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WEEKLY DIGEST
NOVEMBER 9, 2018

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ATTORNEY GENERAL JEFF
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GV Wire Photo/Jahz Tello

LOCAL ARIAS, ESPARZA WIN SPOTS ON FRESNO COUNCIL

Luis Chavez Wins Re-Election

November 7, 2018 | David Taub

The next Fresno city council will be more left-leaning and majority Latino. Miguel Arias has defeated Tate Hill in the District 3 race, 58%-42%, with 100% precincts reporting. In District 5, Luis Chavez won his case for re-election to represent southeast Fresno, with a 62%-38% win over Paula Yang, with 100% precincts reporting. And, in a seat that swung in the favor of Democrats, Nelson Esparza bested Brian Whelan, 59%-41% with 100% precincts reporting. “I feel like it’s a collective community effort and a collective community win,” Esparza said at his victory party at the Broadway Events Center in downtown Fresno.

Latino Majority

Arias, Chavez and Esparza join Esmeralda Soria, who won re-election in June as an unopposed incumbent, as the new majority-Latino council. Arias noted that the last time there was a majority-Latino council was 20 years ago. Those four, along with District 4 councilman Paul Caprioglio, give the council a decidedly Democratic look (though city council offices are officially non-partisan). “That really sends a strong signal for our mayor that we need to find a way to collaborate and ensure our democratic values will be honored,” Arias said from the same election-night party at the Broadway Events Center. Fresno Mayor Lee Brand, a Republican, supported Hill (a Democrat) and Whelan (a Republican) for council. Steve Brandau (District 2) and Garry Bredefeld (District 6) will represent the council’s only Republicans. Clint Olivier, a libertarian-leaning Republican representing District 7, is termed out.

2019 Issues

The next city council already has work on its plate. It will tackle such issues as how to implement water fees, regulation of marijuana businesses and the aftermath of Measure P’s defeat. Esparza is already thinking ahead. “We have to fix our broken public safety system. We

need to structurally address our homeless issue. That’s a beast in itself. What I preached during the whole campaign for a long-term vision is economic development. A lot of this won’t happen without resources,” Esparza said. The new council will be sworn in Jan. 8, 2019. Brandau is next in the pre-determined rotation to become council president.

Measure P Fails

Not only did Measure P, the proposed 3/8 of a cent sales tax raise in Fresno, fail to garner two-thirds of the vote needed, it couldn’t even attain a majority. With 100% of the precincts counted, “No” votes prevailed by a margin of 51%-49%. This campaign pitted the current mayor, Lee Brand, against former mayors Ashley Swearengen and Alan Autry. It also divided many on Fresno’s philanthropic front. Campaign spending on both sides exceeded \$2 million.

Measure A Wins

Measure A, which would allow the city of Fresno to impose up to a 10% business license tax on the cannabis industry, appears headed to victory. With 100% of precincts reporting, A is leading 70%-30%. It needs a two-thirds margin, which it is currently exceeding, to pass. Olivier, who strongly supported the measure, says the city now needs to move forward with regulations for the cannabis industry. “We got a lot of support from Democrats, Republicans and independents as well,” he said on election night. “Either we get on this train or run over by it.”

Results on two other Fresno measures are split. Measure O, which would clean up outdated language in the city’s charter, is trailing 51%-49% with 100% precincts reporting. Measure Q, which would require a balanced budget, prevailed easily with a margin of 80% – 20% with 100% precincts reporting. Both measures require a simple majority to pass.

This story has been updated.



SCHOOL BOARDS: INCUMBENTS FALL IN CLOVIS, CENTRAL, FRESNO, SCCC

GV Wire Photo/ Jahz Tello

November 7, 2018 | Myles Barker

Veva Islas ousted incumbent Christopher De La Cerda in the Fresno Unified school board race to represent McLane High School trustee area. With 100% precincts reporting, Islas garnered 59% of the vote. De La Cerda, a retired school educator, was seeking his second full term on the school board. The race was for one of four trustee seats in play this election cycle. In the weeks leading up to Election Day, De La Cerda caused a stir in the race by claiming the California Teachers Association and SEIU had endorsed him. In fact, CTA did not endorse any candidate in the race and SEIU endorsed Islas. De La Cerda said he misspoke.

Keshia Thomas Wins Area 1

In Area 1, Keshia Thomas beat out Robert Fuentes to represent the Edison High Region. “It feels so wonderful,” Thomas said. “I am humbled and excited and can’t wait to go to work for my kids.” Thomas finished with a comfortable lead over Fuentes, winning 58 percent of the votes. Fuentes received 42 percent. Thomas will replace Lindsay Cal Johnson, who decid-

ed not to run for re-election. Johnson served on the board for 12 years.

Valerie Davis Secures Re-election

Incumbent Valerie Davis defended her seat in the Area 3 race to continue representing the Sunnyside region. She faced competition from two challengers – Mark Ratchford and Karl Diaz. Davis finished off Tuesday night with 46 percent of the votes. Diaz had 35 percent and Ratchford 19 percent. Davis said her win reflects the work she has done as a board member for the past 12 years. “I am grateful to do the work again for our students,” Davis said.

Terry Slatic Claims Area 7 Seat

Terry Slatic reigned supreme in Fresno Unified’s Area 7 race. He beat out three other candidates — Nasreen Johnson, Amanda Karabian and Terri Edwards – to represent the Bullard High region. He replaces Brooke Ashjian, who did not seek re-election. Slatic claimed 36% of the vote Tuesday night...

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IS MEASURE P’S DEFEAT THE END OR NEW BEGINNING?

November 7, 2018 | David Taub

To the surprise of many, Fresno’s ambitious Measure P ballot initiative not only failed to attain the two-thirds vote it needed to pass, it didn’t even receive a simple majority of votes in favor. With 100% precincts reporting, 51% of Fresnoans voted “no” on P. The measure would have raised the city’s sales tax 3/8 of a cent for parks and related programs. It had a broad range of support from former mayors Ashley Swearengen and Alan Autry, to advocacy groups like Fresno Building Healthy Communities. The “Yes on P” campaign raised more than \$2 million in contributions, giving it a nearly a 5-to-1 fundraising advantage over the “No on P” side. That advantage did not carry over to the ballot box.

Brand and Others React to Vote

Fresno Mayor Lee Brand, a Measure P opponent, expressed mixed feelings the day after the local measure was defeated. “The results for Measure P are bittersweet for me. I agree...

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STUDENTS FEEL THE WARMTH OF LOCAL GENEROSITY

November 8, 2018 | GV Wire

With winter weather approaching, the non-profit Foundation for Central Schools gifted new coats and jackets to over 800 students across the district Wednesday. Students from 22 district schools benefited from the program this year. It’s one of several annual events for Central students and families organized by the foundation.

The effort was made possible through a \$15,000 grant from Granville Homes, which has supported the Coats for Kids program for over a decade. The funds also help to underwrite the foundation’s annual Holiday Joy canned food drive that benefits more than 300 Central Unified families. (Disclosure: Darius Assemi, CEO of Granville Homes, is the publisher of GV Wire.)

“More than 70% of our Central Unified students face food insecurity and often cannot afford clothing items, including a winter jacket,” said Superintendent Andy Alvarado. “Lacking...

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AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

STATE

NEWSOM ELECTED CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR

Expect Continued Battles with Trump

November 6, 2018 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — Democrat Gavin Newsom was elected California governor Tuesday and used his victory speech to punch at President Donald Trump and extoll California as a beacon for all Americans who oppose “agents of anger.” Newsom’s victory ensures one opponent of Trump, outgoing Gov. Jerry Brown, will be replaced by another. “We’re saying unmistakably and in unison that it’s time to roll the credits on the politics of chaos and the politics of cruelty,” Newsom told supporters at a nightclub in downtown Los Angeles. “Now is the time for decency, for facts, for trust, and now is the time for truth. Now is time for leaders to lead.” He did not mention Trump by name, but his remarks were aimed squarely at the president.

Newsom Hails “California’s Moment”

Newsom presented California as “America’s coming attraction,” extolled the state’s diversity, innovative businesses and thriving economy, and urged Americans

“This, in every way, shape or form is California’s moment,” “This, in every way, shape or form is California’s moment.”

— Gavin Newsom

dispirited with political polarization to look toward the Golden State. “This, in every way, shape or form is California’s moment,” Newsom said. Newsom

defeated Republican John Cox with a pledge to spur a rapid bump in housing construction, bring about universal health care and help impoverished children. He’ll replace Gov. Jerry Brown, one of Trump’s chief antagonists. Newsom led Cox 57 percent to 43 percent with about 4.2 million votes counted.

Bold Moves Promised

For the past eight years Newsom has been lieutenant governor, a position with almost no power. Before that, as San Francisco mayor, he rocketed into the global spotlight when he ordered the issuing of marriage licenses to same-sex couples when it wasn’t legal. Newsom, 51, promised similarly bold moves on the priorities

of his party’s liberal base. For Newsom, the pivotal moment in the campaign came in June, when Cox finished second in a crowded primary field where the top two advance regardless of party affiliation.

Clear Democratic Advantage

Facing a Republican provided a huge advantage in the state where the GOP has 3.8 million fewer registered voters than the Democratic Party. Newsom spent much of the campaign raising money and holding rallies for Democrats running for seats in Congress and the Legislature, building

“I consider myself very proud that we highlighted the incredible struggle that the people of this state have had for years.”

— John Cox

goodwill with lawmakers with whom he’ll be working. Cox, 63, a lawyer and investor living in the San Diego area, hammered relentlessly on California’s high cost of living, for which he blamed Newsom and the Democrats who control the Legislature and every statewide office.

He pledged to cut taxes and roll back environmental laws that he says obstruct housing construction. He downplayed his conservative stances on social issues — he opposes abortion and made inflammatory comments about gay marriage a decade ago — but was unable to persuade voters to give him a shot. He also was hurt by support from Trump, who is very unpopular in the state. “I consider myself very proud that we highlighted the incredible struggle that the people of this state have had for years,” Cox told supporters as he conceded defeat in San Diego.

He blamed his loss on the enormous cost of running a campaign in California, home to nearly 40 million people and some of the nation’s most expensive television markets. He raised more than \$11 million this year — much of it his own — but still did not have enough...

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November 7, 2018 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Eleni Kounalakis will be the first female lieutenant governor of California while Attorney General Xavier Becerra, Secretary of State Alex Padilla and Controller Betty Yee will all return to office. The four are among several statewide offices voters cast ballots for Tuesday. In the contest for insurance commissioner, Republican-turned-independent Steve Poizner had the edge over Democratic Sen. Ricardo Lara. Here's a look at the down-ballot races:

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: Kounalakis defeated Ed Hernandez in a Democrat-on-Democrat matchup for Lt. Governor, winning with nearly 57 percent of the vote. She will replace

Governor-elect Gavin Newsom in the office. During the race, Kounalakis emphasized her background as a developer and former ambassador to Hungary. She vows to fight sexual harassment in workplaces, hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure women receive equal pay for equal work.

Although the job holds little real power, it's seen as a launching pad to higher office. The lieutenant governor serves as a University of California regent, a Cal State trustee and as a state lands commissioner overseeing conservation and public access. The lieutenant also acts as governor when the top executive is away...

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NUNES EASILY DEFEATS JANZ IN CA 22 RACE

November 6, 2018 | AP News

Voters gave Devin Nunes another term in Washington. In the race that saw candidates raise the most money out of any congressional race in the country, Nunes won an eighth term to congress, defeating Democrat Andrew Janz in District 22. Nunes garnered 56% of the district wide votes for the areas covering parts of Fresno and Tulare counties.

The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and close ally of President Donald Trump outdistanced Janz in the Republican-friendly district. However, with the Democrats taking control of the House in January, Nunes will likely become ranking member on the intelligence committee. Nunes had depicted Janz as a favorite of the Democratic liberal wing. Janz, a prosecutor, said he entered the race after what he called "ethical lapses" by the incumbent. His supporters, many from outside California, were eager to take down one of Trump's key supporters and poured millions into the race. Trump carried the district in 2016 while losing California...

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CALIFORNIANS REJECT GAS TAX REPEAL

November 6, 2018 | AP News

Voters have rejected a proposal to repeal California's gasoline tax increase that was passed by the Legislature to fund road and transportation projects.

Proposition 6 failed Tuesday after Democrats campaigned to preserve \$5 billion a year to fix roads and improve transit. The Republican-backed initiative sought to repeal increases in fuel taxes and vehicle fees that are expected to fund \$52 billion in transportation projects over a decade. It also would have required voter approval for future gas tax hikes.

GOP officials argued that California has grown too expensive and state lawmakers should spend money more wisely. They hoped the measure would drive Republican turnout in contested state and congressional races. Democrats and construction industry and union leaders maintained the revenues are vital to upgrade California's crumbling roads and bridges...

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AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

TRUMP FORCES OUT ATTORNEY GENERAL JEFF SESSIONS

November 7, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Jeff Sessions was pushed out Wednesday as the country’s chief law enforcement officer after enduring more than a year of blistering and personal attacks from President Donald Trump over his recusal from the Russia investigation. Sessions told the president in a [one-page letter](#) that he was submitting his resignation “at your request.”

Trump Announces Replacement by Tweet

Trump announced in a tweet that he was naming Sessions’ chief of staff Matthew Whitaker, a former United States attorney from Iowa, as acting attorney general. Whitaker has criticized special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into potential coordination between the president’s Republican campaign and Russia.

The resignation was the culmination of a toxic relationship that frayed just weeks into the attorney general’s tumultuous tenure, when he stepped aside from the Mueller investigation. Trump blamed the decision for opening the door to the appointment of Mueller, who took over the Russia investigation and began examining whether Trump’s hectoring of Sessions was part of a broader effort to obstruct justice and stymie the probe.

Control of Mueller Investigation

Asked whether Whitaker would assume control over Mueller’s investigation, Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Flores said Whitaker would be “in charge of all matters under the purview of the Department of Justice.” The Justice Department did not announce a departure for Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller more than a year and a half ago and

has closely overseen his work since then. Whitaker once opined about a situation in which Trump could fire Sessions and then appoint an acting attorney general who could stifle the funding of Mueller’s probe. “So I could see a scenario where Jeff Sessions is replaced with a recess appointment and that attorney general doesn’t fire Bob Mueller, but he just reduces his budget to so low that his investigation grinds to almost a halt,” Whitaker said during an interview with CNN in July 2017. Asked if that would be to dwindle the special counsel’s resources, Whitaker responded, “Right.” In an op-ed for CNN, Whitaker wrote: “Mueller has come up to a red line in the Russia 2016 election-meddling investigation that he is dangerously close to crossing.”

President’s Relentless Attacks on Sessions

The relentless attacks on Sessions came even though the Alabama Republican was the first U.S. senator to endorse Trump and despite the fact that his crime-fighting agenda and priorities — particularly his hawkish immigration enforcement policies — largely mirrored the president’s. But the relationship was irreparably damaged in March 2017 when Sessions, acknowledging previously undisclosed meetings with the Russian ambassador and citing his work as a campaign aide, recused himself from the Russia investigation. The decision infuriated Trump, who repeatedly lamented that he would have never selected Sessions if he had known the attorney general would recuse.

The recusal left the investigation in the hands of Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller as special counsel two months later after Trump fired then-FBI Director James Comey. The rift lingered for the duration of Sessions’...

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DEMS SEIZE HOUSE CONTROL BUT GOP RETAINS SENATE

AP Photo/Alex Brandon

November 6, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Democrats seized the House majority from President Donald Trump’s Republican Party on Tuesday in a suburban revolt that threatened what’s left of the president’s governing agenda.

But the GOP gained ground in the Senate and preserved key governorships, beating back a “blue wave” that never fully materialized. The mixed verdict in the first nationwide election of Trump’s young presidency underscored the limits of his hardline immigration rhetoric in America’s evolving political landscape, where college-educated voters in the na-

tion’s suburbs rejected his warnings of a migrant “invasion.” Blue-collar voters and rural America embraced his aggression. Still, a new Democratic House majority would end the Republican Party’s dominance in Washington for the final two years of Trump’s first term with major questions looming about health care, immigration and government spending.

The president’s party will maintain control of the executive and judicial branches of U.S. government, in addition to the Senate, but Democrats suddenly have a foothold that gives them subpoena power to probe deep into Trump’s personal...

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AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

TRUMP SAYS THE GOVERNMENT WILL HALT IF DEMS INVESTIGATE

November 7, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump, emboldened by Republican election wins in the Senate and scornful of GOP candidates he felt didn’t sufficiently embrace his support, delivered a stark warning to the new Democratic House majority on Wednesday: Investigate me, and I’ll investigate you — and the government will grind to a halt.

Noting that his Republican Party retained control of the Senate on Tuesday, he said that if Democrats in the House come after him, “we’ve got” a thing called the U.S. Senate. Speaking at a wide-ranging White House press conference, Trump, by turns combative and conciliatory, said Democrats and Republicans should set aside partisanship to work together. Some House Democrats have threatened to use the subpoena power they will gain in January to investigate Trump and administration actions. But, he warned, he will respond in kind and government will suffer. Plus, he said, Democrats...

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OUT OF MANY, SEVERAL FIRSTS ELECTED ACROSS COUNTRY

November 6, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — What is already the most diverse Congress ever will become even more so after Tuesday’s elections, which broke barriers of race and gender. For the first time, a pair of Native American congresswomen are headed to the House, in addition to two Muslim congresswomen. Massachusetts and Connecticut will also send black women to Congress as firsts for their states, while Arizona and Tennessee are getting their first female senators.

The high-profile midterm cycle that produced a record number of women contenders and candidates of color means a number of winners will take office as trailblazers. The inclusive midterm victories bode well for future election cycles, said Kimberly Peeler-Allen, co-founder of Higher Heights for America, a national organization focused on galvanizing black women voters and electing black women as candidates. “This is going to be a long process to get us to a...

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Mark Vancleave/Star Tribune via AP



AP Photo/Vahid Salemi

WORLD IRAN PRESIDENT WARNS OF 'WAR SITUATION' AS SANCTIONS RESUME

November 5, 2018 | AP News

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran greeted the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on Monday with air defense drills and a statement from President Hassan Rouhani that the nation faces a “war situation,” raising Mideast tensions as America’s maximalist approach to the Islamic Republic takes hold.

The sanctions end all economic benefits America had granted Tehran for its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, though Iran for now continues to abide by the accord that saw it limit its enrichment of uranium. While at the moment not threatening to resume higher enrichment, Iranian officials in recent months have made a point to warn the controversial process could

“We are in the war situation. We are in the economic war situation. We are confronting a bullying enemy. We have to stand to win.” — President Hassan Rouhani

resume at any time, faster than before. The new American sanctions particularly hurt Iran’s vital oil industry, a crucial source of hard currency for its anemic economy. Its national currency has plummeted over the last year, sending prices for everything from mobile phones to medicine skyrocketing. “Today, Iran is able to sell its oil and it will sell,” Rouhani vowed Monday as the sanctions kicked in. However, the noose of American sanctions appeared to be tightening. Iranian officials, meanwhile, reported a cyberattack targeting the country’s communication infrastructure, blaming the purported attack on Israel.

Airing Footage of Air Defense Systems

Iranian state television aired footage of air defense systems and anti-aircraft batteries in two-day military maneuvers underway across a vast stretch of the country’s north. It included surface-to-air missiles shooting down a drone. The drill was to continue through Tuesday. Iranian army Gen. Habibillah Sayyari said both the national army and the country’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard were taking part in the exercise. Rouhani, mean-

while, pledged to government officials in comments aired on state TV that Iran would overcome the sanctions. “We are in the war situation,” Rouhani said. “We are in the economic war situation. We are confronting a bullying enemy. We have to stand to win.” He further stepped up the rhetoric, comparing Iran’s situation in the 1980s war against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with the current one and President Donald Trump’s move to reinstate U.S. sanctions. “Yesterday, Saddam was in front us, today Trump is front of us. There is no difference. We must resist and win,” he said.

In the Grip of an Economic Crisis

Iran is already in the grip of an economic crisis. Its national currency, the rial, now trades at 150,000 to one U.S. dollar, down from when it traded around 40,500 to \$1 a year ago. The economic chaos sparked mass anti-government protests at the end of last year which resulted in nearly 5,000 reported arrests and at least 25 people being killed. Sporadic demonstrations still continue. Rouhani separately said leaders from “four powers” met with Iran on the sidelines of the September meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to try to save the deal, including brokering a possible meeting with Trump. He did not name those countries, but was likely referring to China, France, Russia and Britain, which along with Germany made up the world powers involved in the 2015 nuclear deal.

“Many countries from Europe to Russia and China have opposed the sanctions. [Iranians] have experienced more extensive sanctions. [They are] not a new issue.” — Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi

“This issue does not require a mediator,” Rouhani said, blaming America for unilaterally pulling out of the accord. Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi also predicted the sanctions will actually work against America’s interests. “Many countries from...

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ON ECONOMY AND POLITICS: AUSTRALIA SHOWS THE WAY

Photo: Shutterstock

November 5, 2018 | AP News

As Western nations experience rising populist anger over contentious issues like immigration, health care access and wage equity, one country appears to have cracked the code for maintaining political consensus. Simultaneously, it also has managed to achieve, what The Economist calls, “the most successful rich economy” in the world. The country is Australia.

Achieving the Impossible?

While noting the nation of 25 million inhabitants has its flaws, “Australia’s example shows that reforms considered impossible elsewhere are perfectly achievable.” Its “enthusi-

asm” for immigration is particularly noteworthy, given rapidly growing nationalist sentiments elsewhere around the globe.

“In Australia both main parties argue that admitting lots of skilled migrants is essential to the health of the economy,” the article says. “Compare that with America or Britain or Italy, where far smaller inflows have generated hostility among a big portion of the electorate—or Japan, where allowing foreigners to settle in any numbers is a political taboo.” In addition, Australia offers universal healthcare and ensures all retirees receive some level of public pension. Even so, its economy has remained robust. “It has been growing for 27...

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AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell

MIGRANTS IN MEXICO WANT BUSES TO US BORDER

November 8, 2018 | AP News

MEXICO CITY — Central American migrants in a caravan that has stopped in Mexico City demanded buses Thursday to take them to the U.S. border, saying it is too cold and dangerous to continue walking and hitchhiking. Mexico City authorities say that of the 4,841 registered migrants receiving shelter in a sports complex, 1,726 are under the age of 18, including 310 children under five.

“We need buses to continue travelling,” said Milton Benitez, a caravan coordinator. Benitez noted that It would be colder in northern Mexico and it wasn’t safe for the migrants to continue along highways, where drug cartels frequently operate. He said the route and departure time would be decided at a meeting Thursday night. The Mexican government has said most of the migrants have refused offers to stay in Mexico, and only a small number have agreed to return to their home countries. About 85 percent of the migrants are...

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TURKEY: SAUDI INVESTIGATORS WORKED TO REMOVE EVIDENCE

November 5, 2018 | AP News

ANKARA, Turkey — Members of a team from Saudi Arabia sent to help Turkish authorities investigate the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi worked instead to remove evidence of the slaying, a senior Turkish official said Monday. The official confirmed a report in Turkey’s Sabah newspaper that an 11-member team of Saudi investigators that arrived in Turkey nine days after Khashoggi was killed to take part in a joint Turkish-Saudi probe included experts on chemistry and toxicology who were reportedly charged with obfuscating the evidence.

The official said Turkey believes that two members of the team “came to Turkey for the sole purpose of covering up evidence” before Turkish police were allowed to search the Saudi Consulate, where Khashoggi was killed on Oct. 2 after he entered to collect a document he needed to marry his Turkish fiancée. The official said the fact that a clean-up...

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