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Southern DAILY

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Gunman in deadly California siege was decorated veteran treated for PTSD

Gunman in deadly California siege was decorated veteran treated for PTSD Scott Bransford

YOUNTVILLE, Calif. (Reuters) - Details emerged on Saturday about a decorated former U.S. serviceman who took three women hostage at a California veterans home where he had undergone treatment for PTSD, in a standoff that ended when police found him and his captives dead.

The Veterans Home of California in Yountville, the largest such facility in the United States, was the scene on Friday of the latest mass shooting to rock a country already shocked by the slaughter last month of 17 people at a Florida high school.

Officials named the gunman as Albert Wong, 36, of Sacramento, and said he had served with the U.S. Army on active duty from May 2010 to August 2013 and spent a year in Afghanistan. He received four medals including an Afghanistan campaign medal and was awarded an Expert Marksmanship Badge with Rifle, the Pentagon said.

Wong had been a patient of Pathway Home, a program at the Yountville complex for former service members suffering post-traumatic stress disorder after deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. The San Francisco Chronicle, citing unnamed sources, said he had been asked to leave the program two weeks ago.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic situation in Yountville and mourn the loss of three incredible women who cared for our Veterans," U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday on Twitter.

The incident, which began at about 10:30 a.m. local time on Friday at the sprawling facility in the heart of Napa Valley's wine country, some 60 miles (100 km) north of San Francisco, ended almost eight hours later. According to Larry Kamer, the husband of one of the Pathway Home administrators, Devereaux Smith, Wong walked into the program's building carrying a rifle during a going-away party for one of the employees. Kamer, who volunteers at the home, said his wife told him by phone during the siege that the gunman had let her and three other women leave the room where the party was taking place, but that he kept three female employees behind as hostages.

"These brave women were accomplished professionals, dedicated to their careers of serving our nation's veterans, working closely with those of the greatest need of attention," Pathway Home said in a statement.

The hostages who died were named as Pathway Home Executive Director Christine Loeber, 48, the program's clinical director, therapist Jen Golick, 42, and Jennifer Gonzales, 29, a psychologist with the San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System.

Despite repeated efforts by police negotiators to communicate with Wong throughout the day, authorities said they had failed to make



People sign up at the booth for the National Rifle Association (NRA) at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) at National Harbor, Maryland

contact with the gunman after he exchanged gunfire with a sheriff's deputy at the start of the standoff.

Officers who eventually entered the room where the hostages were being held found all four bodies there, police said. No details were immediately given about how the four died.

James Musson, a 75-year-old Army veteran and resident of the facility, told Reuters many who lived there voiced concerns

about lax security, saying visitors could walk in and out without restriction and that public safety officers were not armed.

The siege came less than a month after a former student killed 17 people at a Florida high school using an assault-style rifle. That massacre in the Fort Lauderdale suburb of Parkland sparked a student-led drive for new restrictions on gun sales to curb mass shootings that have occurred with frightening frequency in the United States in recent years

Trump says North Korea agrees to not test missiles 'through meetings'

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday North Korea had agreed to not conduct another missile test until after proposed meetings with its leader, Kim Jong Un, had taken place, as he sought to rally international support for a potential summit.

"North Korea has not conducted a Missile Test since November 28, 2017 and has promised not to do so through our meetings. I believe they will honor that commitment!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

Trump's comments aligned with what a South Korean official had stated on Thursday about the possible talks. Trump made no mention of nuclear tests in his tweet, however. It was not immediately clear which meetings Trump was referring to or their exact timing. South Korean officials said earlier this week that

Trump had agreed to an invitation from Kim to meet by May.

The White House has been under fire for agreeing to talks and responded to the criticism on Friday by warning that no summit would occur unless Pyongyang took "concrete actions" over its nuclear program.

Trump also took to Twitter on Saturday to characterize the leaders of China and Japan as supportive of the potential dialogue, even as he did little to clear up confusion over the timing of any talks and what preconditions would be required.

"President XI told me he appreciates that the U.S. is working to solve the problem diplomatically rather than going with the ominous alternative," Trump wrote on Twitter, referring to Chinese President Xi Jinping. "China continues to be helpful!"

Trump also tweeted on Saturday: "Spoke to Prime Minister Abe of

Japan, who is very enthusiastic about talks with North Korea. Also discussing opening up Japan to much better trade with the U.S. Currently have a massive \$100 Billion Trade Deficit. Not fair or sustainable. It will all work out!"

Trump wrote. Late on Friday Trump wrote that a deal with North Korea "is very much in the making and will be, if completed, a very good one for the World. Time and place to be determined."

The Twitter posts followed a news briefing by White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders on Friday where she said Trump would nothave a meeting "without seeing concrete steps and concrete actions take place by North Korea, so the president will actually be getting something."

Kim had earlier invited Trump to

join him for what would be unprecedented talks between leaders of the two nations.

Sanders did not specify what actions North Korea needed to take, and a White House official later said she was not intending to set new conditions. But the comments were a sign that an end to a standoff between the two countries over North Korea's nuclear weapon program is not imminent.

The United States has long said it wants any talks to aim at Pyongyang abandoning its nuclear weapons and missile programs.

Hopes for a breakthrough had risen on Thursday when Trump said he was ready to meet with Kim.

The two leaders prompted jitters around the world last year as they exchanged bellicose insults over the North's attempts to develop a nuclear weapon capable of hitting the United

States. Pyongyang has pursued its nuclear program in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

But tension eased around last month's Winter Olympics in South Korea, laying the groundwork for what would be the biggest foreign policy gamble for Trump since he took office in January 2017.

The head of South Korea's National Security Office, Chung Eui-yong, speaking in Washington on Thursday after briefing Trump about a meeting South Korean officials held with Kim this week, said the U.S. president had agreed to meet the North Korean leader by May in response to an invitation from Kim.

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Mayor Turner Requests your feedback on proposed flood ordinance

Mayor Sylvester Turner

As I work to make sure Houston stands even stronger in the next natural disaster, I join the City Council and Houston Public Works in welcoming your feedback about the flood ordinance changes I have proposed.

The changes are aimed at making future dwellings (and buildings) in Houston less likely to flood. The heart of the changes, which I described to City Council weeks ago, mean that we would no longer use the "100-year flood plain" as our guide. The 100-year flood plain is land that would flood in a storm that brings 13-14 inches of rain in 24 hours - an occurrence that was expected once every hundred years.

Instead the City would use the "500-year flooding plain" as the new standard. The 500-year flood plain is land that would flood in a storm that brings 17-19 inches of rain in 24 hours -- an occurrence that was expected once every five hundred years. Houston regulated to the 100-year floodplain since

the flood plain was officially mapped in 1981. Thousands of homes that were built before 1981 have flooded and may flood again. But another 4,808 homes that were built to 100-year standards flooded during Harvey.

There will be more storms in the future. We cannot control when and where they will hit. We can, however, control how we prepare for when they do hit. This leads me to propose transforming the way we build in flood plains. Future homes and buildings would have to be built 2 feet above the 500-year flood level. Building homes higher can help save lives and belongings. The construction may cost more, but the cost of death and destruction in the next storm would be much higher.

There are 640 square miles within the Houston city limits. Nearly 30% of the City is in the 100-year floodplain. Expanding to include the 500-year would cover another 7% of the city with these regulations.



Four Texas cities land on Niche's 20 best places to live in America 2018 ranking

By Heather Leighton

Texas and California have the most cities in the top 20 places to live in America, according to ranking and review site Niche. A total of four cities in each state made the top 20. For Texas, the cities making the top 20 include Plano, The Woodlands, Richardson, and Round Rock. California's cities are Berkeley, Irvine, San Francisco, and Sunnyvale. While California and Texas were tied for number of cities in the

top 20, Texas came out on top when looking only at the top ten, with three Texas cities - Plano, The Woodlands, and Richardson - landing in the top ten. These cities offer first-time homeowners the most home-buying options, the best home values, and the greatest opportunity for property value growth, according to Zillow. The rankings are calculated by a number of metrics, including "quality of local schools, crime rates, housing trends, employment

statistics, and access to amenities." Each city is given a letter grade in the following categories: public schools, housing, "good for families," crime and safety, nightlife and diversity. The city is given an overall grade based on the subcategory scores. Professional Fire Fighters Association President Marty Lancton said after news of the suit first surfaced.



Plano, Texas

Overall score: A+
Public Schools score: A
Housing score: A+
"Good for families" score: A+
Crime and safety score: B
Nightlife score: A-
Diversity score: A+

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A Snapshot Of The World



Dana Loesch speaks CPAC conference held in National Harbor, Maryland



NRA Executive Vice President and CEO Wayne LaPierre looks up at the image of Virginia Tech mass murderer Seung-Hui Cho on an NRA promotional video at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) at National Harbor, Maryland, U.S., February 22, 2018. REUTERS



LaPierre speaks at the CPAC conference held in National Harbor, Maryland



A migrant carries a child at a naval base after they were rescued by the Libyan coast guard in Tripoli



People take part in a rally in support of fair election, held by leftist parties and movements, in Moscow



A Standard Poodle is groomed during the third day of the Crufts Dog Show in Birmingham



Venezuela's Yulimar Rojas, Women's Triple Jump gold medallist in IAAF World Indoor Championships 2018, takes a selfie during a news conference in Caracas



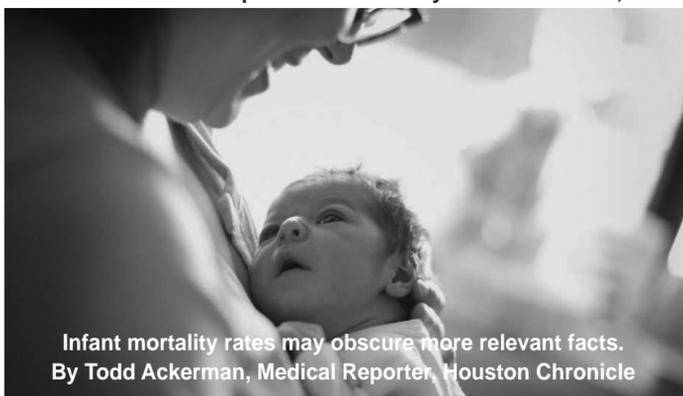
Bundesliga - Bayern Munich vs Hamburger SV



French President Emmanuel Macron (C) his wife Brigitte Macron (2-R) and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi share a moment as India's President Ramnath Kovind (2-L) and his wife Savita Kovind look on during Macron's ceremonial reception in New Delhi

UT Study Shows 'False Sense Of Security' In Stat Infant Mortality Still Hits Hard In Certain Houston Areas

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Infant mortality rates may obscure more relevant facts. By Todd Ackerman, Medical Reporter, Houston Chronicle

Infant mortality rates in Houston and Texas, thought to be greatly improved in the last 25 years, are still dramatically high in some communities, according to a new study.

The University of Texas System study shows that the state rate, actually lower than the national figure, obscures pockets where alarming numbers of babies are still dying before their first birthday. In some areas, the rates are nearly five times the national average.

"We've made progress in Texas as a whole, but the overall rate gives a false sense of security," said Dr. David Lakey, former Texas health commissioner and current vice chancellor for health affairs at the UT System. "Broken down by ZIP code, it's clear many communities are still doing very poorly."

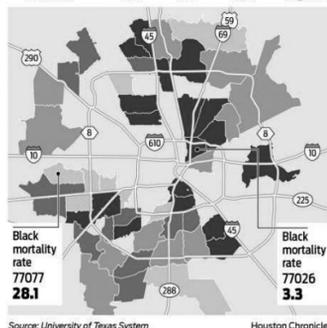
ZIP codes in Channelview to the east, Kashmere Gardens and Acres Homes to the north and north Fort Bend County to the southwest had some of the highest rates.

Lakey said the study shows "one's ZIP code is as important to their health as their genetic code."

Houston's infant mortality rate

Houston has made significant progress improving its infant mortality rate, but a new study breaking down the numbers by zip code shows they're still terribly high in some communities. In some areas, the rates are double the national average.

RATE PER 1,000 BIRTHS: Less than 2.74 or no data, 2.74-5.48, 5.48-8.21, 8.21-10.95, 10.95 or greater



Infant mortality, a measure of the deaths of infants less than a year of age, is considered a leading health indicator. It provides insight into the health of infants, mothers and the larger community.

Nationally, slightly more than six babies die annually for every 1,000 live births. In Texas, 5.8 of every 1,000 do.

Lakey said he expected there'd be differences in some areas, but nothing like the study found. In some Texas ZIP codes, the study found, more than 10 of every 1,000

babies died before their first birthday. In others, there was not a single infant death in the four-year period studied.

He said poverty and education are part of the problem, but don't fully explain it.

The study did not look at why such variation exists. Lakey said his team is currently trying to answer that question, but emphasized it was important to make the information available immediately so local health departments and medical institutions can focus their interventions.

"I'm glad someone is doing this sort of uncommon research, diving down to the neighborhood level," said Dr. Sean Blackwell, chairman of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at McGovern Medical School at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. "You can't improve outcomes unless you know where the infants are dying."

'Geographic Disparities'

Blackwell said infant mortality remains a big problem in Houston and Texas, overlooked with all the attention given recently to maternal mortality, the death of mothers between childbirth and the first four months after. Houston's maternal mortality rate is higher than the state rate, which is higher than the national rate, which is higher than the rate in the rest of the developed world. Lakey said the new study, which collected data from 2011 to 2014, shows infant mortality is much more complex than health

officials previously thought.

Dr. David Lakey, former Texas state health commissioner

Texas has met national targets for infant mortality since 2012, for instance. Houston has lagged a little behind, but its 6.8 rate for every 1,000 live births represents



significant improvement from the 11.5 rate it averaged in the 1980s. Elected city officials at the time called the rate "a moral outrage."

Despite the overall improvement, the new study shows numerous areas where the rates are well above average. Large swaths of ZIP codes show rates of both 8.2 to 10.95 deaths per 1,000 births and 11 and above. In one ZIP code in Kashmere Gardens, 77026, the rate averaged 28.1.

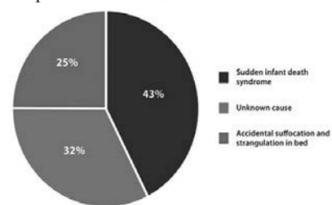
Infant mortality disproportionately affects blacks - Kashmere Gardens and Acres Homes are both historically black communities - but Lakey noted that race or ethnicity is not the sole explanation for a ZIP code's high rate. The black infant mortality rate in the more affluent 77077 area in west Houston is 3.3, about eight times lower. "We tend to think one number represents

all for each ethnic group," said Lakey. "But a clear look at the data shows that geographic disparities are as great as ethnic-based disparities."

Of the three major racial or ethnic groups, Hispanic women have the lowest rate of infant mortality.

Most Common Causes Of Infant Deaths

But their infant mortality rates also varied depending on where they lived when they were pregnant, the study found. In some areas of San Antonio, for instance, the Hispanic rate was more than double the



national average.

Community Factor

White women in Texas have a relatively low risk of their baby dying within the first year after birth, but they too fare worse in certain communities, with the highest numbers occurring outside the major metro areas. Longview and Wichita Falls, for instance, both had more than one ZIP code with a white infant mortality more than double the state's overall rate.

Researchers calculated the rates of ZIP codes with 400 or more births between 2011 and 2014 depending on the mother's residence at the time of delivery. The data were obtained from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

"Having a lower than average rate, nationally, is not enough when we know that there are communities where rates are tragically high," said Lakey. "The sooner we can understand why babies are dying, the better off we'll be." (Courtesy http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news)

Related

Map Shows Where Infants Are Dying The Most In Houston

A New UT Austin Study Has Put A Harrowing Statistic Into Perspective



Heat map created by researchers at UT Health shows Houston's infant mortality rate by zip-code.

Using infant mortality rates, researchers created a heat map that shows Texas zip-codes with the most and least deaths per 1,000 births.

In Houston, the data reveals that neighborhoods just a few miles apart can have wildly different infant mortality rates.

For example, zip-code 77026, which includes the Kashmere Gardens neighborhood northeast of Houston, has an infant mortality rate of 13.69 per 1,000 births—one of the highest rates in Bayou City.

Right below is zip-code 77020, which includes the Greater Fifth Ward area, with an infant mortality rate of 2.51 per 1,000 births.



"There is substantial evidence that social, environmental, and economic factors at the community level partially explain this variation," wrote researchers at UT Health. "Socio-economic status of the community, income inequality, and air pollution are three community-level factors that have been found to be related to infant mortality."

In addition, researchers also broke down the infant mortality figures by race, showing that babies born to Hispanic women have the lowest rate of deaths in Texas.

Tragically, only 15 zip codes throughout Texas did not experience a single infant death in the four-year period in which the data was collected, 2011-2014. (Courtesy http://www.chron.com/news/education/article)

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President Trump Agrees To Meet With North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un On Denuclearization

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



PHOTO: South Korean National Security Director Chung Eui-yong, center, makes a statement outside the White House March 8, 2018, announcing that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has invited President Donald Trump to meet face to face. (Michael Reynolds/EPA via Shutterstock)

President Donald Trump has agreed to a high-stakes meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un by this May on his nuclear weapons program, South Korea's national security adviser announced at the White House Thursday evening. He had briefed the president on a message from Kim earlier in the day. The White House said afterward that Trump "will accept the invitation," and the president tweeted, "Great progress being made ..."

Donald J. Trump
Kim Jong Un talked about denuclearization with the South Korean Representatives, not just a freeze. Also, no missile testing by North Korea during this period of time. Great progress being made but sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached. Meeting being planned!
7:08 PM - Mar 8, 2018

South Korea's envoy Chung Eui-Yong said, in his recent talks with Kim, the North Korean leader had expressed an eagerness to meet with Trump as soon as possible.

Chung said that Kim told him he was committed to denuclearization, would refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests, and had agreed that U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises the North objects to must continue.

"I explained to President Trump that his leadership and his maximum pressure policy, together with international solidarity, brought us to this juncture. I expressed President Moon Jae-in's personal gratitude for President Trump's leadership," he said, referring to South Korea's president.



President Trump has agreed to an invitation from North Korea leader Kim Jong Un to met in person as soon as possible. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders

issued a statement shortly afterward from the U.S. side saying, "President Trump greatly appreciates the nice words of the South Korean delegation and President Moon. He will accept the invitation to meet with Kim Jong Un at a place and time to be determined. We look forward to the denuclearization of North Korea. In the meantime, all sanctions and maximum pressure must remain."

Later Thursday evening, Trump tweeted: "Kim Jong Un talked about denuclearization with the South Korean Representatives, not just a freeze. Also, no missile testing by North Korea during this period of time. Great progress being made but sanctions will remain until an agreement is reached. Meeting being planned!"

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who spoke to reporters Friday in Djibouti while on a tour of several African countries, said, "President Trump has said for some time that he was open to talks and he would willingly meet with Kim Jong Un when conditions were right, the time was right. And I think in the president's judgment that time has arrived now."

A senior administration official told reporters the president deserves credit for the dramatic developments.

"I think that history speaks for itself," the official said, adding "as President Moon expressed, he believes that we're at this juncture precisely because of the approach President Trump has taken with maximum pressure. President Trump has made his reputation on making deals and



People watch a TV screen showing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump, left, at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, March 9, 2018. (Photo/The Associated Press)

Kim Jong Un is the one person who is able to make decisions under their ... totalitarian system and so it makes sense to accept an invitation to meet with the one person who can actually make decisions instead of repeating this sort of long slog of the past."

"At this point, we're not even talking about negotiations. What we're talking about is an invitation by the leader of North Korea to meet face-to-face with the president of the United States. The president has accepted that invitation," the official said.

The official said the president "has always left the door open to dialogue" at the right time, adding that the message from South Korea's national security adviser was conveyed orally to the president after Kim Jong Un conveyed the message to South Korea's national security adviser during their meetings.

"There was not a letter," the official said. "This was a message conveyed orally by Kim Jong Un to the national security advisor of South Korea during the several hours of meetings just a couple days ago in Pyongyang and Ambassador Chung, who is the national security advisor, then conveyed to the president today in the Oval Office."

"Part of that message was a commitment to denuclearize," the official said. "It was also a commitment to refrain from testing nuclear weapons or missiles and it was also an invitation. I would also add Kim Jong Un had made clear that he understands that routine defensive exercises between the Republic of Korea and United States must continue -- something that will continue and he conveyed that he wants to meet with President Trump as quickly as possible."

Kim joked about his own image to the world and said he did not take it seriously, the South Korean president's office told local reporters on Friday of the delegation's meeting with the leader in Pyongyang on Monday. An official from the president's office called Kim "honest and bold" and "very thoughtful" during the meeting.



South Korean President Moon Jae-In. "President Moon must have had a hard time early mornings to chair National Security Council meetings whenever we fired a missile," the president's office told local reporters on Friday, relaying Kim's words during the face-to-face meeting.

"I made a big decision today so President Moon won't have to wake up early hours anymore," Kim is quoted as saying, referring to the North's promise to not test missiles while the sides work on a summit.

South Korean presidential spokesman Kim Eui-Kyeom said in a briefing Friday afternoon in Seoul that a U.S.-North Korea summit meeting before May will be recorded as an historic milestone that will eventually lead to peace on the Korean peninsula.

"President Trump's leadership, which deliberately accepted Kim Jong Un's invitation,

will be praised by the people of North and South Korea, as well as the people of the world yearning for peace," Moon said, as relayed by the spokesman.

"President Trump and Prime Minister Abe assessed that the maximum pressure policy, together with international solidarity, brought us to this critical juncture," the White House said in a statement discussing the call between the two leaders. "The leaders affirmed their strong intention to continue close trilateral coordination with South Korea to maintain pressure and enforce international sanctions until such point that North Korea takes tangible steps toward complete, verifiable, and irreversible denu-

clearization."



China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Geng Shuang

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Geng Shuang told reporters at a daily press briefing on Friday that China "welcomes these positive signals by the U.S. and the DPRK." When asked if China would be open to hosting the Trump-Kim summit, Geng only responded, "China is a close neighbor and an important party to the issue." (Courtesy yahoo.com)



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美食美景盡在美南

歡迎洽詢業務部:

秦鴻鈞 Christi Mei
713-306-6808
Christimeit2011@ail.com

朱幼楨 Emerson Chu
713-828-2689
Emersonchu@msn.com

黃麗珊 Nancy Huang
713-818-0511
nancyh6688@gmail.com

黃梅子 Jenny H. Lee(MeiZi)
832-260-8466
meizihuang@yahoo.com

韋霓 Winnie Yu
301-509-1137
Winnie.yu10@gmail.com