

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Gunfire erupts at New Mexico high school, two students killed

AZTEC, N.M. — Heaven Angelica Hughes and her classmates heard loud noises coming from the hallway just before bullets began flying through the window, striking a wall just over one student's head.

"Get down!" her teacher yelled. The 15-year-old freshman fell to the floor and hid under her desk. Heaven then sent a text message: There's a shooting here at school, mom.

Across the hallway, David Stone, 16, heard the same booms while in math class. His teacher herded the class into a closet and locked the door.

"This is not a drill," an announcer over the school intercom told students.

When the frightened students emerged Thursday from their hiding places at Aztec High School, they learned two of their classmates had been killed. The shooter also was dead and the close-knit community of 6,500 people was thrust into mourning as they became the latest to feel the sting of what seems to be a routine tragedy in the United States.

Why the shooter chose Casey J. Marquez and Francisco I. Fernandez remained a mystery as detectives combed through evidence. So far, they have released few details.

Police arrived at the school less than a minute after getting the initial calls, which came shortly after the start of first period. With the school in lockdown, they got inside through a window and a door.

The identity of the shooter has yet to be released. It was not clear if the shooter died by suicide or was killed by police. No other injuries were reported.

Aztec is in the heart of northwestern New Mexico's oil and gas country and near the Navajo Nation. Its main street is lined by old brick buildings that date back more than a century. Officials say it's a town where everyone knows everyone else and where homecoming festivities are enough to shut down the main street.

Fast-moving wildfire engulfs semi-rural San Diego area

FALLBROOK, Calif. — Retirement communities built on golf courses, thoroughbreds in race horse stables and other usually serene sites were engulfed by flames as the San Diego area became the latest front in California's wildfire fight.

The fire broke out Thursday and exceeded 6 square miles in a matter of hours, burning dozens of houses as it tore through the tightly packed Rancho Monserate Country Club community in the small city of Fallbrook, known for its avocado orchards and horse ranches.

The California Horse Racing Board said approximately 25 horses were killed when eight barns burned and others in adjacent pastures were unaccounted for. Surviving horses were taken to Del Mar race track and all of Friday's races at Los Alamitos Race Course were canceled as the racing community mourned.

Three people were burned while escaping the flames, said Capt. Nick Schuler of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

At least 65 structures were destroyed and the fire remained uncontained early today, although the winds subsided significantly overnight. Forecasters said they would return later in the day but would be less widespread than on Thursday.

The fire was on the eastern border of the Marine Corps' vast Camp Pendleton, where base Fire Chief Thomas Thompson told Fox5 San Diego that the lack of wind should help the firefight.



AP Photo/Russell Contreras

Aztec High School students and area residents gather for a candlelight vigil in Aztec, N.M., after a shooting at the school.

Marine and Navy aircraft will join the battle, he said.

Meanwhile, firefighters in Ventura County, northwest of Los Angeles, gained 10 percent containment of the largest and most destructive fire in the state.

Snow in Deep South brings back bad memories for some

ATLANTA — The snow that dusted parts of the Deep South early today delighted schoolchildren with an unexpected holiday, but also brought back panicky memories for many adults of past storms that trapped commuters on interstates for hours.

The forecast called for a wintry mix of rain and snow across several states. Parts of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi reported snow flurries before dawn. The weather band also prompted closures in the Carolinas and brought a rare snowfall to parts of South Texas.

"It's the first snow of the season and any time you even mention snow in the South, you're going to get people a little panicky," said David Nadler, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service's office south of Atlanta.

Delta Air Lines canceled 125 flights Friday through its hub at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, while Southwest Airlines canceled more than 40 flights. Both airlines prepared for the storm by having crews de-ice planes, and Delta waived fees for some passengers scheduled to fly today.

The frigid temperatures behind a cold front that combined with moisture off the Gulf of Mexico to bring the weather to parts of the South also knocked out power to thousands and caused numerous accidents along slick roadways.

Winter weather advisories have been posted for parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas. The advisories were issued for cities including Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Hattiesburg, Mississippi; and Birmingham, Alabama.

Arizona GOP lawmaker resigns over surrogacy allegation

WASHINGTON — Republican Rep. Trent Franks of Arizona is resigning effective Jan. 31 after revealing that he discussed surrogacy with two female staffers.

The eight-term lawmaker, a staunch conservative and fierce opponent of abortion, said in a statement that he never physically intimidated, coerced or attempted to have any sexual contact with any member of his congressional staff.

Instead, he says, the dispute resulted from a discussion of surrogacy. Franks and his wife, who have struggled with infertility, have 3-year-old twins who were conceived through surrogacy.

Franks, 60, says he had become familiar with the surrogacy process in recent years and "became insensitive as to how the discussion of such an intensely personal topic might affect others."

He said he regrets that his "discussion of this option and process in the workplace" with two female staffers made them feel uncomfortable.

Franks has been a member of the far-right House Freedom Caucus. He's a staunch social conservative who sponsored House-passed legislation to make it a crime for any person to perform an abortion if the age of the fetus is 20 weeks or more.

Franks drew a sharp response from Democrats during a 2013 House committee debate when he said, "the incidence of rape resulting in pregnancy are very low." He sought to clarify the comment, saying later-term abortions linked to pregnancies caused by rape are infrequent.

Franks is a strong backer of President Donald Trump and has embraced some of his stances on social issues. Franks has harshly criticized some NFL players for not standing during the national anthem, calling them "arrogant and overpaid Lilliputians who dishonor America."

Franks represents a district encompassing suburbs north and west of Phoenix. He serves on the House Judiciary and Armed Services committees.

Trump signs 2-week spending bill to avoid a government shutdown

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has signed a spending bill to avoid a government shutdown and keep the federal government running through Dec. 22.

The president signed the two-week spending bill at the White House after the House and Senate acted to prevent a government shutdown this weekend.

The White House and congressional leaders are negotiating a longer-term agreement.

The measure funds government agencies from the Defense Department to the IRS. It also makes money available to several states running out of funds for the Children's Health Insurance Program. The popular program provides medical care to more than 8 million children.

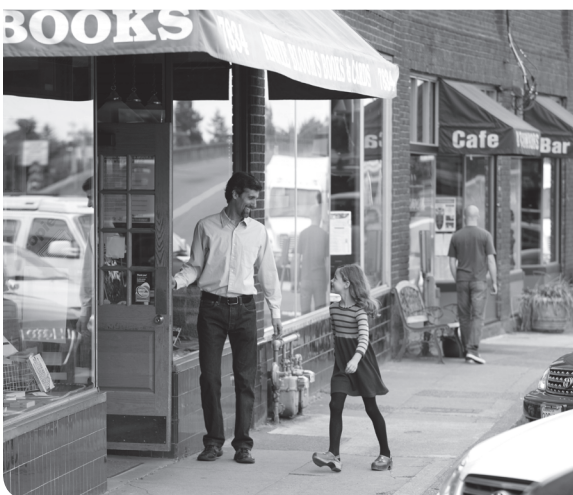
The White House and lawmakers say the bill will give them more time to negotiate several end-of-year agenda items, including the budget, a children's health program and hurricane aid.

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