

From: Moore, Camlin <CamlinMoore@gov.sc.gov>
To:
Date: 12/22/2016 5:15:50 PM
Subject: Afternoon Clips – Thursday, December 22, 2016

Afternoon Clips – Thursday, December 22, 2016

Governor Nikki Haley News:

The State: Common Cause urges Haley to step aside as governor <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article122425474.html>

Bristow Marchant

Government watchdog group Common Cause of South Carolina is asking Gov. Nikki Haley to step aside as governor, saying her pending nomination to become U.N. ambassador impedes her ability to do the job. In a letter to the governor released Thursday, Common Cause director John Crangle notes, "The process of vetting, security clearance, confirmation, briefing, and training for the position of UN ambassador will require considerable time and effort on your part at a time when the new General Assembly will be convening in January 2017 and considering vital issues..." In light of the timing of Haley's nomination, Crangle asks her if "it would be in the best interests of the people of both South Carolina and the United States if you would take a leave of absence from your position as governor". Haley's office did not immediately respond to the letter.

NOTE: Haley is expected to step down once her position as UN ambassador is approved, allowing Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster to take over as the state's chief executive. It's unclear who would then take over as the state's lieutenant governor. Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, has said he will not rise to fill the post. He could resign and another senator could be elected as the Senate leader and then rise to lieutenant governor.

NOTE: However, some argue that because of changes to the S.C. Constitution, McMaster could appoint his replacement.

Post and Courier: Watchdog group says S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley should step down early http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/watchdog-group-says-s-c-gov-nikki-haley-should-step/article_0363a25e-c874-11e6-9147-6776dff8b66c.html

Gavin Jackson

A government watchdog group said Gov. Nikki Haley should leave office before her expected confirmation as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. John Crangle, executive director of Common Cause of South Carolina, said it's in the best interest of the state and country since Haley's prep time for her next job could constitute an inability to serve as governor. "It would be better to let Lt. Gov. (Henry) McMaster take over in time for the new session of the General Assembly while you devote your full attention to the preparation for taking this important office," Crangle said in a letter Thursday. The Statehouse reconvenes Jan. 10. Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams said there's no chance she'll step aside early. "Gov. Haley has found no problems in doing her duties as governor while preparing for her Senate confirmation process," Adams said.

Associated Press: Company adding 100 jobs in Horry County http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=cKoQb0ks

SC State Wire

A company that makes air flow measuring devices is expanding its operations in Horry County. Gov. Nikki Haley's office said in a news release Thursday that Ebtron plans to add 100 jobs over the next five years. The Loris-based company is expected to spend more than \$2.5 million in the expansion. Ebtron's products are used for monitoring and maintaining air quality, humidity, climate and other environmental conditions. Its products are used in health care, manufacturing, educational, laboratory

and office settings. The expansion will next to its current operation on U.S. 701 in Loris.

General Assembly News:

Associated Press: Former state House majority leader appears in court

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=k2iVBOPb

Seanna Adcox

A South Carolina representative who once led the Republican majority said nothing Thursday as he appeared in court on dozens of charges stemming from a legislative corruption probe. Rep. Jim Merrill was allowed to remain free from jail on his own recognizance by Judge Knox McMahon, meaning he didn't have to pay a bond. The 49-year-old Charleston Republican, who led President-elect Donald Trump's South Carolina campaign, let his lawyers do the talking and left through a side door. Prosecutor David Pascoe announced indictments last week against Merrill, including two counts of misconduct in office and 28 ethics violations. Three of those are felonies. Merrill faces up to 66 years in prison and \$146,000 in fines if convicted on all 30 counts. Attorney Matthew Hubbell told the judge Merrill is eager to defend himself against charges they believe are "based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the law."

The State: Bond set for indicted state lawmaker Merrill as he appears in court

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article122409414.html>

Avery G. Wilks and Cynthia Roldan

Suspended state Rep. Jim Merrill confirmed at a court appearance Thursday he wants to fight 30 charges that accuse him of misconduct in office and a series of ethics violations. "He strongly disagrees with (special prosecutor David) Pascoe's accusations and with his version of the facts indicated to the court today," Matthew Hubbell, one of Merrill's attorneys, told state circuit Judge Knox McMahon. "He is eager to present numerous legal and factual defenses to each and every one of these charges. We believe they are based on very fundamental misunderstandings of the law that would apply and are based on serious mistakes of the fact and misunderstandings of the law." McMahon set Merrill's personal recognizance bond at \$146,000 on Thursday. It was the Berkeley County Republican's first public showing since he was formally accused last week of using his public office to pocket at least \$1.3 million and failing to disclose receiving payments of more than \$673,000 from outside interest groups.

The State: Watchdog raises ethics questions in Merrill case

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article122465859.html>

Cynthia Roldan and Avery G. Wilks

A state ethics watchdog said Thursday he's exploring whether there is a conflict of interest in the case of one state legislator representing another in court. Rep. Leon Stavrinakis, D-Charleston, is one of two attorneys representing former House Majority Leader Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Berkeley. Merrill faces 30 charges of misconduct in office and a series of ethics violations. But John Crangle, a state ethics watchdog, said he's exploring whether there is a conflict of interest in Stavrinakis representing Merrill. Stavrinakis not only serves as a House member, but he is also on the House Ethics Committee, the panel charged with investigating potential misdeeds by legislators. "I have not come to any conclusion on whether Leon has a conflict of interest, but I am looking into it," Crangle said. Should he conclude Stavrinakis' representation of Merrill clashes with his duties as a House member, Crangle said he'd file a complaint with the House Ethics Committee. Crangle said he's concerned about several issues, including Stavrinakis' potential to serve as a witness in Merrill's case.

Post and Courier: Suspended state Rep. Jim Merrill gets \$146,000 personal recognizance bond in ethics case

http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/suspended-state-rep-jim-merrill-gets-personal-recognizance-bond-in/article_3f5dfaf0-c853-11e6-aeb6-47db27faf796.html

Gavin Jackson

The special prosecutor in the Statehouse corruption probe said suspended state Rep. Jim Merrill's case is different from the politicians who preceded him. David Pascoe told a judge that Merrill's case involves taking money at the same time he was acting as a lawmaker. That means it is different from former House Speaker Bobby Harrell's and other ethics cases, including former Lt. Gov. Ken Ard's and former Sen. Robert Ford's. All improperly used personal campaign funds. "This is a case that deals with public trust," Pascoe said in court Thursday. Pascoe's comment came as Richland County judge set a \$146,000 personal recognizance bond for Merrill, R-Charleston, in his first court appearance since he was hit with 30 ethics-related charges last week. Circuit Judge Knox McMahon said the amount mirrors the maximum fines Merrill could face if found guilty. He faces a maximum 66 years in prison as well.

SC Delegation News:

McClatchy DC: Sen. Lindsey Graham stands at the heart of Republican discord on Trump and Russia

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/congress/article122448129.html>

Matthew Schofield

After six years of contention with Democrats controlling the White House and Republicans controlling at least one chamber of Congress, Donald Trump's victory was supposed to usher in a more unified era. The Republican president-elect, after all, will take office as both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives remain controlled by Republicans. But before many of Trump's policies are even known, cracks in the unification are appearing. The cracks are small, and it looks at this point like they are all related to foreign policy, or more specifically Russia. But at the heart of this looming discord is U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. Graham, with the substantial help of U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has made it clear that he won't be backing down on Russia in the name of party unity or to please a new president. When asked to comment, Graham's reply by email was simple: "I'll support him when I think he's right. And I'll oppose him when I think he's wrong."

Associated Press: Leahy, others mark new law to ease Canada-US travel

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

SC State Wire

Officials say a new law that will make it easier for people to travel between Canada and the United States will be good for Vermont and other states, even some far the border. Vermont Democratic U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy was at the Burlington International Airport Thursday where he marked the arrival of the first direct Porter Airlines flight of the season from Toronto's Billy Bishop City Airport, located not far from the downtown. The new Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act will make it possible for more U.S.-bound customers to clear U.S. Customs at airports, train stations and other locations before leaving Canada. Porter Airlines spokesman Brad Cicero says the law could also benefit its flights from Toronto to other U.S. cities such as Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

SC Political News:

The State: Former Sanford aide added to Trump White House team

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article122461104.html>

Bristow Marchant

The man who helped Mark Sanford win a second term as S.C. governor and return to Congress after the "Appalachian trail" scandal will serve as communications director for the Donald Trump White House. Jason Miller was also given the title "assistant to the president" when the president-elect announced his communication team on Thursday. Miller had previously served as the communications head for Trump's campaign and transition team. Miller was campaign manager for Sanford's 2006 re-election campaign and served in the governor's office as a deputy chief of staff afterward. He teamed up with Sanford again for the former governor's 2013 special election during

which Sanford won another term in the House of Representatives – as well as redemption for the public breakdown of his marriage following an admission of an affair. In the White House, Miller will work alongside other Trump aides Sean Spicer as press secretary, Hope Hicks as strategic communications director and Dan Scavino as director of social media.

Post and Courier: Former Sanford consultant hired for Trump communications office

http://www.postandcourier.com/politics/former-sanford-consultant-hired-for-trump-communications-office/article_a9ea5ad2-c879-11e6-968f-8f9581157ecd.html

Schuyler Kropf

A former consultant to South Carolina U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford has been hired to work in President-elect Donald Trump's White House. Jason Miller, who most recently directed Sanford's 2016 re-election win, was named Trump's director of communications Thursday. The move comes as Trump named Republican National Committee communications director Sean Spicer as White House press secretary, and Trump campaign press secretary Hope Hicks as director of strategic communications. Miller directed Sanford's 2006 re-election bid when he was South Carolina's governor. He also worked for Sanford during the 2013 special election where Sanford won back his former 1st Congressional District seat. Earlier this year Miller worked in the Sen. Ted Cruz presidential primary campaign. Sanford endorsed Cruz the day before the S.C. presidential primary in February.

SC Military News:

Associated Press: Marine Corps sets 3 hearings in Parris Island hazing cases

<http://bigstory.ap.org/e9dea48fa430418988a65b8a26f007de>

SC State Wire

The first public military court proceedings involving allegations of abuse and hazing at the Marine Corps' recruit training facility at Parris Island in South Carolina are set to begin in January, the Marine Corps announced on Thursday. Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Joshua Pena said arraignments for two Marines facing mid-level, or special courts-martial, in connection with the hazing accusations are Friday, Jan. 6, 2017, at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. A third hearing known as an Article 32 is to be Thursday, Jan. 5, 2017, at the same installation for a third Marine potentially facing a court martial. Such a preliminary hearing is similar to a civilian grand jury proceeding and helps determine if a court-martial is to be held or other types of military punishments might be considered. Quantico is the home of the Marine Corps Training and Education Command and its commander, Maj. Gen. James Lukeman, has responsibility for developing and overseeing the service's training regime.

Island Packet: USMC schedules hearings for Parris Island Marines facing hazing, abuse charges

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/community/beaufort-news/bg-military/article122460144.html>

The Marine Corps announced Thursday the first scheduled proceedings for three Marines implicated in the investigations of hazing and recruit abuse at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. An unnamed staff sergeant is scheduled to appear for an Article 32 hearing on Jan. 5. Staff Sgt. Matthew T. Bacchus' and Sgt. Riley R. Gress' arraignments are slated for Jan. 6. All proceedings will take place at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia, according to a news release from the Corps' Training and Education Command. "All Marines are presumed innocent until proven guilty," according to the release. Bacchus and Gress face special courts-martial. Bacchus is charged with violating Uniform Code of Military Justice Articles 92 ("failure to obey a lawful general order"), 93 ("cruelty and maltreatment") and 107 ("false official statement"). Gress is accused of the same violations but, in regard to Article 92, the description specifies "violation of a lawful general order." The unnamed staff sergeant, whose Article 32 hearing is required because his case is being considered for general court-martial — the highest level military court — is also accused of the same UCMJ violations.

Island Packet: Parris Island Marine arrested, charged in Texas child pornography sting

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/community/beaufort-news/bg-military/article122396949.html>

Wade Livingston

A Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island drill instructor has been arrested and charged with child sex crimes in Texas after a months-long sting. Sgt. Keith Knight, whom Parris Island officials confirmed Thursday was a drill instructor with the depot's Recruit Training Regiment at the time of his arrest, faces two second-degree felony counts of promotion of child pornography, according to the Houston Chronicle. If convicted, he could be imprisoned for up to 40 years, according to the newspaper. Parris Island spokesperson Staff Sgt. Greg Thomas said an outside agency conducted a search on the depot on Nov. 17. A day later, Thomas said, Knight was in the hands of "civilian authorities in Beaufort County" awaiting transfer to Montgomery County, Texas. Specifically, Knight is alleged to have initially sent a nude photo of an infant to an undercover officer via an internet instant messaging application, according to the Chronicle. As the conversation transpired over a few days, he allegedly "sent the investigator multiple photos and a video depicting young children performing sexual acts," according to that newspaper.

Post and Courier: Silver Star, Purple Heart found at Goodwill in Virginia returned to a fallen S.C. WWII soldier's family

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/a-silver-star-and-a-purple-heart-were-found-at/article_3208ce7c-c865-11e6-a2cb-3fb0efe1d31a.html

Caitlin Byrd

They found the war medals in a box, discarded among piles of items that were no longer needed or wanted. Next to clothes that no longer fit and housewares that were no longer used were the medals that had been awarded to a man who was no longer alive. But the South Carolina soldier was never forgotten. Records stored at Clemson University and printed in newspapers during World War II would tell his story: His name was Robert Ogden Sanders Entzminger, but his great-nephew said his relatives referred to him as "Bobby." He grew up in Hartsville and graduated from Hartsville High School in 1939. He attended Clemson University for two years where he majored in civil engineering.

Hurricane Matthew Recovery:

Island Packet: As Hilton Head debris piles rise, so do frustrations

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/weather/hurricane/article122475039.html>

Teresa Moss

Where's my mailbox, fire hydrant, cable box ... ? These are common questions asked by some Hilton Head Island residents as debris piles remain in front of their homes nearly three months after Hurricane Matthew. Richard Kerr, a resident of Hilton Head Plantation, looked over the debris filling his yard Thursday. His 16-year-old son, Jackson, sunk a shovel into the ground, working on some landscaping at the edge of the pile. "It stinks to look at it, and I would like to get my yard back in order, but you just have to be patient," Richard Kerr said. As of Thursday, half of the debris had been removed from areas approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said Jennifer Lyle, Hilton Head's assistant town engineer. FEMA has approved reimbursement for debris pickup costs in all of the large plantations, though the town is still waiting for approval of roads in some smaller private communities.

South Carolina News:

Island Packet: Notice a new TSA sign at the airport? Pay attention if you have an SC driver's license

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/politics-government/article122405749.html>

Lucas High

A South Carolina driver's license will serve you well if you're motoring across the country. By 2018, not so much if you fly. Travelers winging their way across the country this holiday season may notice some new airport signs about the type of identification necessary for boarding. If you have a South Carolina driver's license, pay attention. The signs, which the Transportation Security Administration began installing earlier this month, inform fliers that starting in January 2018 they may need a second form of identification in addition to a state issued driver's license in order to board a plane. "Effective

January 22, 2018, TSA will only accept state-issued driver's licenses or identification cards if they are issued by a REAL ID compliant state or a non-compliant state with an extension," according to a recent TSA news release.

Post and Courier: Boeing hands over 500th Dreamliner in record time

http://www.postandcourier.com/business/boeing-hands-over-th-dreamliner-in-record-time/article_9e58964a-c85e-11e6-ae46-bf9f01a8e162.html

John McDermott

Boeing Co. is closing out its aircraft production year with another milestone for its 787 program. The company said Thursday that it delivered its 500th Dreamliner twin-aisle jet on Tuesday at a ceremony in Seattle. The customer was Avianca S.A., a South American airline based in Colombia. "Achieving 500 deliveries – the fastest to 500 for twin aisles – is a great accomplishment, made possible by the hard work and dedication of our employees and global suppliers," said Mark Jenks, vice president and general manager of the 787 program. Boeing makes the lightweight jets at plants in North Charleston and Everett, Wash. A slowdown in sales this year has the company rethinking a planned increase in the production rate - to 14 planes a month from 12 - by the end of the decade. Uresh Sheth, the author of the "All Things 787" website, predicted earlier this week that the delivery of No. 500 was imminent. Avianca officials flew off in their new 787-8, the original and smallest model, on Wednesday, said Boeing spokeswoman Elizabeth Silva.

Local News:

The State: Orangeburg Co. deputy fired after DUI crash in patrol car, officials say

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article122471574.html>

Teddy Kulmala

An Orangeburg County sheriff's deputy was terminated after crashing an unmarked patrol car in Richland County while allegedly driving impaired, according to authorities. Devrinn Washington, 30, was charged with DUI after the crash, which happened around 2:30 a.m. Saturday on U.S. 378 near Trotter Road, according to Lance Cpl. David Jones with the S.C. Highway Patrol. Troopers say Washington was traveling west when his 2013 Chevrolet sedan exited the roadway and hit a tree. Washington was not injured, but Jones said troopers believed he was under the influence. He was charged with DUI, Jones said. Washington was a deputy with the Orangeburg County Sheriff's Office but was terminated immediately after his arrest, a sheriff's spokesman said. He was not on duty when he crashed. The unmarked patrol car had minor damage.

Independent Mail: Sheriff's Office won't say who worked at fatal shooting

<http://www.independentmail.com/story/news/local/south-carolina/2016/12/22/sheriffs-office-wont-say-who-worked-fatal-shooting/95742222/>

Mike Ellis

The Anderson County Sheriff's Office has denied a Freedom of Information Act request from the Independent Mail for information about the fatal police shooting of Alexander Chance Partain. Partain, a 31-year-old Iva man, was shot and killed after running away from deputies on Nov. 29 near Bascomb Drive just outside of Iva. The Independent Mail has sought information including the duty roster of all officers who were on shift at the time of the shooting, incident reports detailing what happened and administrative leave paperwork. The Sheriff's Office cited an ongoing investigation and the premature release of information in its denial of the records request. "Cops make up that 'under investigation' exemption, it does not exist under the law," said Jay Bender, an attorney with the South Carolina Press Association.

The Herald: Charges dropped against former York County police officers in alleged baby abuse case

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/crime/article122478019.html>

Andrew Dys

Prosecutors dropped all criminal charges against two former York County police officers who had

been charged with neglect of their infant son in 2015, court documents show. And lawyers for both Audrey Schurig and Robert Jeffrey "Jeff" Taylor now say that both are vindicated after they were accused of crimes they did not commit. Taylor, 47, and Schurig, 38, were charged by State Law Enforcement Division agents in March 2015 after alleged injuries to the son that Schurig and Taylor have together. Taylor was charged with inflicting great bodily injury on a child and neglect and Schurig was charged with neglect. Both resigned police jobs during the investigation. Yet charges are now dropped because prosecutors cannot prove who caused the injuries to baby Jaxon after his birth in late 2014, court documents show.

Post and Courier: Small plane makes emergency landing on remote beach near IOP

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/small-plane-makes-emergency-landing-on-remote-beach-near-iop/article_aeb75b12-c876-11e6-9f6c-3f9694acac84.html

Angie Jackson

Authorities are responding after a small Cessna plane made an emergency landing Thursday on Capers Island. The Charleston County Sheriff's Office and other emergency personnel were called to the beach shortly after 1 p.m. Sheriff's Maj. Eric Watson said no injuries have been reported and investigators believe the plane had mechanical trouble. Watson said the plane landed on two wheels but flipped over. The plane rests upside down on the beach, according to Anthony Kozak, an operations unit controller for the U.S. Coast Guard. The two people inside are "alive and well," he said. There were no reports of pollution. The undeveloped barrier island is located north of Isle of Palms and Dewees Island. It is about 3 miles long and only accessible by boat.

President-elect Trump News:

Associated Press: Trump: US must 'greatly strengthen' nuclear capability

<http://bigstory.ap.org/f0ec634adae54108b316826f985bbaa3>

President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday abruptly called for the United States to "greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability" until the rest of the world "comes to its senses" regarding nuclear weapons. His comments on Twitter came hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin said strengthening his country's nuclear capabilities should be a chief military objective in the coming year. The president-elect's statement also followed his meetings a day earlier with top Pentagon officials and defense contractors. Trump, who is spending the holidays at his palatial private club in Florida, did not expand on the actions he wants the U.S. to take or say why he raised the issue Thursday. Spokesman Jason Miller said the president-elect was referring to the threat of nuclear proliferation "particularly to and among terrorist organizations and unstable and rogue regimes." Miller said Trump sees modernizing the nation's deterrent capability "as a vital way to pursue peace through strength."

Associated Press: Continuing battle with media, Trump avoids news conference

<http://bigstory.ap.org/b58266226a934f4091186f6e5538fc6f>

Less than a month from taking office, President-elect Donald Trump has yet to hold the traditional news conference that most incoming presidents have held within days of their victory. As of Thursday, it had been 147 days since Trump held his last formal news conference as a candidate. Trump, whose refusal to do news conference has been criticized by journalism groups and media watchdogs, has instead tried to convey his message directly to the American public, bypassing the media with pronouncements at his boisterous rallies and, of course, distributing his thoughts 140 characters at a time on his famed Twitter account. He was slated to hold a press conference on December 15 to discuss his plan to leave his sprawling business empire as he takes office but that event was postponed. Aides have said it will be rescheduled for January but no date has yet been set.

Associated Press: Clinton wins popular vote by nearly 2.9 million

<http://bigstory.ap.org/2c7a5afc13824161a25d8574e10ff4e7>

Hillary Clinton received nearly 2.9 million more votes than President-elect Donald Trump, giving her

the largest popular vote margin of any losing presidential candidate. Certified results in all 50 states and the District of Columbia show Clinton winning nearly 65,844,610 million votes — 48 percent — to Trump's 62,979,636 million votes — 46 percent — according to an analysis by The Associated Press. Clinton is the fifth presidential candidate in American history to win the popular vote and lose the Electoral College. Democrat Al Gore, the only other presidential candidate this century to come up short in the Electoral College but claim a popular vote victory, received 540,000 more votes than President George W. Bush. The vote total discrepancy between Democratic nominee Clinton and Trump has fueled arguments by some Democrats that the election process is undemocratic and an intense lobbying push to convince electors to cast their votes against Trump.

National News:

Associated Press: In realist foreign policy, Obama found limits

<http://bigstory.ap.org/4bac12e615954bb19c2eb54888f2cd35>

President Barack Obama's foreign policy legacy may be defined as much by what he didn't do as by what he did. Over eight years, Obama ushered in a new era of diplomacy, re-establishing the United States as the driving force behind fighting climate change and reducing the threat of nuclear weapons. He restored unity between the U.S. and its allies after the divisive tenure of President George W. Bush and avoided adding another large-scale U.S. military commitment overseas. But Obama also ran headlong into his limitations as the world's chief diplomat. His cautious and pragmatic approach to world affairs ultimately couldn't deliver on the founding promise of his presidency: ending wars. He will leave office in January having failed to end the conflicts he inherited in Iraq and Afghanistan, settling instead for greatly reducing U.S. involvement in each. And he will pass on the woes of a raging civil war in Syria that he has been helpless to stop.

United Nations News:

Wall Street Journal: Samantha Power's Syria Problem

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/samantha-powers-syria-problem-1482439632>

Alexandra Wolfe

When Samantha Power's 7-year-old son recently asked her, "Why are all the kids in Syria always painted white or gray?" the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations recalls wishing that she had a better answer. Her son, who had often heard his mother talking about the country's agonizing civil war, had gotten the idea from seeing photographs of ash-covered Syrian children pulled out of bombed-out rubble. That innocent question hit home, rather literally, for perhaps the Obama administration's highest-profile human-rights advocate. Ms. Power, scalded from the experience of covering the 1990s Balkan wars as a young reporter, came to prominence for her 2002 book "A Problem From Hell: America in the Age of Genocide." Her research documented the chilling passivity of U.S. administrations over the decades in the face of genocides in Armenia, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and elsewhere. Now, her final weeks in office have been overshadowed by the fall of Aleppo, where Syria's dictator, Bashar al-Assad, has retaken rebel-held parts of the shattered city, helped by Russia and Iran. Human-rights groups estimate that more than 430,000 Syrians have died during the war. Critics say that Ms. Power should have resigned to protest U.S. inaction in the face of the slaughter.

World News:

Associated Press: Syrian government takes full control of Aleppo after 4 years

<http://bigstory.ap.org/b72989c89dd94e99a0725696d014dcd1>

The Syrian government took full control of Aleppo on Thursday for the first time in four years after the last opposition fighters and civilians were bused out of war-ravaged eastern districts, sealing the end of the rebellion's most important stronghold. The evacuations ended a brutal chapter in Syria's nearly six-year civil war, allowing President Bashar Assad to regain full authority over the country's largest

city and former commercial powerhouse. It marked his most significant victory since an uprising against his family's four-decade rule began in 2011. The announcement was made via an army statement broadcast on Syrian state TV shortly after the last four buses carrying fighters left through the Ramousseh crossing. "Thanks to the blood of our heroic martyrs, the heroic deeds and sacrifices of our armed forces and the allied forces, and the steadfastness of our people, the General Command of the Army and the Armed Forces announces the return of security and stability to Aleppo," an army general said in the statement.

Associated Press: Officials say fingerprints tie Tunisian to Berlin attack

<http://bigstory.ap.org/409c2c32bfac4f7b93ccce50ef6af757>

German officials presented mounting evidence Thursday that Anis Amri was behind the wheel of a truck that smashed into a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12, as authorities across Europe pressed ahead with their feverish manhunt for the 24-year-old Tunisian, who has evaded capture since the attack. Police raided properties in Berlin and the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia where Amri is believed to have spent time. They also swooped on a bus in the southwestern city of Heilbronn after receiving a tip that turned up nothing. No arrests were made, said Frauke Koehler, a spokeswoman for federal prosecutors. Even so, investigators were increasingly confident that Amri carried out the rampage after finding his fingerprints in the cab of the truck that had been hijacked shortly before Monday's attack. "We can tell you today that there are additional indications that this suspect is with high probability really the perpetrator," Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said after visiting the Federal Criminal Police Office along with Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Associated Press: Berlin attack victims included Israeli, Pole and Italian

<http://bigstory.ap.org/a687f9a3ef8e4cd38099b26806177c68>

Twelve people were killed and dozens were injured Monday when a truck smashed into a Berlin Christmas market. German authorities have described it as a terror attack most likely perpetrated by a Tunisian with ties to Islamic extremists. Authorities say six of the dead identified so far came from Germany, one each from Poland, Italy and Israel. Here are portraits of the three victims named publicly.

--

Camlin Moore

Cell: 803-206-8236

Office: 803-734-8044