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WEEKLY DIGEST

AUGUST 17, 2018

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AP Photo/Gary Kazanjian

LOCAL YOSEMITE VALLEY REOPENS

Cars Packed With Visitors Line Up

August 15, 2018 | AP News and GV Wire

Hikers and nature lovers returned to Yosemite National Park's scenic valley Tuesday after a rare 20-day closure because of smoke from wildfires. Some said they didn't mind the hazy air that obscured scenic vistas; others came prepared with eye drops and face masks. Park officials also advised visitors to expect limited lodging and food services at Yosemite, one of the busiest national parks in the U.S., as it gets back to full speed following the longest closure in decades.

In Montana, hundreds of people were hastily evacuated from Glacier National Park where a wildfire destroyed at least nine homes and cabins in one of the park's historic districts. The hit to national parks comes as wildfires continue to rage across parts of the West. California, like several other states, has faced a longer and more destructive wildfire season because of drought, warmer weather attributed to climate change and homes built deeper into forests. Yosemite's closure came at the height of tourist season, costing the park and nearby communities millions of dollars. The park draws more than 600,000 visitors during a typical August, according to the National Park Service.

Cars Lined Yosemite's Entrance Gates
Undeterred by lingering haze, cars packed with visitors lined Yosemite's entrance gates. "It's smoky, but you can see most of the mountains — just not the tops," said Dutch tourist Gert Lammers, who entered a gate on the western side of the park near the town of El Portal, driving past fire crews and burned out cars and structures. "We feel lucky that it's open today," said Lammers, 48, who heads back to Holland on Friday after a three-week tour of Califor-

nia with his wife and two children. Others packed special gear. "I brought face masks for breathing, and I brought eye drops because the smoke will irritate your eyes," said Michael Aitken, 57, who has a permit to climb Half Dome later this week. Standing at the usually scenic Tunnel View, Aitken listed what he could not see. Tens of thousands of visitors from across the globe had to cancel trips to Yosemite, which closed its valley and other areas on July 25 because of smoke from the Ferguson Fire. The wildfire has burned 150 square miles and killed two firefighters since it started July 13. Though the blaze didn't reach the heart of Yosemite Valley, it burned in remote areas of the park and choked popular areas with smoke.

Some fires still burned on hillsides near the park's borders, several miles from the scenic valley. As of Tuesday, all of the park was reopened except a major road from the south, Highway 41, and a popular park attraction known as Glacier Point that is expected to remain closed for at least another week, park officials said.

Still Calculating the Financial Impacts
Yosemite spokeswoman Jamie Richards said Yosemite was still calculating the financial impacts, noting not all campsites were reopening immediately and visitors should check the park's website to see what services were still closed.

"We are working to get campgrounds back up and running," Richards said, adding that food services were also not yet running at full capacity. Air quality in the park will vary depending on the time of day and location. "You are going to smell and see smoke," Richards said, adding, however, that from her office in Yosemite Valley she was looking out at clear...

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VALLEY GROWERS HIT PERDUE WITH TOUGH QUESTIONS

August 15, 2018 | David Taub

Stopping in Kingsburg during a Central Valley tour, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue heard concerns from representatives of dairy, fruit and nut growers. What was top of mind? Everything from the Trump tariffs to market access to immigration. Perdue made news: He said that the president is in negotiations with Mexico on a labor treaty to help ensure that agriculture has the workers it needs.

Trying to calm grower fears on tariffs, Perdue said, “President Trump is committed early on that he doesn’t want producers to bear the brunt of these trade disruptions. That is what we are trying to mitigate.”

The stop Tuesday (Aug. 14) at HMC Farms was part of a north-to-south tour down Highway 99. Rep. David Valadao (R-Hanford) joined him at the Kingsburg stop. Rep. Jim Costa (D-Fresno) and Steve Knight (R-Palmdale) hosted at other venues. In Kingsburg, Perdue toured a cold storage facility before taking part in a roundtable discussion.

Tariff Relief Package

Several growers expressed concern that they would be missing out on President Trump’s \$12 billion aid package for farmers affected by the recent trade war. “We do get overlooked in comparison to the rest of the Midwest. It is difficult...”

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WOULD NEW FRESNO CC SCIENCE BUILDING GIVE BLACKSTONE A LIFT?

August 17, 2018 | Myles Barker

What can be done to make Blackstone Avenue more attractive to shoppers and businesses? The question has been batted around since the end of the Manchester Mall’s glory days in the 1960s and ’70s when families flocked to Sears, Rhodes, Gallenkamp Shoes, and a host of other merchants. But, as buying tastes changed and newer malls were built, Blackstone began losing its luster.

Residents (particularly those who live in the heart of the city) along with city leaders and developers have brainstormed ideas ever since without finding a solution. Perhaps this will make a positive difference: Can you imagine Fresno City College’s brand-new \$70 million science building on Blackstone? According to the State Center Community College District (SCCCD), it could happen...

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GV Wire Photo/Jahz Tello

NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT HELPS HENG

Will She Flip Blue Congressional Seat?

August 10, 2018 | David Taub

Getting banned on Facebook may have been the best thing to happen to Fresno congressional candidate Elizabeth Heng’s campaign. In the least, it has elevated a second Valley congressional race into the national spotlight. Heng, a Republican, hopes to unseat seven-term Democrat Jim Costa of Fresno in the 16th District seat spanning from Merced to Los Banos to Fresno.

Heng turned social media censorship and subsequent national media attention into a fundraising bonanza. According to her campaign, she raised \$93,438 from Aug. 4 through Aug. 9. That comes from 874 donors for an average of \$106. Heng’s social media exploded as well since the news of the ban surfaced — Facebook likes up 283%, Twitter followers up 821%. “The momentum on this campaign has grown tremendously since we started fighting the censorship of my story on Facebook,” Heng said...

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GV Wire Graphic/Alexis Desha



Paul Kitagaki Jr./The Sacramento Bee via AP, Pool, File

GOLDEN STATE KILLER

Charged With Visalia Murder

August 13, 2018 | AP News

VISALIA — Prosecutors added another murder charge Monday against a California serial killing suspect, boosting the number of victims to 13 in the Golden State Killer case. Former police officer Joseph DeAngelo, 72, was charged with first-degree murder in the 1975 killing of community college teacher Claude Snelling, who was shot while stopping the kidnapping of his 16-year-old daughter in Visalia, Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward said. Police say they have physical evidence linking DeAngelo to the killing of Snelling but didn't elaborate.

Detectives are also confident that DeAngelo is a burglar known as the Visalia Ransacker, who struck more than 100 homes in the 1970s.

"We have taken that first step in providing justice not only for the victim's family but for this community as a whole," Ward said. DeAngelo was previously charged in 12 killings throughout the state in the 1970s and 1980s that authorities say were committed by one of the state's most elusive serial killers. Detectives are also confident that DeAngelo is a burglar known as the Visalia Ransacker, who struck more than 100 homes in the 1970s, terrorizing the farming community, Visalia Police Chief Jason Salazar said.

DeAngelo Was an Exeter Police Officer

DeAngelo worked as a police officer in the nearby town of Exeter from 1973 to 1976. Snelling's daughter, Elizabeth Hupp, said Monday she was in her bedroom when she awoke to see a masked gunman in 1975. The man threatened her before dragging her out of the

"That's when I heard my dad yell and the man with a ski mask pushed me to the ground, turned and shot my dad twice as he was coming through the back door."

— Elizabeth Huff

house. "That's when I heard my dad yell and the man with a ski mask pushed me to the ground, turned and shot my dad twice as he was coming through the back

door," Hupp told CBS News. Even though she didn't see his face, Hupp said she believes DeAngelo killed her father. "In my heart, I believe he's the one, and that my father was his first victim," she said.

DeAngelo Suspected of 50 Rapes

DeAngelo is also suspected of committing roughly 50 rapes but he can't be tried on those crimes or the burglaries because the statute of limitations has expired. His attorney, Diane Howard, didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment Monday. Investigators linked DeAngelo to some of the killings by plugging DNA collected from a semen sample at one of the crime scenes into a genealogical website that they say showed a match to a distant relative of DeAngelo. Authorities say they later collected DNA from a tissue left in trash outside DeAngelo's house to make the final match.

No DNA Evidence in Snelling Murder

There is no DNA evidence in the killing of Snelling. After DeAngelo was arrested earlier this year, investigators said they were eyeing fingerprints and shoe tracks left by the Visalia Ransacker for a possible link to DeAngelo. They previously determined the gun used to kill Snelling was taken during one of the thefts.

Shortly after Snelling was killed, DeAngelo moved and joined the Auburn Police Department outside Sacramento. He was fired from that police department in 1979 after he was caught shoplifting a hammer and dog repellent, authorities said. Authorities finally arrested DeAngelo in April at his Citrus Heights home and said they believed he was the killer who had long proved elusive to authorities.



WILL CALIFORNIA FIRES MAKE HOME OWNERS INSURANCE HARDER TO GET?

AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu, File

August 13, 2018 | AP News

California homeowners may find themselves facing insurance headaches even if their houses weren't affected by this year's blazes. The California Department of Insurance had already warned this year that the increasing number and severity of wildfires were making it harder for homeowners in the state to find and hold onto insurance. And now it says the most recent massive fires — nearly 20 blazes are burning across the state, with 20,000 people under evacuation orders — may make the problem acute. "We are not at a crisis point yet, but you can see where the trends are going," California Insurance Commissioner David Jones said in an interview.

Policy Cancellations Are Climbing
He expects more insurance companies to opt not to renew policies or to simply stop writing homeowners policies in areas with the highest fire risk. He also anticipates rate increases, and for parts of the state to be reclassified from safe to high-risk.

State officials don't track exactly how many people are dropped by their insurance companies, but the number of homeowners complaining about it happening more than tripled from 2010 to 2016...

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AP File Photo/Richard Vogel

CALIFORNIA COULD RESHAPE POT RULES AS LEGAL MARKET STRUGGLES

August 15, 2018 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — The nation's largest legal marijuana market is struggling. Illicit sales continue to thrive. A shaky supply chain has customers looking at barren shelves in some shops. There are testing problems. And a proposal to allow home marijuana deliveries in cities that have banned pot sales could lead to a courtroom fight.

A Los Angeles hearing Tuesday provided a window into the state's emerging cannabis economy, in which early enthusiasm for broad legal sales has been followed by anxiety and frustration across a swath of the industry. The state's top marijuana regulator, Lori Ajax, said after the hearing that the state remains in a challenging transition period as it attempts to transform what was once a largely illegal market into a multibillion-dollar, regulated economy...

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JURY AWARDS \$289M TO MAN WHO BLAMES ROUNDUP FOR CANCER

August 11, 2018 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — A jury's \$289 million award to a former school groundskeeper who said Monsanto's Roundup left him dying of cancer will bolster thousands of pending cases and open the door for countless people who blame their suffering on the weed killer, the man's lawyers said. "I'm glad to be here to be able to help in a cause that's way bigger than me," Dewayne Johnson said at a news conference Friday after the verdict was announced.

Johnson, 46, alleges that heavy contact with the herbicide caused his non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The state Superior Court jury agreed that Roundup contributed to Johnson's cancer and Monsanto should have provided a label warning of the potential health hazard. Johnson thanked jurors "from the bottom of my heart" for their work...

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Josh Edelson/Pool Photo via AP



Photo by Charles Sykes/Invision/AP, File

CANCER CLAIMS THE QUEEN OF SOUL

Aretha Franklin dies at 76

August 16, 2018 | AP News

NEW YORK — Aretha Franklin, the undisputed “Queen of Soul” who sang with matchless style on such classics as “Think,” “I Say a Little Prayer” and her signature song, “Respect,” and stood as a cultural icon around the globe, has died at age 76 from pancreatic cancer. Publicist Gwendolyn Quinn tells The Associated Press through a family statement that Franklin died Thursday at 9:50 a.m. at her home in Detroit. The statement said “Franklin’s official cause of death was due to advanced pancreatic cancer of the neuroendocrine type, which was confirmed by Franklin’s oncologist, Dr. Philip Phillips of Karmanos Cancer Institute” in Detroit.

“Music is my thing, it’s who I am. I’m in it for the long run. I’ll be around, singing, ‘What you want, baby I got it.’ Having fun all the way.” — Aretha Franklin via The Associated Press in 2008

The family added: “In one of the darkest moments of our lives, we are not able to find the appropriate words to express the pain in our heart. We have lost the

matriarch and rock of our family. The love she had for her children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins knew no bounds.” The statement continued: “We have been deeply touched by the incredible outpouring of love and support we have received from close friends, supporters and fans all around the world. Thank you for your compassion and prayers. We have felt your love for Aretha and it brings us comfort to know that her legacy will live on. As we grieve, we ask that you respect our privacy during this difficult time.”

Funeral Arrangements Will Be Announced

Funeral arrangements will be announced in the coming days. Franklin, who had battled undisclosed health issues in recent years, had in 2017 announced her retirement from touring. A professional singer and accomplished pianist by her late teens, a superstar by her mid-20s, Franklin had long ago settled any arguments

over who was the greatest popular vocalist of her time.

Her gifts, natural and acquired, were a multi-octave mezzo-soprano, gospel passion and training worthy of a preacher’s daughter, taste sophisticated and eccentric, and the courage to channel private pain into liberating song. She recorded hundreds of tracks and had dozens of hits over the span of a half century, including 20 that reached No. 1 on the R&B charts. But her reputation was defined by an extraordinary run of top 10 smashes in the late 1960s, from the morning-after bliss of “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman,” to the wisecracking “Chain of Fools” to her unstoppable call for “Respect.”

“She was truly one of a kind. She was more than the Queen of Soul. She was a national treasure to be cherished by every generation throughout the world. Apart from our long professional relationship, Aretha was my friend. Her loss is deeply profound and my heart is full of sadness.” — Clive Davis, music mogul who brought Franklin to Arista Records

Her records sold millions of copies and the music industry couldn’t honor her enough. Franklin won 18 Grammy awards. In 1987, she became the first woman inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Clive Davis, the music mogul who brought her to Arista Records and helped revive her career in the 1980s, said he was “devastated” by her death.

Bowing to Her Eminence

Fellow singers bowed to her eminence and political and civic leaders treated her as a peer. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was a longtime friend, and she sang at the dedication of King’s memorial, in 2011. She performed at the inaugurations of Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, and at the funeral for civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks. Clinton gave Franklin the National Medal of Arts. President George W. Bush awarded her...

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PRIMARY NIGHT: DEMS GO FOR DIVERSITY, GOP FOR TRUMP CHOICES

AP Photo/Charles Krupa

August 15, 2018 | AP News

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Democrats embraced diversity Tuesday in a primary night of firsts, while Republicans in Minnesota rejected a familiar face of the GOP old guard in favor of a rising newcomer aligned with President Donald Trump. In Vermont, Democrats rallied behind the nation's first transgender nominee for governor. Minnesota Democrats backed a woman who would be the first Somali-American member of Congress. And in Connecticut, the party nominated a candidate who could become the first black woman from the state to serve in Congress. Still, Democrats in Minnesota also backed a national party leader who is facing accusations of domestic violence. He has denied the allegations, yet they threaten to

undercut enthusiasm in his state and beyond. On the other side, Trump tightened his grip on the modern-day Republican Party as the turbulent 2018 primary season lurched toward its finale. A one-time Trump critic, former two-term Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, lost a comeback attempt he was expected to win.

All but 10 states picked their candidates for November's general election by the time the day's final votes were counted. While the full political battlefield isn't quite set, the stakes are clear: Democrats are working to topple Republican control of Congress and governors' offices across the nation...

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WHITE HOUSE ADMITS ERROR FOR FALSE CLAIM ON BLACK EMPLOYMENT

August 15, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The White House has acknowledged error in its false claim that President Donald Trump created three times as many jobs for African-Americans than President Barack Obama. It was a rare admission of fault for an administration that frequently skews data and overstates economic gains. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said on Twitter late Tuesday that she had been wrong earlier that day when she told reporters that Obama created only 195,000 jobs for African-Americans during his tenure compared with Trump's 700,000 new jobs in just two years.

The U.S. economy actually added about 3 million jobs for black workers during Obama's tenure, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Official statistics show black jobs went from 15.5 million when Obama took office...

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AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

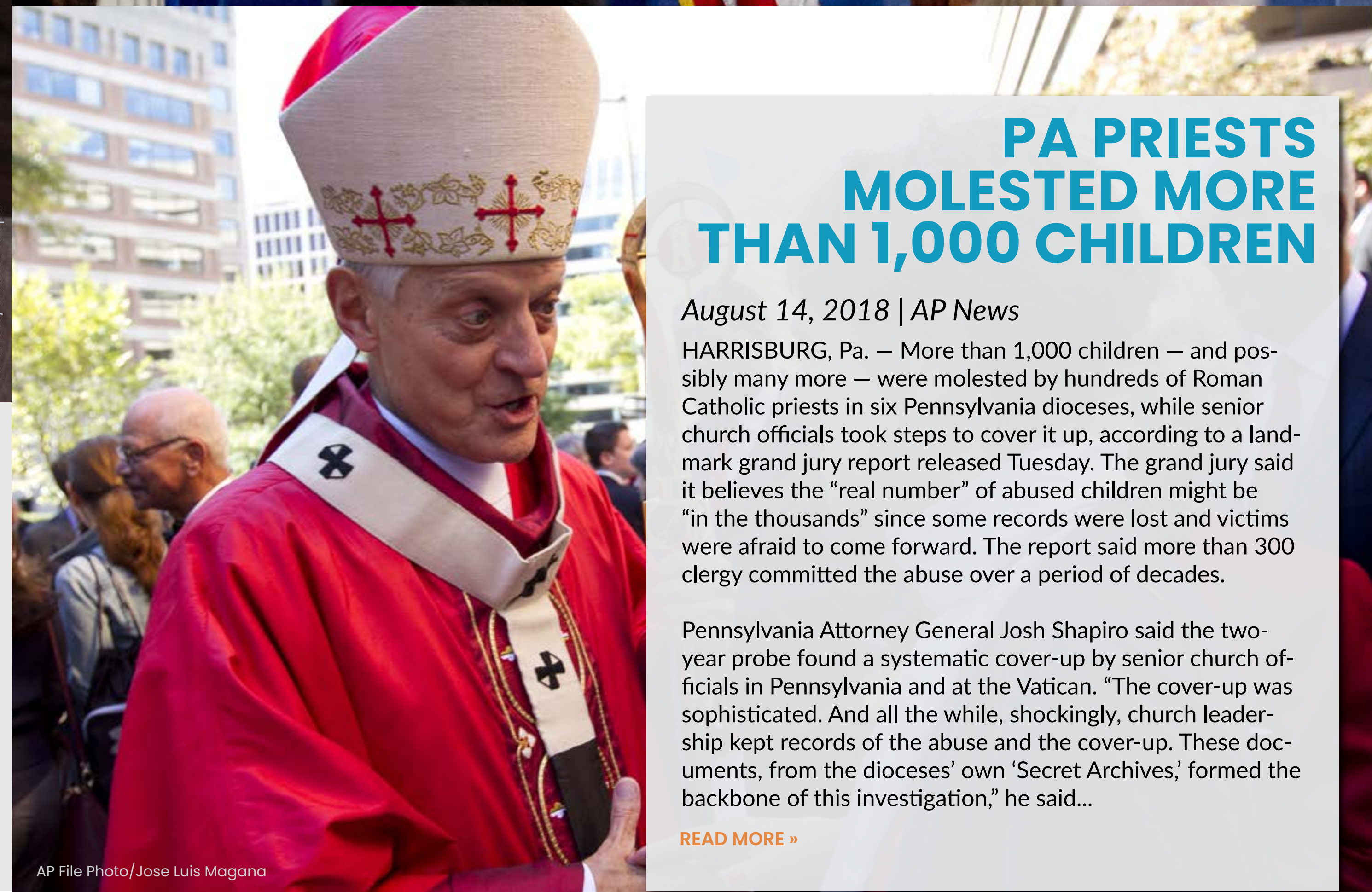
PA PRIESTS MOLESTED MORE THAN 1,000 CHILDREN

August 14, 2018 | AP News

HARRISBURG, Pa. — More than 1,000 children — and possibly many more — were molested by hundreds of Roman Catholic priests in six Pennsylvania dioceses, while senior church officials took steps to cover it up, according to a landmark grand jury report released Tuesday. The grand jury said it believes the "real number" of abused children might be "in the thousands" since some records were lost and victims were afraid to come forward. The report said more than 300 clergy committed the abuse over a period of decades.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro said the two-year probe found a systematic cover-up by senior church officials in Pennsylvania and at the Vatican. "The cover-up was sophisticated. And all the while, shockingly, church leadership kept records of the abuse and the cover-up. These documents, from the dioceses' own 'Secret Archives,' formed the backbone of this investigation," he said...

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AP File Photo/Jose Luis Magana



WORLD ARMY SUSPENDS DISCHARGES

of Immigrant Recruits

July 23, 2018 | AP News

The U.S. Army has stopped discharging immigrant recruits who enlisted seeking a path to citizenship — at least temporarily. A memo shared with The Associated Press on Wednesday and dated July 20 spells out orders to high-ranking Army officials to stop processing discharges of men and women who enlisted in the special immigrant program, effective immediately. It was not clear how many recruits were impacted by the action, and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment about the memo. “Effective immediately, you will suspend processing of all involuntary separation actions,” read the memo signed by Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Marshall Williams.

Proving There Was a Policy

Early last month, the Pentagon said there had been no policy change and that background checks were ongoing. And in mid-July the Army reversed one discharge, for Brazilian reservist Lucas Calixto, 28, who had sued. Discharges of other immigrant enlistees continued. Attorneys sought to bring a class action lawsuit last week to offer protections to a broader group of reservists and recruits in the program, demanding that prior discharges be revoked and that further separations be halted.

A judge’s order references the July 20 memo, and asks the Army to clarify how it impacts the discharge status of Calixto and other plaintiffs. Margaret Stock, an Alaska-based immigration attorney and a retired Army Reserve lieutenant colonel who helped create the immigrant recruitment program, said Wednesday the memo proves there was a policy. One Pakistani man caught by surprise by his discharge said he was filing for asylum.

Strengthening Security Requirements

The reversal comes as the Defense Department has attempted to strengthen security requirements for the program, through which historically immigrants vowed

to risk their lives for the promise of U.S. citizenship. President George W. Bush ordered “expedited naturalization” for immigrant soldiers after

“It’s an admission by the Army that they’ve improperly discharged hundreds of soldiers. The next step should be go back and rescind the people who were improperly discharged.” — Margaret Stock, immigration attorney and retired Army Reserve lieutenant colonel

9/11 in an effort to swell military ranks. Seven years later the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program, known as MAVNI, became an official

recruiting program. It came under fire from conservatives when President Barack Obama added DACA recipients — young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children — to the list of eligible enlistees. In response, the military layered on additional security clearances for recruits to pass before heading to boot camp.

The Trump Administration added even more hurdles, creating a backlog within the Defense Department. Last fall, hundreds of recruits still in the enlistment process had their contracts canceled. Government attorneys called the recruitment program an “elevated security risk” in another case involving 17 foreign-born military recruits who enlisted through the program but have not been able to clear additional security requirements. Some recruits had falsified their background records and were connected to state-sponsored intelligence agencies, the court filing said. Eligible recruits are required to have legal status in the U.S., such as a student visa, before enlisting. More than 5,000 immigrants were recruited into the program in 2016, and an estimated 10,000 are currently serving. Nearly 110,000 members of the Armed Forces have gained citizenship by serving in the U.S. military since Sept. 11, 2001, according to the Defense Department.



ASSAULTS BY TALIBAN RAISE QUESTIONS

About US Plan for Peace

AP Photo/Mohammad Anwar Danishyar

August 14, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — A year after the Trump administration introduced its strategy for Afghanistan, the Taliban are asserting themselves on the battlefield even as U.S. officials talk up hopes for peace. That's raising questions about the viability of the American game plan for ending a war that began when some of the current U.S. troops were in diapers.

A Taliban assault on Ghazni, a key city linking areas of Taliban influence barely 75 miles from Kabul, has killed about 100 Afghan security forces and 20 civilians since Friday, the Afghan Defense Ministry said. That has demonstrated the militants' ability to attack, if not hold, a strategic center on

the nation's main highway, and highlighted the vulnerability of Afghan security forces. In a reminder that U.S. troops and their families are paying a heavy price, even with Afghan forces in the lead combat role, the Pentagon announced Monday that a 36-year-old soldier, Staff Sgt. Reymund Rarogal Transfiguracion of Waikoloa, Hawaii, died Sunday of wounds sustained on a combat patrol in the Helmand province. Against that turbulent backdrop, some wonder whether President Donald Trump can resist pulling the plug on a war in which the U.S. is still spending \$4 billion-plus a year just to keep Afghan forces afloat. He said when he introduced his strategy on Aug. 21, 2017, that his instinct was...

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IS KUSHNER TRYING TO STRIP 2 MILLION PALESTINIANS OF REFUGEE STATUS?

August 14, 2018 | GV Wire

According to an Aug. 6 article by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Jared Kushner — President Donald Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law — has reportedly pressured Jordan to strip the refugee status of more than 2 million registered Palestinians living in the country. A report in Foreign Policy stated that Kushner raised the issue with Jordanian officials in the region during his visit there in June.

Haaretz reported that the Palestinians' chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat, told reporters after Kushner's visit to Jordan that the latter's delegation said it was ready to stop the United Nations Relief and Works Agency from redirecting the sum allocated to the agency to Jordan and other countries that host refugees...

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YEMEN'S SHIITE REBELS WELCOME UN CALL FOR SAUDI STRIKE PROBE

August 10, 2018 | AP News


SANAA, Yemen — Yemen's Shiite rebels on Friday backed a U.N. call for a probe into a Saudi-led coalition airstrike in the country's north that killed dozens of people the previous day, including many children, in an attack that drew wide international criticism. Senior Yemeni rebel leader Mohammed Ali al-Houthi said on Twitter that the rebels — known as Houthis — welcome the call and are willing to cooperate in an investigation of the strike in Saada province that hit a bus carrying civilians, many of them school children, in a busy market in Dahyan district.




The coalition said Friday it would investigate. The official Saudi Press Agency quoted an unnamed senior official as saying the coalition has a "firm commitment" to investigate incidents involving "claims of mistakes or violations of international law" and to hold those responsible accountable...

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