

## World News Roundup



US Navy sailors gather on the deck of the USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19), the US 7th Fleet Flagship, as it anchors off Manila Bay west of Manila, Philippines for a routine port call on March 13. (AP)

## US Navy won't alter sail-bys at sea

The US Navy won't alter its so-called "freedom of navigation" sail-bys in the disputed South China Sea and has pressed ahead with such operations despite a dangerous maneuver by a Chinese navy ship against an American destroyer, a senior US Navy commander said Monday.

Vice Adm. Phillip Sawyer, commander of the US 7th Fleet, told reporters in Manila that Washington protested that "unprofessional behavior" by the Chinese ship, which maneuvered very close

to the USS Decatur as the latter sailed closely by a Chinese-occupied island in the Spratlys in September.

"No, it's not going to change where we do our freedom of navigation operations," Sawyer said when asked if the Sept. 30 incident off Gaven Reef would change such US Navy operations.

Several such sail-bys have been undertaken by American naval ships since that close encounter in the disputed waters, he said.

"It was concerning because the ships got too close," Sawyer said, adding that US officials have voiced "our displeasure with what we consider to be unprofessional behavior."

The USS Decatur had sailed within 12 nautical miles of Gaven Reef when a Chinese destroyer dangerously approached within 45 yards (41 meters) of the bow of the US Navy ship, which changed course to prevent a collision. The Decatur was also warned to leave the area, US Pacific Fleet officials said at

the time.

China said the Luoyang, a Chinese missile destroyer, was deployed to identify the US warship and drive it away near Chinese territory. Beijing protested the Decatur's action as provocative.

One of seven disputed reefs transformed by China into militarily fortified islands in recent years, Gaven is claimed by China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan. Malaysia and Brunei also have claims in the South China Sea. (AP)

## Immigration

## Caught in standoff

US veterans court may be collateral damage in fight

EUGENE, Ore., March 18, (AP) — Three decades ago, Lori Ann Bourgeois was guarding fighter jets at an air base. After her discharge, she fell into drug addiction. She wound up living on the streets and was arrested for possession of methamphetamine.

But on a recent day, the former Air Force Security Police member walked into a Veterans Treatment Court after completing a 90-day residential drug treatment program. Two dozen fellow vets sitting on the courtroom benches applauded. A judge handed Bourgeois a special coin marking the occasion, inscribed with the words "Change Attitude, Change Thinking, Change Behavior."

The program Bourgeois credits for pulling her out of the "black hole" of homelessness is among more than three dozen Oregon specialty courts caught in a standoff between the state and federal government over immigration enforcement.

The Trump administration in 2017 threatened to withhold law enforcement grants from 29 cities, counties or states it viewed as having "sanctuary" policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration agents. Today, all those jurisdictions have received or been cleared to get the money, except Oregon, which is battling for the funds in federal court.

The Veterans Treatment Court in Eugene and 40 other specialty courts, including mental health and civilian drug programs, risk losing all or part of their budgets, said Michael Schmidt, executive director of Oregon's Criminal Justice Commission, which administers the money.

The commission has managed to keep the courts funded through July, Schmidt said. Unless the Trump administration relents or is forced by court order to deliver the money, or the Oregon Legislature comes up with it, the commission must make "horrible, tough decisions" about where to make the cuts, Schmidt said.

Speaking in her small office in the Eugene courthouse, specialty courts coordinator Danielle Hanson said if the veterans court budget is cut, the vets would have to start paying for drug treatment, and they would be deprived of housing resources and travel funds to go to residential treatment facilities as far as 330 miles (530 kilometers) away. Some veterans might even be turned away.

"It would impact the program substantially," Hanson said.

Oregon Gov. **Kate Brown** and Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum sued President Donald Trump in November to get \$4 million in grants from fiscal years 2017 and 2018 restored, saying Oregon was "unlawfully deprived" of the funds. The lawsuit accuses Trump of an "unconstitutional attempt" to compel Oregon to enforce federal immigration policies.

"As we have seen, these efforts have frequently been both inhumane and dangerous," Rosenblum said. Furthermore, the administration is violating the separation of powers by invading Congress' spending authority, the lawsuit says.



Brown



This 1999 flyer released by the Ozark (Ala.) Police Department, shows J.B. Beasley (left), Tracie Hawlett, who were both murdered in July 1999. Alabama authorities say a DNA match found through a genealogy website has led to an arrest in the killings of the two teenage girls nearly 20 years ago. Al.com reports Coley McCraney, of Dothan, was arrested on March 16, 20, on rape and capital murder charges in the 1999 deaths of Hawlett and Beasley. (AP)



Obama



Pence

## America

**O'Rourke tops field:** Democrat Beto O'Rourke raised more than \$6.1 million in the first day after declaring his candidacy for his party's 2020 presidential nomination last week, his campaign said on Monday, highlighting his fundraising prowess in a crowded field.

His fundraising puts him at the top of a Democratic pack of more than a dozen candidates including Bernie Sanders, the independent US senator who unsuccessfully sought the Democratic Party's nomination in 2016. Sanders raised \$5.9 million in the first 24 hours of his 2020 campaign.

O'Rourke kicked off his presidential campaign on Thursday in a video on social media and joined a Democratic field that includes a number of veteran US lawmakers.

The former congressman from Texas raised a record \$38.1 million in his failed 2018 effort to unseat Republican US Senator Ted Cruz, more than in any other US Senate race and more than three times what Cruz raised.

Sanders' campaign held the previous one-day record for the Democrats' 2020 contest and has said he raised about \$10 million by the end of his campaign's first week. (RTRS)

## Weather

## Floodwaters head downstream

## More evacuations in Midwest

ST LOUIS, March 18, (AP) — Residents in parts of southwestern Iowa were forced out of their homes Sunday as a torrent of Missouri River water flowed over and through levees, putting them in a situation similar to hundreds of people in neighboring Nebraska who have been displaced by the late-winter flood.

Heavy rainfall and snowmelt have led to dangerously high water in creeks and rivers across several Midwestern states, with the Missouri River hitting record-high levels in many areas. At least two deaths were blamed on flooding, and two other men have been missing for days.

While river depths were starting to level off in parts of Nebraska on Sunday, the water is so high in many places that serious flooding is expected to remain for several days. And downstream communities in Kansas and Missouri were bracing for likely flooding.

In Iowa, the Missouri River reached 30.2 feet (9.2 meters) Sunday in Fremont County in the state's far southwestern corner, 2 feet (0.6 meter) above the record set in 2011. People in the towns of Bartlett and Thurman

were being evacuated as levees were breached and overtopped.

County Emergency Management Director Mike Crecelius said it wasn't just the amount of the water, it was the swiftness of the current that created a danger.

"This wasn't a gradual rise," Crecelius said. "It's flowing fast and it's open country - there's nothing there to slow it down."

Thurman has about 200 residents. About 50 people live in Bartlett.

Lucinda Parker of Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management said nearly 2,000 people have been evacuated at eight Iowa locations since flooding began late last week. Most were staying with friends or family. Seven shelters set up for flood victims held just a couple dozen people Saturday night.

In Nebraska, the Missouri River flooded Offutt Air Force Base, with about one-third of it under water on Sunday. Spokeswoman Tech Sgt Rachelle Blake told the Omaha World-Herald that 60 buildings, mostly on the south end of the base, have been damaged, including about 30 completely inundated with as much as 8 feet (2.4

meters) of water.

Hundreds of people remained out of their homes in Nebraska, where floodwaters reached record levels at 17 locations. The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency highlighted some remarkably high crests. The Missouri River was expected to reach 41 feet (12.5 meters) in Plattsmouth on Sunday - 4 feet (1.22 meters) above the record set in 2011. The Elkhorn River got to 24.6 feet (7.5 meters) Saturday in Waterloo, breaking the 1962 record by 5-1/2 feet (1.68 meters).

In hard-hit Sarpy County, Nebraska, up to 500 homes have been damaged, including some cabins along a lake, said Greg London of the Sarpy County Sheriff's Office. The damage followed breaches of levees along the Platte River on Thursday and Saturday, and a Missouri River levee break on Thursday. The two rivers converge there.

London said many of the damaged homes are wet up to the roof line and likely ruined.

"This area's had flooding before but not of this magnitude," London said. "This is unprecedented."

Nearly 300 people have been rescued from high water across the state.

**Pence to help Graham:** US Vice-President **Mike Pence** is making a trip to South Carolina to help kickoff US Sen Lindsey Graham's bid for a fourth term.

Graham's campaign says Pence will be

with Graham at events in Myrtle Beach and Greenville on March 30.

In a release, Graham praised Pence as "a strong ally and close friend." The 63-year-old senator has often fielded challenges from the right in his previous re-election campaigns,

subject to criticism that he's been too willing to work with Democrats to accurately represent conservative South Carolinians.

For the 2020 campaign, associate Democratic National Committee Chairman Jaime Harrison is considering seeking his party's nomination to unseat Graham. (AP)



Senator Lee Anderson (left), and Senator William Ligon, Jr., look over proposed amendments to an abortion bill on March 18 in Atlanta. A Georgia Senate committee approved a measure that would ban most abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected. Republicans in Georgia are joining others in many states moving to enact tough abortion restrictions, even though they're certain to be challenged in court, in hopes that recent appointments to the US Supreme Court will find them constitutional. (AP)

**De Blasio slams Obama:** New York Mayor Bill de Blasio on Sunday criticized former president **Barack Obama** during a small gathering as he mulls a run for president, saying that Obama's early days in office were "a lost window."

Minutes later, in front of a larger audience, de Blasio praised the Affordable Care Act, Obama's signature legislative achievement, calling it "progress." Obama pursued the health care legislation during his first two years in office and has been criticized at times for focusing more on health care than the struggling economy.

A handful of people were present in a second-floor private room of a Concord restaurant when de Blasio compared Obama to president Franklin D. Roosevelt, who took office in 1933 amid the Depression and immediately began a series of actions that came to define the modern presidency's focus on a 100-day agenda. The mayor said Roosevelt was the only person who "had a greater head of steam and political momentum and capital coming into office." (AP)