamadou Issoufou made a plea to the leaders of G-7 industrialized nations to address the migration crisis during a meeting in Taormina, Sicily.

Trump keeps US Embassy in Tel Aviv, for now

WASHINGTON — Stepping back from a campaign promise and incurring Israeli ire, President Donald Trump acted Thursday to keep the U.S. Embassy in Israel in Tel Aviv for now instead of moving it to Jerusalem, a cautious move aimed at bolstering prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

Trump avoided a step that threatened to inflame tensions across the Middle East and undermine a push for peace before it even started. Still, the White House insisted Trump was merely delaying, not abandoning, his oft-cited pledge to relocate the embassy.

Trump had faced a Thursday deadline to determine how to proceed. Under a 1990s law passed by Congress, the president must move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem or the State Department loses half its funding for overseas facilities. But the president can waive the law if asserting that a waiver is in U.S. national security interests.

Presidents have consistently renewed the waivers for six-month stretches — former President Barack Obama did so six months ago.

Trump's decision to keep the embassy in Tel Aviv showed just how far he has shifted from the unwavering support for Israel's policies that he expressed during the 2016 campaign. As president, Trump has proceeded cautiously, hoping to preserve his ability to mediate one of the world's most intractable conflicts.

IS news agency's founder killed in strike

BEIRUT — The founder of the Islamic State group news agency was reported killed with his daughter in an airstrike last week in eastern Syria, opposition activists said Thursday.

The militant group itself has not reported the death of the Amaq agency founder, Baraa Kadek. Activists said Kadek was close to the IS leadership, gaining their trust and reportedly meeting with the enigmatic leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Kadek's brother, Hazaifa, and former friends reported his death, saying he died when a suspected airstrike by the U.S.-led international coalition fighting IS hit his home in the town of Mayadeen in Deir el-Zour province.

Last week, the coalition told The Associated Press it had carried out a series of airstrikes on May 25 and 26 targeting IS media infrastructure and "propaganda facilities." It said at the time that targeting such facilities "degrades" the group's capabilities and its tools to inspire attacks on foreign lands.

At the time, activists said the coalition airstrikes killed at least 35 civilians, including family members of IS.

Scientists say Antarctic shelf about to lose iceberg

BERLIN — Scientists say a crack along a key floating ice shelf in Antarctica indicates that a vast iceberg is close to breaking off.

The process, known as calving, happens periodically but researchers are watching closely to see whether climate change is affecting the phenomenon.

Scientists at the University of Swansea in Britain said Thursday the rift in the Larsen C ice shelf grew by 17 kilometers (10.6 miles) in six days.

They say the break, when it comes, could produce one of the largest icebergs ever recorded. University of Colorado scientist Ted Scambos says the shelf appears to be breaking further back than previously recorded calvings.

Scambos adds that "this berg is telling us something has changed, and not for the better. For now, though, the ice shelf will barely notice."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Venezuelan medics aid demonstrators

Volunteer team tends to anti-government protesters injured in clashes with police

FABIOLA SANCHEZ
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — As thousands of people fled tear gas at a recent anti-government protest, a young woman stood still, protected only by a gas mask and a white helmet with a green cross.

The woman took shelter under a bridge and attended to a person whose right ankle was bloody and injured. She splinted the leg and then took the man away on a motorcycle.

The rescuer belongs to the "Green Helmets," a group of about 200 medical students, dentists and doctors who attend the marches that have rocked the South American country daily for two months. Protesters applaud the so-called brigadiers as heroes and pose with them for selfies when they arrive at rallies marching in single file, waving a giant white flag and howling military-like cadences. It's part of a pre-protest ritual intended to steel the volunteers for another day at the frontline of violent clashes.

"When the police get aggressive, they go out to find people among the tear gas and stones, and they save them," said Patricia Colmenares, a 50-year-old psychiatrist, as she participated in a



ARIANA CUBILLOS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Volunteer first responders from the "Green Helmets" move along the sidelines of an opposition protest during clashes with security forces in Caracas, Venezuela, on May 22. The priority of the group is to attend to injured protesters.

protest in Caracas.

The group was born out of anti-government demonstrations in 2014 and reactivated in April after a new wave of protests against President Nicolas Maduro began. Green Helmet chapters have sprung up in at least six of the country's 24 states, and students from at least 12 public and private higher education institutions have lent their support.

The group's director, Daniella Liendo, a 22-year-old medical student, said all volunteers re-

ceive advanced first-aid training. The group generally only sends about 30 people at a time to the hottest areas of protests while the rest tend to patients in small tents or inside ambulances.

Government supporters have attacked the group as part of a terrorist movement. A prominent presenter on state television called the rescue workers a "paramilitary group" and accused them of creating "false positives" to tarnish the image of Maduro's government.

While the group's priority is to look after injured protesters, members are not immune from serious risks themselves.

One Green Helmet volunteer, 24-year-old medical school student Paul Moreno, was killed in mid-May when a vehicle ran him over in the western city of Maracaibo while he was helping the wounded.

Soldiers and police too have been hurt in the demonstrations, but official ambulances generally care for them.



RAHMAT GUL / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Afghans on Thursday bury a victim of Wednesday's massive bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan. The truck bomb killed at least 90 people and injured more than 450 in the capital city.

Afghans mourn after truck bombing kills 90

RAHIM FAIEZ AND AMIR SHAH
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghans on Thursday mourned the loss of family members, friends and colleagues, a day after a bomb hidden in a tanker truck exploded in the capital, killing at least 90 people and wounding more than 450 in one of the worst extremist attacks since the drawdown of foreign forces from the country in 2014.

In Wednesday's attack, the suicide truck bomber drove into Kabul's heavily guarded diplomatic quarter during the morning rush, leaving behind chaos and destruction. Most of the casualties were civilians, including women and children, but the dead also included Afghan security guards working around the many embassies in the area.

The blast gouged a crater about 15 feet deep near Zanzaq Square in the Wazir Akbar Khan district, where foreign embassies are protected by their own security personnel as well as Afghan police and National Security Forces. The nearby German Embassy was heavily damaged.

Also in the area is Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry, the Presidential Palace and its intelligence and security headquarters, guarded by soldiers trained by the U.S. and its coalition partners.

The city's acting mayor, Abdullah Habibzai, said the explosion was so strong that it damaged property as far as 2.5 miles from the blast site. He said an initial estimate put the total damage from the bombing at \$1.5 million, although that number could rise.

A CITY IN MOURNING

Scores of people waited in hospitals to learn the status of their family members and friends wounded in the attack. Funeral processions took place throughout Kabul on Thursday.

Hundreds gathered in a Kabul cemetery for the funeral of Zemarai Khan, a security guard who lost his life in the attack.

Jan Mohammad, Zemarai's brother, said Zemarai died alongside nine of his fellow guards who worked for a private security

company.

Mohammad said he saw news of the bombing on TV and tried to call his brother, who never answered his phone. "From that moment I realized that my brother is dead," he said.

He said transporting his brother's body home was the hardest thing he's ever done. "No one can imagine the moment that seven children of my brother realized that their father is not alive anymore," he said.

Meanwhile, some people were still missing and families were searching for news about loved ones in local hospitals.

Mohammad Sarwar stood crying behind the gate of an emergency hospital, looking for his nephew, who was missing. Sarwar said he had gone to all the hospitals in Kabul and still couldn't find him after two days.

NO CULPRIT YET

There was no claim of responsibility for the bombing, which came in the first week of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The Taliban flatly denied any involvement in an email to news outlets and condemned all attacks against civilians.

Although they are small in number, militants from the Islamic State in Khorasan — an ancient name for parts of Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia — have taken credit for several brazen assaults on the capital.

In neighboring Pakistan, President Mamnoon Hussain said Pakistanis were saddened by Wednesday's attack. He said the people and the government of Pakistan will continue to support all efforts aimed at ensuring peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have often traded accusations that each side harbors militants who stage attacks in the other country.

Also Thursday, the Afghan ambassador to Islamabad, Omar Zakhilwal, vowed in a tweet that the "heinous and cowardly crime will fail to break the spirit and morale of our nation." He noted the attack took place during Ramadan: A "day of fasting, worship and joy was turned into a bloody day of mourning."

Hacks threaten state relations

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cyberspace is at risk of "permanent war" between states and criminal or extremist organizations because of increasingly destructive hacking attacks, the head of the French government's cybersecurity agency warned Thursday.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Guillaume Poupard lamented the lack of agreed-upon rules to govern cyberspace. "We must work collectively, not just with two or three Western countries, but on a global scale," Poupard said.

"With what we see today — attacks that are criminal, from states, often for espionage or fraud but also more and more for sabotage or destruction — we are getting closer, clearly, to a state of war, a state of war that could be more complicated, probably, than those we've known until now," he said.

In recent years, hacking has emerged as a potential threat to Western democracies. U.S. intelligence agencies suspect that Russia has orchestrated hacks designed to interfere with elections in the United States and France.

Last summer hackers targeted the Democratic Party's emails. And on May 7, documents from French President Emmanuel Macron's campaign were leaked, two days before France held its runoff election.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has staunchly denied state involvement in both cases, but said Thursday in a meeting with leading international news agencies that some "patriotic" individuals may have engaged in hacking. He added it was "theoretically possible" that Russia-West tensions could have prompted individuals to launch cyberattacks.

"Hackers are free people, just like artists who wake up in the morning in a good mood and start painting," Putin said.

Even though U.S. intelligence agencies warned of "Russian activity" before Macron's win, Poupard said a French investigation found no trace to APT28 — identified by the U.S. government as a Russian intelligence outfit and blamed for hacking the U.S. election campaign, anti-doping agencies and other targets.

Poupard described the Macron campaign hack as "not very technological," saying: "The attack was so generic and simple that it could have been practically anyone."

Without ruling out the possibility that a state might have been involved, he said the attack's simplicity "means that we can imagine that it was a person who did this alone. They could be in any country."

Regardless of who the culprit of the Macron hacks might have been, Putin argued that hackers, wherever they come from, can't sway election outcomes because the public opinion isn't that easy to manipulate.

"No hackers can have a radical impact on an election campaign in another country," Putin said, adding: "No information can be imprinted in voters' minds, in the minds of a nation, and influence the final outcome and the final result. No hackers can influence election campaigns in any country of Europe, Asia or America."

But the French government is taking the threat of hacks seriously.

"Unfortunately, we now know the reality that we are going to live with forever, probably," Poupard said.



SERGEI SAVOSTYANOV / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vladimir Putin

Despite Trump, green energy blooms

MICHAEL BIESECKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump abandoned U.S. pledges to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change, but his decision to do so seems unlikely to stall a widespread push to adopt cleaner forms of energy.

Around the world, coal-fired power plants are closing down as governments and private companies invest billions in wind turbines and solar farms.

Even in regions of the U.S. where coal is plentiful, electric utilities are increasingly shifting to cheaper, cleaner-burning natural gas. And in the absence of federal action on climate change, some left-leaning states such as California and New York are moving ahead with their own clean-energy policies.

On Thursday afternoon Trump announced his decision to pull the United States out of the Paris climate agreement, which was negotiated by President Barack Obama in 2015.

Reports of Trump's decision triggered statements of support for the climate accord from scores of world leaders. At a Group of Seven meeting in Sicily last week, only Trump refused to reaffirm his nation's continuing support for the Paris deal, which was signed by nearly 200 countries.

"A U.S. withdrawal from Paris will be a disappointment to the climate community, but it may also embolden other countries to fill the void left by the U.S.," said Glen Peters, a Norwegian scientist who tracks global carbon emissions.

Trump, a Republican who has claimed global warming is a hoax, has moved quickly since taking office to delay or block restrictions on the use of fossil fuels enacted by his predecessor. He claims the restrictions impede economic growth. The president has pledged to revive the coal mining industry, which now accounts for fewer than 75,000 U.S. jobs.

Nearly every other industrialized economy in the world is moving in the opposite direction. In April, Germany established a new national record for renewable energy use with 85 percent of all electricity produced in the country coming from renewable sources. That same month, Scotland produced an electricity surplus from its wind turbines.

Earlier this year, the Chinese government announced plans to invest at least \$360 billion in green-energy projects by 2020.

China is the largest global carbon emitter, but it also leads the world in total solar and wind capacity.

"President Trump is ceding the future to the Germans, the Chinese, the Indians, and other nations rather than having the United States continue to lead the world on clean-energy solutions," said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass.

THREE-PEAT: CAVS AND WARRIORS FACE OFF AGAIN



Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James drives between Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green and guard Stephen Curry during the first half of Game 1 of basketball's NBA Finals in Oakland, Calif., Thursday.

MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS

NATIONAL

Mets mascot gives fan the finger, employee fired

NEW YORK — Even Mr. Met is frustrated with the team's disappointing start.

New York's funny-looking mascot flashed his "middle" finger at a fan during Wednesday night's 7-1 loss to the Milwaukee Brewers, and the team says the employee who did it won't work in the costume again.

A person tweeted video of the incident, which soon went viral online, and the club quickly issued a statement.

"We apologize for the inappropriate action of this employee," the Mets said in an email attributed to the organization. "We do not condone this type of behavior."

Mr. Met, known for an oversized head with baseball seams, is among the sport's most recognized mascots.

Expected to contend for a playoff spot, the Mets are 23-28, hurt by injuries to ace starter Noah Syndergaard, closer Jeurys Familia and slugger Yoenis Cespedes.

Trump's cellphone use worries security experts

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump, who blasted Hillary Clinton for using a personal email server, might be a walking magnet for eavesdropping and malware if he is using an unsecured cellphone to chat with foreign leaders.

Trump has been handing out his cellphone number to counterparts around the world, urging them to call him directly to avoid the red tape of diplomatic communications. The practice has raised concern about the security and secrecy of the U.S. commander-in-chief's communications.

In today's world of cyber espionage, cellphone security experts say such a policy is not only unorthodox, but dangerous. Voice calls can be intercepted. A cellphone's signals to nearby phone towers can give up its precise location. Even cellular networks are vulnerable. And knowing someone's number makes it easier to infect a phone with malware.

"Hillary Clinton's email server was like Fort Knox compared to Trump just carrying around a regular cellphone," said Andrew McLaughlin, former deputy chief technology officer for the Obama administration.

McLaughlin said it's possible the number that Trump is giving to world leaders rings to someone else's phone, who then transfers the call to the president, a system that could protect Trump from anyone trying to monitor his communications.

Gun-rights group opposes hearing aid legislation

PORTLAND, Maine — A proposal designed to make hearing aids more affordable has generated resistance from a gun rights group.

Gun Owners of America is organizing opposition against the bill, because it believes the measure would change the way certain hunting products are regulated.

A bipartisan group of senators introduced the measure. They have said the rule change would allow hearing aids intended to compensate for mild to moderate hearing impairment to be sold over the counter, rather than by prescription.

Gun Owners of America worries the legislation could include hearing enhancement devices that hunters use to better track game in its definition of an over-the-counter hearing aid, Pratt said. That could give the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulatory authority over at least some aspects of hunting, he said.

Sen. Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican who introduced the bill with Warren, said the proposal wouldn't affect hunting tools in any way.

Ohio State attacker faulted 'moderate' Muslims

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A man responsible for a car-and-knife attack at Ohio State University last year left behind a to-do note in which he urged his family to stop being "moderate" Muslims and said he was upset by fellow Muslims being oppressed in Myanmar.

Abdul Razak Ali Artan also wrote: "In the end, I would like to say that I pledge my allegiance to 'dawla,'" an Arabic word that means state or country and a likely reference to the Islamic State group. He concludes by saying he's leaving his property to his beloved "but yet 'moderate mother.'"

Artan's family was baffled by that note, which caused them a great deal of anguish, said Bob Fitzakis, a Columbus attorney representing the family.

The 18-year-old Artan was shot and killed by an Ohio State officer moments after driving into a crowd on Nov. 28 and then attacking people with a knife, leaving 13 injured.

US job market looks solid years after recession ended

WASHINGTON — Eight years after the Great Recession ended, the U.S. job market has settled into steady growth.

The 4.4 percent unemployment rate matches a decade low. Many people who had stopped looking for jobs are coming off the sidelines to find them. More part-timers are finding full-time work. About all that's still missing is a broad acceleration in pay.

On Friday, when the government releases the jobs report for May, that pattern is likely to extend itself. The consensus expectation of economists is that the Labor Department will report that employers added 176,000 jobs, according to a survey by FactSet, a data provider. That's right in line with the monthly average of 174,000 over the past three months.

Annual growth in average hourly earnings was a so-so 2.6 percent in April. For workers who aren't supervisors, average hourly pay has risen just 2.3 percent.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Investors choose Tesla over GM

TOM KRISHER AND DEE-ANN DURBIN
Associated Press

DETROIT — When General Motors Co. CEO Mary Barra introduced the Chevrolet Bolt at the CES gadget show last year, she took a shot at Tesla.

Chevrolet buyers can be confident because the company has 3,000 U.S. dealers to service the new electric vehicle, she said. The implication was that Tesla, with just 69 service centers nationwide, can make no such promise.

The uncharacteristic insult from Barra highlighted the difference between 108-year-old GM and Tesla, a disruptive teenager.

It also acknowledged a budding rivalry that could help determine whether Detroit or Silicon Valley sets the course for the auto industry's future.

An objective comparison favors GM. It has made billions in profits since returning to the public markets in 2010. GM got the Bolt, a \$36,000 electric car that goes 238 miles per charge, to market before Tesla's Model 3. Tesla, the 14-year-old company led by flamboyant CEO Elon Musk, has never posted an annual profit.

Yet as both CEOs face shareholders for an-



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors Inc., introduces the Model X car at the company's headquarters in Fremont, California, Sept. 29, 2015.

nual meetings Tuesday, it is Barra who must explain to skeptical investors why GM's future is as bright as Tesla's.

GM's stock is trading around \$33, the price of its initial public offering seven years ago. During that time, Tesla shares have soared more than tenfold to \$335.

Tesla's electric cars are the envy of the industry, and its semi-autonomous technology is among the most advanced on the road. And

it's branching into areas with potential for bigger returns, including solar panels, energy storage and trucking.

Still, Musk can't risk any missteps as Tesla pivots from being a niche manufacturer of high-priced cars to a mass producer. The Model 3 sedan, Tesla's first mainstream car, is due out later this year, but previous launches have been plagued with delays. Tesla has yet to prove it can build high-volume vehicles with quality and reliability, as GM does. Musk aims to make 500,000 vehicles per year in 2018; GM made more than 10 million cars and trucks last year.

GM, too, is stretching into new areas. Its Maven car-sharing service has 35,000 members in 17 North American cities, and it's providing cars for ride-hailing services. GM is developing autonomous cars with Cruise Automation, a software company purchased last year.

GM knows the ups and downs of auto sales, but Tesla will have to learn to manage them. If the Model 3 is late and Tesla sales fall, its stock price could drop and reduce Tesla's access to cheap capital, Ramsey said.

"I don't think they're completely immune to economic cycles," he said.

Safety inspectors had reprimanded Wis. mill before deadly explosion

TODD RICHMOND
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — A Wisconsin corn mill that exploded late Wednesday night had been reprimanded by federal inspectors six years ago for not taking safety precautions.

The blast at the Didion Milling Plant in Cambria, a rural village about 45 miles northeast of Madison, left at least one person dead. Emergency workers were still searching for two employees as of Thursday afternoon. A dozen other employees were taken to area hospitals. None of the workers have been identified.

The cause of the blast remained unknown as of Thursday afternoon, Didion officials said. U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigators were on the scene.

"The safety and security of our employees is our top priority," Didion Vice President of Operations Derrick Clark said in a news release.

The plant processes corn for ethanol and other uses. A review

of online OSHA records shows the plant was cited in January 2011 for exposing its workers to dust explosion hazards, as plant filters lacked a protective system.

The agency ordered the mill to correct the problem by April 2011. The records show Didion paid a \$3,465 fine and the case was closed in September 2013. OSHA hasn't cited the plant for anything since, the records show.

Dust explosions are a serious problem in handling grain, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. There were five grain dust explosions in the U.S. last year; two of the incidents resulted in fatalities, Purdue University said in an annual report.

Such explosions occur when high concentrations of dust particles are suspended in the air in a confined space during grain handling and a spark from something like a cigarette butt ignites it, according to the USDA's website. Keeping facilities clean of dust and equipment in good working order is critical to preventing explosions.



JEFF LANGE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firefighters work at the scene following an explosion and fire at the Didion Milling plant in Cambria, Wis., on Thursday.

Emails sent to several Didion officials Thursday and a voice-mail left for Vice President of Sales Jeff Dillon weren't immediately returned. A note posted on the company's website said the company would be closed until further notice.

Seventeen employees were working in the plant when the

blast was reported around 11 p.m. Wednesday, village officials said in a news release. Nearly two dozen fire departments and four police departments responded.

Cambria Village President Glen Williams said the fire was contained by early Thursday and there were no evacuations in the area.

TEXAS AND SOUTHWEST

Gasoline prices up a penny in Texas, across the nation

COPPELL — Retail gasoline prices in Texas and across the rest of the country rose a penny this week.

AAA Texas on Thursday reported the statewide average price at the pump was \$2.20 per gallon. Drivers across the U.S. are paying an average \$2.38 per gallon.

The survey found Amarillo has the cheapest gasoline in Texas this week at an average \$2.10 per gallon, while drivers in Fort Worth face the highest gasoline prices statewide at an average \$2.25 per gallon.

Association experts say the market remains lukewarm after a late May meeting with OPEC and non-OPEC producers regarding an extension of production cuts, now planned through March 2018.

Texas man, 84, accused of killing 80-year-old neighbor

KILLEEN — Investigators say an 84-year-old Central Texas man has been accused of using a cane to beat an 80-year-old neighbor, then fatally shooting the victim during a years-long dispute.

Killeen police on Thursday announced Santiago Vasquez of Killeen was arrested on a murder charge, with bond set at \$1 million.

Police spokeswoman Ofelia Miramontez had no specifics on what she calls a neighborhood dispute going on for years and leading to Tuesday's death of John Wesley Seth Jr. of Killeen.

Miramontez says police believe a verbal argument between the two men turned physical and Seth was attacked. Officers responding to reports of shots fired located Seth's body on a road.

Former Texas coach Brown on Football Hall of Fame ballot

IRVING — Former University of Texas coach Mack Brown and longtime Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer, along with former players Charles Woodson, Ed Reed and Calvin Johnson, are among those making their first appearance on the College Football Hall of Fame ballot this year.

The ballot released Thursday by the National Football Foundation includes 75 players and six coaches who competed in the Football Bowl Subdivision of the NCAA. An additional 98 players and 31 coaches from lower divisions and NAIA are also up for consideration.

Beamer coached Virginia Tech from 1987-2015 and won 238 games. Brown won 158 games in 15 seasons with Texas, including a national title in 2005.

The newest Hall of Fame class will be announced Jan. 8 in Atlanta, the site of the College Football Playoff championship game.

2 drown in rescue attempt in water-filled Texas quarry

TERRELL — Authorities say two men drowned while trying to rescue others after a boat capsized in a water-filled quarry in North Texas.

Kaufman County sheriff's spokesperson Jolie Stewart says officials were called to the abandoned sand quarry just north of Terrell on Wednesday evening.

She says three adults and two children, ages 6 and 8, were on board a flat-bottomed boat in the quarry when it capsized.

She says 51-year-old Eric Knight and 32-year-old Brandon Stayton tried to help them, but both drowned. She says neither man was wearing a life jacket.

No one on the boat was injured.

Stewart says the bodies of the two men have been transported to the Dallas County medical examiner.

Texas to study record maternal mortality

AUSTIN — Texas, where the rate of maternal mortality has spiked in recent years for reasons not fully understood, is poised to take an initial step toward examining the problem.

The state could soon be required to post guidelines for reporting pregnancy-related deaths. There's currently no uniform method of investigating maternal mortality, meaning some women's deaths might not have been properly referred to the medical examiner.

The proposal passed the state House on Monday, after already clearing the Senate. Under it, Texas' health department must prepare online guidelines about when maternal deaths should be investigated, how to complete death certificates, and when to perform toxicology screenings.

A study last year found that more than 600 Texas women died between 2010 and 2014 either while pregnant or within six weeks after giving birth.

North Texas officer accused of stabbing wife

MCKINNEY — A North Texas police officer is charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon after his wife accused him of stabbing her in the stomach.

Sgt. Audrey Lee Palmer is a 21-year veteran of the McKinney Police Department. He's free on \$50,000 bond.

An arrest affidavit says he and his wife were on a date night when a text message arrived on Palmer's cellphone from a number unfamiliar to his wife. When his wife called the number, a woman answered by saying, "Hey, babe."

Palmer and his wife had begun to argue when, according to the affidavit, his wife picked up a steak knife in the kitchen "out of anger." A struggle ensued for the knife and the wife was wounded.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Under Trump, wealthy Mexicans flee Houston suburb immigration patterns see drastic shift

OLIVIA P. TALLEY
Houston Chronicle

THE WOODLANDS — A year ago, Perla Soto wrote a guidebook to help Mexicans coming to The Woodlands, a community 30 miles north of Houston, understand how things work in America. She explained why so many of her wealthy countrymen were drawn to it: large, beautiful homes, parks, good schools and few worries about crime.

Soto and "los woodlandeses," as they are called in Spanish, have boosted the area's economy, spending billions on homes and several hundred million more on new businesses, taxes, cars and other goods in the last 10 years. More than 10,000 Mexicans now live there — about 10 percent of the population.

But these days, the immigration pattern is reversing. Fewer Mexicans are coming to live in The Woodlands, and more are moving back to Mexico.

President Donald J. Trump's rhetoric and efforts to curb illegal immigration are not just affecting working-class communities and those without legal status. It's what Soto calls "The Trump factor."

Soto moved to The Woodlands



Nicole Rojas, who is of Colombian origin, walks her one-year-old son Mason Rojas while she waits for lunch to be served at Fielding's Local Kitchen + Bar, Friday, May 26, 2017, in The Woodlands, Texas.

from Mexico City seven years ago with her husband, David Medina, and their kids, Diego, 11, and Paola, 9.

She and Medina saw business opportunities in the U.S., and they wanted their children to be bicultural and bilingual. More importantly, they wanted them to be safe. The family had been robbed at gunpoint back home.

"Mexicans like buying brand-new houses here," said Medina, a real-estate agent.

Some of those who came north

to live in The Woodlands became residents through EB-5 visas, which require an investment of at least \$1 million, or \$500,000 for special projects, in commercial enterprises that employ at least 10 U.S. citizens. That provides permanent residence to the holders.

Others have trader or investor visas for people who do business between the two countries under bilateral arrangements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Jorge Cadena and his wife, Hei-

di Herfurth, obtained EB-5 status recently after living in The Woodlands for eight years.

But Trump, Cadena said, "is not making it any easier for me to convince people to come spend their money here."

Soto and others say The Woodlands feels different since Trump's election.

About 15 residents, including Soto, went to town hall meetings earlier this year to express concerns about a surge of discriminatory behaviors toward minorities. Woodlandeses feel that having a president who has repeatedly offended Mexicans, and immigrants in general, has given de facto permission to some people to act out on previously suppressed sentiments.

Soto said she and her husband no longer feel welcome, even though all of her family members became U.S. citizens last year, and they're not as worried about safety in Mexico.

Medina was moving back in May. Soto and the kids will follow at the end of the school year.

MORE ON THE WOODLANDS

■ Complete story available online at swjournalist.com.



CHELSEA PURGAHN / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Joel Enge has been raising butterflies for 16 years. The butterflies migrate through Texas but are not native to it. Through the fall and winter, the butterflies will fly from as far as Canada to migrate to Mexico. Enge typically does a butterfly release each year with either his students or his church.

Butterfly keeper delights kids, community

CHELSEA PURGAHN
Tyler Morning Telegraph

TYLER — "Look! Do you see it?" Joel Enge exclaims mid-conversation. He points to the sky as he stands in Kingdom Life Academy's budding garden, excitedly talking about the beauty of the monarch butterfly overhead.

He's been raising butterflies for 16 years.

"I started raising butterflies to give my elementary students an exciting experience with real life science, not just out of a textbook," Enge recalls of his first year raising painted lady butterflies in 2002 with his Austin Elementary School students.

The students loved the project,

so Enge continued ordering and raising painted ladies from California with them until he found out about monarch butterflies and ordered the caterpillars from a place in Texas.

By the time he decided to raise the monarchs in 2008, it had become a campuswide event, with each class at the school receiving 10 caterpillars so they could watch the metamorphosis.

Enge now searches for his own caterpillars and milkweed, and shares the butterflies with his congregation at Colonial Hills Baptist Church.

It was a tough season for the butterflies, Enge said. Ants and storms took almost 50 caterpillars



CHELSEA PURGAHN / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Joel Enge picks a milkweed bloom on the side of a county road in Tyler on April 19. Enge carries a mesh laundry basket along the sides of country highways to collect eggs and milkweed.

and butterflies before Mother's Day, when he wanted to release them. In the end, he was still able to bring nearly 50 butterflies to his church to release.

After a tour through the Sunday

school classes so kids could experience the butterflies, Enge and dozens of church members made their way to the front lawn after the service to release the butterflies into the sunny blue sky.

Galveston paves new roads for bikers

SAMANTHA KETTERER
The Galveston County Daily News

GALVESTON — Tim Tietjens, planning and development director for Galveston, has been a long-distance biker for several years. Now, he's using his love of the sport to form a better bike plan for the island.

Galveston's streets are already in an "X/Y grid," which is ideal for biking, Tietjens said. What the city is lacking is a comprehensive bike plan to make it safer for people to get around.

The city is now working on a bicycle network, with painted bike lanes going north-to-south across the island, and shared bike lanes going east-to-west. Many of the changes will be implemented as streets undergo major construction. The plan is expected to be complete in several years.

Galveston's Intermodal Transportation Committee is behind many of the planned changes.

"What we've seen is real enthusiasm from the city, and Tim is probably the single most enthu-

"Some just exercise, while others get out and try to make an outdoor adventure out of it."

TIM TIETJENS

siastic," committee member Jayson Levy said.

Tietjens said he has found the benefits of biking span wider than just exercise.

"Some just exercise, while others get out and try to make an outdoor adventure out of it," he said. "When you do that, you really open up the realm of what a city has to offer."

Tietjens said he hopes the city can develop a grid good enough for "biking tourism" to draw people to the island.

"The advantage of living in Southeast Texas is we have really decent weather year round," Tietjens said. "I could see kind of an industry cluster of bike tourism happening."



TOM STROMME / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Although the Dakota Access pipeline opened yesterday, it leaked 84 gallons of oil in northern South Dakota in April as the line was being prepared for service.

Dakota Access pipeline opened despite outcry from Native American tribes

BLAKE NICHOLSON
Associated Press

BISMARCK, North Dakota — Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners announced the 1,200-mile Dakota Access pipeline began shipping oil for customers on Thursday.

Grow America's Infrastructure Now, a coalition of businesses,

trade associations and labor groups that benefit from infrastructure development, issued a statement saying such projects "are key components to unlocking our nation's economic potential and creating jobs."

Four Sioux tribes in the Dakotas are still trying to shut down the line, fearing water pollution.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Free Syrian Army fighters give the victory sign in Jarablus, Syria. Veteran Syrian rebels who have fought Assad for years are struggling to find a place in a bewildering battlefield where several wars are all being waged at once by international powers. Battered by defeats, they bounce from alliance to alliance, feeling abandoned by the U.S. who they feel has given its support to Syrian Kurds. The rebels are faced with choosing whether to ally with Turkey or al-Qaida.

★★ REBELS WITHOUT A SIDE

Fighters struggle to find a place in ever-changing battlefield landscape

THE MIDDLE EAST



SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

GAZIANTEP, Turkey — They are veteran Syrian rebels who for years tried to bring down President Bashar Assad. Now they're doing little fighting as they seek a place in Syria, where several wars are being waged.

Battered by divisions, the rebels are trying to find allies they can trust as international powers look after their own agendas.

Their options are limited. One is to line up behind Turkey, which is recruiting groups to fight its own war in Syria, primarily against Syrian Kurds.

Another option is to ally with al-Qaida's affiliate. Despite differences with the U.S., the rebel groups hope for support, but they feel the U.S. has abandoned them, throwing its weight behind the Syrian Kurds.

The AP spoke to two veteran rebels, and found them desperate for resources but intent on fighting for years to come.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

In March 2011, protests broke out in Syria as part of the wider Arab Spring movement. President Bashar Assad cracked down violently, as civilians began defending themselves in what became a civil war. But it's now a series of different conflicts with many players.

KEY PLAYERS

- President Bashar Assad and the Syrian government
- The rebels
- Syria's ethnic Kurdish minority
- Islamic State group
- Foreign entities (U.S., Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Britain, France)

CONFLICTS

- Syrian government (president) vs. Syrian rebels
- The Syrian government is backed by Russia, Iran and Hezbollah of Lebanon. The rebels are backed by a U.S.-led coalition, Turkey and Gulf States. This has all created a Proxy war.
- Then there is fighting between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.
- IS is there fighting for land for its caliphate state.



THE TATTOOED FIGHTER

Nothing blurs 39-year-old Tarek Muharram's determination to fight Assad. Not the loss of his beloved city of Aleppo to government forces, nor the hours he and his comrades now spend in a small apartment in the southern Turkish city Gaziantep, watching TV and smoking, waiting for the next battle. Muharram quit his banking job in the Gulf to return home and join the rebellion in 2011. Over the years, he fought alongside several different rebel groups, including ones backed by the United States. The fall of Aleppo was a watershed moment. It cost the rebels their strongest base, their resources and their homes. "We had reached a dead end," said Muharram. Now he and his group, Noureddine el-Zinki, have joined the alliance led by the al-Qaida-linked Hayat

Tahrir al-Sham. The move caused many in his group to break away. But for Muharram, anything else would have required too many concessions, including accepting a role for Assad. Muharram says he has his personal differences with al-Qaida. He doesn't always pray, for example, and he smokes. He sports a wolf-head tattoo on his arm, something militants frown upon. But he said the al-Qaida-led alliance has kept its weapons pointed in the right direction, against Assad. He said the alliance has resources and support to back it. "The revolution will end with a ballot box. There is no legitimacy for a new Syria without elections," he said.



THE AL-QAIDA HUNTER

Lt. Col. Ahmed al-Saoud drives around the Turkish seaside city of Iskenderun with another car of Syrian bodyguards and aides behind him. He has been living almost permanently in Turkey since al-Qaida's affiliate attacked him and his group, the U.S.-backed Division 13, in Syria last year. When he tried to return home in April, an ambush was waiting for him. He survived, but one of his commanders was killed. A defector from Assad's military, al-Saoud has received Western aid from the start. His fight against the extremists, who tried to gain a foothold in his Idlib hometown of Maaret Numan, has been relentless. But he feels let down now that the U.S. is throwing its weight behind Syrian Kurdish militias. "We can't be temporary allies for a certain stage

and then they drop or back me as they please," al-Saoud said. He fears U.S. support will only deepen the Kurds' determination for self-rule, leading to the division of Syria, in the process boosting support among Sunni Arabs for al-Qaida. During a recent AP visit to his home in Turkey, al-Saoud was constantly on the phone with his commanders back home. Al-Saoud has also joined the Northern Front Operation Room. But he's skeptical of its Islamist leadership, which would minimize the role of more secular groups like his and also deny him direct contacts with the Americans. "My aim is a Syria free of Assad and of terrorism," he said.

In February 2016, the UN estimated that 400,000 have been killed in the conflict, but an accurate count has been impossible to record.