

## MIDWEST DIGEST

### Officials Confirm Tornado Hit Wall

WALL (AP) — A tornado destroyed an airplane hangar in southwest South Dakota along with the three small airplanes inside, the National Weather Service confirmed Monday.

Officials had been unsure whether the destruction was caused by a tornado or strong straight-line winds.

Fire Chief Jim Kitterman said no one was hurt Sunday night, but the two-seater planes were thrown about 150 yards, and one ended up in a row of cedar trees. A canoe in the hangar was thrown 250 yards, he said.

The Weather Service said that damage indicated wind speeds around 100 mph, which rates EF-1 on the enhanced Fujita scale.

Uprooted trees and broken tree branches throughout town were typical of 75 to 80 mph wind speeds, the service said.

The news that a tornado had caused the damage confirm what Kitterman had suspected.

"It had to be a twister of some kind, just the way it scattered debris," he said.

Some posts anchored in concrete at the airport weren't broken but instead were pulled right out of the ground, further suggesting a tornado, Kitterman said.

There also was some damage to trees, sheds and shingles on homes in the community of 800 people, he said. A damage estimate was not immediately available.

### Tornado Tears Through Montana City

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Billings city and Yellowstone County officials declared a state of emergency Monday, a day after the largest tornado to hit the city in more than 50 years peeled the roof off of a sports arena, causing millions of dollars in damage.

Billings Police Sgt. Kevin Iffland said the commissioners gave verbal approval to the declaration Sunday evening, allowing the Montana Army National Guard to help provide security to the city's most damaged areas overnight.

Gov. Brian Schweitzer was scheduled to visit Billings on Monday for briefings and a tour of the damage. No deaths or major injuries were reported, other than a person getting struck on the head by a large hailstone.

City Commissioner Bill Kennedy said two people were on the MetraPark grounds when the tornado hit, but neither was hurt. A day earlier, thousands of people were inside the arena for an Indoor Football League game.

"The big guy was looking out after us," Kennedy said. "It would have been tough if that (tornado) came up and people were inside to get everybody in the basement safely."

### Court Rejects Funeral Protester's Motion

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A federal judge has rejected a request to keep Nebraska authorities from enforcing a state law that prohibits picketing within 300 feet of a funeral or memorial service.

Shirley Phelps-Roper, a member of a Kansas church that regularly protests at the funerals of fallen soldiers, had made the request for a preliminary injunction as part of her lawsuit against the state of Nebraska. The lawsuit challenges the constitutionality of Nebraska's funeral protest law, as well as the state's ban on flag mutilation.

The lawsuit followed Phelps-Roper's 2007 arrest during a protest at the funeral of a National Guardsman in Bellevue. Authorities say she let her then-10-year-old son stand on an American flag and that she wore a flag as a skirt that dragged on the ground.

### Sidney Officer Fatally Shoots Armed Man

SIDNEY, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say a Sidney officer fatally shot a 28-year-old man at the home of the man's girlfriend.

An affidavit filed in support of a search warrant says the officer was dispatched to the home of 24-year-old Dawna Serkiz around 10:15 a.m. MDT on Sunday. She had said her boyfriend, Michael Panduro, had a gun "and was threatening himself and others."

Cheyenne County Attorney Paul Schaub said Monday that Officer Randy VerMaas repeatedly told Panduro to drop his gun. Schaub says the officer finally fired twice at Panduro, hitting him once.

Authorities say Panduro died later at a Scottsbluff hospital. In accordance with state law regarding the deaths of people in custody or being arrested, a grand jury and special prosecutor will investigate.

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## USDA Stops Using Beetles Versus Invasive Saltcedar

BY MEAD GRUVER  
Associated Press Writer

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — Concern about an endangered bird has caused the U.S. Department of Agriculture to declare a cease-fire in its biological war against saltcedar, an invasive tree that has taken over riparian areas across the West.

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service last week formally ended its program of releasing saltcedar leaf beetles to eat saltcedar, also known as tamarisk, in 13 states: Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Montana, Washington and Wyoming.

The reason for the program's demise is the southwestern willow flycatcher, an endangered species found in scattered pockets around the Southwest. The bird nests in saltcedar, as well as in native willows and cottonwoods.

Concern that beetles could destroy much of the bird's nesting habitat was why the USDA excluded New Mexico, Arizona and California from the beetle-release program, which began in 2005.

Now, scientists think the beetles are likely to spread from the states where they were introduced. They say it could be just a matter of time before the insects chew through saltcedar all the way down the Colorado River drainage in Arizona and eastern California.

"The beetles move around. They don't stay where you put them," Alan Dowdy, director of invertebrate and biological control programs for APHIS in Riverdale, Md., said Monday.

The USDA moved to end the beetle program last year, he said. A June 15 memo from Dowdy told APHIS state directors that APHIS no longer endorsed releasing saltcedar leaf beetles and stated that doing so could be prosecuted and punished by a fine up to \$250,000 per violation.

The change has environmentalists who opposed the use of saltcedar leaf beetles from the beginning saying "I told you so."

They also said it might be too little, too late to prevent one artificially introduced species from destroying another and wiping out an endangered native species in the process.

"It's very serious," said Robin Silver, with the Center for Biological Diversity.

The Tucson, Ariz.-based group and the Maricopa Audubon Society sued APHIS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last year over the release of saltcedar leaf beetles in southern Utah in 2006. The released beetles proliferated, the groups said, destroying several saltcedar trees containing southwestern willow flycatcher nests.

The release also opened a door for the beetles to spread southward, the groups said.

Saltcedar grows up to 30 feet tall. The tree was introduced to the West during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s and has since spread along streams throughout the region.

One of the problems with the tree is it concentrates salt in its leaves. When those leaves fall, salt can concentrate around the trees and prevent anything else from growing.

Saltcedar has been successful in part because of the dams built in the West during the 20th century, said Matthew Chew, an assistant research professor at Arizona State University.

The dams altered the natural flow of Western rivers like the Colorado, giving saltcedar trees an advantage over native willows and cottonwoods.

"They are adapted to this new regime — this new, artificially managed regime," Chew said. "We created a habitat. We created the perfect conditions."

The federal government's view that saltcedar leaf beetles could do no harm was an "illusion," said Jeff Ruch, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

"Perhaps the best hope for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher is for it to develop a taste for leaf beetles," Ruch said.

## Ellsworth To Be Home Of Drones

### Squadron Of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles To Be Stored In South Dakota

BY CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press Writer

PIERRE — The U.S. Air Force has selected Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City as home to one of two new squadrons that operate unmanned aerial vehicles used in patrols over Iraq and Afghanistan, South Dakota's congressional delegation announced Monday.

The added mission helps secure the future of the base, which survived a plan for its closure in 2005, said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., who announced the addition of the unmanned aircraft operation. Ellsworth's B-1 bombers already provide air support to troops in Afghanistan, he said.

"It does further solidify and reinforce the importance of Ellsworth to the Air Force. That's good for its future," Thune told The Associated Press.

Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri will get the other new squadron for operation of remotely piloted aircraft.

Ellsworth will be responsible for flying five unmanned air patrols a day to provide vital intelligence to troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, Thune said. The squadron, which will control aircraft based elsewhere in the world, will be in place by January 2012, he said.

The new mission will add about 280 active duty airmen, Air Force civilians and contractors to Ellsworth, which is located on the edge of the Black Hills in western South Dakota. Thune said Ellsworth was chosen to operate unmanned aircraft because it has available space and a high-capacity communications network that will allow the operation to communicate with the aircraft and send intelligence information to users around the world.

"It's a great news story for Ellsworth, for the Black Hills area and for all of South Dakota," the Republican senator said.

Thune said South Dakota's congressional delegation helped secure the new mission by sending a letter and talking with Air Force officials. Republican and Democratic members of the congressional delegation joined state and local officials to save Ellsworth in 2005 when

the Pentagon proposed closing the base. A federal commission decided to keep the base open.

Thune said the Air Force is planning to add another three squadrons of unmanned aerial vehicles, and he hopes Ellsworth might land some of those.

Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., said the entire congressional delegation has worked to bring the remotely piloted aircraft operation to Ellsworth. He said he has worked to get money to improve facilities at the base.

"This decision by the Air Force recognizes the strengths of Ellsworth Air Force Base and is a testament to the great work that has been done across the board to keep this a world-class facility," Johnson said in written statement.

Democratic Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, South Dakota's lone member of the U.S. House, said the location of unmanned aircraft at Ellsworth indicates the base's importance to national defense and the strong support it gets from the state.

"Remotely piloted vehicles are and will continue to be a crucial part of our nation's arsenal, and Ellsworth is a premier installation that is perfectly situated to receive this important mission," Herseth Sandlin said.

## Another Former Scout Settles Neb. Abuse Lawsuit

BY MARGERY A. BECK  
Associated Press Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. — A sexual abuse lawsuit filed by a former Boy Scout against the Boy Scouts of America and the Lincoln Interfaith Council has been dismissed.

The 21-year-old former Scout is referred to only as John Doe in the lawsuit, which was dismissed Friday. His attorney, Kathleen Neary, filed the motion to dismiss the lawsuit. Neary said that she could not comment on whether the case was settled or why it was dismissed.

The man sued in 2007, claiming he was molested in 2002 by Norman Leach, who is a former Presbyterian minister and had been the director of the interfaith council, which sponsored a Scout troop.

The lawsuit said the Boy Scouts, its Cornhusker Council and the interfaith council had a duty to retain a competent leader to ensure that John Doe would not be sexually abused. The man sought damages caused by the abuse, as well as for pain, suffering and emotional distress.

Leach declined to comment when reached Monday at his home. An attorney for the Boy Scouts, William Tannehill of

Lincoln, did not immediately return a message left Monday by The Associated Press.

In 2004, Leach was sentenced to one year in jail after pleading no contest to third-degree sexual assault for fondling a 15-year-old Boy Scout who was staying at his house.

Another boy who said he was molested by Leach sued the Boy Scouts and the council, and reached a settlement in 2007. The terms of that settlement were not disclosed.

After Leach's arrest, Lincoln police said several men came forward to say they were abused by Leach from 1963 to 1967, when he was working in York for the Boy Scouts' Cornhusker Council. Officials from the Child Advocacy Center and the Cornhusker Council also said they received calls about incidents in the 1960s.

In the 1970s, Leach was convicted of a misdemeanor charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor 12 or younger in California, according to court records.

A Boy Scout official said after Leach's 2004 arrest that no background check was conducted on Leach because he had been involved in the organization long before the group began conducting national criminal history

background checks on scout leaders.

The Boys Scouts of America has made headlines recently for sex abuse by Scout leaders. In April, an Oregon jury ordered the organization to pay \$18.5 million to a man sexually abused by a former assistant Scoutmaster.

That award followed evidence

introduced in the case of more than 1,000 so-called "perversion files" secretly kept by the Boy Scouts of America at the group's national headquarters from 1965 to mid-1984.

The Boy Scouts have argued that those files are outdated and do not reflect current prevention efforts or even past policy.



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### Ozzy Osbourne To Perform At Sturgis

STURGIS (AP) — Heavy metal pioneer Ozzy Osbourne will play the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Buffalo Chip Campground owner Rod Woodruff says Osbourne is scheduled to perform on Aug. 12.

Woodruff says the word "icon" is an overused term in the music business, but it applies to Osbourne.

Other acts scheduled at Sturgis this year are Kid Rock, Motley, Cure, Buckcherry and ZZ Top.

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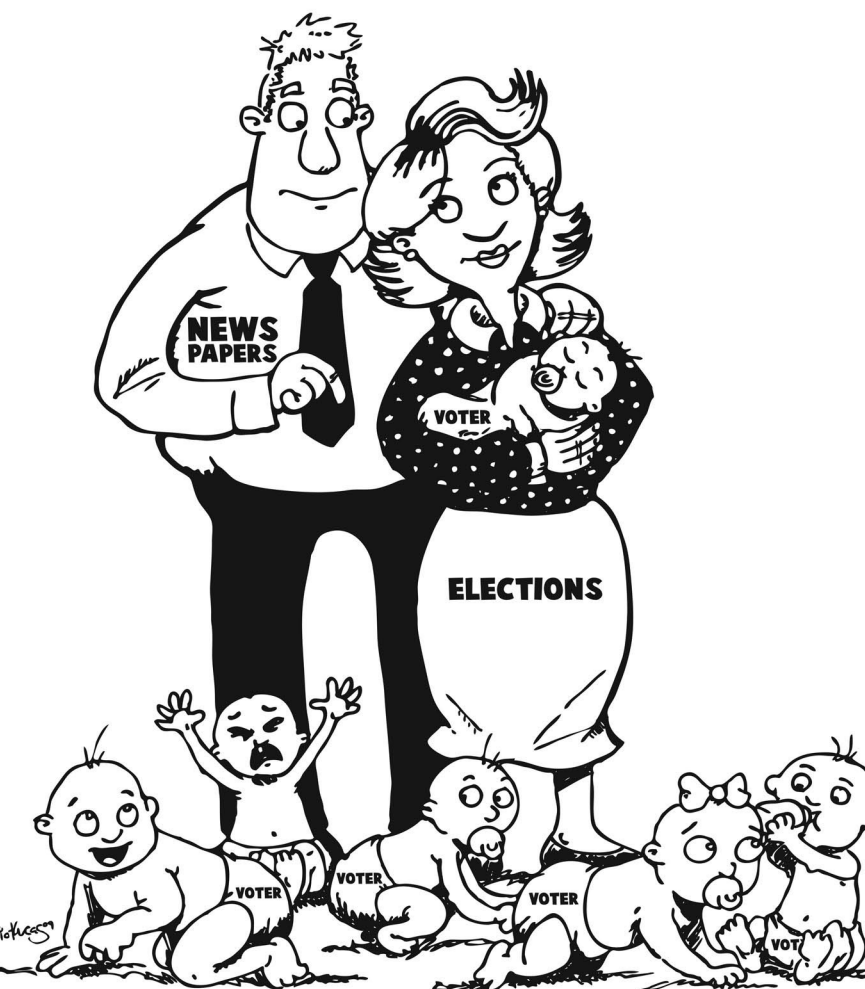
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