

Alliance Gunman Admitted To Colorado Killing

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say a gunman who died during a 14-hour standoff with police at a pharmacy in Alliance admitted he killed a Colorado man in 2011.

The Nebraska State Patrol says 27-year-old Andres Gonzalez told negotiators during Tuesday's standoff that he killed 38-year-old Joshua Bullock, of Denver.

Investigators believe Gonzalez killed Bullock around Dec. 1, and disposed of the body in a remote area of Dawes County in the Nebraska Panhandle. Officials say Bullock's burned pickup was found by a rancher in a ravine near Chadron on Dec. 14. Chadron is 50 miles north of Alliance.

A search for Bullock's remains is under way.

Authorities have arrested Gonzalez's girlfriend, 19-year-old Rose Siefke, of Hemingford, on a charge of being an accessory to a felony.

Bullock had ties to Chadron and Alliance.

3 Wounded In Standoff Still Hospitalized

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The two officers and business owner wounded in Tuesday's deadly standoff in the Nebraska Panhandle town of Alliance remain hospitalized.

Box Butte General Hospital spokeswoman Bonnie Wallace said Thursday that all three men remained in stable condition as they recovered from their gunshot wounds.

Forty-three-year-old Alliance Police officer Kirk Feller was shot early in the standoff that began Tuesday morning when 27-year-old Andres Gonzalez tried to rob Thiele Pharmacy & Gifts.

Later in the morning, 37-year-old state trooper Tim Flick sustained several gunshot wounds.

Pharmacy owner, 62-year-old Charles Lierk, was shot in the back and arm as he escaped.

Another Alliance police officer, 35-year-old Matt Shannon, sustained a shrapnel wound Tuesday when Flick was shot. He was treated and released Tuesday.

Autopsy Confirms Teen Died From Drowning

RAPID CITY (AP) — An autopsy has confirmed that a teenager who went missing while kayaking died from an accidental drowning.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says an autopsy performed Thursday morning confirms that 15-year-old Justin Lewis of Hill City died from drowning. His body was recovered from Deerfield Lake in southwest South Dakota on Wednesday.

Experts from several states had been searching for Lewis since he disappeared May 28 and his boat and life jacket turned up the following day.

Man Pleads No Contest In Center Abuse

BEATRICE, Neb. (AP) — A former worker accused of abusing residents at a Nebraska center for developmentally disabled adults has pleaded no contest to abuse charges.

KWBE radio in Beatrice says Cameron Barnes, of Fairbury, entered the plea to two counts of abuse of a vulnerable adult on Thursday in Gage County District Court. In exchange, seven other charges were dismissed. Barnes also agreed to testify against the four defendants in the case.

Barnes faces up to five years in prison on each count. Sentencing is set for Aug. 22.

Barnes and four other workers were charged after an investigation last year at the Beatrice State Developmental Center. They allegedly beat, pushed and choked residents.

Cases are pending against the others — Carmen Yates, Matthew Pangborn, Matthew Johnson and Cody Creek.

First 3 Trail Of Governors Statues Unveiled

PIERRE (AP) — The first three statues for the Trail of Governors project have been unveiled.

KCCR radio reports that the bronze, life-sized statues of former Govs. Arthur C. Mellette, Harlan J. Bushfield and Walter D. Miller were unveiled Thursday in the Capitol Rotunda.

Former Gov. Miller and family members of former Govs. Bushfield and Miller were on hand for the ceremony. Miller says sculptors Lee Leuning and Sherri Treeby did a good job capturing his physical features.

Each statue costs \$68,000 and is funded by private donations.

Statues of all former South Dakota governors will be placed around the state Capitol complex and through downtown Pierre. Officials plan to do about three statues a year.

Man Who Closed Business Denied Benefits

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Supreme Court says a man who closed his financially struggling business is not eligible to get unemployment benefits.

Michael Manuel of Sioux Falls argued he should get jobless benefits because he had to close his business after it began to lose money. As the owner and employee of the business that sold toner cartridges for printers, he was covered by unemployment insurance.

But the Supreme Court ruled that the state Labor Department was correct to deny Manuel's claim seeking unemployment benefits.

The high court says state law allows people who voluntarily leave their jobs for good cause to get jobless benefits under certain circumstances, but Manuel's decision to close his business did not meet any of those specific circumstances.

OBITUARIES

Carol Weatherwax

Carol Weatherwax, 63, of Yankton died unexpectedly Tuesday, June 12, 2012, at her home.

Mass of Christian Burial is at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, June 19, at St. Benedict Catholic Church, Yankton, with the Rev. Ken Lulf officiating. Burial will be in the Sacred Heart Cemetery, Yankton.

Visitations begin at 5 p.m. Monday at Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory, Yankton, with a Scripture service at 7:30 p.m. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.

pending with Kober Funeral Home, Elk Point.

Adam Gilpin

SIoux CITY, Iowa — Adam John Gilpin, 39, of Sioux City, Iowa, died Wednesday, June 13, 2012, at his home under hospice and family care.

Funeral services are at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Ponca Tribal Hall, rural Niobrara, Neb., with Jeff Gilpin officiating. Burial will be in the Ponca Native Cemetery, rural Niobrara, Neb.

Visitations began Thursday evening at the Ponca Hall with a prayer service at sunset each evening and visitations will continue until service time Sunday afternoon.

Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory, Yankton, is assisting with arrangements.

Waldron Harding

JEFFERSON — Waldron Harding, 94, of Jefferson died Thursday, June 14, 2012, at his residence.

Funeral arrangements are

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S.D. Dems Optimistic About Fall Election

CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota Democrats expect to be outspent by Republicans in this year's election, but say they believe they can win races up and down the ticket by emphasizing issues that also will be on the ballot.

State Democratic Party Chairman Ben Nesselhuf said his party has spent 18 months developing a plan to target campaign spending in a way that will counter the GOP's ability to raise more money in a heavily Republican state.

"They can go ahead and outspend us. That's fine. We're going to spend our money smarter," Nesselhuf said Thursday.

South Dakota Democrats are gathering in Aberdeen this weekend for their state convention. They will hear a speech from Matt Varilek, the party's candidate for South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat, and will nominate candidates for two seats on the state Public Utilities Commission.

Republicans hold their state convention in Sioux Falls next week.

Democrats hope they'll be helped by two ballot measures giving voters a chance to pass judgment on laws passed by the Republican-dominated Legislature. One sets aside money for grants to large construction projects. A plan to give bonuses to top teachers, establish scholarships to recruit teachers into critical fields and phase out teacher tenure also is expected to be referred by the South Dakota Education Association, which is collecting signatures to put it on the ballot.

Democrats opposed both measures, which were suggested by Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard. The minority party has argued the money in both measures should instead be



Nesselhuf

spent to boost state aid to school districts.

State Rep. Bernie Hunhoff of Yankton, the House minority leader, said the governor's plan to set aside money from a tax on construction to give grants to large construction projects will help Democratic candidates.

"That's an issue that wasn't put on the ballot for political reasons, but it does work for Democrats politically," Hunhoff said.

But South Dakota Republican Party Chairman Tim Rave, a state senator from Baltic, said he believes voters will side with Republicans. The education measure seeks to give teachers \$15 million a year, and the grants to large construction projects will encourage businesses to create jobs in the state, he said.

"We'll get the party united, move forward to get our message out and let the voters decide and see where it goes," Rave said.

Nesselhuf said the presidential race between President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney is unlikely to get much attention in South Dakota, which last favored a Democratic presidential candidate in 1964, when Lyndon Johnson defeated Republican Barry Goldwater.

Democrats in every race have to contend with the GOP's advantage in registered voters. Republicans have nearly 46 percent of the state's registered voters, Democrats have 36 percent, and independents account for more

than 17 percent.

Hunhoff said voter registration numbers suggest Democrats should hold 36 percent of the seats in the Legislature, but they have only about 25 percent because Republicans have drawn legislative district boundaries that favor their party.

The House Democratic leader said he hopes his party also can gain seats in the Legislature this year. Democrats have recruited good candidates in districts where voter registration numbers are relatively close, he said.

In addition, the growing number of voters registered as independent is a good sign because many are likely to vote for Democratic candidates, Hunhoff said.

"They're not satisfied with the status quo, and in South Dakota the status quo has been Republican domination for some 40 years," Hunhoff said.

Hunhoff said he hopes voters realize more Democrats are needed in the Legislature so the two parties have to negotiate to produce better legislation.

Republicans now outnumber Democrats 30-5 in the state Senate, while the GOP has a 50-19 edge in the House, where one current representative is an independent affiliated with Republicans.

In Republican legislative primaries last week, some conservative GOP lawmakers were upset that Daugaard endorsed some candidates they considered too liberal. Two candidates backed by the Republican governor won, while three lost.

Rave said he doubts those primary disputes will hurt the party in the general election. "I don't really think there's anything to patch up," he said.

Study: Cougars Again Spreading Across Midwest

BY JIM SUHR
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Cougars are again spreading across the Midwest a century after the generally reclusive predators were hunted to near extinction in much of the region, according to a new study billed as the first rigorous statistical look at the issue.

The findings, detailed in The Journal of Wildlife Management, showed 178 cougar confirmations in the Midwest and as far south as Texas between 1990 and 2008. While confirmed sightings of Midwest cougars were sporadic before 1990, when there were only a couple, that number spiked to more than 30 by 2008, the study shows.

Researchers said the study poses fresh questions about how humans and livestock can co-exist with the re-emerging predators, whose movements appear to be following natural dispersal instincts.

The study sorts through various reported sightings and affixes a number to those it could confirm, which is significant because no government agency tracks the number of large cats across the country. Wildlife officials have for years said it's unclear how many of the animals may be in the Midwest, where they are not federally protected and, in some states, can be hunted.

"We (now) know there are a heck of a lot more cougars running around the Midwest than in 1990," said Clay Nielsen, a Southern Illinois University wildlife ecologist who co-authored the report while heading the nonprofit Cougar Network's scientific research.

"For those who are excited about the notion of living with large carnivores, this is great. For those worried about livestock degradations, there's going to be division in the ranks in the Midwest. It's going to be interesting to see how the public responds if this colonizing continues."

CLAY NIELSEN

Research. "We've got an interesting and compelling picture to talk about now."

"For those who are excited about the notion of living with large carnivores, this is great," Nielsen added. "For those worried about livestock degradations, there's going to be division in the ranks in the Midwest. It's going to be interesting to see how the public responds if this colonizing continues."

In the study, researchers relied on carcasses, cougar DNA from scat and hair samples, animal tracks, photos, video and instances of attacks on livestock across 14 states and Canadian provinces to measure the number of cougars east of the Rocky Mountains.

Scientists long had suspected that cougars were migrating from the West or South Dakota's Black Hills mountain range, where populations of the big, long-tailed cats have been so abundant that the state has staged a yearly hunting season targeting mountain lions since 2005. The study excluded confirmations from the Black Hills, given that state's bounty of the cats.

Of the cougar confirmations by researchers, roughly 62 percent took

place within some 12 miles of habitat considered suitable for the animals' populations. Sixty-seven of the confirmations were in Nebraska, 31 in North Dakota, 12 each in Oklahoma and Texas, 11 in South Dakota and 10 in Missouri. Single-digit tallies were in Arkansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas and Michigan.

Researchers theorize cougars are inhabiting the Midwest again following a "stepping stone" dispersal pattern — moving out of a dense population, stopping at the closest patch of available habitat and examining it for mates and prey before moving on. One male cougar made its way as far as Connecticut, where it was hit and killed by a vehicle.

Such cougar dispersal "is what they're programmed to do. Young mammals, even young humans, tend to move away from home," said Paul Beier, a Northern Arizona University conservation biology professor who studies cougars. "They once occupied the midwestern U.S. There's still some appropriate habitat, and this is how they'll find it."

Cougars are known to be largely secretive and mostly keep to riverbanks and wooded areas, usually

avoiding humans while feeding on deer, turkeys and raccoons.

But at times, the predators have drifted into populated areas. Police in Santa Monica, Calif., last month killed a 95-pound mountain lion that roamed into a downtown area — the first such sighting in that city in more than three decades — and Chicago police in 2008 shot and killed a 150-pound cougar in an alley on the city's North Side.

The study's findings come as little surprise to Bill Jorgenson, a North Dakotan who came face to face in January of last year with a 130-pound female cougar and her three cubs in a storage barn on his property, where he has 20 horses and some 1,000 head of cattle.

Fearing for his safety, Jorgenson shot and killed the animals.

"They're so thick out here, it's unbelievable," Jorgenson, 58, said of the mountain lions he blames for "wiping out" the deer population around his home near the 1,700-resident town of Watford City. "Two years ago, it'd be nothing to see 200 to 300 mule deer out there; this past winter, we never saw more than 20. We have carcasses all over where they've been killed."

Missouri's Department of Conservation said recently the 14 confirmed cougar sightings in that state this year compares to a dozen cougars confirmed there over the previous 16 years.

Since 1996, Missouri has deployed a specially trained, evidence-collecting "Mountain Lion Response Team" of wildlife experts, law enforcers and biologists whenever there's a credible sighting of cougars.

Study Backs Up Proposal For VA Changes In S.D.

RAPID CITY (AP) — A Department of Veterans Affairs plan to restructure its facilities in western South Dakota would be cheaper and more efficient than trying to fix aging VA facilities in Hot Springs, according to an economic analysis from the agency.

The VA's plan to close its hospital in Hot Springs has met strong local opposition. The proposal unveiled last year also would add a clinic in Hot Springs and rebuild facilities in Rapid City. The study found that the plan would cost about \$149 million, compared with \$258 million for renovating the existing VA facilities in Hot Springs, according to the Rapid City Journal.

There also would be a workforce reduction.

"Over time we believe we should reduce our labor force from 1,080 to about 800," KOTA-TV quoted Steve DiStasio, director of VA Black Hills Health Care System, as saying Wednesday. He said the emphasis would be on natural attrition over five years, according to the Journal.

DiStasio said a final recommendation to VA leaders has not yet been made.

"I want to have a dialogue with whomever is coming forth with alternative proposals," he said. "We might then reframe the proposal including these new ideas."

Hot Springs Mayor Don DeVries told the Rapid City Journal that he is not surprised the study backs up the VA's proposal. The

Save the VA organization plants to release an alternative plan, he said.

"I feel like it's an open discussion yet," he said. "It could very well be productive. At least, that's what we're hoping."

Members of South Dakota's congressional delegation were among those who sought the financial study. U.S. Sens. John Thune and Tim Johnson and Rep. Kristi Noem say they will continue to monitor the process.

Independence Day Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closed Wednesday, July 4th, for the Independence Day holiday.

The following deadlines will apply:
Thursday, July 5 newspaper 5 p.m., Friday, June 29th
Friday, July 6 newspaper 5 p.m., Monday, July 2nd
Saturday, July 7 newspaper 5 p.m., Tuesday, July 3rd

There will be no newspaper on Wednesday, July 4, 2012.

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