

Wisconsin man arrested in teen's abduction

By **JEFF BAENEN and GRETCHEN EHLKE**
Associated Press

BARRON, Wis. — A 21-year-old man is jailed in the deaths of a Wisconsin couple he killed because he wanted to kidnap their teenage daughter, investigators said today, a day after the girl approached a stranger along a rural road saying she'd been abducted in October and held against her will.

Jake Thomas Patterson was taken into custody shortly after 13-year-old Jayme Closs sought help from a woman walking her dog in a rural, heavily wooded neighborhood near the small town of Gordon, about 60 miles north of Barron. Jayme disappeared from her family's Barron home when her parents were killed Oct. 15.

Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald said during a news conference today that Jayme was taken against her will. Investigators believe Patterson killed Jayme's parents because he wanted to abduct her, and that Patterson "planned his actions and took many steps to hide his identity."

Fitzgerald said investigators believe the girl was "the only target" but don't believe Patterson had any contact with the family. Douglas County Sheriff Thomas Dalbec said Patterson was jailed on kidnapping and homicide

charges.

The woman who first spotted Jayme on Thursday, Jeanne Nutter, said she was walking her dog along a rural road when a disheveled teenage girl called out to her for help and quickly grabbed her. Only then did Jayme reveal her name.

Nutter said Jayme told her she had walked away from a cabin where she'd been held captive, a cabin not far from Nutter's home.

"I was terrified, but I didn't want to show her that," said Nutter, a social worker who spent years working in child protection. "She just yelled please help me I don't know where I am. I'm lost."

Nutter said she didn't want to bring Jayme to her nearby home because it was too close to where she'd been found, and she didn't want them to be alone. She said: "My only thought was to get her to a safe place."

The two went elsewhere in the neighborhood, to the home of Peter and Kristin Kasinskas. Jayme was skinny and dirty, wearing shoes too big for her feet, but appeared outwardly OK, the neighbors said.

"I honestly still think I'm dreaming right now. It was like I was seeing a ghost,"



Jake Thomas Patterson



Jerry Holt/Star Tribune

Barron County Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald speaks during a news conference in October about Jayme Closs, who had been missing.

Peter Kasinskas said. "My jaw just went to the floor."

Fitzgerald said Closs was taken to a hospital but has since been medically cleared and released. She was not being interviewed by law enforcement, the sheriff said.

Jayme went missing after police discovered someone had broken into the family's home outside Barron and fatally shot her parents, James and Denise Closs. Jayme was nowhere to be found. The Barron County Sheriff's Department said the girl had likely been abducted. Detectives pursued thou-

sands of tips, watched dozens of surveillance videos and conducted numerous searches in the effort to find Jayme. Some tips led officials to recruit 2,000 volunteers for a massive ground search on Oct. 23, but it yielded no clues.

Fitzgerald said in November that he kept similar cases in the back of his mind as he worked to find Jayme, including the abduction of Elizabeth Smart, who was 14 when she was taken from her Salt Lake City home in 2002. Smart was rescued nine months later with the help of two witnesses who

recognized her abductors from an "America's Most Wanted" episode.

"I have a gut feeling she's (Jayme's) still alive," Fitzgerald said at the time.

Today, Smart posted on her Instagram account that it was a "miracle" Jayme had been found alive. Smart said the girl's family should be given "space and privacy on their road to finding a new sense of normal and moving forward."

"Whatever other details may surface, the most important will still remain that she is alive," Smart said. During the 20 minutes

Jayme was in their home, Peter and Kristin Kasinskas said they tried to make her feel more comfortable. They offered her water and food, but she declined both. Jayme was quiet, her emotions "pretty flat," Peter Kasinskas said.

Jayme told the couple she didn't know where she was or anything about Gordon, a town home to about 644 people in a heavily forested region where logging is the top industry. From what she told them, they believed she was there for most of her disappearance.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office confirmed on its website that Jayme was found in the town at 4:43 p.m. Thursday, and that a suspect was taken into custody 11 minutes later.

Jayme's grandfather, Robert Naiberg, said he'd been praying for months for the call he received Thursday about his granddaughter being found alive.

Naiberg said his daughter called him with the news, saying Jayme reported having been held by "a guy in the woods" but was able to escape.

Sue Allard, Jayme's aunt, said she could barely express her joy after learning the news Thursday night.

"Praise the Lord," Allard said between sobs. "It's the news we've been waiting on for three months. I can't wait to get my arms around her. I just can't wait."

Trump closer to declaring emergency for wall

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is edging closer to declaring a national emergency to pay for his long-promised U.S.-Mexico border wall as pressure mounts to end the three-week impasse that has closed parts of the government and deprived hundreds of thousands of workers of their salaries.

Some 800,000 federal employees, more than half still on the job, were due to miss their first paycheck today under a stoppage that neared a record for the longest government shutdown. With the closure's growing impact on the economy, national parks and food inspections, some Republicans are becoming uncomfortable with Trump's demands.

Lawmakers tried to reassure federal employees today that Congress was aware of the financial hardship they are enduring. By a vote of 411-7, the House passed a bill requiring that all government workers receive retroactive pay after the partial shutdown ends. The Senate approved the bill unanimously Thursday. The president is expected to sign the legislation.

Trump visited McAllen, Texas, and the Rio Grande

on Thursday to highlight what he calls a crisis of drugs and crime along the border. He said that "if for any reason we don't get this going" — an agreement with House Democrats who have refused to approve the \$5.7 billion he demands for the wall — "I will declare a national emergency."

Trump was consulting with White House lawyers and others about using emergency powers to take action on his own, and over the objections of Congress, to construct the wall. Bypassing Congress' constitutional control of the nation's purse strings would lead to certain legal challenges and bipartisan charges of executive overreach. Trump said his lawyers had told him the action would withstand legal scrutiny "100 percent."

The wall was the central promise of Trump's winning campaign in 2016. Supporters have tried to convince him that an emergency declaration is the best option to end the shutdown and would give him political cover to reopen the government without appearing to be caving on his pledge. Trump, they argue, could tell backers that he was doing all he could to fight for the wall, even if his order were held up or blocked in court.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Ex-Trump lawyer Cohen to testify to Congress

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, will testify publicly before a House committee next month in a hearing that could serve as the opening salvo of a promised Democratic effort to scrutinize Trump, his conflicts of interest and his ties to Russia.

The House Oversight and Reform Committee announced Thursday that Cohen will appear before that panel Feb. 7, a little more than a month after the Democrats took the House majority.

The hearing marks the latest step in Cohen's transformation from a trusted legal adviser to the president to a public antagonist who has cooperated extensively against him. Although Democrats say the questioning will be limited to avoid interfering with open investigations, the hearing is still likely to pull back the curtain on key episodes involving Trump's personal life and business dealings, including hush-money payments to women

and a proposed Moscow real estate deal, that federal prosecutors have been dissecting for months.

Cohen is a pivotal figure in investigations by special counsel Robert Mueller into potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign and by federal prosecutors in New York into campaign finance violations related to payments to buy the silence of a porn actress and a former Playboy Playmate who say they had sex with Trump. Federal prosecutors have said Trump directed those payments during the campaign.

Trump has denied having the extramarital affairs.

US official says withdrawal from Syria has begun

BAGHDAD — After days of conflicting statements about a timeline for President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw American forces from Syria, a U.S. defense official said today the process has begun with the removal of some military cargo.

The official said the movement of equipment is part of what the military calls a "deliberate withdrawal" from Syria, where

some 2,000 troops have been working with a coalition of Syrian Kurdish and Arab fighters to defeat the remnants of the Islamic State group.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the equipment withdrawal is underway and that an unspecified number of additional U.S. troops have been brought into Syria to assist with the process, including by providing additional security.

Hours earlier, Col. Sean Ryan, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group, said "the process of our deliberate withdrawal from Syria" has started. He said the U.S. would not discuss a specific timeline, locations or troop movements out of concern for operational security.

There has been confusion over plans to implement Trump's pullout order and threats from Turkey to attack the Kurdish fighters, who Ankara views as terrorists because of their ties to insurgents within Turkey.

Bernie Sanders faces questions about political future

NEW YORK — Allies of Vermont Sen. Bernie

Sanders are rallying behind the embattled presidential prospect even as they reluctantly begin to ponder the painful possibility of a 2020 campaign without him.

The 77-year-old self-described democratic socialist is the most prominent contender to face a serious setback in the evolving White House field. He's been forced to confront reports detailing allegations of sexual harassment of women by male staffers when he sought the Democratic nomination for president in 2016.

No one has alleged that Sanders had direct knowledge of the incidents.

Sanders' loyalists expect him to launch a second campaign in the coming weeks, and his network of die-hard supporters is hosting hundreds of events across the nation this weekend encouraging him to run.

But the allegations put Sanders in an unenviable position in the early days of a contest playing out in the #MeToo era. While his competitors are visiting early-voting states and scoping out potential campaign headquarters, Sanders spent Thursday apologizing for the behavior of a handful of 2016 campaign workers and looking for new staffers should he run in 2020.

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