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Subject: Afternoon Clips – Wednesday, December 21, 2016

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Nikki Haley: UN Ambassador News:

New York Times: Donald Trump, Seeking Ambassadors, Sorts Through Competing Priorities

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/21/us/donald-trump-ambassadors.html?_r=0

Maggie Haberman

President-elect Donald J. Trump appears to believe he owes little to the Republican establishment donor set, a majority of whom opposed him. He also ran a campaign that challenged longstanding shibboleths of American diplomacy. Mr. Trump's choice of ambassadors could be a sign of how serious he is about both those stances. But as his transition team begins sifting through possible choices for a dozen major embassies, the signals are unclear. Two of his three choices so far, Gov. Terry E. Branstad of Iowa for China, and David M. Friedman for Israel, are loyalists, not big donors. The third, Gov. Nikki R. Haley of South Carolina, picked as ambassador to the United Nations, was an ardent critic of Mr. Trump. Mr. Branstad has described President Xi Jinping of China as an "old friend;" Ms. Haley and Mr. Friedman have no diplomatic experience. But the nomination of Mr. Friedman, a conservative who has been deeply critical of the pro-Israel lobbying group J Street, and who has vowed to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem, has roiled large sections of the foreign policy establishment — just the kind of disruption Mr. Trump liked to emphasize in his campaign.

NOTE: If he goes for someone like Robert Pence, a Virginia developer who did not support Mr. Trump's candidacy but who has been recommended by Vice President-elect Mike Pence, it would fall more in line with his choice of Ms. Haley and of bringing outsiders into the fold. (The two Pences are not related).

Governor Nikki Haley News:

Post and Courier: Scooter maker, distributor Bintelli announces Charleston expansion

http://www.postandcourier.com/business/scooter-maker-distributor-bintelli-announces-charleston-expansion/article_8ed72902-c7af-11e6-99a7-9318a0091b8a.html

David Wren

Bintelli LLC, a manufacturer and distributor of mopeds, scooters and electric vehicles, has expanded its Charleston County operations with new equipment that is expected to create 23 jobs over the next five years. Bintelli, based at 620 Dobbin Road in Charleston, said it is increasing its electric vehicle manufacturing output to meet the growing demand from dealers and users. "With a large manufacturing team, increased inventory and additional sales and support staff, we are finally able to run our program the way we have envisioned for the last few years," said Justin Jackrel, the company's president. The company offers more than 40 customizable electric vehicles, including electric golf carts, electric shuttles, street-legal golf carts, low-speed vehicles and Americans with Disabilities Act-compatible shuttles, along with parts and accessories.

NOTE: "Each time one of our companies in the manufacturing industry is able to expand here, it shows the world that South Carolina's workforce is second to none," Gov. Nikki Haley said in a statement.

WCSC: Lowcountry powersport manufacturer expanding, adding jobs

<http://www.live5news.com/story/34108260/lowcountry-powersport-manufacturer-expanding-adding->

jobs

Patrick Phillips

A Lowcountry-based powersport manufacturer is expanding its operations in Charleston County with an investment expected to add new jobs. Bintelli LLC builds and distributes mopeds, scooters and electric vehicles for a variety of applications, according to a release from the governor's office. Bintelli increased its electric vehicle manufacturing output and its available inventory at its headquarters at 620 Dobbin Road in Charleston, governor's office spokesman Brian Symmes said. The expansion is expected to add 23 new jobs over the next five years, 10 of which have already been filled. The company's president, Justin Jackrel, said the changes mean the company will fulfill an early vision.

NOTE: "Each time one of our companies in the manufacturing industry is able to expand here, it shows the world that South Carolina's workforce is second to none," Gov. Nikki Haley said. "We're excited to congratulate Bintelli and its leadership on the success it has found here and look forward to seeing the impact that this investment, and the 23 new jobs it means for Charleston County, will have in the lives of South Carolinians."

General Assembly News:

WACH: Senate Judiciary Chair backs Tom Davis over Lt. Governor fiasco

<http://wach.com/news/local/senate-judiciary-chair-backs-tom-davis-over-lt-governor-fiasco>

Matthew Stevens

Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee Larry Martin is siding with Tom Davis over a 2012 general election vote that would ratify how the chain of command would be formed at the State House. Davis sent a petition to the SC Supreme Court arguing that the President of the Senate would be automatically pushed to the Lt. Governor if and when Henry McMaster becomes governor after Nikki Haley is sworn in as Ambassador to the UN. Other officials, including current Senate President Hugh Leatherman said the 2012 vote would allow McMaster to choose his own Lt. Governor. Leatherman has previously said he will not take the position. Davis wants the SC Supreme Court to review this, but Tuesday Speaker of the House Jay Lucas and House Judiciary Chair said this is a legislative fix.

North Carolina HB2 Law:

Associated Press: North Carolina GOP wrestles over 'bathroom bill' repeal

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/52b1930481a9430d9de9dbcdade5f85cc/north-carolina-lawmakers-meeting-consider-hb2-repeal>

North Carolina Republicans grappled internally Wednesday with whether to repeal a 9-month-old law dictating which bathroom transgender people must use that damaged the state's economy and national reputation. Legislators returned to Raleigh for a special session called by GOP Gov. Pat McCrory to eliminate House Bill 2 — the "bathroom bill" — which has been blasted by gay-rights groups and resulted in job losses and sporting event cancellations. State Senate leader Phil Berger filed legislation that would repeal the bill but block local governments from passing ordinances regulating employment practices or public accommodations related to restrooms, showers or changing facilities for six months. The chamber was debating the measure Wednesday afternoon. House Republicans returned to a closed-door meeting that continued into the afternoon. They held a similar meeting that lasted for more than four hours Tuesday night. Some Republicans were unhappy after learning that Charlotte on Monday had not repealed its entire nondiscrimination ordinance, which had been the genesis of HB2, Republican repeal supporter Rep. Chuck McGrady said.

Charlotte Observer: Berger bill repeals HB2, places six-month hold on local LGBT measures

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article122145494.html>

Bill Henderson and Jim Morrill

North Carolina Senate leader Phil Berger filed a bill Wednesday that repeals House Bill 2 but places a six-month moratorium on local ordinances regulating employment practices, public

accommodations or access to restrooms. The bill by the state's most powerful legislator ran into immediate opposition from gay rights advocates and Democrats. They said that adding the moratorium would renege on a deal to kill HB2 once Charlotte repealed the ordinance that gave rise to it. "This wasn't the deal," said Sen. Jeff Jackson, a Charlotte Democrat, his voice rising on the Senate floor. "The deal was simple ... this bill breaks that deal. Charlotte acted in good faith that we would keep our part of the bargain and it looks like we're not going to." Berger cast his bill, and the "cooling off period," as a way to work toward a long-term solution on an issue that has rocked the state's social and economic climate for nine months.

SC Agency News:

WIS: SC residents may have to take two forms of ID on planes soon. Why?

<http://www.wistv.com/story/34108779/sc-residents-may-have-to-take-two-forms-of-id-on-planes-soon-why>

Caroline Patrickis

Boarding or plane or accessing a military base could become a big headache in several states including South Carolina for those without a passport. TSA is taking advantage of the busy holiday season to warn travelers that these changes could come sooner than we expect. Starting next month, South Carolina residents won't be able to enter a federal building, nuclear power plant, or gain access to any military bases without a federal identification. Then in January 2018, state residents won't be able to fly with just a driver's license. That's because we are one of nine states not in compliance with the REAL ID standards put into place in 2005 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The act states that government ID cards should be consistent across the country and hard to replicate. Travelers aren't happy with the possible new rules and say it's just one more thing to carry. "Having a passport just to travel within the US is unnecessary," traveler Breanna Cole said. "We already have our own form of identification with a license and plus passports are costly, especially having to renew them." The SC DMV has requested an extension from the Department of Homeland but it has not been approved.

SC Political News:

McClatchy DC: Repealing key parts of Obamacare could be easy, but replacing it might be a mess

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/congress/article122245494.html>

David Lightman

The Republican-dominated Congress that starts its 2017 work Jan. 3 is determined to repeal Obamacare – and fast. Yet consumers may not notice any difference in their health care coverage for a long time. Eradicating tax and spending-related provisions of the 2010 law that requires nearly everyone to have health insurance should be fairly easy. The harder task is replacing it, and "the eventual result will take several years," said Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. In the House of Representatives, Rep. Mark Walker, R-N.C., is all for dramatic changes, but he warns that moving too quickly is unrealistic. "The original bill was thousands of pages and has tentacles that are incredibly deep, and there's been four or five years of dependency that's grown out of that," said Walker, who next year will head the House's Republican Study Committee, the chamber's influential conservative caucus. At least, Walker said, Congress can develop a framework for change in 2017.

NOTE: Their Exhibit A is the federal health insurance exchanges. They were supposed to promote competition and make it easier for consumers to shop for coverage. But one-third of all counties will have only one insurance alternative next year, up from 7 percent this year. Particularly limited are rural counties in North Carolina, South Carolina and other states.

NOTE: For example, pre-Obamacare uninsurables under 65 in North Carolina would be 27 percent; in South Carolina, 28 percent; Missouri, 30 percent; Idaho, 25 percent; Florida, 26 percent. Among the conditions that were used to deny coverage were AIDS/HIV, epilepsy, pregnancy, sleep apnea, Parkinson's disease and arthritis.

Post and Courier: Obamacare enrollment keeps increasing, amid Republican calls to 'repeal and delay'

http://www.postandcourier.com/features/your_health/obamacare-enrollment-keeps-increasing-amid-republican-calls-to-repeal-and/article_20edbbfc-c7b1-11e6-9cbc-e36766e5c9b2.html

Lauren Sausser

Obamacare sign-ups in South Carolina are increasing, even as Republicans keep repeating their intention to repeal the law early next year. A new federal enrollment snapshot published Wednesday shows more than 147,000 South Carolinian residents purchased Affordable Care Act coverage between Nov. 1 and Dec. 19. This total doesn't include patients whose coverage will automatically renew on Jan. 1. During open enrollment last year, more than 200,000 people in South Carolina purchased Obamacare policies. Enrollment this season will proceed through January. Nationally, 6.4 million Americans have purchased policies since early November. That's about 400,000 more people than those who had signed up at the same point last year, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell told reporters during a press call. "The marketplace is strong," she said.

Associated Press: Report: Fewer South Carolinians lack health insurance

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=giMF7pDp

SC State Wire

The number of South Carolinians without health insurance has dropped in the last few years. A new report shows the number of uninsured South Carolina adults declined by 7 percent from 2013 to 2015, The Greenville News (<http://grnol.co/2hcmzTK>) reported. The report from the Commonwealth Fund shows that even though South Carolina did not expand its Medicaid program, the uninsured rate dropped from 23 percent to 16 percent. The national decline was from 20 percent to 13 percent. The report attributes the drop to the Affordable Care Act. The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation that pushes for better health care. "We know that health insurance is essential for people to get the care they need," said Sara Collins, vice president for coverage and access with the Commonwealth Fund. "In this time of uncertainty about the ACA, it's important to keep in mind the financial and health protection health insurance provides for families."

The Herald: SC prosecutor outraged after Obama cuts drug dealer sentence by almost half

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/crime/article122239974.html>

Andrew Dys

The top prosecutor for Chester County is outraged after President Barack Obama cut the sentence of a convicted drug dealer. President Obama commuted the sentence of Marcus Emile Franklin, 40, of Chester, who was sentenced in 2006 to 20 years in prison to be followed by 10 years probation for his role in a crack cocaine distribution conspiracy that spanned York and Chester counties. The case was part of a five-year investigation that convicted eight people and took kilograms of crack cocaine off the street. Franklin will be released at the end of 2018 and will have to enroll in residential drug treatment, according to a release from the White House. Although President Obama has come under fire from some for what is perceived as undercutting sentences for drug crimes, the president has said repeatedly that too many drug offenders have received sentences that are too long and that those who have had sentences cut deserve a second chance.

Wildfires Across Southeast:

Greenville News: Gatlinburg works to rise from ashes

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/12/21/gatlinburg-works-rise-ashes/95661064/>

Michael Burns

The smell of stale smoke still wafts through Gatlinburg, Tennessee, as the city works to rise from ashes. Most of the familiar landmarks remain, but they're ringed by burned ground and a burdening sadness. Fourteen people were killed near there last month as a wildfire torched more than 2,400 buildings and caused an estimated \$500 million in damage. Two teenage boys have been charged

with aggravated arson for causing the blaze by dropping lit matches along a drought-stricken trail in the Great Smoky Mountains. Winds gusting to at least 56 miles per hour whipped the flames toward town and trapped some victims ordered to evacuate. Cleanup is underway. Wounds are beginning to scar. Shopkeepers and residents are weary from trauma but hopeful, determined and thankful – thankful merely that they're more fortunate than others.

Hurricane Matthew Recovery:

Associated Press: Hurricane Matthew leads to sinkholes on Hilton Head roads

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dLxmAZmk

SC State Wire

An official says dozens of sinkholes have opened on Hilton Head Island roads since Hurricane Matthew brushed the island in early October. Community Development Director Charles Cousins told the Hilton Head Island Town Council on Tuesday that more than two dozen sinkholes have appeared on the island's roads since the storm. The Island Packet reports (<http://bit.ly/2i0ID0e>) that Cousins says rains from the hurricane disrupted or washed away fill sand under roads, and storms after Matthew keep making the problem worse. Cousins says the repair process is slow because the island must get a state permit before filling each sinkhole. The town is currently putting steel plates over the holes.

2015 Flood Recovery:

WIS: Road to recovery still long for some homeowners impacted by floods

<http://www.wistv.com/story/34103052/road-to-recovery-still-long-for-some-homeowners-impacted-by-floods>

Mike DeSumma

Months after the epic floods of 2015, some Columbia homeowners say they are still waiting on the chance to get federal help in rebuilding their lives. The high waters washed out several homes that sit along Harrison Road off of Forest Drive. Yet, several property owners there say they were having issues with flooding well before that happened. They say a city sewer line that runs through their backyards is constantly backing up during heavy rains. "Flooding is a natural disaster..that part I understand. It's the impact of what occurs after the flood which is human error...and that's where I feel like it's human error," remarked Lisa Henderson, who lives in one of the homes impacted. Since the floods of last year, some homeowners have opted to have their properties bought out by the city. This past year, FEMA awarded roughly \$36 million to the state to help with the acquisition of damaged homes in flood prone areas. So far, 38 properties in the Columbia area are being considered for that aid.

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: Duke awarded licenses to build 2 nuclear power reactors

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=yxl0a1ht

SC State Wire

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has awarded Duke Energy licenses to build two nuclear power reactors in South Carolina, a decade after the project was first announced. The federal agency announced Wednesday the licenses allow the utility to build and operate two reactors near Gaffney, South Carolina, that use "advanced passive" safety. But the Charlotte Observer reports (<http://bit.ly/2hb4eoa>) that Duke may never build the \$11 billion William States Lee plant. Duke applied for the licenses in December 2007, but officials say it's unclear whether the company will proceed. The newspaper reports that factors going into the decision include electricity demands, the cost of natural gas and environmental regulations. The company said in a July filing it has spent nearly \$495 million in preconstruction costs since 2011.

Charlotte Observer: Duke Energy wins license for S.C. nuclear plant it may never build

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/article122205799.html#storylink=cpy>

Bruce Henderson

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has awarded Duke Energy licenses to build two nuclear power reactors near Gaffney, S.C., although Duke might never build them. The combined licenses allow Duke to build and operate two AP1000 reactors, a project first announced in 2006. Duke applied for the licenses for the William States Lee plant in 2007 but says it is undecided whether to go forward with the \$11 billion plant. "Duke Energy continues to regard new nuclear as a viable option for future generation and understands the importance of fuel diversity in creating a sustainable energy future," spokeswoman Rita Sipe said. "We evaluate new generation based on, among other factors, energy needs, project costs, carbon regulation, natural gas prices, and existing or future legislative provisions for cost recovery. The ultimate decision and timing of Lee will be based on what is in the best interest of our customers and will be founded on the best information available at the time we make the decision."

Associated Press: NC court OKs big fight: 800K tobacco growers, \$340M, 1 case

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=eLNz1vUq

SC State Wire

North Carolina's Supreme Court is setting up a whopper of a lawsuit to settle claims by 800,000 past and present tobacco farmers in five Southeastern states for a piece of \$340 million. The state Supreme Court said Wednesday it was impractical for courts to handle hundreds of thousands of individual lawsuits in the fight over the reserve funds held by a North Carolina-based tobacco marketing cooperative. The decade-long lawsuit involves money collected by the Flue-Cured Tobacco Cooperative Stabilization Corp. Tobacco growers across North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and Virginia paid into the cooperative over six decades dating back to the mid-1940s. Membership has dropped 99 percent since U.S. taxpayers quit underwriting tobacco crop prices in 2004. The lawsuit now returns to a state trial court in Raleigh.

Greenville News: Student homelessness increases in SC, nation

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/2016/12/21/student-homelessness-increases-sc-nation/95698370/>

Angelia Davis

South Carolina is among 21 states that saw a 10 percent increase or more in their homeless student population. That's according to new figures released by the U.S. Department of Education. The department said public schools across the nation reported 1,263,323 children and youth, pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, who were identified as experiencing homelessness, and enrolled in school at some point in the 2014-15 school year. That total represents a 3.5 percent increase over three years and a 34 percent increase since the recession ended in the summer of 2009, the department's report said. Thirty-five states reported an increase in their homeless student populations between 2012 and 2014. South Carolina, along with Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Washington and Wyoming experienced growth of 10 percent or more, while only five states saw a decrease of 10 percent or more.

Post and Courier: Volvo's rebound could have Swedish automaker considering public stock offering

http://www.postandcourier.com/business/volvo-s-rebound-could-have-swedish-automaker-considering-public-stock/article_79fc50fa-c78e-11e6-909f-1bb01f3fd5d0.html

David Wren

Even before residents of the Charleston region start building Volvo cars, they might be able to invest in the Swedish automaker. Volvo, which is building its first U.S. manufacturing plant in Berkeley County, said this week that it has raised \$532 million from a trio of institutional investors in its home country. The announcement has sparked speculation that the company is preparing to go public after eight years of private ownership by China-based Zhejiang Geely Holdings. "Today's move is another

step towards Volvo Cars' long expressed ambition to act as a listed company," Volvo said in a news release announcing the investment by a pair of pension funds and an insurance company. Volvo also entered the international bond market earlier this year, raising an additional \$519 million. A report by Reuters states the recent investments combined with "rising sales and profits at Volvo Cars has led to speculation of a stock market listing over the past year." Analysts say an initial public offering could be followed by a dual listing on markets in Stockholm and China.

Local News:

Post and Courier: Ruling: \$67,000 of cocaine can't be used as evidence in Moncks Corner man's case

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/ruling-of-cocaine-can-t-be-used-as-evidence-in/article_93174b32-c7aa-11e6-8da6-ab097720f2cc.html

Derek Asberry

About \$67,000 of cocaine and crack will not be used as evidence in the 2011 case of a Moncks Corner man because agents violated the man's Fourth Amendment rights when they found the drugs, the state Supreme Court ruled Wednesday. On Nov. 10, 2011, agents with Berkeley County's Drug Enforcement Unit were following up on tips of drug activity at 497 Nelson Ferry Road. They found Walter Bash, who is now 28 and listed as a Mattie Road resident, in a pickup truck. He attempted to flee but was detained. The agents looked in Bash's truck and found scales and cocaine. He was indicted by a grand jury for trafficking 400 grams or more of cocaine and trafficking "ten grams or more, but less than twenty-eight grams" of cocaine base. The agents had not obtained a search warrant, prompting Bash to argue that they violated his Fourth Amendment right to "be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures."

Post and Courier: Report: Charleston VA employees 'improperly' handled appointment records

http://www.postandcourier.com/features/your_health/report-charleston-va-employees-improperly-handled-appointment-records/article_be4f1ace-c79a-11e6-a8de-63622cbd80f7.html

Lauren Sausser

A new federal report has determined that patient appointment requests at Charleston's Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center were sometimes marked "discontinued" or "completed" when it was not clear that veterans had been seen yet by outside health care providers. In one case, an elderly patient with advanced liver cancer was referred by the VA to an outside radiation oncologist in mid-2012. But he had to wait 77 days for an appointment and almost two more weeks for actual treatment. Meanwhile, staff at the VA had marked his consult "completed," even as he waited months to see a doctor. Once he arrived at the hospital for radiation treatment, the patient was in critical condition, the federal report found. "He was admitted briefly but died two days after being discharged," according to the report.

President-elect Trump News:

Associated Press: Trump: Deadly violence in Germany is 'attack on humanity'

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/d20f2c8afdf645e48e49c20c41267d17/after-violence-abroad-trump-meeting-security-adviser>

President-elect Donald Trump declared Wednesday that the deadly truck attack on a Christmas market in Germany was "an attack on humanity and it's got to be stopped." He also suggested he might go forward with his campaign pledge to temporarily ban Muslim immigrants from coming to the United States. "All along, I've been proven to be right, 100 percent correct," Trump said when asked if the attack in Berlin had caused him to reevaluate the proposal. "What's happening is disgraceful. "Trump proposed the Muslim ban during the Republican primary campaign, prompting criticism from both parties. He shifted his rhetoric during the general election to focus on temporarily halting immigration from an unspecified list of countries with ties to terrorism, though he did not disavow the Muslim ban. Trump addressed reporters for less than two minutes before a meeting with incoming

White House national security adviser Michael Flynn. Transition officials did not respond to questions Wednesday seeking clarification about Trump's positions.

Associated Press: Economy healed under Obama, but unhappy voters chose Trump

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/32e080d2a63747719eb983a8fb2e6e32/economy-healed-under-obama-unhappy-voters-chose-trump>

He was a first-term senator-turned-president, a former law professor with little experience in economics or management. When he entered the White House he had one essential task: piece together the shards of a shattered U.S. economy. It wasn't smooth and it wasn't fast. But President Barack Obama will leave behind, by most measures, an economy far stronger than the one he inherited. Unemployment is 4.6 percent, a nine-year low. Stocks keep setting highs. An additional 20 million Americans have health insurance coverage. The nation has shifted toward cleaner energy sources: natural gas, wind and solar. Yet it's also an economy that left many people feeling neglected. Polling after the November election found that nearly two-thirds of voters described the economy as "not so good" or "poor." The costs of housing, college and prescription drugs kept outpacing paychecks. Job options had been dwindling for workers with only high school diplomas even before Obama took office, but the downturn and slow recovery magnified the pain of that trend. Many people gave up looking for work. Struggling rural towns never enjoyed the uplift that benefited major cities.

Associated Press: Obama oil pipeline rules face uncertain future under Trump

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/1d040b0e525445f48bb06c7195847154/obama-oil-pipeline-rules-face-uncertain-future-under-trump>

President Barack Obama's administration is expected to push through long-delayed safety measures for the nation's sprawling network of oil pipelines in its final days, despite resistance from industry and concern that incoming president Donald Trump may scuttle them. The measures are aimed at preventing increasingly frequent accidents such as a 176,000-gallon spill that fouled a North Dakota creek earlier this month. Thousands more accidents over the past decade caused \$2.5 billion in damages nationwide and dumped almost 38 million gallons of fuels. Fights over pipelines have intensified in recent years, illustrated by the dispute over TransCanada's Keystone XL plan and efforts by American Indians to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from crossing beneath the Missouri River near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The U.S. Department of Transportation proposal covers roughly 200,000 miles of lines that crisscross the country and carry crude, gasoline and other hazardous liquids.

National News:

Associated Press: Berlin attack prompts high security in US cities for holiday

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/810bfdafc8384d2eb3b147b1581b4ef2/berlin-attack-prompts-high-security-us-cities-holiday>

In the wake of the Berlin truck attack, police departments around the U.S. are making a show of force at places where crowds gather at Christmastime. In New York City, police dispatched heavily-armed counterterrorism officers to stand guard at crowded pop-up Christmas markets in Union Square, Bryant Park and Columbus Circle only an hour after news broke Tuesday about the carnage in Berlin, where a stolen truck slammed into a crowd and killed 12 people. The police department also has a program to encourage truck rental companies to report any suspicious interactions with people wanting to rent vehicles that might be used in an attack. Mayor Bill de Blasio called the precautions "a very sad reality." In Chicago, police parked their vehicles diagonally at the corners of Daley Plaza to block any vehicle access to a Christmas market there. In San Francisco, motorcycle and mounted horse units will be patrolling in high-traffic shopping areas.

Associated Press: Kremlin calls US-Russian ties 'frozen,' unsure about Trump

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/7a70469ce3364b6e954d50bc8c9ce385/kremlin-says-us-russian-ties-frozen>

The Kremlin hopes that Donald Trump's administration will help improve the strained Russia-U.S. ties that it describes as "frozen," but it doesn't expect any immediate breakthroughs, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman said Wednesday. Dmitry Peskov told Mir TV that the Kremlin expects the new U.S. administration to take a "fresher and more constructive approach," while cautioning against "excessive optimism." He warned that Washington would be unlikely to reverse such moves as the deployment of NATO's forces near Russian borders or quickly lift sanctions against Russia. "We have never worn rose-colored glasses," Peskov said. "We clearly understand that any U.S. president will first of all protect interests of his country." Peskov rejected the claims by Trump's opponents that the U.S. president-elect is too Russia-friendly, saying that was a reflection what he called "Russophobia."

United Nations News:

Associated Press: Aleppo evacuations in heavy snow end brutal war chapter

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/4b2af1bbba48464782daf81eae4b469e/delays-hamper-last-evacuations-rebel-enclave-aleppo>

Hundreds of rebel fighters and civilians, including small children swaddled in thick blankets, were bused out of war-ravaged Aleppo in heavy snow on Wednesday as the evacuation of former rebel strongholds entered its final phase. Scenes of buses slowly driving out of Aleppo in a shroud of white offered an evocative finale to what has been one of the most brutal chapters in Syria's civil war. The departures from Aleppo pave the way for President Bashar Assad to assume full control there, after more than four years of fighting over Syria's largest city. It marks the most significant victory for Assad since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule swept the country in 2011. The evacuations were set in motion last week after Syria's opposition agreed to surrender its last footholds in eastern Aleppo. Since then, about 25,000 fighters and civilians have been bused out, according to the United Nations. On Wednesday, buses began evacuating the last rebels and civilians, an estimated 3,000 people.

Reuters: U.N. likely to vote Friday on South Sudan arms embargo

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-security-un-idUSKBN14A1PS>

Michelle Nichols

The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote on Friday on whether to impose an arms embargo on South Sudan, even though the U.S.-drafted measure is likely to fail despite warnings by U.N. officials of a possible genocide, diplomats said on Wednesday. The resolution also proposes blacklisting South Sudan opposition figure Riek Machar, army chief Paul Malong and Information Minister Michael Makuei by subjecting them to an asset freeze and travel ban. To be adopted, a resolution needs nine votes and no vetoes. Diplomats say that so far seven members were in favor, with the remaining eight planning to abstain. The United States has requested that a vote be held on Friday. "Council members will need, each of us, to own our decisions. So the United States urges you to prepare to vote your conscience, and to vote to stand with the people of South Sudan," Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, told the council on Monday.

World News:

Associated Press: Germany hunts 'violent and armed' Tunisian in truck attack

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/61b09b1b98954ae4a50357421a3d3edf/german-investigators-search-berlin-market-attacker>

Germany on Wednesday launched a Europe-wide manhunt for a "violent and armed" Tunisian man with ties to Islamic extremists who has used at least six different names and three different nationalities, saying he is a suspect in the Berlin Christmas market attack. German authorities had considered him a possible terror threat months before the attack, put him under covert surveillance for six months this year and tried to deport him after his asylum application was rejected this summer. Authorities issued a notice to other European countries overnight seeking the arrest of 24-year-old Anis Amri, but initially held off on going public so as not to jeopardize the manhunt. After German

media published photos of him and a partial name, federal prosecutors issued a public appeal for the information. "Caution: He could be violent and armed," the notice warned. "A reward of up to 100,000 euros (\$104,000) has been issued for information leading to the suspect's arrest."

Associated Press: Suspect in Berlin attack is just the latest Tunisian jihadi

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/6ac45e21063342588cc7dae4eebfc980/suspect-berlin-attack-just-latest-tunisian-jihadi>

The Tunisian now wanted throughout Europe has six aliases, three nationalities — and links to the same brand of Islamic extremism that has drawn at least 6,000 of his countrymen to jihadi networks. Anis Amri, who turns 24 on Thursday, is in grim company with other Tunisians claimed by the Islamic State group. One of them includes the man who mowed down 86 Bastille Day revelers in the southern French city of Nice last July and another who gunned down tourists on a beach in Tunisia. At least 6,000 Tunisians have left home to join Islamic State extremists, forming the single largest nationality of foreign fighters for the group. Many trained at IS camps in neighboring Libya. Others made their way to Syria and Iraq. It's still not known whether Amri had direct links to Islamic State, but the extremist group claimed responsibility for the Monday night truck attack on the Berlin Christmas market that left 12 people dead and 48 injured.

Associated Press: Turkey links Russian envoy's killer to US-based cleric Gulen

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/c4c8df4dbf47482badacd27bd7ee6eb6/russian-parliament-urges-tighter-security-diplomats>

Turkey's president on Wednesday implicated a U.S.-based Muslim cleric in the killing of Russia's envoy to Turkey, saying the policeman who carried out the attack was a member of his "terror organization." Ambassador Andrei Karlov was killed Monday evening by a gunman in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition in Ankara. The assassin, Mevlut Mert Altintas of Ankara's riot police squad, was killed in a police operation. "He (Altintas) was a member of the FETO terrorist organization. There is no point in hiding this," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said during a joint news conference with his visiting Albanian counterpart. "From the places he was raised to his connections — that's what they point at." Turkey has accused Fethullah Gulen — a former ally who has turned into Erdogan's top foe — of trying to destabilize Turkey and says his movement is behind a failed military coup in July aimed at toppling the Turkish leader. Gulen has denied any involvement in the coup. His movement also condemned "in the strongest terms" the ambassador's assassination.

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