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## A Touch Of Royalty

Albers The First  
Miss Yankton To  
Be Named Miss  
South Dakota

BY ANDREW ATWAL  
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For Jessica Albers, the opportunity to represent Yankton in the Miss South Dakota USA pageant meant everything. "My hometown is here in Yankton, and I'm the first Miss Yankton to be named Miss South Dakota USA," she said.

She won the title at the state pageant held Sunday, Nov. 4 at the Brandon Valley Performing Arts Center in Brandon.

The annual competition consists of three segments, all of which are judged equally; swimsuit, evening gown and interview. Women must be between the ages of 14-26 to compete in either the Miss S.D. USA or Miss S.D. Teen USA pageant and also must be unmarried residents of South Dakota.

Alexis Rupp of Sioux Falls took home the honor of being Miss South Dakota Teen USA.

Albers currently works for Country-side Stores in northeast Nebraska as the executive of operations. She graduated from Mount Marty College with a business administration degree in 2009.

She has been in the Miss USA system for nine years, including one year as a teenager. She has been the first runner-up as Miss South Dakota twice, second runner-up once and the third runner-up three times.

"This year has been like so many other years. You're standing up there in the top two holding the other persons hand and just hoping they pick you," Albers said. "Not only is it an honor to win, it's an unbelievable ex-



COURTESY PHOTO  
Jessica Albers of Yankton was recently crowned as Miss South Dakota USA and became the first woman from Yankton to receive the honor. Albers will compete in the Miss USA pageant, which will be held at a date to be announced. Albers said she is honored to be able to represent Yankton and the state at the national level in the Miss USA pageant. Alexis Rupp of Sioux Falls was named Miss South Dakota Teen USA at the annual pageant which was held in Brandon.

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### Patraeus Scandal

## Obama: No Evidence Of Security Breach

Reaffirmed His Belief That U.S. Can't Continue Tax Cuts For The Wealthiest

BY BEN FELLER  
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama said Wednesday he has seen no evidence that national security was threatened by the widening sex scandal that ensnared his former CIA director and top military commander in Afghanistan.

Facing questions from reporters, Obama also reaffirmed his belief that the U.S. can't afford to continue tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, a key sticking point in negotiations with Republicans over the impending "fiscal cliff." He said, "The American people understood what they were getting" when they voted for him after a campaign that focused heavily on taxes.

And he defiantly told critics of U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice, a potential candidate to lead the State Department, that they should "go after me" — not her — if they have issues with the administration's handling of the deadly attacks on Americans in Benghazi, Libya. His words were aimed at Republican Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham, who have vowed to block Rice's potential nomination.



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS  
U.S. President Barack Obama speaks during his first press conference since winning re-election in the East Room of the White House on Wednesday, in Washington, DC.

The president addressed those topics and others for about 50 minutes in his first news conference since he won re-election last week. His party also picked up seats in both houses of Congress, but the president refrained from claiming a broad mandate, other than for protecting middle class families.

The tangled email scandal that cost David Petraeus his CIA career and led to an investigation of Gen. John Allen has disrupted Obama's

OBAMA | PAGE 12

## Branstad: Not Enough Info For Iowa Exchange Choice

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Gov. Terry Branstad plans to tell the federal government Friday that Iowa still doesn't have enough information to move forward with a state-based insurance marketplace under President Barack Obama's health care law, a spokesman said Wednesday.

The federal government has imposed a Friday deadline for states to confirm whether they will create their own health exchanges for consumers and small businesses. States don't have to provide specific details about their plan until next month, but those that don't

declare their intention by the deadline will have to move forward with a state-federal partnership or a federal takeover — at least for now.

Branstad spokesman Tim Albrecht said the governor will notify U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius that Iowa isn't able to decide. Albrecht said the federal government has set arbitrary deadlines for the states without answering basic questions that would help Iowa officials choose the best option.

"We are unable to inform Secretary Sebelius of our intention on a state-based exchange without first having the knowledge on what is required for a partnership exchange with other states," Albrecht said. "We'll

convey this in our letter to the secretary on Friday."

The new insurance system is designed to create a marketplace where consumers and small businesses can make side-by-side comparisons when buying health insurance. Supporters of the law say that transparency will ultimately push costs down, while many Republicans have criticized it as an undue intrusion into the private marketplace.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted states another month to submit detailed blueprints if they choose to create a state-based exchange. The new, Dec. 14 deadline gives the

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## Living Nativity A Tribute To Rev. Fahr

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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BLOOMFIELD, Neb. — The Rev. Duane Fahr initiated the Living Nativity Scene in 2008 for Bloomfield's First Trinity Lutheran Church, starting a Christmas tradition for the surrounding area.

But Fahr suffered a fatal heart attack last April, just before presiding at a wedding. His death left his parishioners in shock and without a shepherd for their flock.

And, as Christmas approached, the congregation faced the painful question: Should they continue with the Living Nativity Scene that meant so much to their late pastor?

The answer: A resounding yes. Church elder Richard Eisenhauer said the program — entitled "Christmas From A-Fahr" — will be presented as a tribute to the late minister. This year's presentation will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Harm and Tulleys Event Center on the Knox County, Neb., fairgrounds in Bloomfield.

"Pastor (Fahr) was very passionate about this. He insisted that it needed to be our gift to the community and surrounding communities at no admission charge," Eisenhauer said.

"His passion developed a large sup-

**"Pastor (Fahr) was very passionate about this. He insisted that it needed to be our gift to the community and surrounding communities at no admission charge. ... The Live Nativity committee felt it important to continue this year as a tribute to his commitment to spreading the Christmas story through this performance."**

RICHARD EISENHAUER

port from the congregation to put this presentation on. Several people spend many hours building the set and preparing in other ways."

The commitment continued after the minister's death, Eisenhauer said. "The Live Nativity committee felt it important to continue this year as a tribute to his commitment to spreading the Christmas story through this performance," he said.

Church secretary Deb Nielsen said parishioners agreed on moving forward with this year's production.

"We knew we wanted to do something," she said. "This was (Fahr's) creation. We had a celebration several years before, but it wasn't anything as elaborate as this (current production). It's really inspirational."

### PLANNING THE TRIBUTE

The early programs were held out-

doors, but the arena provides an ideal and warm indoors venue for the cast and audience.

"Actually, the program grew over the years, but the attendance varied with the weather," Eisenhauer said. "We started with it being performed the second Sunday in December, but we had issues with snow and extreme cold. Two years ago, we had to cancel because of the weather. Last year, we moved it to the Sunday before Thanksgiving."

Eisenhauer combined portions of previous scripts to create this year's program, Nielsen said.

Eisenhauer said he had a hand in creating the previous programs.

"Pastor and I worked on the scripts over the years. We talked about ideas



RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D  
First Trinity Lutheran Church members of Bloomfield, Neb., hoist a crucifix in place for next Sunday's Living Nativity Scene. The parishioners decided to move forward with this year's program after their pastor — who created the event and wrote each year's script — died suddenly in April.

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## Hamas Military Chief In Gaza Assassinated By Israel Strikes

BY IBRAHIM BARZAK AND JOSEF FEDERMAN  
Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israel carried out a blistering offensive of more than 50 airstrikes in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, assassinating Hamas' military commander and targeting the armed group's training facilities and rocket launchers in Israel's most intense attack on the territory in nearly four years.

Israel said the airstrikes, launched in response to days of rocket fire out of Hamas-ruled Gaza, were the beginning of a broader operation against the Islamic militants codenamed "Pillar of Defense." Israeli defense officials said a ground operation was a strong possibility in the coming days though they stressed no decisions had been made and much would depend on Hamas' reaction. There were no immediate signs of extraordinary troop deployments along the border.

The attack came at a time when Israel seems to be under fire from all directions. Relations have been deteriorating with Egypt's new Islamist government, Egypt's lawless Sinai desert has become a staging ground for militant attacks on Israel, and the Syrian civil war has begun to spill over Israel's northern border. Earlier this week, Israel fired back at Syria — for the first time in nearly 40 years — after stray mortar fire landed in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

With at least 10 Palestinians dead, including two young children, Wednesday's offensive was certain to set off a new round of heavy fighting with Gaza militants, who have built up a formidable arsenal of rockets and missiles.

It also threatened to upset Israel's relations with neighboring Egypt and shake up the campaign for Israeli elections in January. In a preliminary response, Egypt recalled its ambassador to Israel in protest.

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